

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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: Appalachia Commercial Historic District

Other names/site number: DHR #164-5003

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: W. Main Street, Kentucky Avenue, Powell Street

City or town: Appalachia State: VA County: Wise

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A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 nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

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

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">Julie W. Longan</p> <hr/> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p><u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u></p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p> | <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">6/25/19</p> <hr/> <p>Date</p> |
| <p>In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> | |
| <hr/> <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> | <hr/> <p>Date</p> |
| <hr/> <p>Title :</p> | <hr/> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p> |

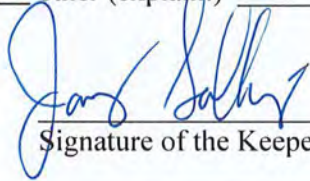
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4. National Park Service Certification

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

8.6.2019
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>30</u> | <u>7</u> | buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | objects |
| <u>30</u> | <u>9</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: hotel
COMMERCE/TRADE: business
COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
COMMERCE/TRADE: department store
COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
GOVERNMENT: city hall
GOVERNMENT: post office
RELIGION: religious facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business
COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
COMMERCE/TRADE: organizational
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
GOVERNMENT: city hall
GOVERNMENT: fire station
GOVERNMENT: post office
RELIGION: religious facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater
VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival; Classical Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne, Art Deco

OTHER: "House with Canopy" Service Station

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; CONCRETE; STONE; METAL;

GLASS; TERRA COTTA; OTHER: Cloth

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 Appalachia Commercial Historic District comprises the commercial core of the Town of Appalachia and includes buildings that date from 1910 through 1950. This period represents the height of Appalachia's economic development as a commercial area that served both in-town residents and thousands of residents in the nearby coal camps. The 11-acre district contains commercial, governmental, and religious buildings located on both sides of West Main Street (U.S. Route 23 Business), and on Kentucky Avenue and Powell Street. The North Fork of the Powell River and still-active railroad tracks extend along the southeast side of the district. Vehicular bridges, which cross the river and train tracks, connect the commercial area and residential community to the north and southeast; these vehicular bridges are not of historic age. Historically, suspended footbridges and sets of steps up the steep hillsides also linked the residential areas to the commercial area. The relatively flat area of the commercial district contrasts with the steep slopes of the surrounding hillsides; as a response to topography, many buildings on the northwest side of the district are built into the hillside and those on the southeast side have basement levels that are above grade at the back. The majority of the buildings are executed in an early-twentieth-century commercial style, although examples of Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Art Deco, and Moderne styles also are present. The majority of buildings about the wide concrete street sidewalks, are one-to-three stories in height (with the exception of the eight-story Appalachian Hotel), and are of masonry construction (brick and stone). The commercial buildings, designed as enframed window walls and one- and two-part blocks, exhibit notable brickwork details and are built in adjoining rows that contribute to the district's visual cohesion. Residential neighborhoods extend northwest, southeast, and east of the district; however, residential use historically has been

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present within the commercial area in mixed-used buildings with commercial enterprises and professional offices on ground floors and living units above—a use that continues to the present. The 39 resources documented within the district include 30 contributing buildings, 7 non-contributing buildings, 1 non-contributing structure, and 1 non-contributing site.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

Appalachia is an incorporated town in the western section of Wise County. The town stands at an elevation of 1,651 feet and is surrounded by the steep mountain ridges that hold coal-rich deposits to the north. The layout of the town reflects the influence both of transportation routes, as well as environmental factors. Primary among the transportation routes is the existing railroad lines, which developed in the late nineteenth century and extend northeast to southwest along the southeast side of the district. The vehicular route of U.S. Route 23 (Business) connects Appalachia with the towns of Big Stone Gap to the south and Norton to the east and serves as the main thoroughfare through the historic district (West Main Street).

The North Fork of the Powell River runs east-to-west along the southeast side of the district and historically included numerous oxbow turns, some of which have been filled and redirected over time. Callahan Creek flows from the north to join the river on the east end of the district and Looney Creek joins the river on the southwestern end of town. The steep terrain and floodplain have played a role in the organization of the town, dividing it into distinct areas: the central, commercial core; the New Bottom and Old Bottom residential areas; Ridge Avenue (on the slopes north of town); and Stringtown (to the east, south of U.S. Route 23 Business).

The area, which generally lies between Black Mountain on the northwest and Stone Mountain and Little Stone Mountain on the south, sat atop some of the region's riches and most important coal seams (the Taggart, Taggart Marker, and Imboden seams) and gave raise to numerous coalmining communities ("camps") during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹ Callahan Avenue, which extends north of downtown and parallels the creek of the same name, leads to the railroad community of Andover and connects with the coal camps of Arno, Derby, Osaka, Roda, and Stonega. Ison Rock Ridge (approximate elevation of 2,180 feet) extends into town from the northwest; the coal camps of Inman, Linden, and Laurel stood along the southwest side of the ridge. The camps of Imboden, Lower Exeter, and Exeter stood southwest of town along the southern slopes of Looney Ridge (approximate elevation of 2,780 feet), which was the site of the first coalmine in the region. The coal camps were located along the deep, creek-made hollows that stood between the mountain ridges. The coal companies built spur lines that connected their operations to the main railroad lines in Appalachia and also provided passenger service between the localities.²

Early Development

Since its incorporation in 1906, the Town of Appalachia has existed as a railroad hub, a banking town, and as the commercial center that served the area's coal camps. Prior to the establishment of the railroad, family farms occupied the Powell River bottomland and small pockets of settlements extended up through the mountain hollows to the north. The natural resources of coal

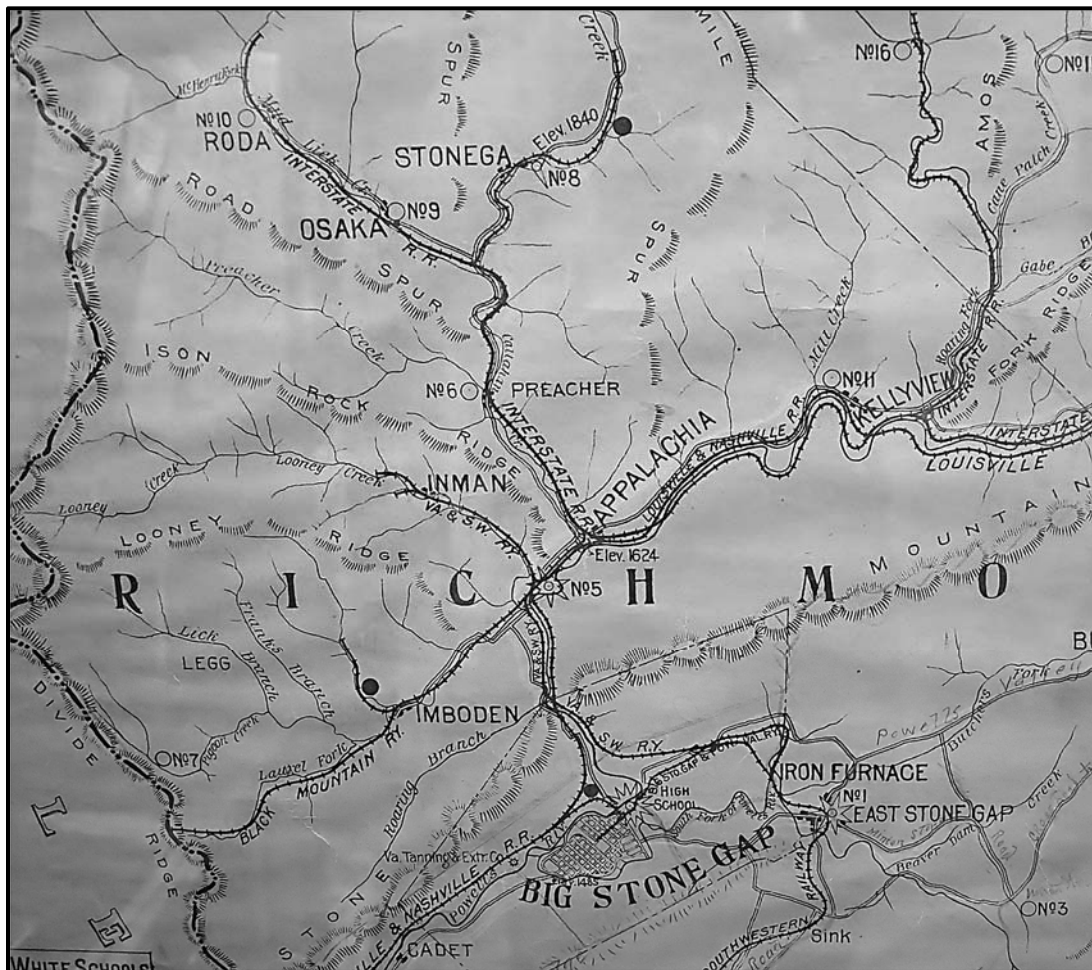
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and timber drew the railroads, which included three different lines providing both freight and passenger services. In 1890, the South Atlantic and Ohio (SA&O) Railroad completed its line from Bristol to the area, establishing its “Intermont” terminal at the southwest end of the present town site. In 1899, the Virginia and Southwestern (V&SW) Railroad absorbed the SA&O line, and later merged with the Southern Railway (becoming the line’s Appalachian Division) with connections to major cities in the Northeast and South. In 1911, the V&SW moved its main operations from Bristol to Appalachia and the Southern had a significant impact on Appalachia when it later built its railroad yards at the Intermont terminal site. The Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad also built through the area in 1890, and extended on to the Town of Norton, where it joined with the Norfolk & Western Railroad. The L&N, which connected the region to Louisville, Nashville, and Cincinnati, built its depot at Callahan Creek and the Powell River (North Fork) junction and named it “Appalachia.” The Virginia Coal & Iron Company constructed the Interstate Railroad (later, a part of Southern), which brought the company’s loaded coal cars and cut timber from the hollows to Appalachia for transfer to the larger rail lines. The Interstate also provided passenger service for a time. The town thus became a “passenger rail hub that connected the regions of Southwest Virginia, East Tennessee, and Eastern Kentucky with the rest of the country.”³



Map showing General region around Appalachia (at center), location of Coal Camps, and Big Stone Gap to south (bottom), ca. 1910. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

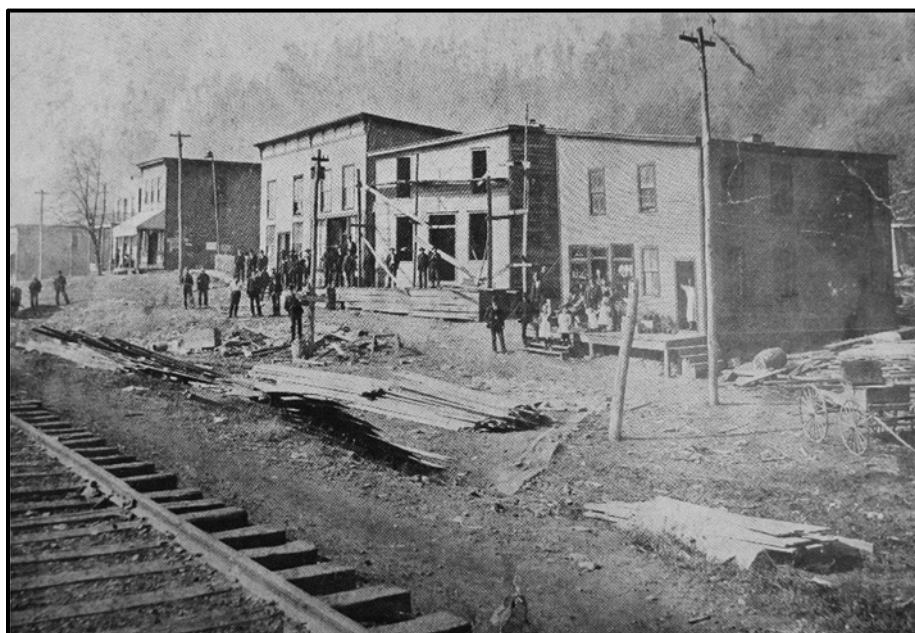
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The railroads were drawn to the area of present-day Appalachia due to the abundant supply of coal and lumber. “Capitalists aspiring to mine coal built railroads to make that mining possible.”⁴ At least four coalmines began operations in the area by 1892, including the mine along Looney Creek, later called Inman and initially operated by the Virginia, Tennessee, and Carolina Iron and Steel Company.⁵ Commercial harvesting of timber, which began in Wise County around 1887, became prolific in the mountains above Appalachia and went on at a “feverish” pace until about 1940 when accessible stands of timber were depleted.⁶ Prior to the coming of the railroad, logs were hauled by wagon from the rugged slopes to Abingdon in Washington County for shipment to outside markets.⁷ In Appalachia, as the town grew, saw mills were established along Powell River and Callahan Creek and provided local building materials.

