

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Alton Club

other name/site number Presley, Jerry J., Conservation Education Center

2. Location

street & town On a gravel road 1.5 miles west of Hwy 19 and 12 Mi. N. of Eminence N/A not for publication

city or town Eminence X vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Shannon code 203 zip code 65560

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles 26 Aug 05
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ 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:) _____

Alton Club
Name of Property

Shannon County, MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☐ public-local
☒ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
14	3	buildings
3	1	sites
6	0	structures
0	0	objects
23	4	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/camp
Recreation and Culture/outdoor recreation

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/camp
Recreation and Culture/outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Rustic

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Wood/weatherboard

roof Asphalt
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Alton Club
Name of Property

Shannon County, MO
County and State

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1937-1955

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other Name of repository: _____

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

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Shannon County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 35

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 6/3/8/6/4/0 4/1/3/2/4/4/0
Zone Easting Northing

2 1/5 6/3/8/7/8/0 4/1/3/2/0/2/0
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/5 6/3/8/7/8/0 4/1/3/1/4/1/0
Zone Easting Northing

4 1/5 6/3/8/1/9/0 4/1/3/1/2/8/0
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathryn S. Love

organization Friends of Alton Club date December 13, 2004

street & number 1028 Boonville Road. telephone 573-636-7013

city or town Jefferson City state MO zip code 65109

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title Missouri Department of Conservation

street & number 2901 W. Truman Blvd. telephone 573-751-4115

city or town Jefferson City state MO zip code 65109

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Alton Club
Shannon County, Missouri

Summary Paragraph:

Constructed c. 1937-1945, the Alton Club, near Eminence, Shannon County, Missouri, was used as a summer retreat by the employees and customers of the Alton Box Board Company. The camp, on the banks of the Current River, includes lodging, recreation facilities and utility buildings. The 27 resources on the property are within a 35 acre developed area. They reflect rustic design elements made popular by the National Park Service and Civilian Conservation Corp in the early part of the 20th Century. The use of native materials for the stone foundations and wood siding is reflective of the rustic movement. In addition to the buildings, the district includes sports and recreation venues in the form of man made lakes, a skeet shooting range, tennis court, and over 1,000 acres of undeveloped land for hiking, hunting and fishing. Of the 27 resources in the district, 23 contribute to its historic character. Contributing resources include 14 buildings, 6 structures and 3 sites. There are also 4 non-contributing resources including a lake constructed in the mid-1970s, a modern wellhouse, a log outhouse constructed in 2001, and a heavily modified barn. Though some of the resources have been modified and new structures introduced the rural character and majority of historic features have been maintained. Overall, the district has a high degree of integrity and reflects its historic function as a rural private resort.

Elaboration:

Setting:

The complex overlooks the Current River, one of the first designated Wild and Scenic Rivers in the nation. In 1964, a scenic easement was granted to the complex by the National Park Service, which manages the Current River as part of Ozark National Scenic Riverways, to allow the complex to remain in private ownership while protecting the scenic and historical integrity of the complex. The buildings are constructed of indigenous materials on a steep hillside overlooking the river. The locale is remote but receives heavy tourist visitation during the summer, primarily floaters who come to enjoy the Current River. Shannon County is dominated by rugged, forested hills punctuated by large springs which feed into clear, fast-flowing creeks and rivers.

Individual Resource Descriptions:

The following resources were surveyed by Becky Snider, Ph.D, for her report, "*Jerry J. Presley Conservation Education Center (former Alton Club) Shannon County, Missouri, Historical and Descriptive Data*," prepared for the Missouri Department of Conservation. The text has been edited and adapted for this nomination for brevity and to note the contributing or non-contributing status of each resource.

The Jerry J. Presley Conservation Education Center is an educational retreat comprised of 1,565 acres and a complex of historic buildings and structures.

Twenty-three (23) buildings and structures were identified on the property as historic resources associated with the former Alton Club. These resources are clustered together in an improved area of the property which is located along the east bank of the Current River and around the Lower Lake.

The historic resources identified in the survey of the Presley Center property are of three types:

1. buildings and structures used for educational and recreational activities and for lodging,
2. buildings used for utility purposes,

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3. landscape-related structures.

All of the buildings and structures are rustic in appearance. With the exception of the additions to the Main Lodge, all of the buildings have rubble stone and concrete foundations and are sheathed with weatherboard siding. The buildings are simple in design with little or no decorative embellishments.

Descriptions of each resource follow.

1. **Alton Club Site, c. 1937—Contributing site**

The improved portion of the 1,565 acre property is counted as a contributing site. The site includes the grounds around the contributing buildings and structures and numerous landscape features that contribute to the rustic feel of this once private resort. The improved portion encompasses roughly 35 acres. Improvements that contribute to the overall site include stone paths and retaining walls. Retaining walls are constructed with native stone and can be found around the buildings as well as along the man-made lake. The retaining walls were constructed to reinforce the hillsides which were cut away to construct buildings on the site and paths between the buildings. Stonework provides a decorative element as well as functional, such as the remains of a wishing well 300' north of the Entrance Columns, and fireplaces and walls that are embellished with cave formations.

2. **Main Lodge, ca. 1938, additions ca. 1985—Contributing building**

The Main Lodge is a large, one-story, frame building with side-facing asphalt shingle gable roof. The original building and additions are covered in weatherboard siding sealed with a creosote stain. It is likely that some of the siding was replaced when the additions were constructed in the 1980s.¹ Although the siding isn't original, it is wood and retains the rustic feel of the original design. Because the building is constructed into a hill, the rubble stone foundation of the original portion of the building is exposed on the west side. In the 1980s, the kitchen, dining area and sleeping rooms were expanded. These later additions have concrete block foundations. Windows are a mix of multi-paned casement windows in the original sections and aluminum sliding windows in the renovated sleeping areas. There are two screened porches on the west and south sides that appear to be original or early additions. The interior of the building contains a living room, two dining areas, a large kitchen, office, 7 sleeping rooms and 6 ½ baths. The living room, with its wood paneling and wood flooring, appears to be the only portion of the lodge to retain its original interior finishes. The original stone fireplace, with stalagmites included in the stonework, is also still in place. Newer and remodeled areas have new finishes such as drywall, carpet and linoleum floors with hollow core doors. These interior areas were changed to comply with fire codes. The modifications make no attempt to fit in with the rustic appearance of the rest of the lodge.

There is a walkout basement, used as a wood shop and for storage, under the living room and front screened porch. There is also a large concrete patio in front of the lodge with steps leading to the parking area and to the building. Stone and concrete retaining walls, sidewalks and steps are located around the building.

The main lodge has always been the center of activity for the Alton Club. The sleeping area on the south end (now divided into private rooms), was once a dormitory for male guests. In addition to sleeping, the

¹ Personal Interview with Lee Howard, May 27, 2004.

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building was also the main dining area and had rooms for relaxing. According to Bill Hoagland, former Alton Box Board employee and guest, card playing and listening to music on the jukebox were common activities.

