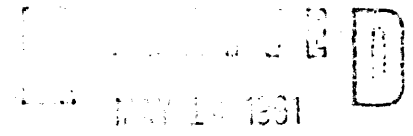


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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Potomac Boat Club other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 3530 Water Street, N.W. city, town Washington state District of Columbia code DC county N/A code 001 zip code 20007

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories. Includes a table for contributing/noncontributing resources.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: John P. ... State Historic Preservation Officer Date: 5-9-91

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper: Patrick Andrews Date of Action: 6/27/91

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/boat house

SOCIAL/club house

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/boat house

SOCIAL/club house

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

CRAFTSMAN

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Shingle

Brick

roof Asphalt shingle

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Please see Continuation Sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1908-1941

Significant Dates

1908

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Millett, A.B. and Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Please see Continuation Sheets.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	8
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3	2	0	4	6	0
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4	3	0	7	9	6	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Square 1179, Lot 11

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The property occupies Lot 11 of Square 1179 within the District of Columbia.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty Bird
 organization N/A date September 30, 1989
 street & number 2025 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 801 telephone 202-463-2033
 city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20006

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The Potomac Boat Club, constructed in 1908, is a two-story frame building facing south onto the Potomac River. The stone pier for the former Aqueduct Bridge (now gone) is located west of the building; three-story buildings of recent construction are located to the east. The boat club is situated below the western end of K Street which runs parallel to the rear facade of the building. The Whitehurst Freeway is elevated above K Street, which dead ends at the clubhouse. The building shows unmistakable Craftsman influences, appropriate for its recreational use. An overhanging balcony surmounted by a front gabled roof projects from the front facade. The rear and side facades of the original building are undetailed. The building is sheathed with shingles. A recent brick addition is attached to the building on the east. There is a tower located at the east end of the rear facade of the addition. As is typical for the building type, the first floor of the building is designed for boat and oar storage. The ballroom, board room, and locker rooms occupy the second floor of the original building; the second floor of the addition is used for locker rooms and shop space. While the building has been altered over the years, the distinguishing characteristics of the original building remain and the building possesses sufficient integrity to convey its historic associations.

The primary facade of the Potomac Boat Club, which is visible from the Potomac River and Virginia, is skillfully executed. A large, horizontal gable surmounts the tripartite composition. Three boat ports occupy the lower story; three paired French doors, the upper. There are paired, French windows at the center of the shingled gable. The balcony, which extends the length of the building, is supported by 4 curved knee braces terminating in sawn brackets with dogtooth ornament. Paired square piers extend from the balcony to the projecting gable above; a simple wood rail extends around the balcony. Decorative, false beams project from the gable and curved, exposed roof rafters are visible on the side facades. A floating dock extends the length of the front facade.

The rear facade, which faces the end of K Street, is detailed in a utilitarian fashion. The rear gable is flush with the facade and sheathed with shingles. False beams project under the eaves. Seven window and door openings are cut into the 1st floor. There are three window openings at the center of the 2nd floor corresponding with the location of the board room. Two windows are placed within the gable. Two internal chimneys rise above the roof line at the rear of the building. The side facades are similarly detailed. The west facade has small openings on the 1st floor, with paired double-hung windows on the 2nd floor. Two small shed dormers are located at the north end of the west facade at the location of the women's locker room. A new addition has been built against the 1st floor and north half of the 2nd floor of the east facade. The visible portion of the 2nd floor of the east facade of the original building is similar in appearance to the west facade. Because of the

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Aqueduct Bridge pier and the addition and adjacent townhouse construction, visibility of the side facades is limited.

The interior of the 1st floor of the building consists of open plan space with racks for boat and oar storage. The post and beam construction of this floor is entirely exposed. A ballroom occupies most of the 2nd floor on the south. The northwest corner of the 2nd floor houses the women's locker room; the board room is located on the northeast. A massive brick chimney, built by members around 1914, is located along the north wall of the boardroom; the original chimney was probably located in the northeast corner. The Craftsman influence on the building's design is most apparent in the ballroom. The room, which extends the width of the front of the building, is finished in horizontal pine panelling above a wainscot of novelty siding. Exposed trusses support the ceiling, which is also panelled. A shallow musician's balcony projects into the space above the entrance on the north. Round, cast iron ventilation grilles, displaying a floral pattern, are located in the center of the ceiling. Stairs are located at the rear of the building. Stair and balcony railings, as well as door and window trim, are simple, square-cut elements consistent with the building's Craftsman-influenced architecture.

