

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

3605

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Toano Commercial Historic DistrictOther names/site number: VDHR File # 047-5458

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 7852 to 7960 Richmond Road, east of Forge Road.City or town: Toano State: VA County: James CityNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

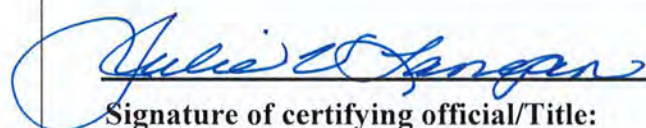
I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 x A B x C D

	<u>2-19-19</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

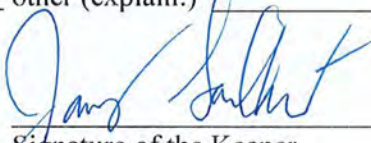
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain): _____


Signature of the Keeper

4-5-2019

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 ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Retail Store
FUNERARY: Mortuary/Funeral Parlor
COMMERCE/TRADE: Gasoline Station
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution/Bank

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Retail Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Business/Offices
COMMERCE/TRADE: Hair Salon
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall/Fraternal
OTHER: Telephone Exchange
GOVERNMENT: Post Office

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italian Renaissance Revival; Queen Anne

LATE 19TH and EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Craftsman;

Commercial Style

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; CONCRETE; METAL; ASPHALT;
WOOD: weatherboard; STUCCO; SYNTHETICS: Vinyl

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Toano Commercial Historic District is situated at the western end of James City County, in the unincorporated community of Toano, Virginia. It occupies 4.1 acres on the north side of U.S. Route 60/Richmond Road, just east of its intersection with Forge Road (Route 610). The district is bounded on the south by Route 60, on the east by the eastern property line of 7852 Richmond Road (047-5458-0012), on the north by rear property lines of the listed buildings, and on the west by the western property line of 7960 Richmond Road (047-5458-0004). The district contains eleven buildings, of which nine contribute to the district's areas and period of significance. Those nine all functioned initially as commercial properties, employed in the sale of dry goods, groceries, petroleum products, or services (banking and funerals in the latter case). All were built in the period between 1900 and 1926 and feature a range of vernacular interpretations of nationally popular styles such as Queen Anne, Italian Renaissance Revival, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. The contributing buildings grow in scale and elaboration as one travels Route 60 from Williamsburg toward Richmond, so that the smallest, least elaborate survivors stand at the district's eastern end. Farther west are the three largest buildings in the district, all adjacent, all two full stories in height. This imposing row was the heart of Toano's commercial district in 1906. Near the intersection with Forge Road, three interesting commercial buildings—a gas station and two stores—appear in a tight cluster, putting an exclamation point on the district's western end. Collectively the buildings that comprise the district are representative of an early-twentieth-century commercial area in a rural town setting in Virginia's Tidewater region. The district's integrity is sufficient to convey its historic associations, with integrity of

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location, feeling, and association being the strongest, while various aspects of the integrity of setting, design, workmanship, and materials is more uneven across the district.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Toano Commercial Historic District is situated at the western end of James City County, Virginia, in the unincorporated community of Toano. There, it embraces a continuous, ¼-mile stretch of properties on the north side of Route 60/Richmond Road, just south of its intersection with Forge Road. The district features a collection of commercial buildings representing the boom period in Toano's history, an economic expansion that lasted from the arrival of the C&O Railroad in 1881 until the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. The northern side of the district is bounded by an open field at the eastern end, and recent apartment buildings are at the western end, thus establishing clear boundaries between the historic commercial core and Toano's later development.

Beginning in 1903, the contributing buildings were all built within the space of a quarter century, a reflection of the community's new prosperity, its rapid rise as a center of transportation and commerce, and the growing importance of the automobile as a transformative force in American life. Contributing properties are congregated primarily in the western half of the district, with a more diffuse grouping at the eastern end.

Architectural Analysis

One early commentator characterized Toano as a "Village of Stores." The proposed district includes several of these, varying widely in scale and sophistication. Smaller examples display a vernacular Commercial Style prevalent in the region at the beginning of the 20th century. These are typically single-story frame buildings, each having a distinctive "half-height parapet" in front with the gabled roof showing above.¹ This was a characteristic feature of Commercial Style buildings in Norge and Toano, where at least nine examples have been documented (four of them surviving). The earliest example may have been R. H. Slater's Store (now vanished) built as early as 1885. For most commercial buildings of the period, a central front door (recessed on the larger buildings) was typically flanked by display windows. Roofs were universally covered with sheet metal, and the walls were most often framed, with a covering of plain wooden weatherboards.

Two buildings define this lower end of the vernacular Commercial Style. Significantly, both are situated at the eastern margin of the district. The smallest, easternmost resource, a c. 1930 building at 7852 Richmond Road (047-5458-0012), was known in the 1960s and 1970s as "Mrs. Mosely's Diner." It is a simplified version of the early twentieth century commercial type, omitting the inset entry and even the usual display windows. (Before its alteration in recent

¹ Chris Novelli, Melina Bezirdjian, Calder Loth, and Lena Sweeten McDonald, *Classic Commonwealth: Virginia Architecture from the Colonial Era to 1940* (Richmond, VA: Department of Historic Resources, 2015), p. 82-83.

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years, two conventional windows stood on each side of the flush front doorway). Nonetheless, the building incorporated the characteristic half-height front parapet and other typical attributes.

The next contributing building to the west, at 7864 Richmond Road (047-5458-0003) was constructed c. 1906. Known in 1923 as “Mrs. L. H. Meanly’s Store,” it originally resembled the commercial building at 7852 Richmond Road (047-5458-0012) in its modest dimensions, its framed construction, its half-height front parapet, and its flush front doorway. The building’s exterior was bricked at some point (reportedly in 1949), but there is reason to believe that earlier wooden siding survives behind the present veneer. Retention of the gabled parapet and storefront fenestration pattern are indicative of its early twentieth century construction date.

At the opposite end of the district, two other stores comprise the middle range of vernacular commercial buildings in the district. Like the smaller examples, they are single-story, frame buildings, but significantly broader and deeper, having inset entries and very large display windows. At 100 Depot Street (047-5458-0006) is the c. 1910 building first known as James E. Banks’ Store. It may have been moved to its present site at some time during the historic period, after the community’s rail lines and train depot were removed, though it is equally possible it was built on the present site when Depot Street was created c. 1906. The c. 1910 building displays a typical half-height front parapet, while the nearby c. 1906 store at 7960 Richmond Road (047-5458-0004) displays a full, half-circular pediment crowned by a robust cornice. It is further distinguished by its greater height, and by extensive joinery surrounding the front door and windows, having flat, inset panels of matchboard, diagonally set. It is the most architecturally developed single-story store in the district.

Close to the center of the district, the buildings at 7886 Richmond Road, the Masonic Lodge No. 286 (047-5458-0011) and, at 7880 Richmond Road, the Martin-Farinholt Store (047-5458-0009,) represent the district’s highest expressions of early twentieth century vernacular commercial architecture. The Masonic Lodge, originally built by 1903 to house the W. R. Branch Store, was a two-story version of the commercial type described above. Like most of the single-story examples, this was a frame building covered with weatherboards, having the characteristic half-height front parapet. Like the better single-story examples, it had an inset entry and large display windows, sheltered by a full-width pent. The second story later was raised to accommodate an upstairs meeting hall for the Lodge. The original character of this building was further obscured by a renovation of the exterior using brick veneer and concrete block, reportedly in the 1950s.

Substantial as the Branch store was, the 1906 Martin-Farinholt Store (047-5458-0009) exceeded it in several important aspects. Two-full stories in height, it was built of brick with a full-height stepped parapet on the front, its adornments borrowed from the 1903 Peninsula Bank next door, now known as the Old Bank Building (047-5458-0010). In plan, the original brick building was identical in size to the Branch store, having the same inset entry and large display windows, typical of better stores in the district. However, the upper floor was of sufficient height to comfortably accommodate a dance hall/pub assembly room. Instead of the usual pent, moreover, a full-height classical entablature crowned the entry and windows. The building was

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expanded with a large brick addition in 1911, evidence of the community's sustained prosperity, extending into the era of the automobile.

The Peninsula Bank, now known as the Old Bank Building (047-5458-0010) was completed in 1903 by contractor (later architect) R. Kemper Taylor. The building—and the institution—formed the keystone of Toano's business district and, appropriately, the bank is the most sophisticated building. A broad arched opening led into the recessed entry, which was originally open to the weather. This provided a dramatic, eye-catching feature in a façade of smooth pressed brick—the only such front in the district. The arched heads of all the openings are enriched with protruding header courses, while the protruding piers and cornices of the stepped parapet all ride on corbelled haunches. A metal plaque set into this parapet proudly bears the building's construction date in raised numerals.

