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 enter the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typical way of processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property	
historic nameCaudill, C. B., Store	
other names/site numberLR-79	
. Location	
treet & number 7822 Highway 7 South	NA □ not for publication
ity or town Blackey	NA Vicinity
tate Kentucky code KY county Let	cher code <u>133</u> zip code <u>41804</u>
. State/Federal Agency Certification	
Birector, Kentucky Heritage Constitution of certifying official/fille Kentucky Heritage Council/State History State of Federal agency and bureau In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National comments.)	oric Preservation Office
Signature of certifying official/Title D	eate
State or Federal agency and bureau	
. National Park Service Certification	4 1 22
	Date of Action
determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.	
determined not eligible for the National Register.	
☐ removed from the National Register.	
other, (explain:)	

Caudill, C.B., Store Name of Property		Letcher, Kentucky County and State		
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not Include previously listed resources in the count.)		
private public-local public-State public-Federal building(s) district site site structure object	☐ district	Contributing	Noncontributing	
		1	2	buildings
	=			sites
	☐ object			structures
				objects
	1	2	Total	
Name of related multiple p (Enter "N/A" if property is not part		Number of con in the National	tributing resources Register	previously listed
NA		0		
6. Function or Use				
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		
COMMERCE/department store		CULTURE/museum		

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Wood, balloon framed

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Stone foundation ___

Metal walls _____

roof Metal

other _____

Narrative Description

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

CFR 67) has been requested

Register

Record # __

☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National

designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

□ University

Name of repository:

☐ Other

□ Local government

Caudill, C.B., Store	Letcher, Kentucky		
Name of Property	County and State		
10. Geographical Data			
Acreage of Property	•		
UTM References (Flace additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)			
1 1 7 3 2 4 0 0 0 4 1 1 2 0 0 0 Zone Easting Northing 2 1	Zone EastIng Northing 4		
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)			
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)			
11. Form Prepared By			
name/title Donavan G. Cain / Mimi Pickering			
organization Appalshop, Inc.	dateJuly 20, 2000		
street & number 91 Madison St.	telephone (606) 633-0108		
city or town Whitesburg	state KY zip code 41858		
Additional Documentation			
Submit the following items with the completed form:			
Continuation Sheets			
Maps			
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the	e property's location.		
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties has	ving 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			
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)			
name Gaynell Begley			
street & number P.O. Box 274	telephone (606) 633-7738		
city or town Blackey state KY zip code 41804			
Panerwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected	for applications to the National Begieter of Historic Places to pominate		

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 Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Caudill, C. B., Store Letcher Co., KY

Description:

The C. B. Caudill Store (LR-79) is a balloon framed, steel beam supported, wooden structure with a back-sloping metal roof. The original rectangular structure was constructed by the C. B. Caudill family in 1933, with two subsequent additions built in 1940. From its original construction until 1997, the structure has been operated continuously as a general store. The structure is one story, measures 116 feet by 26 feet, and opens on the long side onto a 100' long porch that faces Highway 7 to the southeast. The outside walls are sided on three sides with metal. The back wall has a covering of tarpaper. The structure sits on stone supports and is 18 feet from the highway in the rural Letcher County town of Blackey. Blackey is located on Highway 7 South about 17 miles from the county seat of Whitesburg in the southwestern section of the county.

The building sits on the high ground across from the town proper, which it is separated from by the North Fork of the Kentucky River. The adjacent properties are typical of those found in small, Appalachian coalfield towns, with dwellings standing in close proximity to both the highway and the railroad tracks. Such towns contain a low density of businesses and public buildings on the small acreage of flat ground between the surrounding mountains. Outbuildings on the property include a small structure to the north that was used to house coal mining equipment that was for sale. It was built during the store's expansion in 1940. Also attached to the property is a small two-bedroom house to the rear of the store, built sometime around 1945.

The roof is gently sloped towards the rear of the building with an end chimney. This gives the front more height and the illusion of a false front, allowing for the painting of the store name above the porch facing the road. The current roofing material is metal, replacing the original asphalt roll roofing which dated from 1933. The building has a long appearance as it is approached from either the south or the north along State Highway 7.

