

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Houston Coal Company Store

other name/site number: Koppers Store

2. Location

street & number: Highway 52

not for publication: n/a

city/town: Kimball

vicinity: n/a

state: WV county: McDowell

code: 047

zip code: 24853

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of related property listing: Coal Company Stores in McDowell County

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this

☒ nomination


☐ request for determination of eligibility

meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property

☒ meets

☐ does not meet

the National Register Criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.



Signature of Certifying Official

2/10/92

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property

☐ meets

☐ does not meet

the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

=====

5. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

☐ 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): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. Function or Use

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Historic: commerce/trade Sub: department store
commerce/trade business

Current : commerce/trade Sub: business

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:
Italian Renaissance

Other Description: n/a

Materials: foundation stone roof tile
walls brick other concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance. x See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: statewide.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : n/a

Areas of Significance: architecture
commerce
industry

Period(s) of Significance: ca.1923-1941

Significant Dates : n/a

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
x See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet x

- previously listed in the National Register
 - previously determined eligible by the National Register
 - designated a National Historic Landmark
 - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository: _____

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

A 17 454970 4142480 B — — —
C D

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

State:WV ZIP: 25305

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 1 Houston Coal Company store

The Houston Coal Company store, located on highway 52 at the mouth of Carswell hollow near Kimball, may be one of southern West Virginia's most intact company stores. The one-story brick building, constructed ca. 1923, stands substantially unaltered from its original appearance when it provided goods and services to the busy coal mining community. The store's outstanding characteristics are its perfect symmetry, round arch openings, rear arcade, and its spacious setting.

The store's plan is basically an L but with short projecting wings on the main facade. The main roof and those over the L and wings, are hipped and covered with tile shingles. The nine bay facade faces south towards the highway. The double door entrance stands in the center under a simple fanlight transom. The facade wall surrounding the door opening extends up beyond the roofline into a low-pitched pediment. On each side of the entrance are three windows in round arched openings.

The bays on each end of the facade project beyond the main portion of the building and contain single windows similar to the other windows except larger. A concrete-surfaced porch extends across the facade between the two end bays. Secondary entrances open off the porch into these wings. The same type of round arched windows located on the facade continues around to the store's east side. Two additional secondary entrances under bracketed awnings open into this side.

The rear portion of the L was the building's delivery and storage area. Four pairs of double doors stand on the L's east side and each is recessed behind a separate round arch opening. A concrete platform extends from the doors beyond the arches.

The company store sits in a spacious yard that is bordered on two sides by a low stone wall. A stream, flanked by stone retaining walls, flows along the store's east side. A pedestrian and a vehicle bridge span the narrow creek bed.

The building's only noticeable change is the absence of the company's name over the door. The solar windows on the roof ridge appear on an early photograph when the Koppers company controlled the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 1 Houston Coal Company store

The Houston Coal Company store is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its association with southern West Virginia's coal mining industry and under criterion C for its architectural significance. The Houston store, like other company stores, was indispensable to the local mining industry. Stores were not only functional but also architectural showpieces intended to reflect the company's wealth (for historical information about the Pocahontas Coalfield and the significance of company stores, see sections E and F in "Coal Company Stores in McDowell County", multiple property listing). This store displays more high style architectural characteristics than the county's other stores, and it is less industrial looking than some so that it is not as easily identifiable as a company store. The building is occupied and has been well-maintained so that it retains its original appearance when it served as a coal company store.

Before the coal industry boomed in southern West Virginia at the end of the nineteenth century, the area consisted of scattered, self-sufficient farms and communities. Because of the absence of railroads and good roads, the southern counties had little interaction with the rest of the nation. After the Civil War, however, the nation's industrial market expanded and outsiders began to turn their attention to West Virginia's vast coal reserve to meet growing demands.

The major railroads extended their lines into southern West Virginia allowing the area to be developed. Without a sufficient labor force, however, coal mining could not be productive. Companies recruited thousands of workers first from the older coalfields in Pennsylvania, and then from Eastern Europe and the American South. To accommodate these new arrivals, coal companies built self-sufficient communities to house and provide for their workers. The construction of company towns was absolutely necessary in southern West Virginia. Unlike the northern coalfields of Pennsylvania, where mining operations began in regions that were already settled, southern mines opened in sparsely settled areas with few organized communities. The company town was the most logical solution because it provided efficient and inexpensive housing for a large labor force.

Central to each of these communities was the company store. The store was usually the most prominent building in the town and was typically placed in an easily accessible location. The buildings often housed not only a store but also the company's business offices, a post office, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 2 Houston Coal Company store

sometimes, a doctor's office. Because of its location and multiple functions, the store provided each community with a center for social gathering.

The store at Carswell near Kimball served employees and families first for the Houston Coal Company and then for Koppers Coal Company. The building is located at the mouth of a long, narrow valley that was lined with company-owned houses. Because of the community's stretched configuration, two stores were necessary for goods to be readily available to all residents. The other store was located further up the valley and although it is no longer standing, it is unlikely that it was as large or as architecturally distinguished as the extant store.

This building was constructed during the early years of the automobile age and, although not many miners owned cars, the building seems to have been built with the residents' mobility in mind. The store was conveniently placed at the mouth of the valley on the county's main route near Kimball, a thriving service town. The store was easily accessible for those traveling to and from Kimball and also for those who lived within walking distance. This location on a busy thoroughfare provided residents with a perfect social center that was so typical and essential in the industrial community.

The Houston Company store is not as easily recognizable as a store as are McDowell County's others. A spacious lawn surrounds it, it has a single story, no display windows, and it is not located at the center of the community. A second glance, however, reveals that the building does include nearly all of the characteristics that company stores generally share. Although not so obvious from the front, the building is large and probably holds nearly as much store space as the others. It has a delivery entrance along the railroad tracks; a broad porch; secondary entrances into the offices; and originally, the company's name was applied to the facade.

