

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCERS use only

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Main Building, Montgomery Preparatory School

and/or common "Old Main," West Virginia Institute of Technology

**2. Location**

street & number West Virginia Institute of Technology not for publication

city, town Montgomery vicinity of congressional district Second

state West Virginia code 54 county Fayette code 019

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name West Virginia Board of Regents

street & number 950 Kanawha Boulevard, East

city, town Charleston vicinity of state West Virginia 25301

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fayette County Courthouse

street & number Court Street

city, town Fayetteville 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

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The "Old Main" building of West Virginia Institute of Technology is sited at the center of the college campus on a terrace above the town of Montgomery in Fayette County. Shortly after the school was created as a preparatory branch of West Virginia University by an act of the West Virginia Legislature on February 16, 1895, it was housed entirely within the single structure. The original two-acre campus expanded with changes in the purpose and direction of the institution to encompass a late 20th century (1980) complex of twelve buildings on 112 acres.

Construction of Old Main began in 1895 and was completed in 1897 at a cost of \$7,500. The center block or original unit consisted of two classrooms, one office, two study halls, a chapel, and an auditorium. The building was 65 feet long, 55 feet wide, and was reached from the northeast by a long cinder path that extended from the bottom of the hill, terminating at the arched entrance. In 1898 and 1905, two-story wings were attached to each side of the original unit. It is this elongated structure that has survived, essentially intact, to the present time.

The First Biennial Report of the State Board of Control, 1910, p. 263, described the Preparatory Branch of West Virginia University at Montgomery as the occupant of "a single building, consisting of a main or central building, with east and west wings. The total frontage is 207 feet. The class rooms are upon the lower floor. The upper floors of the east wing are used as a dormitory for boys, and the corresponding floors in the west wing, as a dormitory for girls. The dormitories will accommodate about thirty boys and twenty girls. There are three good class rooms, a very good auditorium and a study hall." The report of the Board of Control also provided a magnificent photograph of the building with its well-kept grounds.

Symmetrical massing of the Old Main central unit is emphasized by a projecting three-story, square entrance tower. The roof of this section is hipped, truncated and slate covered. Integration of the entire mass assumes a picturesque, romantic, and rambling quality that was intended to dominate the landscape in the tradition of turn-of-the-century eclectic modes popularized by carpenters and builders.

Alterations at Old Main over the years have impaired but have not seriously damaged its Victorian character. The hipped platform roofs of the wings were removed during mid-20th century renovations, alterations that destroyed a pedimented gable over the front bow of the east wing and destroyed a conical roof of the bow at the end of the west wing. The sum of this change is seen in the slightly disproportionate height advantage of the central block with its surviving roof and tower.

Pressed red brickwork contrasts with the sandstone trim of window and door openings. Arched openings of the tower are filled with fanlights at the first and second levels echoing nicely the second floor windows of the main block outlined with sandstone voussoirs. The major stone feature of the building, however, is the raised basement of rock-face sandstone. Fine brickwork in the corbeled cornices of the central block surmounts two-story recessed brick panels in the entrance facade.

(11/78)

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"Old Main," West Virginia Institute of Technology

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Over the tower's second floor arched window is a sandstone block inscribed with the names "T. P. Davies" and "J. McNabb" ( These men were instrumental in founding the college.), and the date, "1895." The formerly louvered opening above the date stone is now occupied by a clock face and clockworks dedicated in 1976 to the memory of John W. Matheny, a member of the college history department, 1921-62.

Renovation of Old Main's interior was undertaken in 1953 during the presidency of M. J. Horch. Metal fire stairs were added. These changes, among others, resulted in a general eradication of the original features.

Approximately fifty feet below Old Main's entrance is a plaza paved in cast concrete slabs. Two sculptures are featured: a stone bear (representing the college's symbol, the Golden Bear), sculpted by Conrad Wolfe in 1963; and a large open metal sphere titled, "Planet 73", by Joe Mullins.