In 1897, the Keystone Coal & Iron Company (KCI), a loose affiliate of the Virginia Coal & Iron Company, purchased a large portion of land around the newly established rail lines and platted the area for development. KCI’s Plat No. 1 included commercial lots along Main Street and larger residential lots along the steep hillside to the north. The overall plan reflects an orthogonal layout, although some streets curve in response to the hilly terrain. KCI adopted the name “Appalachia” for the new town.

The commercial area paralleled the northwest side of the SA&O and L&N tracks. Initially, many of the one- and two-story frame buildings faced towards the tracks or had entrances on both track- and street sides. The frame buildings were slowly replaced by masonry structures, perhaps spurred on by a fire in 1919 that destroyed several of the buildings at the northeast end of town.⁸ Wide concrete sidewalks, poured by local businessman and builder Brown Hampton “Hamp” Crizer, fronted the buildings and edged Main Street, which was not paved until the early 1920s (also completed by Crizer). Streetlamps also were an early amenity.



Early frame buildings in Appalachia, facing railroad tracks, ca. 1901.

From Collins [c.1983], from the collection of the late Mrs. Nellie Feagins, furnished by Mrs. J.M. Johnson

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Late 1910s-early 1920s view of W. Main Street looking southwest.
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

Architectural Description

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District comprises buildings on both sides of West Main Street and includes resources that date from 1910 through 1950. The two-lane roadway includes on-street parking lanes and wide concrete sidewalks. Nearly all buildings along the street abut the sidewalk and many have historic metal canopies or more modern cloth awnings that extend over the street-level storefronts. Buildings on the northwest side of W. Main Street extend back to and are built into the steep hillside. A few buildings have upper level entrances at the back, some of which are accessed by long, frame walkways. Buildings on the southeast side of W. Main Street are built at-grade, but many have basement levels that, due to the slope of the land, are above grade at the back.

Three resources in the district date to the 1910s and reflect the early efforts at community organization. The **Appalachia United Methodist Church** (527 W. Main Street), originally called the Revival Memorial Church, Methodist Episcopal Church South, was constructed in 1910, as confirmed by the cornerstone on the building. The handsomely designed church reflects Byzantine influence in its Greek-cross plan and Colonial Revival-style influence in its details. The church is executed in rusticated stone and exhibits fine arched openings with cut-stone sills and keystones, stained-glass windows, and classical details. The front (southeast) elevation holds one-story, hip-roofed entrance porches on either side of the centrally located projecting gable wing. Each recessed entry holds paired, wooden paneled doors with four-light, fixed transoms above and flanking wooden pilasters that support a full entablature. The character of the building suggests that it was architect-designed and that skilled stonemasons were involved in its construction. Alterations include the construction of a stylistically sympathetic education wing that extends to the sloping hillside at the back, where there is an entrance into the attic level. Another alteration to the original

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church is the removal of the octagonal dome that formerly projected from the center of the building's hipped roof.



1938 photograph showing Revival Memorial Church (later, Appalachia United Methodist Church) with cupola.
Courtesy Appalachia U.S. Post Office

In 1906, the Town of Appalachia incorporated and since that time, municipal offices have occupied several buildings in town, the most architecturally distinct of which is the 1919 **Town Hall** (104 Powell Street). The building stands on the southeast side of the railroad tracks, diagonally across from the former L&N depot (see photo on next page). Appalachia town offices, police, jail, and fire departments have occupied the building. The one-story, brick-clad building is covered by a shed roof with stepped parapet side walls topped by terra cotta tile coping. The front elevation features two, central, two-course-rowlock, round-arched brick openings that access the recessed entrance porch. Metal awning type windows have replaced the original double-hung windows in the façade bays. The building retains its painted signage (which now reads “City Hall”), but only one of the two original date tiles.

The 1920s was a time of great prosperity in the region and Appalachia served as the commercial center for the miners in the nearby coal camps. Entrepreneurs opened a variety of stores in the town that offered hardware, dry goods, furniture and household goods, groceries that offered more and different items from the coal camp commissaries, and numerous clothing and shoe stores. Drug stores, professional offices, telegraph offices, beauty salons and barbershops also lined both sides of W. Main Street. Restaurants and cafes, pool halls and bowling alleys, movie theaters, and newsstands also offered diversions for miners, farmers, and local residents who crowded the town on “Payday Saturdays.”

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Former Appalachia Town Hall, 104 Powell Street, ca. 1920.
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

The **300 block of W. Main Street** holds intact rows of masonry commercial buildings that date to the 1920s and 1930s and that retain the overall historical streetscape appearance. The buildings, most of which replaced earlier frame buildings, are one- to three stories in height, clad with stone or red- or buff-colored brick, and feature detailed parapets. On multi-story buildings, the first levels are occupied by storefronts and the upper levels historically housed offices or living units. Awnings project over the storefronts and front sidewalks, providing a shaded area for patrons to “window shop” through the large, splayed plate glass windows. Most buildings retain the row of fixed transom lights above the storefronts, although metal or wooden panels cover many of the transoms. Typical alterations on the buildings include replacement upper level windows and installation of aluminum or other siding over parts of the facades; however, as a collection, the buildings retain good integrity of design and workmanship with regard to brick and stone details that include quoins, corbelled cornices, stringcourses, patterned brickwork, pilasters, and window bay details.

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The Peake Building, 315 W. Main Street, when it housed the Stuart Faucette Co. 5-10- and 25¢ store, ca. 1925.
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

Two brick buildings on the northwest side of W. Main Street are of particular note. The **Peake Building** (315 W. Main Street), constructed around 1925, is a three-story building that stands at the northeast intersection of W. Main Street and Virginia Avenue. The building is unique in the district for its curved corner and, in a response to the hilly terrain, street-level entrances are present on all three levels of the building. Commonly, such buildings address the corners with a flat-sided entrance or a faceted facade, but the Peake Building actually curves around the corner, which provides an interesting element to this building and is another example of the quality of masonry workmanship in the district. The recessed commercial entrances at the south corner and on the southeast elevation are flanked by large display windows. A metal, flat-roofed awning with metal bracket tiebacks extends over the storefront. At present, metal sheeting covers the multi-paned transom located above the storefront, which is visible in historical photographs. The exterior walls are executed in a brick bond pattern of five rows of stretcher bond with a fifth row of Flemish bond and the parapet is detailed with inset panels of decorative brickwork. Window openings have smooth cast stone lintels and sills. Over the years, the building has housed a variety of commercial uses including clothing stores, dime stores, and professional offices. At present, the lower level holds an antiques store and living units are present above.

The **Fig Building** (309 W. Main Street), constructed about 1920, is located within the row of adjoining buildings east of the Peake building. Like others on the block, the Fig Building abuts the street sidewalk at the front of the lot and extends to the hillside that rises at the back of the property. For many years, the Intermont Drug Store occupied the lower level of this building with offices

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for doctors and pharmacists above. The front elevation of the building is executed in a Flemish brick bond pattern with glazed headers, has rusticated stone window sills and lintels, and features an enframed facade with brick corbelling, pilasters, and decorative brick panels. The storefront is modified, but retains its original recessed entry bay, storefront windows, and a secondary entrance to the upper floors.



Fig Building, 309 W. Main Street, (at right) with original cloth awning.
Building at left replaced by Art Deco-style building, 307 W. Main Street.
From Collins, c. 1983

In 1894, Martin D. Collier, a native of Kentucky, came to Appalachia and worked on the railroad for a year and then worked for the Stonega Coke and Coal Company as an outside foreman. In 1906, Collier began his furniture company, which was housed in a building formerly located on the Peake Building site. Collier also became a building contractor and reportedly built about one-third of the buildings in Appalachia.⁹ In 1922, Collier constructed his large, three-story brick furniture store building on the southeast side of W. Main Street (320 W. Main Street). The **M.D. Collier Furniture Store**, like other retail establishments on this side of the street, received stock from the trains that passed directly behind the building. This stately building features two, four-bay-wide sections that are divided by a square brick support. The building stands on a concrete foundation, is clad with brick laid in a stretcher bond, and is covered by a flat roof with a parapet edge. The two entry doors of the building are recessed at the center of the front elevation and are flanked by wood-frame storefront display windows with wooden paneled aprons. A tall transom filled with small glass blocks extends over the top of the storefront. Similar transoms are present

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on other Main Street buildings, but many are, at present, boarded over. The upper level openings hold large original one-over-one wooden sash windows. Details on the building include corner pilasters, a corbelled brick cornice, recessed brick panels, and continuous cast stone sills beneath the windows. The rear elevation of the Collier building holds an entrance to the full-height basement level. Although most of the openings on the basement and first two levels are filled with concrete block, original one-over-one window sash are present in the third-story openings. The openings are detailed with two-row brick segmental arches and row lock sills.



M.D. Collier Building, 320 W. Main Street.
Left, original Collier sign (ca. 1950), Courtesy Appalachia Cultural Arts Center.
Right, present sign on building.

In 1997, a Community Development Block Grant allowed the Town of Appalachia to purchase the Collier building. In a lease agreement with the non-profit Appalachia Cultural Arts Council, the building has been renovated and presently houses the Appalachia Cultural Arts Center. The present blade sign on the front elevation of the building recalls an earlier, similar sign for the Collier store. Interiors on this building are in a good state of preservation and the upper levels retain the detailed, pressed metal ceilings.

The Appalachian Hotel and the federally-owned U.S. Post Office, which stand further west along W. Main Street, also are of architectural note. Beginning in 1901, several small, frame hotels were built in Appalachia to accommodate traveling salesmen (“drummers”) and rail passengers who had overnight layovers for connecting trains. In the late 1920s, local businessmen came together to fund the building of the **Appalachian Hotel** (505 W. Main Street), which was the town’s largest

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and most fireproof hotel. The building, at eight stories, remained the tallest in Southwestern Virginia for many years. (By comparison, St. Paul's Blue Sulphur Hotel (ca. 1912) was three stories in height and Norton's Hotel Norton (1920) was six stories.) Bristol-based architect Clarence B. Kearfott designed the Classical Revival style hotel, as well as some of Appalachia's other historically prominent buildings, including the First National Bank (1922) and the Appalachia High School (1925), both of which have been demolished. The hotel held 90 guest rooms, a large dining room, and a ballroom; the building cost over \$200,000 to construct. "The Grill" restaurant was designed as an integral part of the hotel and was accessible from Main Street, as well as from the interior of the hotel.¹⁰



The Appalachian Hotel (505 W. Main Street) soon after its construction. The one-story wings and the two-story commercial building left of the hotel (509-511 W. Main Street) remain extant.

From Wolfe 2005

The building consists of an eight-story brick tower with exterior walls executed in a bond pattern consisting of five rows of stretcher bond with a fifth row of Flemish bond. The flat roof is surrounded by a parapet with molded brick panels. Other stylistic details include molded cornices, keystones above the second-story window openings, and a wrought iron balcony centrally located on the second story with three door openings detailed with wooden paneled pilasters. Open air

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balconies are located atop the one-story wings that flank the tower; columned screens and wooden pergolas edge the balconies.

