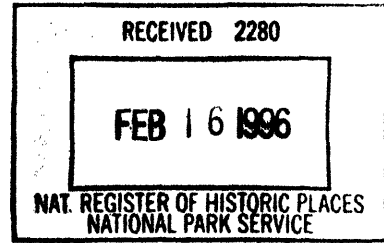


NPS Form 10-900
1024-0018
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No.

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

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=====

1. Name of Property

=====
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historic name: **Cumberland Central Business District**
other names/site number: **NA**

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2. Location

=====
=====

street & number: **Roughly bounded by Freeman Street, Huff Drive, the Poor Fork of the Cumberland River, Cumberland Ave., and an unnamed alley running parallel to West Main Street.**

not for publication: **N/A**

city or town: **Cumberland** vicinity: **N/A**

state: **Kentucky** code: **KY** county: **Harlan** code: **095**

zip code: **40823**

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

David L. Morgan, Executive Director and
State Historic Preservation Officer

David L. Morgan

2-7-96

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Kentucky Heritage Council, the State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register

Edson H. Beall

Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the
National Register.

=====
=====
 ___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined not eligible for the _____
 National Register
___ removed from the National Register _____
___ other (explain): _____

=====
=====
5. Classification
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
52__	9__ buildings
0__	20__ sites
2__	0__ structures
0__	0__ objects
54__	29__ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: **N/A**

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.): **N/A**

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6. Function or Use

=====
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions):

- Commerce/specialty
- Commerce/Department Store
- Commerce/financial
- Commerce/business
- Commerce/restaurant
- Government/city hall
- Social/meeting hall
- Recreation/theater
- Transportation/rail-related
- Transportation/road-related

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions):

- Commerce/specialty
- Commerce/business
- Commerce/department store
- Transportation/rail-related
- Transportation/road-related
- Vacant/not in use

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7. Description

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=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions):

- Commercial Style
- Craftsman
- Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions):

- foundation: Brick
- Other: Cinder Block
- roof: Other: Composition
- walls: Brick
- Stone
- Synthetics
- Other: Carrara Glass

other:

=====
=====
Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition
of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
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=====
8. Statement of Significance
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=====
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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

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___ F a commemorative property.

___ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within
the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions):

Industry

Commerce

Period of Significance:

1911-1930

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of
the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

=====
=====

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

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

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Cumberland Central Business District
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_____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

_____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

_____ State Historic Preservation Office

_____ Other State agency

_____ Federal agency

_____ Local government

_____ University

_____ Other

Name of repository:

=====

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

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Acreage of Property: 8

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet):

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	322800	4093765	3	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

_____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) **Boundaries are indicated on base map.**

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

=====
name/title: Karen E. Hudson/Architectural Historian
organization: PCRA/University of Kentucky
date: November 23, 1995
street&number: 330A Virginia Ave.
city or town: Lexington state: KY zip code: 40506-9854
telephone: (606) 257-1944
=====

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Cumberland Central Business District
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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Cumberland Central Business District is an independent mercantile and political center that emerged during the Appalachian Kentucky coal boom, 1911-1930, and subsequently experienced a period of decline following the closing of local mines. It covers approximately 8 acres and contains 54 contributing resources and 29 non-contributing resources. No resources within the boundaries have been previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The City of Cumberland, the largest town in Harlan County, is located at the foot of Pine Mountain, 22 miles north of Harlan, the county seat and within 10 miles of the Virginia line. Two coal company towns, Benham and Lynch, both of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are located within three miles of the Cumberland Central Business District.

The City is dissected by three streams, the Poor Fork of the Cumberland River and two of its tributaries, Looney and Cloverlick Creeks. Since the general terrain in the vicinity is very mountainous, the majority of the city has been built in a relatively flat area near the confluences of Looney and Cloverlick Creeks with the Poor Fork. The L&N Railroad essentially parallels the three streams. These factors resulted in many homes and businesses being built in the flood plain. Cumberland's highest flood occurred in 1898.

The Central Business District lies in one of several large bends of the Cumberland River near the center of town. The River actually

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dissects the district into two parts. The lower section was historically anchored by the city hall (1), fire station (1), Fields Lodge (1), bank (7) and theater (35). Among the businesses located in the upper section were the bus station(74), several restaurants (74), automobile showrooms (62), specialty shops (64) and department stores (69). The sections are joined by two historic bridges, the L&N Railroad bridge (82), a steel structure constructed in 1911, and the Main Street Bridge (83), a concrete bridge built in the early 1930s.

