

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration Building

other names/site number Western Maryland Railway Engineering Building; Old Western Maryland Railroad Office

2. Location

street & number 570 Douglas Road ☐ not for publication

city or town Thomas ☐ vicinity

state West Virginia code WV county Tucker code 093 zip code 26292

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

West Virginia 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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the

National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the

National Register.

☐ removed from the National

Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Davis Coal & Coke Company

Administration Building

Name of Property

Tucker County, West Virginia

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Total

Name of related multiple property listing

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

COMMERCE/business, office building

Current Functions

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

No style

Materials

foundation STONE/Sandstone

walls BRICK

roof STONE/Slate

other WOOD; CONCRETE

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheets

Davis Coal & Coke Company
Administration Building

Name of Property

Tucker County, West Virginia

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ **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

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B.** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance: See Continuation sheets

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance

Industry

Commerce

Period of Significance

1900-1950

Significant Dates

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Record # _____

Davis Coal & Coke Company
Administration Building

Name of Property

Tucker County, West Virginia

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.36 acres

UTM References

1 17 629097 4333611
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See Continuation Sheets

Boundary Justification

See Continuation Sheets

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Caplinger, Historian, and Cynthia A. Phillips, Secretary, TCHLC
organization Tucker County Historic Landmark Commission (TCHLC) date March 2011
street & number 215 First Street telephone 304.478.2866
city or town Parsons state WV zip code 26287

Property Owner

name City of Thomas, WV
street & number City Hall, Spruce Street telephone 304.463.4360
city or town Thomas state WV zip code 26292

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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LOCATION and SETTING

The Davis Coal and Coke Company (DC&C) Administration Building is located in Tucker County, West Virginia, along the North Fork of the Blackwater River, in the city of Thomas, about one-half mile southeast of the town's center. It sits on a moderately sloping parcel of 0.36 acre, just a few feet within the western boundary corner of the original city limits, in a small neighborhood consisting mostly of former workers' housing and numerous open lots. Directly to the building's south is Front Street – the only road directly adjacent to the property. Front Street (County Route 27) passes east-to-west in front of the building's south facade before curving northwest to also pass the west facade. This portion of the road forms part of a "turning circle," between the building's west side and the larger Buxton and Landstreet Company (B&L) store across the street. The road proceeds away from the structures and continues down the hillside toward the small "suburbs" of Coketon and Douglas. To the building's north (and 30 feet down a grassy hill) is the abandoned "Davis Branch" railroad grade of the West Virginia Central and Pittsburg Railroad (later the Western Maryland Railway); to the east is an open grass-and-gravel lot. Just outside of the building foundation's northwest corner is a U.S. Geological Survey benchmark dated 1903, and identifying the elevation as 2986 feet.

The general viewshed around the building encompasses this portion of the North Fork of the Blackwater River Valley, and is as follows: approximately 0.25 mile to the north, past a line of homes and then across the valley to its northern ridgetop; 0.75 mile northeast to Thomas's downtown; to the east about 0.25 mile along Front Street and its adjacent homes; to the south, less than 150 feet up the small valley's sharp, forested hillside with homes and the entrance of another street to the turning circle; 100 feet to the west, the B&L building and side parking lots. Along with the a speckling of houses, the B&L building, the road and river, etc., the overall area is forested with both coniferous and deciduous trees, some quite large, as well as smaller shrubbery and overgrowth. The numerous industrial facilities which once buzzed with activity within the viewshed have been reduced by decay or demolition to minimal visibility.

DESCRIPTION

The DC&C Administration Building, built in 1900, has been unoccupied and dormant since about 1982.¹ It is a two-story, red-brick building (with a third-story created in the attic area), rectangular in plan (approximately 40 feet by 70 feet) with its long axis on a north-south line. Facades contain window openings on all sides, false windows on two sides, and doors on three sides. Although in 2008 the building's roofing and windows were

¹ When the DC&C Administration Building came under city ownership, a considerable amount of historical documents, books, ledgers, maps, engineering drawings, magazines, office supplies, and general ephemera remained. These are still stored in portions of the building. The year ca. 1982 marked some of the last dated material found sent to the building, and coincides with the abandonment of the rail lines in this area. However, some random materials have been stored here as well since 1982.

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repaired (under ownership of the City of Thomas), no other known repairs have occurred since its abandonment. It is in relatively good condition considering its age, but the interior has been damaged in some spots along the west facade by water leaks prior to repairs, and there are floor problems in a few first-floor offices.

The building sits on a sandstone-masonry foundation. The ground surface, starting at street grade on the south side, slopes downhill (north) and gradually exposes the foundation stonework. The north foundation is fully exposed a height of about 5 feet. Overall, the building retains a high level of integrity in relation to the first half of the twentieth century.

Facades²

An addition to the building ca. 1903 extended the southern portion approximately 20 feet, changing both plan and elevation view from the original 1900 construction. In appearance, the original building was more square-shaped and the main elevation (west) was symmetrical. In the original form, the west facade was more easily identified as the primary facade, with the main entrance (still existing) exactly centered in the first-story level. Directly centered above the main door was the second-level's arched window, and at the roof level a dormer enhanced the building's central verticality (see Photo Section, page 19, photo 2). A small window for the basement is located in the west foundation as it nears the fully exposed north foundation. The west facade faces the B&L building, and considering the curve in the road and the relationship of the two buildings, it was the natural main elevation. The building's south facade sat back from Front Street about 20 feet in 1900.

The north elevation is recessed back approximately two feet for one-third of its length. On this façade, there are two doors at the exposed basement level; one situated within the recessed section. At the center of this facade, an exterior brick chimney is outset approximately one foot and extends through the roofline, with the top few feet of the chimney missing. The north (and likely south) facade, even in 1903, had a matching brick "false window" to maintain the window opening pattern but shield large vaults inside the building (both described in more detail below).

The ca. 1903 addition to the south portion of the building forced the design to take on a more horizontal, rectangular, and asymmetrical appearance (see photo 7). The window layout across the southern one-third of the building (the ca. 1903 addition) used a different window spacing pattern, especially in the west facade.

² There are no known photographs or drawings of the original building prior to the addition.

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The addition left the main entry no longer visually centered in the west facade. A larger dormer (likely a new feature, previously not part of the original roof design) was also added to the roof's extended south section, facing Front Street, which helped make this portion of the building visually dominant. The north facade and roof line was not altered.

The east (or rear) façade lacked symmetry even prior to the 1903 addition. The second-story window openings exhibit a horizontal brick lintel (similar to the first story) instead of brick arches. There are not even "false windows" on this side in an attempt to maintain a window opening pattern similar to the other facades. However, the east facade provided considerable light into the interior stairwell, which likely ranked high in the reasoning for one window's odd location. Another reason for a lack of concern over this facade's appearance may have been the existence of the company's chemical laboratory building about 30-feet east, sitting parallel to the DC&C building, which designers may have thought would place the east façade mostly out of public view. Indeed, all known historic photos of the DC&C building are looking toward the west, south, or north facades. After the ca. 1903 addition, during which no windows at all were added to the east facade, it reflected a more "form-follows-function" design.

This ca. 1903 addition is also made evident by a slight difference in brick color to a lighter red, discernable at the starting point of the addition, and an overhang on the south facade (both described in more detail below). Although just one-third of the building's overall size, the addition likely nearly doubled the usable interior work and storage space (especially in the two new vaults added), as no additional stairwells, hallways or entries were added. The third floor/attic area usable space was nearly tripled.