3. Classroom (formerly known as the Pool Hall) ca. 1940—Contributing building

Constructed, c. 1940, the classroom building originally served as the club's game room/pool hall and is located about 30' south of the Main Lodge. The 20 X 30' frame building has a north/south facing gable roof and is covered in creosote stained weatherboard. Because the building is constructed into a hill, the rubble stone foundation is exposed on the west side. The single entrance is on the north, gable, end and a stone chimney is located on the south wall. The entrance is flanked by multi-paned casement windows topped by shed-roofed awnings. The west wall has two casement windows for light and a shed roof addition runs along the east elevation.

The interior has been updated with a varnished plywood ceiling and walls and indoor/outdoor carpet. The fireplace has been enclosed. The electrical system has been upgraded in the last 20 years, and the overall condition of the building is good.

The classroom originally served as a pool hall/game room for the Alton Club. The pool table that was originally located in this building is now in the gymnasium. The building was probably constructed in the late 1930s shortly after the Main Lodge was built.

4. Lower Dorm, ca. 1940—Contributing building

The Lower Dorm, formerly known as the "Hen House," is an 18'-6" wide x 90'-0" long, rectangular, frame building with a north/south facing gable roof. It is located approximately 100 feet south of the Main Lodge. Orinally built to house female guests, the building is set into the hillside and has a stone and concrete foundation. On the west side of the building, the foundation is entirely above ground. A large stone chimney is centered in the north elevation with the main entrance just to the west. The main entrance door is early or original and has three vertical panes of glass and three horizontal wood panels in the bottom half. The west elevation features two groupings of 3/1 double-hung windows, a grouping of fifteen 3/1 windows and an emergency exit. The emergency exit opens onto a modern wood deck and staircase and has a modern steel slab door. On the south elevation, there are four fixed sash windows set into a single opening. Windows on the east elevation have four-light casements with two windows in each sleeping room.

The lower dorm has six, double sleeping rooms, a large community bathroom and a small half-bath. With the exception of the northernmost room, which was originally a sitting room and has a stone fireplace in it, all of the sleeping rooms are very similar. The rooms have two small closet nooks and double doors opening onto the hallway that runs along the west side of the building. The rooms have hardwood floors, paper board walls and vinyl flooring. Other than the updating of the bathrooms and electrical system and the addition of the emergency exit, there have been no significant changes to the Lower Dorm.

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5. Gymnasium, ca. 1940—Contributing building

Built c. 1940² and measuring 40' wide and 90' long, the Gymnasium is located approximately 200 feet north of the Main Lodge. The building is set on a concrete and stone foundation and is built into the hillside. A concrete trench has been built around the building on the east side to direct water around the building. The foundations of the north and south elevations are partially exposed, and the west side is entirely exposed by the hillside that terraces down towards the lake. The exposed foundations provides for a walk-out basement with entrances on the south and west elevations. The building is sheathed with creosote-stained weatherboards that are original, though deteriorated. The Gymnasium has a lamella roof which is a reticulated barrel vault roof composed of a network of diamond-shaped framing sections covered with sheathing and asphalt roofing.³ There are twenty, early or original fifteen-light, top-hinged windows on each of the east and west elevations. The only entrance to the gymnasium is located on the east end of the south elevation and is sheltered by a small gabled, wood awning.

The interior of the Gymnasium is one large room. It has oak, tongue-and-groove, hardwood floors. This flooring material also covers the north and south walls. The east and west walls are covered with tongue-and-groove knotty pine paneling. The diamond-patterned roof structure is exposed on the interior of the Gymnasium. The Gymnasium has a basketball goal at the north end, a volleyball/badminton net, and an automatic bowling pinsetter. The pool-table, which was originally housed in the classroom (pool hall) is now located in the Gymnasium. The gymnasium is in fair condition, but is suffering from deferred maintenance and neglect. Though some historic materials need to be replaced because of deterioration, the building as a whole retains a high degree of integrity.

6. Barbeque House, ca. 1940—Contributing building

The Barbeque House is a 20' wide and 40' long screened enclosure located approximately sixty feet northwest of the Main Lodge. It sits on a full basement with stone and concrete foundation walls. The foundation walls are exposed on the north, south and west elevations. The building has a hipped roof with a smaller hipped roof running across the ridge. The Barbeque House has a post and beam wall and roof structure. The walls are framed with 6" x 6" posts, the main beam is 9" x 9" and the cross beams are 6" x 9". On the south, west and east elevations, the lower sections of the walls are framed with 2' x 6" lumber set on the diagonal on 4" centers. The upper portion of the walls is open between the support posts. Metal screening covers both the lower and upper portions of the walls. The north elevation has weatherboard siding on the lower portion and screening in the upper portion. There is also a stone chimney in the center of the north elevation. Entrance into the building is via a screened door on the south end of the east elevation. There is also a door into the basement on the south end of the building. The interior of the Barbeque House consists of an open-air room with a large stone grill built into the north end of the building. The wood-burning grill, which is centered on the north

² According to Bill Hoagland, the Gymnasium was particularly used for kid's activities during inclement weather. According to Junior Blake, the Gymnasium was already in place by the time he worked there in the early 1940s. Telephone interview with Bill Hoagland, June 30, 2004; telephone interview with Junior Blake, June 30, 2004.

³ The lamella roof design was patented in 1925 by Gustel R. Kiewitt, a St. Louis architect. (Ward Bucher, (ed.), Dictionary of Building Preservation. (New York: Preservation Press and John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1996), p. 263.)

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wall, has cave formations laid in with the stone. It is flanked by a built-in sink and built-in cabinet.

7. Lake House, ca. 1940 – Contributing Building

The Lake House is an approximately 15 feet by 15 feet screened enclosure built on piers over the lower lake, about 300 feet north of the Current River. A wooden walkway of about 50 feet leads from west shore to the Lake House. It has a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The interior walls, ceiling and floor are finished oak. It retains its original furnishings, consisting of handmade oak chairs and a settee with hickory bark seats. It was originally used to gain access to the lake for swimming, fishing or rowing, or for card-playing and relaxing.

8. Storage Building #1 (formerly called the Laundry), ca. 1940—Contributing building

Originally used as a laundry,⁴ Storage Building #1 is a small, rectangular, frame building, which is located approximately 30' north of the Main Lodge and 7' east of the Laundry Building. The one-story building, which is approximately 19' wide and 28' long, has a concrete and stone foundation, creosote stained weatherboard siding and a side-facing asphalt shingle gable roof. Storage Building #1 is partially built into the hillside on the east and south sides. There are entrances on the west and north elevations, both of which consist of 5 panel wood doors. There are two equally-spaced window openings on the east elevation. One is filled with a top-hinged, six-light wood sash; the other has been in-filled with plywood to accommodate a window air conditioner. The interior is unfinished with a concrete floor.

