

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Steele's Hill or Bellmonte Park

and or common Grafton Hill Historic District

2. Location

street & number Streets bounded roughly by Grand, Plymouth, Forest, and Salem not for publication

city, town Dayton vicinity of

state Ohio code 039 county Montgomery code 113

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Recorders Office

street & number 451 West Third Street

city, town Dayton state Ohio 45402

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Ohio Historic Inventories has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978-1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Ohio Historical Society I-71 and 17th Avenue

city, town Columbus state Ohio 43211

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The GRAFTON HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT is an extension of the Central Avenue Historic District (listed on the National Register in September 1980), a primarily residential area northwest of the Miami River and the central business district in Dayton, Ohio. The fact that Central Avenue, one of the streets within the locally designated Grafton Hill Historic District, was nominated individually as opposed to a district nomination was frankly an oversight and a matter of poor judgement. Grafton Hill is a wonderful grouping of late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses in the Queen Anne, Neo-classic, Craftsman, and Jacobethan styles. Enormous old maple trees shade the approximately 120 houses, many with carriage houses located at the rear of their lots. Some houses are close together, presenting only their facades to the passerby--as city houses do--while a number of those situated on corner lots are turned slightly to present two elevations. The bulk of the buildings have remained unchanged over the years and exhibit few modern alterations. This cohesive neighborhood is bordered by the Miami River to its south, a park and the interstate to its east, a mid-twentieth century neighborhood to its north, and a commercial strip to its west.

The architectural variety of the Grafton Hill Historic District is one of its most striking characteristics. The district contains several large and distinctive Queen Anne houses, a few of which are considered the nicest in the city. These are typically of frame and brick construction with limestone foundations, large verandas, dominant corner turrets, and a complexity of wood detailing and trim. Excellent examples of these Queen Annes are 332 Central, 309 Grafton (photo #9), 240 Central (photo #5), and 318 Grand (photo #22).

In addition to Queen Anne is the Jacobethan. Like the Queen Annes, the Jacobethans in the district are some of the most outstanding in the city. These large houses exhibit brick faces with large leaded glass windows, a multitude of strap work detailing and dominant roof lines with roofs sheathed in either red tile or slate shingles. The houses at 234 Belmont Park (photo #15), 60 Stoddard, 220 Central (photo #4), 326 Grand, and 212 Belmont Park (photo #16) are typical of the Jacobethans found in the district.

The Neo-classic style also makes an impressive appearance in the district with its large square floor plan and decorative dormers. Of both frame and brick construction, these houses are large structures with restrained yet elaborate and classical detailing, beautifully decorative entranceways and sidelight and facade-spanning porches. Such houses as 631 Belmont Park (photo # 17), 459 Grand (photo #22, 319 Grafton, and 227 Belmont Park are excellent examples of the Neo-classic style.

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A final distinctive style which adds visual variety to the district is the Craftsman Influenced style. These houses are large rectangular wood framed structures with exposed roof beams, brace work, mullion windows and dominant and distinctive front porches. The style is well represented by such houses as 139 Forest (photo #20), 75 Stoddard (photo #19), and 144 Central.

In addition to the residential houses, there are a few other period structures in the district. One is Longfellow School (photo #1), built in 1882 as the 11th District School and changed to Longfellow in 1904. Originally, this school served the children of the whole Dayton View area as it still does today. A late Victorian structure, it is of brick construction, four stories in height, with an irregular floor plan, decorative cornice detailing and large rectangular windows with decorative stone incised surrounds.

One of the two churches in the district is the Northminster United Presbyterian Church (photo #21), constructed in 1902. It is a most unusual but architecturally interesting structure with its red varigated sandstone, beautiful Tiffany stained glass windows, and very dominant low red tile roof. Located on a corner lot, it is a focal point to the district. (The other church is the Greek Orthodox (photo #18) located on a hill at the eastern edge of the district. The only such church in Dayton, it was constructed in 1951 to serve the Greeks who had started to settle in the Dayton View area. It is a beautiful structure with a gold domed roof and much decorative mosaic detailing; in design, it is similar to St. Sophia in Constantinople. Although not built within the designated historic time frame for the district, it is a notable structure.)

Another contemporary district structure is the commercial Miller Building (photo #2) and its architectural complement, the Delux Apartments, both built in 1926. Faced in brick and buff pink terra cotta, they are without a doubt the most outstanding terra cotta structures in the city of Dayton. Classically and highly detailed, the two story Miller Building faces Salem Avenue and curves around to face Grand. Next to its Grand Avenue facade are the Delux Apartments, three stories in height, with two wing extensions projecting outward and flanking a recessed wing with a beautifully elegant curving exterior stairway.

Three other period apartment houses, all of brick construction, are located in the district: one at the southeast corner of Grand and Grafton, the other in the middle of the 400 block of Grand, and the third at the southwest corner of Forest and Grand. All built in the early 1920's, the Commodore (Grand and Grafton) is an impressive structure, ten stories in height, with a highly decorative cornice line. The Grand Avenue structure (photo #23) is "U" shaped, smaller in scale with four stories, with a restrained but decorative

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cornice line. The Shildon (Forest and Grand) is also four stories in height with nice cornice line detailing and boasts a prominent classically designed front porch supported by fluted columns.