Nearly all of the buildings in the district were constructed during the 1920s and 1930s, the coal boom period. As a result, one resident recalled that Cumberland looked "brand new" in the early 1930s. Most of the buildings are one or two-story brick commercial structures. The Ike and Arthur Creech Grocery (38), a one-story frame structure built in the teens is probably the oldest building in the district. Doc Fugate's Drug Store (25), built in 1919, was the first brick building built in Cumberland. Most of the other brick buildings were built between 1930 and 1940 by a construction crew out of Knoxville, Tennessee. One stone building, the City Hall (1), was built by the Works Progress Administration in 1935. The structure also housed the fire department, and Fields Lodge. The Ball Brothers Grocery (59), built in 1928 by N.T. Triplett, was the only three-story structure built in the district.

Most of the buildings in the district were owner or contractor built and thus few are clothed with the ornamentation associated with academic high styles. Most run the spectrum of commercial architectural types and styles that were popular regionally during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Building

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materials which were particularly popular in the Appalachian region during the first three decades of the twentieth century are particularly prominent in the district, for example, cinder block and carrara glass, both materials whose production is associated with the Appalachian coal fields, and the cut stone of the New Deal Era.

Integrity

The transient nature of coal mining has left a legacy of historic properties that pose challenges to our traditional rules for evaluating significance and integrity. Many coal mining structures were built for temporary use and quickly abandoned and often even dismantled once the mineral was exhausted. Because of these unique characteristics, National Register Bulletin 42 was issued by the National Park Service to assist individuals preparing nominations of historic mining properties to the National Register of Historic Places (Noble and Spude 1992). The authors of the bulletin suggest that the integrity of mining properties can not be judged in the tradition fashion. They concluded that although the individual components of a mining property may appear to lack distinction, the combined impact of these separate components may enable the property to convey the collective image of a historically significant mining operation. In essence, the whole of the property will be greater than the sum of its parts.

Under the guidance of Bulletin 42, numerous coal company towns have been nominated to the National Register. However, the historic context developed for this nomination suggests that the bulletin is not only relevant to historic mining properties themselves, but may

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also assist with the nomination of properties which were not directly associated with the mining process but were nonetheless greatly impacted by the industry. Such is the case with the Cumberland Central Business District. Although the district was not company owned and none of the resources were directly associated with the mining process, it exists in its current form solely because of the boom and bust legacy of the mining industry as discussed in Bulletin 42. Thus, each of the individual resources ability to contribute to the significance of the Cumberland Central Business District was evaluated in terms of its overall relationship to the district. The following integrity guidelines establish which of the seven aspects of integrity are most important for the individual resources and the district as a whole to continue to convey its significance as an important example of an agrarian community which emerged as an independent mercantile and political center during the Appalachian Kentucky coal boom, 1911-1930, and subsequently experienced a period of decline following the closing of local mines.

Location, setting, design and association are the aspects of integrity most important for the Cumberland Central Business District to continue to convey its significance or for individual resources to contribute to the district.

Location and Setting

The relationship of the district and its location and setting are important to understanding why it exists. The district grew and prospered in this location because a bend of the Poor Fork of the Cumberland River created a flat area for building sites, the L&N railroad passed through this location, and there were two large

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coal company towns located within three miles. If resources which reflect the importance of the district's location and setting have survived then it continues to possess these aspects of integrity.

Design

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a resource. The design of the Cumberland Central Business District was greatly impacted by several factors: its location in a bend of the Poor Fork of the Cumberland River caused it to be dissected into two sections; the abrupt ascendancy of the coal industry around 1911 and its just as rapid decline just three decades later resulted in most of the resources being constructed in less than a thirty year period. If individual resources possess the integrity which enable them to continue to convey these factors, they contribute to the district.

Association

Integrity of association will exist when resources remain to convey a strong sense of connectedness between the district and contemporary observer's ability to discern the historical activity which occurred at the location. The district can still have integrity even though a number of resources may be missing, have been altered or are in poor condition. Individual resources will contribute to the district if they retain enough integrity to allow observers to discern that they were built during the coal boom period and use regionally popular building materials, form and styles.

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Archaeological Potential

An effort was made to document the location of potentially significant archaeological sites as revealed through archival and oral historical information. These sites were listed as such under the current function category of the survey table. However, since there has been no effort to evaluate the integrity of the sites, at this time it is not possible to determine their eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is recommended, however, that in the future these sites be further evaluated by a qualified archeologist.

