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National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

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This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic and Architectural Resources of Fentress County, Tennessee

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Agricultural and rural development from 1870 to 1940

Development of towns and communities from 1819 to 1940

Industrial development from 1880 to 1940

**C. Geographical Data**

The area covered in the nomination includes the geographical boundary of Fentress County except for the land included in the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area.

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

*Herbert L. Bayne*

Signature of certifying official

5/14/91

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*Patricia Andrews*

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

7/3/91

Date

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

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STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

## INTRODUCTION

Fentress County was established in 1823 from sections of Morgan and Overton Counties. In 1849, when it had a population of about 4,454, and again in 1879 the county was reduced in size when portions of it went to form Scott and Pickett Counties, respectively. Today much of the county remains rural or undeveloped. The 1980 county population was only 14,826 or 29.8 people per square mile, little more than the 14,262 people who were there in 1940. Jamestown, the county seat and the largest community in the county, had a population of only 2,364 in 1980. Allardt is the next largest community with a population of 654. No other incorporated towns are found in the county.

Fentress County is situated in the northeastern section of Middle Tennessee on the Cumberland Plateau, one of the physiographic regions of the state. Approximately five hundred square miles in area, most of the eastern portion of the county is comprised of table land while the northern portion consists of the Wolf River Valley. Elevations up to 1,800 feet above sea level occur in the county, but much of the area is characterized by a flat or gently rolling landscape. Principal waterways include the Wolf River, Obey River, Clear Fork River, and Clear Creek River, a tributary of the Tennessee River. Table lands usually have a sandy soil surface and generally are not suitable for grain farming. However, native grasses found here allow for cattle grazing. This portion of Fentress County rests on sandstone and conglomerate, some of which is suitable for quarrying. Shale, clay, and coal deposits are located below the mountainous regions.

The area known as the Three Forks of the Wolf River is probably the most fertile in the county. This valley is formed where the forks unite to form the Wolf River. Fifteen miles in length, the valley ranges from three miles in width at Three Forks to ten miles in width about half-way down. Each of the three forks has its own valley, all of which contain acceptable agricultural lands. Valley lands are primarily red clay sitting on limestone, and limestone bluffs sometimes flank the rivers and streams. The coves are covered with a mixture of humus and sand which is often several feet deep. It was also the first part of the county to be settled.

The table land of Fentress County is part of the Cumberland coal field, which is itself a part of the larger Appalachian coal field. In Tennessee, this area covers approximately 5,100 square miles and approximately 400

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square miles of Fentress County contain coal fields. As late as the 1880s, no coal had been mined for use outside of the county, but outcrops of coal had been worked for local use. Deposits of slate and iron were also known to exist, as were oil springs and chalybeate and sulphur springs.

Several natural features in the county are of interest. Numerous caves are believed to have been worked for saltpeter to manufacture gun powder during the Civil War. Two of these are the Saltpeter Cave, four miles west of Allardt, and Buffalo Cave, one mile northeast of Helena. A natural sandstone bridge, about two and one-half miles southeast of Allardt, is fifty feet in length and has a twenty feet wide and eight feet tall arched opening. Another natural bridge is located just above Rock Castle Falls, one and one-half miles southwest of Jamestown. Northrup Falls is one and one-half miles south of Allardt and has a fifty-four feet drop.

Fentress County grew slowly and by 1900 had a population of only 6,106. During the 1930s, both the Oneida and Western Railway and the Crawford branch of the Tennessee Central traversed the county with twenty-five miles of tracks. Of the seventy-one miles of state highways in Fentress county in late 1930s, State Route 28 was the only paved road; State Routes 52 and 85 were still gravel. Forty-three grade schools, three high schools, and the Alvin York Agricultural Institute were open in the county at this same time. Beginning in 1930 electric power was provided by the Tennessee Electric Power Company. It had 300 subscribers and was purchased by the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1939. At that time, the local electric company was known as the Volunteer Electric Co-operative. Telephone service, with only sixty-nine subscribers in 1937, was provided by the Southern Continental Telephone Company. In the mid-1930s seventy-five percent of the county's population was still considered rural. Fentress County ranked seventy-sixth of the state's ninety-five counties in population, although it was fortieth in area.

**AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT FROM 1870 TO 1940**

In 1870 Fentress County's population was 4,717 or less than ten persons per square mile. During the 1880s farm size varied between an estimated fifty acres up to over one thousand acres; one hundred to three hundred acres was considered average. Hired help or tenant farming was common on the larger farms, however, skilled labor was hard to attract because of low farm wages. Leases typically ran for three years with the owner receiving one-third of the crops if the tenant supplied his own equipment or one-half of the crops if the owner supplied the same; paying money for leasing land was

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rare. Prices for buying farm land ranged from five dollars per acre to twenty dollars per acre, except in the Three Forks of the Wolf River, where it was much higher. Mountain lands could be had for as little as five cents per acre, in areas where the title was in dispute, and rose up to ten dollars per acre for improved lands.

Corn, wheat, oats, rye, tobacco, potatoes, turnips, pumpkins, buckwheat, and garden vegetables were the main crops in the county during the 1880s. Few grasses were cultivated since cattle could graze on natural grasses. The growing season lasted from April through October. Generally, two-horse plows were used to break up the land and there was little use of hillside plows or subsoil plows. Horses provided three-fourths of the work stock in the county. Mules were used on some farms, but oxen were rarely worked.