Of course, Toano's commercial district offered more than groceries and dry goods. The Esso Gasoline Station at 7894 Richmond Road (047-5458-0008) was built in 1926, just as U.S. Route 60/Richmond Road, newly designated and merged into a new system of national highways, was paved for the first time. Like similar establishments elsewhere in the town, the service station catered to the growing number of motorists traveling Route 60 (and other U.S. highways) at the time. The low-pitched roof, deep eaves, arched braces, and stuccoed exterior echoed details of Craftsman-style bungalows and cottages of the time. These traditional, domestic touches helped reconcile motorists to a new building type and the emerging technologies it served.

Toano's commercial endeavors eventually—and inevitably—included funerary services. The two-story, western end of the Carlton House (047-5458-0005), built after 1906 on the vacated C&O track bed, functioned initially as a funeral parlor. The single-story appendage at the eastern end was probably added as a service wing, when the building became a dwelling, sometime before 1923. Reportedly, this extension had previously functioned as a school. The building is a fine example of mass-produced materials applied to a vernacular building type, though the canted western doorway, with a turned pendant suspended above, is an unexpected flourish. The building stands on a broad, shaded lawn, where it is seen to advantage by motorists traveling on Route 60/Richmond Road.

This property, and the large, tree-shaded site at 7852 Richmond Road (047-5458-0012), gives the eastern end of the district a pleasing rural quality. The imposing commercial row near the middle of the district provides a carefully detailed center of mass, while three charismatic buildings clustered beyond the post office put an exclamation point on the district's western end.

Integrity Analysis

Today, a majority of properties in the Toano Commercial Historic District retain historic buildings dating to the district's period of significance (1881-1926). Two modern buildings, the building leased by a U. S. Post Office at 7890 Richmond Road (047-5458-0001) and the Verizon Building at 7862 Richmond Road (047-5458-0002), differ noticeably from these, but their materials and scale are compatible with the district. Elsewhere, the disappearance of early

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buildings, or in one case the enlargement of a street, opened up spaces in the original fabric of the district, reducing the overall density of the street front. Nonetheless, clusters of remaining buildings serve to illustrate the early character of the district, spatially and architecturally. These define and maintain the setback of early storefronts on the north side of Route 60/Richmond Road. The widening of that thoroughfare in 1966 took all resources on the south side and pushed the Toano General Gun Shop (7960 Richmond Road; 047-5458-0004) backward 90 feet from its original site. A tight aggregation of early buildings at the district's western end presents an urban appearance, while two widely separated buildings at the eastern end, stand on broad green sites shaded by large trees, giving that neighborhood a village-like character.

Most of the buildings have experienced the usual episodes of maintenance and cosmetic updating. However, the Toano General Gun Shop (7960 Richmond Road), the Old Bank Building (7884 Richmond Road) and the Martin-Farinholt Store (7880-7882 Richmond Road) are remarkably intact, retaining their original fenestration, together with most of their early millwork and masonry details. The Carlton House (7858 Richmond Road) retains all of its original exterior surfaces, excepting only the present metal doors and storm windows. Modifications have transformed the appearance of the Masonic Lodge (7886 Richmond Road), which received a new brick façade during the 1930s. Likewise, the ca. 1930 commercial building at 7852 Richmond Road has been clad with vinyl siding and replacement sash have been installed in the windows. Both buildings, however, retain their original form and massing. The front wall of the 1926 Esso Gasoline Station (7894 Richmond Road) was re-faced in brick at some early date, and the gas pumps have disappeared. However, the rest of the stuccoed exterior, the front fenestration, and even the original pavements remain unchanged, as well as the building's character-defining form, with its deep eaves and supporting brackets. During the 1940s, the original wooden exterior of the ca. 1906 commercial building at 7864 Richmond Road was wrapped in wire-cut brick, a marked change, but one that continues to fit comfortably with the district. Built ca. 1910, the commercial building now housing the Thrift Depot (100 Depot Street) has been updated with Masonite siding, but it too retains its original, distinctive commercial form.

INVENTORY

The following inventory lists the resources within the Toano Commercial Historic District. It is organized alphabetically by street name and then numerically by street number. Each entry provides the address, date of construction, architectural style, building type, DHR File number, and the contributing status within the district. Whether a resource is considered contributing or non-contributing was determined based on its direct association with the district's significance in the area of Commerce under Criterion A and/or in the area of Architecture under Criterion C during the district's period of significance of c. 1903-1966. For a resource to be classified as contributing, retention of character-defining features, such as original form and massing, historic detailing, and fenestration patterns, were considered necessary. Replacement of a building's doors and window sash, without alterations to original openings, and installation of replacement siding, without removal or character-defining details, detract from its integrity but alone did not

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result in classifying the resource as noncontributing. Each resource in the following inventory is keyed to the attached Sketch Map by its numerical street address.

Depot Street

100 Depot Street **047-5147-0007** *Other DHR Id#: 047-5458-0006*
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1910
Contributing Total: 1

Richmond Road

7852 Richmond Road **047-5147-0031** *Other DHR Id#: 047-5458-0012*
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1930
Contributing Total: 1

7858 Richmond Road **047-5147-0003** *Other DHR Id#: 047-5458-0005*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1906
Contributing Total: 1

7862 Richmond Rd **047-5458-0002** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: Communications Facility (Structure), Stories , Style: Modernist, Ca 1980
Non-contributing Total: 1

7864 Richmond Rd **047-5458-0003** *Other DHR Id#: 047-5147-0029*
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1906
Contributing Total: 1

7880-7882 Richmond Road **047-5147-0011** *Other DHR Id#: 047-5458-0009*
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Italian Renaissance Revival, Ca 1906
Contributing Total: 1

7884 Richmond Rd **047-5147-0012** *Other DHR Id#: 047-5458-0010*
Primary Resource: Bank (Building), Stories 2, Style: Italian Renaissance Revival, 1903
Contributing Total: 1

7886 Richmond Road **047-5147-0013** *Other DHR Id#: 047-5458-0011*

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Primary Resource: **Meeting/Fellowship Hall (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1930**

Contributing Total: 1

7890 Richmond Rd 047-5458-0001 Other DHR Id#:

Primary Resource: **Post Office (Building), Stories 1, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1980**

Non-contributing Total: 1 (NOTE: The U.S. Postal Service leases this building.)

7894 Richmond Rd 047-5147-0008 Other DHR Id#: 047-5458-0008

Primary Resource: **Service Station (Building), Stories 1, Style: Craftsman, Ca 1926**

Contributing Total: 1

**7960 Richmond Road 047-0060 Other DHR Id#: 047-5147-0006,
047-5458-0004**

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Victorian, Queen Anne, Ca 1906**

Contributing Total: 1

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ 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.

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 (047-5458-0004)
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE
TRANSPORTATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

ca. 1903-1966

Significant Dates

1906 – C&O tracks re-located
1926 -- Richmond Road becomes U. S. Route 60

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Taylor, R. Kemper

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Toano Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The period of significance is ca. 1903-1966, and begins with the construction date of the district's earliest contributing resource. However, the forces that shaped the district's initial development extend back to 1881 and construction of the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Railroad's "Peninsula Extension," which boosted the prosperity of Toano and its environs through the movement of goods, people, and ideas; and allowed the C&O to traverse the entire length of Virginia. Meanwhile, by improving access to northern cities, the railroad engendered a new, market-oriented agriculture in James City County, centered on truck farming. This revolution created two new manufacturing operations—a barrel factory and a cannery—in Toano to facilitate the shipment of produce to urban markets. Starting ca. 1903, construction of a group of new commercial buildings, including a bank, in Toano demonstrates the vibrancy of local economic activity at the time. Although the railroad tracks and depot were relocated in 1906, today the Toano Commercial Historic District continues to reflect the railroad's impact on the community's physical development. Originally, the 1881 right-of-way cut through the center of town, discouraging further construction on its eastern and southern margins. Removal of the tracks in 1906 effectively opened the town for redevelopment, leading to the construction of many new buildings. The persisting effect of the old right-of-way continues to be evident in Toano's physical composition. At the eastern end of the district, all contributing buildings stand within the 1881 right-of-way—one of them on the alignment of the former track bed itself. The district's built environment also shows the emergence of automobile transportation and related commercial development as a potent cultural force in American life during the 1920s. Following the paving of U.S. Route 60/Richmond Road in 1926 Toano transformed a second time. Roadside inns, restaurants, and gasoline stations appeared along Route 60 to serve a growing population of motorists. Within the district, the former Esso Gasoline Station was built in the same year Richmond Road was first paved, designated "U.S. Route 60," and merged into the new system of national highways. Forty years later, in 1966, Route 60 was widened, which led to demolition of the commercial buildings that stood along the road's south side. This event provides the end date for the district's period of significance as it accounts for the district's current configuration and boundaries. With regard to the district's historic architecture, the array of commercial buildings exemplify vernacular Commercial Style architecture characteristic of the region between ca. 1903 and ca. 1930. Construction of these buildings was facilitated by newly available local products and services. By 1901, a brick yard, a planing mill, several local housebuilders and a resident painter pushed Toano's buildings to a new plateau of sophistication. Built ca. 1903, the masonry Old Bank Building, completed by contractor (later architect) R. Kemper Taylor, has the most sophisticated design and workmanship. A broad arched opening sheltered the recessed entry and was accented by a protruding header course similar to those atop each window opening, and the protruding piers and cornices of the stepped parapet all ride on corbelled haunches. Meanwhile, the 1926 Esso Gas Station stands out architecturally as it was a