The final two outstanding structures are the Dayton Art Institute (DAI), constructed in 1930, and the Masonic Temple in 1929. The DAI, placed on the National Register in November of 1974, is a rambling structure of yellow stone, three stories in height, with a dominant hip red tiled roof. An outstanding curving stairway graces the classically detailed facade. The DAI (photos #32,33,36, and 37) is a replica of an Italian villa. The Masonic Temple (photos #34 and 35) is an equally imposing structure of buff stone construction with an elaborate Greek designed facade and sides. Rectangular in plan, its five stories dominates the view.

A number of intrusions exist in the district: a modern structure (photo #31) next to, but not joined to, the Greek Orthodox Church, a one story modern social club building on Superior (photo #27), a high rise apartment building on Belmont Park (photo #26), and eleven three story apartment buildings (photos # 24, 28, 29, and 30), all of small scale and all having the same setback as the houses around them. Because of their scale and lot location, these structures, with the exception of the high rise, do not jar the atmosphere of the neighborhood. The district still exhibits a sense of cohesiveness and sensitivity of architectural surroundings.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion	
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science	
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture	
1600-1699	X architecture	education	military	social/	
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian	
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater	
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation	
		invention		- X other (specify)	early suburban growth

Specific dates approx. 1880-1925 Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The GRAFTON HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT is significant for both historical and architectural reasons. Architecturally, this relatively small area constitutes an excellent grouping of high style residences which date roughly from the 1880's to the early twentieth century and which display a remarkable degree of integrity. A number of them are among the finest of their style in Dayton. Of those neighborhoods within the city limits, the district's Queen Annes, Jacobethans, and Craftsman houses are unrivaled in scale and detail. Historically, the district is a reminder of Dayton's earliest suburban development, of the movement of population from the center of the city outward, north of the Miami River. The proposed district is part of the much larger area generally known as Dayton View and represents part of the first successful development of Dayton across the river. A Dayton View Historic District nomination was submitted and accepted to the National Register earlier this year but included only that neighborhood west of Salem Avenue, a major thoroughfare which bisects North Dayton. Grafton Hill is located east of Salem, and while similar to its western counterpart in development pattern and architectural style, has always been considered a separate entity even though its development was concurrent with that of Dayton View west of Salem. Before this time, no successful expansion of Dayton, north across the river, had taken place. This expansion was secured after Dayton's 1913 Flood since Dayton View and Grafton Hill is on some of the highest ground in the city. Both before and after the Flood, this residential area was created by and for a generation of rising professionals and businessmen who were the leaders of their rapidly growing industrial city. Its houses reflect in their architectural variety the tastes of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, the district remains today as a physical link to an important segment of Dayton's development history.

About 1819, a small community known as Pierceton existed in the vicinity of the Riverview, Salem, and Central avenues area but had failed and was vacated. This land eventually passed to Judge James Steele and his brother Samuel, early Dayton residents who were interested in development on the north side of the Miami River.

In 1847, another brother, Dr. John Steele, a Dayton physician, submitted for record, his plat for Dayton View near Central Avenue and eastward. The name implied that Dayton could be viewed from his plat across the river. His holdings included the hill at the eastern edge of the district now being nominated. Eventually known as Steele's

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Hill or Steele's Woods, it was a favorite picnicing area for pre-Civil War Daytonians.

In 1869, J. O. Arnold, the "father of Dayton View," set the final pattern for this section by his important plat extension along Central Avenue. After this date, a series of subsequent plats led to the rapid development of Dayton View (for additional information, see the Dayton View Historic District nomination).

Finally, in 1875, John Stoddard, a wealthy and prominent farm implement manufacturer, platted an exclusive residential suburb east of Arnold's plat on Steele's Hill, naming it Bellmonte Park. He filed two additional extensions of this plat in 1890 and 1906. Envisioned was a plat filled with pretentious homes in a beautiful woodland setting. Bellmonte Park was considered one of the finest residential sections of Dayton well into the twentieth century. In addition to Stoddard, family names such as Canby, Reynolds, and Kumler were among the many representative residents and leading citizens of Dayton who maintained elegant homes here. A sampling of other original or early residents of the district includes:

- 221 Central: Charles Seybold, President, Seybold Machine Co.
- 240 Central: Thomas Elder, President, Elder & Johnson Co., dry goods
- 308 Central: H. B. Canby, Vice-presidnet, Crawford, McGregor, and Canby
- 319 Central: Richard Burkhardt, General Manager, National Cash Register (NCR) and co-founder of Dayton Electric Co. (DELCO)
- 515 Belmont Park: Charles Kelso, President, Kelso Wagner Co.
- 205 Belmont Park: T. A. Ferreding, Judge
- 221 Belmont Park: Allen O Freehafer, President, Kimmel & Freehafer Co.
- 607 Belmont Park: Edwin Reynolds, Treasurer, Reynolds & Reynolds
- 75 Stoddard: Clarence Gondert, Vice-president, Gondert & Leinsch Box Co.
- 60 Stoddard: Cecil Edwards, attorney and one of the first ari mail pilots in U.S.
- 33 Stoddard: Ellis J. Fink, President, Homestead Loan and Saving Assoc.
- 211 Forest: John Schoenhals, owner, John A Schoenhal's Shoes
- 117 Forest: Roy Fitzgerald, attorney
- 225 Grafton: John Stemler, Bookkeeper
- 319 Grafton: Samuel Rothenburg, dealer in leaf tobacco
- 318 Grand: Joseph H. Painter, Principal, Steele High School
- 320 Grand: Edward Leo, President, National Broiler Protector Co.
- 450 Grand: Hans Hayden, Purchasing Agent, Dayton Motor Car Co.