Typical of buildings that have seen continuous use, the Potomac Boat Club has undergone changes over the years. The brick addition to the east and interior rehabilitation presently underway constitute the major alterations to the building. The 1-1/2 story brick addition to the east is comprised of a one-story boat shed topped by shop and locker room space. The 1st story, which respects the wall plane and floor-to-floor ratios of the original boat club, is executed in orange brick. The 2nd floor is set back. A simple metal rail extends along the front at the 2nd floor level of the original building. The open deck at the front of the 2nd floor of the addition is used for free weights. The 2nd story, at the rear, is constructed of brick and wood. A brick tower buttresses the addition at the east end of the rear facade; the remainder of the addition reads as wood infill between the brick tower and the original club. The addition is utilitarian in appearance and exhibits no particular architectural style.

The present rehabilitation by architects Williams & Dynerman is directed to providing more space for boat storage and repair and bringing the frame building more in line with contemporary life safety standards. A metal fire stair has been added to the rear of the west facade. On the interior, the stair has been left intact, but enclosed with fire-rated partitions, and the women's locker room has been expanded.

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The Potomac Boat Club, constructed in 1908, is one of two remaining early 20th century boat clubs along the Potomac River in the District of Columbia. Along with the Washington Canoe Club, the Potomac Boat Club represents recreational pursuits that were an important part of Washington life. The Potomac Boat Club meets Criterion A because of its association with the Potomac Boat Club, an organization founded in 1859. The Potomac Boat Club also meets Criterion C as an excellent local example of the boat house as a building type.

The Potomac Boat Club survives as the only building in the District of Columbia associated with competitive rowing. While the building itself only dates to 1908, it is the sole remaining structure associated with the Potomac Boat Club and the history the Boat Club embodies. It represents not only the specific history of the club, but also the importance of rowing as a sport. In order to understand the patterns that the Potomac Boat Club represents, it is necessary to understand the background of the sport. Rowing's greatest significance occurred in the 19th century. Unlike England, where rowing was the exclusive province of gentlemen, in the United States rowing was available to all. In the 19th century, rowing was a major sport on the order of boxing or football in the 20th century (Dulles, p. 226). Crowds of 20,000 or more would gather along river banks to watch races. Railroads would organize special trains to take people to race sites. During the 1870s rowing clubs appeared everywhere and several weekly publications were devoted to the sport. Professional scullers, like those depicted by Thomas Eakins, could win \$5000 in high stakes races (Freligh, pp. 26-27). Races were sponsored not only by boat clubs but by patent medicine concerns, railroads, and excursion companies. Gamblers were heavily involved, resulting in several race-fixing scandals. The atmosphere surrounding these heavily wagered, professional races led to an increased interest in amateurism among both colleges and rowing clubs. In 1872, the Schuylkill Navy conducted the first all-amateur regatta and the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen was founded later that same year.

The history of the Potomac Boat Club as an organization closely parallels the national history of the sport. The Potomac Boat Club was founded as the Potomac Barge Club in 1859. Boat clubs in existence at that time included the Falcons, the Gazelles, and Undine, the latter organized by Governor Alexander R. Shepherd in order to put together a crew with "plenty of beef in the boat" (Proctor, May 3, 1936). Along with the now-defunct Analostans and Columbians, the Potomac Boat Club was part of the Potomac River Rowing Association which held races attracting national competition. John Clagett Proctor quoted from a Star article of June 13, 1859,

'A number of our citizens have formed themselves into a club under the title of the Potomac Barge Club for the purpose of aquatic exercise and pleasure. They have purchased a beautiful barge of 40 feet in length with six oars and finished and furnished in most

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superb style ... We are glad to know that some of our prominent citizens have turned their attention to this pleasant and healthy exercise; for certainly there is no city in the Union where this exercise is more needed and can be so successfully prosecuted as in this, where there are so many engaged in sedentary pursuits and where we have such a magnificent stream as our broad Potomac' (Proctor, April 6, 1930, p. 8).