MAP#	C/NC	HISTORIC FUNCTION	CURRENT FUNCTION	ADDRESS	#STORIES	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL	ORIG. CLADDING	ADDED CLADDING	TYPE OF ALTERATION	ESTIMATED D.O.C.
1	C	City Hall/ Fire Dept/ Fields Lodge	Fields Lodge	414 W. Main	2	Stone (WPA)			2nd floor windows infilled	1935
2	C	Store	Vacant		2	Cinder Blk.	Brick		Roof	1930s
3	C	Carruba Grocery	Cornett Electro n-ics	410 W, Main	2	Cinder Blk.	Brick		entrance	1930s
4	NC		Lot							NA
5	NC		Lot							NA
6	C	Jacobs Furniture	Thrift Bit Service	404 W. Main	2	Cinder Blk.	Carrara Glass			1940s
7	C	Guaranty Deposit Bank	City Hall	402 W. Main	2	Brick				1928
8	C	Holcomb Furniture	J&R Furn. Co	312 W. Main	2	Brick				1920s
9	NC		Library		1	Brick				1990s
10	NC		Lot							NA
11	NC		Lot							NA
12	C	Summter Hardware	Vacant		1	Brick			windows	1920s
13	C	Creech Furnature	Traden' Post Antiques		1	Brick				1930s
14	NC		Lot							NA
15	NC		Lot							NA
16	C	Store	Julia's Hair Boutique	206 W. Main	2	Cinder Blk.	Brick Facade			1930s

MAP#	C/NC	HISTORIC FUNCTION	CURRENT FUNCTION	ADDRESS	#STORIES	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL	ORIG. CLADDING	ADDED CLADDING	TYPE OF ALTERATION	ESTIMATED D.O.C.
17	NC	Vic's Jewellery	Vic's Jewellery		2	Frame		Brick Vener	Roof	1930s
18	NC	Dwelling	Dwelling		1	Frame		Brick Vener	Roof	1930s
19	C	Store	Tri City Gifts	202 W. Main	1	Brick			Roof	1930s
20	C	Myers Hardware	H&R Block	203 W. Main	2	Brick			Roof	1930s
21	NC		Lot							NA
22	NC		Lot							NA
23	C	Jacobs Dry Goods	Nearly New Consignment	209 w. Main	1	Brick				1930s
24	C	A&P Grocery	New Image Beauty Shop		1	Brick				1930s
25	C	Fugate Drug Store	Town & Country Hair	213 W. Main	2	Brick				1919
26	C	2nd Fugate Drug Store	Lasting Impressions	215 W. Main	2	Cinder Blk.	Brick Vener			1930s
27	C	Store			1	Brick				1930s
28	C	Fiechter Myers Clothing			1	Brick				1930s
29	C	Morris Scott Clothing	Rowletts Furn.		2	Brick				1930
30	C	Store	Vacant		2	Brick				1930s
31	C	Store	Vacant		1	Brick				1930s

MAP#	C/NC	HISTORIC FUNCTION	CURRENT FUNCTION	ADDRESS	#STORIES	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL	ORIG. CLADDING	ADDED CLADDING	TYPE OF ALTERATION	ESTIMATED D.O.C.
32	C	Store	Poor Fork A & C		1	Brick				1930s
33	NC	Store	Lot							NA
34	C	Isaacs Bldg.	Modern Electric	401 W. Main	2	Brick				1930s
35	C	Novo Theatre	WIFX Radio		2	Brick			Roof, Marquee	1930s
36	C	Creech Bldg.	Gerrys Clothing		2	Brick				1924
37	NC	Frazier Bldg.			2	Brick				1953
38	C	Ike & Arthur Creech Grocery	Crestline Flowers		1	Frame		Metal		1910s
39	C	Frazier Hardware	Krafts & Cards		2	Brick				1920s
40	C	Resteraunt			2	Frame				
41	C	Store			1	Frame				
42	C	Drug Store			2	Brick				
43	NC		Lot		1					
44	NC		Lot							
45	C	Store			2	Cinder Blk.	Brick Facade			1930s

MAP#	C/NC	HISTORIC FUNCTION	CURRENT FUNCTION	ADDRESS	#STORIES	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL	ORIG. CLADDING	ADDED CLADDING	TYPE OF ALTERATION	ESTIMATED D.O.C.
46	NC		Lot							NA
47	NC		Lot							NA
48	NC		Lot							NA
49	NC	Store			2	Frame		Aluminum		1930s
50	C	Store			1	Brick				1920s
51	NC	Dry Cleaners		405 Main	2	Frame		Aluminum		1920s
52	NC		Lot							NA
53	C	Store		409 Main	2	Brick				1930s
54	C	Wells Bldg.		411 Main	2	Brick				1937
55	C	Black Motor Auto Sales & Service		412 Main	2	Brick				1930s
56	C	Furniture Store		503 Main	2	Cinder Blk.	Tile			1940s
57	C	Benham Laundry & Dry Cleaners		505 Main	2	Cinder Blk.	Tile			1940s
58	C	Bobich Liquor Store		507 Main	1	Tile	Brick			1930s
59	C	Ball Brothers Grocery		506 Main	3	Frame	Brick			1930s
60	C	Resteraunt			1	Brick				1940s