9. Laundry Building (formerly called the Pump House or Well & Generator House), ca. 1940—Contributing building

The Laundry Building is a small, rectangular frame building, which is located approximately 30' north of the Main Lodge and 7' west of Storage Building #1. The one-story building, which is approximately 10' wide and 24' long, has a concrete and stone foundation, creosote stained weatherboard sheathing and a side-facing asphalt shingle gable roof. The entrance is located near the south corner of the west elevation and shares the façade with two windows. The doorway is filled with an original 5-panel door. There are two windows on the east elevation and one window centered on the north elevation. The south elevation, which is partially built into the hillside, has a single centered window. Each window on the Laundry Building has a top-hinged, six-light sash.

The interior is partially finished with drywall and the south end of the concrete slab is covered with low pile carpet. There is a sleeping area on the finished end and a laundry on the north end. The building, according to former club manager Dale Davidsmeyer, housed the original well pump and electric generators. The generators were removed in the 1950s and a new well was dug in the 1970s after the well was contaminated by leaking fuel.

10. Storage Building #2, ca. 1940—Contributing building

Storage Building #2 is a small, square, frame building, which is located approximately 15' northeast of the Main Lodge. Measuring 14' wide and 15' long, the one-story building has a concrete and stone foundation, creosote stained weatherboard sheathing and a front-facing asphalt shingle gable roof. Three concrete steps lead up to the entrance to the building, which is centered on the west elevation. A

⁴ Interview with Maudalean George, July 1, 2004.

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six-light wood sash window is centered in the west gable end. Storage Building #2 may have been constructed on the foundation of an earlier building or another building was located next to this building. The foundation of the building extends approximately 10' to the north as does a stone and concrete retaining wall. There is also a set of concrete steps just north of the foundation extension. The interior has some wood shelves, but is basically unfinished. The building appears to have always been used for storage and appears to be in good condition.

11. Cottage (formerly called the Pump House) ca. 1940.—Contributing building

The Cottage is a small, frame building with a front-facing asphalt shingle gable roof, a stone and concrete foundation, and creosote stained weatherboard siding. The building, which is 9' wide and 11' long, is located approximately 300' southwest of the Main Lodge and approximately 30' from the Current River. The only entrance into the Cottage is through a door centered on the building's west elevation. Each of the other elevations has one window. The window opening on the east elevation is filled with a leaded art glass window. The windows on the north and south elevation have hinged, multi-light wood sash. Originally the pump house, the building was converted to sleeping quarters sometime in the past 10 years. However, an infestation of brown recluse spiders has made it unsuitable for accommodations.⁵ It is in good condition and retains historic integrity.

12. Cellar #1, ca. 1940—Contributing structure

Cellar #1 is a low concrete building located approximately 20' east of the Main Lodge. It is built into the hillside with a short, 3 foot, entrance on the west side. The building has a wood floor at ground level and a lower level beneath that floor. Cellar #1 was used as a root cellar and later as cold storage for beer.⁶ It is in fair condition.

13. Cellar #2, ca. 1940—Contributing structure

Cellar #2 is a concrete building which is located approximately 8' east of the Main Lodge. There is a door into the building on the north elevation. Cellar #2 was probably used originally as an icehouse or root cellar and later for storage.⁷

14. Outhouse, ca. 1940—Contributing building

The Outhouse is a very small frame building with a shed roof and weatherboard siding. It is located approximately 20' east of the Gymnasium. There is a door on the west elevation.

15 Lower Lake, ca. 1940—Contributing site

The Lower Lake is located to the east of the main service road on the Presley Center property and it is approximately 300' north of the Current River. The main service road wraps around the Lower Lake and crosses over a stone and concrete spillway constructed to control the water level of the lake. The Lower Lake is a man-made lake approximately 4 acres in size and up to 12 feet in depth. A stone and concrete retaining wall with a sidewalk and pipe railing form the border of the lake on the east and south sides. A

⁵ Interview with Lee Howard, May 27-28, 2004.

⁶ Interview with Dale Davidsmeyer, July 5, 2004.

⁷ Ibid.

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small lake house (described above) is located on the south end of the lake. The Lower Lake was used for fishing, swimming and boating.

16. Composting Toilet, 2001—Non-contributing building

There is a very small log outhouse with a composting toilet. It was constructed in 2001.

17. Spillway, ca. 1940—Contributing structure

The Spillway is a concrete and stone structure, which extends approximately 150' from the access road to the Current River. The side walls of the spillway are stone and the bottom is concrete. The concrete decking is probably a modern alteration. The Spillway serves to prevent the flooding of the Lower Lake. Overflow from the lake flows into the spillway and down to the Current River.

18. Tennis Court, ca 1940—Contributing structure

The Tennis Court is located approximately one-half mile west of the Main Lodge. The court measures 120' long and 60' wide. The Tennis Court is surrounded by chain-link fencing supported by wood posts. The asphalt tennis court surface is badly deteriorated.⁸

19. Skeet Range, ca. 1940—1 Contributing site

The Skeet Range consists of three small frame buildings with weatherboard siding and shed roofs. The three buildings are located approximately one-half mile west of the Main Lodge. The buildings are arranged in a semicircle and are connected by concrete paths and are roughly 6' X 6". There are shooting stations with small wood stands along the sidewalk between the buildings. The largest of the three buildings is located on the southwest side of the range. It is two stories tall with a small ladder that leads up to the second floor door on the south elevation. The two smaller buildings have top-hinged doors on their front elevations to accommodate the skeet equipment. The skeet equipment is still in place in all three buildings.⁹

20. Building Foundation, ca. 1937—Contributing structure

The Building Foundation is a stone and concrete slab located approximately one mile west of the Main Lodge. The foundation is what is left of the sawmill (later used as a storage building) used to mill the lumber for the club buildings and structures. The service road circles this 20' X 30' foundation and the area around it is used for parking and canoe storage. The foundation is now covered with foliage.¹⁰

⁸ Bill Hoagland, a longtime guest of the Alton Club, remembers tennis as one of the many activities available to Alton Club guests. Telephone interview, June 30, 2004.

⁹ Bill Hoagland, a longtime guest of the Alton Club, remembers skeet shooting as one of the many activities available to Alton Club guests. Telephone interview, Jun 30, 2004.

¹⁰ The building was shown in an aerial photo of the Alton Club that appeared in a publication entitled Plan for the Preservation and Development of Recreational Resources on the Current River published in 1956 by the Missouri Division of Resources and Development. According to Dale Davidsmeyer, a former manager of the property, the building was demolished in the late 1970s.

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21. Manager's Residence, ca. 1945--Contributing building

The Manager's Residence is a one-story frame house with a stone and concrete foundation, weatherboard siding, and a side-facing, gabled roof. The house has a full-width, shed-roofed front porch that is screened and partially filled in to accommodate an extra bedroom. Entrance to the front of the house is via a door on the south elevation of the porch. The bedroom has 6, 6/6 double-hung windows across the front one 6/6 window on north elevation, that corresponds with the screened sections on the rest of the porch. The north elevation has two equally spaced, 1/1 windows. There are 3 windows, one with a 1/1 double-hung sash, and paired 3/1 sash windows on the south elevation. The south side also has a door leading into one of the two, c. 1980s, rear additions. The two gable-roofed, rear additions are frame construction.¹¹

The Manager's Residence has three bedrooms (including the converted porch room), one bath, a living room, a kitchen/breakfast room, and a utility room. The original kitchen cabinets are still in place. Window and door trim throughout the house is plain. The kitchen and bathroom have vinyl flooring; the bedrooms and living room are carpeted.