Although the Potomac Boat Club was organized to represent Georgetown (Proctor, May 3, 1936), the club's first boat house was located at the 10th Street Canal Bridge. This building was followed by three successive boathouses at the foot of 31st Street in Georgetown, the most recent of which was constructed around 1875. (Proctor, April 6, 1930 and "A Brief History of the Potomac Boat Club"). The club moved to its present location in 1908.

In 1930, John Hadley Doyle, President of the Potomac Boat Club from 1898 - 1908 reminisced for Proctor:

This Potomac Boat Club has had a wonderful stretch of history, from its membership of the very best citizens, a boat house that for years was the gathering place for cotillions and dances of all kinds by the elite of Georgetown, their assembly room in the old house at the foot of Thirty-first street, being one of the largest in the city, ... supplied with heating arrangements for Winter gatherings. Oh, it was a swell place and in its brightest days was the resort of the beaux and belles of the period. It will be then seen that the club made much of its social whirl and hence the place became the home of the cotillionist, as much so as to those who went into the rowing game. Added to the glamor of the boat house, the club also possessed an up-river landing ... where barge parties and picnics were almost daily happenings during the season, and the spot where representatives of the other clubs used to meet to bury the hatchet and participate in the cheer that is now prohibited (Proctor, April 6, 1930).

Mary Mitchell notes the significance of the older Potomac Boat Club Building in "After-hours in Georgetown in the 1890s." The present clubhouse continues the tradition by hosting a variety of activities. A newspaper article published in 1932 noted the following activities of the Potomac Boat Club: rowing, boxing, wrestling, basketball, horseshoe pitching, swimming and canoe racing ("Potomac Boat Club Has Varied Program," February 28, 1932). The Potomac Boat Club also took on canoeists when the crew of the Colonial Canoe Club, formerly of the Washington Canoe Club, transferred their affiliation in 1924 (Hazzard, n.p.) In 1933, Potomac Boat Club housed 150 private canoes, nine cedar racing canoes, and 35 shells ("Potomac Boat Club Remains Virile").

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In addition to its contributions to local recreational and social life, the Potomac Boat Club played a significant role in the history of racing in the United States by rehabilitating Charles Courtney, a legendary 19th century oarsman who later won equal fame as coach at Cornell. Courtney was a professional who rowed in the single scull match races that were so extraordinarily popular in the late 19th century. In 1880 Courtney was scheduled to meet Edward Hanlan, another professional oarsman, in a match race comparable to the World Series or Superbowl in the degree of promotion and gambling involved. Gamblers approached the favorite Courtney with a bribe to throw the race. Courtney refused and found his racing shell sawn in half the morning before the race. Using a borrowed boat, Courtney lost to the underdog Hanlan and the ensuing scandal ended rowing as a professional sport. Although he was disgraced, the Potomac Boat Club offered Courtney a job as coach, which he held from 1881-1885. During that time the Potomac Boat Club crews gained national recognition and "during the period from 1885 to 1888 ... were invincible." Cornell University then approached Courtney in 1885 about establishing a team at Cornell. Courtney served as coach at Cornell from 1885-1916 during which time Cornell crews dominated intercollegiate rowing (Koski-Karell, "Information on Charles E. Courtney"). Courtney was considered the most successful of the renowned late 19th and early 20th century coaches. One hundred one of the 146 Cornell crews Courtney coached were victorious. Cornell finished first in 14 of 24 Poughkeepsie races and never finished lower than third (Mendenhall, pp. 19-20).

Potomac Boat Club has excelled in more recent competition as well. Potomac Boat Club serves as the home of several local high school and college teams as well as a club for its adult members. While the club has been represented on every Olympic rowing team since 1948, it is perhaps most noted for Charles S. Butt, Jr., whose coaching success is comparable to that of Charles Courtney. Butt, who began coaching the Washington-Lee High School team in 1949, has won more high school competitions than any coach in United States history (Interview with Dan Koski-Karell). Described as "legendary," Butt not only directed the Washington-Lee crew to a national championship in his first year coaching, but went on to win several more national championships and five Henley Regattas. J.E.B. Stuart High School, which also trains at the Potomac Boat Club, won the Royal Henley Regatta in 1968 (Tilp, p. 29 and Heller, p. 6); Washington-Lee, the following year (Mendenhall, p. 113).