The Fentress County Gazette reported on November 12, 1891 that several families from tobacco growing regions in East Tennessee were moving to Allardt to grow tobacco there. In 1897 an early frost killed the crop and the decline of tobacco as a crop began. Hogs and sheep were raised on some farms in the county, but livestock was usually considered best. Dried fruits, poultry and eggs were important cash crops. Merchants could transport the farm products by river to Nashville. However, because of the lack of an adequate and reliable transportation system, dairying was not a profitable venture. Often livestock had to be driven to market on foot; produce and stock were taken to Clinton in Anderson County sixty miles away or to Horse Cave in Kentucky one hundred miles north. Steamships did come to the mouth of the Wolf and Obey Rivers but the water level was uncertain. Goods could be shipped from Burksville forty miles away or from Celina or Butler's Landing fifty miles away only during certain seasons.

Around 1900, the average estimated yield of corn was only fifteen bushels per acre, oats was fifteen to twenty bushels per acre, and potatoes was seventy bushels per acre. The agricultural extension agent from the University of Tennessee visited the county occasionally during the 1910s. In 1913 a boys' corn club was organized and by 1918 a girls canning club had begun; a 4-H Club was also initiated during this time. As a result of this activity, a part-time county agent was established circa 1927. Agricultural fairs had been held sporadically in the county, but not until 1928 was the Fentress County Fair officially begun. During much of this period scattered towns and loosely defined rural communities were established in the county. Fentress County had a population of 10,435 and 1,214 farms in 1920. A co-operative agricultural group between the federal, state, and county agencies and individuals was started in Allardt by the agricultural extension agent.

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Clear titles to lands on the Cumberland Plateau were a major problem during its development. Often Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina would issue grants for properties with overlapping boundaries. Fentress County, through Bruno Gernt of Allardt, played a major role in establishing clear title to these lands and opening them for settlement and the exploitation of natural resources. Development of the area could not have occurred without these legal decisions.

In spite of being a generally rural county with a population of only 11,601, by the 1930s agriculture had not developed as a major enterprise. Although forty percent of the county's land was considered suitable for agriculture, only ten percent was in this use. Thirty to sixty bushels of corn per acre could be grown on the river bottom lands of the valleys, the most productive region of the county. There was also subsistence farming and the raising sheep and cattle. Other grains and livestock were grown on farms in the more mountainous regions of Fentress County. Truck farming, especially potatoes, occurred mainly on the plateau section of the county and might have been a profitable venture if better transportation to other markets were available. A poultry industry developed in the county during the early years of the twentieth century.

Generally, corporations purchased twenty percent of the corn and beef cattle, and thirty percent of the livestock and potatoes. Farmers sold thirty percent of their beef cattle, forty percent of their potatoes, and twenty percent of their livestock to cooperatives. The remainder of the farm produce and livestock was for personal use or sold to other individuals. The sale of dairy products was not common. Dairy goods were used by the farmer and families in towns often kept cows for their own use. At that time, sixty percent of agricultural income came from livestock.

The county extension agent's office, headquartered in Allardt, had closed circa 1931-1933 but it re-opened in 1934. A Potato Growers' Association for Cumberland, Fentress, Morgan, and Scott counties was established and the 4-H Club was re-established around 1930 to aid in promoting agriculture. The Tennessee Lumber and Coal Company donated land to the 4-H Club on the Clear Fork River at Brewster Ford. A log cabin camp was built here between 1934-1936.

There were 987 farms surveyed in the county in 1930 with an average size of eighty-two acres. Approximately two-thirds of these farms were owner-operated (677 full ownership, 63 partial ownership) and the remainder were occupied by tenant farmers. Of the 247 tenant farmers, only thirty-two

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were cash tenants. Ten percent of 3,454 farm buildings surveyed were considered modern in 1930; seventy-five percent needed repairs and ninety percent needed paint. Electrical appliances and silos comprised only two percent of farm buildings. The total value of farm machinery was \$94,637.00.

Transporting farm produce or livestock was still a problem in the 1930s, although roads now connected Jamestown to Nashville (150 miles), Chattanooga (114 miles), and Knoxville (130 miles). Livestock was sold directly to individuals and packing plants or through commission agents and trucked out of the county, often to Cincinnati (250 miles). It cost from twenty-five cents to fifty cents per one hundred pounds to truck goods. Rail transportation was available but not widely used. Seeds, fertilizer, cottonseed meal, and seed potatoes were usually shipped into the county.

A 1934 Agricultural - Industrial Survey of the county stated that Fentress offered many opportunities for agricultural (and industrial) development. The report suggested that the county's large limestone deposits be developed as agricultural lime and that a canning factory should be built to serve as a market for local truck farms. Establishing commercial grain mills was also suggested as a means of providing income for the county while utilizing crops already grown. Corn was the most important crop grown and outranked lumbering as the major product of the county. Potatoes, beef cattle, other livestock, and hay were additional primary agricultural products.

The survey noted that the economic conditions of farmers in Fentress County were poor because of high taxes, low prices received for farm products, and the lack of industries that could market or process farm products. Yet the overall condition of farmers was improving because of better farming practices, such as crop rotation and the introduction of new crops, and the introduction of modern conveniences, including water and lighting. More modern farm equipment was also being utilized. In 1940, just over 51% (1,612) of the work force was employed in agriculture. There were still 987 farms in the county covering 80,313 acres of land. In 1943 wild blackberries were collected at stations set up in local stores. Growing sweet peppers was initiated in 1944 and broccoli in 1947. Also in 1947, there was a change from open range to fenced areas for livestock. Only 13.9% were employed in agriculture in 1970.

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## DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES FROM 1819 TO 1940

Jamestown and Allardt are the only two incorporated towns in Fentress County. Other small communities have evolved in both rural and industrialized sections of the county. These include Pall Mall, Davidson and Wilder, Clarkrange, Grimsley, and Martha Washington. Today, the latter three are recognized as communities, but did not develop specifically as town centers. These communities usually served as the focal points for the rural, primarily agricultural, portions of Fentress County. Some other communities include East Jamestown, Armathwaite, Ben Stockton, Forbus, Gernt, and Helena. Many of these rural communities no longer exist, but they were an important element in the county's development. By the mid-1920s the most densely populated areas were near Jamestown and just north of it and around Allardt and Clarkrange.