22. Manager's Garage, ca. 1945—Contributing building¹²

The Manager's Garage is a two-story, frame building with a gable roof, weatherboard siding and a stone and concrete foundation. It is located approximately 30' north of the Manager's Residence. The Garage faces west and is built into the hillside. Because of this, only the second floor is above ground on the west elevation. A door leading into the unfinished second floor is the only opening on this side. The east elevation features three open garage bays on the first floor, and two, six-light, side-hinged windows on the second. The south and center garage bays are separated by a low stone and concrete wall. The northernmost garage bay appears to be an addition. It has a shed roof and is separated from the center bay by a stone and weatherboard wall. The north wall of the garage is partially built into the hillside so there are no windows or doors on this side. The second floor of the south elevation has two large, eight-light, casement windows.

The Manager's Garage has suffered from years of neglect. The posts on the first floor between the garages are leaning, the roofing is missing in many places, and the wood soffits are deteriorated. The Manager's Garage is now only minimally used for storage.

23. Dog Kennel ca. 1945 Photo No. 45—Contributing building

The Dog Kennel is a small, frame building with a shed roof and weatherboard siding. It is located approximately 35' northwest of the Manager's Residence. On the east elevation, there is a door and a small dog access door. On the south elevation, there are three dog access doors leading out into the

¹¹ The Manager's Residence has been in place at least since the early 1950s when Maudalean and Wayne George worked at the Alton Club as a cook/housekeeper and maintenance person respectively. Maudalean stayed in the converted porch room with another young girl who worked at the Club. Lee Howard, the current resident, constructed the two rear additions in the 1980s.

¹² Junior Blake worked at the Alton Club in the 1940s and learned to lay stone working on this building with his uncle, Donny Piatt. Telephone interview, June 30, 2004.

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fenced area on the south side of the building. The fenced area is attached to the south side of the Dog Kennel. Wire mesh fencing surrounds a raised stone and concrete foundation. The interior of the Dog Kennel is unfinished. The Dog Kennel is in fair condition.

24. Well House, ca. 1975¹³—Non-contributing building

The Well House is a small frame building with a gable roof and weatherboard siding. There is an entrance into the building on the south elevation. The weatherboard siding has recently been replaced. The building is in excellent condition.

25. Barn, ca. 1940¹⁴, remodeled 2002—Non-contributing building

The Barn is a large, frame building with a stone and concrete foundation, weatherboard siding and a gambrel roof. The south elevation of the Barn features a roll-up garage door flanked by a pedestrian door and a small window. On the east elevation, there are four equally-spaced casement windows. The north elevation features a pedestrian door to the first floor, and a staircase and door that leads to the second floor loft. A gravel drive leading from the main service road, encircles the barn.

The Barn was remodeled recently and is in excellent condition. However, the new siding, windows, doors, and roof affect the historic character of the building. The interior of the Barn is also all new. It has a concrete floor, drywall walls and ceiling, a full bathroom and a new furnace. The second floor loft is an unfinished storage area. Because of the extensive remodeling, the building no longer retains integrity and is counted as non-contributing.

26. Entrance Columns, ca. 1940—Contributing structure

The two Entrance Columns flank the service road leading into the Alton Club. They are located approximately two miles from Highway 19, just north of the Barn. The Entrance Columns are stone and concrete pyramidal-shaped structures that are approximately 8' tall. At the base, each column is approximately 4' square. At the top, each column is approximately 2' square. A stone and concrete retaining-wall extends east from the east column along a hiking path. The Entrance Columns appear to be in good condition.

27. Upper Lake, ca. 1975—Non-contributing site

The Upper Lake is located to the north of the main service road on the Presley Center property and it is approximately one mile north of the Current River. A secondary service road leads north from the main service road to the Upper Lake. The Upper Lake is a man-made lake approximately 4 acres in size. It was constructed for flood control, but it was also stocked and used for fishing.

¹³ According to Dale Davidsmeyer, the Well House was constructed in the mid-1970s when a new well was dug to replace the original well, which had become contaminated by a leaking fuel tank. The original well was located just north of the Main Lodge. Telephone interview, July 5, 2004.

¹⁴ According to Wayne George and Dale Davidsmeyer, some livestock (cattle and horses) was kept on the property in the early years of the Alton Club's existence. Horseback riding was one of the many activities offered to Alton Club guests. Interview, July 5, 2004.

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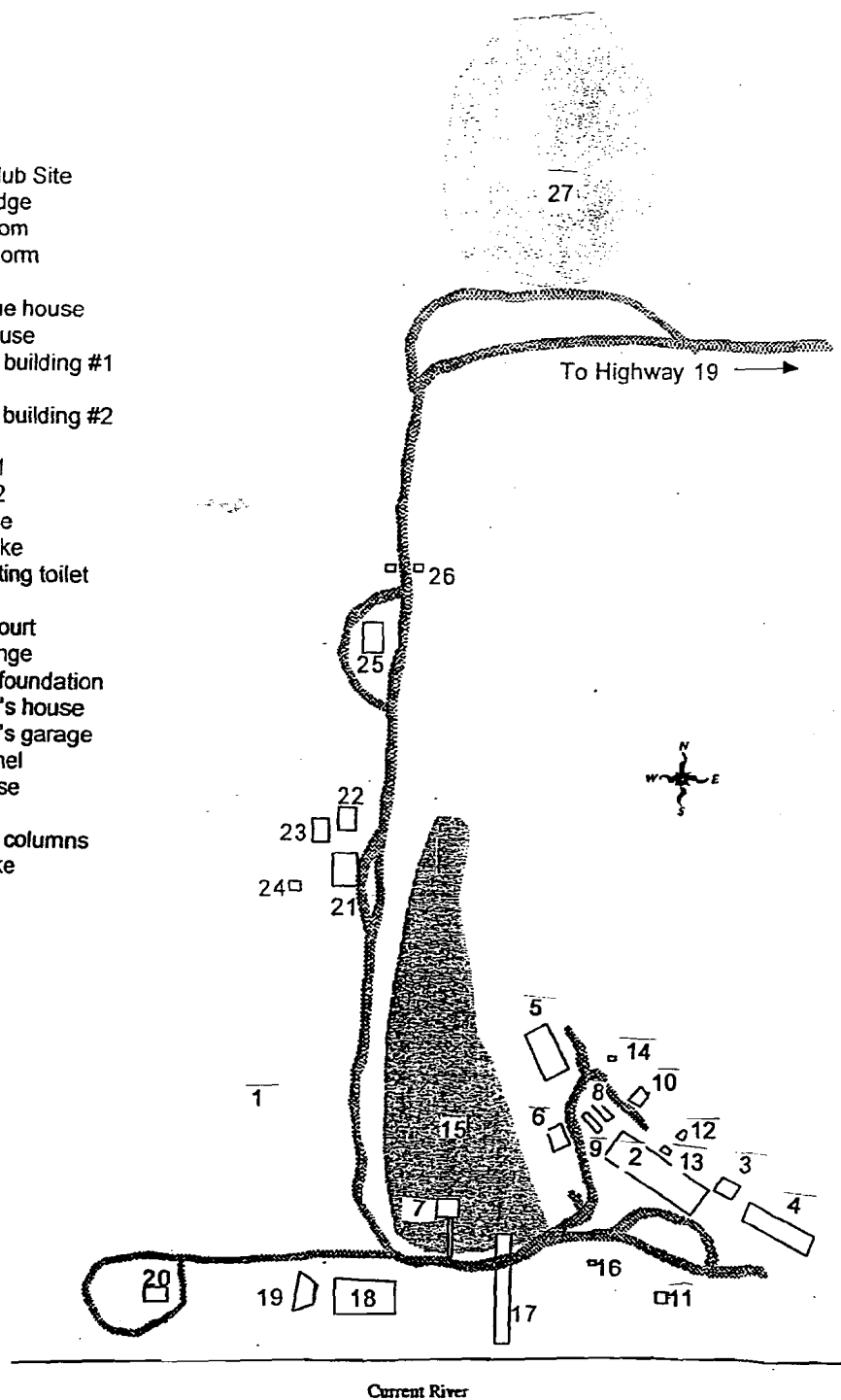
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Figure 1: Sketch Site Plan, not drawn to scale.