The front faces to the southeast, looking across the highway and the creek toward the town of Blackey proper and has four openings, all onto the white oak porch that goes all but 16 feet of the length. The interior measures 98 by 25 feet, 53 feet

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of which is the store display area dating from the original construction of 1933. The remaining footage is made up of a former warehouse area and a gas station with an open car bay, added in 1940. Since the store closed in 1997, the gas station has been converted into a small, one bedroom apartment, occupied currently by the property owner. These additions, combined with the original retail area of 1933, bring the total length of the structure to 116 feet. The interior walls are finished with drywall, painted green, with 5-inch wood molding along the pine plank floor. The 10 feet high ceiling is also sheathed in drywall and painted green. The windows all seem to be original, with the metal roof being the primary alteration to the store in recent years.

The building is in good repair and is currently the residence of the property owner, Gaynell Begley. Since her father opened the store in the 1930s, it has been a collecting place for historic artifacts, documents, and photographs from the local community and throughout eastern Kentucky. These items have been gathered by the Caudill/Begley family, from family and friends, and displayed around the store. Mrs. Begley and her late husband Joe, who passed away in March of 2000, focused on this unique aspect of the Caudill Store after it ceased operation as a retail establishment in 1997. Since that time they have painstakingly documented each object, keeping dry good items on the shelf where they originally were sold and creating other displays for various farm tools, coal mining equipment, railroad objects, and community history items the store has preserved since the 1930s. The Begley Family is currently working with the cultural organization Appalshop, Inc. to convert the property into a store museum and history center for Blackey, Letcher County, and the Central Appalachian coalfield region.

From the statement of description above, this structure clearly retains integrity of feeling, association, workmanship, location, and design, with the integrity of setting remaining virtually unchanged since its construction was completed in 1940.

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Caudill, C. B., Store Letcher Co., KY

Statement of Significance:

The C. B. Caudill Store (LR-79) meets National Register Criterion A and is significant within the historic context of *Retail and Commerce in Letcher County*, 1900-1950. The store is one of the last examples of the rural general store from this historical context in Letcher County and in Central Appalachia. This structure, built during the Great Depression in 1933, is important for illustrating the content, construction, and social role of the general store in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky and in rural areas throughout the state and the South during the early part of the twentieth century. The structure is also important for the social history it has preserved as an independent general store in a county and region dominated by company coal towns and their company-owned and -operated stores during this historical period. Because the C. B. Caudill Store blends a variety of uses, from retail establishment and trading post, to community free space and political planning center, it is an important reflection of the place and function of the country store in early Letcher County economic and social history, as well as in the history of rural areas throughout Kentucky and the South.

Retail and Commerce in Letcher County, 1900-1950

Scholarly research on the rural general store and the place these stores occupied in the retail and commerce of their communities in the early decades of the twentieth century in Kentucky and in the South is limited. Possibly the best academic source material on the country store is the work of Kentucky historian Thomas D. Clark in his study, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows: The Southern Country Store*. Besides this work, this nomination author examined the histories written by local residents and consulted the local library for documentation of the area's economic history. Those histories, along with the memories of local residents who lived in the rural areas of a county, provided important information on the frequency, the number, and the social role of early rural economic establishments.

In looking at the C. B. Caudill Store, Thomas Clark provided the "classic" layout, role, and discussion of the rural general store in the history of the post-Civil War South. In combination with Clark, local sources and personal interviews were used to compare the classical with the local, to discover where each varied and

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Caudill, C. B., Store Letcher Co., KY

coincided. The regional cousin of the country store, the coal company commissary, was examined to provide important historical context and comparison for the role the independent C. B. Caudill Store would play in the Appalachian coalfield community of Blackey in rural Letcher County, Kentucky. Computer database searches were conducted at the Kentucky Heritage Council to determine if other stores, both independently operated and company operated, are registered in Letcher and in adjacent counties. In order to understand the overall historic context of Appalachian Kentucky during the early period of operation of the Caudill Store, scholarly examinations of the region, including the works of Dr. Ronald D. Eller, Dr. John Gaventa, and Dr. David A. Corbin, were consulted and, where appropriate, cited in the discussion of significance that follows.

