

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

DEC 14 1990

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 Washington Canoe Club

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 3700 K Street, N.W.

not for publication N/A

city, town Washington

vicinity N/A

state District of Columbia code DC

county N/A

code 001

zip code 20007

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

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

D.C. STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

11 - 28 - 90

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

12-7-90

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

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

Patrick Andrews

3/19/91

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

SEC. 1

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

SHINGLE STYLE

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Shingle

roof Standing-seam metal

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

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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)

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1904-1939

Significant Dates

1904

1924

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not known

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

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 18 32,03,10 4,30,8|0,0,0
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Parcel 301/4

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The property occupies Parcel 301/4, the D.C. Surveyor's description of the Washington Canoe Club's improvements on Federal Reservation 404.

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 Washington Canoe Club, constructed in 1904, is an excellent example of shingle style architecture. The two-story frame building faces south onto the Potomac River and is designed to be seen from the river and opposite shoreline. The five-bay main structure is symmetrical about a central cross gable. Three-story octagonal towers frame the main block at its east and west ends. A smaller two-story addition, also shingled, extends the building to the east. Despite damage caused by numerous floods, ice jams, and Corps of Engineers' projects, the Washington Canoe Club retains its original architectural character. Primary interior spaces like the grill room, ballroom, and boardroom are virtually unchanged. The complex massing of this shingle-clad building forms an important element of the visual appearance of the District of Columbia shoreline from the Virginia bank of the Potomac.

The setting of the Washington Canoe Club is integral to its architectural significance. The building forms a sculptural element in a landscape composed of the eastern shore of the Potomac River and the wooded terrain of the C&O Canal National Park. Located upriver from Key Bridge, the free-standing building is sandwiched between the river on the south and abandoned railroad tracks on the north. The masonry pier for the demolished aqueduct bridge is approximately 100 yards downriver from the building; there are no nearby structures located upriver. The Washington Canoe Club was originally constructed on pilings in the Potomac River. Photographs taken in the 1930s show that the first floor of the front of the clubhouse was approximately 8 - 10 feet above the water line. The shoreline was then located at the northern edge of the building. A bridge, now gone, above the railroad tracks provided access from land to rear facade of the building. During the 1960s, the Corps of Engineers demolished all but the remaining pier of the Aqueduct Bridge, using the masonry as riprap along the Potomac's eastern shoreline. Because no riprap was placed under the Washington Canoe Club, the resulting embayment under the Canoe Club became stagnant and was subsequently filled with concrete. Shortly thereafter the area north of the Canoe Club was paved with concrete and now serves as the club's parking area.

The Washington Canoe Club incorporates the complex massing and continuity of surface that characterize shingle style architecture. Because of the limited visibility of the building, this expression is confined to the primary facade facing the Potomac River. The river facade displays a handsome five part composition anchored at either end by projecting octagonal towers and surmounted by a hipped roof. A projecting cross-gable marks the central axis which is further reinforced by the louvred cupola at the ridge of the roof. A balcony with a closed, shingled balustrade extends across the building emphasizing the horizontality of the overall composition and unifying the projecting elements. The diamond composition of the central, projecting pavilion is particularly sophisticated. The pavilion, which is bisected by the balcony, is surmounted by a gable with verge boards shaping an arch. A fanlight

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is centered within the arch. There are two windows on the 2nd floor located to either side of the fanlight. A door opening on the 1st floor forms the base of the diamond. A flagpole rises from the base of the gable between the gable and the verge boards, and extends well above the roofline. The building is entirely sheathed in green shingles; the present standing-seam metal roof duplicates the configuration of the original one.

In keeping with the architectural style of the building, decorative elements and openings are secondary to the unified expression of the exterior surface. This reading is strengthened by the contrast between the white paint outlining the openings and the dark surface of the building, an appearance depicted in the earliest photographs of the building. Regularly spaced openings consist of boat ports, windows, and doors on the 1st floor and windows and French doors on the 2nd. Smaller openings are used at the location of locker rooms. Both casement and double sash are used. Older sash incorporates six-over-six lights, newer work is one-over-one. Openings on the 3rd floors of the towers, originally unglazed, have been infilled with pivot windows on the west.