Drummers could set up their wares in offices located on the hotel's mezzanine floor, and the one-story side wings held a variety of shops and stores over the years. The hotel also housed offices of the Western Union Telegraph company and, later, the telephone company and a bus station were located on the ground level. Historical photos also show that from about 1930 into the mid-1960s, a lighted blade sign extended between the fourth and sixth floors with "Appalachian" on the vertical blade and "Hotel" on the horizontal blade. The sign is no longer extant, but the hotel retains its flat canopy with metal tiebacks over the front entrance. In the early 1980s, the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority renovated the hotel for use as low-income housing; at that time a stair hall was constructed on the rear of the building for fire safety.

In 1886, John J. Kelly was the postmaster at "Gilly," which operated near the railroad "Double Tunnel" (now the "Cut") at the southeastern end of the historic district. In 1899, that post office relocated to the coal community of Inman. The Town of Appalachia post office was established on March 3, 1898 with Anthony M. Blair as postmaster.¹¹ During the first decades of Appalachia's existence, the town's post office operated from the L&N Depot, then occupied several different buildings along W. Main Street. In 1937, the federal government built the **Appalachia Post Office** (534 W. Main Street), where it remains today. A cornerstone, located at the northeastern corner of the building, identifies Louis A. Simon as supervising architect and Neal A. Melick as supervising engineer. L.B. Gallimore of Greensboro, North Carolina served as general contract with Harry S. Braun as the construction engineer.



Appalachia Post Office Mural

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The one-story Colonial Revival-style building is five bays wide, is covered by a copper-clad hipped roof, and is executed in a five-course American-bond brick pattern. The building retains its original twelve-over-eight, double-hung, wooden-sash windows. The original main entrance on the front (northeast) elevation has been replaced with a modern aluminum and glass entrance. The interior retains its plaster walls and ceilings and its wooden floor, wainscot, and chair rail. The front lobby is distinguished by its terrazzo floor, marble wainscot, and an oil-on-canvas mural painted and signed by artist Lucile Blanch in 1939. The mural depicts a small town surrounded by wooded hills, symbolic of the town of Appalachia.

During the 1920s, with the rise of automobile ownership, service stations began to line W. Main Street. **Buck and Gene's Gulf Oil Station** (617 W. Main Street), constructed about 1920, is a one-story, brick-clad station reflective of the company's "house with canopy" design that featured an office wing with a projecting porte cochere at the front. This example is distinguished by crenelated parapet walls and a dentil-block cornice. A three-bay garage wing extends from the northeast end of the building. The original tank house, located southwest of the station, has been modified but is similar to the main station and is detailed with the same crenelated parapet and dentil-block cornice.



Buck and Gene's Gulf Service Station/Appalachia Service Station, 1994.
Source: Tolson, 1994. Copy on file, Archives, DHR, Richmond, VA

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Tank building at Buck and Gene's Gulf Station (617 W. Main Street), ca. 1925.
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

Appalachia's other remaining historic service station is the **Esso Station** (102 Kentucky Avenue), formerly operated by Buford Necessary. Located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Kentucky Avenue and W. Main Street, this station, constructed about 1955, reflects influence of the streamlined Moderne style favored by service stations of the time. The one-story, concrete block building is clad with aluminum panels and is covered by a flat roof with a projecting flat canopy at the corner that extends over the office area of the building. Large glass windows flank the south side of the single entrance door and the three service bays that extend to the north are enclosed by metal overhead doors.

Integrity

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District retains good overall integrity and continues to convey its historical appearance and associations. Demolition and fires have resulted in the loss of several notable buildings in the district, with vacant lots left in the aftermath. Despite the loss of some buildings along the commercial corridor of W. Main Street, a sufficient number of historical resources dating from the early through the mid-twentieth century remain intact and in use, and provide a physical link to the boom times when the town prospered as the major trading center for the nearby Appalachia coal camps. Iconic buildings, including the Peake Building, the M.D. Collier Furniture Building, the Appalachian Hotel, the Revival Memorial Church (later, Appalachia United Methodist Church), and the U.S. Post Office, retain very good integrity and

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provide visual continuity along the streetscape. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship within the district is especially evident in the fine masonry and brickwork on many of the buildings.

The district retains very good integrity of setting and location, with one important feature being the way that buildings were built into slopes to accommodate the area's rugged terrain. The district's integrity of feeling and association are intact, as demonstrated in part by the railroad tracks (still in active use by Norfolk & Southern) that continue to run along the southeast side of the commercial district. Rail transportation provided the initial impetus for Appalachia's establishment and provided vital support to the extractive coal and timber industries that drove the local economy. (Elsewhere in Appalachia, the L&N passenger station and the freight station still stand northeast of the district, east of Kilbourne Avenue; both buildings are vacant at present.) Additionally, of the 39 resources in the historic district, only 9 are non-contributing, which includes two secondary resources (sheds), a municipal parking lot, and a park, which cumulatively have had little impact on the district's overall setting and feeling as an early to mid-twentieth century commercial center.

INVENTORY

The following is a list of resources located within the Appalachia Commercial Historic District boundaries. The resources are listed alphabetically by street name and numerically by address number. DHR historic district numbers are listed for each resource, as are numbers previously assigned to individual resources. In the following inventory all resources, both primary and secondary, have been considered either contributing or non-contributing based upon their physical integrity and direct association with the historic district's areas of significance, which are Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Transportation, and Architecture; during the period of significance of 1890-1955. Minor alterations, such as installation of cloth awnings over sidewalks, covering of storefront transoms with non-historic materials, and replacement of entry doors, are considered to have minimal impact on a building's overall integrity and further are easily reversible, allowing these resources to be classified as contributing. All non-contributing resources have been so noted either because they are of less than 50 years in age or because non-historic materials have been applied over historic fabric (such as siding materials) or possibly replaced historic fabric (such as doors and window sash). Thus, non-contributing resources either are not associated with the district's period of significance or cannot convey their association with at least one of the district's areas of significance. Resources are keyed to the attached Sketch Map by the last four digits of the resources 10-digit inventory number (i.e., -0001, -0002, etc.).

KENTUCKY AVENUE

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 102 Kentucky Avenue | 164-5003-0033 | | |
| <i>Primary Resource: Service Station (Building), Stories 1, Style: Moderne, Ca 1955</i> | | | |
| | | Contributing | Total: 1 |

| | | | |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 106-110 Kentucky Avenue | 164-5003-0034 | | |
| <i>Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1960</i> | | | |
| | | Contributing | Total: 1 |

MAIN STREET

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- West 202-204 Main Street** **164-5003-0001**
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1922
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 208 Main Street** **164-5003-0002**
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1922
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 215 Main Street** **164-5003-0003**
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1922
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 217 Main Street** **164-5003-0005**
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1929
Non-contributing Total: 1
- West 303 Main Street** **164-5003-0006**
Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 305 Main Street** **164-5019** *Other DHR Id#: 164-5003-0010*
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1920
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 306 Main Street** **164-5003-0007**
Primary Resource: Store (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1920
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 307 Main Street** **164-5012** *Other DHR Id#: 164-5003-0008*
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Art Deco, Ca 1925
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 308 Main Street** **164-5003-0009**
Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1920
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 307 Main Street** **164-5003-0011**
Primary Resource: Store (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Non-contributing Total: 1
- West 311 Main Street** **164-5003-0012**
Primary Resource: Store (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1930
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 313 Main Street** **164-5003-0014**
Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Contributing *Total: 1*
- West 314 Main Street** **164-5003-0013**

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- Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1920*
Contributing Total: 1
- West 315 Main Street 164-5011** *Other DHR Id#: 164-5003-0016*
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Contributing Total: 1
- West 316 Main Street 164-5003-0015**
Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1920
Contributing Total: 1
- West 318 Main Street 164-5003-0017**
Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Contributing Total: 1
- West 320 Main Street 164-5003-0019**
Primary Resource: Store (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, 1922
Contributing Total: 1
- West 410 Main Street 164-5003-0020**
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1950
Contributing Total: 1
- West 412 Main Street 164-5003-0021**
Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Contributing Total: 1
- West 414 Main Street 164-5003-0022**
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Contributing Total: 1
- West 415 Main Street 164-5003-0037**
Primary Resource: Parking Lot (Structure), Style: No discernible style, Ca 1983
Non-contributing Total: 1
- West 416-418 Main Street 164-5003-0023**
Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1930
Non-contributing Total: 1
- West 505 Main Street 164-5010** *Other DHR Id#: 164-5003-0024*
Primary Resource: Hotel/Inn (Building), Stories 8, Style: Neo-Classical Revival, 1928
Contributing Total: 1
- West 508 Main Street 164-5003-0025**
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Non-contributing Total: 1
- West 509-511 Main Street 164-5003-0026**

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- Primary Resource: Mixed (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1928*
Contributing Total: 1
- West 514-516 Main Street 164-5003-0027**
Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1930
Contributing Total: 1
- West 518 Main Street 164-5003-0028**
Primary Resource: Store (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925
Contributing Total: 1
- West 520 Main Street 164-5003-0029**
Primary Resource: Store (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1950
Non-contributing Total: 1
- West 527 Main Street 164-5009** *Other DHR Id#: 164-5003-0030*
Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 1, Style: Colonial Revival, 1910
Contributing Total: 1
- West 534 Main Street 164-5018** *Other DHR Id#: 164-5003-0031*
The post office building is federally owned.
Primary Resource: Post Office (Building), Stories 1, Style: Colonial Revival, 1937
Contributing Total: 1
- West 602-604 Main Street 164-5003-0035**
Primary Resource: Warehouse (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1940
Contributing Total: 1
- West 617 Main Street 164-5003-0018**
Primary Resource: Service Station (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1920
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: Garage (Building) **Contributing Total: 1**
Secondary Resource: Shed (Building) **Non-contributing Total: 1**
- West Main Street 164-5003-0036**
Primary Resource: Park (Site), Style: No discernible style, Ca 1983
Non-contributing Total: 1
- POWELL STREET**
- 104 Powell Street 164-5017** *Other DHR Id#: 164-5003-0032*
Primary Resource: City/Town Hall (Building), Stories 1, Style: Vernacular, 1919
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: Shed, Vehicle/Equipment (Building) **Non-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
- 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.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1890-1955

Significant Dates

1897

1906

1911

1953

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Braun, Harry S.

Collier, Martin D.

Crizer, Brown Hampton "Hamp"

Gibson, John Clay

Simon, Louis A.

Melick, Neal A.

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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 Appalachia Commercial Historic District in Wise County, Virginia, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and Transportation. The district comprises the historic commercial core of the Town of Appalachia, which served as the primary shopping and entertainment center for residents of the surrounding coal camp communities. Initially platted in 1897 by the Keystone Iron and Coal Company, the town developed along the northwest side of the tracks of the three railroads that ran through the area beginning in 1890. In 1911, the Virginia & Southwestern Railroad moved its shops from Bristol to Appalachia, which triggered additional investment and development in the nascent town. Resources in the historic district represent the height of Appalachia's affluence (1900-1950), when numerous businesses, offices, and institutions were built. Its fortunes rising and falling with the coal and railroad industries, the district's prominence began to decline in the 1950s with the advent of mechanized coalmining practices and the railroad's use of diesel, rather than steam, locomotives. These technological advances required less manpower to operate and resulted in a dramatic loss of jobs and population in the area. Appalachia's commercial district is differentiated from other towns in the county, such as Big Stone Gap and Wise, as a town that developed from the direct influence of the coal and railroad industries with a primary clientele of working residents of the coal camps and the merchant class residents who lived in surrounding neighborhoods. The historic district also is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The district includes several notable examples of early-twentieth-century Commercial Style architecture executed in brick and stone, as well as Colonial Revival, Art Deco, and later Moderne style examples. A notable example of a "house with canopy" type Gulf service station also is within the district. As a collection, the district's architectural resources are unified by plan, visual continuity, and physical development. Nearly all buildings stand adjacent to the wide street sidewalks and most are built in adjoining rows. The few sites where buildings have been demolished are integrated into the townscape by renovation into open space parks/performance areas and as a municipal parking lot beautified by the presence of painted murals. The physical layout of the town also relates to its natural environment and reflects adaptations to the steep terrain and the course of the North Fork of the Powell River and its tributary creeks. The Appalachia Commercial Historic District has a period of significance extending from 1890, when the first railroad line was established in the area, to 1955, by which time the railroads had stopped service to the town and local mining activities had declined. In addition to those mentioned above, significant dates include the town's incorporation in 1906 and the L&N Railroad's cessation of passenger rail service to Appalachia in 1953.