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new building type designed to service a still-new mode of transportation while being consciously designed to blend with Toano's existing architectural fabric.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Burnt Ordinary

The earliest information concerning the present site of Toano seems to be a deed of c. 1700, recording David Bray's lease of 1500 acres in James City and New Kent Counties, granted by a group of four owners.² The next sixty years of Toano's history remain uncertain, owing to destruction of early James City County records in 1865. Despite that loss, Toano re-enters the historical record late in the 1760s, when John Lewis operated a store and tavern at the junction of Forge Road with the James City and New Kent Road.³ As a hostelry offering prescribed services at fees set *by ordinance*, Lewis's "ordinary" served travelers between Williamsburg and points west, affording a needed stopping point in the nascent transportation system of the colony. Later, the spot came to be known as "Burnt Ordinary," memorializing the destruction of this establishment by fire early in 1780.⁴ The intersection would remain an enduring landmark.

During the first half of the 19th century, J. G. Slater operated a store at this location, but Burnt Ordinary remained little more than a road junction with a handful of buildings clustered nearby.⁵ During the Civil War, surveys prepared by the Confederate army engineers in 1863 show a few dwellings in the immediate area, all associated with names later prominent in Toano's history. Early in the war, Union and Confederate forces moved to and fro through this intersection; later in the conflict, the junction lay in the "no-man's land" between the opposing armies.⁶ Architecturally, nothing from the first three quarters the 19th century survives in Toano. Not until the arrival of the C&O Railroad in 1881, would history leave lasting footprints here.

² Deed for this transaction, dated 4 October 1700, is preserved in the Library of Virginia, Accession 24881, Personal papers collection.

³ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie & Dixon, 20 October 1768, p. 2, col. 3.

⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, Dickson & Nicolson, 15 January 1780, p. 2, col. 3; Martha McCartney, *James City County, Keystone of the Commonwealth*, (Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1997), p. 188.

⁵ Fred Boelt, *Burnt Ordinary—Toano: Center of Trade and Industry*, (Toano, VA: Friends of Forge Road and Toano, [2009]), [pp. 4-5].

⁶ Confederate States of America, Department of Northern Virginia, Engineer's Office. *Map of New Kent Charles City James City and York Counties...*, 1863, Library of Congress; William Warren Potter, "Three Years with the Army of the Potomac – A Personal Military History," *Buffalo Medical Journal*, 6:72, (September 1911), p. 74-75; *Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, (hereafter, "O.R."), Report of General Henry S. Wise, 10 February 1863, Series I, Vol. VIII, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), p. 152; *O.R.*, Report of General Isaac Wister, 9 February 1864, Series I, Volume XXXIII, pp. 146-148.

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Transportation – The Railroad

The decades following the American Civil War witnessed an intense period of railroad construction as northern interests sought to identify and cultivate investment opportunities in the vanquished states of the old Confederacy. During this time, Collis P. Huntington, President of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad (C&O), assembled a rail network stretching from Richmond to the coal fields of West Virginia. Huntington's desired connection to Hampton Roads was the final piece of this system. His ambitions were finally realized in 1881 with construction of the C&O's "Peninsula Extension" between Richmond and Newport News. Getting coal to Hampton Roads was the *raison d'être* of Huntington's railroad, but it was not the sole revenue source he relied on. Trains from Newport News hauled fertilizer and manufactured goods to the hinterland of the state, and returned with agricultural products. Stopping at its newly completed Toano depot, the railroad brought a new world of people, goods, and information to the community's door.⁷ (Reportedly the new name, "Toano," was a Piute word, meaning, "high place," a term aptly applied by track crews who had previously worked on earlier railroad projects in the American west).⁸ In time, Toano became the most profitable station between Hampton Roads and Richmond. Shipments of wheat and flour had declined in the face of increased competition from grain farmers in the Midwestern states, but the production of potatoes and vegetables soon acquired great importance in Toano and the surrounding region, since these products could now be shipped northward. Close by the depot, moreover, a new hostelry, the Felix Hotel, was erected on the north side of Richmond Road (today's Route 60) to serve passengers making stopovers in Toano. One resident, born in 1905, recalled that the place was typically filled with patrons at the time of the potato harvest. These people were buyers, looking to purchase potatoes for distribution, or "drummers," travelling salesmen who, in the age before automobiles, hired a "jitney" or taxi, visiting and selling to the stores between Toano and Williamsburg.⁹

Commerce

The coming of the railroad in 1881 brought rapid economic change to Toano and James City County by facilitating access to distant markets for local agricultural products. By 1893, Cary Branch, a local landowner, began to promote truck farming as a means of tapping those markets. Rising land values gradually altered the demographics of farming in James City County, cutting the number of tenant-operated farms by 44 percent between 1900 and 1910. By that time, six large farms in the county were operated by managers, indicative of a shift away from subsistence

⁷ Linda Rogers, "C&O brought good Times to James City County," *The Daily Press* (Newport News), 22 February 1987, pp. 11-15; Tina Jeffrey, "When Toano was a Boomtown," *James City County 300th Anniversary*, (Williamsburg: The Virginia Gazette, 1984), p. 15.

⁸ Boelt, [pp. 5-6].

⁹ Recollections of Carl Jenson (1892-1987), in Nancy Smith Bradshaw, ed., *Tales from James City County, Virginia: Oral Histories*, (Williamsburg: James City County Historical Commission, 1993), pp. 62-63.

Toano Commercial Historic District
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James City County, VA
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farming toward market-oriented “truck farming.”¹⁰ (That term originated in the 18th century and so had nothing to do with motorized transport. Instead, the noun, “truck” connoted goods for barter, or it was synonymous with the noun, “trade.” Nowadays, the expression simply refers to market-based production, usually of vegetables.) With the growth of truck farming in James City County, traditional field crops ceased to figure prominently in the county’s agricultural output.¹¹

Meanwhile, local production of Irish potatoes had exploded from 1,159 bushels in 1880 (just before the railroad came) to 28,369 bushels in 1900, a 25-fold increase in 20 years. Sweet potatoes had always been a viable presence on southern farms, but in James City County, production of even this familiar crop rose from 4,725 bushels in 1880 to 12,959 bushels in 1900, an increase of nearly 200 percent.¹² The railroad now provided a means of getting these products to northern cities, but only if packaging was available and economical. To meet that need, a cannery was operating in Toano by 1908, while a barrel factory to facilitate the shipment of potatoes opened in 1908-1909.¹³ Many Virginia communities were experiencing similar success. Statewide, cooperage operations increased from 75 in 1900 to 118 in 1910, while canning and preserving establishments in Virginia rose more than 200 percent from 99 to 325 operations.¹⁴ By 1918, the transportation of a better product from drier climes in western states began to reduce the price of Virginians’ potatoes while reducing their share of the market. The best days of potato farming around Toano had passed.¹⁵

During the early 20th century, however, the overall general improvement of Virginia’s economy, the invigorating presence of the railroad, and eventually, the arrival of the automobile all served to stimulate commerce in Toano. By 1901 the town had its own newspaper, the “Peninsula News,” and a telephone connection at the Felix Hotel. There were a number of stores in town, selling groceries, hardware, hats, shoes, ready-made clothes, pharmaceuticals, tobacco, oysters, soft drinks, “holy cakes,” and other treats. One local business specialized in the repair of farm equipment; another provided funeral services in a part of what later became the Carlton House (047-5458-0005). Otherwise, bereaved families could telegraph to Williamsburg for a hearse, a coffin, or embalming services, all from “Mrs. Branthwaite,” while dirty linens left at Marston’s Store could be sent to the Richmond Steam Laundry for cleaning.¹⁶ These and other businesses benefitted greatly from improved transportation and communications that had arrived with the

¹⁰ United States Census Bureau. *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in 1900*, Population, Vols. 1-2; Manufactures by State, Vol. 9, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912-1914); *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Taken in 1910*, Population, Vols. 1-2; Manufactures by State, Vol. 9, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912-1914).

¹¹ Rogers, p. 11; Tina Jeffrey, “When Toano was a Boomtown,” *James City County 300th Anniversary*, (Williamsburg: The Virginia Gazette, 1984), pp.3-4.