The C. B. Caudill Store is typical of other rural general stores in Letcher County during the first fifty years of the twentieth century, as well as general stores throughout rural Kentucky and the rural south during the same period. In 1935, in a report published by the United States Department of Agriculture, entitled Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Mountains, 24 percent of retail establishments found in a 205 county area of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains, including Letcher County, KY, were rural general stores. The USDA described such stores "...as those handling a general line of merchandise in which groceries and foods constitute an important part of the total." The USDA states that these stores are "typical of retail-trade areas restricted, as is so common in this region, by rugged topography and an undeveloped rural highway system." As was the case in other Appalachian counties, most specialty stores, including food, clothing, drugs, automotive, and furniture retail establishments, were located in the county's urban centers or the county seat town, in Letcher County's case, in Whitesburg. In the rural areas surrounding the county seat of Whitesburg, including Blackey some 17 miles away, the rural general store would become the single most important, dependable, independent source of general retail and commerce.

Many of the general stores in the Blackey community and other nearby areas dating from the first half of the this century are now remembered only in local histories and by the residents from that generation. The C. B. Caudill Store is significant, in part, because it is one of the last of these important hubs of local

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Caudill, C. B., Store Letcher Co., KY

retail and commerce and because of the integrity it possesses in representing this earlier historical period in Letcher County history.

Both Thomas Clark and the memories of residents and local historians provide a basic layout for the country store, which will be useful in what follows. The attributes include a two-story size with divisions between a retail downstairs and owners' residence upstairs. In the C. B. Caudill Store's case, the two-story arrangement is split into a side-by-side model, with a retail side and a living quarters apartment attached. Other features of the Caudill Store's segregation of space which are common include food and dry goods separation, a porch which functions as a social center, and a centrally placed stove which serves as a social center in winter months. Within larger spatial contexts, the Caudill Store follows the typical pattern of a one store per community frequency and store identification chiefly through the store owner. These attributes not only repeat themselves over and over in rural Letcher County, Kentucky, but also in general stores throughout the rural South.

The George Matt Hogg Store is an excellent example of the general stores in the county during the first half of the twentieth century. Located across the river from the site of the C. B. Caudill Store, in the northern or upper section of Blackey, the Hogg Store was a predecessor to the Caudill Store, originally built sometime during the town's boom period between 1919 and 1927. This store was located in a two-story building with the retail area occupying the lower floor and the living quarters of the George Matt Hogg family occupying the upper floor. The store itself was divided into two sections, with groceries and food items in the main store area and dry goods and hardware occupying a connected side room. The front of the store had a long porch, shorter than the Caudill Store, but remembered by one resident as a gathering place for local crowds prior to the Caudill Store's opening. The Hogg Store, owned and operated by C.B. Caudill's father-in-law, operated as general store into the early 1940s.

Usually a single general merchandise store would serve each community in Letcher County, and after the closing of the Hogg Store, the C. B. Caudill Store would be the single general store serving the Blackey community until improved highways allowed faster and easier access to Whitesburg and nearby Hazard.

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Other general stores which served nearby communities in Letcher County and in adjoining Perry County from the 1930s into the 40s and 50s included the Kelly Halcomb General Store which served the neighboring community of Linefork, and the Denver Miniard Store, which served as a general merchandise store at the mouth of Leatherwood, on the Perry County/Letcher County line, 14-15 miles from the Caudill Store in Blackey.

Most of the information on the Halcomb and Miniard Stores is lost, but longtime Blackey resident Bill Bates remembers both of them, along with the Hogg Store, and the similar aspects they all shared with the C. B. Caudill Store. Bates recalled in a recent interview that each of the establishments was arranged in a similar fashion, all selling a wide variety of important food, hardware, and dry good items to each rural community. According to Bates, each store was the focal point of the surrounding areas, with a porch for summer time visiting, politicking, and gossiping, and a cast-iron, pot-belly stove in the center of the store for much of the same activities during winter months. Bates' descriptions of the "typical" lay-out and function of the general stores in western Letcher County, as pointed out above, fits the description by Thomas Clark in *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows* of the general stores in the overall South and the role they played in the retail and commerce of the entire region during the same historical period. Vii

Other similar general stores, fitting the country store formula, served other rural communities throughout Letcher County during the first half of this century. The mining community of Kona in the northeastern portion of Letcher County has a surviving remnant of the general store in the McAuley Grocery Store, which had been serving the Kona community for several decades as a general store prior to its purchase by James McAuley in 1953. The J. D. Maggard Store in the southern portion of the county, just across Pine Mountain in the Oven Fork community, is one of the only stores, other than the C. B. Caudill Store, which is being actively preserved in the county. The Maggard Store was built in 1914, and still occupies its original building. A general store from its opening, it is currently listed on the Kentucky Historical Building Register and is open as a store and an antiques museum.