Roof, Dormers, and South Overhang

The roof is hipped augmented by "secondary" dormer windows in the east and west pitches, and a larger "primary" dormer (added ca. 1903) on the south pitch (see photo 9). Each dormer holds three smaller windows. Those windows on the south side dormer differ from the other dormers with wider spacing, and the dormer extends across a majority of the roofline, helping make this appear as the main elevation of the building when viewed from the south and east. Since original construction, there have been at least three generations of roof. The original (1900, and added to ca. 1903) had a raised peak line and slate shingles, however with clear differences (in historic photos) between the original and ca. 1903 added sections. A second-generation roof covering (ca. 1930) did away with the sectional differences and raised peak, while a dentil trim was added around the roof's base. By the 1990s, the roof covering had substantially deteriorated. The damaged roofing material and dentil trim were replaced in 2008 (topped with a faux-slate shingle type of historical appearance) and new downspouts installed.

The building's south side adjacent to Front Street has an overhanging roof, likewise re-shingled and braces painted in 2008. This overhang is mounted to the south wall between the first and second floor and runs the

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entire width of this facade. This is, in style, reminiscent of early twentieth century railroad depot overhangs via the use of exposed chamfered wooden bracing beams. Photos show that the overhang was added some years after ca. 1903-1909. Although the exact date is unknown, it was probably in place by ca. 1920. Like the oversized dormer above this portion of the building, the overhang added to the appearance that this was the front of the building, even though there is no entry door in this side.

Brickwork and Foundation

The structural brickwork is a standard-size fired brick in a common bond pattern, with a header course (bricks laid sideways) running between every five stretcher courses. The walls are two rows thick. A few structural/architectural amenities are included in the brickwork. The vertical/angled lintel bricks (two bricks in height) above each first-floor window meet at a central "v" (see photo 10). Over the second-floor windows (except in the east facade) are brick-arch lintels created with two arching courses of bricks laid sideways like header courses. The building includes three brick "false windows"; two in the south facade, one to the north facade. The window opening sills are a natural white cut stone, except for the false windows which have no sills (as constructed). The west-facade brickwork shows signs of water damage and eroded mortar. Other than the slightly different color of the brickwork of the ca. 1903 addition, the addition's brickwork is tied almost seamlessly to the older brickwork with an exact common-bond interlock up the sides of the building. In some areas are the remains of metal pipes passing through the brickwork, or other minor metal features relating to power supply or unknown use.

The foundation is small- to medium-size sandstone blocks with a rock-face finish and thin mortar bond. In the basement (about 6 feet from floor to ceiling) which exists only under the building's northern portion, it appears that the foundation is two rows thick, with the inner row a mix of bricks and rougher-cut sandstone. Also, an east-to-west stone wall in the basement splits the basement into two areas, and supports the first-level floor beneath the main hallway.

Facade Windows

In total, forty-four window openings pierce the building's facades.³ The first-floor windows are all rectangular and most of similar, standard size. Nearly all are double-hung, one-over-one-pane windows. The

³ On the first floor: sixteen rectangular double-hung, one-over-one-pane windows; two rectangular false windows (north and south facades); one square single-pane window in the east facade for stairwell light; and two over-door transoms (east and west facades). The second floor: fourteen arched one-over-one-pane, double-hung windows on the north/south/west facades, along with four rectangular windows only in the east facade; and one false arched window (south facade). In the roof dormers: three rectangular one-over-one, single-pane, double-hung windows in each of the three dormer units. Two windows in the east facade are different than all others: the square, single-pane window for stairwell light, and on the second-floor, a uniquely [cont. next page]

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second-story windows are mostly single-hung, one-over-one pane with the top pane arched in shape to meet the lintel framing.

While numerous window openings were important for light and ventilation in the building, their placement was limited due to the building's five interior safes, or rather, walk-in vaults. The vaults located inside the building's eastern portion are structurally tied into the brick walls. While three are original, the two largest were also part of the ca. 1903 addition. Thus, in three places, where a standard window should otherwise exist, "false" windows were created by bricks set back about three inches into the facade, mimicking the size and shape of the real window openings. There are two false windows in the south facade, one on each the first and second floor (and part of the ca. 1903 addition); and, one on the north facade's first floor (original). On the east facade no real or false windows were located where the vaults lay behind the wall, leaving the addition's portion of that facade featureless.

Entry Doorways

The main entry is in the west elevation. Three concrete steps lead up to a concrete pad at the entrance of wooden double doors topped by a two-pane transom. These doors each have a single-glass upper panel over two wooden lower panels. A wooden bracket mounted on the brickwork over the door likely held a post-1950 small overhang, now missing. Another smaller, single-door entry (with transom) is on the east side, partially extended down into the foundation level, and still covered with protective plywood. The only other entries are through the exposed foundation level of the north facade, where two small wooden doors provide access to the basement. All the entry doors appear original.

Interior

The building's interior consists of sixteen general rooms, two bathrooms, five steel walk-in vaults, and a small basement. The first floor likely handled the payroll, accounting, and employee management offices, staffed with secretaries, stenographers, accountants, and lower-level managers. The second floor was largely dedicated to the engineering department, draughtsmen and likely the district DC&C leadership for much of the company's existence. These two floors with a multitude of features are where most activity occurred and where the most important structural components and materials remain. The third floor, mostly hidden on the exterior by the hip roof, is actually three rooms (all with sloping ceilings): the stairwell entry area under the west dormer; a mid-sized room (possibly a washroom) within the east dormer; and a larger, oblong storage

larger opening with a two-over-two-pane, double-hung window. In the foundation of the west facade is a single six-over-six-pane, double-hung window, also unique to the building, currently covered with plywood.

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area which ends in the south facade's dormer. There are also three very small wooden doors on this level which allow restricted entry into low attic spaces along the roof's east/west/north edges.

There are hardwood floors throughout most of the building. Nearly all doorways within the building are wooden and topped with single-pane transoms. Most walls are covered by plaster over wooden slats (lathe and plaster). The remaining wall and moulding paints throughout the building are generally a blue/green or white for the walls, and versions of brown for all mouldings and wainscoting. The first and second floors have approximately 10-foot-high ceilings, covered mostly with wooden panels, most ornately represented in the main hallway.

Steam radiators of various sizes remain in all rooms, along with the steam piping. From the ceilings throughout the building hang a mix of ca. 1920-1940 lamps and ca. 1970 fluorescent lights. There are few electrical outlets (denoting the building's age prior to electronic office machinery), and some light switches are of the early-twentieth-century dual push-button style. At least one interior wall on each of the upper floors has a set of small-pane windows to allow more light into the other rooms. There is phone and electric wiring in many rooms dating to various periods, along with assorted circuit boxes which may have related to more than just this building.

Other items exist still in the structure, such as a ca. 1970s water fountain and wall-mounted cup holder on the second-floor landing.

Interior Details

Once inside the first floor via the main doorway in the west facade, one enters a broad west-east hallway (with office entries along each side) leading to stairs at the eastern end. The first-floor hallway is the only hallway in the building, and so was no-doubt the area of most employee and visitor traffic. This hallway allows entry into the first floor's seven office spaces, and access to three steel vaults along the building's eastern section. Two of the vaults are lesser size and date to the original building, while the southern-most is larger, and dates to the ca. 1903 addition. The hallway includes a "greeting/pay window" area (to the north, immediately inside the main door) with bank-like transaction windows (see photo 11). Indeed, the "greeting/pay window" feature of the hallway is most striking, and visible immediately upon entering the building. The two wooden countertops are supported by curved brackets, and single-pane single-hung windows (which lift up into the wall) are located just above the countertops. On the wall across from the counters, an outline of a large sign remains.

At the east end of the first-floor hallway, the stairwell leads either down to the basement or up to the second and third floors.

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Down the stairs is a mid-level landing with a single wooden-door entry (with transom) in the east facade/foundation at ground level (the door is currently boarded shut). A restroom off the landing has one of the east facade windows. Like the other restroom in the building, this restroom has basic early to mid-twentieth-century bathroom features (likely not original). This stairwell reverses at the landing and continues down a short distance to the basement which is the location of the furnace for the steam heating system (along with a ca. 1970s water heater) and miscellaneous pipes, wiring, tools, supplies, and general clutter. The basement floor is mostly poured concrete.

