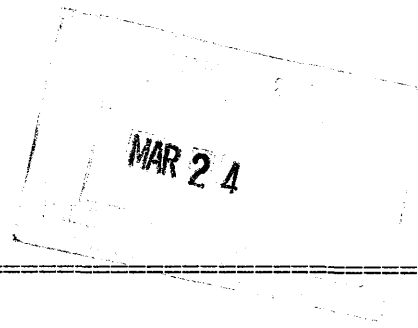


NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

OMB No. 10024-0018

399



1. Name of Property

historic name: ASHLAND COAL COMPANY STORE
other names/site number :

2. Location

street & number:

Rt. 17 not for publication N/A

city or town:

Ashland vicinity

state:

West Virginia code: WV

county: McDowell code: 047

zip code: 24810

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Susan Mitchell
Signature of certifying official

2/15/05
Date

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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Ashland Coal Company Store
Property name

McDowell County, West Virginia
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- 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):

Edson H. Brall
Signature of Keeper

05/05/05
Date of Action

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

Contributing	Non-contributing
<u>2</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>2</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

Ashland Coal Company Store

Property name

McDowell County, West Virginia

County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Cat: COMMERCE

Current Functions

Cat: Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th and EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK, STONE

roof: ASPHALT

walls: BRICK

other: WOOD, GLASS

Narrative Description

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- 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.

Ashland Coal Company Store

Property name

McDowell County, West Virginia

County and State

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance:

COMMERCE
INDUSTRY
SOCIAL HISTORY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance: 1907-1954

Significant Dates: 1907, 1927, 1943

Significant Person: N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: ASHLAND COAL COMPANY

Narrative Statement of Significance

See Continuation sheets

Ashland Coal Company Store
Property name

McDowell County, West Virginia
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)
See continuation sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
- 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 COAL HERITAGE SURVEY, 1990
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: West Virginia and Regional History Collection of West Virginia University Libraries,

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: LESS THAN ONE ACRE

UTM References

Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>17</u>	<u>468679</u>	<u>4140114</u>

Verbal Boundary Description

See Continuation Sheet

Boundary Justification

See Continuation Sheet

Ashland Coal Company Store

Property name

McDowell County, West Virginia

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Barbara E. Rasmussen, Ph.D

organization: Historic Preservation and Research

date: June 20, 2004

street & number: 224 Wilson Avenue

Telephone (304) 292-7652

city or town: Morgantown State: WV

zip code: 26501

Property Owner

name: IMPACT REAL ESTATE, LLC

street & number: 3180 MATHEISON DRIVE UNIT 1206

telephone: (404) 233-7930

city or town: Atlanta

state: GA

zip code: 30305

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Ashland Coal Co. Store
McDowell County, West Virginia

Narrative Description of Property

The Ashland Company store property is less than one acre in size and contains two eligible buildings. The site is located along Rt. 17 in Ashland, McDowell County. Rt 17 intersects U.S. Rt. 52 at the town of North Fork. The property immediately abuts the banks of North Fork of Elkhorn Creek of the Guyandotte River. Spanning the eastern edge of the plot, from Rt. 17 to the creek side, the building is fronted by a large, informal area used as a parking lot. To the north of the parcel, a small wooden bridge crosses the creek leading to the site of the former mine tipple. The second property, a small wooden gymnasium, sits flush with the creek bank at a perpendicular axis to the larger store. The property is located in West Virginia's third congressional district. Formerly the heart of a flourishing coal town, the site now is remote.

The store
Circa 1907
EXTERIOR

The two-story Ashland Coal Company Store is constructed of brick on a brick and stone foundation. Built in 1907, it was converted to a warehouse in 1927. When fire destroyed the original company store in 1943, this building was adapted for that purpose. The two story building is constructed of brick on a brick and stone foundation. There are two wings, seemingly of dedicated purpose. The south-facing short façade on Rt. 17, formerly housed the paymaster's office, the U.S. Post Office, and company offices. There is almost no clearance between the street and the building's entrance. This façade features, on the first floor, five single doors with half lights and transoms, two 2/2 double hung windows and two display windows. They are asymmetrically arrayed beneath six 2/2 double hung windows on the second story. All windows and doors feature assertive concrete and stone sills and lintels that lend weight and authority to the building's otherwise plain appearance. Some modest wear and tear on the brick fabric is evident. Ground level windows on this face are fenced.

The perpendicular and larger west-facing wing extends to the creek bank. From 1927 until 1943 this building was a warehouse that served three company stores in the area. This building became the company store in 1943, when fire destroyed the original one. This façade originally had eight ranked bays with double-hung 2/2 windows. The eight windows are all present in the second story, but have been altered on the ground floor, where there are two 2/2 double hung windows, one single entry leading to the second floor, two display windows flanking the store entrance proper, and two re-sized windows that are now sealed with cinderblock. The display windows and store entry are covered over by metal plates. Scars on the building's fabric and oral histories indicate that there was once a small portico, supported by pilasters, sheltering the entry. The one story extension on the northern end of the storefront wing has one bay on the front, two on the northern face, and a rear door.

The building's rear faces (inside of the Ell) feature one entry and two ranked bays with 2/2 double-hung sash on the short (east) leg of the Ell. The building appears to have once had seven ranked bays inside the Ell, also of 2/2 double-hung configuration, however, a two-story cinderblock extension was built in the corner to house the later addition of three safes in the building. Three first floor windows were bricked up at that time.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

**Ashland Coal Co. Store
McDowell County, West Virginia**

The distinctive low hipped roof is covered with green asphalt shingles in deteriorating condition that has been covered with green rolled roofing, also showing evidence of deterioration, especially over the one-story extension. A wide roof overhang is finished with beaded fir. Unusual for the coal fields, this brick structure has been painted with a decorative two-tone scheme of forest green and very light green.

INTERIOR

The first floor interior on the office wing contains a post office space, a paymaster's office and counter, a safe, and offices. Except for the paymaster's counter and the safe, these spaces may have been altered somewhat, perhaps in the building's adaptive conversion to company store after the 1943 fire. No accoutrements of a post office remain. Ceilings have been lowered and modern paneling, now painted, finishes the walls. The paymaster's window, however, remains intact, and is a valuable architectural anchor for the space. In remarkably good condition, it is constructed of wood and glass. Floors have been finished with linoleum or asphalt tiles. The second floor of this wing has been remodeled into several smaller offices. Ceilings there have been lowered, floors carpeted, and walls resurfaced. Some evidence of original interior detail is visible inside closets, where ten-foot ceilings, wide baseboard trim and paneled doors are evident. This wing was in use as a mining office as late as the 1980s, and the post office was in use until 1991. Flood waters seeped over the ground floor of this wing in 2003, causing minor damage. The safes in this building are no longer functional, but retain their massive presence. Locks have been removed, presumably as a safety precaution, however bolts and hinges and doors remain.

The preservation plan for this building calls for establishing a hierarchy of space. Under this protocol, the first floor showroom will be completely restored to its original condition, excepting modern lighting requirements and utilities. The interior of the first floor store wing of the building once held shelving, but that is now mostly gone. Yet, a few hints remain, particularly a display case that has been removed to the post office space and can return to the main room. The ceiling is finished with bold tin tiles painted white, with an assertive cornice molding. Both are in very fine condition. Lighting was originally eight suspended light bulbs, two of which are still in place. A massive wooden staircase with an easy rise leads to the second story. The balusters are milled in a squared style and painted white, while the risers and treads are stained a dark walnut brown. The second floor of this wing is also a wide open space, where the company's clothing store was located. There is a safe on each story of this wing. Two walls are finished with a beaded board wainscot in the stairwell area. Most of the interior trim remains, as does the second story hard wood flooring, although it is buckling in places. Some plaster has fallen as a result of water damage from the failing roof. A few of the store shelves survive on this floor. Formerly, there was a door connecting this wing to the office suite, but that was closed off in a recent remodeling. This wing has escaped alterations to its original configuration. While there is evidence of some benign neglect, the building was responsibly mothballed when it was removed from service, and can be restored. The company store closed in 1971 and these spaces were then used for storage before being essentially abandoned. Utilities are inadequate for any use of the building beyond storage. Plumbing has been disconnected.