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Caudill, C. B., Store Letcher Co., KY

When looking at retail and commerce in Letcher County from 1900 through 1950, the presence of the coal company commissary cannot be overlooked. The coal company commissary was a general store type of retail establishment serving the numerous coal company towns and camps found during this period throughout Letcher County and the Central Appalachian coalfields. These stores, owned and operated by the coal company, typically traded in a type of company-produced currency called script, issued to coal miners as credit between paydays or, occasionally, as the company's exclusive pay currency. Many scholars have pointed out the abuses miners often suffered at the hand of company stores through inflated prices, poor selection, and forced patronage by the company script system. Independent stores provided miners and their families the only alternative to company store shopping in rural areas and developed as important "free spaces" for miners to discuss company politics, work conditions, and unionization. ix

Several company stores are currently listed in Letcher County on the Kentucky Historic Registry, including the Consolidation Coal Company Store, built in 1910, in the community of Jenkins, its northwestern extension in the community of Dunham, built in 1912, and a third Consolidation Coal Company Store, built in 1912 and currently used as a post office in the community of Burdine. Local histories and interviews conducted in the Blackey community tell us that the C. B. Caudill Store was surrounded to the north and the south by coal company camps, including the Elk Creek Coal Camp and the Little Blackey Coal Camp to the south and the Rock House, Wood Rock, Carbon Glow, and Marion Coal Camps to the north. Each of these camps operated company stores along the same description of those above, with trading primarily done with company script and prices, as remembered by one local resident and former employee, as higher than the independent stores interspersed around the camps. The C. B. Caudill Store was an important economic contrast to these coal company stores, providing an independent economic alternative in the rural countryside of Letcher County.

By the 1970s and 1980s, and in some cases much earlier, most of the country general stores had vanished from the rural landscapes, replaced with the newer variety of "Quick Stop" markets, built as brief stopping points on the way out of rural communities to modern urban shopping hubs. The C. B. Caudill Store is one

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of the last intact remnants of this earlier period in the history of retail and commerce in Letcher County. Its integrity is preserved throughout the structure, inside and out, from the store area which is located within the same walls that were built to house it in 1933 down to the thousands of staples and nails imbedded around the two entrances which have held countless flyers, political posters, and sales signs. The C. B. Caudill Store is significant in what it represents and documents for the Blackey community, Letcher County, and all of Kentucky: a rural economy now in transition, an institution which rallied and sustained a community, and an essential social and commercial hub for the rural landscape.

The C. B. Caudill Store in Community History

The history of the small Letcher County community of Blackey is the beginning point for understanding the circumstances in which the C. B. Caudill Store was born and took on life. Blackey had been a thriving boomtown during the 1920s, flourishing amidst the development following the railroads and the opening of the rich Eastern Kentucky coalfields. Blackey would find its place and its name with the coming of the railroad, independently growing up around the train depot which bore its name. By the early 1920s, Blackey was an independent hub, surrounded by camps and towns built, maintained, and run by the coal companies. Blackey was the town to which many a miner and his family ventured to find entertainment (Blackey had one of the only movie theaters in that part of the county), independent banking, and independent shopping. It would be this last element for which C. B. Caudill and his brother R. B. would work to provide for the miners and other town patrons.

As early as 1859, the Caudill family had been operating general stores in the area that eventually became the community and town of Blackey. As Blackey sprang to life during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Caudill brothers continued this legacy with several business ventures taking prominent positions in the town's merchant section, including R. B. Caudill's wholesale store and an eatery run by C. B. Caudill and his wife Tessie Mae Hogg Caudill. Other stores that operated in the Blackey community during its heyday of 1921-1927, making up the earlier generation of country stores with which the C. B. Caudill Store would eventually identify, included the Jeff Ison General Store, The Dollar Store,

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run by Jim Kassen, and the G. M. Hogg Store, operated by Tessie Mae's father, which continued to sell groceries and dry goods into the 1940's. xii