The stairs leading upwards from the first-floor hallway, after reversing direction at a mid-level landing, continue upwards to the west for two floors without a change in direction. Only the second-floor landing, small in size, interrupts its continued climb toward the third floor. The stairwell (including risers, treads, the banister, decorated balusters, etc.) is wooden, with solid wooden railings and square-section balusters and box newels (see photo 15). Where walls accompany both sides of the stairwell above the first landing, tongue-and-groove walls follow the stair's incline. Up the stairs from the first floor, wooden handrail is on one side, wooden "rake" type moulding on the opposite wall above the wainscoting. At the second-floor landing is a unique recessed carved knob, the only one like it in the building (see photo 17).

On the second floor are six offices, a bathroom, and two walk-in vaults. Wall modifications exist in some areas. In particular, the use of ca. 1970s wood paneling forming the southwest corner office indicate the office was originally open space combined with the larger draughting area (see photo 18). Other minor modifications exist, for instance a door has been "walled in" between two offices, leaving the door frame intact. Some interior walls appear to be later-manufactured material replacing original plaster. Some of the walls are enhanced with curved corners. The east wall of the draughting room is dominated by the vaults. Also in the central draughting room, features such as marks on the floor locate the spot of now-missing draughting tables, and a wooden panel on the wall show indications that dozens of drawing tools (or drawing templates) hung there for many years.

The third floor holds only two rooms aside from the stairwell entry area, all with sloped ceilings due to the roof just overhead (see photo 34). In the stairwell entry area in the west dormer, the stair opening is surrounded on three sides by balusters and four box newels.

The building's steel safes are particularly significant. "Davis Coal and Coke Co." is ornately painted on the doors or door frames (see photo 20). The vaults are in good condition and upon closer inspection visually rewarding, for instance "York Safe & Lock Co. York, Pa.", the vault's maker, is painted inside the door of one upstairs vault, and the lock itself is marked "Sargent & Greenleaf, Rochester, N.Y."; both names of prominent high-security lock companies of the time (and still in existence). They are fireproof and blast proof, with secondary folding steel doors, as they were meant to protect not just money, but other materials of the highest value to the company. The first-floor vaults likely held money (and company scrip), employee

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records, and general documents. On the second floor the vaults held engineering and surveying-related materials. Inside they hold custom wooden shelving units for various materials, including large maps, blueprints, drawings, and small surveyor's books. The three vaults dating to the original building are smaller than the two added with the building's southern addition. The second floor vaults are directly over two of the first floor vaults.

Walls, Floors, Mouldings, and Doors

Overall, the interior walls are mostly lathe and plaster mounted to the brickwork or wooden framework. The plaster coverings are most seriously degraded along the west facade wall, where water leaks from the roof (until repaired in 2008) had damaged or destroyed the material leaving the brick exposed.

Floors are nearly all wooden tongue and groove, very darkly stained and worn, and in places marked by former desk locations. Portions of the floor in the downstairs area offices, especially in the area of the ca. 1903 additions, have collapsed primarily due to extreme weight of materials stored here in the last years prior to city ownership.

The walls throughout the building (except limited altered portions) exhibit simple wooden features: floor baseboard mouldings, tongue-and-groove wainscoting topped by a rake rail (or chair rail) moulding, while some 5-feet above the chair rail is another molding piece which varies in style throughout the building (see photo 30). Smaller custom-built shelves, storage units, and cabinets are located in some offices, and one second-floor office has a closet insert below the stairway. The second-floor southeast office has an especially large storage cabinet in one wall. There are curved wall corners at a few locations, one of the few truly aesthetic additions.

Window and door casings vary little, exhibiting simple moulding design with Rosette corner pieces. An exception are the arched windows on the second floor, which have arched moulding with no corner pieces.

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STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE

The Davis Coal & Coke Company (DC&C) Administration Building in Thomas, West Virginia is locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: Commerce and Industry for its significant role in the commercial and industrial history of Thomas and the surrounding area. The period of significance begins in 1900, when the building was constructed, and ends in 1950 when the company was dissolved.

The building was the "field operating office" or "mining headquarters" (among various general names) for the DC&C mines from 1900 until the company's closure in 1950. It was the main office especially for the local mines around Thomas, Coketon, Benbush, Pierce, and Kempton. Beginning in the 1880s the DC&C and its "parent" company, the West Virginia Central and Pittsburg Railway (WVC&P), were the impetus for, and a dominant, continuous presence behind dozens of towns in the region. The companies were the result of Henry Gassaway Davis' (and his brother, Thomas Beall Davis') business and political success in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In the railroad's wake, the towns, coal mines, logging, and related industries prospered for decades. Although owned by other business interests after 1902, the company never gave up the "Davis Coal and Coke" name and the Davis family retained some influence for many years. The DC&C company was dissolved in 1950, but the building continued in use by the corporate owners, the Western Maryland Railway (and its subsequent owner as well), until ca. 1982. In remaining an active office and storage place for company materials, the building helped preserve a large amount of historic documents and materials related to the region's history. The building itself played a long-term role in local employment, as dozens of local residents worked in the DC&C building (alongside more transient supervisors and managers) during its period of significance. During this period, untold numbers of employees (of all levels), local citizens, politicians, businessmen, salesmen, and company luminaries passed through this building in their dealings with DC&C. The building maintains a high-level of integrity relating to this period and is a unique remaining representative of the region's industrial and commercial history.

HISTORY

Henry Gassaway Davis and the Davis Coal and Coke Company

Henry Gassaway Davis (b.1823 - d.1916) was one of West Virginia's most prominent politicians and industrialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The DC&C Building was constructed during the pinnacle of Davis' ownership of the company. Beginning his stellar career as a brakeman during the 1840s on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O), Davis became a station agent at Piedmont, West Virginia, when the B&O reached there in 1851. Soon thereafter, he advanced to a train conductor for the B&O, then

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superintendent of the important Piedmont Roundhouse and Shop complex. Davis acquired a large sum of money through marriage and left the B&O after 14 years, entering the mercantile and banking businesses with his brother, Thomas Beall Davis (the firm was named H.G. Davis & Brother), prior to the Civil War. While remaining based at Piedmont, he explored on foot and horseback the still-wild mountainous regions southwest of Piedmont which he later developed. He learned a great deal about the geography and geology of the region, and the location of major coal outcrops. Davis also knew the North Branch of the Potomac was a natural railroad route into the region. It was reconnoitered and considered by the B&O as a possible route for its mainline as early as 1836, although in 1850 the B&O had chosen a route that passed the area about 20 miles north and through Oakland, Maryland. During the Civil War, Davis put his railroad plans temporarily on hold, sided with the North, and vastly increased his fortune by selling supplies.

Seeing the golden opportunity to tap the region's natural resources, Davis continued buying land and planning the railroad and mining enterprises. In 1866, Davis chartered and was made president of the WVC&P, although it remained little more than a "paper railroad" for many years. Again putting the enterprise on hold, Davis entered politics in 1871 and became the first Democrat party Senator elected from West Virginia, holding the office through three elections.⁴ In the meantime, Davis, his brother Thomas, and new business partner Stephen B. Elkins (the firm eventually became Davis, Brother & Elkins) started buying tracts of land in Mineral, Grant, Tucker, and Randolph Counties. These included the locations of the later town of Thomas where the DC&C Building would be constructed. However, construction of the railroad and first mine on the line didn't begin until 1882 with the financial help of political and business contacts made while Davis was in the U.S. Senate. The first goal was near Piedmont, the Elk Garden coal field, but overall the target was the entire "Upper Potomac Coal Field."