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

Justification of Criteria

Criterion A: Commerce

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its important role as a transportation center and the primary commercial

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center serving the region's coals camps from the 1890s through the 1950s. Arrival of the railroad in 1890 began the process of opening the area for passenger and freight service, and the town thrived with the arrival of thousands of miners as numerous colliers were opened in the coal-rich mountains north of town. Although each coal town had a company store or commissary, Appalachia offered residents additional commercial options, as well as entertainment venues. In 1929, there were 88 commercial enterprises operating in Appalachia that included an impressive assortment of clothing stores, shoe stores, grocery and dry goods stores, jewelers, furniture and houseware stores, five-and-ten stores, drug stores, barbershops, and doctor and lawyer offices. Cafes, restaurants, and bars also lined the town's Main Street. Pool halls, bowling alleys, theaters, and less legitimate gambling venues provided diversions for miners during the height of the mines' productive period (1900-1950).

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as an example of a town that was platted and developed in response to the arrival of the railroad and the existence of area coalmining camps. The town arose when a railroad junction was established here in 1890 by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad on its way to the town of Norton, although the South Atlantic & Ohio Railroad had arrived from its hub in Bristol a few months earlier. In 1897, the Keystone Coal & Iron Company, loosely affiliated with the Virginia Iron & Coal Company, purchased substantial acreage along the North Fork of the Powell River near the railroad lines and established lots for development.¹² The initial plat for the town, which the company named "Appalachia" after the mountains surrounding the site, included the area along Main Street, which developed as a commercial core. The town incorporated in 1906 and by 1908, the town's population stood at approximately 1,500. By 1929, the population had grown to 4,400. Rather than the wide array of manufacturing concerns that grew around the town of Norton, or the coal company business offices in Big Stone Gap, Appalachia's growth centered on the small stores and businesses of its local merchants. The architectural resources within the historic district were constructed between 1910 and 1950, and reflect the commercial growth along the town's main thoroughfare.¹³

Criterion A: Transportation

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Transportation because the town had its founding in the arrival of the railroad. In 1890, the SA&O Railroad established its junction on the southwest end of the present downtown and the L&N established a junction to the northeast. The Virginia Coal & Iron Company constructed the Interstate line to connect its coalmines with the main lines in Appalachia. Since few miners owned automobiles, the Interstate also provided passenger service from the coal camps to Appalachia and transported schoolchildren from the camps to schools in town. The area's natural resources, including coal, iron, and virgin timber, were inaccessible to commercial exploitation until the arrival of the railroads provided profitable links to regional markets. The presence of the railroads also created jobs in Appalachia and created the demand for commercial goods and services, giving rise to the commercial core of the town. The still-active railroad tracks run along the southeast side of the district and former freight and passenger depots stand to the northeast. Although not counted among the resources in the district, the presence of these transportation-related resources is

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supportive of this area of significance, provide continuity with regard to physical integrity, and contribute to the town's historical context.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its distinctive concentration of buildings that are united by physical development, harmonious size, scale, massing, and style, and visual continuity. The architectural resources in the district include commercial, religious, and governmental buildings that date from 1910 through 1950. Residential use is represented by mixed-use of commercial buildings that held stores on the ground floor and living units above. The majority of buildings date from the early twentieth century (1910-1940), which was the height of Appalachia's prominence. The buildings are executed in a number of nationally popular styles including Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Art Deco, and Moderne; however, most of the buildings can be classified as Commercial Style and are executed in masonry with parapet roofs. Most buildings are built adjacent to the wide concrete sidewalk that edges Main Street, and many are built in adjoining rows. Buildings are typically one to three stories in height, with the exception of the eight-story Appalachia Hotel. Prominent individual buildings include the Appalachia Methodist Church (1910), the M.D. Collier Furniture Company Building (1922), the Peake Building (ca. 1925), the Appalachia Hotel (1928), and the U.S. Post Office (1938).

Historical Background

The town of Appalachia is situated in western Wise County at an elevation of 1,651 feet, covering 2.32 square miles with approximately 1,750 residents.¹⁴ The North Fork of the Powell River flows east to west through the town, with several ninety-degree turns in the river (oxbows); Callahan Creek flows from the north into the river on the east end of the town and Looney Creek joins Pigeon Creek, which then joins the river on the southwest end. These waters and the surrounding steep terrain divide the town into distinct historic residential neighborhoods: Old Bottom, New Bottom, Ridge Avenue, and Stringtown. The commercial core of Appalachia extends along the northwest and southeast sides of W. Main Street.

The Town of Appalachia came into existence in 1890 and quickly grew into a regional commercial center serving both railroad and coalmining interests. In 1890, the South Atlantic and Ohio (SA&O) Railroad completed its line from Bristol to the area, establishing a terminal the company named "Intermont," which was located at the southwest end of the present town. In 1899, the Virginia and Southwestern (V&SW) Railroad absorbed the SA&O line, and by 1910 was part of the Southern Railway (becoming the line's Appalachian Division) with connections to major cities in northeastern and southern states. In 1911, the V&SW moved its main operations from Bristol to Appalachia. As part of the Southern system, the railroad had a significant impact on Appalachia when it built its railroad yards at the Intermont terminal site. The Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad also built through the area in 1890, continuing on to the town of Norton, where it joined with the Norfolk & Western Railroad. The L&N, which connected the region to Louisville, Nashville, and Cincinnati, built its depot at Callahan Creek and the Powell River (North Fork) junction and named it "Appalachia." The Virginia Coal & Iron Company constructed the Interstate

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Railroad (later also a part of Southern), which brought its loaded coal cars and cut timber, to Appalachia for transfer to the larger rail lines. The Interstate also provided passenger service for a time and brought children from the coal camps to schools in Appalachia.



View looking northeast through Appalachia, pre 1910. Note livestock on hill at lower left. Sidewalks are in place, but Main Street remains unpaved and the Methodist Church has not yet been constructed.
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

The Appalachia coalfields are located in a 540 square-mile area near a gap where the Powell River passes through Stone Mountain. Coal was first recorded in the area by Dr. Thomas Walker in 1750, but access to the resource would remain limited for 150 years. The area's natural resources, which also included virgin timber, were inaccessible to commercial exploitation until the railroads provided profitable links to regional markets. Until that time, coal was used only as a local domestic resource and timber was taken by wagon to Abingdon in Washington County for shipment.

Although not the first coal company in the county, the Pennsylvania-based Virginia Coal & Iron Company (VCI) (incorporated in 1882) was the primary founder and operator of company towns in Wise County. In 1902, VCI established the Stonega Coke & Coal Company (SCC), which was responsible for mine operations. In 1964, Stonega merged with the Westmoreland Coal Company and assumed that name. (In 1967, VCI changed its name to Penn Virginia Corporation).¹⁵ The coal camp at Stonega was built in 1896; camps that followed were Osaka in 1902, Roda in 1903, Arno in 1908, Exeter, Lower Exeter, and Keokee in 1917, Dunbar in 1919, and Derby in 1923. Imboden

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was purchased as an operating unit in 1910. Andover, located north of Appalachia along Callahan Creek, was a town constructed at the Interstate Railroad's main yard. The Virginia Iron, Coal & Coke Company (VIC) ran the camps of Laura, Linden, and Inman situated along Looney Creek. Most of the mining company administrators and their families lived in the town of Big Stone Gap, located south of Appalachia. Blackwood Coal and Coke Company operated the camps of Blackwood, Roaring Fork, Pardee, and Calvin.¹⁶

The coal company towns were built as an efficient way to house workers near the site of the mines, in areas that otherwise were sparsely populated. The towns were artificially-created settlements that appeared rapidly on the landscape. Different housing types of varying quality were provided for managers and workers and generally reflected the ethnic and racial segregation that were required by state and local laws during the Jim Crow era of segregation.¹⁷ During the boom period of the early twentieth century, the mining workforce was composed of native Appalachians, African Americans (many from Alabama), and recent immigrants to the United States, including Irish, Polish, Italian, and Hungarian populations.¹⁸ The camps were designed to be self-contained, providing miners and their families with goods, services, and entertainment. The commissary (company store) sold groceries, housewares, and clothing that could be purchased with company scrip (a company advance on pay). Workers' reliance on scrip and inflated prices at company stores, coupled with their poor wages, left many in debt to the coal companies, a situation immortalized by the song "Sixteen Tons," written by Merle Travis. Each camp also had its own school, churches, post office, doctors' offices, and theaters, all of which were beholden to the coal company. Schools were built by the companies, but teachers and principals were hired by the county; schools generally offered elementary education, and students attended high school in Appalachia.¹⁹

Appalachia's location along the North Fork of the Powell River is a point of convergence of numerous, parallel mountain valleys. With regard to vehicular traffic, this meant that "all roads led from the coalmining communities down to Appalachia." This in turn gave rise to the town as the hub "to which people from the surrounding coalmining communities gravitated for shopping, socializing, and Saturday night entertainment."²⁰ Although the camps provided miners and their families with necessities, Appalachia's commercial district offered a wider variety of selection and availability of goods and services.

The present masonry buildings of the Appalachia Commercial Historic District replaced earlier frame buildings that stood along the railroad tracks and W. Main Street during the first decades of the twentieth century. Those buildings were erected quickly to house a variety of businesses that offered such services as blacksmithing, stables and liverys, since horses, mules, and wagons still provided primary transportation in the area. Several groceries, furniture, hardware, and general stores also lined the street. The 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map depicts the buildings on Main Street northeast of present-day Spruce Street, which included the Hotel Windsor (later the Houston Hotel) on the west side of Virginia Avenue, barbershops, and entertainment halls including a pool hall and bowling alley. The hotel, at three stories, was the largest building in town; most businesses were one or two stories in height. A few dwellings stood along Main Street, but these were soon replaced by commercial buildings.

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View looking southwest along W. Main Street, ca. 1925
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

A 1929 economic study of Wise County provides a glimpse of the volume of activity and social conditions of the town at the time. Appalachia led Wise County towns in the number of businesses, the number of employees, and the total volume of business. The 88 businesses in operation in Appalachia employed 284 people and accounted for over \$1.6 million in capital invested and transacted over \$5.1 million in volume of business. In comparison, Norton had 71 businesses that employed 347 people with a volume of \$3.9 million in volume and Big Stone Gap had 48 businesses that employed 134 people with a volume of \$1.8 million. Appalachia's enterprises included automobile dealerships and service stations, a variety of stores (dry goods, drug stores, furniture, general merchandise, groceries, hardware, jewelry, music, clothing, and shoes), restaurants and confectioners, a power company, and a washing machine company (laundry and dry cleaning). The survey estimated that the town served as the main trading post for 25,000 people in the area.²¹

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View looking northeast along W. Main Street, ca. 1931
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

By 1929, the Sanborn maps show Appalachia's commercial corridor as fully developed. These buildings, many of which are still extant in the historic district, were often built by business owners or were built on speculation. M.D. Collier first operated his furniture store from a wooden building at the northeast corner of W. Main Street and Virginia Avenue; in 1922, he built the large three-story brick store (320 W. Main Street) across from the earlier site. The former Collier store was razed, and the Peake Building (315 W. Main Street), a three-story brick building with a distinctive curved corner, was erected. Local businessmen formed the Appalachia Chamber of Commerce and encouraged, as well as financed, the construction of several important buildings in the town. The Appalachia Hotel, constructed in 1928, was financed by local businessmen in an effort to provide a modern, fireproof hotel for visitors to the town. Soon after its completion, the hotel hosted the American Legion annual conference, which drew scores of guests. The Adams family operated Appalachia's first hotel (1901), and other early hotels included the Windsor, the Commercial, and the Hale hotels. These hotels, holding between 25 and 35 rooms, provided accommodations for train passengers and the numerous travelling salesmen who came to town, but were outdone by the prestige of the Appalachian.