The west and north facades of the building are detailed as secondary elevations. With the exception of the 3rd floor, there are no openings on the west facade of the tower. Three small six-light casement windows are located on each floor of the west facade. A small dormer, which appears to have been added, is located at the center of the roof and is obscured by the tower. The rear facade is equally utilitarian in appearance. Because of the grade change, the Washington Canoe Club appears as a single-story building from the rear. Fenestration consists for the most part of six-over-six windows that light the 2nd floor of the building. An interior chimney brick projects above center of the north wall; a second brick chimney is located at the center of the building between the original building and the boat shed addition. A small rectangular tower projects from the northeast corner of the original building. This tower, which is lit by casements on the east, is covered by a hipped roof. The bridge that once spanned the railroad tracks joined the building at the upper floor of this tower. Access to the north facade is presently located at the lower floor of this tower on the level of the 2nd floor of the building. A small porch with four steps projects out from the building at this location. A smaller, two-story boat shed addition is located at the east, below the roofline of the original building. The addition is topped with a shed roof. A single door and window punctuate the 2nd floor of the addition on the east; the three windows on the north facade of the addition continue the fenestration pattern of the original building.

The Washington Canoe Club as it appears today is the result of four periods of construction. Although numerous early photographs of the club depict a two-story building framed by octagonal towers, one photograph included in the "History of the Club" shows that the east end of the building was once located

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immediately east of the central cross gable. The awkward, truncated appearance of the building in the photograph coupled with other early photographs depicting the present structure as it now exists strongly suggest that the main building was conceived as a single structure but constructed in two phases. Accordingly, the term, "original building" will be used to refer to the completed five-part composition. Later additions include the 1st floor of the boat shed to the east, constructed prior to 1930 and the 2nd floor of the boat shed, constructed after 1971.

The central hall floor plan of this rectangular building is little altered from its original configuration. Boat storage is located on the first floor to the west of the center entrance; the grill room is located to the southeast of a central hall; the kitchen is located north of the grill room. The men's locker room occupies the western end of the 2nd floor and extends in width to include the tower and the first two bays behind the balcony. The 3rd floor of the west tower, which was originally open to weather, is presently used as temporary living space for visiting coaches and paddlers. The east tower and single bay to the west house the board room; the 3rd floor of the tower is still open. The ballroom occupies the large central space between the two towers on the 2nd floor. The women's locker room is located in the north-east corner of the building between the ballroom and the addition. Both the 1st and 2nd floors of the addition are used for boat storage.

The significant interior elements of the Washington Canoe Club have changed very little over the years. The large open space of the ballroom is particularly impressive. A massive corbelled brick fireplace is located at the center of the north wall. Trophy cases and built-in benches are disposed along the walls. There is a raised band stand located within the projecting gabled bay on the south. Columns now visible in the center of the space were recently added to stabilize the building. A very early photograph of the ballroom shows that it originally had horizontal wood siding similar to that presently visible along the ceiling. The board room features dropped beams and panelled ceilings. The grill room on the 1st floor displays a noteworthy cartoon frieze depicting members of the Washington Canoe Club. Felix Mahoney, a cartoonist for the *Evening Star*, painted the frieze in the club's early days. The frieze was touched up in the 1981-1982 by Charles W. Lundmark (Commemorative citation on boardroom wall).

The Washington Canoe Club is presently in fair condition. Damage caused by successive flooding, ice jams, and engineering changes to the river have resulted in water damage to finishes and structural damage to the building. Windows and finishes have been replaced as they have deteriorated. In the 1950s, ice floes pushed the building five feet downstream but the structure

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was jacked up and returned to its original location. Despite these changes, however, the Washington Canoe Club retains its significant architectural characteristics and its ability to convey its historic associations with the Washington Canoe Club.