MAP#	C/NC	HISTORIC FUNCTION	CURRENT FUNCTION	ADDRESS	#STORIES	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL	ORIG. CLADDING	ADDED CLADDING	TYPE OF ALTERATION	ESTIMATED D.O.C.
61	NC		Maynards			Cinder	Brick			1950s
62	C	Auto Sales & Service	Air Brush Shop		1	Brick				1930s
63	C	Parts Storage		410 Main	1	Brick				1930s
64	C	Bakery	George's		2	Cinder Blk.	Brick			1930s
65	C	Store	George's	408 Main	2	Cinder Blk.	Brick			1930s
66	C	Dr. Fields 2nd Office/Store		404&406 Main	2	Tile	Brick			1930s
67	C	Dr. Fields 1st Office		402 Main	2	Frame		Aluminum		1920s
68	C	Store			2	Frame		Brick Vener		1930s
69	C	Dawhares		308 Main	2	Brick				1930s
70	C	Store	Movie World	306 Main	1	Brick				1930s
71	NC	Gas Station	Gas Station		1	Tile	Brick			1950s
72	NC		Lot		2	Frame				NA
73	NC		Lot							NA
74	C	Resteraunt & Bus Station	Vacant		1	Brick				1930s
75	NC	A&P Grocery			1	Cinder Blk.	Brick		Roof	1940s
76	NC		Lot							NA
77	C	Dwelling			2	Frame		Permastone		1930s
78	C	Barber Shop			2	Frame		Permastone		1930s
79	C	Palace Cafe			2	Brick				1930s

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The ascendancy of coal during the first decade of the twentieth century brought sudden and dramatic changes to the Appalachian landscape. The decline of the industry less than three decades later had just as great an impact. The Cumberland Central Business District materially reflects these significant historical events. For this reason, the district is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, as a significant example of an agrarian community which emerged as an independent mercantile and political center during the Appalachian Kentucky coal boom, 1911-1930, and subsequently experienced a period of decline following the closing of local mines.

Settled in the early 1820s, the town was originally known as Poor Fork because of its location on the stream by the same name. The post office, one of the oldest in Harlan County, was established in 1837 and the city was incorporated in 1895. Like the rest of the county, however, the rugged area remained isolated until the building of the L & N Railroad in 1911 and the subsequent arrival of the coal mining industry.

When eastern Kentucky coal mining activity began to accelerate at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the growth was phenomenal. In 1900, for example, most of the coal mined in Kentucky was produced in the western part of the state. Eastern Kentucky produced only 1.3 million tons, or about 38 percent of the state total.

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By 1910, the percentage had increased to 41.5, but five years later it had jumped to 64.3 percent, and in the following decade it rose to 78.5 percent. By 1925, three-fourths of all miners in Kentucky were employed in the Cumberland Plateau, working in over 570 mines (Eller 1982:140).

The rapid growth of the eastern Kentucky coal fields after 1910 was made possible by the extension of railroad branch lines into the area's three major coal districts. In the north, the C&O constructed its Levista Branch from the head of the Big Sandy River into the Elkhorn district of Pike and Letcher counties. From the west, the eastern Kentucky branch of the L&N was extended from Breathitt County into Perry and Letcher counties in the heart of the Hazard Coalfield (Eller 1982:143). The final opening of the eastern Kentucky coal fields came when the Wasiota and Black Mountain Branch of the L&N was completed to the head of the Cumberland River in Harlan County. As early as the turn of the century, northern capitalists were sending land agents into the Harlan Coalfield, but the absence of adequate transportation prevented its early development. In 1907, Thomas Jefferson Asher of Pineville began construction of a short-line railroad up the Cumberland River in Bell County to reach coal lands that he had recently acquired. Three years later, that line was taken over by the L&N and extended some twenty-seven miles through the town of Poor Fork to Benham (Eller 1982:146).