The one-story extension at the north end of the building houses a fourth safe, a former cold storage area, and a small kitchen area, which further suggests that this building may have had a first life as a community center.

One eligible building

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Ashland Coal Co. Store
McDowell County, West Virginia

The gym

Circa 1907

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR

The gymnasium has suffered flood damage and is endangered. Located to the rear of the main company store, and flush with the creek's bank, it is a small wooden structure that was formerly used as a basketball area and weigh room. It is painted the same forest green color that is used on the main building. The single gable roof is finished in rolled roofing also in the corporate color. The gable front entry features one bay, and each of the long walls features three bays with double-hung sashes. There is a non-historic alteration of a single door on the south face, where a small room has been studded in. At present, the building is not weatherproof, as there is a vent in the wall to allow for a stovepipe. There are no utilities to the building. There are six recessed electric lights in the ceiling, which is approximately fifteen feet high. Large stones support the structural timbers because much of the foundation washed away during floods in the summer of 2003. The building is threatened by its location and must be moved a short distance in order to preserve it.

One eligible building

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1

Ashland Coal Company Store
McDowell County, West Virginia

Statement of Significance

The Ashland Coal Company store property is historically significant at the state and local level under National Register Criterion A for its association with the rise of the institution of coal company stores and towns of McDowell County West Virginia, for its association with the coal heritage of southern West Virginia, and under Criterion C for its architecture, which reflects the building philosophies of the coal industry at the time. There are two contributing resources on the site, the large brick company store and a smaller wooden gym to the store's rear.

Criterion A

Although the existence of vast seams of high quality coal in the southern West Virginia region had been known as early as 1790, there was no real demand for the fuel until the late nineteenth century, and when demand did arise, the issue of the rugged, isolated terrain was a serious barrier to development of the Pocahontas fields. Shortly after the Civil War, these problems were resolved. Major Jed Hotchkiss of Staunton, Va., in 1873 financed an expedition to explore the area. Realizing both the potential for exploitation and the need for outside capital, he sought the participation of northern capitalists. The vice president of the Norfolk and Western Railroad, Frederick J. Kimball, purchased much of the 40,000 acres that were acquired by the northern investors as a result of Hotchkiss's overtures. Thereafter, the Southwest Virginia Improvement Company was formed to work with the railroad to develop the coal resources. By the mid 1880s, The Flat Top Coal Land Association and the Crozer Land Association had acquired the entire field.

The land companies then offered tracts of land for lease for thirty years with an option for another thirty years. The land companies received ten cents per ton royalty on all coal mined. The railroad and the land companies shared many stockholders who were anxious to see their investments become more lucrative. Thus, work began on the gargantuan task of bringing the railroad to the coal fields. To reach McDowell County, it was necessary to construct a 3,000 foot tunnel through Flat Top Mountain. With that project completed, the development of the coal fields began at a very rapid pace, transforming the rural agricultural county into a rural industrial one that became the leading producer of coal in West Virginia.¹ Once the railroad provided transportation for the mined coal, coal operators could begin their work for relatively little investment. The rugged terrain was actually ideal for mining. Coal seams cropped on the steep hillsides, which allowed for the construction of inexpensive drift mines instead of the more costly shaft mines that were used in the northern coal fields.

The path of the railroad determined the location of the coal mines. Land companies were eager for mines to arise, and for production to begin, so opening a mine was easy. Development came rapidly. By 1888 there were fifteen mines in McDowell County. Another 119 mines opened before 1910, and by 1930, there were 224 coal mines there. The quality of the coal was spectacular. It burned hot, with low ash levels, and almost no smoke. Converted to coke, it was indispensable to the steel industry.

¹ Ronald D Eller, *Miners Mill hands and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 73.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 2

Ashland Coal Company Store
McDowell County, West Virginia

Armed with this cachet, the mines and miners of southwestern West Virginia quickly established a culture of mining that made them famous. At the center of this culture was the coal town, and the center of the coal town was the coal company store. At first, the miner was as invisible to the outside world as he was indispensable to the industry. Ruthlessly exploited in the early years, miners lived in the towns the companies built, and shopped in the stores the companies provided. In the seven southern coal producing counties of the state, company stores formed the core of social and economic life for many thousands of workers who lived in coal towns. In McDowell County, the railroad was the major means of transiting the region. By 1892, the Norfolk and Western reached the Elkhorn Valley. Ashland Coal Co., began construction that year, near the terminus of the rail line into the narrow valley that is drained by the North Fork of Elkhorn Creek.

Ashland was organized and developed by entrepreneurs from the Pennsylvania anthracite fields. According to Ashland's corporate history, W. J. Richards, chief engineer of the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Co., of Wilkes-Barre, Pa., secured the original Ashland lease from E.W. Clark, and the other trustees of the Flat Top Land Association.² Richards is credited with working with Thomas A. Edison to develop the electric mine safety lamp. The first General Manager of Ashland Coal was A.W. Phillips, who lived in Ashland until he retired as President of the company, returning then to Mount Caramel, Pa.

Ashland Coal began operations in 1894 after two years of construction of the mine and the plant. The company erected a drift mine and a wooden gravity fed tippie that loaded coal onto the Norfolk and Western Railroad. That year, 30,330 tons of coal were loaded. The firm was initially capitalized with \$36,400 that was increased to \$200,000 by 1901. The first dividend was paid in 1902 and the capital stock was increased to \$500,000. The operation expanded and a company town was soon constructed. By 1907 it was largely complete. Some 150 miners occupied the town and by 1935 they had hand-loaded nearly four million tons of the "smokeless" Pocahontas coal. Ashland's coal seam was five feet 10 inches thick at its outcropping.³

W.W. Greer became store manager at Ashland in 1902, and later became General Manager of the stores of the three companies that in 1927 comprised the A.P.M. Wholesale Company. This organization bought store merchandise, hardware, and mine supplies at the manufacturers' prices. These items were sold to Ashland's stores and mines, and outside customers, at a "reasonable jobber's markup," Walker wrote. Warehouses were maintained at Ashland and Bluefield.⁴ The present company store served as that warehouse after 1927. Prior to 1927, the building may have served as a community center, although little is known about the building's original purpose. The store was one of several that a consortium of coal companies operated. They were profitable, according to the corporate history: "At times these profits kept the mines in operation."⁵

The original company store, located across the street from the present building, was a multi-story many-windowed structure that also served as a social hall and inn, according to Ashland old-timers Carl Rose and Pete Tolliver who remember it. This building burned in 1943, and the present building was then adapted to be

² W.W. Walker, "History of Ashland Coal and Coke Company and Associated Companies (Directly or Indirectly)," unpublished ms. Bluefield, WV, 1968, 1.

³ Walker, "History of Ashland Coal," 1.

⁴ Walker, "History of Ashland Coal," 34.

⁵ Walker, "History of Ashland Coal," 33.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Ashland Coal Company Store
McDowell County, West Virginia

the company store. The store carried everything the miner and his family needed or could want, including fresh fruit, foods, ice cream, clothing, toys, weapons, tools, automotive supplies, fabric, shoes, hats, coats, and dynamite. The store was a meeting place as much as anything else. Miners gathered there in down times to visit or play cards, and their wives counted trips to the store as important aspects of the social life of the town.

In 1930, the wholesale company was sold to Bluefield Supply Company in exchange for stock in that company. Ashland owned 298 shares. Majestic Collieries Co., and Pemberton Coal and Coke Co. also were shareholders. The Great Depression hit the mines and the company stores quite hard, and by 1931, Ashland's condition was "not good," according to the corporate history. The Ashland company store was leased to United Pocahontas Coal Co. in 1965. Through a series of buy-outs and mergers, there emerged by 1967 the Ashland Mining Corporation that controlled 3,607,209 tons of coal reserves in the Pocahontas field. Ashland employed miners from 1894-1980s. The coal seam began to play out in 1979, when employment there was down to 21 miners who loaded only 10,274 tons of coal. In the late 1980s, the company ceased operations and the tipple was sold for scrap. The federal government closed the town's post office in 1991.

