

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Empire Coal Company Store

other name/site number: _____

2. Location

street & number: highway 52

not for publication: n/a

city/town: Landgraff

vicinity: n/a

state: WV county: McDowell

code: 047

zip code: n/a

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | _____ | buildings |
| _____ | _____ | sites |
| _____ | _____ | structures |
| _____ | _____ | objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related property listing: Coal Company Stores in McDowell County

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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

2/10/92
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

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

=====
5. National Park Service Certification
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

~~Entered in the~~
National Register

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): _____

 4/7/92

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. Function or Use
=====

Historic: commerce/trade Sub: department store
commerce/trade business office
government post office
Current : vacant/not in use Sub: _____

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification:
late 19th and early 20th century American movements

Other Description: n/a

Materials: foundation brick roof metal
walls wood other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. x See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: statewide.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : n/a

Areas of Significance: architecture
commerce
industry

Period(s) of Significance: ca. 1900-1941

Significant Dates : n/a

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
x See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet. x

Previous documentation on file (NPS): n/a

- 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 -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|
| A | <u> 17 </u> | <u> 458000 </u> | <u> 4140480 </u> | B | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| C | _____ | _____ | _____ | D | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Beginning at the intersection of highway 52 and Elkhorn Creek, proceed 800' east to the store which stands in the center of a square 100' on each side fronting on highway 52.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the Empire Coal Company.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Stacy Sone, surveyor

Organization: WV SHPO Date: December 16, 1991

Street & Number: Cultural Center Telephone: 304-348-0240

City or Town: Charleston State: WV ZIP: 25305

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 1 Empire Coal Company store

The Empire Coal Company store is one of few intact wooden frame company stores remaining in southern West Virginia and one of two left in McDowell County. The two-story building has been vacant for several years but has undergone little change since its service in the company-owned community. Although not as elaborate as some of the brick company stores, this building still retains those characteristics that define the company store property type.

The company store, located on highway 52 in the center of Landgraff, stands on a brick foundation and has a metal roof. Its plan is rectangular and includes a two-story and one-story section, each under a hipped roof.

The facade includes four entrances and when the store was in operation, each would have opened onto a porch that extended across the facade. The main entrance is recessed and stands in the middle of the facade between display windows. The spaces adjacent to it on the facade's west end are arranged in the same way. Most of the large display windows have been boarded over. It is clear that these two entrances were the most important not only because they are recessed between display windows but also because simple classical decoration surrounds these spaces. Pilasters frame each of the six bays and the low walls beneath the display windows contain decorative recessed panels. The classical ornamentation was not limited to this space but is more pronounced there. A dentiled cornice with brackets runs the perimeter of the building over the first and second levels. The same decoration is also found on the front and rear hipped dormers.

Aside from this simple classical detail, the company store is plain and functional which was typical of the coal industry's earliest buildings. Double hung windows are arranged evenly across most of the building. The eight bays of windows on the west side, however, were horizontal and placed evenly in a row just under the roofline. These windows and some of the sash windows have been boarded over. Because of the store's location between the highway and the railroad tracks, its delivery entrance is on the rear side.

Although the store's porch is missing and some siding is beginning to fall, the exterior is in good repair considering its age and years of vacancy. It hardly compares in size to some of McDowell County's massive brick buildings but it shares many of the later stores' features that characterize company store construction.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section number 8 Page 1 Empire Coal Company store

The Empire Coal Company store is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its association with West Virginia's coal mining industry and under criterion C for its architectural significance. The coal company probably built the store right at the turn of the century making this one of McDowell County's earliest stores. Like other company stores, the one at Landgraff was an important mercantile and social center in the community (for detailed historical information about the Pocahontas Coalfield and the significance of company stores, see sections E and F in "Coal Company Stores in McDowell County", multiple property listing). The building is significant architecturally for its size and subtle classical detail and also because it is one of only two wooden frame company stores remaining in McDowell County.

Before the coal industry boomed in southern West Virginia at the end of the nineteenth century, the area consisted of scattered, self-sufficient farms and communities. Because of the absence of railroads and good roads, the southern counties had little interaction with the rest of the nation. After the Civil War, however, the nation's industrial market expanded and outsiders began to turn their attention to West Virginia's vast coal reserve to meet growing demands.

The major railroads extended their lines into southern West Virginia allowing the area to be developed. Without a sufficient labor force, however, coal mining could not be productive. Companies recruited thousands of workers first from the older coalfields in Pennsylvania, and then from Eastern Europe and the American South. To accommodate these new arrivals, coal companies built self-sufficient communities to house and provide for their workers. The construction of company towns was absolutely necessary in southern West Virginia. Unlike the northern coalfields of Pennsylvania, where mining operations began in regions that were already settled, southern mines opened in sparsely settled areas with few organized communities. The company town was the most logical solution because it provided efficient and inexpensive housing for a large labor force.

Central to each of these communities was the company store. The store was usually the town's most prominent building and was typically placed in an easily accessible location. The building often housed not only a store but also the company's business office, a post office, and sometimes, a doctor's office. Because of its location and multiple functions, the store provided each community with a center for social gathering.

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Section number 8 Page 2 Empire Coal Company store

The store in Landgraff was constructed by the Empire Coal Company which established itself on land leased from the Flat-Top Coal Land Association in 1896. The store was probably built around that time and served for years as the center of commercial, business, and social activity in the company-built community. It offered a wide variety of merchandise on its two levels. Miners and their families typically visited the store daily to purchase goods and to receive mail and then handled other business in the office section. Because of its convenient location near the residential areas and the mine, the building was a constant gathering point.

In 1922, the successful company hired A.B. Mahood, a prominent Bluefield architect who designed several outstanding coal company buildings in McDowell County, to design its clubhouse which was situated nearby. Instead of replacing its turn-of-the-century store with a Mahood-designed brick building, the Empire company recognized that its wooden store was perfectly adequate and handsome enough to represent the company's stability. Even with the new clubhouse, the store continued to be the community's center of activity. Information about the store is scarce and it is unclear whether or not Hawley Coal Mining Company, which bought control of Empire Coal, continued to operate the store, or if it simply became office and storage space. The building is now unoccupied.

The Landgraff store is significant architecturally not only because it is a scarce wooden store, but also because of its size and simple detail. The basic mass of the building is similar to turn-of-the-century residential construction. The design would have been widely available and could have been built without the skill of a trained architect. For this reason, it is likely that other companys' first stores were similar to the Empire store. The brackets and dentils are simple but they add definite distinction to the store and make it outstanding in the community. The Landgraff store indicates the industry's interest in providing an impressive building immediately after being established.

The Empire Coal Company store has weathered over the years and its porch is no longer standing. Aside from this, it has changed little from its original appearance. It is important as a surviving wooden frame store and for its long term operation in the coal community. The building remains as an outstanding and representative example of a coal company store and its importance to the industry's early years.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 Page 1 Empire Coal Company store

Bluefield Daily Telegraph, Industrial Edition, 1896. reprint, 1983.

Company Stores, file. Eastern Regional Coal Archives, Bluefield, WV.

Eller, Ronald D. Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers. Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982.