

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Coal House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 2nd Avenue & Court Street not for publication

city, town Williamson vicinity of congressional district Fourth

state West Virginia code 54 county Mingo code 059

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce

street & number 2nd Avenue & Court Street

city, town Williamson vicinity of state West Virginia 25661

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mingo County Court House

street & number Court Street

city, town Williamson state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☒ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Coal House in Williamson, Mingo County, West Virginia, is a unique structure, built entirely of coal.

Constructed in 1933, this one-story rectangular building was constructed under the supervision of H.T. Hicks, an architect from Welch, West Virginia, and Associate Architect D.M. Goode, a local Williamson merchant. Sixty-five tons of Bituminous Coal, mined from the nearby Winifrede Seam, were utilized in the construction of the Coal House.

The coal was cut into random size blocks and laid in random range. The outside surfaces are remarkably intact, due largely to coats of weatherproofing varnish applied periodically to protect the coal masonry from deterioration.

All of the openings in the building, windows and the main entrance, are arched. The front elevation portal is a round compound arch, made up of voussoirs of coal.

The colossal entrance portal is flanked by two corner buttresses, or psuedo-pilasters. The entrance door itself is a large double door surmounted by a large fanlight and flanked by sidelights.

The entire building rests on masonry blocks, set on concrete footing. The walls of the Coal House are capped with stone coping.

The interior of the Coal House has been re-modeled several times, and today consists of walnut paneling, wall to wall carpet, and a plush, modernistic red decor that contrasts well with the black exterior of the building.

Located on Court House Square, the Coal House occupies one of Williamson's most prominent places, both in physical setting and in the minds of this community.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600-1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800-1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☒ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1933 Builder/Architect H.T. Hicks, Architect, and D.M. Goode, Associate Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Coal House, located in Williamson, Mingo County, West Virginia, is a building significant as one of only two such structures in the state, and is of exceptional importance as a symbol of the dominant economic activity of this region of West Virginia.¹ It is also significant for its association with several figures of historical significance in West Virginia,² and as a source of overwhelming community pride.

Explanatory Notes

¹ Since the late Nineteenth Century, the mining of coal has been the dominant economic activity of West Virginia, the source of West Virginia's periods of economic prosperity and recession, her pride and her tragedies. This has been especially true in the region of southern West Virginia where coal mining has been practically the only economic activity of any significance (excepting timbering, which is largely mine-related) since the 1890's.

In 1931 O.W. Evans, Manager of the Norfolk & Western Railroad's Fuel Department in Williamson, hit upon the idea of building a structure entirely of coal in order to symbolize the dominance of coal in the region and Williamson's claim to be "the Heart of the Billion Dollar Coal Field." Mr. Evans organized a campaign which eventually bore fruit with the completion of the Coal House in 1933, constructed under the supervision of Welch architect H.T. Hicks from 65 tons of Bituminous coal mined in the local area and donated by coal companies. At the time of its construction it was the only structure built of coal in West Virginia. Since that time, another "coal house" was built in Lewisburg, Greenbrier County (1959) using 30 tons of coal and designed as a private residence. The Coal House in Williamson, housing the Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce, stands on a lot immediately adjacent to the Mingo County Court House, symbolizing the vital link between the coal industry and the life of Mingo County.

When Mr. O.W. Evans conceived the Coal House project, it was evident that if the project was ever to come to fruition it would have to have the support of individuals prominent in Mingo County public life. Two of the individuals whom Evans turned to for support, and who immediately gave him assistance, were Wells Goodykoontz and M.Z. White. Their aid was instrumental in rounding up support for the project among other community leaders, and their names appear prominently upon a bronze plaque attached to the Coal House wall.

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Wells Goodykoontz (1872-1944) was a prominent attorney and West Virginia politician. President of the W. Va. Bar Association in 1917-18, Goodykoontz served in the W. Va. House of Delegates from 1911 to 1913 and in the West Virginia Senate, 1915-1919 where he rose to become first Majority Leader (1916) and then (1917) President of the Senate. In 1918 he was elected to the U. S. House of Representatives from West Virginia's 5th Congressional District. Re-elected in 1920, Goodykoontz was defeated for a third term in Congress in 1922. In 1924 he sought election to the U. S. Senate from W. Va., but lost in the Republican primary to Gay D. Goff, though receiving a respectable 19.7% of the vote. He later served on the W. Va. Tax Commission (1925-28) before returning to the private practice of law.

M. Z. White (1872-1945) began his public career humbly enough, serving as Justice of the Peace for Thacker, in Mingo County, from 1896 to 1900. In 1901 White was elected Mayor of Williamson and was re-elected to three one year terms, serving until 1905. He then saw five years of service on the Mingo County Court (1905-10) before being elected to the W. Va. Senate in 1910. Warden of the State Penitentiary from 1913 to 1918, White was vice president of the 1st National Bank of Williamson from 1918 until his second election to the W. Va. Senate in 1922. M. Z. White served in the Senate from 1923 to 1935, and from 1925 until 1931, losing in the Republican primary to T. C. Townsend, though receiving 29.3% of the vote that was split among five candidates. M. Z. White served as President of the 1st National Bank of Williamson from 1935 until his death.