The community known as Little Crab was located about ten miles west of Jamestown. When the first settlers arrived here circa 1819, the land was part of Overton County. Farming and logging were the principal occupations in the region, although in 1896 oil wells were drilled near here (Bob's Bar Wells). More drilling occurred in the early 1900s. The Cumberland Pipeline Company built tanks and laid down pipes, through Pickett County, to its nearest branch line in Kentucky. This resulted in some growth of the community, but it was short lived. Pickett County levied a tax on the pipe lines, some of the wells flooded, and the lines were removed in 1906. By the mid-1920s, Little Crab was an area of between 500 to 800 people. There was a school here during the 1880s and a new school building was erected in 1907. The two story frame school had classrooms on the first story and space for the Odd Fellows on the second story. By 1986 there were only about thirty-five people living in fourteen houses, where there were once forty to fifty houses.

Once known as Sand Springs, the county seat of Jamestown was established in 1823 in the north central portion of the county and named after James Fentress, a state legislator. It was not incorporated until 1837. The first court was held at the Three Forks of the Wolf River, but in 1828 a courthouse was erected at Jamestown. A second courthouse was built in 1860 and a third one in 1901. By 1920 the city had grown to 700 residents. Between 1930 and 1939 the town's population increased from 857 to 1,200. Located near the headwaters of the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers, in the 1930s Jamestown was served by the Oneida and Western Railroad and State Routes 28 and 52. The town had three churches, a weekly newspaper, one grade school, and a high school.

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Out of fifty-eight schools in Fentress County in 1916, Jamestown was one of four communities that had a school with more than one teacher. (It had two teachers). The largest community in the county, it also had fourteen retail stores, the county jail (NR 5/24/88), and one bank in the early twentieth century. A 1933 business directory listed twelve attorneys, four church pastors, two doctors, one dentist, fourteen general stores, five garages, six barbershops, and seven lumbermen. A photographer, cafe, hotel, newspaper, and scenic painter were also found in the city directory. By the 1940s Jamestown also had acquired six manufacturing and processing businesses, four wholesale and distributing businesses, and it was served by four public utilities. Lumbering, coal mining, barite ore mining, and natural gas wells were the major industries in the surrounding areas. As many as seventy cars per week shipped barite out of Jamestown during the 1940s. The rail line ran trains six days a week. Much of the commercial district was constructed of sandstone in the 1930s; several of the buildings have been altered since then. Several early twentieth century residences are located in the city.

Although the Jamestown Academy was begun as early as 1860, it was not until 1928 that the city got its best known educational institution, the Alvin York Agricultural Institute. York, the World War I hero, started the school to provide vocational and academic education for the county's youth. York started a campaign to raise funds for the school in 1926. The first classes were held in the former county poor house across the street from where the campus was being built. In the 1930s the York Institute had five teachers and 175 pupils. The state took over the operation of the school in 1937. It became the only state run and financed comprehensive secondary school in Tennessee. The York Institute continues to operate, using both historic and modern buildings.

Possibly named for the building of flat boats, which were shipped down the Obey River, Boatland is situated eight miles west of Jamestown. Established circa 1830, the community had a post office and a general store in the 1880s. Logs were rafted down the river from here, eventually to arrive in Nashville. Prior to the construction of the first church in 1905, services were held in schools. Davis, Hixson, and Green Lumber Company arrived in the area circa 1913 and built a saw mill, railroad line, and a freight depot for their lumber. An agricultural community in the 1930s, it had two churches and one grade school. Although only thirty pupils attended the school, there were two teachers. The general store remained in use until the 1930s and Boatland kept its post office until 1954.

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Pall Mall is located in the agricultural lands of the Three Forks of the Wolf River about ten miles north of Jamestown along State Route 28. The community was established around 1840 and had an estimated population of 150 in 1939. The rural community had one grade school and two churches in the early twentieth century. The grade school employed two teachers and was attended by forty pupils. In addition to farming, barite ore was mined near here and a grist mill was built in 1880. Pall Mall is probably best known as the home of Sergeant Alvin C. York. Several houses, churches, a post office, and a grist mill associated with the York family are extant. (Sgt. York Historic Area, NR 4/11/73.) York's 1922 house is a National Historic Landmark.

First settled circa 1845, Armathwaite grew from a scattered settlement of thirty to a town of 300 in the 1930s. It is situated thirteen miles southeast of Jamestown on State Route 52. Oil exploration occurred in the region around the 1890s. The Forest Oil Company drilled a well near the mouth of Rock Branch in 1896. Lumber camps also developed near Armathwaite, but they were only temporary and had few ties to the community. Primary enterprises were lumbering and agriculture in 1939. The town had one grade school and two churches at that time. Three teachers and eighty-six pupils attended the school.

The agricultural community now known as Ben Stockton was established around 1850, as Lade, in the northeastern portion of Fentress County. It is located seven miles west of Jamestown on the White River. There was a post office and railroad depot here in 1919. A county road connected it to State Route 28 at Jamestown and the Oneida and Western Railroad stopped here during the 1930s. One grade school and two churches were located in the community of approximately 300 in 1939.

Clarkrange was settled in the southern portion of the county around 1875 and by 1930 it had a population of one hundred. There was a post office here in 1887. During the 1916 school year, it was one of only four communities in the county with at least two teachers per school; it had a high school in 1924. In 1939 the town, located along State Route 28, had one high school and grade school, and a church. The school had 148 pupils and seven teachers. Today, Clarkrange has the only high school maintained by the county. Nearby, the communities of Camp Ground and Martha Washington developed. Located west of Clarkrange, Camp Ground was used as a Civil War camp ground and for religious revivals. Martha Washington, north of Clarkrange, was another lumber and grist mill settlement.

