



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park

16 S. Williams St.

Dayton, Ohio 45409

September 23, 2021

City of Dayton
Landmarks Commission
101 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45402

Re: Demolition of the Gem City Ice Cream Building

The Gem City Ice Cream building, 1005 West 3rd St., is currently before the Landmarks Commission for approval of demolition. I am writing to provide additional information related to the Wright Brothers' occupation of the building site as it relates to the role the building plays in the West 3rd Street Historic District.

As you know, the West Third Street Historic District is a historic, designed landscape occupying 10.1 acres along Third Street. Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park manages five structures within the district including the Setzer Building owned by Aviation Trail Inc. which is now a modern building with the historic façade intact. The district, composed of two- and three-story brick buildings of varying architectural styles, is characterized as a suburban streetcar commercial block with a period of significance from 1885 to 1924. Visitors can observe examples and elements of architectural styles including Romanesque Revival, Italianate, and Classical Revival, among others.

The Wright Brothers occupied a previous structure on the Gem City site in 1892 for approximately 6 months in order to operate their first bicycle shop. This was at an early stage of their career and well before they became involved in the invention of controlled, powered flight. Little, if any, of the structure they occupied is extant.

The Gem City Building is a contributing structure in the West 3rd Street Historic District and would have been a familiar part of the landscape in which Orville and Wilbur Wright continued to live, and travel to work, in the West 3rd Street area for the following five decades, respectively. The Gem City Ice Cream Building anchors the northeast corner of the Historic District and is likely more historically important for its association with the Gem City Ice Cream Company than its association with the Wright Brothers.

The National Park Service (NPS) includes the Gem City Ice Cream Building as a stop on guided historical tours of the Historic District. Similar to the approach taken with the Setzer Building, maintaining at least the façade of the building would continue to support NPS educational operations.

Sincerely,

Kendell Thompson
Superintendent, Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park