Form No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 2 3 1980

DATE ENTERED

NOV 1 9 1980

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Wheelwright Commercial District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

Kentucky	021	Floyd	071	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE	
Wheelwright	VICINITY OF			
CITY, TOWN		CONGRESSIONAL DI	STRICT	
Main Street		NOT FOR PUBLICATIO	N N	
STREET & NUMBER				

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	••••••	STATUS	PRESENTUSE		
X_DISTRICT (16	bldgs)BLIC		AGRICULTUREMUSEUM		
BUILDING(S)	XPRIVATE		COMMERCIALPARK		
STRUCTURE	вотн	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONALPRIVATE RESIDENCE		
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENTRELIGIOUS		
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	_XYES: RESTRICTED	X.GOVERNMENTSCIENTIFIC		
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIALTRANSPORTATION		
		NO	MILITARYOTHER:		

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple--see attached list

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

FEDERAL

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Floyd County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Prestonsburg

state Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TÏTLE

DATE

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

___STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CON	DITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK (DNE
EXCELLENT	DETERIORATED	X_UNALTERED	ORIGINAL	SITE
G00D	RUINS	X_ALTERED	MOVED	DATE
FAIR	UNEXPOSED			

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The coal camp of Wheelwright (pop. 793, according to 1970 census), is located in Floyd County in Kentucky's eastern extreme. The county's population in 1970 was almost 36,000--a decrease of approximately 17,000 from 1950, the county's peak coal boom decade. The terrain is mountainous and abounds in rich coal seams and productive deposits of oil and gas.

Floyd County's remaining historic resources, largely commercial, are comprised of a number of early to mid-twentieth century structures that characterize its small communities, which for the most part were built in direct correlation with the coal booms. The coal booms also stimulated the construction of numerous coal camps in Floyd County and throughout eastern Kentucky, which were planned communities built exclusively by the coal companies. The towns were designed to be self-sufficient, necessitated by the isolated conditions of the coal mine areas of eastern Kentucky. In addition to housing, the towns contained general merchandise stores, hospitals, churches, community recreational buildings, schools, and all other buildings necessary for a self-contained community.

Wheelwright is the largest, most intact of the coal camps remaining in Floyd County. It is found in the southern section on the county in a valley approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long--"a narrow twisting crease in the hills." There is one main road into the valley off Hwy. 122,which is lined on both sides of the street with one-story frame houses that were the residences of the miners, with more housing located up the hollows and terraced along the hill behind the west side of the commercial district.

The downtown is contained within one block along Main Street, marked at its northern extent by Hall Hollow Road and at the south end by Maple Street. There are 16 buildings within the district, the majority of which were constructed during the period of 1916 to 1920. However, during 1940 and 1941, an intensive modernization program was undertaken in which many of the older structures were brick veneered. ² With two exceptions, all are now brick or brick faced, one to three stories in height and in most cases incorporate some element of the Classical Revival, seen in the classical entranceways, or in the use of quoins, dormers, railings, or other characteristics of the style. Quite naturally, this similarity in detailing reflects the singular ownership of the coal company and their attempt at design conformity. The district remains remarkably intact and is virtually unchanged since the 1940 "modernization" period.

The <u>Clubhouse</u>, along with the Community Center, comprise the focal buildings of the downtown. When originally constructed in 1941, the Clubhouse contained the town hotel, restaurant, shops, library, and a bowling alley in the basement--serving, therefore, as Wheelwright's social and recreational center. Designed by Albert Franklin Tucker, an architect based in Huntington, West Virginia, and built by Beckett Construction Company, it is one of the finest examples of the Colonial Revival in Floyd County. It is a three-unit composition characterized by gabled-end pavilions