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Known as Blue Rock and Gatewood, Forbus was first settled by families from North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky in the early part of the nineteenth century. By 1832 there was a store and post office located here. John Clemens, the father of Samuel Clemens, was an early settler in the area. The Van Buren Academy was started close by in 1841. Saw mills and grist mills were early industries. However, this community gradually dispersed and it was not until circa 1890 that the present day community was established. It had an estimated population of 250 in 1939. The rural community is located in the northwestern portion of the county on State Route 28 and the Caney Creek River, fourteen miles northwest of Jamestown. Lumbering, mining of barite ore, and agriculture were the principal occupations. Some production of gas and oil also occurred in this region. One grade school, one high school, one weekly newspaper, and two churches served the community in the 1930s. The Forbus Grade School had three teachers and eighty-four pupils. A general store, house, and outbuildings are all that exist of the core of Forbus.

The town of Allardt was established by Bruno Gernt, as the land agent for Cyrus and James N. Clarke of Nebraska. It was named after M.H. Allardt, colonization commissioner for Michigan and Gernt's partner. Planned as a model community, Allardt is located on State Route 52 five miles southeast of Jamestown. It was settled primarily by German immigrants and had a population of 600 in 1939. Laid out on a geometric pattern, the original plan was to designate property for churches, businesses, and schools. The baseline for the city was called Michigan Avenue. Promotional brochures were printed to encourage settlement of the new town. People reached Allardt by travelling through Cincinnati, where the land company had an office.

In 1881 approximately 300,000 acres of land were offered for sale at \$4.00 per acre in parcels of twenty-five, fifty, and one hundred acres. Nine thousand acres were sold the first year and a post office opened in 1883. On February 7, 1885 the Rugby Gazette reported that 12,000 acres of land had been sold and that there were seventy-five families living in Allardt. By 1886 there were three general stores, a hotel, a blacksmith, a shoe shop, a steam mill, a lumber mill, and several houses. A local newspaper began publication in 1891. Agriculture and lumber were the chief industries in the region. The town led Fentress County in the production of hay, apples, grapes, and vegetables.

Allardt's first school opened in 1883 and a literary society was formed in 1892. The German church and the band hall were used as schools and in 1910 a new one-room school building was constructed. As a result of the school

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term only lasting for five months, subscription schools were established. Max Colditz taught one in 1892 and another subscription school was begun in 1904. The town of Allardt built a new school in 1923. Hugo and Arthur Gernt paid for the four-room school and were later reimbursed for half of the cost. In 1925 a two year high school was created. High school was taught here until 1927, after which the students attended the York Institute. Allardt had one grade school and one church in the 1930s. A 1940s promotional booklet for the Upper Cumberland region called Allardt a "progressive and prosperous colony". Allardt had a number of firsts in Fentress County. It held the first school fair in 1918, the first county fair in 1923, and had the first boy scout troop. The first hot lunches in a school in the county were served in Allardt circa 1931 when mothers took turns cooking donated food. Bruno Gernt's house (NR 3/6/87), Gernt's office, a historic church, the 1910 school, a store, an automobile dealership, and several historic residences remain in Allardt.

East Jamestown is seven miles east of the county seat. It was first known as Louvain and was a lumber camp. Because it was located about two miles from the rail line, the camp was eventually abandoned. Tennessee Stave and Lumber Company later set up another camp and called it New Louvain. New Louvain had camp houses, a commissary, a hotel/boarding house, offices, and a depot. A school was built in 1908. This building was demolished in 1939 and a new school constructed. The community had a population of only seventy-five people in 1939. The post office here was called Coon Rod (after Coon Rod Crockett, an early settler) until the 1920s when the rail line, part of the Oneida and Western, came to the town. In 1928 the name was changed to East Jamestown.

In the early twentieth century coal mining was an important enterprise in Fentress County and adjacent Overton County. As a result, five small industrial villages associated with the coal mines prospered for a brief time. Davidson, Wilder, and Highland were in Fentress County and Twinton and Crawford were located in Overton County. The towns were large enough to each support a two-teacher school in 1916. Devastating miners' strikes during 1932 and 1933 broke the union and precipitated the decline of the region. Davidson and Wilder were the second and third most populous communities in Fentress County in 1941. Today the area is known as Davidson-Wilder, although no buildings remain from Wilder.

Begun around the turn of the century to house and service miners, Wilder was named after General John T. Wilder, a Union soldier and prominent southern industrialist. It was twenty-one miles southwest of the county seat. Approximately one hundred houses were built at first and seventy

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more houses were constructed in 1917, when the mining company was increasing production. State Route 85 was built through the middle of the community in 1935. The town had grown from 1,200 people in 1930 to 2,000 in 1939. A high school and grade school, and church were located in Wilder in 1939. The school employed ten teachers and was attended by approximately 160 pupils. There was also a store owned by the Fentress Coal and Coke Company. When the mining industry was at its peak in Fentress County, Wilder had a school, church, company commissary, post office, hotel, barber shop, ice house, doctor's office, depot, and a house for company officials. The postmaster in 1939 described it as "a small mining camp."

Davidson was also founded about 1900 and incorporated in 1934, but it was much smaller than Wilder. Between 1930 and 1939 the population decreased from 250 to 140. Fourteen miles southwest of Jamestown, the nearest major road (State Route 85) was one mile south of the community. Although Davidson was located on a branch line of the Tennessee Central Railroad, the line had been discontinued by the 1930s. One church and one grade school served the community in 1939. The school employed five teachers and had an average attendance of sixty-six pupils. A few worker houses and the Davidson School are all that remain of the town.