In the twenty-first century, Ashland is an unincorporated place consisting of fewer than thirty buildings, mostly homes, which are generally well-kept. As with the other coal towns of the region, the community was designed as an architectural whole, with some care given to its overall appearance. Many of the surviving houses in Ashland reflect the American Foursquare architectural style with hipped roofs and wide, open eaves. This theme is echoed by the roofline of the company building. Cultural resource reviews elsewhere have suggested that company towns in many industries often chose these economical architectural styles that featured balloon construction. These buildings could be erected quickly and repeatedly in a variety of geographical situations.

Generally, company stores were located in the commercial heart of coal towns, or else they were on the way to the mine mouth from the residential areas of the town.⁶ Miners were obligated to purchase their own equipment and supplies, so a location that was convenient seemed to make sense. But, since the store enjoyed a monopoly, its location was largely irrelevant, and company store locations did vary from town to town. For Ashland, which was laid out in a cruciform (crossroads) style, the original store was at the center of that crossroad. The present building is across the street from the location of the original store. According to the company sketch of the town, the buildings were arrayed along the base and arms of a east-west Y configuration. The company store was at the yoke of the Y, with two arms reaching out on either side of the tipple and mine mouth in an easterly direction. A school and a church were located on each arm of the Y, suggesting that the town was, in the practice of the time, a racially segregated one. Originally, there were about 125 buildings in the community. At one time, Ashland also had a theater and a gas station. They were located just to the west of the present store.

The rapid construction in Ashland and many other places in the county, wrought overwhelming change for the region, identifying it from then on with the coal industry rather than the remote, sparse, and independent mountain farms that characterized McDowell County when it was formed in 1858. According to the Ninth

⁶ Mack H. Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historic Geography of Mining Settlements in the Pocahontas Coal Field of Southern West Virginia 1873-1930," diss. University of Tennessee, 1972. 91

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

Ashland Coal Company Store
McDowell County, West Virginia

Census, there was no manufacturing at all in McDowell County, because prior to the late 1880s, the county was only lightly inhabited by farmers. When mining began, the local population could not supply enough labor so workers were recruited from the American south and the countries of eastern Europe. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, these immigrants changed the county's ethnic and cultural makeup. This population shift brought great adjustments in that the various backgrounds, languages, and political perspectives of the population were far more diverse than before. This new diversity, however, quickly became submerged under the more dominant identity of coal mining, and a new ethos of interracial and intercultural relationships arose. In one 1953 study of a small, unidentified, southern West Virginia coal town, the investigator observed that while the races were segregated in all aspects of their social life in the coal camps, they were not segregated in the mine, and were able to forge trusting, cooperative work relations. Outside the mine, the miners were cordial with each other, but kept to their own racial group. The segregation was partly corporate; company housing for blacks was inferior to that provided for white workers. Yet within the company store, equality was the norm. Customers were waited on in turn, and staff was under instructions to be equally cordial and helpful to all customers. Service to blacks was as prompt and courteous as service to whites. The investigator further observed the quality of goods in the store. Most shoppers flocked to the grocery and supply areas. In the clothing department the outlay was "severe" and little interest in those goods was displayed by the miners of either race. Workers of both races mingled at the company's dairy bar, a refreshment stand where no alcohol was served.⁷ McDowell County's black population spiked from almost nil in 1880 to 22,000 by 1930. The county soon was home to nearly 20 percent of the state's 115,000 black residents. Other ethnicities, particularly Italians, Slavs, and Hungarians, were also amply represented in the county's population, which that year surpassed 90,000. Although they rarely were elected, African-Americans routinely ran for public office, owned businesses, and practiced the learned professions in the county seat of Welch, where their political clout was factored into most public policy decisions. Thus, McDowell County holds much historical significance for the African-Americans of West Virginia.

Because the mines were located in remote hollows and hillsides far away from established communities, it was necessary for companies to provide housing, schools, churches, and other community needs in order to recruit workers. In their heydays, prosperous companies vied with each other for the best quality of life in their towns. Some towns boasted of their orchestras, restaurants, opera halls, theaters, and ball clubs. Parsimonious or less prosperous companies built little more than depressing shanty towns, with few or no amenities. However, labor was hard to find in the first quarter of the twentieth century, so most companies took pains to offer attractive living conditions to stabilize their work force. It was cheaper to build a private town from scratch rather than pay for the costly transportation from an existing town, which in any case would not have been able to provide the required housing. Each coal town had its own personality and style. They ranged in condition from exemplary to miserable. No towns focused on any other economic activity besides coal. In McDowell County, coal mining was the only economic endeavor. The county was completely dependent upon outside sources of food, clothing, and every other necessity of life. For the majority of citizens everything came from company stores. Although the county seat of Welch is not a company town, it, too, depended upon coal and the railroad. One resident there said in 1940, "our boxcars come in full and go out empty and our coal cars come in empty and go out full."⁸

⁷ Jack French, "Segregation Patterns in a Coal Camp," MA thesis, West Virginia University, 1953, 57-58.

⁸ "The Story of McDowell County," *West Virginia Review* 17:7(April 1940), 165-67.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

Ashland Coal Company Store
McDowell County, West Virginia

With such a focus on coal production at the expense of everything else, the industry came only slowly and reluctantly to the realization that it would need to be pro-active in the matter of housing and general worker welfare.⁹ Saloons had become the curse of coal communities, and companies waged an aggressive social war against their wares, as evidenced by the “dairy bar” discussed above.¹⁰ In the first days of corporate social programs, the companies provided “club houses” where miners could read or socialize in an alcohol-free environment. Strong drink posed grave hazards to mining, as well as to families of drinking miners, so companies worked hard to develop an alternative. By deliberate corporate intent, miners had to travel very far to find ardent spirits, beer, or wine.¹¹ When times were better, and company housing was more common, companies used the threat of eviction and discharge to mold a miner’s behavior.¹²

In the early years, the cost of building company housing was prohibitive for the relatively lightly capitalized industry. Houses, even modest ones, were expensive to build, and sewers, streets, and other amenities represented a huge investment that was only recovered indirectly and over a great number of years. When major corporations and outside investors got involved in the industry after the turn of the twentieth century, they provided the capital necessary to build higher quality company towns. Between 1900 – 1915, miner housing changed drastically. In this period, bituminous coal production more than doubled, making it possible for companies to go far beyond a clubhouse for the miners. Ashland grew rapidly in this era after it re-capitalized its mine in 1902.

Companies reacted differently to their role as landlords. Operator motives were mixed. Some expressed a genuine concern for worker welfare, while others believed that benevolence was good business. Still others simply did not “want their names associated with an unkempt cluster of shacks.”¹³ Some companies configured the worker housing to augment profits, an essential though heartless practice among companies that were struggling financially in the over developed industry. Other managers believed that the coal town was “a necessary evil to which a prudent manager devoted as little time, energy, and money as possible. Most company officials appear to have known little and cared less about the living conditions of their employees,” historian Robert Munn wrote.¹⁴ However, there were exceptions, and market realities and economic demands brought most operators to the conclusion that worker welfare was an important aspect of the mining business. In time, company housing was broadly viewed as good business, not good works, and operators constructed their villages and towns “to attract a better class of coal miner.” The first corporations to build model towns in the southern fields were U.S. Steel, Island Creek Coal, and Consolidated Coal. The first “model” company town in West Virginia was the community of Holden, in Logan County. Albert F. Holden, a mining engineer for the United States Oil Co., designed well-made houses, and properly maintained them. His town also contained a school, store, theater, clubhouse, and other amenities. U.S. Oil later became Island Creek Coal Co.¹⁵

⁹ Robert F. Munn, “The Development of Model Towns in Bituminous Coal Fields,” *West Virginia History* 15:3(Spring 1979):243-254, 244.

¹⁰ Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 245.

¹¹ French, “Segregation in a Coal Camp,” 57-58.

¹² Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 245.

¹³ Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 244.

¹⁴ Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 244.