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The Washington Canoe Club, constructed in 1904, is one of two remaining boat clubs along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. An excellent example of shingle style architecture, the building has served as the sole home of the Washington Canoe Club, which pioneered the development of flatwater racing as an Olympic sport and which continues to play an important role in Olympic competition. The Washington Canoe Club also represents the role of athletic clubs and active sports in the District of Columbia's recreational life in the early 20th century. The Washington Canoe Club meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the shingle style. It meets Criterion A because of its association with the Olympic sport of flat water racing and because of the role it played in the social and recreational life of the District of Columbia in the early 20th century.

The historical associations represented by Washington Canoe Club are the culmination of recreational trends and attitudes rooted in the 19th century. The role of sports and recreation in American society has shifted dramatically since the country was founded. In the late 18th and early 19th century, a predominately rural society shaped by religious attitudes that frowned on personal pleasures and gratification viewed recreational activity with profound ambivalence. Furthermore, prevailing sentiment dictated that free time should be spent in cultural uplift and self-improvement. Foster Dulles stated in his history of American recreation, "the American tradition still insists that amusements should at least make some pretense of serving socially useful ends" (Dulles, pp. viii - ix). In the first half of the 19th century, as the American economy shifted from agrarian to manufacturing pursuits and as the population of urban centers expanded, the need for pastimes to relieve repetitive indoor work intensified. Industrialization spawned increased leisure time that set the stage for development of sports and recreation as we know them today.

Organized sports developed in the 1860s and 1870s and sports crazes like roller skating, croquet, polo, and cycling swept the country throughout the late 19th century. A concern for the "physical decline" of the urban population led to a shift in attitude toward sports, which then took on a practical and moral purpose. Thus participation could now be encouraged as an ideal for leisure activity. By 1890, the outdoor movement became increasingly important. Transportation improvements made the the country accessible to city dwellers who took to mountain-climbing, fishing, hunting, and camping with a vengeance (Dulles, pp. 201-202).

While boats similar to canoes and kayaks have been used since time immemorial, their recreational use in both Europe and America boomed in the late 19th century. Canoeing was popularized by John MacGregor, a Scots lawyer who toured Europe in the "Rob Roy," a 4.57 meter "canoe" (technically a kayak) of his own manufacture. During the 1860s and 1870s, MacGregor toured Europe in

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the "Rob Roy" and described his travels in a series of widely read books. In 1867 the Royal Canoe Club, founded in England in 1866, held its first flatwater race and began annual competitions in 1874 (Endicott, p.1). The New York Canoe Club was founded in 1871 (Toro, p. 2) and the American Canoe Association, the first national canoe association in the United States, in 1880 (Endicott, p. 4). Canoeing itself became a craze. Railroads ran special excursions with freight cars equipped with canoe racks (Dulles, pp. 201-202). At the turn of the century, the introduction of fold-boats, collapsible boats that could be easily stored and transported, gave further impetus to the sport.

Washington's sultry summers and its location along the Potomac made canoeing a particularly appealing activity. Of the water-based recreational organizations that once existed along the Potomac in the District, only the Washington Canoe Club and Potomac Boat Club remain. The Washington Canoe Club's founding in 1904 came close on the heels of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency in 1901. While there is no documented connection between political events and the establishment of the Washington Canoe Club, the club's early activities exemplify Teddy Roosevelt's call for the strenuous life. In August of 1904, canoeists who were members of another club joined with men interested in other athletic endeavors to organize the Washington Canoe Club. Chartered for "mutual improvement, the promotion of physical culture, and the art of canoeing" ("History of the Washington Canoe Club"), the Washington Canoe Club incorporated activities typical of athletic and country clubs of the period. The club sponsored entrants in boxing, wrestling, bowling, swimming, track, and water polo competition. Club members and teams won national and city-wide events ("Washington Canoe Club Active," Evening Star, June 25, 1933). A 1913 article in the Christian Science Monitor noted that "activities of the club are diverse. In summer excursions, cruises, regattas, lantern parades, swimming matches, and water baseball add to the usual attractions; in the winter ladies' nights, dances, receptions, minstrel shows and theater parties serve to keep the membership interested" (Washington Canoe Club Log, March 1938). In its earlier days the club sponsored the first public appearance of La Cantori Napolitani, and minstrel shows entitled "In Japan" and "In Africa with Roosevelt" (Vertical file, Washingtoniana Division).