It is thought that church services were held in the region of Helena as early as the 1820s, however, a post office was not established until 1897. A Baptist school was established here in 1909. It eventually became known as the Stockton Valley Institute or the Stockton Valley Academy. A dormitory and house for the school principal were constructed in 1912. In 1914 Helena had one store, but in 1930, the community had a population of only eighteen. By 1939 it had grown to 120 people and had one grade school and one church. The principal occupation in Helena, and the rest of the northwestern portion of the county, was agriculture. A county road connected the town with State Route 52 four miles away, but no rail line served the town.

Gernt is located along the Oneida and Western Railroad line in the northeast portion of the county. Established in 1920, it was named by the post office when they established a new post office here. The nearest major road is U.S. Highway 27, located ten miles east. The town is located in the coal mining region. The Gernt Grade School employed one teacher and had only nine pupils.

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Numerous additional communities developed in Fentress as a result of the extraction of natural resources in the early part of the twentieth century. Pine Haven was located north of Jamestown in the 1920s. The Gernt family had a mill here in the late 1920s and the first tourist camp in Fentress County was built here in 1941. Roanoake and Tinctown were located where the airport is today, on what was once cattle range. The first newspaper in the county was published in the 1880s in Banner Springs (Banner-Roslin) in the southern part of the county. Its primary purpose was to advertise for land. Stockton, about seven miles east of Jamestown, was once the major rail shipping point for the county. Jonesville, No Business, Red Hill, Round Mountain, Station Camp, and Williams Creek were the names of some other settled areas.

## INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FROM 1880 TO 1940

In the 1880s small industry in Fentress County consisted primarily of trade in furs, deer-skins, feathers, honey, dried venison, pine tar, turpentine, and lampblack. Transporting trade goods, as well as agricultural products, to a suitable market was a problem because of the lack of an adequate transportation system.

Coal had not yet been sold outside of the county but it was being mined for local use. Beginning in the 1880s groups of investors started to purchase land in the county in order to exploit the timber and coal resources. It was known that there were deposits of coal four feet thick in Rockcastle Cove, southwest of Jamestown; thick layers of slate covered the coal. Seven miles east of Jamestown on Crooked Creek were coal deposits that had not been worked at all. Banks of coal were also known to exist near the East Fork and Buffalo Cove. Deposits of iron and limonite were also in the county, but none had been mined yet. Oil springs were located on the East Fork, about ten miles west of the county seat, and at the mouth of Poplar Creek Cove.

The county newspaper printed a column called "Oil Notes" during the 1890s. Bruno Gernt of Allardt, J.R. Storie of Jamestown, Blanchard and Alexander of Allardt and Byrdstown (in Pickett County), and L.C. Carlin of Jamestown and Findlay, Ohio advertised the sale of coal, oil, timber, and farm lands at this time. The first known oil and gas well was dug in 1896 in the Little Crab area; other wells were dug along the Obey in the early 1900s. However, it was not until later in the twentieth century that oil drilling as a business began. During the early 1920s Fentress County was the only county in the state that produced oil profitably for commercial use.

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Four mills were located on the Wolf River, near the "Tunnel Hill Place", which was named because a tunnel had been cut through a bend. One of the mills had a carding machine, while another mill on the Caney Creek employed a saw mill, grist mill, and wool-carding machine. Several tributaries and small streams (Indian Creek, Crab Creek, Poplar Cove, Rockcastle Creek) had mills but the water power was relatively weak or unreliable. Two carding machines and a cotton gin were in operation on these waters. Numerous household goods were produced from the mills.

It was not until the arrival of the railroads in the county during the early twentieth century that the principal industrial development occurred. An attempt was made in the mid-nineteenth century to mine coal and ship it by barge to Nashville, but the river was too low and had numerous obstructions. The Tennessee Central Railway was built in the county circa 1903, chiefly to support the emerging coal industry. The line extended from Monterrey in nearby Putnam County to the Crawford Coal Field in the southwest portion of Fentress County. This area was isolated by the deep gorge of the Obey River from much of the rest of the county, making it unfeasible to extend the line. Many areas of Middle Tennessee were closer by rail to the coal fields of northern Alabama and western Kentucky than to Fentress County.

The timber industry did not fully develop in the county, or the rest of the south, until after the Civil War. Outside investors financed many lumber operations in the south then, but in the Upper Cumberland valley, including Fentress County, the lumber industry was usually small scale and locally run. Farmers in the county would work in the lumber industry after their crops were in. If no mill had been set up in the lumber camp, river transportation was the often the only way to get the logs to the mills in Nashville. Logs were rafted down the river, resulting in communities developing at the confluence of the river tributaries and the rafting streams. Steamboats were also used for a while, but they were more dependent on the river level. By 1895, most of the larger sawmills in the region were out of business, while smaller mills, used for local consumption, still existed.

Timber was hauled by wagon over "unimproved" roads to the nearest rail lines or rafted down the Wolf and Obey Rivers. Beginning in 1913 the Oneida and Western Railroad, a branch of the Southern Railroad, arrived in the county, making transportation of goods to markets outside of Fentress easier. This thirty-eight mile line was intended primarily for use by the logging industry, although two mines were located along the eastern edge of

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the line by 1925. It was extended westward from Scott County in two stages, 1913 and 1930. Prior to this time lumber was hauled by wagon to the rail line at Glenmary in Scott County (twenty miles) or to Sunbright in Morgan County. As early as 1923, the president of the rail line agreed to erect a depot if the county would build a road from Jamestown to the railroad line. In 1930, when the line reached Jamestown, a frame railroad station was constructed there. By the 1930s, coal was usually shipped to Nashville on the Tennessee Central Railroad, through branch lines, to the mines. Approximately seventy-five percent of the lumber was shipped to Cincinnati and the eastern United States on the Oneida and Western Railroad, C.N.O., and T.P. Railroads.