The first coal was shipped from Harlan County in 1911, and by 1914 production had reached over a million tons annually. By 1920, Harlan had become the leading coal-producing county in Kentucky (Eller 1982:146). Thousands of miners poured into the district from

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the surrounding hills. Between 1910 and 1920, the population of Harlan County tripled, and it doubled again the next decade (Table 1). The growth of the town of Poor Fork (Cumberland) paralleled that of Harlan county. For example, the town's population

Table 1
 Harlan County Population
 1820-1950

YEAR	WHITE	BLACK	FOREIGN BORN	TOTAL	PERCENT INCREASE
1820	1851	110		1961	
1830	2786	143		2929	49.3
1840	2928	87		3015	2.9
1850	4108	160		4268	41.5
1860	5352	142		5494	28.7
1870	4316	99	0	4415	-19.6
1880	5164	114	0	5278	19.5
1890	6041	154	3	6197	17.4
1900	9612	226	3	9838	58.8
1910	10002	564		10566	7.4
1920	27375	2901	131	31546	198.6
1930	58641	5879	822	64557	104.6
1940				75275	16.6
1950				71751	-4.7

Source: United States Population Census 1850-1950.

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increased from 300 to 2,639, a 780 percent increase, in just ten years from 1920 to 1930 (Table 2).

The rapid growth of Poor Fork was no doubt due to the fact that, during the period, two of the largest operations in the Harlan Coalfields, Benham and Lynch, were established within three miles of the town's doorstep. In 1910, the Wisconsin Steel Company, a subsidiary of the Morgan-McCormick International Harvester Company of Chicago, began mining and coking activities in the area. The company's town, Benham, was constructed "almost over night" from materials hauled in from Virginia before the Wasiota and Black Mountain Branch was completed; by 1915, it contained over two hundred mining houses. Two miles east of Benham, at Lynch, another Morgan affiliate, U.S. Coal and Coke, built one of the largest coal-mining plants in the South. It constructed approximately 2,000 buildings to provide for a population that reached 10,000 in 1919 (Eller 1982:147).

Table 2
Cumberland Population
1920-1950

YEAR	TOTAL	PERCENT INCREASE
1920	300	
1930	2639	779.6
1940	4149	57.2
1950	4249	2.4

Source: 1940 United States Population Census.

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Benham and Lynch are important examples of privately owned and operated coal company towns built during the paternalistic period of Appalachian coal town construction, 1900-1930. By the time they were established, the demand for coal had reached levels where operators could rarely attract all the miners they needed. This combined with the isolated nature of the mines away from any urban center, resulted in both companies providing their workers with social institutions, recreational facilities, quality health care, and comfortable homes. Along with the benefits of paternalism, however, came the negative aspects of company control. Because they also owned and operated the post office, store, schools, churches and other public spaces, the operators had enormous control over many aspects of the miners lives. As a result, Cumberland, an independent mercantile center, quickly became a favored place for the residents of the company towns to have a good time, do business, or participate in politics. Cumberland had independent stores, a bank, bus station, restaurants, a theater, and a lodge.

Shaunna L. Scott has warned, however, that it is important to realize that company control was not restricted to company towns. She discovered, for example, that even in the independent towns of Harlan, Cumberland and Evarts, coal operators "put local democracy to the test." By the 1930s, the coal industry served as the driving force behind the local economy of these independent communities as well, providing the patronage and wages that kept local businesses afloat (Scott 1995:16). The companies control was not as complete as in the company town, however, and as a result, Scott found that most union organizing rallies and meetings held in Harlan County during the 1930s occurred outside the confines of company

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towns in independent communities such as Cumberland(Scott 1995:16).

Though an independent town, there is no question that the development of Cumberland parallels that of the county's coal industry. For example, in 1921 Harlan County produced about 30 percent of all the coal mined in eastern Kentucky. Over the next decade, the production would more than double, reaching a peak of 15 million tons in 1929(Eller 1982: 149). It is precisely this time that Poor Fork experienced unprecedented growth (Table 2). In 1926 the town was renamed for the Cumberland River by local businessmen who sought a more "dignified" name for their community. Main Street was paved in the early 1930s and nearly all of the buildings in the central business district date from the coal boom period. One resident recalled that during the early 1930s when coal was king, Cumberland looked "brand new."

After 1927, coal production in the mountains commenced a sharp decline, sending the region's coal industry into a depression. By 1930, unemployment, destitution, and despair stalked the coal fields. Sweeping changes in the fuel industry, the Great Depression, World War II, the automobile, and mechanization in the coal field were some of the major forces that resulted in the decline of the coal industry. Hundreds of coal companies in the mountains went bankrupt or simply boarded up their mines, abandoned

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the company towns, and left the region. "Over night," some of the companies dismantled entire towns that just two or three decades earlier they had just as quickly constructed. Like its neighbors, Cumberland underwent a similar decline. While the population increased 57 percent from 1930 to 1940 this was drastically down from the 780 percent increase that had occurred the previous decade and between 1940 and 1950 the population increase was only 2 percent (Table 2). Much of the later population increase was likely due to the arrival of miners fleeing the neighboring company towns that had been abandoned by their operators. With the bust of the coal industry, the Cumberland Central Business District underwent a period of decline. Many of the once vibrant establishments closed their doors including the theater, bus station and bank.