In a pattern typical of country clubs and athletic clubs of the late 19th and early 20th century, the Washington Canoe Club not only provided activities to fill increased leisure time, it also helped set standards for competition in amateur sport. The Washington Canoe Club is particularly significant for its role in the development of flatwater canoe racing in Olympic competition. At the time the Washington Canoe Club was founded, competition within various countries was well-developed but there was no official international standard. In 1923 an international federation was formed to set dates for regattas and codify classes of boats. Standards for racing class canoes and kayaks were

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then set as single, double, and four-man kayaks (K-1, K-2, and K-4) and single and double Canadian canoes (C-1 and C-4). The international organization succeeded in placing flatwater canoeing in the 1924 Paris Olympics as a demonstration sport, the preliminary step leading to full Olympic status. The Washington Canoe Club prevailed in national competition to represent the United States. Their team, composed of J.F. Larcombe, K.M. Knight, C.W. Havens, and H.T. Knight, won all the double blade races at the Paris Olympics.

A report in the U.S. Olympic Association's 1924 yearbook offers an account of the Washington Canoe Club's role:

information was received that the American Canoe Association would also hold elimination contests to select eight men to represent this country in the "Exhibition of the Canadian Canoe." ... With this in mind the Washington Canoe Club, which has always been interested in, and has bent every effort to foster canoe racing entered most enthusiastically in the proposition, and saw nothing better for its men than to send its best crew to Paris, which along with the eight men that the American Canoe Association planned to send would give America a good representation. The Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia sanctioned our entry as the official representatives of the City of Washington. ... The Washington Canoe Club, competing under the colors of the United States, won every double-blade event and scored second to the Canadians in the four single blade, the Canadians winning by a very small margin. ... In H.T. Knight, Jr., K.M. Knight, C.W. Havens and J.F. Larcombe, Washington Canoe Club, upheld Uncle Sam's established prestige in the world of sports and showed the International Olympic Committee that if the canoe racing is placed on the regular program of events that the United States will be able to place a crew on the water that will add to his glory (Toro, pp. 229-233).

Because only six countries could field teams, flatwater racing did not become an Olympic sport until 1936, by which time the international federation had assisted in developing teams in other nations (Toro, pp. 3-5).

Washington Canoe Club's 1924 Olympic team is not the only one to receive national and international recognition. In the first half of the 20th century, clubs played a more direct role in Olympic competition since Olympic teams were determined by national races among clubs with the winning club representing the United States — not composed of individuals brought together for the specific purpose of Olympic training as they are today. The east coast has traditionally been a stronghold for flatwater racing, with whitewater racing concentrated in the west. As the southernmost of the east coast canoe clubs, the Washington Canoe Club enjoyed a longer training season than their

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more northerly counterparts. Washington Canoe Club members have participated in every U.S. Olympic contingent but the one chosen in 1936. The club has produced numerous national champions and Olympic medal winners. A partial list, compiled from undated newspaper articles and photographs in Washington Canoe Club scrapbooks, is included below:

National Tandem Singles Champions - 1936 - Harry Knight, Richard Ackad
National Champion Double Blade - 1946 - H. Vollmer, E. Trilling, W. Havens, Jr., W. Rhodes
Olympic Silver Medal, 1948 - Frank Havens
Olympic Gold Medal, 10,000 meter single blade - 1952 - Frank Havens
National Champion Lady K-1 - 1960-61 - Gloriane Perrier
National Champion Sr. C-1 - 1961 - Frank Havens

The Washington Canoe Club double-blade four was undefeated for six years during the 1920s (Dacy, p.393). The club is presently designated a "Center of Excellence" by the U.S. Olympic Committee. Olympic hopefuls train at the facility and the club enjoys equipment lent by the committee.