Coal, lumbering, quarrying, and building stone were the central industries in Fentress County in the 1930s. Lumber, stave and cross-tie making, coal, quarried stone, and furniture making/mill work, respectively, were the principal industrial commodities in the 1930s. When industrial and agricultural goods were compared, lumbering and stave and cross-tie making were the second and third most important industries; coal mining was sixth; and stone quarrying and furniture were least important (ninth and tenth). Sandstone, some known as flagstone (similar to Crab Orchard sandstone in Cumberland County), was starting to be used for buildings in the twentieth century. Limestone deposits were crushed for paving roads but they were not used for building stone.

Between 1900 and 1950, one of the principal industries in Fentress County was lumbering, resulting in the establishment of mills and lumber yards. The Wheatons, Fred Fritzsche and Sons, Taubert Brothers, C.E. Ross and Sons, the Heins, Joe Youngs, Andrew Richards, and the Gernts were some of the individuals involved in the industry. Although hard woods for building material and staves were logged and sold, little was done to process hard woods for furniture or soft woods for pulp. Approximately eighty percent of Fentress County's area was covered with first or second growth timber, most of it second growth. Oak, pine, and poplar were the predominant woods. Hard woods were generally located in the northwestern section while pine was found on the plateau.

The North White Oak Creek Lumber and Mining camps were in operation beginning in the 1910s. The White Oak camps were comprised of several houses, a boarding house, and a school. Stearnes Coal and Lumber Company of Michigan owned a lot of land in the county and subcontracted with various companies to work the land. The Tennessee Stave and Lumber Company owned land west of Laurel Creek and had a mill at Verdun. There was a log dump located about three miles up the North White Oak Creek known as

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Zenith. Two stores, a boarding house, fifty houses, and a school were found here. Further west in the Darrow Ridge area was a logging camp known as Christian Camp. This was in existence from circa 1916 to 1921 and it had approximately thirty houses and a boarding house. Here logs were dumped over a hill into the water or hauled over a pole road. From 1918 to 1922 there was a mill and camp at Brier Point. Another camp, East Laurel, contained private houses and a boarding house and used the store in nearby Gernt, where the section crew lived. Most of these camps were gone by the late 1920s. In 1929 only a few families lived at White Oak.

During the 1930s B.D. Shapero's lumber mill employed seventy-five men and used a forty-five horsepower engine to produce 300,000 feet of lumber annually. It received electric power from the Tennessee Electric Power Company. A stave and heading mill employed seventy-five men to produce one million feet of staves per year. The Gernt Brothers Lumber Mill employed seventy-five men and sold one million feet of lumber annually. The company was begun in 1903 and continued until 1945. They also contracted with other mills to manufacture lumber. The Gernt's owned sixty percent of the virgin timber in Fentress County. Four portable sawmills, with fifteen to forty employees, were also operating in Fentress County during the 1930s.

The Agricultural-Industrial Survey for the county suggested that the building stone industry should be expanded to accommodate at least most of the building needs of the county, if not for outside markets. However, at the time of the survey J.P. Sloan's flagstone quarry was abandoned due to poor sales. A limestone crushing operation faced the same problem. Pulp and furniture factories were suggested to expand the use of much of the county timber. Additional coal could be mined if transportation were improved and extended to more areas in the county.

The first mine to open in Fentress County was the Wilder Mine in 1903. The Fentress Coal and Coke Company drilled five cores in 1907. The second mine was probably the Davidson mine in 1912 and the third mine was the circa 1913 Highland mine. Between 1900 and 1920 coal mining was an important major industry in the county as coal and coke became more in demand for use in the fuel industry and WWI munitions plants. A branch of the railroad went from Highland Junction, near Wilder, to Davidson and over to Twinton in Overton County.

The Fentress Coal and Coke Company mines (Negro Hill, Gooch No. 3) and the Buckeye mines of the Gooch Coal Company are all located within the county boundaries. Other mining companies had the mouth or part of the mines in Fentress County, but the main mining activity occurred in adjacent Overton

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County. Six mining companies were operating in 1925. East Laurel mining Company in Gernt worked the East Laurel and White Oak mines; Highland Coal and Lumber Company in Davidson worked the Highland No. 2 and Davidson mines; Gooch Coal Company in Davidson worked the Buckeye and Gooch No. 3 mines; Fentress Coal company in Wilder worked a mine; and Big Laurel Coal Company in Wilder worked the No. 2 mine. Notwithstanding being located in the Appalachian coal field, only one-half of the coal used in Tennessee came from mines located in the state and little coal was shipped out in the 1920s.

Three mines reported to the Department of Labor in 1930. The Davidson Mining Company operated the Highland mine in Davidson and mined 123,173 tons of coal annually. The Fentress Coal and Coke Company worked the Wilder Number Three and Number Four mines in Wilder, producing 265,238 tons. Sanders and Hargiss operated the Buckeye mine in Davidson and produced only 5,250 tons. The Patterson Brothers mine in Davidson employed thirty-five men and produced 6,000 tons of coal per month. One mine in Davidson owned by the Fentress Coal and Coke Company employed two hundred men, while a company-owned steam generating plant furnished power to the mines and the company town. One mine employed only a single miner to produce 1,000 tons of coal annually. The Zenith Coal Mine was owned by the Laxton Coal Company. It mined an average of twenty-five tons of coal per day.

The United Mine Workers initially organized a union local in the county during 1918-1919; they stayed until 1924. By 1931, when the miners' wages had been cut, the union local was re-organized. As a result of labor union disputes in 1932, the Wilder mines were completely closed for three months. They later partially re-opened using non-union labor. A railroad trestle was dynamited and state troopers were called into Wilder. The strike extended into 1933 and a union local president was slain that year. At this time, the mining company was going bankrupt and refused to arbitrate with the union. Because of their refusal to co-operate, the governor withdrew all state troopers from the area.