In recent years, however, the Tri-Cities (Benham, Cumberland and Lynch) have experienced a cultural renewal. Much of this activity is related to a growing interest among both local residents and tourists in the history and traditions of the Appalachian Coal industry. Both Benham and Lynch have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Benham Company Store has been rehabilitated according to the Secretary of Interiors standards and is housing the "Coal Miners Museum." The Benham School has also been rehabilitated to the same high standards and is today the "School House Inn," a bed and breakfast and restaurant. A mine tour is being organized at Lynch and many of the buildings in the Cumberland Central Business district, vacant just a short time ago, have new occupants.

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The ascendancy of coal during the first decade of the twentieth century brought sudden and dramatic changes to the Appalachian landscape. The decline of the industry less than three decades later, had just as great an impact. The Cumberland Central Business District materially reflects these historical events. For this reason, the district is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, as a significant example of an agrarian community which emerged as an independent mercantile and political center during the Appalachian Kentucky coal boom, 1911-1930, and subsequently experienced a period of decline following the closing of local mines.

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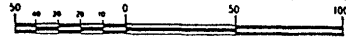
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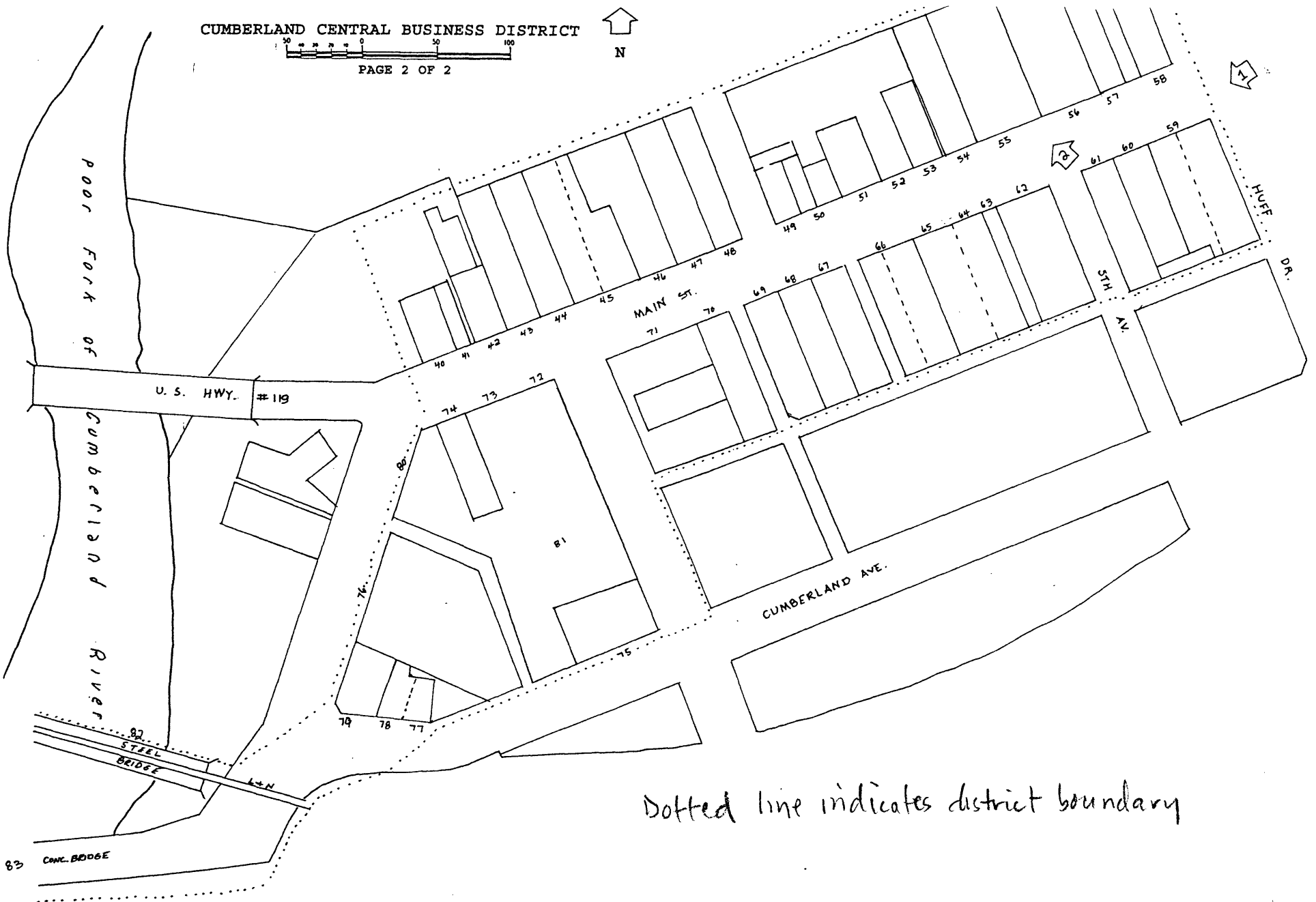
Boundary Justification