Blackey's luck ran out in 1927 when the first of three devastating natural disasters, coupled with a failing coal market and a looming nationwide Depression, began to chip away at the town's prosperity. The first disaster came in the form of a destructive flood, which ripped through the region in May of 1927, destroying much of Blackey's business district and killing 26 people in Letcher County alone. Next came two different fires that destroyed much of what the flood had left behind. The final blow to Blackey and its surrounding communities came in November of 1928 when the Blackey State Bank folded, taking the life savings of many residents with it, including the savings of C. B. and Tessie Mae Caudill. XiV

The C. B. Caudill family, like so many other residents of Eastern Kentucky, was forced to leave the state in search of work in the face of the demise of Blackey, but they would soon return. With a small amount of savings gathered from C. B. Caudill's work with the Civilian Conservation Corp. from 1930 through 1933, and some goods purchased on credit from a nearby wholesale warehouse in the county seat of Whitesburg, Tessie Mae Caudill opened the store named for her husband out of their home in 1933. Shortly after, C. B. would build the current structure which continues to house the store today, with two additions made in the 1940s.**

The C. B. Caudill Store built upon the experiences and knowledge of shop keeping from the early years of community prosperity. It carried on the important role which general merchandise stores took on for all rural communities, especially in the post-Civil War South and in the southern mountains. Kentucky historian Thomas D. Clark explains this place country stores and their proprietors held in their communities throughout his work *Pills*, *Petticoats*, *and Plows: The Southern Country Store*. Clark says, "The storekeeper was all things to his community. He served as school trustee, deacon or steward, railway agent, fertilizer salesman, social adviser, character reference, politician, lodge master, and general community "obliger." His store was the hub of the local universe." This was certainly the pivotal role the C. B. Caudill Store would take on in the local

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community from its beginning, and, arguably, by the sheer luck of its existence during the volatile booms and busts of the Appalachian coalfield economy, the Blackey community itself would survive.

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Notes:

Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Bureau of Home Economics and Forest Service, *Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, 1935, 81.

Collins, Bobby Jean, "Blackey: Its Growth and Decline, 1912-1932," self-published history written in the mid 1980s.

iii Clark, Thomas D., *Pills, Petticoats, & Plows: The Southern Country Store*, Norman, Ok: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944, 20-21.

iv Bates, Bill, Interview with author, June 28, 2000.

^v Ardery, Julie, "More Than You Bargained For: A History of the C. B. Caudill Store," Whitesburg, KY: Appalshop, 2000.

vi Bates, Bill, Interview with author, June 28, 2000.

vii Clark, Thomas D., *Pills, Petticoats, & Plows: The Southern Country Store*, Norman, Ok: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944, 17-34.

viii Discussion of the role of company stores in the Appalachian coalfields and the controlling, abusive traits exhibited by many company retail establishments can be found in detail in David Allen Corbin's *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981), and in Ronald D. Eller's *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).

ix The importance of political and economic "free space" in coalfield communities of Eastern Kentucky is discussed in detail in John Gaventa's *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

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- ^x The listing and description of the coal camps in southwestern Letcher County came from the writing of the local historian William T. Cornett in his work *Letcher County Kentucky: A Brief History*, self-published in 1967 and from the interview with Bill Bates, 6/28/2000.
- xi Ardery, Julie, "More Than You Bargained For: A History of the C. B. Caudill Store," Whitesburg, KY: Appalshop, 2000.
- ^{xii} Collins, Bobby Jean, "Blackey: Its Growth and Decline, 1912-1932," self-published history written in the mid 1980s.
- xiii Ardery, Julie, "More Than You Bargained For: A History of the C. B. Caudill Store," Whitesburg, KY: Appalshop, 2000.
- xiv Ibid.
- xv Ibid.
- xvi Clark, Thomas D., Pills, Petticoats, & Plows: The Southern Country Store, Norman, Ok: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944, x.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The property proposed for listing has a frontage of 200 feet along Highway 7 starting 121 yards southwest from the metal bridge at Blackey and extending southwest along the highway in front of the structure referred to in this form as "the C. B. Caudill." The boundary line then runs in a northwesterly direction perpendicular to the road, extending back all the way to the top of the ridge behind the structure. From the ridge, the boundary returns to the point of origin, on the state road. The only land proposed for listing is the rectangular parcel surrounding and under the Caudill Store, measuring 200 feet by 60 feet.

Verbal Boundary Justification:

The nominated property encompassing the structure is the parcel historically associated with the C. B. Caudill Store. The rest of the woodlands connected to the property has not been significant to the structure or the events associated with it.