Because of this long miners' strike, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) arranged with the State Department of Labor and the United States Forestry Service to provide employment for the miners. The mines in Twinton and Crawford were permanently closed and the mines at Wilder and Davidson were being kept open by strike breakers hired by the company. Apparently the strike breakers' wages were not meeting NRA standards. The striking miners and their families were said to lack adequate diets, clothing, and medical attention. The Red Cross had provided assistance but it was not adequate.

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In 1933 sixty-one of the miners were sent to a CCC camp in LaFollette in Campbell County. They were housed in sixteen camps in the area and some worked on the Cumberland Homesteads (NR 9/30/88). Each man received \$25.00 per month, much of which went to the 350 dependents they left behind in Fentress County. Three men were hired to work on Norris Dam in Norris. Several men requested their stipends be shared with other striking miner's families who were not hired by TVA. One hundred and fifty miner's families still had no employment. The federal aid program did not provide as much help as hoped for, since it covered all of the Cumberland Plateau, not just the mining areas of Fentress County.

In 1937 the first mechanical mine in the county was put into operation. It was located at the Marlow Mine west of the White Oak mine. The Zenith mine operated until 1943. In 1940, 448 or 14.2% of the labor force was employed in mining, but by 1970 the percentage was down to .05%

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**F. Associated Property Types**

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I. Name of Property Type Residential Property Type

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

See continuation sheet

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See continuation sheet for additional property types

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Claudette Stager/Historic Preservation Specialist  
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of Fentress CountyASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

## RESIDENTIAL RESOURCES

## Description

The survey of Fentress County identified 490 properties, of which 414 were listed as having originally been single family residences. In view of the fact that the majority of surveyed properties were residences, the patterns of materials, forms, styles, etc. found in the survey can be utilized in describing the residential resources property type. Residential buildings in the county are usually frame with gable roofs, stone chimneys, and stone foundations. Some house foundations have been sheathed in metal pressed to resemble stone. The survey identified the primary style of all surveyed buildings as being "plain/traditional" (321 properties). A number of these are two story frame I-house forms that are sided with weatherboard and have front porches. Of all surveyed properties, 433 were of frame construction, 267 were sided with weatherboard, and 106 had synthetic siding.

A total of 408 buildings (all types) surveyed had gable roofs. The roofs were usually sheathed with metal (246) or asphalt (190), but the majority of these did not have their original roofing materials. There were 133 stone and seventy-nine brick chimneys, of which 132 were exterior end chimneys and 108 were interior chimneys. After stone (235), concrete block was the material preferred for foundations.

Typically, the only exterior embellishments on houses are found in the porch trim and this is infrequent. Porches are often one story (391), but two story full length porches were also surveyed. The survey found a total of 227 full porches, forty-six three-quarter porches, ninety-six one-bay porches, and thirty wrap-around porches. Porch piers of battered wood resting on stone or brick bases have been added to some nineteenth century residences and can also be found on many twentieth century residences. Dormers and wall dormers, often paired or tripled, are seen on numerous houses. Simple one or one and one-half story bungalow influenced residences, pyramidal roof cottages, and one story side-gabled houses are other residential forms commonly seen in the county.

In the twentieth century buildings constructed of locally quarried stone were erected in Fentress County. A number of these have bungalow characteristics in their roof form and porches, however there is no

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definitive style. Nineteen properties were identified in the survey as bungalows, while forty-two properties were identified as having Craftsman style.

Coal mining companies and lumber companies built several towns in Fentress County during the first part of the twentieth century. Few of these resources survive, and those that do survive have generally been altered. Reports as early as the 1930s characterized the miners' housing as poorly constructed. The extant residences in the towns are mainly one story frame buildings.

The majority of residential properties surveyed are located in rural settings. The survey identified 317 properties (all types) as being in "rural built up" areas and 173 in small towns. Residential property types fit this locational pattern.

The Fentress County survey indicated that most properties were built between 1920 and 1939 (301). The second largest concentration of buildings was erected between 1900 and 1919 (123). Forty-nine buildings were surveyed from 1880 to 1899 and only twelve buildings built prior to this time were surveyed.

Ten outbuildings were surveyed in the county. These consisted of one spring house, six barns, and three smokehouses.

#### Significance

Residential properties in Fentress County can be eligible under criteria A or C. Under criterion A the resources illustrate the settlement patterns, European ethnic heritage, community planning, and agricultural history of Fentress County. Settlement patterns in the county occurred with small communities surrounded by isolated farmsteads; only Jamestown and Allardt developed as incorporated towns. Therefore, a number of properties are expected to be eligible for their significance in the areas of settlement or agriculture.

Architecturally, eligible residences illustrate good examples of the forms and detailing found in the county. Except for the Hugo Gernt House, a pattern book example of Dutch Colonial Revival design, no "high style" designs were surveyed in Fentress County. All of the residences eligible under criterion C are expected to be notable for their local craftsmanship, form and proportions, and use of materials.

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The Bruno Gernt House and the Sgt. Alvin C. York House are already listed in the National Register for their association with important individuals. Additional research is needed to determine if there are any other properties significant under criterion B.

Outbuildings that are associated with eligible residences can be eligible if they are good representations of their type and if they fit into the period of significance of the main resource.

**Registration Requirements**

Eligible properties can be individual or located in historic districts. If they are located in districts, the districts may be entirely residential, or a mix of resource types. Properties that are significant under criterion A require a high degree of setting and association. Individually eligible properties should retain many of their exterior and interior features and be directly associated with the important events and areas of significance. Properties eligible under this criterion that are in districts should retain much of their exterior features and contribute to the historical development of the district.

Under criterion C, eligible properties must retain a large degree of design, materials, and workmanship. Since most residences in the county have few embellishments, the degree of form and craftsmanship is important. Additions are acceptable if they do not overwhelm the building and are not placed at the facade.

Residential resources that are eligible may have been constructed during any time covered in the context.