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880*, Agriculture, Vol. 3; *Twelfth Census of the United States...*, Agriculture, Vols. 5-6.

¹³ Boelt, pp. 13-14.

¹⁴ See Note 9.

¹⁵ Rogers, p. 15; Jeffrey, pp. 3-4.

¹⁶ Boelt, [pp. 7-8].

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railroad. The C&O depot was another asset in all of this—and the two hotels nearby. Both hostelries served a growing population of travelers—local residents, visiting family members, and growing numbers of strangers. The latter included buyers of potatoes, “drummers” selling their wares to local shopkeepers, or people simply passing through. For those who stopped to conduct business in the area, there were rented taxis or “jitneys” available to make their rounds. One establishment advertised “teams furnished on short notice,” while another offered blacksmithing and horse shoeing services.¹⁷

As a consequence of Toano’s commercial expansion, the volume and importance of financial transactions grew rapidly, as evidenced by construction of the Peninsula Bank in 1903, now The Old Bank Building (047-5458-0010). This institution accelerated Toano’s commerce, extending credit to growers, local businesses, and individual residents. Similarly, the arrival of two lawyers—J. Norville Henley, and Commonwealth’s Attorney Cyrus A. Branch—was indicative of Toano’s growing business traffic, which now required each man to maintain a branch office at the Felix Hotel, receiving clients or petitioners one day a week. Besides these professionals, Toano residents included a patent attorney and a steel engraver, the latter to prepare patent drawings, perhaps. Two physicians maintained practices on the ground floor of the Masonic Lodge (047-5458-0011), and a pharmacy operated next door in the shed built against the west side of Martin-Farinholt Store (047-5147-0011) in 1910.¹⁸ By that time, the *Virginia Gazette* had opened an office in D. W. Marston’s Store. Not far away, a brickyard, several sawmills, and a planing mill provided employment in the surrounding area and, in the case of lumber, freight for the C&O. James E. Banks’ Store (047-5147-0007) supported the retailing of lumber products, including finished millwork, from the mills that Banks operated in and near the community.¹⁹

Commerce had a bracing impact on Toano’s social life during this period. By 1906, the Martin-Farinholt Store (047-5458-0009) provided a large dance hall and assembly room above the ground-floor retail space.²⁰ Successful businessmen banded together to build Toano High School, which afforded additional spaces for public events.²¹ In 1910, Lodge No. 286, Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons, rented the W. R. Branch Store (047-5147-0013), raising the upper room several feet to create their new meeting hall. Meanwhile, the dining room of the Felix Inn hosted special fetes and became a meeting place for locals relaxing on weekends or celebrating holidays.²² Meanwhile, the Wayside Inn hosted dances and other social events in its large room.

¹⁷ Recollections of Carl Jenson (1892-1987), in Nancy Smith Bradshaw, ed., *Tales from James City County, Virginia: Oral Histories*, (Williamsburg: James City County Historical Commission, 1993), pp. 62-63.

¹⁸ Boelt, [pp. 7-11].

¹⁹ Chesapeake & Ohio railway Company. *Official Industrial Guide and Shippers' Directory...*, 1906, p. 150.

²⁰ Boelt, [p. 10-11].

²¹ Recollections of Mildred Tayler Moody (b.1906), in Bradshaw, *Oral Histories*, p. 95.

²² Boelt, [pp. 8-9].

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For male patrons of all races, the barbershop and pool hall, operated by Mr. Haily, a black barber, became a favored haunt.

These and other developments, all consequences of the C&O's arrival, energized the local economy and drove Toano's physical development. But the railroad was not an unalloyed blessing. It had cut through the heart of Toano (previously known as "Burnt Ordinary"), undoing the community's spatial logic, halting development in portions of the town, and creating general inconvenience besides. In 1906, the C&O tracks were re-routed to run north of Toano, re-opening the town for continued development.²³ In 1908, a new barrel factory supporting local potato farms appeared squarely in the footprint of the old rail bed, as did every contributing building at the eastern end of today's historic district.²⁴ Even where the tracks had not physically impinged on Richmond Road, the C&O's removal restored the town's spatial integrity, and so made the adjoining real estate more valuable. The present row of three commercial buildings, begun prior to 1903, reached completion soon after the tracks vanished, with completion of the Martin-Farinholt Store (047-5458-0009) in 1906-1907. These buildings are a measure of how important the C&O's removal was in the town's subsequent development.

Transportation – The Automobile

Important as the railroad had been in Toano's economic expansion and physical development, the coming of the automobile portended equally important things for the community's future. An early photo of Toano, taken about 1910, captured a street filled with wagons—but devoid of automobiles. It would not remain so for long. Toano residents would soon experience the automobile's growing impact on America and their own community. Between 1913 and 1926, when the Esso Gasoline Station (047-5458-0008) was built, Henry Ford's manufacturing works produced nearly 15 million Model T automobiles. During those years, the simple act of becoming a motorist, multiplied millions of times, did as much to change the United States as any single event before or since. When legions of U. S. soldiers returned from Europe after World War I, the American economy experienced a painful adjustment as these veterans attempted to re-enter the work force. During the ensuing Depression of 1920-1921, national production and income receded for a period of months, but the tandem forces of consumer demand and mass production could not be long contained. Henry Ford's production of cars reached a new high in 1921. He would not look back again until 1927.²⁵

It was during these go-go, post-WWI years that the automobile imprinted itself indelibly on Toano's village-like townscape. Motor hotels like the Green Shingle Inn (now vanished) served motorists with overnight accommodation, offering "Home Cooked" meals in the restaurants they maintained. These new dining facilities soon became meeting places for residents as well,

²³ *Ibid.*, [pp. 15].

²⁴ 1923 Plat, in possession of John E. Wray, IV.

²⁵ John A. Heitmann, *The Automobile in American Life*, (Richmond, TX: 2009), p. 41.

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expanding opportunities for social life in the community. To fuel a growing swarm of automobiles, curbside pumps appeared first in front of retail stores—perhaps as early as 1915, in the case of Wilkinson and Geddy’s (now vanished). For the second time in a generation, one of the main arteries in a national transportation network arrived in Toano—and bisected the town. Half a century later, the 1966 widening of this artery would transform Toano for a third time. In this case, a continued, ever-growing dependence on automobiles and motor transport effected the change, pushing aside older styles of commerce and supplanting railroads as the principal carriers of goods and people.

Architecture

Toano was once described as a “village of shops” and today the district embraces a notable collection of commercial buildings, all built after 1900 during the boom period of Toano’s history. These examples illustrate a broad range of sophistication, from the most substantive buildings (The Old Bank Building and the Martin-Farinholt Store), to the least ambitious (a ca. 1906 building at 7864 Richmond Road). Of all these buildings, the richly embellished ca. 1906 commercial building at 7960 Richmond Road and the Martin-Farinholt store at 7880-7882 Richmond Road are the most intact. Both remain essentially intact externally, including the original fenestration and associated millwork. The frame building at 7960 Richmond Road is remarkable for retaining an early pressed metal roof as well as a semi-circular parapet crowning its original pent, unique among examples in the district. More common is a “half parapet” front which extends only part way up the front gable end, leaving the apex of the roof exposed to enliven the silhouette of the building. This device seems to have been a local idiom, shared between Norge and Toano. Between those two communities, nine such buildings have been documented. Surviving examples in the district are found at 100 Depot Street, the Martin-Farinholt store at 7880-7882 Richmond Road, 7864 Richmond Road, and 7852 Richmond Road. At 7886 Richmond Road, the Masonic Lodge, originally the W. R. Branch Store, was originally a two-story, framed version of the type. These buildings were clearly related to the community hall in Norge, the only survivor of its type in *that* locality.

Apart from these examples, two other commercial buildings deserve notice. A former Esso gasoline station was built in 1926—the very year Route 60 was incorporated into a new system of federal highways and designated as US Route 60. Across the United States, rudimentary arrangements with gas pumps at the curbside in front of an earlier building, gave way to small, purpose-built “stations,” with off-street pumps under the open sky. Eventually, more substantial “gasoline stations” with attached canopies appeared, having display windows to drive sales of tires, batteries and accessories. Built with a canopy, the Esso station at 7894 Richmond Road perfectly represents this phase in the evolution of American gasoline stations, having pumps under cover (versus roadside pumps “under the sky”) and show windows. These canopied stations were eventually followed by streamlined metal-clad “service stations with service bays [within which mechanics could] install new products and preform repairs.” The stucco exterior

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and the deeply projecting eaves, with their timber brackets, echo the aesthetic/bungalow style--a friendly face for a new, unfamiliar kind of business.²⁶

Finally, The Carlton House reportedly functioned as Toano's Funeral Parlor prior to being enlarged and converted into a dwelling. The building is notable for its intact exterior and for the unusual corner doorway, adorned with a turned pendant. In its period as a dwelling, the house served the family of J. H. Carlton, keeper of the Felix Inn.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-80.