The building housing the Washington Canoe Club is as distinguished as the club itself. Despite its sophisticated design, there is no record of the Washington Canoe Club's architect or construction. Because the building originally sat in the river, it is possible that no building permit was obtained or that the original building permit was lost because it could not be easily filed without a lot and block or federal reservation number. Club tradition holds that the clubhouse was built by the members using salvaged timbers and wood from burned barns. Jack Brosius, the present president, states that timbers he has seen bear out this tradition. Accounts of funds available suggest that donated time and materials would have played an important role in construction. Both Cleve Skinker and Ray Garrett of Skinker and Garrett Construction were early members of the club; Ray Garrett is listed as its first commodore ("History of the Washington Canoe Club"). Either man may have provided the link to the architect who undoubtedly designed the building.

The club was constructed in two phases. The first phase extended from the present west wall of the building to the east wall of the ballroom, one bay east of the gabled pavilion. "The History of the Washington Canoe Club," a 50th anniversary pamphlet, contains a photograph of the building depicting only the first phase completed. The unfinished appearance of the composition leaves little doubt that the building was designed as a single entity. The pamphlet dates the photograph to 1913; a photograph in the Sunday Star shows that the building exhibited its present appearance by 191- (Vertical File). Of the numerous early photographs of the club, only the one in the pamphlet depicts the club after the first phase of construction.

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Old photographs show that with the exception of the boat shed addition, the building is little changed. Originally the east facade extended the complex massing of the building around its southeast corner. A pavilion projected from the east wall at the northeast corner of the building and the 2nd floor balcony extended from the east tower to the pavilion in a fashion similar to the river facade. The pavilion, which is still visible, was surmounted by a hipped roof. A bridge, now gone, extended north from the upper floor of the pavilion to the C&O levee above the railroad tracks.

The Washington Canoe Club is one of the finest examples of shingle style architecture in Washington. Because of its location, design, and setting it incorporates characteristics of the style that are absent from other similar buildings. Conventional city lots do not permit the sweeping horizontality that is such a distinctive part of the Washington Canoe Club's appearance. The building's natural setting forms an ideal backdrop for its stylistic expression. Most importantly, the complex massing and continuity of exterior surface that are hallmarks of the shingle style are emphasized by the controlled visibility of the building. From the opposite bank of the river, the sculpted quality of the building's mass composed of twin towers, central cross gable, prominent porches, and hipped roof, is strikingly apparent. This reading is enhanced by the contrast between the white framing of the openings and the dark color of the building which further subsumes details to the whole.

While the building has been altered, it retains its historic architectural character. The Washington Canoe Club's handsome composition, use of materials, prismatic volume, and continuity of surface are still readily apparent despite later changes. Because the addition has been present throughout much of the period of significance and because it harmonizes with the older building, it does not affect the essential form and integrity of the Washington Canoe Club. The addition incorporates the materials of the older building and complements its architectural expression. As with the main block, the mass and continuity of exterior surface take precedence over detail and ornament. Because of its lower height and simple massing, the addition is clearly secondary to the older building. The white horizontal band above the 1st floor of the addition extends the line of the balcony rail of the older building, reinforcing the horizontality of the original composition. Thus the Washington Canoe Club retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic associations. The building still serves its original purpose and is occupied by the organization through which it gained its historic significance.

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Birchfield, James. "Canoe Club Threatened." *Evening Star*, November 5, 1971.

D.C. Building Permits (National Archives)

"D.C. Canoe Club Victor." *Washington Post*, June 27, 1938.

D.C. City Directories (Washingtoniana Collection).

Dacy, George. "Paddle Your Own Canoe." *Hygeia*, August 1927, pp. 391-393.

Endicott, William T. *The River Masters: A History of the World Championships of Whitewater Canoeing*. Washington, D.C.: William T. Endicott, 1979. (Library of Congress)

"50th Anniversary of the Washington Canoe Club: 1904-1954." Washington, D.C.: Washington Canoe Club, 1954 (Washingtoniana Collection).