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The Appalachia Hotel decorated for American Legion Conference, 1928.
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

Two banks also operated in Appalachia: the People's Bank (1904) stood in the center of the downtown area on the block that is now the municipal parking lot. The People's Bank remained in the heart of town until it closed as a result of the Great Depression. The First National Bank, well supported by the Virginia Coal and Iron Company, was chartered in 1909 and in 1922 built its porticoed, limestone building on the east end of town. The latter building was removed in the 1970s.

As automobiles became more prevalent, car dealerships carrying all major national models were built along Callahan Avenue north of the downtown area. Service stations were built along Main Street and included Buck & Gene's Gulf Station (613-617 W. Main Street), Buford Necessary's Esso (102 Kentucky Avenue), and Ernest Brooks' Texaco station, which formerly stood west of the Methodist Church. These buildings were set back from the street, providing ample area for customers to access gasoline pump islands and garage work bays.

As Appalachia's neighborhoods developed, churches were soon organized and new church buildings were erected. The only purpose-built church in the historic district is the 1910 Revival Memorial Church (later renamed the Appalachia United Methodist Church) at 527 W. Main Street. Other churches were located within the neighborhoods of Old and New Bottom. Numerous social and fraternal clubs organized and at least one stood along W. Main Street; the Masonic Lodge building (ca. 1908) was located west of the future site of the Appalachia Hotel. Wells Mercantile Co. and then Sands & Co. Grocery occupied the first floor and the meeting hall was on the second floor of the brick building, which is no longer extant.

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Entertainment venues in Appalachia included dance halls, bowling alleys, pool halls, newsstands, and two movie theaters. The State Theater and the Appalachia Theater showed double-feature movies that drew clientele from Big Stone Gap and Norton via the daily trains. Both theaters burned and are not extant, but around 1950, Gregory Thomas built a large brick and steel theater on the southwest end of town (602-604 W. Main Street). The building never opened as a theater, but was later used as an automotive parts store and a thrift store.

“Payday Saturdays,” a phenomenon that continued into the 1950s, turned the town of Appalachia into a bustling, crowded, social and economic hotspot. Although many arrived by the Tri-State Bus Line, which ran from the coal camps every 15 minutes, or by taxi, other shoppers and revelers arrived by personal vehicles that lined the streets of the commercial strip. Longtime Appalachia resident and historian Lawrence Fleenor describes the vibrant scene: “It was difficult to walk down the sidewalks for the crowds of people, and similarly, it was almost impossible to drive through the town. All the legal parking spaces were filled, and cars were double parked on both sides of the street.”²²

Emma Jane Wright James, another longtime resident and historian, has documented the numerous businesses that operated in Appalachia during the early twentieth century. Grocery stores lined both sides of Main Street and included Lester’s Grocery, which was the first “serve yourself grocery,” and nationwide chains A&P and Kroger. Several jewelers were located along W. Main Street and provided an important service for railroad conductors. In the days before radio, “a train conductor’s most prized possession was his railroad pocket watch,” which could be repaired only by an approved repairman or jeweler. Through synchronization with the stationmaster’s clock, the conductor maintained precise timing of the train.²³



View looking northeast along W. Main Street, early 1950s
Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

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Unlike Big Stone Gap, the town of Appalachia was not the site of coal company offices. Only two buildings in Appalachia at present have tangential ties to the coal companies. The former Westmoreland Company's offices at 516 W. Main Street, which were set up in the early 2000s as an insurance office, and the United Mine Workers of America, Local Union #1607 (217 W. Main Street), which occupies three former storefronts at the eastern end of town. Into the 1990s, the union retained about 1,000 local members.²⁴

Not all services offered in the town of Appalachia were legal. There were several well-known gambling outfits, cafés that offered local moonshine, and prostitution. Following the end of Prohibition, a liquor store opened in Appalachia (Big Stone Gap did not have a liquor store). Bars stood along the street including "The Owl," "The Night Hawk," the "Appalachia Bar and Pool Hall," and the "Main Street Bar and Grill." Street beggars and preachers also vied for space on Main Street corners.

Although African Americans made up a small percentage of the mining workforce, there were a few restaurants and businesses in Appalachia that catered to them; these were located southwest of the main downtown area. Fleenor notes that there were five gambling joints on Main Street, four for white customers and one for black customers.²⁵ Records and local recollections indicate that historically no African Americans lived within the immediate vicinity of downtown Appalachia.

For the first half of the twentieth century, coal was "king" as a fuel for manufacturing and domestic heating. Americans used coal to heat their homes with stoves, coal fueled U.S. steel and other manufacturing production, and coal fueled the railroads' steam engines. The years up to and following World War I were an era of great coal consumption, but the Great Depression years of the 1930s brought hard times to the region. Many mines struggled to stay open. The advent of World War II once again brought an increase in coal demand, but wage-price controls, which continued through 1948, meant that miners' pay stayed at pre-war levels. Just as the wage controls were lifted, coal was replaced by oil as the fuel of choice. Homeowners replaced their old coal stoves with new, cleaner burning oil furnaces. Another blow to the industry came in the late 1940s, when the railroads, one of the primary economic forces in the founding of Appalachia, turned to diesel engines. The new engines were more powerful, required a smaller crew to operate, and came equipped with radios, which provided the conductors with easy, instantaneous communication with crew and stations along the train's route.

These changes, coupled with unionized strikes, spelled the end for Appalachia's coal camps. Companies began to shut down mines and sold or tore down buildings in the mountain towns. At its peak during World War II, the Stonega Coke and Coal Co. mines employed about 5,000 miners. By the early 1950s, however, area mines ceased operations. In 1952, the Stonega mine closed, followed by Roda in 1957, and others. During that period, coalmining employment in the area dropped precipitously, which resulted in a comparable loss of population, and a loss of clientele for Appalachia businesses. In 1953, the L&N ceased the last passenger service to Appalachia. During the late twentieth century, population numbers continued to drop and the 2010 census recorded 1,750 residents in the town of Appalachia. Mining continues on a much-reduced scale in

Appalachia Commercial Historic District

Name of Property

Wise County, VA

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the area, and primarily consists of strip mining and restoration companies that are based outside of Virginia.²⁶

Today, the town of Appalachia retains its historic core of commercial buildings, though many are now vacant. Several small thrift shops and some professional offices remain, and the town offices and U.S. post office remain on W. Main Street. The Appalachia Hotel, still one of the tallest buildings in the region, has been renovated by the town for affordable housing and many of the downtown buildings also provide living units on upper floors. Significant architectural rehabilitation projects include the former M.D. Collier Furniture Store, which presently houses the Appalachia Cultural Arts Center that hosts a variety of musical, theatrical, and historical programs. The town continues to support local festivals, heritage tourism and outdoor recreation activities. In addition to the vehicular connection of U.S. Route 23 (Business), the town is connected to Big Stone Gap by the pedestrian and cycling path of the Powell River Trail, which follows the former route of the L&N Railroad. The project, completed in 2017, was a joint venture between the Virginia Department of Transportation and the town.



View looking northeast along W. Main Street, ca. 1970

Appalachia Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Wise County, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Wolfe, Ed. *Coal Camps, Tipples and Mines: Pictorial History of Stonega Coke and Coal Company's Operations in Wise County, Virginia*. Pittsburgh, PA: HEW Enterprises, 2005.

Worsham, Gibson. Stonega Historic District, National Register of Historical Places Registration Form (097-0042). Copy on file, Archives, Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA, 2004.

Personal Communication

Gary Bush, former Mayor of Appalachia and resident.

Appalachia Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Wise County, VA
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Dr. Lawrence J. Fleenor, Jr., Appalachia resident and historian.
Glenn Gannaway, former Coalfield Progress and The Post staff writer.
Garnett Gilliam, Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center, Big Stone Gap.
James Kilgore, Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center, Big Stone Gap.

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: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR #164-5003

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 14.78 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: 36.903490 | Longitude: -82.786070 |
| 2. Latitude: 36.905790 | Longitude: -82.782910 |
| 3. Latitude: 36.905770 | Longitude: -82.782560 |
| 4. Latitude: 36.905500 | Longitude: -82.782210 |
| 5. Latitude: 36.905550 | Longitude: -82.781700 |
| 6. Latitude: 36.905210 | Longitude: -82.781290 |
| 7. Latitude: 36.904470 | Longitude: -82.781700 |
| 8. Latitude: 36.905040 | Longitude: -82.782120 |
| 9. Latitude: 36.902000 | Longitude: -82.786390 |

Appalachia Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Wise County, VA
County and State

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 true and correct historic boundaries of the district are shown on the enclosed sketch map (1"=100'). The boundaries encompass the commercial area of the Town of Appalachia on the northwest and southeast sides of West Main Street. The southwest boundary of the district is the non-historic bridge that crosses over the railroad tracks; historically, this cut separated the south end of town from the "core" downtown. The northeast boundary extends across West Main Street near its intersection with Callahan Avenue. This area contains the greatest concentration of Appalachia's historic commercial resources.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District encompasses the commercial resources located on the northwest and southeast sides of West Main Street (from the 200 block to the 600 block), as depicted on the 1897 Keystone Coal & Iron Company's Plat No. 1. The extreme southwest corner of the district was formerly a part of the early-nineteenth-century J.J. Kelly landholdings and developed in separate subdivisions not included in Keystone's plat.

Commercial development exists within the Town of Appalachia outside of these boundaries, mostly at the northeast and southwest ends; however, much of that development is less than 50 years of age, does not reflect the same architectural character as resources in the district, and does not fall within the identified period of significance for the district. The district boundaries encompass the greatest concentration of historic commercial resources that conveys the best visual sense of the overall historic environment and an area that is linked both visually and by historical plan and development. All known associated historic resources as well as the district's historic setting are within the boundaries.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Debra A. McClane, Architectural Historian
organization: Debra A. McClane, Architectural Historian
street & number: 4711 Devonshire Road
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23225
e-mail dmccclane1@verizon.net
telephone: 804/233-3890

Appalachia Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Wise County, VA
County and State

date: April 15, 2019

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.)
 1. Map of Appalachia, Virginia, Keystone Coal and Iron Co.'s Plat No. 1. Showing approximate boundaries of commercial historic district. Wise County Deed Book 32:37-40, Plat Cabinet Slide 7. Clerk's Office of Wise County, Wise, Virginia.
 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Appalachia, Virginia," 1908. Showing approximate boundaries of present historic district.
 3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Appalachia, Virginia," 1929. Showing approximate boundaries of commercial historic district, northeast end.
 4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Appalachia, Virginia," 1929. Showing approximate boundaries of commercial historic district, southwest end.