1. Alton Club Site
2. Main lodge
3. Classroom
4. Lower dorm
5. Gym
6. Barbecue house
7. Lake house
8. Storage building #1
9. Laundry
10. Storage building #2
11. Cottage
12. Cellar #1
13. Cellar #2
14. Outhouse
15. Lower lake
16. Composting toilet
17. Spillway
18. Tennis court
19. Skeet range
20. Building foundation
21. Manager's house
22. Manager's garage
23. Dog kennel
24. Well house
25. Barn
26. Entrance columns
27. Upper lake



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Summary Paragraph:

The Alton Club Historic District, 11 miles north of Eminence, Shannon County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of RECREATION AND CULTURE and ARCHITECTURE. This former corporate retreat was opened by the Alton Box Board Company, c. 1938, to provide a recreational outlet for its employees and important political and business guests. The complex of buildings was part of a movement in the early 20th century to create outdoor recreation facilities for urbanites in unspoiled "wilderness" areas of the state. It is now a rare surviving example of historic private club development in the region. Like many buildings and camps constructed in the Ozarks during the 1930s, this complex shows the influence of Rustic architecture. Rustic building design, usually using native stone, wood and other materials, was popularized by the National Park Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Although some of the buildings are in need of repair, as a group the resources that form the Alton Club retain a high level of integrity in all areas of consideration: location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association. The period of significance is c. 1938 to 1955, the date of the earliest building through the arbitrary cut off date.

Much of the narrative statement of significance is derived from "Jerry J. Presley Conservation Education Center (former Alton Club) Shannon County, Missouri, Historical and Descriptive Data," prepared by Becky L. Snider, Ph.D. (Becky L. Snider Consulting LLC, 507 South Garth Avenue, Columbia, MO 65203, 573-256-1105, becsnider@hotmail.com). The information has been edited and adapted but it is largely Dr. Snider's work.

Elaboration/Historical background:

The Ozarks and Tourism

The Alton Club is located along the Current River in Shannon County, Missouri, which was organized out of Ripley County in 1841. Shannon County is part of a region that is referred to by historians and geographers as the Courtois Hills of the Ozarks. Two seminal studies, Milton Rafferty's The Ozarks: Life and Land and Donald L. Stevens, Jr.'s A Homeland and A Hinterland, comprehensively detail the historical development of this area.¹⁵ The rugged landscape and lack of good transportation routes delayed the settlement and development of the area. It wasn't until after the Civil War that changes began to reshape the economy of the region. In the preface to The Ozarks: Land and Life, Rafferty summarizes the development in the Ozarks. He writes:

In more recent years, several man-induced factors have worked to reshape the economy and geography of the Ozarks. Among the more important are these: development of an integrated and fully serviceable network of roads; depletion of mineral deposits and discovery of new ore bodies; a shift from animal power to mechanical power in agriculture; growth and acceptance of a multitude of federal assistance programs in agriculture, commerce, trade and social services; establishment of electrical utilities and improved communications; improved educational opportunities; construction of a dozen large reservoirs; and development of alternative and part-time employment, particularly in

¹⁵ Milton D. Rafferty, The Ozarks: Land and Life. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980) and Donald L. Stevens, Jr., A Homeland and A Hinterland. (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Region, 1991).

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manufacturing and the tourism-recreation business.¹⁶

After the Civil War, the westward expanding population and the rapid construction of railroad lines across the United States created a heavy demand for lumber of all types. The construction of railroads into the Ozarks to serve the lumber industry spurred the development of recreational activities and tourism in the area. In the Ozarks, the lumber industry found vast hardwood forests as well as virgin pine forests.

Following well established practices, lumber companies often set up complete manufacturing facilities, constructed logging railroads and began cutting timber.... Some of the largest sawmills with the most frenzied activity were located in the southern Courtois Hills of Missouri in Shannon, Carter, Reynolds, Oregon, Ripley, Wayne and Butler counties.¹⁷

The railroads constructed for the lumber industry opened hitherto remote regions particularly in the Ozark Highland. In the twentieth century, the proliferation of automobiles and the subsequent improvement of roads made the Ozarks even more accessible.

John W. Emerson, a relative of Ralph Waldo Emerson, helped establish the Ozarks as a summer retreat for wealthy businessmen in the late 1870s. As transportation methods and routes improved, hunting and fishing expeditions to the Current River valley, such as those organized by Emerson, became commonplace. These excursions soon became a regular activity, and by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, several sportsmen's clubs had been established along the Current and Jack's Fork rivers by wealthy businessmen from St. Louis, Kansas City and Springfield. The two earliest known clubs in the area were founded in 1888. According to Donald R. Stevens Jr., the author of A Homeland and a Hinterland,

Sportsmen in St. Louis chartered the Current River Fishing and Hunting Club with a five-dollar membership fee. Another group from Springfield and Kansas City organized the Carter County Fishing and Shooting Club and charged its members twenty dollars to join. The Current Local reported that the club had 125 members and that Alex Carter, a leading political figure in Carter County, appeared to be the only member from the county. The incorporators of the club were mostly officials of the Kansas City, Ft. Scott and Memphis Railroad, the parent company of the Current River Railroad.¹⁸

In 1912, a third club, the Shannon County Hunting and Fishing Club, was incorporated by another group from Springfield.¹⁹ The Carter County Fishing and Shooting Club ceased to exist in the 1940s, but the Shannon County Hunting and Fishing Club was in existence until the 1980s.²⁰ Although the Alton Club was constructed in the second wave of development of tourism in the Ozarks and it was built as a corporate retreat, the complex constructed for its guests is similar in design to the facilities created for these early sportsman's clubs.