¹⁵ Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 248.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Ashland Coal Company Store
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Ashland's surviving architecture and archival photography suggests that it was pleasant town in the true sense of the word. If not a noted model town, it clearly followed the model. In 1901, according to the Annual Report of the West Virginia Department of mines, Ashland had fifty houses and 100 coke ovens. The inspector remarked on the pleasant nature of the community noting that the company was fastidious about keeping the community in pristine shape. Inspector William J. Preece wrote, "This company takes a great deal of pride in keeping everything both inside and outside of the mine in first class condition and has built quite a nice little village here, which makes quite an inducement for the better class of laborers."¹⁶ In 1901, Ashland was the last stop on the Norfolk and Western Railroad on the North Fork branch. By 1902, the town was building ten more houses and one hundred more coke ovens. That year, construction began on a "new store." The present building was erected in 1907. By 1913, Ashland Coal and Coke Co., was a "major producer" of coal in the state and county, according to the state department of mines. Some 232,934 tons of coal were mined that year by 188 underground miners and 259 surface workers.¹⁷ It was a safe year for Ashland; there were no fatal accidents in the mine and only one reportable injury. Richard Orander, 28, suffered a broken foot and two broken ribs in a slate fall.¹⁸

Ashland's worker ethnicity that year was varied: there were seventy-two native whites, one German, thirty-five Hungarians, fifty-five Italians, and twenty-five blacks. In this era, maintaining a careful ethnic balance in coal communities was considered to be wise management in that by playing on racial and ethnic prejudices of the workers, the company was undermining the worker solidarity that would be necessary for a union to survive. The bulk of West Virginia's labor force between 1888-1917 was primarily made up of native whites and white foreigners but with a sizeable minority of African American miners.¹⁹

Ashland's miners did not live in stereotypical and shabby Jenny Lind shell houses that were notorious in the northern coal fields. Most of Ashland's surviving homes are duplexes that evidence the architectural styles that are commonly seen in industrial towns. Foursquares with open eaves and ornamental brackets and double hung windows ranged beside I-houses with symmetrical facades that featured front porches. Four-room bungalows, and gable-front houses are present, also. In 1915, the community boasted an inn (above the original store) two schools, two churches, and a population of some 1,500 persons. In addition to the 125 dwellings, there was probably a boarding house for single miners, also.

More than 80 percent of McDowell County's coal miners lived in these privately established towns. They varied widely in size. While Ashland was somewhat small in that it worked only two mines, the town of Gary supported twelve different mines. There, each mine had its own neighborhood. Roads between them were paved. There were street lights, weekly garbage collection, churches, stores, restaurants, schools, clubhouses, athletic fields, tennis courts, and movie houses. Ashland was not as large as Gary, but it did offer

¹⁶ West Virginia. State Department of Mines. *Annual Report 1900/01*.

¹⁷ James T. Laing, *Annual Report of the West Virginia Department of Mines*, (Charleston: Tribune Printing Co., 1913), 26.

¹⁸ Laing, *Annual Report*, 376.

¹⁹ Kenneth Bailey, "A Judicious Mixture: Negroes and Immigrants in the West Virginia Mines, 1880-1917," *West Virginia History* 34 (1973).

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some of the same amenities. Obviously, every company store was extremely important to the community it served.

By 1916, half of the major coal corporations had “sociological” programs designed to increase worker satisfaction. *Coal Age* and other industry journals regularly ran articles on the sociological aspects of mining.²⁰ The word has little similarity to the definition of the twenty-first century field of sociology. The early coal companies were worried about loss of work force, strikes, alcohol, and safety underground. These problems were blamed on a work force “that took little pride in their work, homes, communities, or themselves.” The companies believed that most miners would change if there was an improvement in living conditions.²¹ During the years of World War I, the increased demand for coal and the critical shortage of coal miners made it essential for companies to offer housing and other amenities. The corporate ethic thus changed to reflect the idea that tending to the comfort and happiness of the worker was an important part of the industry’s persona. From this realization, the industry moved toward a desire for total control over the miner’s life, repeating an earlier historical trend in industrial development. Similar concerns were aired by owners of the early factories and textile mills of the 1840s in New York and New England, when temperance campaigns, Protestant religious revivals, and middle class social values were used to corporate benefit at the expense of cultural and ethnic preferences of the workers, many of whom were European Catholic immigrants. This history should have forewarned the coal industry that such oppressive control of workers inevitably leads to labor strife.

By 1922, the U.S. Coal Commission reported that 50 percent of the nation’s bituminous coal miners lived in company towns. Eighty percent of West Virginia miners lived in company towns, and half of the nation’s company towns were located in that state.²² This fact emphasized the magnitude of the shift away from the traditional culture in the southern coal fields. Up until mining began, most of the sparsely settled farmers there were far away from towns, so there was no alternative but to build coal towns in the Pocahontas field. There was simply no other place for miners to live. Most companies also fervently believed – or hoped – that their display of such “benevolence” would keep the United Mine Workers’ organizers out of their towns.²³

It was not to be. Over-production, the rise of the automobile, and the union joined hands to bring down the institution of the company town, and with it the company store. As early as 1911, *Coal Age* magazine had predicted that miners would always prefer their own homes, saying that, “The best of men dread the eye which follows them night and day.”²⁴ The mobility of the automobile, the promises of the union, and the uncertainty of job security made that miners’ dream a reality for more and more workers. By the 1920s, coal towns were beginning to show some wear. The industry was radically over-developed and the overproduction brought coal prices down, which in turn triggered layoffs, which weakened the market. When miners were forced out of their company houses when they were laid off, many families became homeless. There was a marked decline in the quality and vitality of the company towns. The Great Depression in West Virginia began years before the 1928 stock market crash. The conditions of the coal fields, drought, and chestnut blight comprised a triple threat that

²⁰ Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 247.

²¹ Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 247.

²² Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 244.

²³ Munn, “Development of Model Towns,” 252.

²⁴ *Coal Age*, 1911, 159.

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delivered economic catastrophe to the mountain state and to its coal fields. Farming and mining were in ruins. In the opinion of historian Jerry Bruce Thomas, West Virginia's coal miners suffered more egregiously than almost any other group of Americans during those years.²⁵ Suffering continued until the United States entered World War II, when the rapidly arming nation needed every ton of coal that could be mined. Workers were recalled to the mines, and the company towns began to flourish again – if only for a few brief years.

When transportation advances came in the twentieth century, company towns in other places and other industries quickly began to wane, but in the rugged and isolated West Virginia mountains, they lingered much longer. Highway construction in West Virginia was a costly proposition, and the state legislature was loathe to impose taxes that might harm the mining industry, thus, road construction came only slowly. The City of Welch began paving its streets in 1910, but coal communities were not automobile accessible until the 1920s, and then only partly so. The downfall of company towns was accelerated when the automobile became more widely available and the public demand for highways overturned lawmakers' reluctance to raise taxes. Concern about the tax burden of road building had yielded to public pressure. West Virginians by then were so adamant to have better roads that the state legislature passed a road construction bond to "Help Pull West Virginia Out of the Mud." A rapid program of road building soon commenced throughout the state. McDowell County Road Engineer Col. W.J. McLaren boasted in 1924 that his county had more hard road than any county in the state.²⁶ These new roads opened isolated coal company towns to traffic from elsewhere, and they also provoked in the hearts of coal miners an abiding desire for automobile ownership.

As miners became more mobile, they frequently chose to shop away from the company store -- especially those miners who were paid in cash, rather than in company scrip. Technically outlawed in the late nineteenth century, company scrip survived until the Great Depression because it offered an informal system of credit. Although Ashland Coal Co. did make and issue scrip, Ashland workers were not enslaved by the system, which was optional for the miner. Scrip was issued against a future paycheck when the miner found himself short. Rose explained that scrip was very helpful in hard times, and issued only at the miner's request. Normally, each week the miners received a pay envelope with cash -- not a check. This was, according to Rose and Tolliver, a deeply appreciated gesture of the company's good will. By late 2004, the very rare Ashland Coal Company scrip was a valuable collector's item.²⁷

In the 1920s and 1930s, however, coal company scrip was becoming an irritant to union men, and part of the "company control" that labor organizers railed against. Contending that the companies controlled every aspect of a miner's life, the union began to demand that company houses be sold to miners and that scrip be abandoned for cash wages. In some cases, the union demanded that company stores be closed down on the grounds that they were exploitive of the workers. To maintain harmony in the workplace, the companies complied. Where miners were not captives of company scrip, goods sold in company stores tended to be competitive with "outside" quality and price. However, many coal company stores were exploitive and had

²⁵ Jerry Bruce Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal: West Virginia and the Great Depression*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

²⁶ *The West Virginia Review*, 1:9 (June 1924) 16-22.