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

Name of Property: Appalachia Commercial Historic District
City or Vicinity: Town of Appalachia
County: Wise State: VA
Photographer: Debra A. McClane
Date Photographed: November 2018, March 2019

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

Appalachia Commercial Historic District

Wise County, VA

Name of Property

County and State

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0001 Appalachia United Methodist Church (former Revival Memorial Church) |
| 2 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0002 Former Appalachia Town Hall |
| 3 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0003 Peake Building |
| 4 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0004 Buildings on 300 Block, Northeast Side of W. Main Street |
| 5 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0005 Buildings on 300 Block, Southwest Side of W. Main Street |
| 6 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0006 The Appalachia Hotel |
| 7 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0007 U.S. Post Office, Appalachia |
| 8 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0008 Buck and Gene's Gulf Service Station |
| 9 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0009 Necessary's Esso Station |
| 10 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0010 Looking northeast along W. Main Street |
| 11 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0011 Canopies and awnings over street sidewalk |
| 12 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0012 Looking northeast along W. Main Street |
| 13 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0013 Looking northwest at buildings on 300 Block W. Main Street |
| 14 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0014 Looking northwest at buildings on 300 Block W. Main Street |
| 15 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0015 Looking southwest along W. Main Street |
| 16 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0016 Looking northeast at Buildings on 300 Block W. Main Street |
| 17 of 20 View | VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0017 Looking northeast along railroad tracks; Main Street buildings to left |

Appalachia Commercial Historic District

Wise County, VA

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- 18 of 20 VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0018
View Looking northeast from U.S. Route 23 (Business) Bridge
- 19 of 20 VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0019
View Steps up steep hillside near Gulf Station
- 20 of 20 VA_WiseCounty_AppalachiaCommercialHistoricDistrict_0020
View Alley on northwest side of Main Street buildings

HISTORIC IMAGES IN NOMINATION

- Map showing General region around Appalachia (at center), location of Coal Camps, and Big Stone Gap to south (bottom), ca1910. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- Early frame buildings in Appalachia, facing railroad tracks, ca. 1901. From Collins [c.1983], from the collection of the late Mrs. Nellie Feagins, furnished by Mrs. J.M. Johnson
- Late 1910s-early 1920s view of W. Main Street looking southwest. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- 1938 photograph showing Appalachia United Methodist Church with cupola. Courtesy Appalachia U.S. Post Office
- Former Appalachia Town Hall, 104 Powell Street, ca. 1920. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- The Peake Building, 315 W. Main Street, when it housed the Stuart Faucette Co. 5-10- and 25¢ store, ca. 1925. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- Fig Building, 309 W. Main Street, (at right) with original cloth awning. Building at left replaced by Art Deco-style building, 307 W. Main Street. From Collins, c. 1983
- M.D. Collier Building, 320 W. Main Street. Left, original Collier sign (ca. 1950), Courtesy Appalachia Cultural Arts Center. Right, present sign on building.
- The Appalachian Hotel (505 W. Main Street) soon after its construction. The one-story wings and the two-story commercial building left of the hotel (509-511 W. Main Street) remain extant. From Wolfe 2005
- Appalachia Post Office Mural
- Buck and Gene's Gulf Service Station/Appalachia Service Station, 1994. Source: Tolson, 1994. Copy on file, Archives, DHR, Richmond, VA
- Tank building at Buck and Gene's Gulf Station (617 W. Main Street), ca. 1925. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- View looking northeast through Appalachia, pre 1910. Note livestock on hill at lower left. Sidewalks are in place, but Main Street remains unpaved and the Methodist Church has not yet been constructed. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- View looking southwest along W. Main Street, ca. 1925. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- View looking northeast along W. Main Street, ca. 1931. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- The Appalachia Hotel decorated for American Legion Conference, 1928. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center

Appalachia Commercial Historic District

Name of Property

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- View looking northeast along W. Main Street, early 1950s. Courtesy Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Center
- View looking northeast along W. Main Street, ca. 1970

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.).

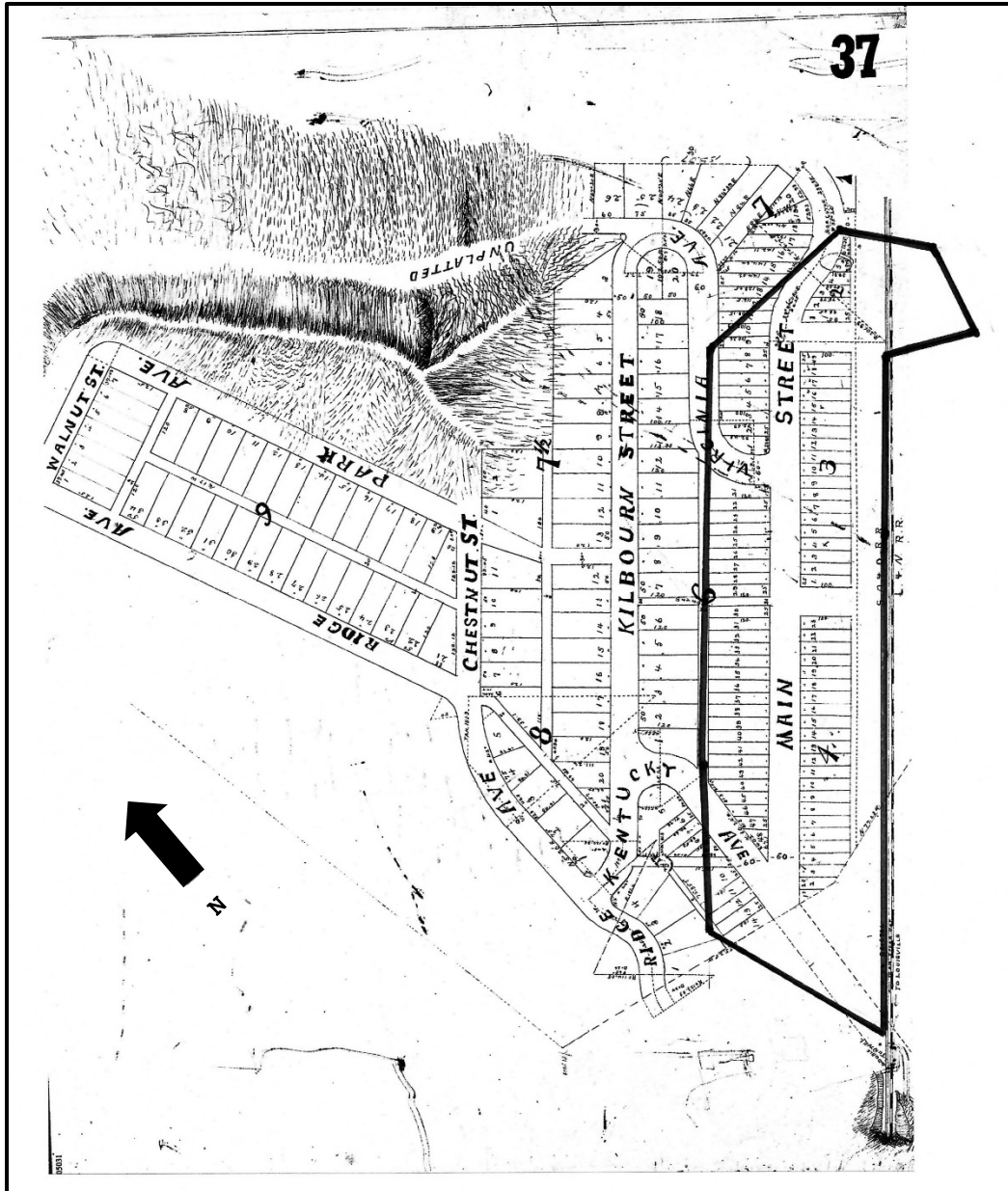
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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| Appalachia Commercial Historic District |
| Name of Property |
| Wise, VA |
| County and State |
| N/A |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Section number Additional Documentation Page 42



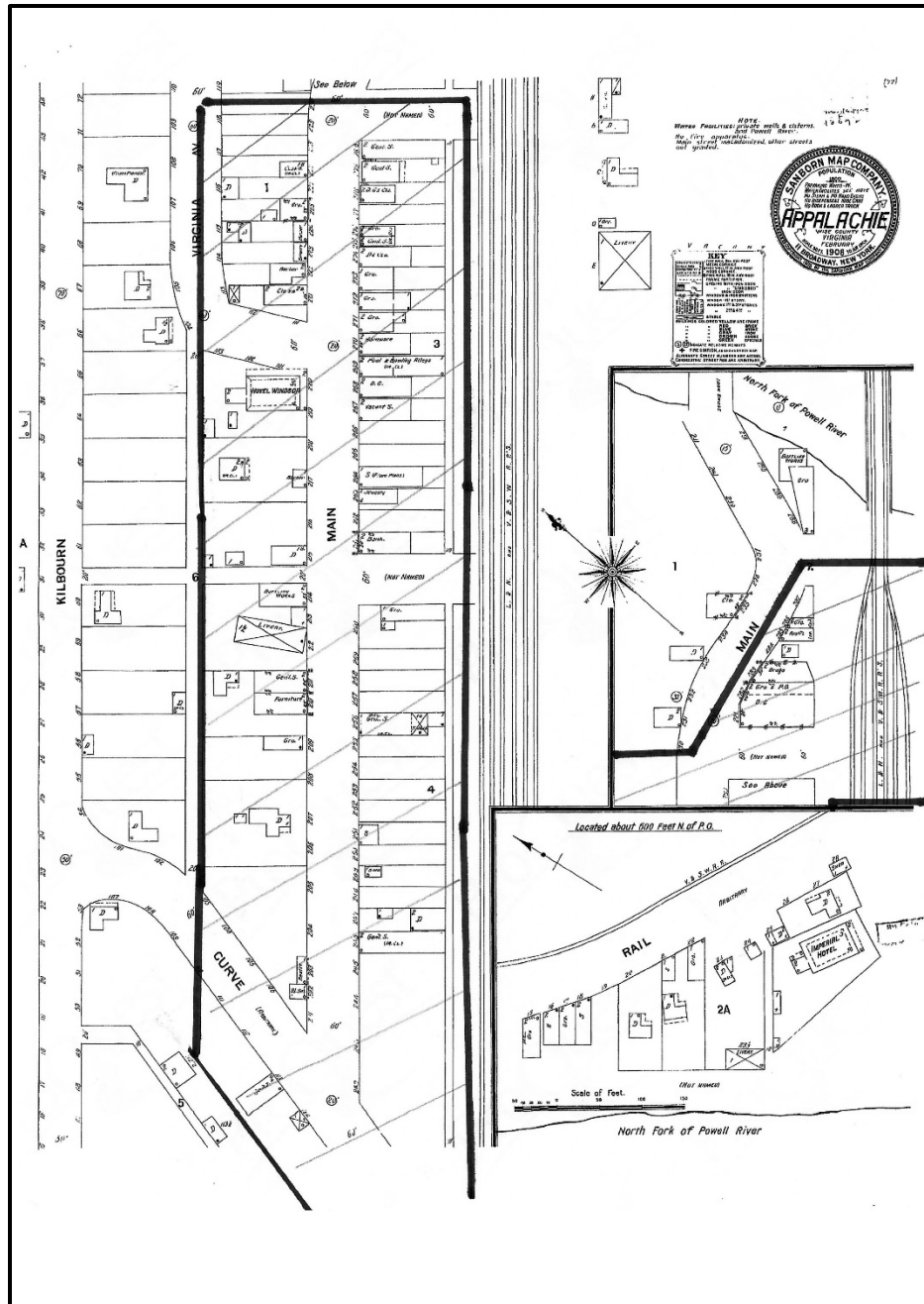
1. Map of Appalachia, Virginia, Keystone Coal and Iron Co.'s Plat No. 1. Showing approximate boundaries of commercial historic district. Wise County Deed Book 32:37-40, Plat Cabinet Slide 7. Clerk's Office of Wise County, Wise, Virginia.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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| Appalachia Commercial Historic District |
| Name of Property |
| Wise, VA |
| County and State |
| N/A |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Section number Additional Documentation Page 43