The Carswell store displays more high-style architectural influences than the county's other extant stores. Its tile roof, broad eaves, projecting end bays, and perfect symmetry recall buildings of the Italian Renaissance. This Renaissance revival style was popular in the 1920's and its location in southern West Virginia's rugged coalfields indicates how pervasive it was. The Houston Coal Company's other important buildings, namely houses for management-level employees, were also built in styles popular in the 1920's. Near the head of the hollow are two outstanding

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 3 Houston Coal Company store

bungalows and several four-square houses. Mr. Houston's own house, located near the store, shows influence from the shingle and Tudor revival styles that were also fashionable at the time.

A construction company's offices have occupied the building since the 1950's and it has been perfectly maintained. It was built later than many of the county's other existing stores but it still displays most characteristics that even the earliest company stores shared. The Houston store's high-style character reflects the store's prominence as a commercial, business, and social center in the community. It also indicates the company's wish to depart from the traditional two-story classically-detailed store building in favor of a newer revival style. The building stands as an outstanding example of a coal company store and its importance to the mining industry.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

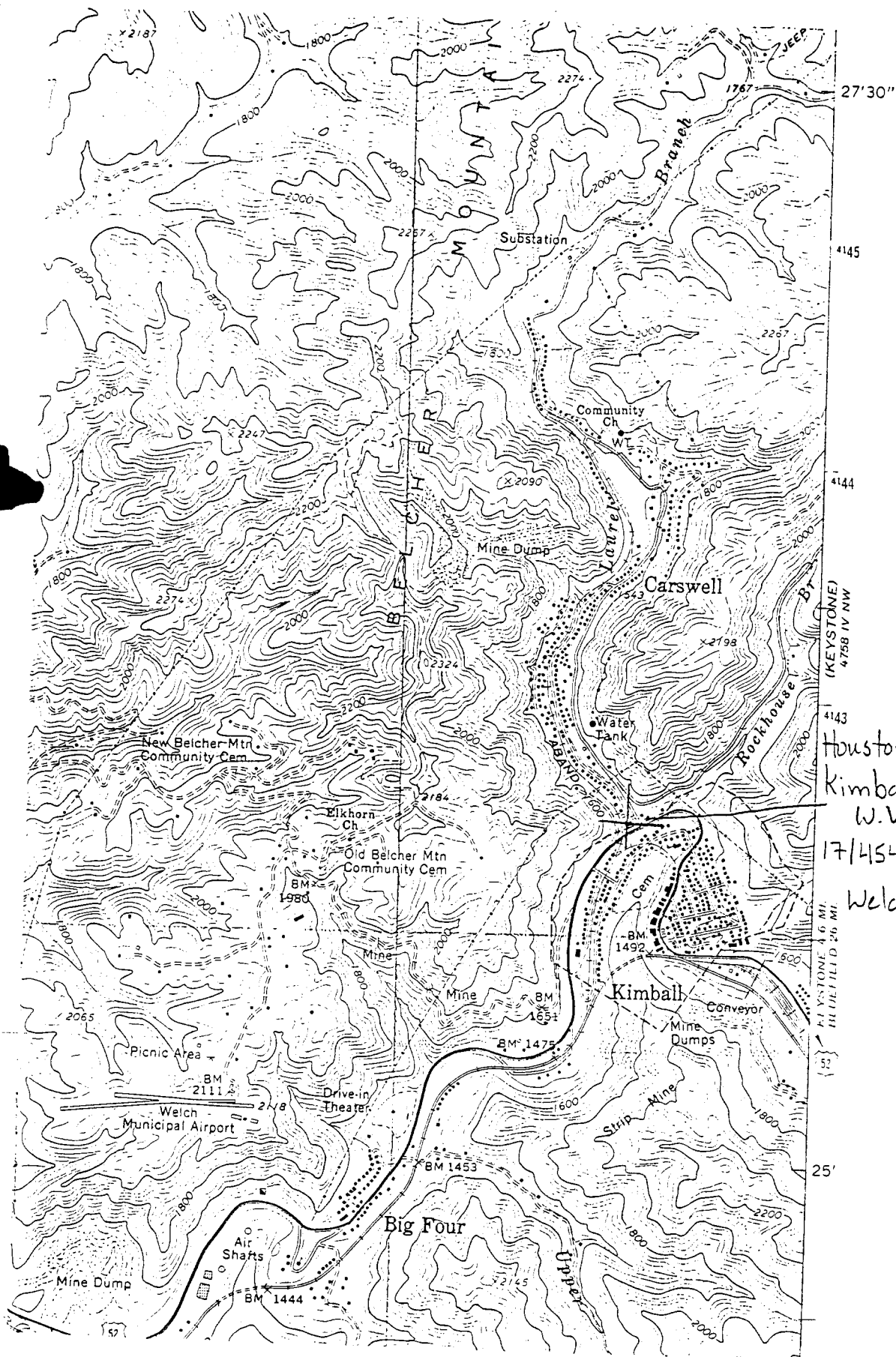
Section number 9 Page 1 Houston Coal Company store

Company Stores, file. Eastern Regional Coal Archives, Bluefield, WV.

Corte, Stelio and Betty. Property owners, telephone conversations, fall, 1991.

Dawson, Helen. Kimball resident, telephone conversation, December, 1991.

Eller, Ronald D. Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers. Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982.



Houston Coal Co. Store
Kimball, McDowell Co.
W. Va.

17/454970/4142480

Welch Quad.