²⁷ Walter Caldwell, *Coal Company Scrip*, ms. West Virginia and Regional History Collection of West Virginia University Libraries, 1969, 99.

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long used the three-pronged tool of scrip, store receipts, and rental income from company houses to recapture revenues that were paid out in wages. Another 1953 study of a West Virginia coal camp revealed that item by item, prices in the company store were higher than the nearest locally owned grocery store, and higher than the A and P chain in the county seat. The investigator concluded that this “monopoly” very clearly restricted the buying habits of mining families.²⁸ Still another study revealed that, “In addition to requiring miners to contribute to the cost of production [by purchasing their supplies] coal operators sometimes reduced labor costs by paying part of wages in “truck” from the company store. To many miners, the company store was the ‘pluck me store.’”²⁹ Company stores had become a red flag to the charging bull of unionism.

Although miners were growing increasingly disgruntled with company autocracy, the Pocahontas field did not endure a major coal strike between 1895-1921. Yet there were incidents of friction. African-American strike-breakers were brought to McDowell County in 1895, and in 1902 labor organizer Mary Harris “Mother” Jones visited miners in the county.³⁰ Historian Stuart McGehee credits the close proximity of the operator to the miners for the relative harmony in the Flat Top region. Additionally, the productivity of the coal fields kept miners working and paychecks steady. This coal field paid higher wages than the union mines did, lessening union appeal. “A severe labor shortage made workers a valuable and precious commodity, and overt oppression might result in no miners, no coal, and no profits,” he wrote.³¹

However, in the opinion of author David Alan Corbin, when the press arrived in southern West Virginia in 1912-1921 to cover the bloody mine wars there, “they discovered that [the wars] were the culmination of decades of exploitation and oppression.” Corbin traced the coal field violence to the “authoritarian rule of the coal industry there, and the heart of that authoritarian system was the company town” increasingly symbolized by the company store.³² Coal town historian Crandall Shiflett saw a middle ground; company stores were neither the villains that the industry critics claimed, nor were they the benign services of a charitable industry. “On the face of it, the instrumental power of the company store – located as it was in remote areas and offering the benefits of convenience and easy credit -- seems formidable. But the store’s power and control over the mining population was blunted by the rational behavior of miners and the business acumen of company officials who understood the limits of their control in a tight labor market.”³³

McDowell and Mercer counties remained non-union throughout the years-long labor struggle, but ultimately they were organized. When the union finally did come to the Pocahontas field, it was not without strife. Matewan Chief of Police Sid Hatfield, who had supported the miners’ unionizing efforts in Mingo County, was gunned down in cold blood on the steps of the McDowell County courthouse by a coal company lackey, C.E. Lively, who was exacting revenge for Hatfield’s obstruction of company intentions. Despite many

²⁸ Thomas J. Morris, “The Coal Camp,” MA Thesis, West Virginia University, 1953, 16.

²⁹ Jerry Bruce Thomas, “Growth of the Coal Industry in the Great Kanawha Basin: 1850-1885,” thesis, University of North Carolina, 1967.

³⁰ Memphis Tennessee Garrison, “The Negro of McDowell,” in *The West Virginia Review* 17:7(April 1940), 185.

³¹ Dr. Stuart McGehee and Eva McGuire, *A Century of Stewardship: The History of the Pocahontas Land Corporation*, Bluefield, WV: Pocahontas Land Corporation, 2001, 64.

³² David Alan Corbin, *The West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology*, (Martinsburg, WV: Appalachian Editions, 1990), 1.

³³ Crandall Shiflett, *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 189.

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eye-witnesses to the brutal crime, Lively was never indicted or tried for the murder. This reflection of absolute industry domination of the southern coal fields has become a well-known example of the region's turbulent past. The first successful union locals in McDowell County were formed in 1933 and were a major part of the transformation of the coalfield from its "pioneer era," McGehee wrote.³⁴ The union came on the heels of Franklin D. Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act. Ultimately declared unconstitutional, the NIRA gave working people the right to join a union, and that right was never revoked. The UMW then quickly succeeded in organizing the Pocahontas field. On June 23, 1933, West Virginia miners swarmed to Charleston to celebrate. They heard UMW District 17 President Van A. Bitner proclaim their victory, "you men of McDowell, Logan, Mingo, the Winding Gulf, and Kanawha fields, New River, Kentucky, and Maryland –you are now free citizens of the United States and you enjoy every right the constitution and laws give to citizens of the United States . . ."³⁵

Within twenty years of the UMWA's arrival, the inexorable decline of company stores had begun, and company towns followed suit. By the 1950s, the egregious conditions of the coal towns began to draw academic interest as sociologists were drawn to them to study their distinctive cultural traits. The union, increased public scrutiny, better transportation, and a sagging coal industry all contributed to the decline of the company towns and stores. The Ashland company store held on for a while, finally closing its doors in 1971. By 1990, the phenomenon of industrial communities and company commerce was a thing of the past, often evidenced by abandoned houses, boarded up stores, and rusty, decaying tipples.

Criterion C

The Ashland Coal Company Store property is historically significant at the state and local level for its association with the coal company stores of McDowell County. It meets the requirements to be included in the Multiple Property Submission "McDowell County Company Stores" because it retains enough of its original fabric and appearance to reflect its importance to the community and to the coal industry. Ashland's distinctive fortress-like commercial architecture is executed in a blend of brick, stone, and wood, accented by a low hipped roof with an exaggerated wide overhang and closed eaves finished in beaded fir. The brick is painted in a two-tone green scheme that appears to be of long standing. A second, smaller, frame building to the rear is also painted in the "corporate" green.

Like most of the other company stores in McDowell County, the Ashland store is located on a flat area very near to the former rail lines, at the center of the community. It housed the payroll office and company business offices as well as the store proper. It was the business and social hub of the town. Like most of the other stores, Ashland's is constructed of brick, although not of red brick. Ashland's brick is yellow. Unlike the other stores in McDowell County, Ashland's store does not have a porch or third floor. No vestige of a corporate logo remains, and the portico over the entry has long since disappeared. The display windows and storefront entry are covered with heavy metal plates.

All of the coal company stores in this section of West Virginia historically displayed their own distinctive architectural styles. The towns themselves do have interesting architectural similarities that mark

³⁴ McGehee and McGuire, *A Century of Stewardship*, 67.

³⁵ Corbin, *West Virginia Mine Wars*, 165.

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them as industrial villages. None of the coal company stores in McDowell County are alike, but each has an architectural statement to make. It was important to the coal companies to assert their authority via the architecture they chose for their company stores and offices. Bluefield, West Virginia, architect Alex B. Mahood designed many of the coal company stores in the southern coal fields, but it is unlikely that he was responsible for the Ashland building, also distinctive in its stately restrained architecture. The building may have been designed by a company engineer. While some company stores reflected an "unremarkable architecture" others were quite fanciful and grand. With a low, streamlined character, Ashland's store is commanding in its aspect, but it is not as fanciful as others. Some aspects of the Ashland building bear similar characteristics to buildings that were constructed in other nearby coal towns.

While the dates of construction of company stores are generally known, this is of no particular assistance in identifying architectural styles. "The structures usually reflect no particular building period," Mack Gillenwater explained in his 1972 analysis of coal towns and their architecture. Roof styles provide some limited assistance in this regard. "Occasionally the occurrence of an unusual type of roof assists in classification. For example, a mansard roof, popular during the Gothic Balloon Period, or a low-angle gabled roof typical of the Eclectic Cube Period, is helpful."³⁶ The utilitarian Ashland store has symmetrical ranked bays and a low hipped roof, calling to mind Colonial Revival and Prairie School architectural forms.