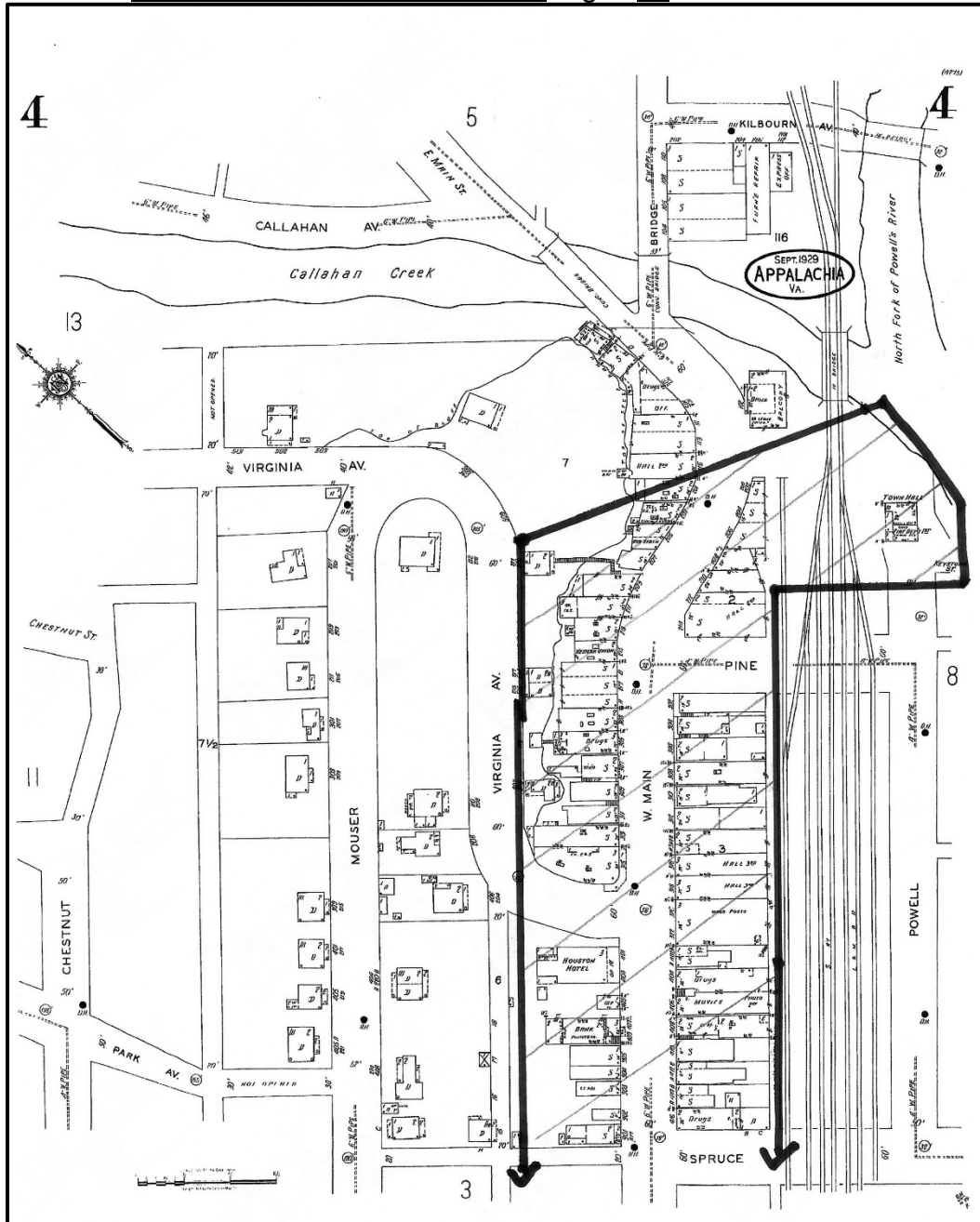
2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Appalachia, Virginia," 1908. Showing approximate boundaries of present historic district.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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| Appalachia Commercial Historic District |
| Name of Property |
| Wise, VA |
| County and State |
| N/A |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Section number 4 Additional Documentation Page 44



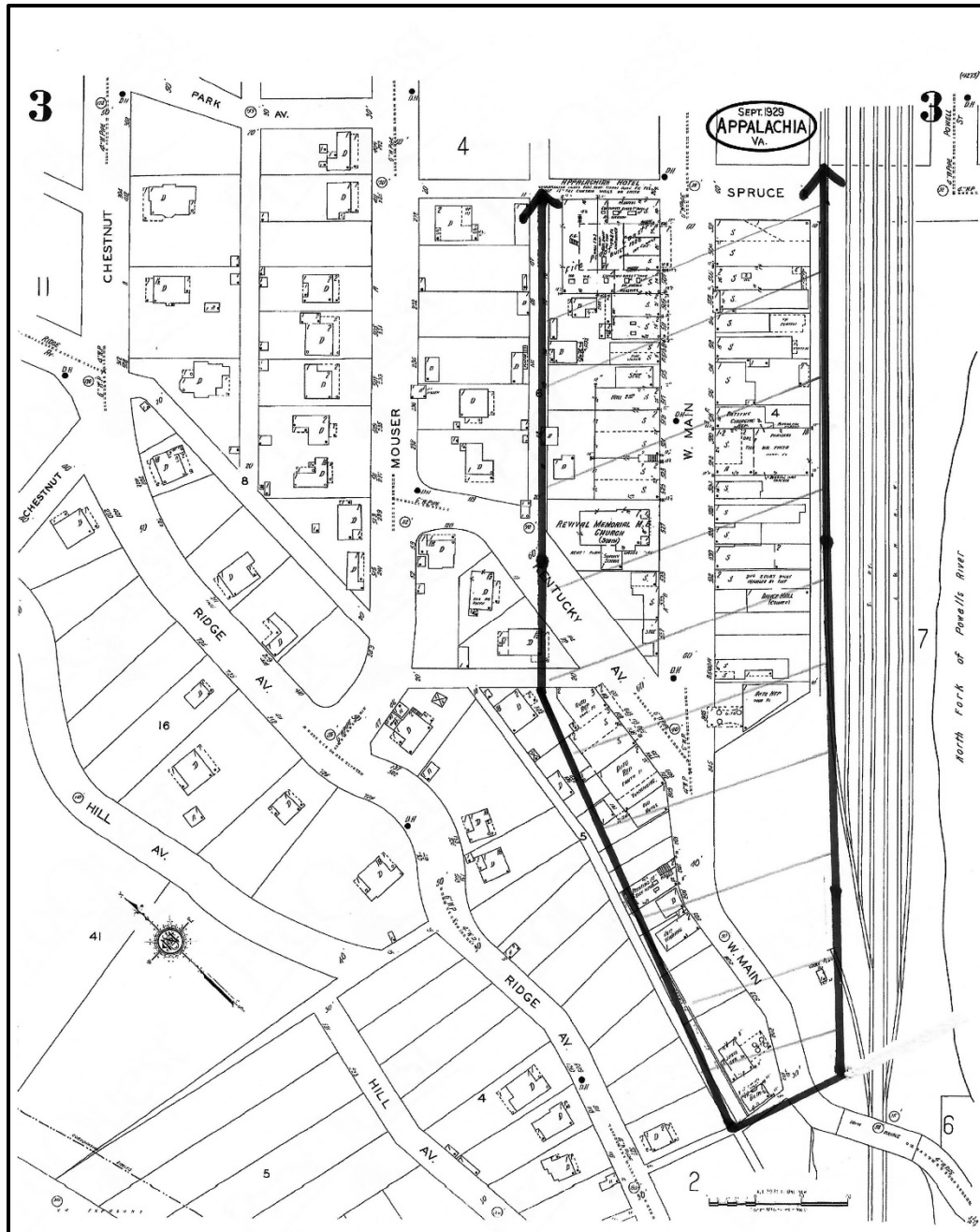
3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Appalachia, Virginia," 1929. Showing approximate boundaries of commercial historic district, northeast end.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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| Appalachia Commercial Historic District |
| Name of Property |
| Wise, VA |
| County and State |
| N/A |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Section number Additional Documentation Page 45



4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Appalachia, Virginia," 1929. Showing approximate boundaries of commercial historic district, southwest end.

Appalachia Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Wise, VA
County and State

ENDNOTES

¹ R.L. Humbert et al., *Industrial Survey, Wise County, Virginia* (Blacksburg, VA, Engineering Extension Division, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1929), 30.

² Lawrence J. Fleenor, Jr., *Appalachian Anthology* (Big Stone Gap, VA: [By author], 2005), 1.

³ Fleenor, 2005:1.

⁴ Lawrence J. Fleenor, Jr. and Harry Meador III, "The First Commercial Coal Mines in Wise County, Virginia." 2016:1.

⁵ Fleenor and Meador give a detailed account of the four earliest coalmines and the various corporate interests that operated those mines and others in the area. There appears to be substantial overlap in the directors of the various companies.

⁶ *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 2nd ed. ([Big Stone Gap, VA]: Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, [2004]), 13. Dr. Lawrence Fleenor, Jr., notes that a stand of virgin timber is still located in Roaring Branch Hollow and survives due to its rugged location that was too rough to harvest. Fleenor, personal communication, May 3, 2019.

⁷ Humbert et al., 43.

⁸ "Big Blaze at Appalachia," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. September 30, 1919, Page 7.

⁹ "Anniversary Noted: Martin D. Collier first started by carrying goods on his back." Newspaper clipping, [Coalfield Progress?], n.d., Collections of Appalachia Cultural Arts Center, Appalachia, VA. According to Fleenor, John C. Gibson built the Collier building. Gibson, a well-known local builder, also designed and constructed the fine John C. Gunther house located just southwest of the historic district, the Appalachia Hardware Store and many houses in the New Bottom neighborhood. Fleenor 2005:12.

¹⁰ John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary* (Richmond, VA: New South Architectural Press, 1997), 235. Dr. Lawrence Fleenor, Jr., personal communication, May 3, 2019.

¹¹ Lawrence J. Fleenor, Jr., "History of Appalachia, Virginia," Paper presented at Appalachia Oktoberfest 10-06-2018:3-4. Charles A. Johnson, *A Narrative History of Wise County, Virginia*. Reprint. Originally published: Norton, VA: Norton Press, 1938. (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, c.1988), 49, 86.

¹² Fleenor 2018. In this paper, Fleenor traces the history of the land that became Appalachia back to the eighteenth century, when the area still was part of Lee County. In 1796, nearly all of the immediate area of present-day Appalachia was granted to Fields, Nathaniel Taylor, and Johnson. In 1834, John C. Olinger purchased the property of 49,000 acres from the county for the \$4.92 in back taxes. Parts of the tract were purchased by Zachariah N. Wells, Sr., in 1805, and John J. Kelly in 1818. In the early 1880s, the Virginia Coal and Iron Company became owner of the eastern part of the Olinger survey, making it the largest property owner in the region.

¹³ Edward Tolson, "Wise County, Virginia; City of Norton; Historic Architectural Survey," 1995:23.

¹⁴ U.S. Federal Census, 2010. Population Schedule.

¹⁵ The Tinsalia Coal and Iron Company, organized by former Confederate General John Daniel Imboden and others, was the first coal company operating in Wise County. Fleenor and Meador, 10; McNight et al. 9.

¹⁶ Tolson, 76-77. For a more detailed account of the company towns, the reader is directed to the NRHP nominations for Stonega Historic District (097-0042)2004, and Derby Historic District (097-0048) 2004. For a thorough discussion of the advent of the mines in Wise County and the companies that backed them, see Fleenor and Meador 2016.

¹⁷ LaLone, 140-141.

¹⁸ Southwest Virginia Museum, "Coal Camps of Early Southwest Virginia." Accessed online, <http://swvamuseum.org/coalcamps.html>.

¹⁹ Gary Bush, personal communication, December 2018.

Appalachia Commercial Historic District

Name of Property

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²⁰ Mary B. LaLone, "Voices from the Coal Camps: Life in An Appalachian Coal Mining Region," in *Life in the Coal Camps of Wise County: In Honor of Wise County's Sesquicentennial* ([Big Stone Gap, VA]: Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, c2006), 139.

²¹ Humbert et al., 10, 97-98.

²² Fleenor, 2005:40.

²³ Fleenor 2005:28.

²⁴ James, 241.

²⁵ Fleenor, 2005:40.

²⁶ Fleenor, 2005:48-49.