With immediate success opening mines around Elk Garden, investors helped continue the line on up the Potomac watershed, creating towns all along the way named after Davis' colleagues and investors he had gained (Harrison, Blaine, Bayard, etc.). After crossing the Eastern Continental Divide and entering the Ohio River watershed via the North Fork of the Blackwater River near Fairfax Stone, the WVC&P was completed to the new town of Thomas (named after Thomas Davis) in 1884, where Davis already had opened a mine in preparation for development. That same year the railroad was terminated at the equally new town of Davis (named after Davis himself) just three miles away from Thomas. The mining interests of the railroad were brought together under the "Davis Coal and Coke Company" in 1886, primarily owned and operated by Davis, his brother Thomas, and Stephen B. Elkins, Davis' business partner (and son-in-law).

In 1888, the railroad was continued from Thomas, following the Blackwater Canyon to the county seat of Parsons, and from there on to Elkins (Randolph County) about 25 miles to the southwest. This left the town

⁴ Charles Pepper, *The Life and Times of Henry Gassaway Davis, 1823-1916* (New York: The Century Company, 1920).

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of Davis the terminus of a branch line. Davis himself built his grand estate and home in Elkins in 1892, near the similar home of Stephen B. Elkins. Davis went on to build an interconnected railroad network down the middle of the state, including the Coal & Coke Railroad. By 1900, when the DC&C Building was constructed, he owned and largely controlled a number of mining, railroad, and mercantile businesses and large amounts of land. He left the presidency of the WVC&P (thus DC&C) in 1902, just prior to the company's purchase by the George Gould business interests, although he and the Davis family remained influential for many years and remained active in the business realm. Most notably, Davis became the vice-presidential candidate for the Democrat Party in the presidential election of 1904, which proved unsuccessful however. He served other public roles afterwards, such as Chairman of the Pan American Railway Commission, until his death in 1916.

All the DC&C mines, and those at Thomas in particular, were melting pots of various newly-arrived European nationalities and African-Americans who travelled from other portions of the region to work the mines, coke ovens, logging operations and for the railroad. They lived mostly near the company operations, often in company-rented houses. There were many immigrant nationalities represented in towns along Davis's rail lines, fresh from Ellis Island. The town of Thomas had an Italian language newspaper, the first published in West Virginia, and segregated neighborhoods. The DC&C company used signs and documents in its mines and DC&C Building printed in numerous languages. At the company's height in the early 1900s, it directly employed about 1300 to 1500 people in the Thomas area alone. Relating to this, the company and its "field operations", were ultimately overseen from the DC&C building.⁵

Davis created a railroad empire in West Virginia, building and/or purchasing railroads to form a "central" line (the West Virginia Coal & Coke Railroad) running north to south through the state connecting the C&O and B&O main-line railroads. The WVC&C covered 200 miles of line from Elkins to Charleston, connecting the B&O and C&O with Davis's own line. Thus, from Piedmont to Charleston (the state capitol), lines were named after his business partners and political allies, such as Blain, Gorman, Bayard, Dobbin, William, Thomas, Elkins, Sutton, and Gassaway (among others). His son-in-law Stephen B. Elkins worked with Davis to build or purchase related rail lines. The largest threat to the Davis and Elkins lines was the need for "east-west main line" access so the coal, timber, and other products their businesses in West Virginia produced could be shipped to markets on the east coast and other interested buyers. This long-term battle of businesses involved the B&O, C&O, and Pennsylvania Railroad, all of which were hauling coal, timber, etc., from the central Appalachians to urban markets and east-west industrial centers.

⁵ Homer Floyd Fansler, History of Tucker County, West Virginia (Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1962), 463-466.

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For nearly twenty years the WVC&P's only outlet to the east-west markets its connection to the B&O at Piedmont, West Virginia. Beginning amicably in the 1880s, the leadership of the B&O grew less cooperative with H.G. Davis's lines over time. Also, the Davis railroad empire battled larger forces in the national railroad industry by 1900. One industrialist working a national scale trying to overcome limitations on track usage and "unfair cost and shipping practices" was Stephen J. Gould. Gould envisioned combining various east-to-west lines to create a new transcontinental "main line" which would cross the Appalachian Mountains and rival the B&O and C&O railroads. One of Gould's successes was the construction of the Western Maryland Railroad, which challenged the B&O in its crossing of the Alleghenies.

The DC & C Company, Post-1903 History

In 1903, DC&C was purchased and incorporated into the Gould business empire. Ironically, this coincided with the 50th anniversary of West Virginia's formation, the pinnacle of Davis's career, and Davis's subsequent run for vice president of the United States on the Democrat ticket. The DC&C was merged with the Western Maryland Railroad (WM) in 1906, and Western Maryland Railway (WMR) in 1910. Throughout these ownership changes, the DC&C name, which had become known worldwide, was kept. DC&C was separated from the WMR in 1913, apparently operating as a stand-alone subsidiary company until it closed in 1950. The company halted coke production by ca. 1920 (due to advances in technology which did away with beehive ovens) but continued producing coal from numerous mines (including mines in Maryland and Pennsylvania) until its closure in 1950. The large amounts of coal and coke produced by the two mineable seams under the area helped "Davis Coal & Coke" make steel in Pennsylvania and Ohio mills which was used all over the world. It fueled homes of families, blacksmith shops, and power plants in the eastern United States and it helped power the US Navy's fleet.

During the company's history it provided a livelihood for tens of thousands of people through direct and indirect means. During its roughly 65-year existence, DC&C dominated coal production in the Upper Potomac Coal Field. It was a leader in coal and coke production in West Virginia from its inception in 1888 until ca. 1915, when production began a slow decline and southern coal fields in the state rose to prominence. As the mines closed one by one as the seams played out, and technological advances reduced the need for miners, employment in the region declined. Even after the DC&C's closure in 1950, the DC&C building and its subsequent owners were managing the properties of what was once the DC&C, and employing a dwindling number of local people. Unfortunately, DC&C would also leave in its path long-term damage to the region, especially acid mine drainage problems and surface disturbances which are dealt with to this day and will be into the foreseeable future.

By the 1950s, the railroad had changed too. The region's timber was exhausted by 1925 and passenger service lost importance. As the century progressed, the WMR became primarily a coal hauler, and passenger service was discontinued after the 1950s. Also, the technological change from steam to diesel power by the

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1950s did away with the numerous facilities (and employees) once needed in places like Thomas. The WMR itself fell under direct control of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad by the 1960s (then the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and the Chessie System in the 1970s), but all maintained the WMR name.

After 1950, strip mining took over in the region, often carried out by small companies leasing mineral rights from the railroad's land holdings. This reached its height during the 1970s and early 1980s, at which point most of the recoverable coal was exhausted. The WMR, still in control of the former DC&C lands, timber, and mineral rights, as well as the railroad so closely associated with DC&C since its inception, operated at the DC&C building in Thomas until ca. 1980 when the WMR name was retired and its properties were fully incorporated into CSX Transportation. This was the death knell for final activity at the building.

Railroad operations were suspended in the region in 1983. CSX removed the tracks in the area in the late 1980s and likewise abandoned the DC&C Building. At the end of use ca. 1983, there were possibly only one or two people working there. Yet even then, it still held a great deal of records, maps, drawings, office supplies, office machines, etc. dating from early in the century and relating to a variety of the company's endeavors over the century.