¹⁶ Rafferty, p. xi.

¹⁷ Rafferty, p. 173,

¹⁸ Stevens, Jr., A Homeland and a Hinterland, p. 151.

¹⁹ Stevens, Jr., "An Evaluation of Historic Significance and Integrity Shannon County Hunting and Fishing Club District in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Shannon County, Missouri", p. 14

²⁰ Stevens, Jr., A Homeland and a Hinterland, p. 151.

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In 1909 Missouri Governor Hadley and a large entourage took a float trip down the river to publicize its unique beauty. Magazines, newspapers and promotional publications began to tout sporting activities in the Ozarks. By the time Alton Club was constructed, the Current River and nearby springs were already growing in popularity. The tourism provided an economic boost to Shannon County. Ethel Boxx, a local wood carver, sold enough of her carvings to "tourers" along Hwy. 19 that she was able to buy her own 40-acre homesite. Alton Club employed local staff to manage the grounds, cook the food and guide expeditions for Alton Club visitors.

In 1964, creation of Ozark National Scenic Riverways began the boom in canoeing that resulted in hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to the Current River. The National Park Service, concerned about maintaining the "wild and scenic" characteristics of the river, purchased land on either side of the river from Montauk Spring to Van Buren. Scenic easements to private landowners were granted only in rare cases. The result is that canoeists see very few structures on the rivers except for park-maintained campgrounds, remnant cabins and Alton Club. The latter has become a landmark for floaters.

Alton Box Company and Alton Club

In 1910, Martin R. Williams and Crawford Fairbanks founded the Alton Box Board in Alton, Illinois.²¹ In the first decade of the company's existence, the Alton Box Board Company struggled to survive. In 1921, the Alton Box Board Company was sold to the New York-based Robert Gair Paper Company. With this change in ownership, the original name of the company was retained, and the company was expanded with the construction of a box making plant to complement the boxboard mill.²² In the following decade, the company greatly increased its production and became one of the leading employers in Alton. In 1928, the Alton Box Board Company built a second paperboard plant in Alton. The new plant increased production from 50 tons of paper per day to 400 tons per day.²³ As a result of this growth, by 1934, Alton Box Board Company had become the largest producer of paper boxboard in the United States.²⁴

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, the Alton Box Board Company continued to grow. By 1973, the Alton Box Board Company owned 43 plants in 15 states, produced 550,000 tons of paper per year and annually processed over 450,000 tons of waste paper.²⁵ The success and growing influence of the company in the 1920s and 1930s allowed the company to develop a corporate retreat for its employees and business and political associates. In the mid-1930s, the Alton Box Board Company began purchasing land in Shannon County, Missouri. According to Bill Hoagland, an attorney associated with the Smurfit-Stone Corporation and a frequent guest at the Alton Club from the 1940s to mid-1990s, the Alton Box Company originally planned to use the land for lumbering pulpwood for their boxboard plant in Alton, Illinois.²⁶ No records exist to establish who

²¹ "Box Maker has been in Alton since 1910," Alton Telegraph. Undated clipping (1998) from the vertical files of the Hayner Public Library, Alton, IL.

²³ "Box Maker has been in Alton since 1910," Alton Telegraph. Undated clipping (1998) from the vertical files of the Hayner Public Library, Alton, IL.

²⁴ Daryl Howlett, "Merger leaves many questions," Alton Telegraph. Undated clipping (1998) from the vertical files of the Hayner Public Library, Alton, IL.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Telephone Interview with Bill Hoagland, June 30, 2004.

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came up with the idea to create a corporate retreat on the property, but the company began planning the Alton Club at least by early 1937.

A short article that was published on April 22, 1937 in the "Local Happenings" section of the Current Wave newspaper notes that:

The Alton Boxboard Company of Alton, Illinois have purchased another tract of land here to add to their Boxboard Beach. Members of the firm were here last Saturday and bought a 60-acre tract of W. A. Richardson of Round Spring.²⁷

The only written history that could be found about the Alton Club was published in two local history books about the Current River written by David Lewis. Both publications, *The Current River and Its Tributaries: Historical and Geographical* and *Footprints Along the Current: A Historical and Geographical Sketch of the Current River Area* have essentially the same information about the Alton Club. In *Footprints Along the Current: A Historical and Geographical Sketch of the Current River Area*, Lewis writes:

Alton Club was built during the 1930's at the mouth of Broad Shoal Hollow. Alton Box Company from Alton, Illinois financed the project. It was used by company members and important customers. Labor was cheap during the Great Depression. Labors (sic) got \$1.25 per day and carpenters got \$2.00. A lake was built in Broad Shoal Hollow. Several building[s] were added some of which served as lodges: Walter Carr and Roy Weese built a ferry for them to cross the river. The ferry washed away and was not rebuilt. Over the years, the corporation added several thousands of acres to their holdings. Alton Box is now owned by another company but the area is still called Alton Club.²⁸

Construction on most of the buildings and structures that formed the Alton Club appears to have taken place in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Junior Blake, who is 75 years old, worked as a laborer at the Alton Club when he was a teenager. According to Junior, the Main Lodge, the Classroom (Pool Hall), the Lower Dorm, the Gymnasium, the Manager's Residence and several of the utility buildings were already in place when he began working at the Alton Club around 1943.²⁹ However, both Junior and his uncle participated in the construction of at least two of the buildings at the Alton Club in the early 1940s - the Manager's Garage and the Barbeque House. Junior helped lay the stone for the foundations of both buildings. He recalls being paid \$5.00 per day. According to Dale Davidsmeyer, the manager of the Alton Club in the 1970s and early 1980s, the lumber for the Alton Club buildings was timbered on the property and was cut in a sawmill, which was west of the skeet range. Dale and his crew dismantled the sawmill in the late 1970s, but the foundation remains.³⁰

According to Bill Hoagland, the Alton Club was initially constructed for the purpose of entertaining the upper-level employees of the Alton Box Board Company. However, the Club's potential as a marketing tool was quickly recognized, and soon Alton Box Board Company salesmen and executives began bringing clients and their families to the Alton Club. Politicians were also frequent guests at the Club.

²⁷ "Local Happenings/" Current Wave. Eminence, Missouri, April 22, 1937.

²⁸ David Lewis, Footprints Along the Current: A Historical and Geographical Sketch of the Current River Area. (Modoc, IL: MODOC Publication, 1997), np.

²⁹ Telephone Interview with Junior Blake, June 29, 2004.

³⁰ Telephone Interview with Dale Davidsmeyer, July 5, 2004.

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Wayne George worked as a hired hand at the Alton Club in the 1950s and early 1960s. He recalls a visit to the Club by Missouri Governor John M. Dalton.³¹ Dale Davidsmeyer recalls that executives from many of the region's largest companies were guests at the Alton Club.