Toano Commercial Historic District
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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Toano Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR File #47-5147

10. Geographical Data

Toano Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

James City County, VA
County and State

Acreage of Property 4.1 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.381960 | Longitude: -76.805060 |
| 2. Latitude: 37.379420 | Longitude: -76.801970 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.378930 | Longitude: -76.802490 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.381560 | Longitude: -76.805760 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☒ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The district is bounded on the south by Route 60, on the east by the eastern property line of 7852 Richmond Road (047-5458-0012), on the north by rear property lines of the listed structures (bridging across over intervening streets), and on the west by the western property line of 7960 Richmond Road (047-5458-0004). The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Sketch Map/Photo Key.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

U. S. Route 60/Richmond Road forms the district's southern boundary as the road's widening in 1966 led to demolition of the historic commercial sector on the road's south side. The remaining boundaries of the district follow the perimeters of the parcels within the district. The resulting precinct gathers into one continuous, 1/4-mile strip comprised of the

Toano Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

James City County, VA
County and State

early twentieth century buildings on the north side of the highway that were spared in the 1966 widening. At the district's eastern end, a long, angled section of the northern boundary represents a rear property line shared by several listed properties. This line is a legacy of the 1881 C&O right-of way, aligning with its northern edge.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mark R. Wenger
organization: Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker, Architects
street & number: 5525 Olde Towne Road, Suite B
city or town: Williamsburg state: VA zip code: 23188
e-mail: mwenger@mcwb-arch.com
telephone: 757-221-0713 ext. 200
date: 8/14/18

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
Historic Structures Survey of James City County, Virginia..., Ottery Group, 2008. John E. Wray, IV.

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Toano Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

James City County, VA
County and State

City or Vicinity: Toano
County: James City County State: VA
Photographer: Mark R. Wenger
Date Photographed: 7/18/2018; 7/24/2018; 7/29/2018; 8/16/2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0001
Name of Property: Toano General Gun Shop (047-5458-0004)
7960 Richmond, Road.
Description: Front façade and eastern flank, looking NNE.

Photo 2 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0002
Name of Property: Thrift Depot (047-5458-0006) 100 Depot St.
Description: Front façade and southern flank, looking South.

Photo 3 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0003
Name of Property: Cuts-4-You (047-5458-0008) 7894 Richmond Rd.
Description: Front façade and eastern flank, looking NNE.

Photo 4 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0004
Name of Property: U. S. Post Office (047-5458-0001) 7890 Richmond Rd.
Description: Front façade and western flank, looking East.

Photo 5 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0005
Name of Property: Chickahominy Masonic Lodge No. 286 (047-5458-0011)
7886 Richmond Rd.
Description: Front façade and western flank, looking NE.

Photo 6 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0006

Toano Commercial Historic District

Name of Property

James City County, VA

County and State

Name of Property: Old Bank Building (047-5458-0010) 7884 Richmond Rd.

Description: Front façade, looking NE.

Photo 7 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0007

Name of Property: Martin-Farinholt Store (047-5458-0009) 7880-7882 Richmond Rd.

Description: Front façade and eastern flank, looking NE.

Photo 8 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0008

Name of Property: Beautifully & Wonderfully Made Salon (047-5458-0003)
7864 Richmond Rd.

Description: Front façade and eastern flank, looking NNE.

Photo 9 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0009

Name of Property: Verizon Telephone (047-5458-0002) 7862 Richmond Rd.

Description: Front façade and western flank, looking East.

Photo 10 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0010

Name of Property: Carlton House (47-5458-0005) 7858 Richmond Rd.

Description: Front façade, looking NE.

Photo 11 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0011

Name of Property: SnoMania Island (047-5458-0012) 7852 Richmond Rd.

Description: Front façade and eastern flank, looking NNE.

Photo 12 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0012

Name of Property: Western Section of Toano Commercial Historic District.

Description: Looking East.

Photo 13 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0013

Name of Property: Mid-Section of Toano Commercial Historic District.

Toano Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

James City County, VA
County and State

Description: Looking East.

Photo 14 of 14

VA_JamesCityCounty_ToanoCommercialHistoricDistrict_0014
Name of Property: Eastern Section of Toano Commercial Historic District.
Description: Looking East.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

LOCATION MAP

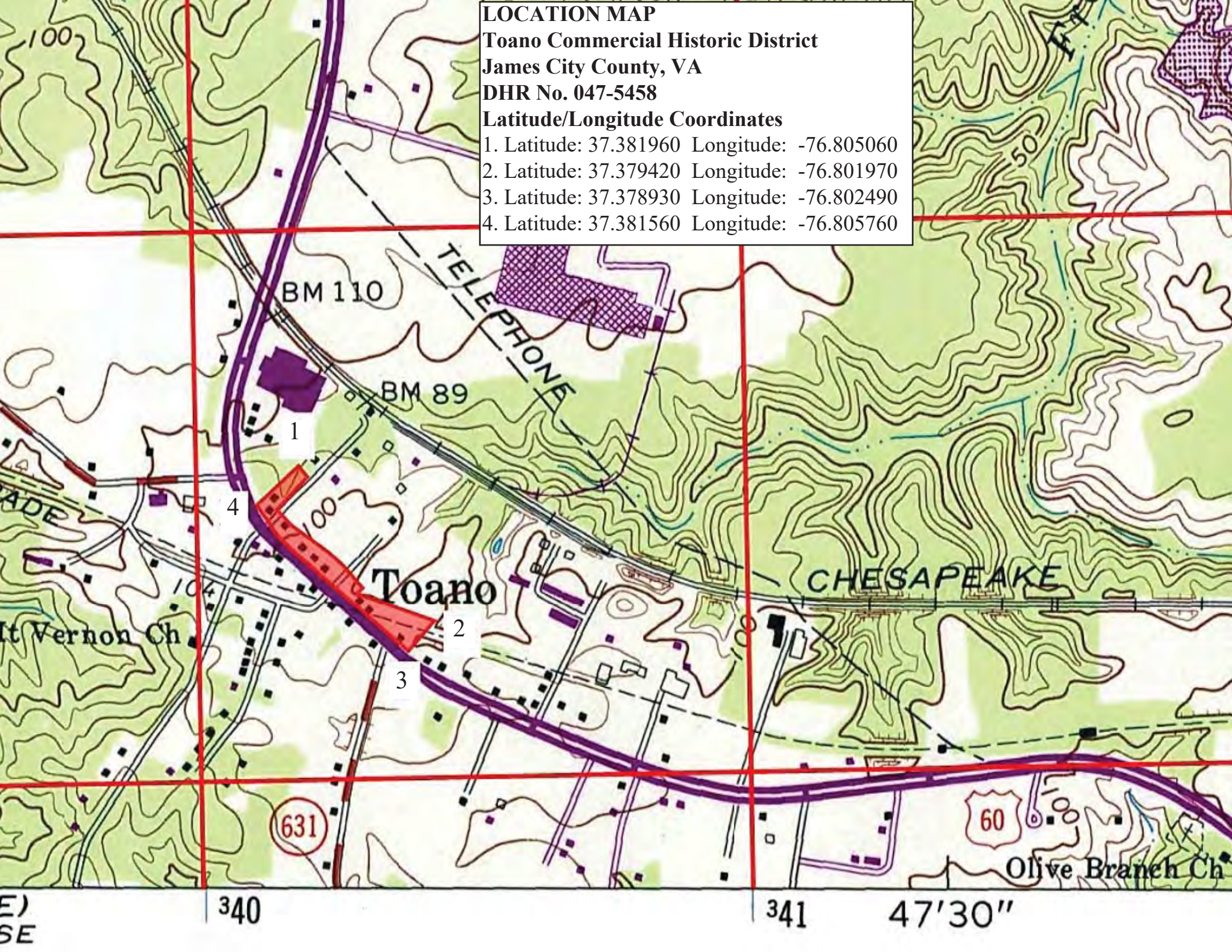
Toano Commercial Historic District

James City County, VA

DHR No. 047-5458

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 37.381960 Longitude: -76.805060
2. Latitude: 37.379420 Longitude: -76.801970
3. Latitude: 37.378930 Longitude: -76.802490
4. Latitude: 37.381560 Longitude: -76.805760



SKETCH MAP/ PHOTO KEY

Photo

Cont.