DC & C Building Related

Davis Coal & Coke built the Thomas field office in 1900 when the company was at its height. Under the Davis leadership, the company had gradually expanded throughout the 1890s, growing toward a level of coal output of around two million tons per year, and continued at that level for over a decade. Even prior to 1900, likely nearer to ca. 1886, the company's main field office for mine operations was located in Thomas, combined with a company store in the same building. Similar to the current building, it was a "three-story, fire-brick building," rectangular in shape. However, at 9:00 am on October 12, 1899, the building exploded from the accidental start of a small furnace-oil fire in the basement, which subsequently ignited 72 kegs of black powder also stored in the basement. The staff present that day consisted of a draughtsman, mine foreman, stenographer, janitor, rail yard foreman, general superintendent of the Thomas mine, and some visitors.⁶ Some of the men present were on the third floor in a small chemical laboratory. Upon hearing warnings, they managed to make it out in time. One employee was killed trying to save account ledgers and maps and fifteen were injured. Most had either managed to flee the building moments before the blast while others were simply near the building rushing to help when it exploded. The building was destroyed, which led to the immediate planning of a new office building (the current building) which was completed the following year in 1900.

⁶ "The Fire at Thomas," The Bedford Gazette, 20 October 1899.

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The placement of the field mine headquarters in Thomas was logical. The 1900 building's location at the western corner of the city limits placed it halfway between Thomas's downtown and its "suburbs" of Coketon and Douglas. It is located near, or perhaps on, the destroyed office's location. Within a five-mile radius were numerous other DC&C company towns such as Benbush, Pierce, and Frances, along with smaller mine openings scattered around the area. In a broader sense, it was the "district" headquarters for numerous other mines in the Upper Potomac coal field as well.

The explosion and destruction of the earlier office in 1899 meant a new office was immediately needed. The WVC&P, which in 1900 also began overseeing the operations of its sister company, DC&C, listed improvements carried out by the coal department in the summer of 1900. "General Office Building. A building is being constructed at a point between Thomas and Coketon, which will provide offices for the clerks at the operations named, as well as headquarters for the General Superintendent and Engineering Department."⁷ It is not known who the building's architect was, but it most likely came from someone in the company's own engineering department.

At the same time the new office building was being built, the Buxton & Landstreet Company (B&L, a subsidiary of DC&C) built a new general store, the largest B&L store ever, just over the city limits by a matter of feet and just across the street from the west side of the DC&C Building's main entrance. Altogether, the main entries and facilities of the DC&C Thomas/Coketon mine complexes, the railroad passenger depot and section offices, a freight depot/passenger platform, the railroad's locomotive roundhouse/repair shops, hundreds of the company's coke ovens, and dozens of company houses were within one-half mile. On the next lot to the east of the DC&C Building (today a parking area) was the company's chemical laboratory, and across the street was the local public school. The Davis Branch of the WVC&P passed the DC&C Building just 30 feet to the north.

The DC&C also experienced its share of mine disasters and labor troubles, with the DC&C building likely a key location for management, workers, and residents during some major events in the town's history. The first occurred at 6:30 A.M. on February 4, 1907, with an explosion in Mine 25 at Thomas that killed twenty-five men. The mine's entrance was about 0.5 mile from the DC&C Building, which held the mine maps, managers, and engineers, so it likely was a hub of activity and communication. In retrospect, it may well have been where widows came to fill out paper work for compensation, and receive compensatory damages payments. Even during mine disasters in other DC&C towns such as Elk Garden in 1911, it was the Thomas headquarters directing much of the activity and sending engineers, rescue equipment, and orders.

⁷ "Nineteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors of the West Virginia Central and Pittsburg Railway Company" (The American Job Printing Office, August, 1900), 15.

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The next long-remembered event was when labor troubles reached a peak in West Virginia in June 1922, and the miners of DC&C went on strike for higher wages. The county sheriff called in the National Guard to prevent violence between striking and non-striking miners. After arresting about one-hundred striking miners and holding them inside a fenced tennis court, the sheriff chartered a coach from the (at this time) WMR on which the miners were placed in order to proceed to Parsons (the county seat), which was about 10 miles southeast. As the train descended the Blackwater Canyon grade, a wheel on the arrested miners' coach broke and the train derailed causing the death of one of the striking miners and injuring sixteen others. In 1923, the company began employing its workers under labor agreements with the United Mine Workers of America. Such major events were not the only causes of death among the areas miners, as injuries (sometimes severe) were common in the mines. Deaths occurred year-to-year in random accidents. It was in the DC&C Building that the situations were dealt with and information stored concerning individual workers and benefits. It was the central field office after all, and here the day-to-day (as well as longer term) plans of the coal operations (and employees) were discussed, finalized, and managed as they were carried out. Indeed, historic records of various sorts relating to these issues were not only created here, but preserved here to this day.

In addition, from records found at the building but not archived yet in any formal way, it appears employees at the building, working with the DC&C's post-1950 ownership structure under the WMR, B&O, and CSX were involved in the strip mining operations, land acquisitions, environmental issues, logging, and numerous other realms of activity important to local history. In fact, mine maps held in the building vaults have proven valuable in the last decade for modern government sponsored projects to control acid mine drainage emanating into the Potomac and Blackwater Rivers from the vast underground complex of abandoned mine workings. Thus, even 60 years after its end as a major operations center for the DC&C company, this unique building and its contents have played a notable part in regional history.

The DC&C Company Administration Building was where the area's numerous mines were planned, designed, and managed. It is one of only a handful of remaining buildings directly associated with the DC&C business empire, and it is apparently truly unique as the only remaining field operations-related building of such major importance (individual mines had much smaller field offices right at the mine site).

Summary

During the early twentieth century, usually little was done to change what was otherwise a sufficient, successful work place. This was especially the nature of railroad and mine related buildings. Companies involved in these industries were naturally concerned with saving money wherever possible, and once built, buildings were often maintained at only the most basic level. This appears to have occurred at the DC&C office building. Other than the ca. 1903 addition, which perhaps occurred right after the company's sale to the Gould interests or WMR, there appears to have been little change to the building's core structure and function throughout its existence. It thus, retains a high degree of integrity.

Davis Coal & Coke Company
Administration Building

Name of Property

Tucker County, West Virginia

County and State

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In summary, there is no more important building existing that represents the overall operations of the Davis Coal and Coke Company, not only during its heyday, but throughout the company's existence between 1900 and 1950. In addition, the post-DC&C era (since 1950) operations of numerous companies which subsequently owned the former DC&C holdings, including this building, were carried on here. Otherwise, the structure likely would have long ago met a sad fate, as so many other vestiges of this important, yet fleeting, past have done. The building's unique, highly important role in the region's industrial and business history, combined with its high level of historic integrity, make it a logical choice for acceptance to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: Commerce and Industry.

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Davis Coal & Coke Company

Administration Building

Name of Property

Tucker County, West Virginia

County and State

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying Tucker County Assessor's Thomas Tax Map, Sheet No. 01. It is described in that certain deed from PCM, Inc., to the City of Thomas, West Virginia, dated May 12, 1995, and is recorded in Deed Book 148, pages 326 through 329 at the office of the County Clerk of Tucker County in Parsons, West Virginia.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property is contained within the 0.361 acre parcel described above and coincides with the historic parcel which existed during the period of significance.

