

## Transportation/Communication

Transportation was an important component of Dayton's early 19<sup>th</sup>-century commercial growth, its late 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial development, and its mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century expansion. Improved transportation corridors, in particular the interstate system, facilitated suburban growth after WWII. Mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century roadside properties such as motels, drive-in restaurants, and gas stations dotted the state routes, the Dixie Highway, and the National Road. Drive-in restaurants, where customers would be waited on at their cars, were popular in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This restaurant type is symbolic of the growing American car culture during the late 1940s through the 1960s. Automated drive-through car washes were a new, post-WWII roadside business enterprise introduced in 1946. (Manual car wash businesses had existed since the 1910s.) Car washes became increasingly popular in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, closely correlating to increased automobile ownership and a general infatuation with cars.

Constructed 1950 to 1968, several of these commercial roadside property types were included in the survey, including seven motels. Four are associated with the Dixie Highway, two with State Route 444, which serves Wright-Patterson AFB, and one with the National Road. The other commercial roadside properties included four drive-in restaurants (see also restaurant types discussion), one gas station, and two car washes.

Four communication-related properties, constructed 1956-1970, were included in the survey project. One was associated with a newspaper and the other three with telephone operations. The *Dayton Daily News* was founded by James M. Cox, who purchased the *Dayton Evening News* in 1898 for \$26,000. Since 1986, the *Dayton Daily News* has been the primary newspaper of the metropolitan area. Cox purchased and published other city newspapers throughout Ohio and in other states, beginning in the 1920s, creating a small media empire still present in Dayton. The Dayton Bell Telephone Company was established in 1878. By the early 1900s, the system had more than 4,000 subscribers, and subscriptions more than doubled between 1904 and 1908. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, more and more people subscribed for phone service until telephones were commonplace in the home.

Constructed in 1954, the **Royal Motel** (MOT-05401-48) is on the Dixie Highway, north of downtown Dayton. It was advertised as a modern motel with a restaurant and swimming pool. Several motels existed in close proximity to each other on the edge of Harrison Township and north Dayton.



Royal Motel  
1450 Keowee St., Dayton

Taking advantage of Vandalia’s “Crossroads of America” nickname, the **Crossroads of America Motel** was constructed in 1954 on the National Road, just east of the Dixie Highway. The Crossroads (MOT-05555-13) was also billed as being modern, with air conditioning, TV, and a swimming pool. The roadside sign depicted in the vintage postcard is no longer extant. Vandalia contained a few motels located on the National Road.



Crossroads of America Motel postcard,  
date unknown  
845 E. National Rd., Vandalia  
(Historic Image 30)

**Frisch’s Big Boy** (MOT-05266-08) features a butterfly roof canopy over the former curbside service area behind the restaurant. The drive-in restaurant was constructed in 1968.



Frisch’s Big Boy  
4081 Salem Ave., Dayton

The former **A & W Root Beer Drive-In** (MOT-05644-63), now Root Beer Stande, is the last operating curb-service drive-in in Dayton. However, of the standard drive-in components (canopy, tele-trays, menu boards), only the canopy remains intact. Constructed in 1962-63, the long-running business illustrates a commercial roadside restaurant concept that was extremely popular countrywide during the 1950s and 60s.



A & W Root Beer Drive-In, date unknown  
(Historic Image 31)



A & W Root Beer Drive-In  
1727 Woodman Dr., Dayton

Beginning in the 1940s, transportation-related businesses, such as gas stations, moved away from early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural expressions, adapting modern styles. Exhibiting the Googie style, **Turrell's Phillips 66** (MOT-05596-06) featured an extended canopy, attracting customers by creating a sense of reaching out to the road. Several gas station companies or individual owners used similar architectural devices to catch the eye of passing motorists. Turrell's was constructed in 1959 and designed by Clarence Reinhardt.



Turrell's Phillips 66  
2560 Woodman Dr., Kettering

Representing a relatively new roadside business, the **Imperial 300 Car Wash** (MOT-05493-06,) is utilitarian in nature, but also expresses a Modernist sensibility. The exposed pre-cast concrete roof beams, flat roof, and bank of full-height storefront window bays are elements of the Modern Movement. While the building itself may not have caught the attention of passing motorists, the property retains the original, vary large roadside sign, complete with an oversized crown. The automated Imperial 300 Car Wash was constructed in 1966.



Imperial 300 Car Wash  
2536 Wilmington Pike, Kettering

The 1956 addition to the **Dayton Daily News** building (MOT-05396-15) reflects James M. Cox's continued mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century expansion and acquisition of other newspapers.



Dayton Daily News  
37 S. Ludlow St., Dayton

Constructed in 1970, the former **Ohio Bell Telephone Company** (GRE-01211-10) building in Fairborn appears to be an equipment building. While very Modernist in style, the building is reminiscent of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century high-style telephone equipment buildings commonly found in neighborhoods. An interesting feature of this property is that it still retains a phone booth, a structure rapidly disappearing from the built environment.



Ohio Bell Telephone Co.  
21 S. Pleasant St., Fairborn



The former **Ohio Bell Telephone Company** building (MOT-05558-06), now AT&T, contained offices for telephone records processing in Kettering. Constructed in 1962, the building is credited to Roger Wolcott Williams, of the Dayton architectural firm Lorenz & Williams.



Ohio Bell Telephone Co.  
3233 Woodman Dr., Kettering