¹Kentucky Heritage Commission, Floyd County survey overview. A comprehensive survey of the county was conducted in 1979 by KHC staff members Kenneth Gibbs and Lee Walker. 2 Information provided by Mr. E. M. Pace of Inland Steel Company.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC 1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE ART	XCOMMUNITY PLANNING CONSERVATION ECONOMICS EDUCATION ENGINEERING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LAW LITERATURE MILITARY MUSIC	RELIGION SCIENCE SCULPTURE SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN THEATER
_1800-1899 x1900-	COMMERCE COMMUNICATIONS	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT &INDUSTRY INVENTION	PHILOSOPHY POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	TRANSPORTATION OTHER (SPECIFY)
SPECIFIC DAT	ES	BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located in the rugged mountainous terrain of eastern Kentucky, Wheelwright remains as an excellent example of the coal company town (commonly referred to in Kentucky as a "coal camp"). The presence of the towns serve as a reminder of the tremendous role the development of the coal industry played in the history of the region and of the state. Wheelwright is the largest, most intact of the camps in Floyd County and one of few intact, unaltered such communities in the region. The Wheelwright Commercial District, containing some sixteen buildings.

served as the focal point of the town--providing commercial, governmental, education, religious, recreational, and other needs as required by a self-contained community. A visual cohesiveness is achieved in the use of brick (with two exceptions) and with the incorporation of classical elements in the detailing. This similarity in style can also be said to illustrate the uniformity in planning and design generally represented in the coal towns.Certain of the buildings, notably the Clubhouse and Community Center, possess an architectural quality that is outstanding in the county.

Coal mining did not become an important aspect of the economy in eastern Kentucky until after the Civil War when railroads began to open up the region, an area rich in natural resources. However, no permanent coal towns were constructed by coal companies in the nineteenth century; for the most part coal camps of any type in Kentucky did not develop until the twentieth century.

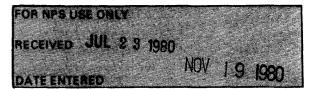
In Floyd County alone the growth of the coal industry was phenomenal after 1890. The total estimated tons of coal mined in Floyd County during 1790-1975, both surface and deep mined coal, was 270,072,753 short tons. Estimates indicate that this important new industry had increased from producing 6,320 tons in 1906 to 1,224,738 tons in 1921. By 1930, underground mining alone produced 3,984,327 tons and by 1950 this had increased to 6,202,614 tons for that single year alone. It reached a peak in 1951 with a production of 6,364,825 short tons through deep mining in Floyd County for that year only. From that time on, estimates indicate that production varied but was generally on the decline. By 1975, a total of 2,540,033 short tons of coal was produced in Floyd

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

f

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Kentucky Geol	ogical Survey, S	Series X	• (Lexington	: University o	f Kentucky, 1977),
Information C	ircular 23.				
Dunlop, R.G. "Hig	h hopesResi	dents s	av takeover	would be town	'e caluation "
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LIST ALL STATE	S AND COUNTIES FOI		IES OVERLAPPI	NG STATE OR COU	NTY BOUNDARIE Scontinued
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STATE	(CODE	COUNTY		CODE
11 FORM PREPA	RED BY				
NAME / TITLE					
<u>Calvin</u> Jon	es, Historian;	Gloria M	lills, Histo	rian	<u> </u>
ORGANIZATION				DATE	e 1980
STREET & NUMBER	leritage Commiss	ion		TELEP	
104 Bridge	Street			502 5	64-3741
CITY OR TOWN				STATE	
Frankfort				Kentu	ucky
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Wheelwright Commercial District Floyd County, Kentucky CONTINUATION SHEET

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each accented by a small Palladian window in the gable and set off by quoins. The center section contains the recessed entrance to the hotel/restaurant lobby behind a galleried portico.

Angled across from the Clubhouse is the <u>Community Building</u>, a massive structure in relation to the smaller scale of the surrounding buildings. It was built in 1916 by Elkhorn Coal Corporation and remodeled and veneered in 1941 by Inland Steel Company.³ The two-story building, by far the most imposing of the commercial buildings, is made more dramatic by the presence of a two-story portico extending the full length of the facade and is supported by ten fluted columns. A suggestion of the Colonial Revival is seen in the railing along the roofline. This important building contained on the first floor a post office, barber shop, restaurant and soda fountain, and on the second floor, a large hall where dances and other social activities were held.

Another building important to the social life of the community was the <u>movie</u> theatre, an early 1920s building remodeled and veneered in 1941, the redesign credited to Leland Becker. It is one of few structures in the downtown that breaks with the classical motif. Art Deco treatment can be seen in the stepped roof and the wide decorative bands extending from the marquee to the roofline and around the sides of the building.