Photo	Status	Cont.
# 1 - 047-5458-0004 - 7960 Richmond Road	C	
2 - 047-5458-0006 - 100 Depot Street	C	
3 - 047-5458-0008 - 7894 Richmond Road	C	
4 - 047-5458-0001 - 7890 Richmond Road	NC	
5 - 047-5458-0011 - 7886 Richmond Road	C	
6 - 047-5458-0010 - 7884 Richmond Road	C	
7 - 047-5458-0009 - 7880-7882 Richmond Road	C	
8 - 047-5458-0003 - 7864 Richmond Road	C	
9 - 047-5458-0002 - 7862 Richmond Road	NC	
10 - 047-5458-0005 - 7858 Richmond Road	C	
11 - 047-5458-0012 - 7852 Richmond Road	C	
12 - Western Section of Historic District		
13 - Midsection of Historic District		
14 - Eastern Section of Historic District		

TOANO COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Toano, James City County, Virginia

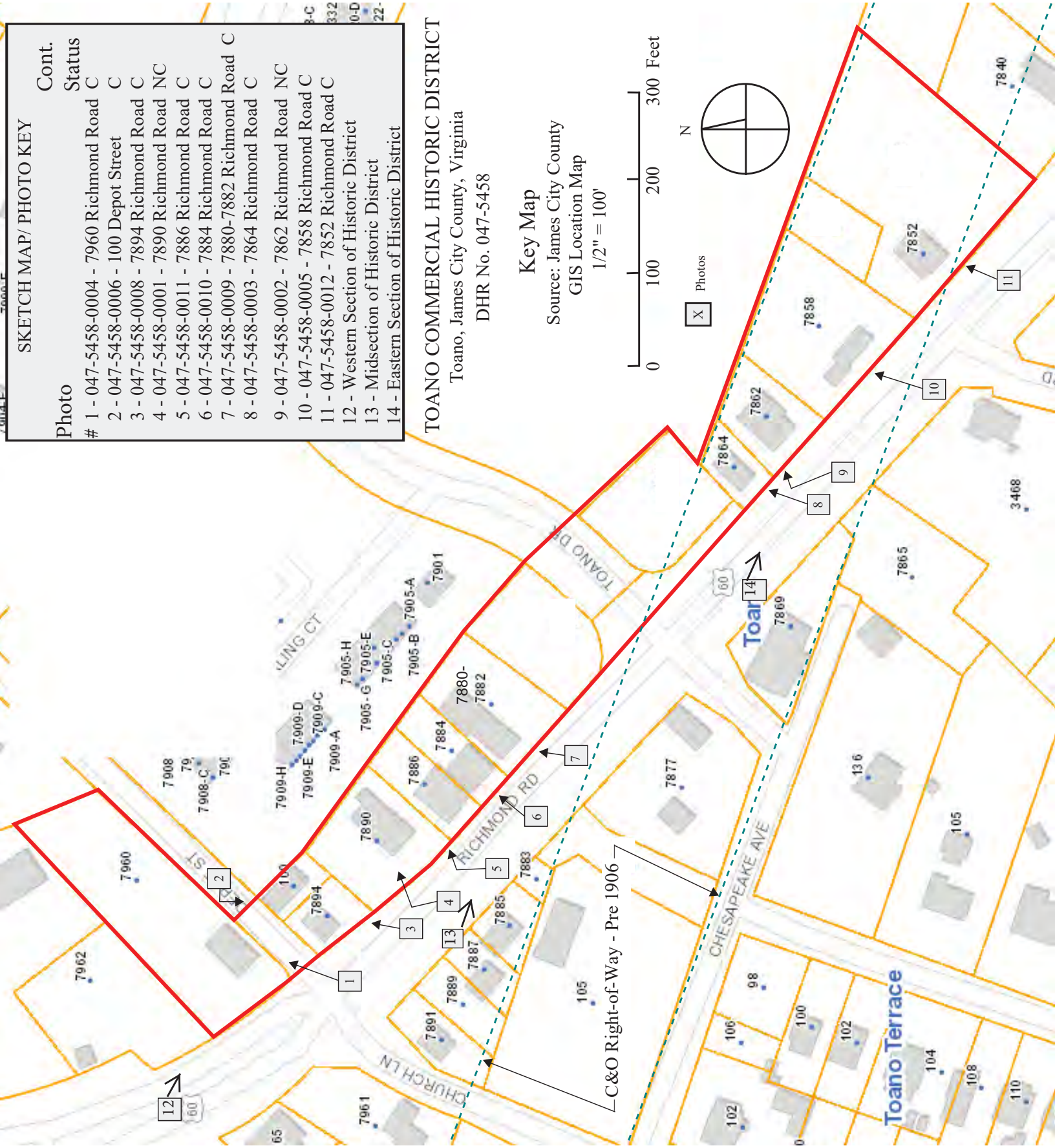
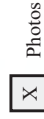
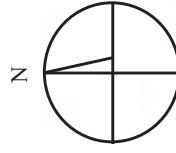
DHR No. 047-5458

Key Map

Source: James City County

GIS Location Map

1/2" = 100'



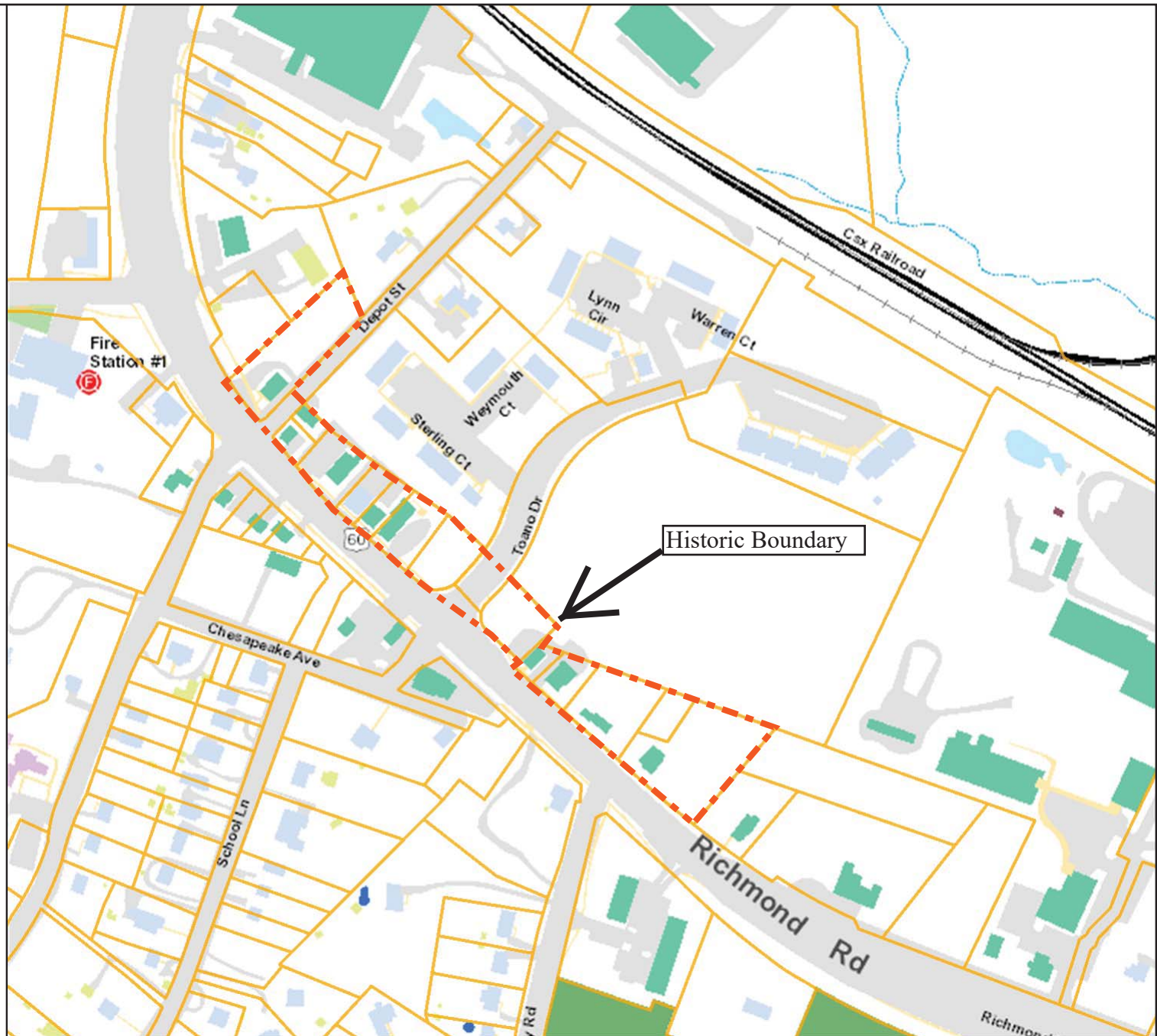
James City County, Virginia

Legend

Parcels

TAX PARCEL MAP

Toano Commercial Historic District
James City County, VA
DHR No. 047-5458



Title:

Date: 10/22/2018

DISCLAIMER: This drawing is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as such. The information displayed is a compilation of records, information, and data obtained from various sources, and James City County is not responsible for its accuracy or how current it may be.