Bill Hoagland's association with the Alton Club began in the early 1940s. Bill also confirmed 'that all of the major buildings at the Alton Club were in place by the time [1942] he began visiting the property with his father and older brother³²

The Alton Club was open for guests from April to November.³³ According to Carol Green, an early employee of Alton Box Board Co., the Club was booked solid with guests from the time it opened each spring until it closed for the winter..³⁴ Each of the groups that visited the Alton Club had a host from Alton Box Board Company. This person, who was generally a plant manager or an executive with the company, was in charge of organizing the group's activities while they were at the Alton Club.³⁵

The Alton Club offered a wealth of activities, all at no charge to the guests. When the weather was nice, guests could float and fish on the river, fish and swim in the lake, hunt, play tennis, shoot skeet, and play golf. Other outdoor activities included hiking throughout the vast acreage, horseback riding, and exploring Bat Cave, a cave located on the property south of the Alton Club complex. The gymnasium provided a sheltered location for activities during inclement weather. Bowling, basketball and badminton were three common activities in the gymnasium; the gymnasium had a regulation bowling lane with a mechanical pinsetter.³⁶ The pinsetter is still located in the gym, but the bowling lane has been removed.

All of the guests' meals were also provided at no charge, and the Alton Club staff cleaned the guests' rooms and laundry. Meals were prepared by the Alton Club staff and were served family style either in the dining room or in the Barbeque House.

In the late 1960s, the Ozark National Scenic Riverways was established and began acquiring private land for the park.³⁷ The National Park Service wanted to buy the Alton Club. The Alton Box Board Company refused to sell the property, but the company did grant the National Park Service a scenic easement on a total of 970 acres of the Alton Club property. Covenants placed on the property in the easement restrict the usage of the property and the alteration of the buildings or the topography.³⁸

In 1981, when the Jefferson Smurfit Corporation acquired the Alton Box Board Company, the Alton Club was included in the assets of the company. The Jefferson Smurfit Corporation continued to use the area as a corporate retreat for several years. However, in 1996, the

³¹ Telephone Interview with Wayne George, June 29, 2004.

³² Telephone Interview with Bill Hoagland, June 30, 2004.

³³ Telephone Interview with Dale Davidsmeyer, July 5, 2004.

³⁴ Telephone Interview with Carol Green, June 28, 2004.

³⁵ Telephone Interview with Dale Davidsmeyer, July 5, 2004.

³⁶ Telephone Interview with Bill Hoagland, June 30, 2004.

³⁷ James W. Goodrich and Lynn Wolf Gentzler, (eds.) Marking Missouri History. (Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1998), p. 249.

³⁸ Ozark National Scenic Riverways Tract No OZAR 305 Corporation Scenic Easement Deed, July 23, 1969. On file with the Shannon County Assessor, Eminence, Missouri. .

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Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri purchased the property from the Jefferson Smurfit Corporation.³⁹ The Conservation Department began operating the complex as an educational retreat, and the property was renamed in honor of the former Director of the Department of Conservation, Jerry J. Presley. In late 2003, the Department of Conservation revealed plans to remodel and/ or demolish several of the original Alton Club buildings.⁴⁰

Architecture

Although the development of the Current and Jacks Fork riverways area into a recreational destination was already underway by early twentieth century, federal and state government programs created to ensure the conservation of the area's wildlife and scenic beauty brought workers and money for improvements as well as more visitors to the area. This movement was encouraged by the Federal Government that established Yellowstone as the first national park in 1872. The national park system was established to protect scenic areas designated for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.⁴¹ State governments followed the federal government's lead, and a number of states began designating state parks in the 1880s and 1890s. Missouri established its first parks in 1924 and 1925. The state recognized the importance of the Ozarks and the need to protect its natural beauty.⁴² All eight of the first state parks established in Missouri were located in the Ozarks. Round Spring, just a few miles south of Alton Club was the first park to be designated.⁴³ During the late 1920s, improvements at these new parks included picnic and camping areas, roads and bridges, and bathroom, lodging and meeting accommodations. However, when the Great Depression set in, work at the parks diminished considerably until the federal aid programs began.

Beginning in 1933, thousands of unemployed men were put to work in Missouri's parks, forests and federal lands as part of the federal New Deal program known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).⁴⁴ The work completed in the state's public lands followed federal conservation principles. Furthermore, the buildings and structures were constructed with local materials and they were designed in the rustic style of architecture popularized by the National Park Service (NPS).⁴⁵

Rustic Architecture grew out of the Romantic movement that inspired wilderness appreciation and tourism. Architects and builders working in national parks system wanted to create buildings and structures that harmonize with the natural setting. As Linda Flint McClelland, the author of Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction, notes

³⁹ Shannon County Limited Warranty Deed, December 2, 1996.

⁴⁰ Marideth Sisco, "Presley Conservation Education Center. Officials have tough choices in preserving structures and building for the future," West Plains Daily Ouill, May 10, 2004.

⁴¹ Linda Flint McClelland Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape and Design. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 53.

⁴² Donald R. Stevens, Jr., "An Evaluation of Historic Significance and Integrity Shannon County Hunting and Fishing Club District in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Shannon County, Missouri." National Parks Service, 1992, p. 20.

⁴³ Stevens, Jr. A Homeland and A Hinterland, 176-177.

⁴⁴ James Denny and Bonita Marie Wright, "Emergency Conservation Work Architecture in Missouri State Parks, 1933-1942, Thematic Resources," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1984, p. 8.11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.4.

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A variety of practitioners seeking harmony between structure and setting and solutions to building homes in rugged and scenic places developed expressions of rustic architecture in the Adirondacks, along the Atlantic coast, in the San Francisco Bay Area, and in the Sierras. As the idea of developing wilderness for personal pleasure extended to an increasing number of public parks - local, metropolitan, state, and national - the rustic style was adopted for a multitude of park structures.⁴⁶

As more parks were developed with Rustic style facilities, the style was refined by the National Park Service. By the early 1940s, however, due to the large demand for park structures and a decrease in development funding, the National Park Service was forced to largely abandon its strict adherence to the ideals of Rustic architecture.

Fewer examples of "exaggerated rustic" were appearing. Many NPS residences built in the late 1930s made only minor concessions to their immediate settings. Quite often these were rather unexceptional wood frame houses incorporating rustic siding and stone veneer foundations.⁴⁷

However, by this time, Rustic Architecture had become widely used in all types of private tourist buildings and the style continues to be a popular style for resort facilities and rural dwellings. Undoubtedly, the executives of the Alton Box Board Company were aware of the buildings and structures that had been constructed by CCC workers in the nearby state parks. In addition, since the Alton Club was a privately owned retreat, the Alton Box Board Company executives may have chosen to have the buildings at the Alton Club blend in with their surroundings in an effort to keep the Club's existence as low key as possible. Finally, the choice of materials and construction techniques chosen in the design of the Alton Club were likely a function of their availability. Not only could most of the materials for the buildings and structures be found on the Alton Club property, but also most of the local laborers had likely worked in the CCC camps and had experience building similar buildings and structures.