3. From the outset of the Coal House project, the people of Williamson gave it their enthusiastic support. Local coal companies donated coal, local business leaders put up money and materials and, in this time of economic depression, workers donated their time and labor. An unusual aspect of the building, and one that sets it apart from most public buildings in West Virginia, is the bronze plaque on the Coal House that not only lists the architects and major sponsors, but names every local company, businessman, mason, carpenter and laborer who worked on the building. The Coal House was truly a community effort as few public buildings are, and is today the major object of interest and community pride in Mingo County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Oral Interview with Frank DeMartino," September 1, 1979
Charleston Daily Mail, July 28, 1961
Mingo County Clipping File, W. Va. State Archives, Charleston, W. Va.
Williamson Daily News, April 5, 1940

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 City Lot

Quadrangle name Williamson; W.Va. & Ky.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7
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 Zone

3	8	7
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 Easting

3	0	0
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 Northing

4	1	6	9	9	8	0
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B

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

C

--	--

 Zone

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 Easting

--	--	--

 Northing

D

--	--

 Zone

--	--	--

 Easting

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 Northing

E

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

F

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

G

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

H

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 Zone

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 Easting

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 Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Coal House is located on one (1) city lot, Lot #25, of Block #8, at the southern corner of Court Street and Second Avenue, in the City of Williamson, Mingo County, West Virginia.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael J. Pauley, Historian

Historic Preservation Unit

organization W. Va. Dept. of Culture & History

date December 10, 1979

Science & Cultural Center

street & number Capitol Complex

telephone (304) 348-0244

city or town Charleston

state West Virginia

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Carroll M. Worrell

title Director, State Historic Preservation Office

date December 10, 1979

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Huntington Herald Dispatch, May 19, 1977

Atkinson, George W. and Gibbons, Alvaro J., Prominent Men of West Virginia,
Wheeling, W. Va., 1928, c. 1890

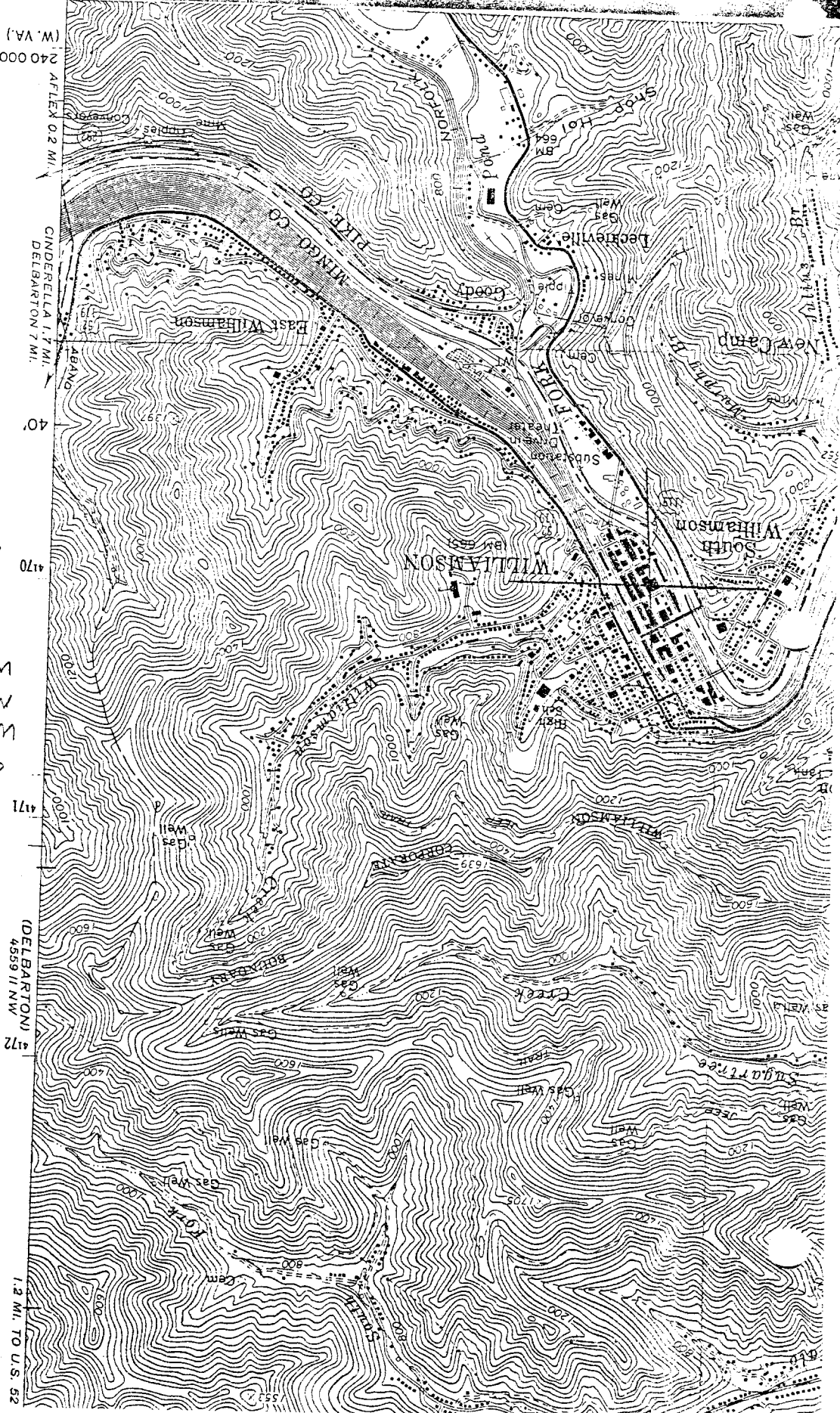
Ross, William, West Virginia Political Almanac, Morgantown, W. Va., 1958

COAL HOUSE
COURT STREET
G. F. SECOND AVENUE
WILLIAMSON,
MINGO COUNTY,
WEST VIRGINIA

UTM

17/387300/4169780

240 000 FEET
(W. VA.)



TUG VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