The boundary includes a significant concentration of the buildings, sites and structures that maintain historic integrity and that have historically been part of the Cumberland Central Business District. The western boundary of the district is established by Freeman Street. The southern boundary is established by the southern property line of the structures and sites fronting West Main Street, the Main Street Bridge, Cumberland Ave and the southern property line of the buildings and sites fronting East Main Street. The eastern boundary is established by Huff Drive. The Northern boundary is established by the northern property line of the buildings and sites fronting East Main Street, the L&N bridge and the northern property line of the buildings and sites fronting West Main Street.

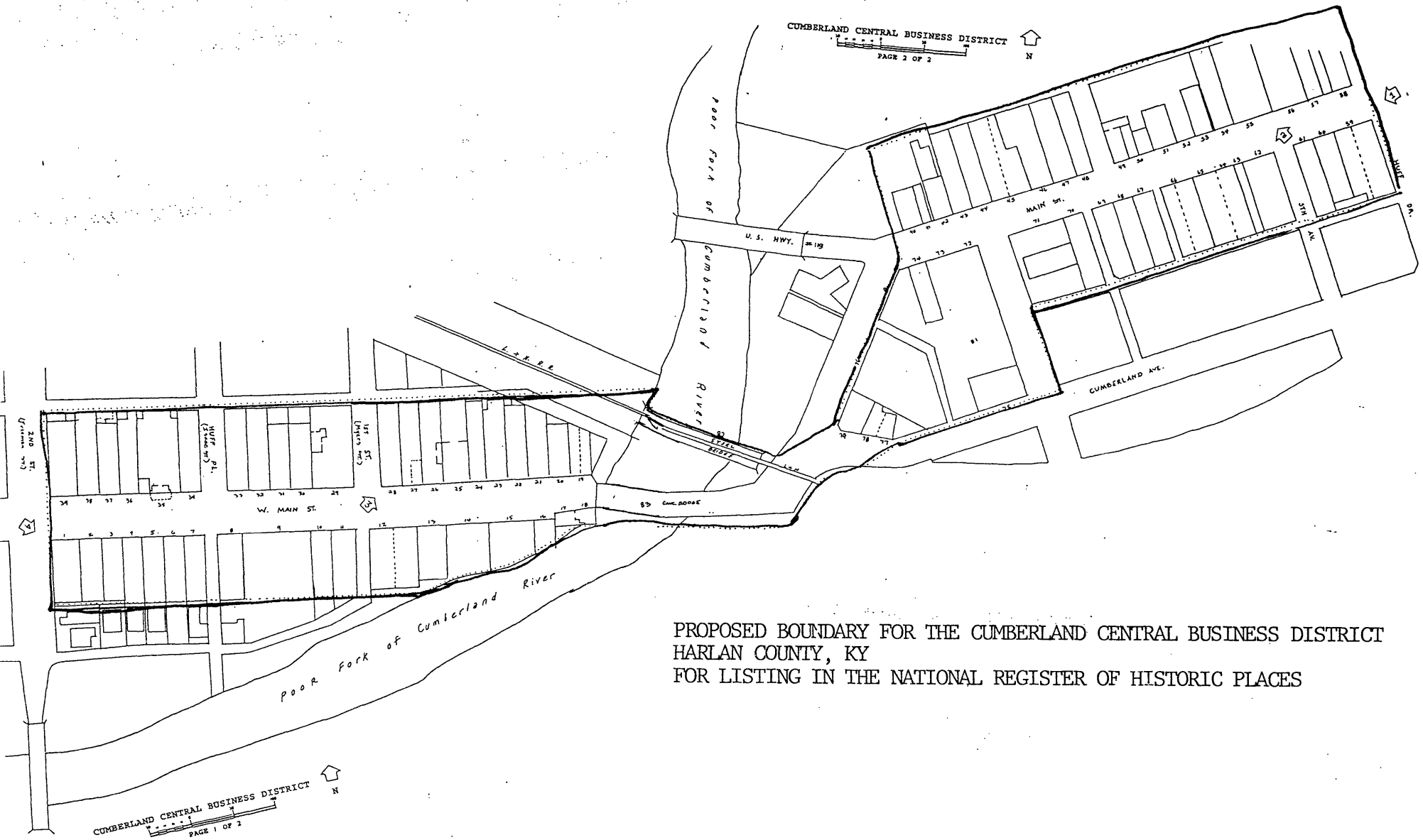
CUMBERLAND CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