No written information was found crediting a specific architect or builder for the buildings at the Alton Club, and none of the people interviewed knew whether or not the buildings were professionally designed. Junior Blake recalls that some carpenters from Illinois were sent down to construct the building's lamella roof structure. According to Junior, the Illinois carpenters had difficulty figuring out how to cut the framing pieces for the roof and a local man named Benton Prugh, known for his carpentry skill, took over that job.⁴⁸ Dale Davidsmeyer said he was told that a local carpenter was sent to St. Louis to look at the Arena, a building which had a lamella roof, and to come back and build the roof on the gymnasium.⁴⁹

The Arena in St. Louis, which was demolished in 1999, was designed by a German immigrant architect named Gustel R. Kiewitt.⁵⁰ Kiewitt moved to St. Louis in 1923 and established a firm called Roof

⁴⁶ McClelland, P. 91.

⁴⁷ Tweed et al., p. VI.2.

⁴⁸ Telephone Interview with Junior Blake, June 29, 2004.

⁴⁹ Telephone Interview with Dale

Davidsmeyer, July 5, 2004.

⁵⁰ G. D. Selzer, "Bringing the Roof Down" Riverfront Times. February 10, 1999.

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Structures, Inc. in Webster Groves.⁵¹ He popularized the German-patented lamella roof design in St. Louis and throughout the Midwest. His most famous design, the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, was completed in 1964 shortly after his death. Given the close proximity of Alton, Illinois, the headquarters of the Alton Box Board Company, to the St. Louis Arena, it is likely that Kiewitt played some part in the design of the gymnasium at the Alton Club.

Design features of the lodges and gymnasium take advantage of the setting for comfort control and structural stability: windows facing the hillside allow cool evening breezes to circulate in the lodges, and trenches dug into the hillside allow run-off to flow around the buildings' foundations. Reliance on locally available resources, e.g., virgin pine timber, limestone, chert and other field stone, helps Alton Club structures blend into its environment. As one canoeist pointed out in a letter to MDC in May, 2004, "The lodge [at Alton Club] is not only historic, but it is also aesthetically appropriate to the river setting. It sets back from the river. It fits in. Floating past the Commission's [MDC's] property, a canoeist or fisherman is not distracted."⁵²

CONCLUSION

The Presley Center (Alton Club) in Shannon County, Missouri is a unique complex of buildings and structures. The property is significant historically because it is one of only a few remaining intact examples of the handful of private retreats which once dotted the banks of the Current and Jacks Fork riverways. Furthermore, despite the rustic appearance of its buildings and structures, the Alton Club was a sophisticated retreat which offered high quality accommodations, service, and recreational activities, amenities that the other similar sportsmen's club complexes did not provide."

No one has been identified as the designer of the Presley Center property, but it is unlikely that the complex was designed without the services of a trained architect. Although the Presley Center complex does not demonstrate "high style rustic" or "exaggerated rustic" architecture, the buildings and structures fulfill the most basic requirement of Rustic architecture; they blend harmoniously with their surroundings. Thus, the property is significant as a substantially unchanged complex of buildings and structures that are representative of the popularity for Rustic-styled architecture in 1930s and early 1940s.

⁵¹ "Gustel R. Kiewitt" Mound City on the Mississippi: a St Louis History

<http://stlcin.missouri.org/history/people/detail.cfm>

⁵² Kay and Leo Drey. Letter to John Hoskins, Director, and Commissioners, Missouri Department of Conservation. May 13, 2004.

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Alton Club
Shannon County, Missouri

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Alton Club
Shannon County, Missouri

Verbal Boundary Description

The NW quarter of the SE quarter, all lying on the left bank of Current River, in Section 1, Township 30N, Range 5. Shannon County, Missouri. The nominated property is a section of a larger acreage historically associated with the Alton Club and now owned by the Missouri Department of Conservation. The nominated property borders either side of an unnamed gravel road lying west of MO 19 in Shannon County, as described below:

The boundary of the property roughly parallels both sides of the access road to the Alton Club (now called the Jerry J. Presley Center). Beginning approximately 1.5 miles west of MO 19 at the intersection of the unnamed county road and the access road to the Upper Lake. From the point of beginning move north northwest 342 meters to the northern most tip of the Upper Lake. Turning south southwest, follow the western shore of the Upper Lake 313 meters to the bend in the lake access road. The boundary then runs parallel, though approximately 60 meters to the west, of the lake access and club access roads south southwest for 635 meters. The boundary then turns due west 160 meters. From this point the boundary turns south for 117 meters to the shore of the Current River that forms the southern boundary of the property. The southern boundary follows the shores of the Current River east for 540 meters. From this point, the boundary turns north for 50 meters, then northwest for 255 meters to the eastern shore of the lower lake. The boundary roughly follows the shore of the lower lake north for 234 meters. Continuing north, the boundary parallels the access road for 110 meters, though 50 meters to the east. At this point, the boundary intersects the access road which curves to the east. The boundary follows the southern edge of the boundary road for 210 meters to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property was historically part of a much larger recreation area and is still the center of an approximately 1000 acre conservation area. The nomination, however centers on the man-made resources that include the buildings and recreational facilities built for the Alton Box Company's Alton Club. The boundaries roughly parallel the access road the leads from Hwy 19 to the Alton Club buildings, and include the buildings, stone structures, roadways and other man-made resources and the land that is directly associated with these resources. The boundaries exclude the undeveloped acreage historically owned by the Alton Box Company and used for hunting and hiking.

Boundaries indicate the parcels containing developed resources, e.g. buildings, lake, structures, etc., that occupy approximately 35 acres used for assessed valuation by the Shannon County Assessor's office.

Photo Log

All photos are of Alton Club, Shannon County, Missouri. They were taken by Becky L. Snider May 27 – 28, 2004. The photographer retains all negatives at 507 South Garth Avenue, Columbia, MO 65203.

1. Entrance gates, looking south.
2. Main Lodge, looking northwest
3. Main Lodge, looking southeast.
4. Main Lodge, looking southeast.
5. Classroom, looking southeast.
6. Classroom, looking northwest.

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Alton Club
Shannon County, Missouri

7. Lower dorm, looking northwest.
8. Lower dorm, looking southeast.
9. Gym, looking southeast.
10. Gym, interior, looking southeast.
11. Gym, interior, looking northwest.
12. Gym, looking southeast.
13. Barbecue house, looking northwest.
14. Lake house, looking northeast.
15. Lake house, interior, looking northeast.
16. Storage building No. 1, looking northwest.
17. Laundry building, looking northeast.
18. Storage building No. 2, looking northeast.
19. Cellar No. 2, looking northwest.
20. Lower lake, looking north.
21. Composting toilet and vicinity, looking south.
22. Spillway, looking south.
23. Tennis courts, looking east.
24. Skeet range, looking west.
25. Manager's house, looking northwest.
26. Manager's garage, looking northwest. (Dog kennel at far left of photo)
27. Barn, looking north.
28. Upper lake, looking north.
29. Cottage, looking south.