Individual club members have also met with success. A partial list of Potomac Boat Club members victories in National Association of Amateur Oarsmen National Championships follows:

1960	Senior Single Sculls	Wayne Frye
1976	Senior Single Sculls	Eric Myers
1976	Senior Pair Oared Without Cox	Blakely, Borchelt

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While Mendenhall's *A Short History of American Rowing* does not provide names of winners, the Potomac Boat Club is listed as the victor in these races as well:

Senior Pair Oared Without Cox	1963, 1967, 1968, 1969
Elite Pair Oared Shells With Cox	1967, 1968, 1969
Elite Four Oared Shells With Cox	1977
Elite Eight Oared Shells	1973
Women's Lightweight Double	1979
Henley Stewards IV Without	1975

Tony Hough and Larry Johnson of the Potomac Boat Club won a silver medal in the 1968 Olympics (Mendenhall, pp. 60-124). Thomas Horton, John Eiseman and Ken Clark were on the U.S. Olympic Canoe Team in 1948, having been the National quad double blade champions in 1947 (Tilp, p. 7).

The Potomac Boat Club building typifies the form of "second generation" boat houses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The development of Boat House Row in Philadelphia, the most intact collection of boat houses in the United States, illustrates the evolution of this form. The first boat houses were utilitarian sheds designed to shelter and store shells. These early buildings were then replaced with larger, more elaborate structures containing locker rooms and spaces, like ballrooms, to house unrelated social functions. Second generation boat houses accommodated boat storage on the first floor and social functions on the second. As in Boat House Row, which contains boat houses designed by such notable architects as Frank Furness, the Potomac Boat Club was also architect-designed.

Designed by A.B. Mullett & Company, the Potomac Boat Club was built by the Charles J. Cassidy Company at a cost of \$9000 (D.C. Building Permit No. 2665, March 10, 1908). A.B. Mullett & Company was the architectural firm of Alfred Bult Mullett (1834-1890), former Architect of the Treasury and designer of the Old Executive Office Building, and his two sons Thomas A. Mullett (1862-1935) and Frederick Mullett (d. 1924) (Withey, pp. 432-433). After the senior Mullett's death in 1890, the firm designed numerous small buildings in Washington. Thomas Mullett was responsible for the Capitol Park Hotel the Hotel Harris, and the Blue Ridge Rod and Gun Company. His entry in *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* notes that "he loved the outdoors, particularly when it was scenic."

Frame boat houses like the Potomac Boat Club are an endangered building type. Because of their materials, they are vulnerable not only to fire but to floods and ice jams. Many boat houses succumbed to obsolescence when the bicycle craze took over; others fell victim to waterfront development plans

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(Mendenhall, p. 23). It is no coincidence that Boathouse Row in Philadelphia, a National Historic Landmark, survives because of its location in the protected setting of Fairmount Park (Article by Sara Freligh).

Ice floes appear to have caused the greatest damage to Potomac Boat Club. In 1936 ice jams were particularly severe. A contemporary newspaper article noted that the floating docks were torn away and that the ice "wrecked part of the building." The club was remodelled at that time ("Potomac Boat Club Reconditioned, Ready for Use," 1936). In 1962, the club began work on the 1st story of the present addition. The \$16,000 fireproof addition replaced storage formerly located at Dempsey's Boathouse, which burned in 1961. The one-story addition featured an observation deck and was designed to accommodate a second story ("Club's New Addition Fireproof," January 19, 1962).

Despite its size, style, and materials the addition has surprisingly little impact on the original building of the Potomac Boat Club. The size and scale of the Aqueduct Bridge pier, on the west, dwarfs the more delicate frame building, particularly because it projects further out into the river than the Club. The Potomac Boat Club is less a free-standing object, than an element in a riverscape, similar to a townhouse in a urban setting. Because the 2nd floor of the addition is recessed back from the plane of the original building and because its materials and style relate more closely to the abutting townhouses than to the Potomac Boat Club, from a distance the addition appears to be part of the townhouses rather than the original boat house. Thus the original reading of the boathouse from the river and the Virginia shore line has not been greatly disrupted. Furthermore the value contrasts in the addition are so subdued that they do not challenge the pattern of solid and void, light and dark, that characterize the visual appearance of the older building.

The essential form and integrity of the Potomac Boat Club and its Craftsman style detailing remain unchanged. Because the river front and the significant interior spaces remain, the building continues to reflect its historic association with the Potomac Boat Club and with rowing as it contributes to life on the Potomac River.

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