Set just in front of the theatre entrance in the middle of what is referred to as the plaza, is the rather fanciful oriental-inspired <u>ticket booth</u>.⁴ Conveniently located in front of one of the major paths leading to 79 Hill--one of the town's most prestigious residential sections--it was also used for posting general interest notices.

The (originally)non-denominational <u>church</u> is located across from the Clubhouse on an elevated site. The cupola and entrance bay with pediment and traceried window also repeat the influence of the Colonial Revival. The construction date is unknown.

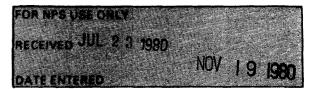
Adjacent to the church is the house formerly occupied by the <u>superintendent and</u> <u>general manager</u>. It is the most substantial of all the residences in Wheelwright and the only major one constructed of brick. Built probably in the 1940s, Colonial Revival detailing can be observed in the latticework railing over the entrance.

Prominent both in size and location at the north end of town is the wash house,

³According to information provided by E. M. Pace.

⁴Although credited to Leland Becker by E. M. Pace, some local sources have stated that the design of the ticket booth was the product of a University of Kentucky competition, won by a student from the Far East.

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Wheelwright Commercial District Floyd County, Kentucky CONTINUATION SHEET

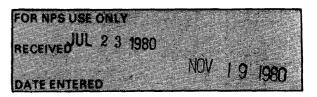
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where the residents did their laundry and where the miners washed before going home from the mines. The first floor is stone, the second and third stories are frame.

For further descriptions of the remaining buildings within the district, see the attached list.

The boundaries are drawn so as to include all major buildings composing the commercial downtown. Housing encloses the district on all sides, extending in a southerly direction up Branham Hollow from City Hall; west up 79 Hill; and east up Hall Hollow. At the northern fringe, beyond the Senior Citizens Building, and outside the boundary is a contemporary gas station and a few frame buildings and the Carpenter Shop. Beyond is more housing. There are no intrusions within the district boundaries.

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Wheelwright Commercial District Floyd County, Kentucky CONTINUATION SHEET

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BUILDINGS WITHIN THE WHEELWRIGHT COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

EAST SIDE OF MAIN STREET

- 1. <u>Municipal Building</u> (1946)--The two-story brick building contained the courtroom on the first floor, jail in the basement, and space allocated for the Women's Club on the second floor. Designed by Albert Franklin Tucker, it exhibits classical elements in the pedimented entranceway.
- Credit Manager's Residence--The one-story brick structure, designed by Albert Franklin Tucker, is now used by the Kentucky House Corporation and Urban Renewal for offices.
- 3. <u>Clubhouse</u> (1941) -- See description within text of #7.
- 4. <u>Company Main Office</u>--Now known as the clinic, the building is an early 20th century structure remodeled by Inland Steel. It is two-story, brick, with classical elements represented in the entranceway, keystone arches, and brick quoins.

A one-story addition is located between the Clubhouse, with classical detailing seen in the entrance, railing over the arched connector to the clinic and in the use of quoins and dormers.

- 5. <u>Community Shopping Center-Store No. 1</u> (1954-55)--The one-story brick structure was designed by Albert Tucker and constructed by Beckett Construction Company on the site of the original store that was destroyed by fire in January 1954. Its main decorative feature is the use of brick quoins.
- 6. <u>Gas Station</u> (c. 1935; alteration 1947) -- The building dates to around 1935 with alterations designed by Albert Tucker.
- 7. Dry Cleaning Plant (alterations: 1944)--Now being used as a TV repair shop, this one-story, stone structure was altered in 1944, designed by Albert Tucker.
- 8. <u>Senior Citizens Center</u>--It previously served as the Black recreational building and, earlier, as the merchandising supply office. The one-story frame structure was probably designed by Albert Tucker. Classical treatment can be seen in the two entranceways.
- 9. <u>Masonic Lodge</u>--Located behind the Senior Citizens center, the building was designed by Leland Becker and dates to 1942. Classical features observed in the facade include the pedimented entranceway, semi-circular window above the entrance, and use of quoins.