Ashland's company store may well have had a first life as the town's community center. It served as a warehouse from 1927 until the 1943 fire. Its architecture reflects the points raised by Gillenwater. These centers typically contained an auditorium, billiard room, a dining room, a lodge hall, or upstairs bedrooms. Because the mining communities were racially segregated, the first floor amenities were often duplicated. Community centers were "large, bulky" structures that often measured fifty feet by one hundred feet, with gable ends. The Ashland building's interior consists of wide open spaces in the long wing, and smaller offices in the short wing, where the paymaster and post office were located. There is no auditorium, but the space could have served as an assembly hall or dining room. There was a kitchen in the building. While many company community centers had porches, single casement windows, and clapboard siding, Ashland's did not. Instead, the façade features an asymmetrical storefront entry and ranks of double-hung sash well anchored by stone and concrete sills and lintels. Location is another hint as to the building's first life. Community buildings were built in the newer towns along North Fork of Elkhorn Creek where Ashland is located.³⁷ The existence of a small gym behind the Ashland store also suggests that it may have been a community center.

"Responsibility for choosing building sites and house types was given to mining administrators," Gillenwater explained. "Most of them originated from outside the region. Their architectural ideas were brought in with them and were manifested in the dwellings and structures, many of which still (1972) remain on the landscape."³⁸ Ashland's owners were from the anthracite fields of Pennsylvania where they had acquired their tastes in industrial architecture. The building materials in coal towns reflected the local supply of lumber, much of which was milled on the site of the town. When a company decided to open a mine, the first task at hand was to provide dwellings for workers, and the company officials who were responsible for that usually

³⁶ Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historic Geography," 91

³⁷ Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historic Geography," 92.

³⁸ Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historic Geography," iv.

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installed a saw mill as a first order of business, dismantling it after the town was built. Until the town was built, workers lived in tents or the shanties previously used by the railroad construction gangs. About every fifth house in a coal town was constructed of brattice (blocks cheaply made from coking ash) to prevent fires from spreading through a whole row of houses. The houses rarely had indoor plumbing or heat, but a pump was usually installed for cold water.

In McDowell County, only twelve of the company store buildings have survived the decline of the coal industry, and none are presently in service as stores. Coal companies took great pains to construct assertive and imposing structures in their coal towns, just as they built extravagant mansions in the nearby small cities, where many of their white collar employees and officers resided. Bluefield and Bramwell were two such towns. This building pattern further reaffirmed the affluence and success of the industry, while exerting an economic and political authority that was unmistakable. In this region, coal was king, and evidence of its purchasing power and political influence was manifest in every aspect of its presence.

Sometimes called the "commissary," a company store reflected functional necessity and was built in a basic cubic shape. "Basically," Gillenwater wrote, "the commissary was a three-story, rectangular-shape structure, built primarily of wood, with either a flat or a low-angle gabled roof." Usually, the first floor was for storage, the second floor for retailing and offices, and the third level was exclusively offices. Building foundations were usually cut stone, brick, or concrete.³⁹ Ashland's building does not have three stories, and therefore departs somewhat from the usual structure, but resembles this description otherwise. The office complex was housed in the smaller wing of the building. This configuration was common among the company stores in McDowell County.⁴⁰

According to Gillenwater, "except for the prefabricated wooden house that was introduced into the Pocahontas field shortly after World War I, all wood-constructed dwellings were built from locally obtained lumber."⁴¹ Coal operators were interested in the most cost-efficient and durable materials available, and local lumber filled the bill. There had been almost no timbering in the Pocahontas field so lumber was readily available. The predominant woods were hemlock, poplar, and oak. All houses were constructed of timber, except for a few homes in the towns of Keystone, Rolfe, Jenkinjones, and Hemphill, the firebreak brattice construction excepted. When brick was used as a construction material, it was usually a dull red color. Ashland's store is notable in that it is constructed of yellow brick, not wood, and is further distinguished by exterior paint over the brick. Although it is not known when the building was first painted, the paint is of long standing. This expensive touch reflects the quality that was noted in the 1901 Mine Inspector's report.

The National Park Service in 1990 conducted a survey of the nation's industrial heritage, including a detailed survey of two Pennsylvania coal company towns. The survey of Robertsdale and Woodvale, Pa., contains much architecture that is similar to Ashland's. The roofline of the Robertsdale offices of the Rockhill Iron and Coal Company is identical to the Ashland building – wide eaves and low hipped roof. The building

³⁹ Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historic Geography," 91.

⁴⁰ Stacy Sones, "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Coal Company Stores in McDowell County," (Charleston: WV: State Historic Preservation Office, 1992.), F-1.

⁴¹ Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historic Geography," 105.

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also features double-hung windows. Also constructed of masonry, the Robertsdale office building is a three story structure. Company houses in the town are similar to Ashland's as well, particularly the American Foursquare style, executed both as single family and duplex configurations. There are also two-story gable-roofed duplexes that contained two four room dwellings with clapboard or board and batten exteriors. Seen also in Ashland, this style of residence had a front porch. Both towns also contain small, one story, four room bungalows.

Informal windshield reviews of other coal towns in McDowell and Raleigh counties in West Virginia reveal that these architectural forms were common in company towns.⁴² From these similarities we might deduce that while individual mine operators designed their own towns on their own terms, they were guided above all by costs. In addition to an industrial *mentalite*, a body of architectural expertise clearly was available to them on the subject of economical worker housing construction. In the broader context of historic American coal company towns, distinctive architectural styles have emerged that were driven by cost and haste. Fanciful architectural statements and more elaborate construction were reserved for the company store.⁴³

According to the 1992 Multiple Property Submission, "Architecturally, the coal company stores in southern West Virginia had no rivals anywhere in the Appalachian region. Unlike general stores across most of the rural United States, company stores were architectural masterpieces intended to reflect the wealth and power of the coal company."⁴⁴ Intentionally monumental and distinctive, if not flamboyant, coal company stores boasted of the company's strength and intimidated newcomers to the industry. Sones wrote that operators often spared no expense in the building's construction, perhaps also as a expression of style and grace extended to an otherwise constrained residential landscape.

⁴² WV Rt. 16 from Beckley to Welch.

⁴³ Lola Bennett, *The Company Towns of the Rockhill Iron and Coal Company: Robertsdale and Woodvale, Pennsylvania*, Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, America's Industrial Heritage Project, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 1990, 48-75.

⁴⁴ Sones, MPS, "Coal Company Stores," F-3.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The property includes the footprint of the Ashland Coal Company Store, a small gym behind it, and a parking area between the road to the former company tipple and the building. It is bounded by North Fork of Elkhorn Creek on the north, State Rt. 17 on the south, the tipple road on the west, and a boundary fence on the east, comprising less than one acre. It is situated on a 1,625 acre parcel that is described in McDowell County Deed Book 431 Page 89 and McDowell County Deed Book 442 Page 286.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the area traditionally associated with the Ashland company store, company offices, and U.S. Post office.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