## 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1895

Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Old Main" is significant for its contributions to the educational development of the upper Kanawha Valley and southern West Virginia. The building is important as a focal point of campus developments that resulted in the creation of the West Virginia Institute of Technology, West Virginia's only institute of technology. Moreover, Old Main has served every need of the college from the date of its initial occupation as a prep school (high school). Subsequent developments in the purposes and directions of the institution permitted it to survive as a junior college, and then as a college.

The growth of Montgomery as a coal boom town and the expansion of population in southern West Virginia were factors in the movement to bring educational facilities to the upper Kanawha Valley. An absence of secondary schools in this area was especially critical. Two Fayette County politicians, Thomas P. Davies (who served in the State Senate, terms 1895, 97; and House of Delegates, terms 1893, 1901), and John McNabb (who served in the House of Delegates, term 1895), sponsored measures resulting in the establishment of the "Preparatory Branch of the University [West Virginia] at Montgomery," in 1895.

During final stages of the erection of a central building (Old Main) in 1895-97, student met in the classrooms using nail kegs for chairs and boxes for desks. Under the able guidance of Principal Josiah Keeley from 1898 to 1907, the school expanded to include student representation from nearly every county in southern West Virginia. The increased enrollment necessitated the construction of dormitory space. Wings were thus added to the structure in 1898 and 1905.

The citizens of Montgomery purchased a four-acre tract between the C & O Railroad and the original two-acre parcel given by the Montgomery heirs to allow for future expansion of the campus. This parcel was donated to the state by townspeople soon after Mr. A.S. Thorn became head of the school. Following Mr. Thorn's resignation in 1920 after a seven year tenure, C. H. Martin was appointed superintendent.

Growth of secondary schools in the region competed with and caused a decline in the enrollment of the Montgomery Preparatory School. A second period of expansion and re-organization followed when, under the leadership of Martin, the institution became the New River State School, a junior college, after 1921.

During the period of the late teens and early 1920's the State Board of Education attempted, with only partial success, to introduce a curriculum containing courses in technic and commercial areas. The creation of a department of engineering in 1925 did, however, set the stage for significant future developments. By 1928, a four-year curriculum was established in the liberal arts, and two-year courses were added in mechanical, electrical, civil, mining and chemical engineering. In 1929, the school graduated its first group of four-year degree students and was known thereafter as New River State College.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Recommendations by the state board of education in 1933 called for the establishment of New River State College as a semi-technical institution. The transition from liberal arts and career teaching areas to technology was accomplished on an accelerated and formal basis during the presidency of Edward S. Maclin, who succeeded President Martin upon the death of the latter in 1933.

New directions and priorities suggested the renaming of New River State College in 1941. Following legislative approval of that year, the college was officially designated the West Virginia Institute of Technology. West Virginia Tech began to offer bachelor's degrees in engineering in 1952. The college has subsequently grown to offer a current academic program in three major divisions: the School of Engineering and Physical Science, the School of Human Studies, and the Community and Technical College.

"Old Main", the original building of West Virginia Tech, is significant because it focuses on the development of the college that grew with and responded to the educational needs of the upper Kanawha Valley and southern West Virginia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The building, like the institution, has changed, though it remains in form a tangible reminder and continuing center of activity that witnessed the interesting evolution of a tiny high school into a modern college of major importance to West Virginia.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Ambler, Charles H. A History of Education in West Virginia. Huntington, West Virginia: Standard Printing and Publishing Co., 1951, pp. 267-68; 836-41.
- First Biennial Report of the State Board of Control, Biennial Period Ending September 30, 1910  
Charleston: Union Publishing Co., pp. 263-68.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Montgomery, W. Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	7	4	7	1	5	0	0	4	2	2	5	5	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property includes the building and a 10' perimeter (does not include a recently landscaped plaza 50' to the north of Old Main). Old Main is located 500' south of Fayette Pike at the top of a prominent concrete steps and 25' southwest of Tech Center, the Student Center.