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Wheelwright Commercial District Floyd County, Kentucky

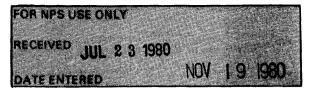
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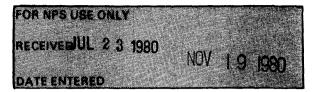
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WEST SIDE OF MAIN STREET

- 10. Wash House--See description within the text of #7.
- 11. Wheelwright Elementary School--Was two-story with stone used at first level, frame at second. It burned in 197-. Portions of the walls still remain, however, and conceivably could be incorporated within a restoration project.
- 12. Theatre (Remodeled 1930) -- See description within the text of #7.
- 13. Community Building--See description within the text of #7.
- 14. Wheelwright Church--Now known as the Wheelwright Methodist Church. See description within text of #7.
- 15. <u>Superintendent's House</u>--See description within text of #7.
- 16. <u>Hospital</u>--Located across the street from the superintendent's house, the structure is frame, somewhat larger than the frame dwellings of the miners.



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Wheelwright Commercial District Floyd County, Kentucky

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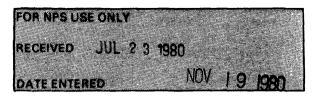
County for that year. Much of the coal production in Floyd County came from the Wheelwright operation.

Figures such as this significantly illustrate how important coal production by itself became in the economy of Eastern Kentucky. When coal production boomed, Eastern Kentucky's economy was good. When coal production slumped, Eastern Kentucky's economy became depressed.

At the present time there are few intact coal towns remaining in Eastern Kentucky, with Jenkins, in Letcher County, and Wheelwright being two of the most important. These unique settlements were the results of the fulfillment of needs. As the coal companies moved into these areas with the assistance of railroads to transport the large productions of coal, it became necessary for the companies to provide some types of housing and the accompanying service facilities which were lacking in the region. The results were coal mining camps which were initially often quite crude but which improved in quality and became more sophisticated as time went by. Wheelwright became one of the most notable of these coal mining towns. It demonstrated in a significant manner what intensive planning and benevolent management by a large corporation can accomplish.

Before 1916, the site of Wheelwright in the extreme southern end of Floyd County, was one of the isolated sections of the Big Sandy River Valley in Appalachia. When the Elk Horn Coal Company established a mining town there in 1916, at the confluence of Hall and Branham Branch on Otter Creek, it transformed the entire section. At first the town was a tent camp but soon these temporary make-shift dwellings gave way to floorless frame structures. Eventually better housing was built with supplies that were hauled over the mountain from Shelby Creek in Pike County. The major commercial buildings were constructed during the period of 1916-1920.

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The first fifteen laborers who were employed by this new coal company in Wheelwright worked ten hours daily for \$1.75 per day and their foremen received twenty five cents more. The first mining crews stored the coal they mined to await the completion of the railway. After three years the town was completed and mining became more highly developed with the importation of foreign crews which were brought in by the railroad. Some foreign workmen were hired in cities in the eastern part of the United States and brought to Wheelwright with guaranteed subsistence expenses which lasted until they received their first pay envelopes. Sometimes as many as three trains each week, accompanied by the hiring agent of the company, brought such transportees to the new mining town. A few of these original immigrants still survive but many of their descendents are still located in Wheelwright.

On January 30, 1930, the Inland Steel Company announced that it was buying the Wheelwright operation and this included both the mine and the town. Legal formalities delayed the sale of Wheelwright until after a Kentucky Court of Appeals decision finally adjudicated certain matters on March 25, 1930. A few days after, the sale was consummated in Baltimore, Maryland. Inland Steel Company's purchase brought about further great changes in this entire area.

Inland had acquired not only the mine plant and equipment but also 1,500 acres of land and all of the buildings upon that land. Inland also leased 11,000 other acres in the immediate area. Rehabilitation of the mine and the town was begun almost at once. A new tipple was built in 1931, machine shops were erected, a modern water filtration system was installed, the streets were paved, natural gas was provided for the homes, telephones were installed, and a sewage and garbage disposal system was arranged. The new owning company spent \$150,000 on a sanitation project that contributed greatly to the decline of the high infant mortality rate in Wheelwright.