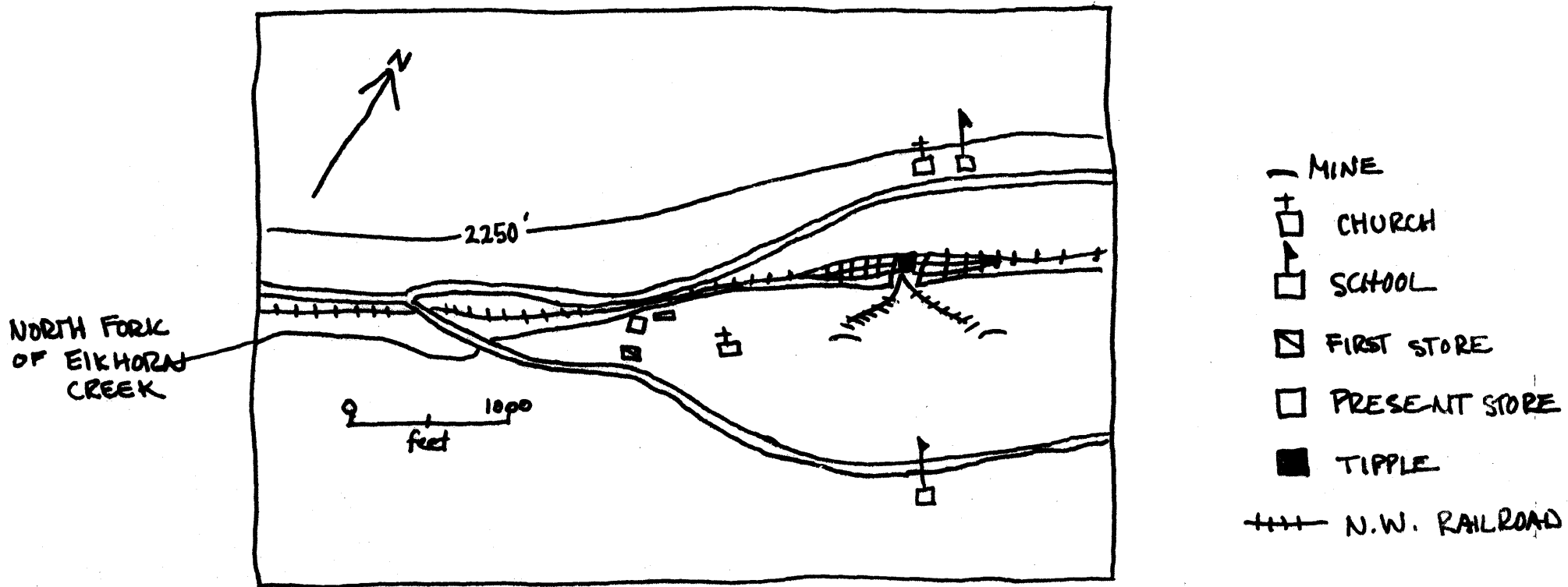
Section Photo Page 1

**Ashland Coal Co. Store
McDowell County, West Virginia**

Name of Property: Ashland Coal Company Store
Address: Route 17
Town: Ashland
County: McDowell County
Photographer: Barbara Rasmussen
Date: 2004
Negatives: WV SHPO, Charleston, WV

Photo 1 of 2 Ashland Coal Company store, south and west elevations
View facing northeast

Photo 2 of 2 Gymnasium in proximity to North Fork Creek
View facing east



Ashland WV. schematic drawing
 from Ashland Coal Co.

← DIRT ROAD TO TIPPLE SITE

← NORTH FORK OF ELKHORN CREEK

GYM

COMPANY
STORE

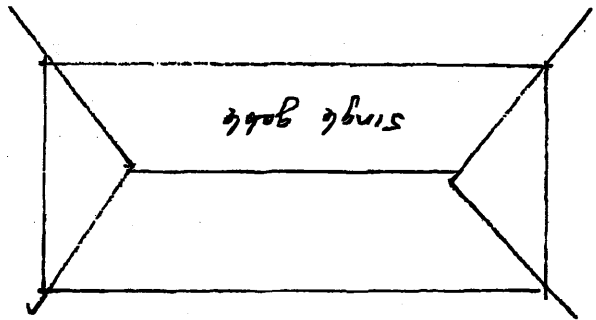
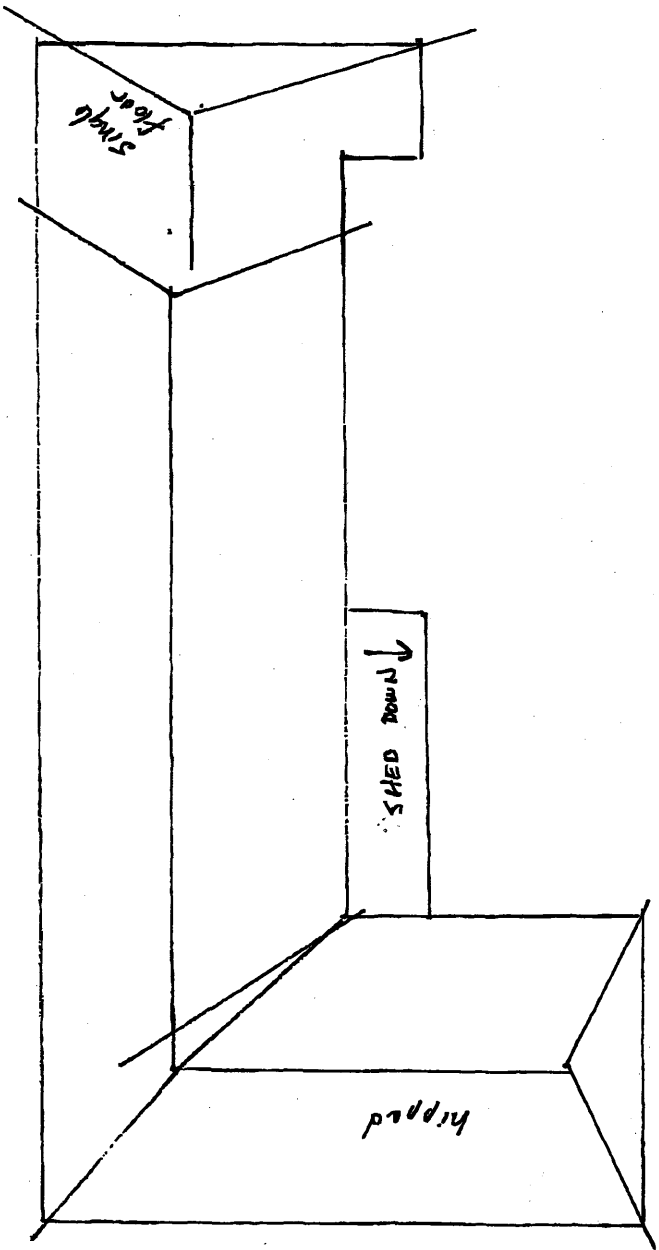
← FENCE