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Name of Property: Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration Building
City or Vicinity: Coketon (Thomas)
County: Tucker
State: WV
Name of Photographer: David Lesher
Date of Photographs: October 2010
Location of Original Digital Files: WV State Historic Preservation Office, Charleston, WV

Photo 1 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0001)
Wide shot of adjacencies of Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration Building
(left) and Buxton & Landstreet Company Store (right)

Photo 2 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0002)
Northwest corner of Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration building showing
main entrance

Photo 3 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0003)
US Geological Survey marker at northwest corner of building

Photo 4 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0004)
Variation in brick pattern and material type

Photo 5 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0005)
Third floor dormer on east side of building

Photo 6 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0006)
Detailed view of cornice, dentil course, rounded brick lintel, and slate pattern

Photo 7 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0007)
Southeast corner of building showing slate roof and overhang, rounded windows, and
third floor dormer

Photo 8 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0008)
Overhang on southeast side of building showing slate roof

Photo 9 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0009)
South wall of building

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- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Photo 10 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0010)
Brick detail over windows on west wall |
| Photo 11 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0011)
Twin windows to coal company pay office and hallway on first floor entrance |
| Photo 12 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0012)
View out window to northwest corner from pay office on first floor |
| Photo 13 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0013)
View out windows to south wall toward exterior overhang |
| Photo 14 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0014)
Equipment room showing map development area and on to safe on first floor |
| Photo 15 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0015)
View up stairway from 1.5 level landing |
| Photo 16 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0016)
Detail of stairway balusters from top of second floor landing |
| Photo 17 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0017)
Architectural detail (recessed turned knob) on second floor landing |
| Photo 18 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0018)
Engineering Department, second floor |
| Photo 19 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0019)
Mine records cabinet |
| Photo 20 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0020)
Entrance to second floor safe with "The Davis Coal & Coke Co." above door |
| Photo 21 of 36 | (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0021)
Detail of "The Davis Coal & Coke Co." lettering |

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Photo 22 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0022) Map drawers inside second floor safe
Photo 23 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0023) View back toward room entrance and interior staircase on second floor
Photo 24 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0024) Window and brick detail in smaller office
Photo 25 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0025) Entrance to engineering department office on second floor
Photo 26 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0026) View from second floor office to central room of engineering department
Photo 27 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0027) Second floor office, northwest corner
Photo 28 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0028) View to east wall and restroom through office on second floor
Photo 29 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0029) View of staircase from second floor landing
Photo 30 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0030) Detail view of staircase from second floor landing
Photo 31 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0031) View from head of stairs on third floor
Photo 32 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0032) Detail view from head of stairs on third floor
Photo 33 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0033) Stairway, third floor, view to west wall
Photo 34 of 36	(WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0034)

Davis Coal & Coke Company
Administration Building
Name of Property

Tucker County, West Virginia
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Third floor storage, view to south wall

Photo 35 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0035)
Third floor wash room, view to east wall

Photo 36 of 36 (WV_TuckerCounty_DavisCoal&CokeBuilding_0036)
Third floor washroom, view to hallway



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DAVIS COAL & COKE
Company Admin. Bldg

Tucker Co., WV

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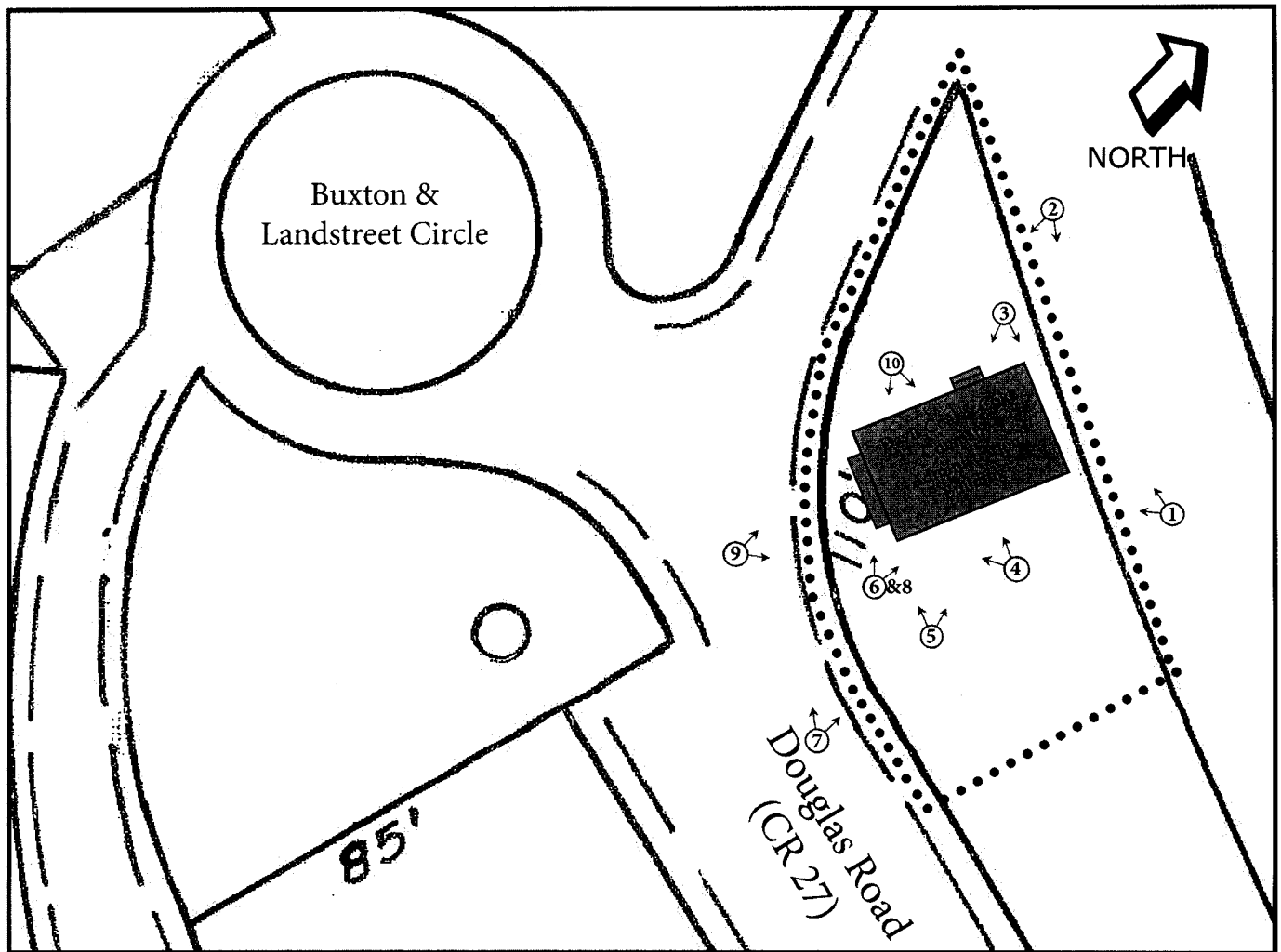
SITE PLAN

Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration Building

Tucker County, West Virginia

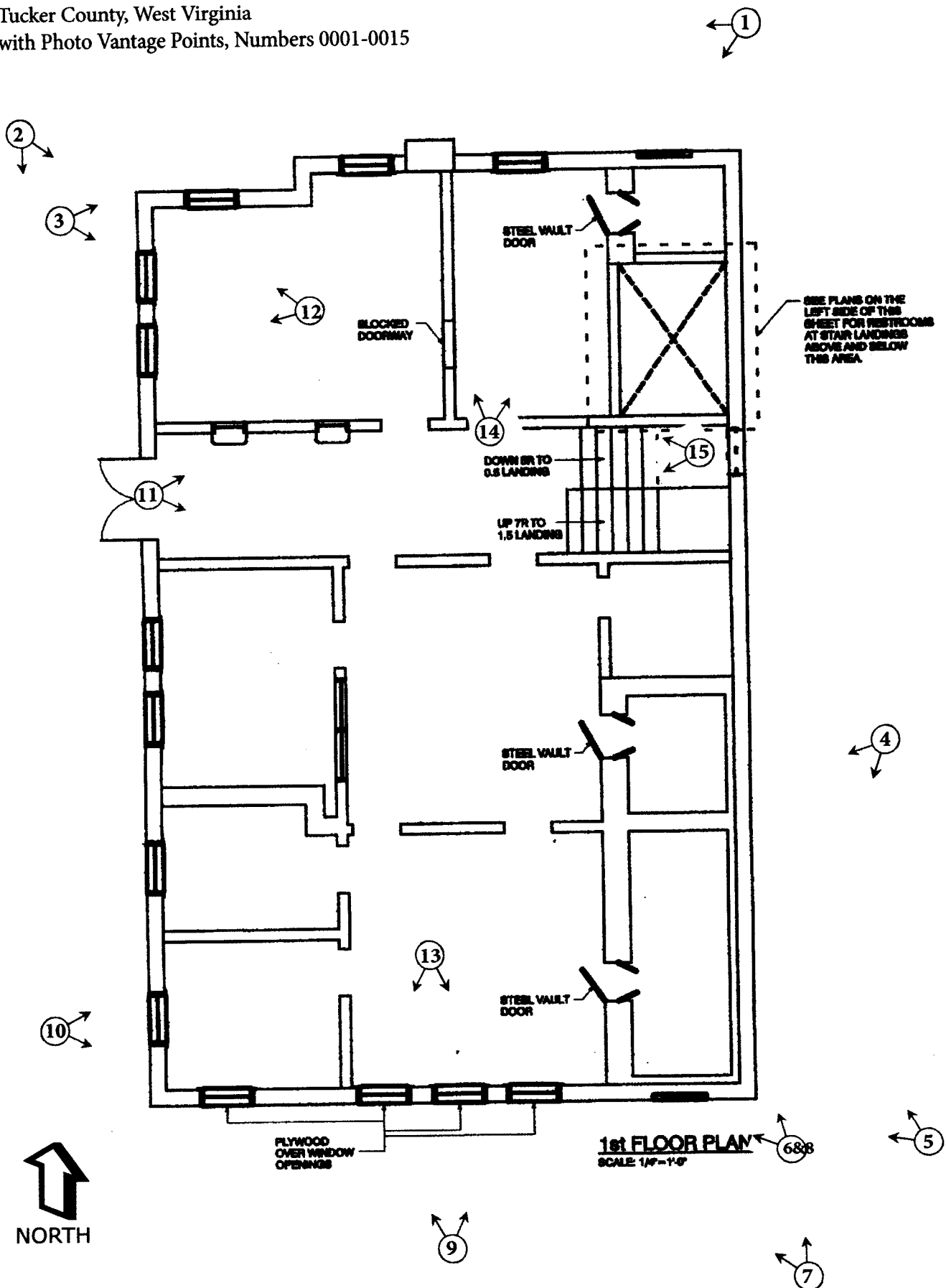
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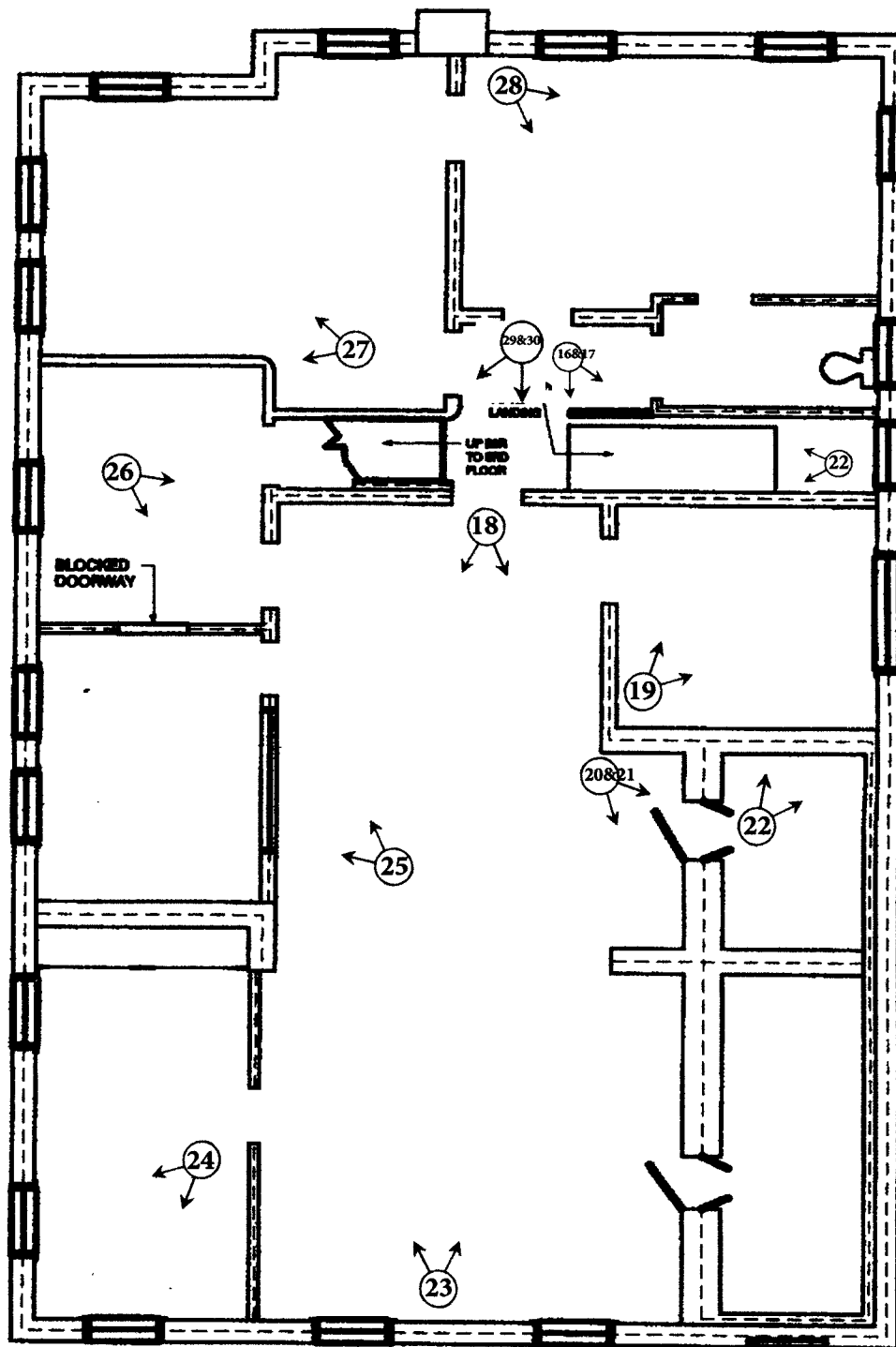


..... Proposed National Register Boundary

FIRST FLOOR Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration Building
Tucker County, West Virginia
with Photo Vantage Points, Numbers 0001-0015