LOCATION MAP

Appalachia Commercial

Historic District

Wise County, VA

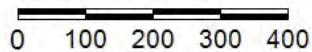
DHR No. 164-5003

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

- 1. Lat: 36.903490 Lon: -82.786070
- 2. Lat: 36.905790 Lon: -82.782910
- 3. Lat: 36.905770 Lon: -82.782560
- 4. Lat: 36.905500 Lon: -82.782210
- 5. Lat: 36.905550 Lon: -82.781700
- 6. Lat: 36.905210 Lon: -82.781290
- 7. Lat: 36.904470 Lon: -82.781700
- 8. Lat: 36.905040 Lon: -82.782120
- 9. Lat: 36.902000 Lon: -82.786390



Feet



1:4,514 / 1"=376 Feet

Title: Digital Location Map

Date: 4/26/2019

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

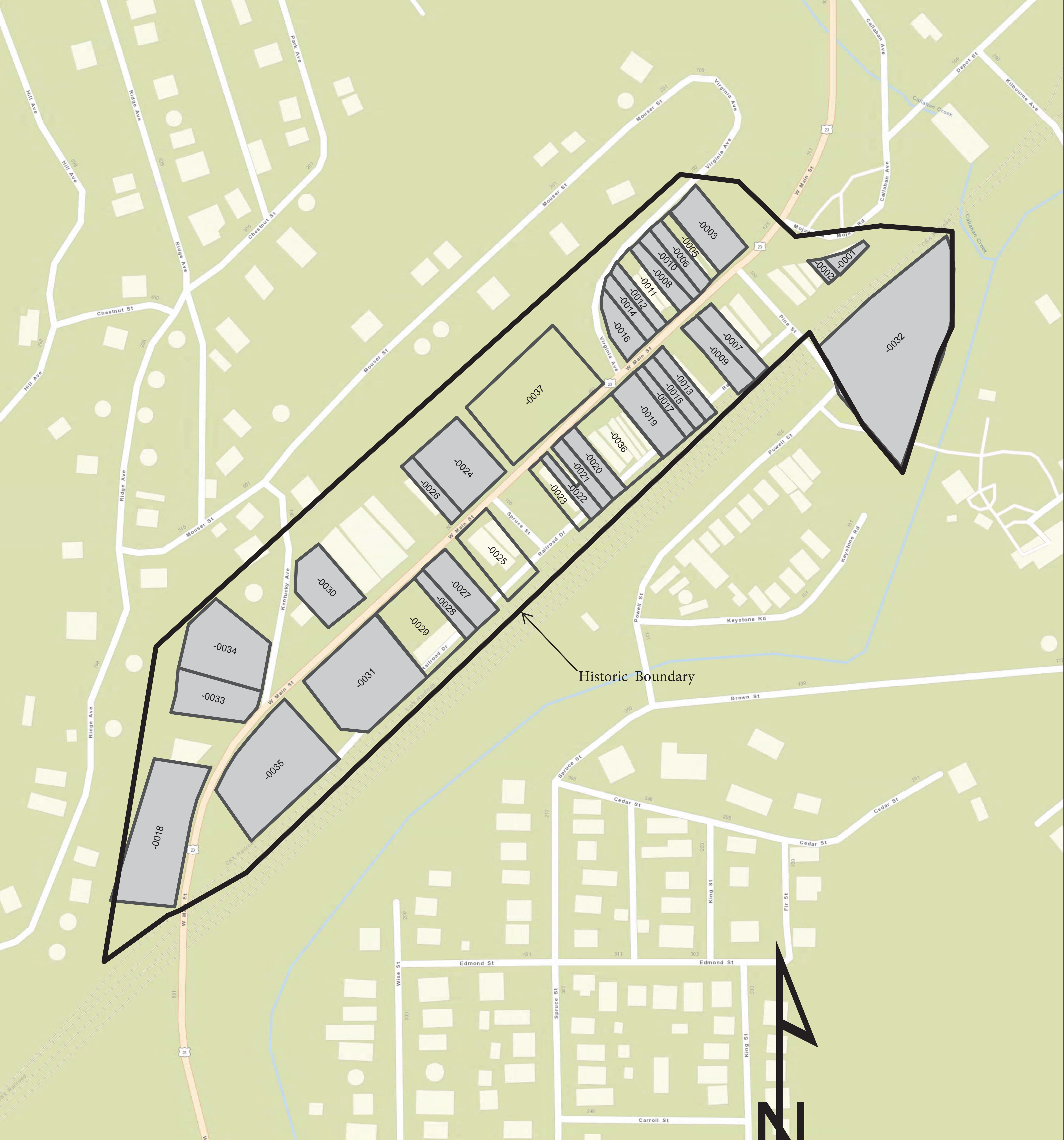
Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.

SKETCH MAP


Appalachia Commercial Historic District


Wise County, VA

DHR #164-5003



Historic Boundary

 Contributing

 Non-contributing

1 inch = 100 feet

PHOTO KEY

Appalachia
Commercial
Historic District
Wise County, VA
DHR No. 164-5003



AERIAL VIEW

Appalachia Commercial Historic
District
Wise County, VA
DHR No. 164-5003



Feet

0 100 200 300 400

1:4,514 / 1"=376 Feet

Title:

Date: 6/24/2019

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.



MITCHELL PLACE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
WELCOMING ALL TO WORSHIP



CITY HALL

MAY







Merry Christmas

APPALACHIA BEAUTY SHOP



Season's Greetings

APPALACHIA

CULTURE





UNITED STATES POST OFFICE



Gulf

JOHN DEERE

WASH. TRUCKS
TRUCK CENTER



BARKER'S
AUTO REPAIR

AUTO
REPAIR

OPENING
NOW

1000





Christmas

T.O.A

75





APPALACHIA BEAUTY SHOP

STOP

LOVINA
CELL AND
REPAIR





Season's Greetings



Happy Christmas

Season's Greetings

NO PARKING











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Appalachia Commercial Historic District

Multiple Name: _____

State & County: VIRGINIA, Wise

Date Received: 6/28/2019 Date of Pending List: 7/19/2019 Date of 16th Day: 8/5/2019 Date of 45th Day: 8/12/2019 Date of Weekly List: _____

Reference number: SG100004258

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review: _____

X Accept Return Reject 8/6/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: Commercial strip of a town that served as a central shipping point and commercial center for a coal mining region. The town was a rail hub for the numerous coal camps that occupied the valleys of the surrounding mountains. The town was successful, and investment included the Appalachia Hotel, the tallest building in SW Virginia for many years.

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.



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources

Matt Strickler
Secretary of Natural Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Julie V. Langan
Director

May 6, 2019

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

Daniel B. Delahaye
Federal Preservation Officer
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Room 6670
Washington, DC 20260-1862

RE: **Appalachia Historic District, Town of Appalachia, Virginia**

Dear Mr. Delahaye:

We are pleased to inform you that the above-referenced resource will be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by the Virginia State Review Board at their next meeting on **June 20, 2019**, in **Sweet Briar, Virginia**.

The Appalachia Post Office, located at 534 W. Main Street in the Town of Appalachia, Virginia, is counted as a contributing resource in the Appalachia Historic District nomination. Built in 1937, the one-story Colonial Revival-style building is five bays wide, is covered by a copper-clad hipped roof, and is executed in a five-course American-bond brick pattern. The building retains its original twelve-over-eight, double-hung, wooden-sash windows. The original main entrance on the front (northeast) elevation has been replaced with a modern aluminum and glass entrance. The interior retains its plaster walls and ceilings and its wooden floor, wainscot, and chair rail. The front lobby is distinguished by its terrazzo floor, and marble wainscot. **Please note that the lobby also retains an oil-on-canvas mural painted and signed by artist Lucile Blanch in 1939.**

We want to let you know about the nomination for your future planning purposes. We have notified all property owners by letter, and by newspaper legal notices. The processing of all nominations has followed the state regulations, which invites all owners and adjacent owners to a public information session. We provide comments from these meetings to the State Historic Preservation Officer and to the State Review Board.

The National Register is the Federal Government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides recognition and assists in preserving our Nation's heritage.

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
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Enclosed is a copy of the **notice** that was distributed to all owners in the district by first-class mail. Also included is a **map** that delineates the boundary of the district.

Listing in the National Register provides the following benefits to Federally-owned historic properties:


- Consideration in the planning for federally assisted projects. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 provides that the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation be given an opportunity to comment on projects affecting such properties.
- Consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface coalmining permit where coal is located, in accordance with the Surface Mining and Control Act of 1977.

More information about Virginia's Register Program is available on our website at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-register/>.

Starting on about May 21, 2019, you may review the pending nominations slated for the June 20, 2019, State Review Board meeting, including the **Appalachia Historic District**, on the agency website at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/boards/>

If you wish to submit comments on the historic district proposal, please send them to Julie Langan, Director, State Historic Preservation Office. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions. I can be reached at 804-482-6445 (email: Jim.Hare@dhr.virginia.gov).

Sincerely yours,



Jim Hare
Director
Survey & Register Division

Enclosures

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962 Kime Lane
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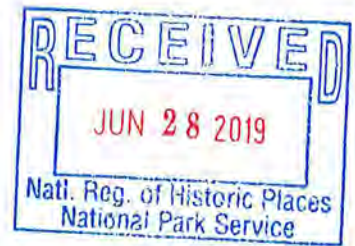
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Appalachia Commercial Historic District, Town of Appalachia, Wise County, DHR No. 164-5003

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District comprises the commercial core of the Town of Appalachia and includes buildings that date from 1910 through 1950. This period represents the height of Appalachia's economic development as a commercial area that served both in-town residents and thousands of residents in the nearby coal camps. The 11-acre district contains commercial, governmental, and religious buildings located on both sides of West Main Street (U.S. Route 23), and on Kentucky Avenue and Powell Street. The Powell River and still-active railroad tracks extend along the southeast side of the district. Vehicular bridges, which cross the river and train tracks, connect the commercial area and residential community to the north and southeast; historically, suspended footbridges and sets of steps up the steep hillsides also linked the residential areas to the commercial area. The relatively flat area of the commercial district contrasts with the steep slopes of the surrounding hillsides; as a response to topography, many buildings on the northwest side of the district are built into the hillside and those on the southeast side have basement levels that are above grade at the back. The majority of the buildings are executed in an early-twentieth-century commercial style, although examples of Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Art Deco, and Moderne styles also are present. The majority of buildings abut the wide concrete street sidewalks, are one-to-three stories in height (with the exception of the eight-story Appalachian Hotel), and are of masonry construction (brick and stone). The commercial buildings, designed as framed window walls and one- and two-part blocks, exhibit notable brickwork details and are built in adjoining rows that contribute to the district's visual cohesion. Residential neighborhoods extend northwest, southeast, and east of the district; however, residential use historically has been present within the commercial area in mixed-used buildings with commercial enterprises and professional offices on ground floors and living units above—a use that continues to the present. The 39 resources documented within the district include 30 contributing buildings, 7 non-contributing buildings, 1 non-contributing structure, and 1 non-contributing site.

The Appalachia Commercial Historic District is eligible under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and Transportation. The district comprises the historic commercial core of the Town of Appalachia, which served as the primary shopping and entertainment center for residents of the surrounding coal camp communities. Initially platted in 1897 by the Keystone Iron and Coal Company, the district developed along the northwest side of the tracks of the three railroads that ran through the area beginning in 1890. In 1911, the Virginia & Southwestern Railroad moved its shops from Bristol to Appalachia, which triggered additional investment and development in the nascent town. Resources in the district represent the height of Appalachia's affluence (1900-1950), when numerous businesses, offices, and institutions were built. Its fortunes rising and falling with the coal and railroad industries, the district's prominence began to decline in the 1950s with the advent of mechanized coal mining practices and the railroad's use of diesel, rather than steam, locomotives. These technological advances required less manpower to operate and resulted in a dramatic loss of jobs and population in the area. Appalachia's commercial district is differentiated from others in the county, such as Big Stone Gap, Norton, and Wise, as a town that developed from the direct influence of the coal and railroad industries with a primary clientele of working residents of the coal camps and the merchant class residents who lived in surrounding neighborhoods. The historic district also is eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The district includes several notable examples of early-twentieth-century commercial architecture executed in brick and stone, as well as Colonial Revival, Art Deco, and later Moderne style examples. As a collection, the district resources are unified by plan, visual continuity, and physical development. The physical layout of the town also relates to its natural environment and reflects adaptations to the steep terrain and the course of the Powell River and its tributary creeks. The Appalachia Commercial Historic District is eligible on a local level with a Period of Significance extending from 1890, when the first railroad line was established in the area, to 1955, by which time the railroads had stopped service to the town, mining activities had declined, and all of the buildings within the district boundaries had been built.



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June 25, 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: Appalachia Commercial Historic District, Town of Appalachia, Wise County, Virginia

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Appalachia 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 33 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

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