PARKING AREA

SKETCH OF SITE
ASHLAND COAL CO.
STORE

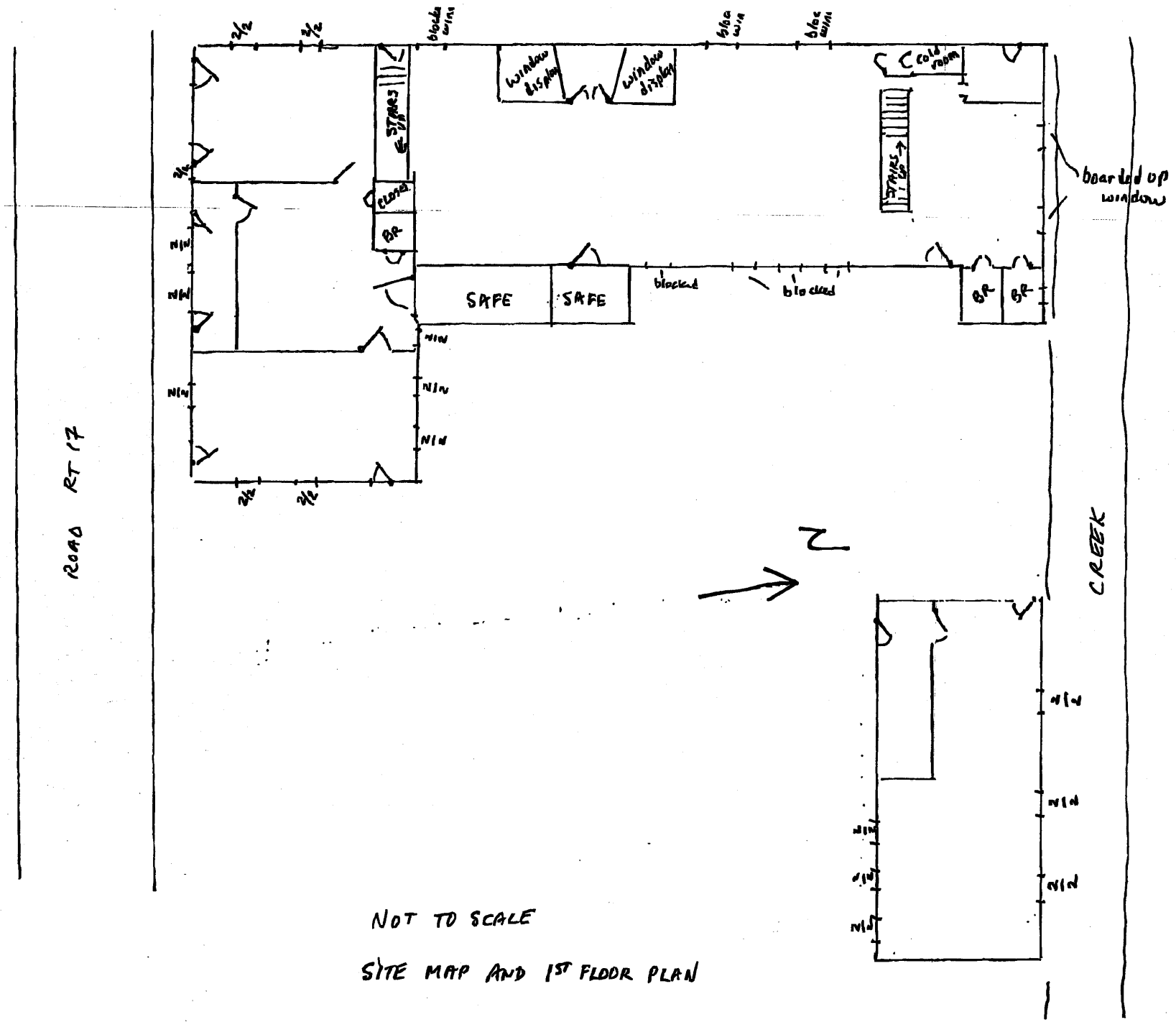
NOT TO SCALE
MCDOWELL COUNTY, WV
2004
BARBARA RASHUSSEN





ROOF DETAIL

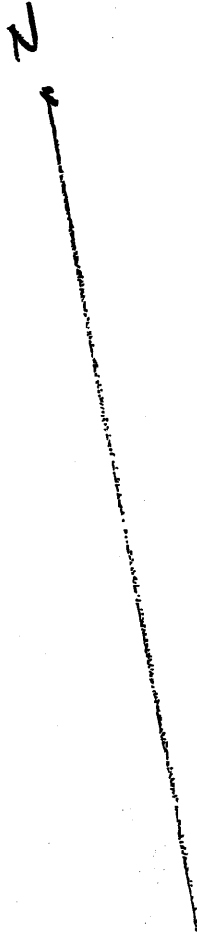
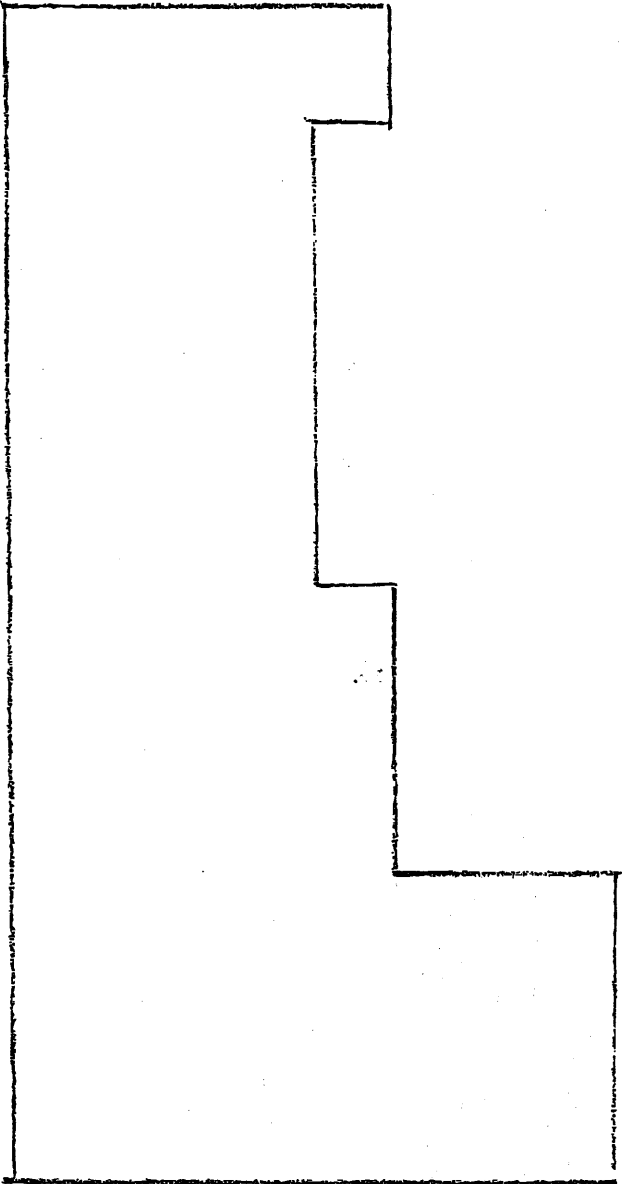
Ashland Coal Co. Store, McDowell Co. WV 2004



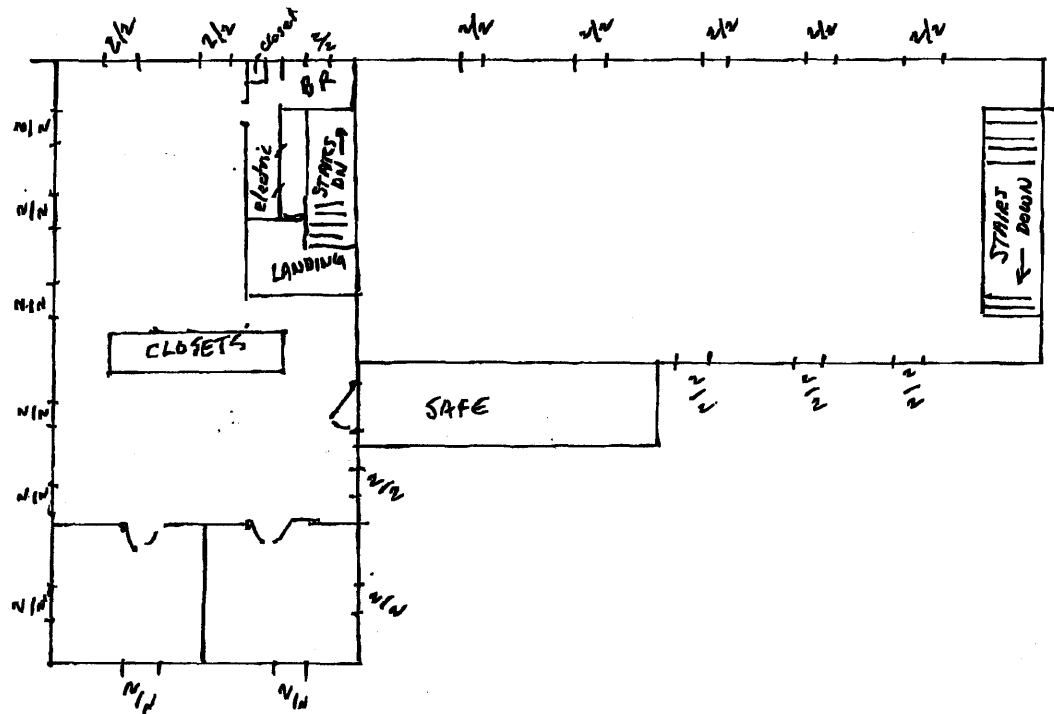
Ashland Coal Co Store and Gym Ashland (McDowell Co) 2m LV 2004

Foot Print

1cm = 200m



Ashland Coal Co. Shore
McDowell County WV 2004



NOT TO SCALE
 2nd FLOOR PLAN

2m