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Hazzard, Jack. "D.C. Is the Canoeing Capital, Too." *Washington Post*, June 5, 1956.

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Interviews with Jack Brosius, president of the Washington Canoe Club, August and September 1989.

Koski-Karell, Daniel. "Archeological Assessment of the Washington Canoe Club," September 15, 1989. (D.C. Historic Preservation Office)

Krout, John Allen. *Annals of American Sport*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929.

The Log of the Washington Canoe Club, 1936 - 1957 (Washingtoniana Collection).

Lucas, John A. and Ronald A. Smith. *Saga of American Sport*. Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1978.

McCullough, David. *Mornings on Horseback*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981.

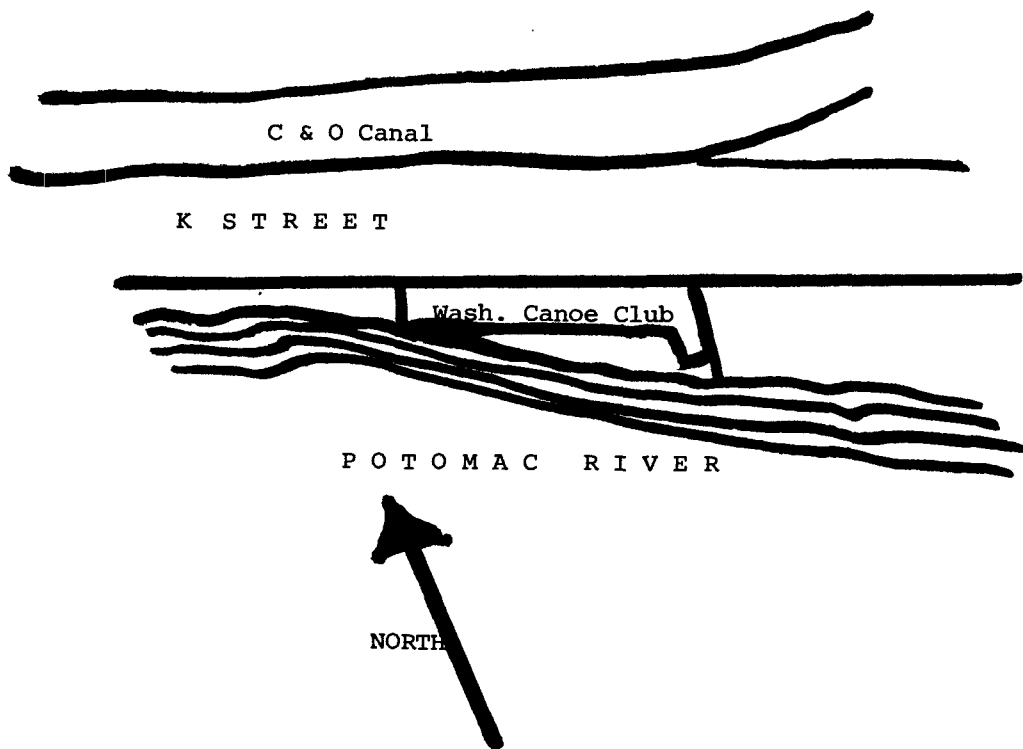
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PARCEL No. 301/4
(Less than one acre)

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Sanborn Maps (Library of Congress)

Scrapbooks (Washington Canoe Club)

Toro, Andras. *Canoeing: An Olympic Sport*. San Francisco: Olympian Graphics, 1986. (The United States Canoe and Kayak Association, Indianapolis, Indiana)

Vertical Files (Columbia Historical Society, Peabody Collection, Washingtoniana Collection)

"Washington Canoe Club Active Making History in Many Lines of Sport Here Since Early 90s." *Evening Star*, June 25, 1933.

Werner, Constance W. *Georgetown Historic Waterfront: A Review of Canal and Riverside Architecture*. Washington: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1968. (Washingtoniana Collection)