The early residents of this district continued to be among the entrepreneurs of the Dayton business and professional class. The district's dominance was further enhanced by the construction

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of the Dayton Art Institute (DAI) and the Masonic Temple on the section of the hill from which downtown Dayton can be viewed. These two structures were built in the district because of the social and economic prominence of the district and its inhabitants as well as the prime "viewability" of the location. Also, of equal importance, is the fact that Mrs. Carnell, the Dayton benefactress responsible for the building of the DAI, and Mr. Charles Underwood, president of the Masonic Temple, were residents of the district at the time of the buildings' construction. The construction of these two structures, representing major segments of Dayton's social and artistic life, secured the elitism of the district until the 1950's when the district suffered a decline. Currently, the district has a strong and dedicated neighborhood association which is determined to bring the district back to its former glory.

Architecturally, the Grafton Hill Historic District contains some of the finest examples of turn-of-the-century architecture in Dayton. Historically, it represents that first successful expansion of Dayton north across the river, thus creating a tangible link to an important part of Dayton's history. For these reasons, the Grafton Hill Historic District deserves to be included on the National Register of Historic Places.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Madeline Korff and Martin Kelly, researchers  
Montgomery County Historical Society  
Grafton Hill Historic District Association  
City Directories (1880-1930)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 70 acres

Quadrangle name Dayton North

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>16</u>	<u>739740</u>	<u>4405660</u>	B	<u>16</u>	<u>739800</u>	<u>4405400</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>16</u>	<u>739640</u>	<u>4405300</u>	D	<u>16</u>	<u>739230</u>	<u>4405170</u>
E	<u>16</u>	<u>739140</u>	<u>4405200</u>	F	<u>16</u>	<u>739200</u>	<u>4405260</u>
G	<u>16</u>	<u>739060</u>	<u>4405460</u>	H	<u>16</u>	<u>739040</u>	<u>4405420</u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Teresa Prosser, preservationist/consultant

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date May 1985

street & number 2516 Auburn Avenue telephone (513)277-6274

city or town Dayton state Ohio 45406

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

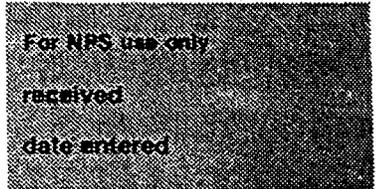
Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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UTM REFERNECE (continued)

- I 16/738850/4405560
- J 16/739380/4405620
- K 16/739400/4405590
- L 16/739620/4405580

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Starting 175' north of the northwest corner of Forest and Grand, go S 900' along the west side of Forest; then W 750' along Riverview then N 700' along Grafton; continue W 750', crossing Central, along the south lot line of Longfellow School to the east side of Salem; go N 300' along the east side of Salem to Superior; go E 250' along Superior to the alley; go N 800' along the alley to Grand; go 250' W along Grand to Salem; continue N 500' along the east side of Salem to North; go E 2500' along North and Grand; then finally NE 250' to the point of beginning.

These boundaries encompass all of the original structures representing the growth and development of Garfton Hill. These structures are achitecturally intact and serve as a visual portrait of the district. The southwest section of the local boundaries (see map) has been excluded from the proposed National Register boundaries because it is a solid grouping of new apartment houses, built approximately in the late 1950's.

Ohio Historic Preservation Office

1985 Velma Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio 43211  
614/466-1500



OHIO  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
SINCE 1885

May 2, 1986

The Honorable Paul R. Leonard  
Mayor of City of Dayton  
101 West Third Street  
Dayton OH 45401

Dear Mayor Leonard:

Re: Grafton Hill Historic District

I am pleased to inform you that the historic district, listed above, has been given approval by the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board as qualified for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The nomination forms and written comments which we have received concerning the significance of the property under the National Register criteria are now being sent to Washington, D.C., for federal evaluation. You will be notified when a final decision has been made in Washington regarding placement of your property on the National Register.

We wish to remind you that you have already received information regarding the benefits of listing as outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act (P.L. 89-665) as well as the effects which may result for depreciable properties which are listed pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976 as amended by the Revenue Act of 1978, the Tax Treatment Extension Act of 1980, and the Economic Recovery Act of 1981.

Sincerely,

David A. Simmons  
Inventory and Registration Department

DAS:dwm

xc: Sandra Shapiro, RC  
MVRPC  
Alice Wetzel (City of Dayton)  
State Senator Charles F. Horn  
State Representative Robert E. Hickey