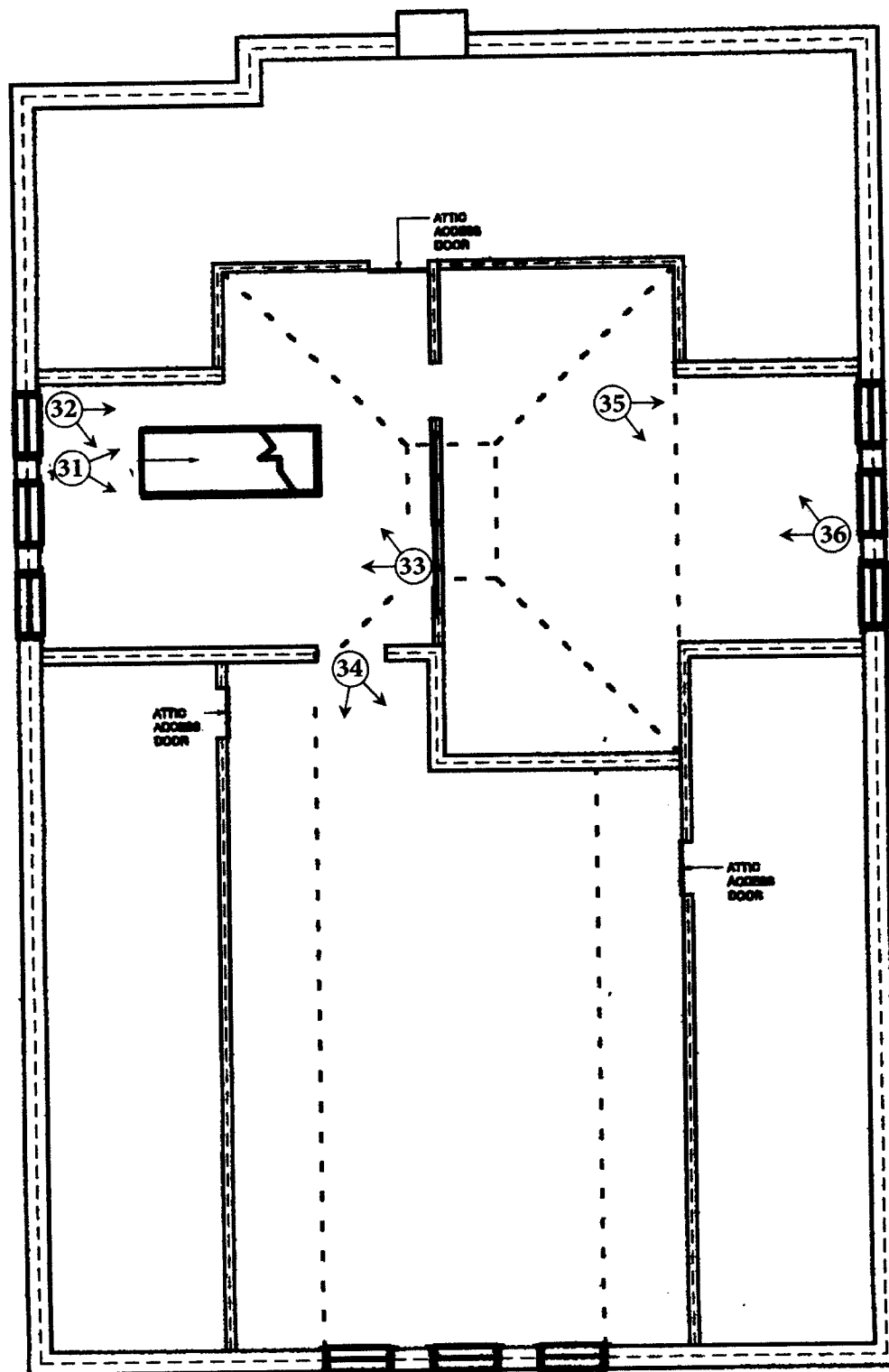


SECOND FLOOR Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration Building
Tucker County, West Virginia
with Photo Vantage Points, Numbers 0016-0030

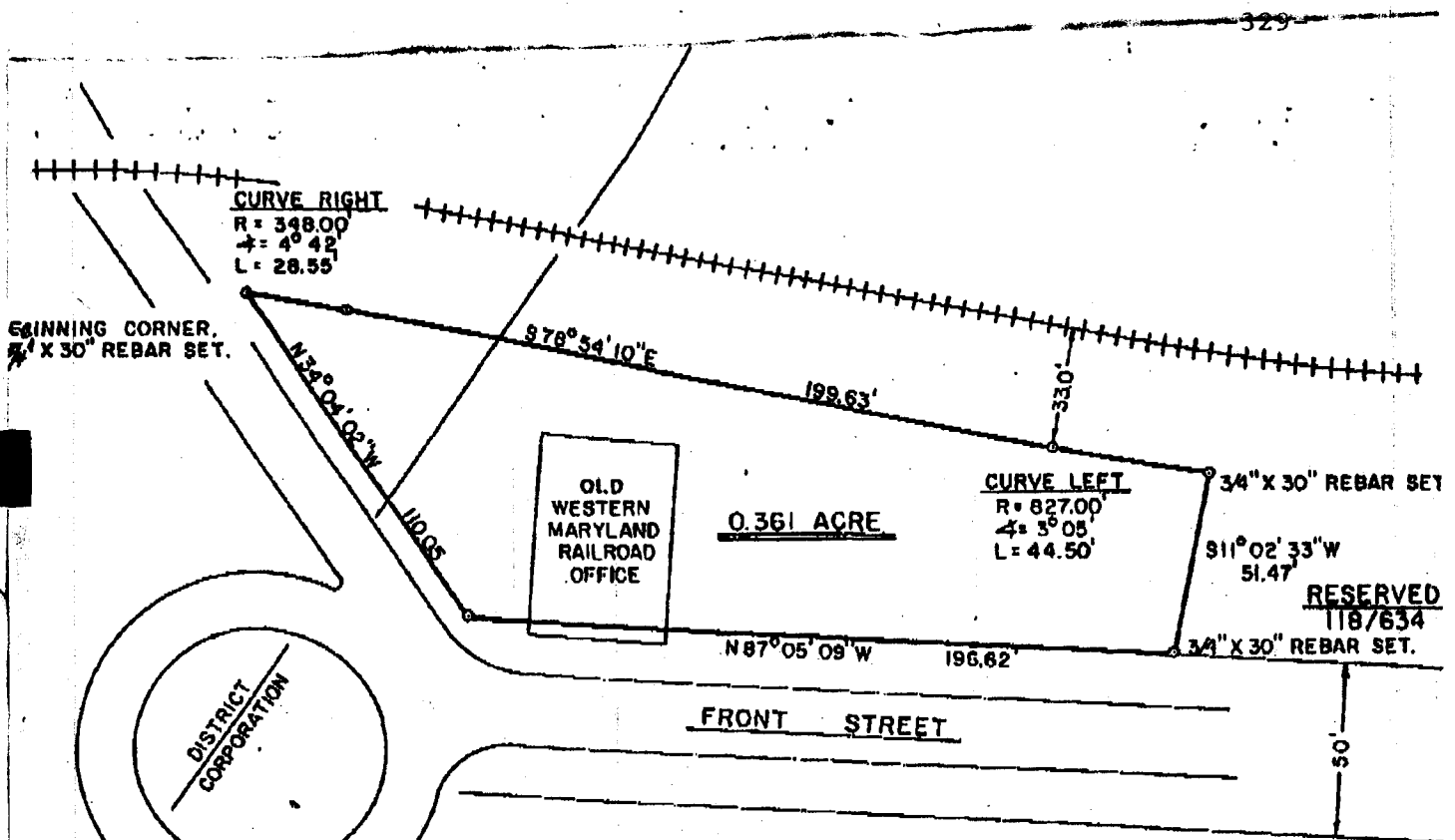


2nd FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

THIRD FLOOR Davis Coal & Coke Company Administration Building-
Tucker County, West Virginia
with Photo Vantage Points, Numbers 0031-0036



3rd FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



PLAT OF SURVEY
FOR
POWER CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

BEING A PORTION OF TRACT A5 OF THE LAND
CONVEYED BY CSX MINERALS, INC., TO WESTERN
POCAHONTAS PROPERTIES LIMITED PARTNERSHIP BY
DEED DATED DECEMBER 31, 1986 AND RECORDED IN
THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF TUCKER COUNTY,
WEST VIRGINIA IN DEED BOOK 118, AT PAGE 634.

TOWN OF THOMAS, WEST VIRGINIA
FAIRFAX DISTRICT
TUCKER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
0.361 ACRE

SCALE: 1 INCH EQUALS 50 FEET
SURVEYED: AUGUST, 1987

SURVEYED BY: LARRY L. KITZMILLER
LICENSED LAND SURVEYOR
#280
MT. STORM, WEST VIRGINIA

Larry L. Kitzmiller

DECLINATION $7^\circ 38' 26''$ WEST
SEPTEMBER, 1984







































THE DAVIS COAL & COKE CO.



THE DAVIS COAL & COKE CO.



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