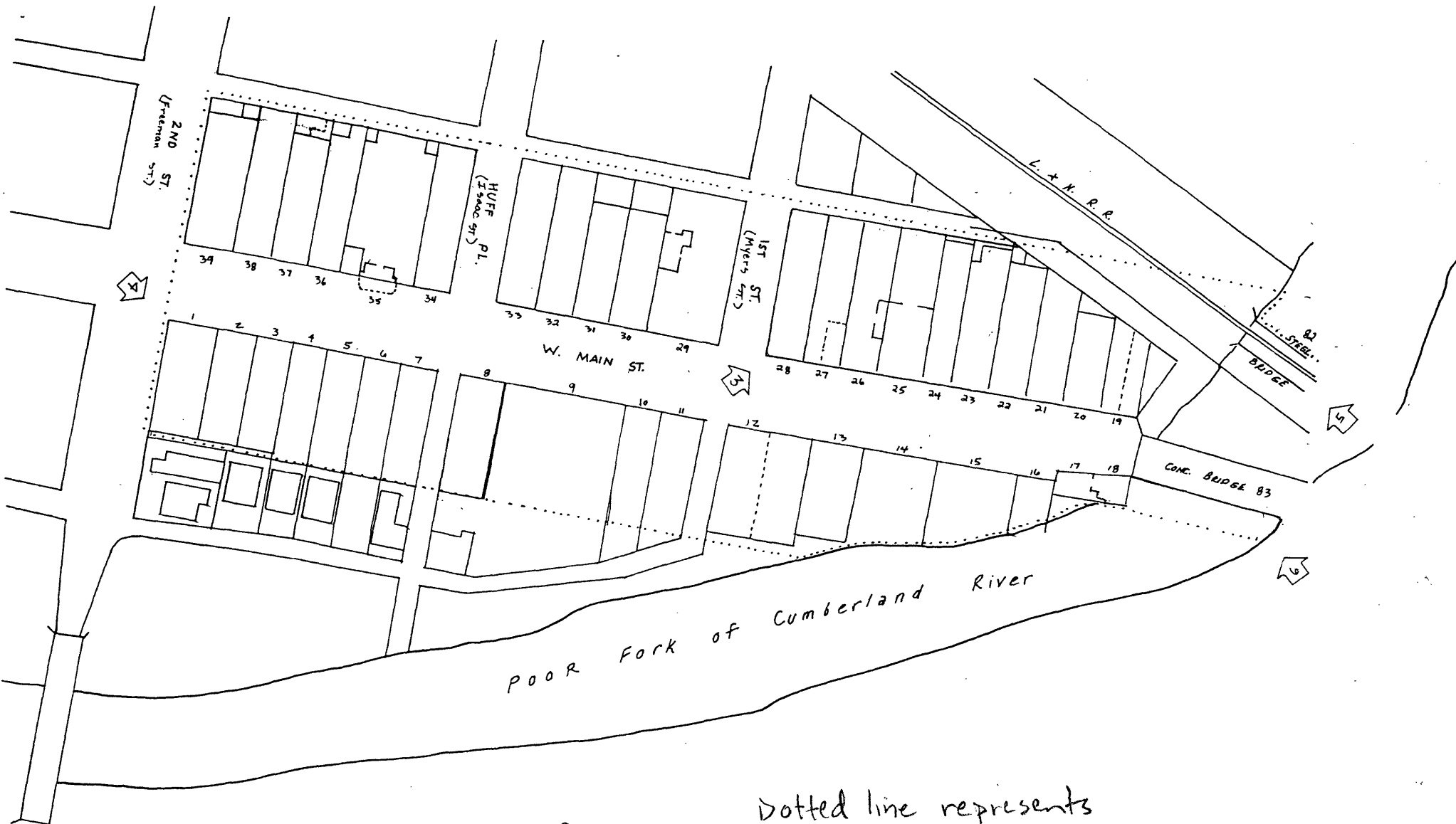
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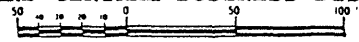
Dotted line indicates district boundary



PROPOSED BOUNDARY FOR THE CUMBERLAND CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
 HARLAN COUNTY, KY
 FOR LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



CUMBERLAND CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



Dotted line represents district boundary