According to E.M. Pace, Executive Vice President of Inland Steel, the building program intensified in the 1940s:

During 1940 and 1941, an intensive modernization program was undertaken: the theater was brick-veneered and the ticket booth-pay window was built; the new club house was built complete with storeroom, beauty salon, library, bowling alleys, recreation room, dining room, and hotel rooms; the community building was veneered and remodeled to include the soda fountain, restaurant, barber shop, post office and community room; the store was also veneered and remodeled - groceries, sundries and hardware were on the first floor and furniture sales were located on the second floor; the office building was veneered and the pool and playground were built during this period.

The architect for the 1940-1941 project was Albert Tucker of Huntington, W.VA., and Beckett Construction was the contractor for the clubhouse and the brick-

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Wheelwright Commercial District Floyd County, Kentucky

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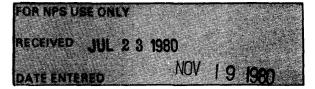
veneering. However, most of the brick veneering was designed by Leland Becker and some of the construction by Inland Steel Company.

E.M. Pace June 1980

The people of this small mining town give much of the credit for the transformation of the entire project to E. R. Price, the general manager of the new company. (Please see exhibit.) He was in charge of the complete program of cultural and physical improvements which the company inaugurated. As the result of the company's actions, the little town was transformed and modernized until it became one of the most outstanding examples of what a well-managed company with good intentions can accomplish for its employees and for itself.

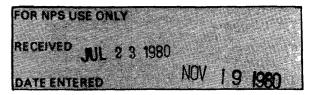
The hugh mining complex of the Inland Steel Company at Wheelwright was sold early in 1966 to the Island Creek Coal Company, a West Virginia firm. In 1969 the town was purchased by Mountain Investments, Inc., with headquarters in Jacksonville, Florida.

In September, 1979, the Kentucky Housing Corporation completed its purchase of much of the town's assets from Mountain Investments, Inc. Some of the downtown buildings have since been resold to private owners who have plans for rehabilitation of the structures. Kentucky Housing Corporation hopes that in time all commercial buildings in the downtown will be privately owned.



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Wheelwright Commercial District Floyd County, Kentucky

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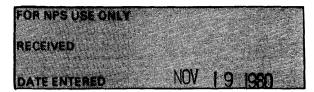
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Pace, E.M. Information provided in letter June 1980.

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Wheelwright Commercial District, Floyd County, KentuckyCONTINUATION SHEETITEM NUMBER 10PAGE 2

Verbal Boundary Description

crosses Main to extend around the Senior Citizens Bldg., approx. 6' from the north and east walls, running in a southerly direction 6' from the rear walls of the buildings fronting Main; encompassing the Masonic Lodge Bldg.; continuing southward to the Municipal Bldg. The line turns west, running 6' from the south wall of the Municipal Bldg., extending across Main to incorporate the hospital. The line runs 6' from the south and west walls of the hospital, turns northward, extending across Maple Street 6' to the rear of the superintendent's house, turning west and north to incorporate the cemetery and church. The line turns eastward, within 6' of the north wall of the church; turns northward, running 6' from the rear of the buildings fronting Main to the north wall of the Wash House and the point of beginning.

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APPENDIX

E. R. Price properly deserves credit for the fine leadership he gave in Wheelwright. He had begun his career as a laborer in 1906 in the mines of the Consolidated Coal Company at Somerset, Pennsylvania. He was promoted by way of the engineering department of that firm until he was sent to the Van Lear mines in 1917 as manager of Consolidated's properties there. In 1928 he came to Wheelwright as manager of the mine properties there for the Elk Horn Coal Company. Inland Steel Company retained his services when it bought the mine properties in Wheelwright. He retired on January 31, 1954, and moved to Frederick, Maryland.

Price not only contributed much to the civic and educational improvement of Wheelwright and Floyd County but was also a benefactor to the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky, his adopted state. He served as a trustee of Berea College, Pine Mountain Settlement School, and at one time as a regent of Morehead State College. He spent much time with Scouting and served in various national offices with that youth organization. He exerted a profound influence on the thinking of civic and industrial leaders of the section as long as he was in Wheelwright because he was always in favor of any measure which would promote the public good.