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CLOS. 1911





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1903

7884

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National Register of Historic Places
Memo to File

Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Toano Historic District

Multiple Name: _____

State & County: VIRGINIA, James City

Date Received:
2/22/2019

Date of Pending List:
3/7/2019

Date of 16th Day:
3/22/2019

Date of 45th Day: 4/8/2019
Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100003605

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

☐ Appeal

☐ SHPO Request

☐ Waiver

☐ Resubmission

☒ Other

☐ PDIL

☐ Landscape

☐ National

☐ Mobile Resource

☐ TCP

☐ CLG

☐ Text/Data Issue

☐ Photo

☐ Map/Boundary

☐ Period

☐ Less than 50 years

☒ Accept

☐ Return

☐ Reject

4/3/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

The district represents the concentration of commercial services driven by changes in transportation. First, the village developed as a railroad stop, and then evolved as the rail line was abandoned/relocated but what is now US 60 was upgraded and improved. Eventual widening of that highway led to the destruction of some resources along the south side of the road, so the district comprises the resources that were left, all on the north side. Of note is the high concentration of false-front parapets on the commercial buildings, a not common design and a rare concentration of surviving examples.

Recommendation/
Criteria

Accept / A & C

Reviewer Jim Gabbert

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275

Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



McDonald, Lena <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>

Re: Toano Commercial Historic District

1 message

Wagner, Marc <marc.wagner@dhr.virginia.gov>

Thu, Nov 15, 2018 at 10:32 AM

To: Brian Thompson <Thompsonbl@cruzinc.us>

Cc: Lena McDonald <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>, Walker Austin zhj28692 <austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov>

Hi Brian and Annette: Your thoughts are appreciated. I am copying my colleagues who will make sure this email is read by our Director and both Historic Resources Board and State Review Board. Sincerely, Marc

Marc C. Wagner**Senior Architectural Historian****Eastern Region Preservation Office****Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

2801 Kensington Avenue

Richmond, Virginia 23221

Direct Phone Line: 804-482-6099

On Thu, Nov 15, 2018 at 10:29 AM, Brian Thompson <Thompsonbl@cruzinc.us> wrote:

Mr. Wagner and Members of the Board:

I wanted to take a moment to write in support of the Toano Commercial Historic District. I have been a Williamsburg resident for the past 12 years and a Toano resident for the past year, having built a farmhouse on 10 acres off of Forge Road in 2017. My family and I settled on Toano for our new home because we could see the charm and promise of the village. The Highway 60 corridor between Richmond and the Historic Triangle is a pleasant drive, made more so by the towns and villages that line the motorway. Toano, as the gateway into Williamsburg/Jamestown, can be another pearl on that string.

This Commercial Historic District request highlights the possibilities of Toano's slice of Highway 60. Furthermore, it highlights the heart and faith of Toano's residents who recognize those possibilities and are willing to dedicate time and money to see them realized.

I sincerely hope that this nomination is favorably received.

Thank you for your time.

Brian and Annette Thompson

2921 Forge Road

Toano, Virginia



McDonald, Lena <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>

Re: Toano Commercial Historic District

1 message

Wagner, Marc <marc.wagner@dhr.virginia.gov>

Fri, Nov 16, 2018 at 10:58 AM

To: benswenson@cox.net

Cc: Lena McDonald <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>, Walker Austin zhj28692 <austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov>

Hi Ben: Thanks for the comment! I am copying my colleagues who will make sure our Director and our two Boards, who will be reviewing the application have your comment. Sincerely, Marc

Marc C. Wagner
Senior Architectural Historian
Eastern Region Preservation Office
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23221
Direct Phone Line: 804-482-6099

On Fri, Nov 16, 2018 at 8:50 AM Ben Swenson <benswenson@cox.net> wrote:

Dear Mr. Wagner,

I support the designation of the Toano Commercial Historic District. As a member of the James City County Historical Commission and a longtime James City County resident, I'm hopeful that this designation will help spur interest and investment in the current and historical assets in this part of the county.

Kind Regards,

Ben Swenson
757-869-3088
benswenson@cox.net

Robert C. & Carole J. Dishman

3460 Frederick Drive

Toano, VA 23168

757-250-3365

Monday, November 26, 2018

Ms. Julie Langan, Director
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, VA 23221

Re: Historic District Designation for Toano Buildings

Dear Ms. Langan:

This letter is to lend our support for approval of the Commercial Historic District Designation for Toano.

While the historic designation seems to be related primarily to preserving the historic buildings because of their historic architectural details, you will find that this letter deals with the same thing, but coming from a slightly different angle. We would like to remind the board reviewing the designation, that the architectural design of the buildings is not just a reflection of the purposes the buildings were to serve, but also a reflection of the people who paid to have them built, the people who built them, and the people who walked into them to purchase the goods and services offered within those buildings.

In short, we must not forget how the buildings came to be there in the first place. To fully appreciate the architectural and functional features of the buildings, it may be helpful to gain an appreciation of the people of the Toano community who created the need for those buildings, and those who responded to that need.

In today's economy, entrepreneurial business people often purchase a plot to have a store built in a town or city in which they may never have set foot. To them, it is just another deal for a building needed for business expansion. Some consultant has told them that the location is a prime site.

Not so during the time of economic growth in Toano when the historic buildings still existing were built. This fact can be confirmed simply by looking at the names that were on the store fronts and businesses in the late 1800's and very early 1900's. Marston, Martin, Farinholt, Barksdale, Banks, Taylor, Slater, Trice, Jennings, and Richardson, are just some of the names that appeared on the storefronts during the time period that Toano was the economic center of James City County. They were not just names on the stores, they were names of families who lived in the community; people who attended church together; people who pulled-together to build one of the finest schools of the time in Virginia, Toano Elementary and High School,

located where the firehose is today, just across the street from some of the very buildings being considered for historic designation.

Unlike today, members of those local families had the buildings built. Like today, as business people they had the sparkle in their eyes that showed that they dreamed of financial success in their ventures. Some of the buildings have the fingerprints of other members of those Toano families who used their building skills to physically build the buildings.

Most of those families lived in the community several generations before those stores were built. In 1791, earlier members of those same families built a Methodist Chapel in the area that is called Norge today, currently the site of the James City Chapel Cemetery. Members of the Chapel resided from Lightfoot to the Chickahominy River. Many of the surnames listed on the Toano stores were on the membership role of the Chapel.

After the Civil War, the economy of James City County was devastated. People had little money to pay their debts, some losing everything, including their farms. In 1881 when the railroad between Richmond and Newport News was constructed, people saw opportunities that could help the community to recover from the devastation left by the war. Surely, there was a refreshing attitude of hope in the air.

In 1885, the Chapel was also struggling. ***"In that year, because the church was not thriving and the building was getting in disrepair,"*** discussions among the leadership of the Chapel began leaning toward moving the Chapel, or building a new church in Toano, previously called Burnt Ordinary.

It was decided to move a major portion of the Chapel to Toano to be reconstructed as the new Mount Vernon Methodist Church.

"Mrs. Ruth Hankins, a member of Mt. Vernon for many years retells her conversation some years ago with two gentlemen who witnessed the relocation of the James City Chapel building by way of the railroad to its present site on the hill. 'They did move a part of that church', I was told by two men living at the time. I suppose Mr. Lemmon was probably in his thirties at the time. I asked how in the world they moved it and he said, 'Well, there were no buildings through there to bother us, no houses at all. They used oxen to pull the building up the hill.'"ⁱⁱ

That little church on a hill in Toano became a center of religious and community activities. Family members of many of the merchants were a part of those activities. Others of the community attended Olive Branch Christian Church or Hickory Neck Episcopal Church, both located close by.

The stores of "Downtown Toano" were where neighbors met and talked.

Those local families jumped in with both feet. Farming became profitable as truck farming was introduced; a barrel plant was opened to provide barrels for shipping the lucrative potato crops, a pickle plant was opened. Electricity was brought to the town. The stores and office buildings

served not only the residents of the community, but also the businessmen who stayed in the fine Toano hotels that Toano folks owned and operated, while conducting business with the local farmers and businesses.

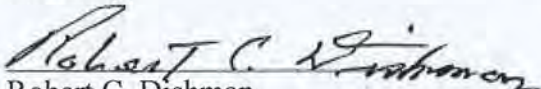
Local families bought their farm supplies, clothing, and other necessities from those merchants. When sick, they went upstairs to see the doctor whose office was above a store. They bought their medicine from the drugstore in town. When the new horseless carriages came about, they bought their gas and oil "in town". When the "flivver" needed repair, the local repair shop was there, too.

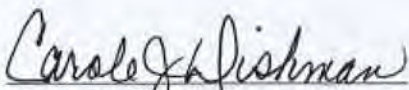
Those buildings brought permanency to the Town of Toano.