Four houses located in the county, a crossroads community that includes a residence and a commercial building (Forbus), and two districts in Allardt that include all property types are potentially eligible. National Register properties that include this property type are the Bruno Gernt House and the Sgt. York Historic Area (which includes York's NHL house.)

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## COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

### Description

The Fentress County survey noted twelve general retail stores, two banks, a service garage, a railroad depot, and one office building. A mill and car dealership are also located in the county.

Commercial buildings that are found outside of Jamestown are generally one or two story frame buildings covered in weatherboard. They have false fronts and/or, gable roofs. Some of the general stores were also used as post offices. Allardt contains an office building, general store, and automobile dealership that retain integrity. In the twentieth century, a large portion of downtown Jamestown was constructed using locally quarried sandstone. These commercial buildings have ashlar stone facades and are principally two stories in height. However, most have had substantial alterations.

### Significance

Commercial property types may be eligible under criteria A, B, and C. Under criterion A the buildings should be representative of the commercial and economic development of Jamestown or the crossroads communities in the county. Those buildings situated out in the county were commercial centers for small communities and/or the rural areas surrounding them. Buildings in Allardt depict the economic development of a small town in this section of the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee.

These resources are good examples of informal designs and/or the use of stone in Fentress County. Like the residential property type, their are no "high style" designs for commercial buildings in the county. Instead, those buildings that are eligible illustrate the use of materials and fine craftsmanship.

If there is a significant individual closely associated with a commercial building for a specific time period, the property may be eligible under criterion B.

### Registration Requirements

Commercial properties can be located in districts or individually eligible, whether they are eligible for criteria A or C. They can be eligible for any time frame covered in the contexts, but most will be post-1900.

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Commercial properties are expected to have local significance. Commercial properties that are located in rural areas are likely to be found in districts that are a mix of property types.

Because of their nature as retail buildings, most are expected to have some storefront alterations. If these alterations do not obscure the original form and workmanship of the building, it can be eligible. The interior integrity is considered important for rural or small town commercial building that are individually eligible. The insides of these buildings should retain sufficient design and/or material to reflect their original use. In addition, it is critical that the setting of eligible general stores should still depict their rural crossroads nature.

Registration requirements under criterion A are that the building must have been used primarily as a commercial establishment throughout its period of significance.

An office, store, and car dealership in Allardt and a general store in Forbus are considered eligible individually or as parts of districts. The Sgt. York Historic Area contains a mill.

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of Fentress County**COMMUNITY RESOURCES****Description**

Eleven churches, eight schools, one courthouse, and a post office were surveyed in Fentress County. In addition, the Old Fentress County Jail (NR 5/24/84) and the schools in the Sgt. York Historic Area, Jamestown, Davidson, and Allardt Historic District are included in this property type, as is the church in Allardt.

This property type is linked more by its associative characteristics than by its physical characteristics. Like most properties in the county, these resources are generally one or two story frame buildings. All of them are in some way associated with the educational, civic, religious, or industrial history of the county during the time period covered in the contexts. They represent important areas of the historical development in Fentress County.

**Significance**

Community property types may be eligible under criteria A and C. The majority of eligible resources under criterion A are expected to be significant in the area of education. The schools are the best representations of the development of education in rural areas and small towns in Fentress County. Some are expected to be eligible in the areas of settlement and industry. The property type may also be eligible under criterion C because it represents a good example of a particular type of building in the county. The period of significance can be any time covered in the contexts. While most of these properties will have local significance, the York Agricultural Institute historic district may have statewide significance. (The Sgt. York Historic Area contains a school building and it listed for its national significance.)

**Registration Requirements**

Community resources, like the other two property types, can be located in districts or individually eligible. Those that are situated in districts generally represent an integral aspect of the districts history. In one instance, the York school buildings in Jamestown, the district is comprised only of educational buildings. A school is part of the district in Allardt, while the church in Allardt is individually eligible. The

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Davidson School is a property that is individually eligible because of its association with a coal town. Community resources should retain a great deal of their exterior integrity of materials and workmanship whether they are in a district or individually eligible.

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of Fentress CountySUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

Fentress County was surveyed between 1982 and 1984 by the Upper Cumberland Humanities and Social Studies Institute of Tennessee Technical University in Cookeville. The survey was completed utilizing matching grants from the Tennessee Historical Commission. Prior to beginning fieldwork, announcements about the survey were placed in the newspaper and aired on the radio. The county historian, Chamber of Commerce, and County Executive were consulted.

Survey forms were completed for 490 properties. Teams of two students filled out survey forms and took two black and white photographs and one slide for each surveyed property. A graduate student served as office and field supervisor. Approximately 200 properties were inventoried during 1982-1983. The remainder of the survey was completed under a second grant. Due to a high rate of turn over in survey personnel, additional training sessions and more quality control were utilized during the second phase of the survey. A brief survey report covering settlement patterns and architecture in the county was completed at the end of the second phase.

In 1987 the SHPO re-surveyed properties that the survey report had considered potentially eligible and began the preparation of a multiple property nomination. Computerized survey data was used in the preparation of the property type descriptions. This data was especially helpful for the residential property type, since the majority of properties inventoried were single family residences. However, because older, non-computer survey forms were used and because not all sections of the survey forms were completed by all surveyors, the survey figures must be considered approximate.

Property types were chosen to be broad enough to cover all expected resources, without having to use overlapping information for significance statements and registration requirements. In most instances, the associative features, rather than the physical features, provide the common link between resources grouped within a property type.

The survey did not include land in Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. Historic and pre-historic archaeological resources were not included in the survey. In view of the fact that there are few extant or unaltered resources associated with the coal or lumber industries, there may be a potential for historic archaeological resources in these areas. Also the survey did not require that outbuildings be inventoried, so it was not possible to formulate a property type for outbuildings.

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