# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

## INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

### NAME

**HISTORIC**

Kirby, James, Mill

**AND/OR COMMON**

### LOCATION

**STREET & NUMBER**

Camp Julia Crowell

Route 303

**CITY, TOWN**

Richfield

**STATE**

Ohio

**CODE**

035

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

22 - Charles A. Vanik

**COUNTY**

Summit

**CODE**

153

### CLASSIFICATION

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER

### OWNER OF PROPERTY

**NAME**

Lake Erie Girl Scout Council

**STREET & NUMBER**

1001 Huron Road

**CITY, TOWN**

Cleveland

**STATE**

Ohio

**CODE**

44115

### LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**

Summit County Courthouse

**STREET & NUMBER**

72 S. High Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Akron

**STATE**

Ohio

**CODE**

44308

### REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE**

**DATE**

**FEDERAL**

**STATE**

**COUNTY**

**LOCAL**

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

**CITY, TOWN**

**STATE**
The mill is wood frame, measuring 22 by 24 feet. It has a gable roof with wide eaves, exposed rafters, and cross-bracing in the end gables. The gables also have board and batten siding, which becomes horizontal lap siding below the eave line. The wheel, with spokes and rims of cypress and water buckets of oak, rests on ball bearings. This allows the water wheel's operation under the slightest pressure. An exterior staircase leads to a lower shed-roof porch. The random ashlar of the exposed foundation and dam is also used in a nearby sundial.

The interior of the mill is intact. It has vertical boarded wainscoting and stained wooden trim.
The James Kirby Mill is the hand-built design of the famous American engineer and inventor, James Kirby (1885-1971). It contained the workshop where many of his inventions were conceived, and the first water wheel mounted on ball bearings.

Kirby purchased the farm in 1919 from descendants of Heman Oviatt, an early settler in Richfield Township. From timber cut on the site, Kirby built the mill for his workshop and supervised a local millwright, Mr. Pardee, in the construction of the overshot water wheel for the generation of electricity for the farm.

Kirby was best known for his invention of the vacuum cleaner, the wringerless washing machine, a dishwashing machine, an electric radiator, shock absorbers, ironing machines, window washers, radio conductors, and a dry cleaning machine. Kirby held more than two hundred patents, and many of his inventions were developed in the mill. In 1936, Lowell Thomas wrote a booklet on Kirby's career, in which he called Kirby "the man who revolutionized the American home."

Thomas described the mill as follows:

"When the house was first built there was no electric service. Kirby constructed a rustic mill house with a water wheel to generate the juice. It was the first of its kind. Mounted on ball bearings, it is so sensitive that a mere trickle of water is enough to generate all the current he needed for his house and all the outbuildings. Since the wheel was installed the community has been electrified. The mill house serves today as Mr. Kirby's workshop."

The Kirby property was purchased by the Lake Erie Girl Scout Council in 1973 and is used for educational and social functions.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Beautiful Ohio, Ohio Department of Economic and Commercial Development, Pam.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME West Richfield

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
A 4,174 4,431 1,110
B 4,561 4,810

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C
D

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
E
F

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
G
H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The nominated property is located on the stream at the south end of the lower lake at Camp Julia Crowell, 400 feet north of State Route 303, and is 100 feet by 100 feet.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
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FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Eric Johannesen, Preservationist

ORGANIZATION
Western Reserve Historical Society

DATE
March 1978

STREET & NUMBER
10825 East Boulevard

TELEPHONE
216-721-5722

CITY OR TOWN
Cleveland

STATE
Ohio

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

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
State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 1/3/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION
January 17, 1979

Ms. Clare Dowdall  
Program Services Director  
Lake Erie Girl Scout Council  
1001 Huron Road  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Dear Ms. Dowdall:

I am pleased to inform you that the James Kirby Mill, Camp Julia Crowell, Richfield, has been entered in the National Register of Historic Places by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, United States Department of the Interior.

The nomination was made in connection with a state plan to identify and document prehistoric and historic places in Ohio which qualify for National Register status under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. All nominations are approved by the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board.

Enclosed is information explaining the purposes and goals of the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,  

Thomas H. Smith  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Director, Ohio Historical Society

THS: cw

X. c: Eric Johannesen, Regional Preservationist  
NEFCO  
Mayor of Richfield
National Register of Historic Places File Checklist

The following materials are contained in this file of the National Register form for:

Name: Kirby, James, Mill
County: Summit

☑ Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form
☐ Multiple Property Nomination form
☑ Photograph(s)
☑ Photograph(s) (copies)
☐ USGS map(s)
☑ USGS map(s) (copies)
☐ Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
☑ Correspondence

☐ Other

CES: 9/01