Yes, preserving architectural details of historic buildings is important. Important, also is remembering that every architectural detail and functional detail of the Toano historic buildings are a direct reflection of the times and lives of those who had them built, those who built them, and those of the community that they served.

Just as in 1885, Toano is in need of being revived. We believe that approval of the Commercial Historic District Designation, coupled with current planning for the revitalization of Toano, offers the opportunity to bring new life into the town, while bringing back much of its small town charm. Continuing to preserve the existing historic building is important to that endeavor.

Sincerely,


Robert C. Dishman


Carole J. Dishman

cc: Mr. Mark C. Wagner
Senior Architectural Historian
Virginia Department of Historical Resources
2801 Kensington, Avenue
Richmond, VA 23221

p.s. The James City Chapel, built in 1791, continues to serve the Toano community as the sanctuary of Mount Vernon United Methodist Church today, 227 years after it was originally built on the cemetery site.

ⁱ Previous History of Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church written by Florence Cottrell, Mount Vernon UMC Archives Book 3, B3-1A

ⁱⁱ Previous History of Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church written by Florence Cottrell. A copy is in the Mount Vernon UMC Church Archives Book 3, B3-1A



Mount Vernon

Toano, Virginia





McDonald, Lena <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>

Re: PROPOSED TOANO COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

1 message

Wagner, Marc <marc.wagner@dhr.virginia.gov>

Fri, Nov 30, 2018 at 10:34 AM

To: dudleyparrish@cox.net

Cc: Lena McDonald <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>, Walker Austin zhj28692 <austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov>

Dudley:

Thanks for commenting! I am copying our Register staff and they will make sure that the comment will be read by our Director and members of the two boards who are reviewing the nomination.

The nomination is now on our Board review page: <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/boards/>

Here is a direct link to the matter: <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/nominations/toano-commercial-historic-district-james-city-county-047-5458/>

Sincerely,
Marc

Marc C. Wagner
Senior Architectural Historian
Eastern Region Preservation Office
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23221
Direct Phone Line: 804-482-6099

On Fri, Nov 30, 2018 at 5:33 AM dudley parrish <dudleyparrish@cox.net> wrote:

Good morning, Mr. Wagner,

As a resident of James City County, Vice Chair of the James City Historical Commission, and a Licensed Architect, I support the prospect of establishing the proposed Toano Commercial Historic District.

Respectfully,

James D. Parrish, Jr., RA

Sent from Mail for Windows 10



McDonald, Lena <lena.mcdonald@thr.virginia.gov>

Re: Toano Commercial Historic District ←

1 message

Wagner, Marc <marc.wagner@thr.virginia.gov>

Tue, Dec 11, 2018 at 12:46 PM

To: fwb@widomaker.com

Cc: Lena McDonald <lena.mcdonald@thr.virginia.gov>, Walker Austin zhj28692 <austin.walker@thr.virginia.gov>

Hi Fred: Just confirming that we received this note and we appreciate the comment! Thanks for attending the meetings and also all of your research and continued interest in Toano and James City County history. I am copying colleagues who will be sending this not to our Director and both Boards! Sincerely, Marc

Marc C. Wagner
Senior Architectural Historian
Eastern Region Preservation Office
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23221
Direct Phone Line: 804-482-6099

On Tue, Dec 4, 2018 at 2:10 PM Fred Boelt <fwb@widomaker.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Wagner,

I am writing to offer my support for the creation of the Toano Commercial Historic District. While James City County certainly celebrates four hundred years of history, the remnants of the Toano village represent the only extant cluster of commercial buildings from the late nineteenth – early twentieth century. After the railroad came through the area in 1881, the area suddenly had ready transportation to market agricultural commodities. Within a few years, general stores, hotels, banks, canning, box and barrel factories were thriving businesses in the village area. Several of these original buildings will form the nucleus of redevelopment for this important area. In this case, preserving the past will be the nexus to the future.

I strongly advocate for the establishment of the Toano Commercial Historic District.

Thank you for your consideration,

Frederick W. Boelt
2896 Forge Road,
P. O. Box 453
Toano, VA 23168



McDonald, Lena <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>

Re: Toano Commercial Historic District ←

1 message

Wagner, Marc <marc.wagner@dhr.virginia.gov>

Wed, Dec 12, 2018 at 10:33 AM

To: Alain Outlaw <alainoutlaw@aol.com>

Cc: sphillips37@cox.net, fwb@widowmaker.com, tori.haynes@jamescitycountyva.gov, Lena McDonald <lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov>, Walker Austin zhj28692 <austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov>

Alain: Thanks for you thoughtful comment! I am copying colleagues who will make sure that the comment is in our Board member's and Director's meeting folders. Sincerely, Marc

Marc C. Wagner**Senior Architectural Historian****Eastern Region Preservation Office****Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

2801 Kensington Avenue

Richmond, Virginia 23221

Direct Phone Line: 804-482-6099

On Wed, Dec 12, 2018 at 10:31 AM Alain Outlaw <alainoutlaw@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Wagner,

As a 24-year member of the James City County Historical Commission, I fully support the registration of the Toano Commercial Historic District. Over time, James City County has sought to fully represent the entire history of this region of Virginia. One of the successes in this endeavor involved years of negotiation to save, move, restore, and use to public benefit the c.1907 Norge Depot. The annual trips I lead for Road Scholars (Elderhostel) from all over the country to visit the site are a constant reminder of the universal interest visitors have in this period of history, which I weave into my week-long focus on the 1607-1907 time-frame represented here. This registration will be an economic stimulus to encourage further private sector investment, already occurring, in preservation and rehabilitation, with a direct temporal link to the nearby Norge Depot. In effect, highlighting this c.1907 period of reverse migration into the northern part of the county from the western United States on roads and railroads, as a result of the extensive potato economy, will bookend the 1607 story of colonization by water transport from the east and south, based on the success of tobacco.

Sincerely,

Alain C. Outlaw

James City County Historical Commission



McDonald, Lena <lena.mcdonald@thr.virginia.gov>

Fwd: Toano Commercial Historic District ←

1 message

Wagner, Marc <marc.wagner@thr.virginia.gov>

Tue, Dec 11, 2018 at 12:43 PM

To: Lena McDonald <lena.mcdonald@thr.virginia.gov>, Walker Austin zhj28692 <austin.walker@thr.virginia.gov>

Hi Lena and Austin: I think I forwarded this one, but just in case. Marc

Subject: Toano Commercial Historic District

To: <Marc.wagner@thr.virginia.gov>

Cc: Jack Wray <jewray75@gmail.com>, Peggy <pkrapflnscapr@cs.com>

Good Afternoon, Marc -

We are writing to express our strong support of the application for a Toano Commercial Historic District (DHR No. 047-5458).

Toano is a historic, late 19th century town that was a significant economic, agricultural and recreational presence on the peninsula. Many of the original buildings are gone but the original commercial core remains. Unfortunately, the town is now at the tipping point and what happens at the December 13th Historic District Review meeting will determine whether Toano will have a rebirth or remain as it is.

The key to this revitalization is the applicant, Jack Wray. He has a vision and a passion to restore Toano to the way it looked in the early 1900's - but with modern shops and apartments within historic and reconstructed buildings. He has committed time, energy and a significant financial investment to make this vision a reality. An essential first step will be approval of his request for a Toano Commercial Historic District.

Creation of this district will not only foster community pride, it will give property owners within the district a valuable tax credit tool to encourage preservation and restoration efforts. It can also help obtain support and assistance from the James City County Board of Supervisors, County Administrator and Office of Economic Development.

We strongly urge you to approve this application for Commercial Historic District designation. There is too much at stake not to.

Sincerely,

Rich & Peggy Krapf
2404 Forge Road
Toano, VA 23168



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Matt Strickler
Secretary of Natural Resources

Julie V. Langan
Director

Tel: (804) 367-2323
Fax: (804) 367-2391
www.dhr.virginia.gov

February 19, 2019

Joy Beasley
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service, National Register Program
1849 C St., NW (Mail Stop 7228)
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Toano Commercial Historic District, James City County, Virginia

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Toano Commercial Historic District** to the National Register of Historic Places. Submitted for your review, the nomination has been considered, and approved, by the State Review Board and the Virginia SHPO has recommended it for listing.

This property has 12 owners and the Department of Historic Resources received no letters of objection concerning the nomination. Any letters of comment or objection have been copied at the end of the nomination material, along with any FPO notification letters.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My direct phone line is 804-482-6439.

Sincerely,

Lena Sweeten McDonald
National/State Register Historian

Enclosures

Western Region Office
962 Kime Lane
Salem, VA 24153
Tel: (540) 387-5443
Fax: (540) 387-5446

Northern Region Office
5357 Main Street
PO Box 519
Stephens City, VA 22655
Tel: (540) 868-7029
Fax: (540) 868-7033

Eastern Region Office
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, VA 23221
Tel: (804) 367-2323
Fax: (804) 367-2391