**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 Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

Historic Preservation Unit

organization W. Va. Dept. of Culture and History date March 10, 1980

street & number Capitol Complex telephone 304-348-0240

city or town Charleston state West Virginia 25305

## 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 Clarence Morris

title State Historic Preservation Officer date May 2, 1980

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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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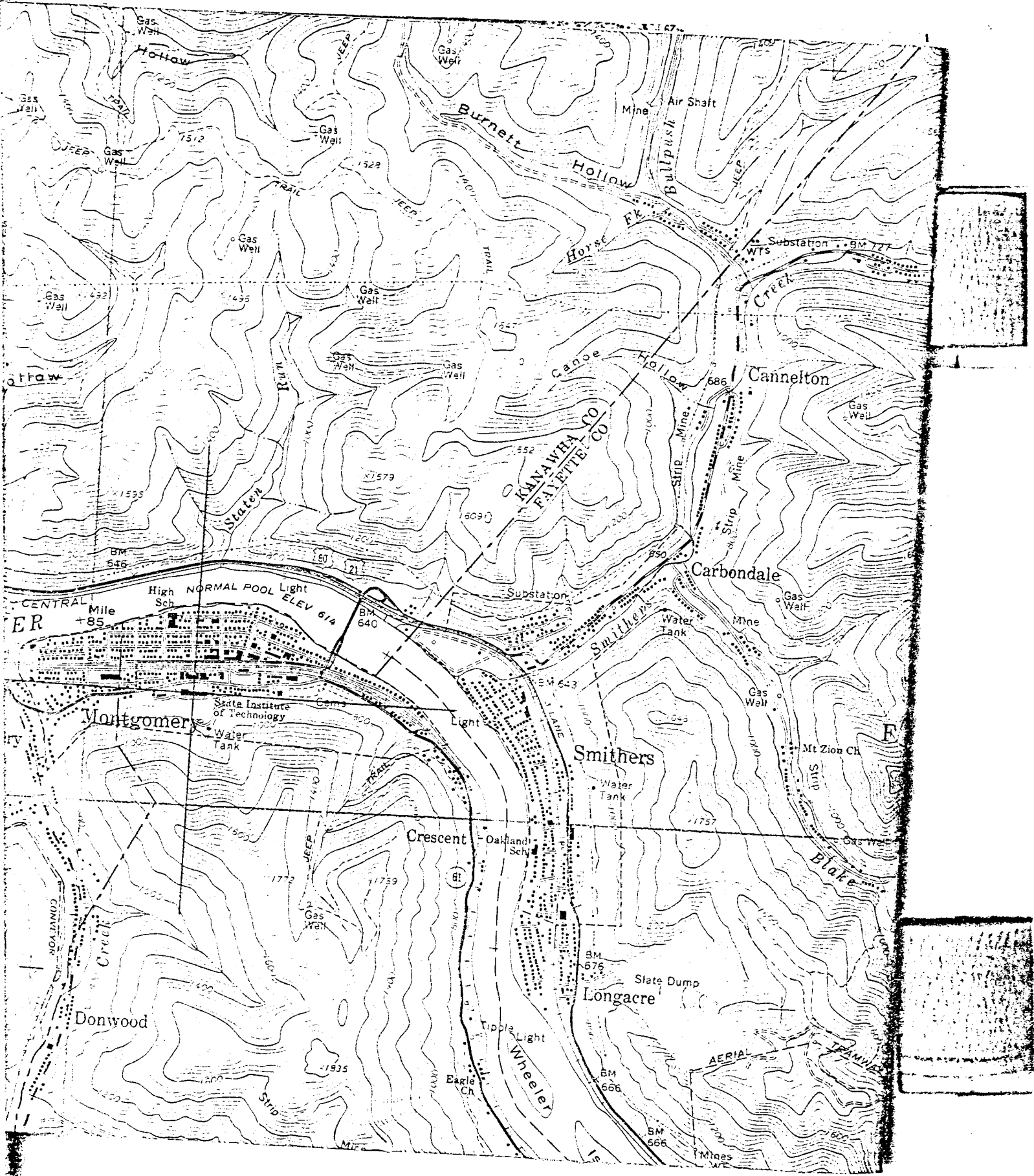
"Old Main", West Virginia Institute of Technology

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

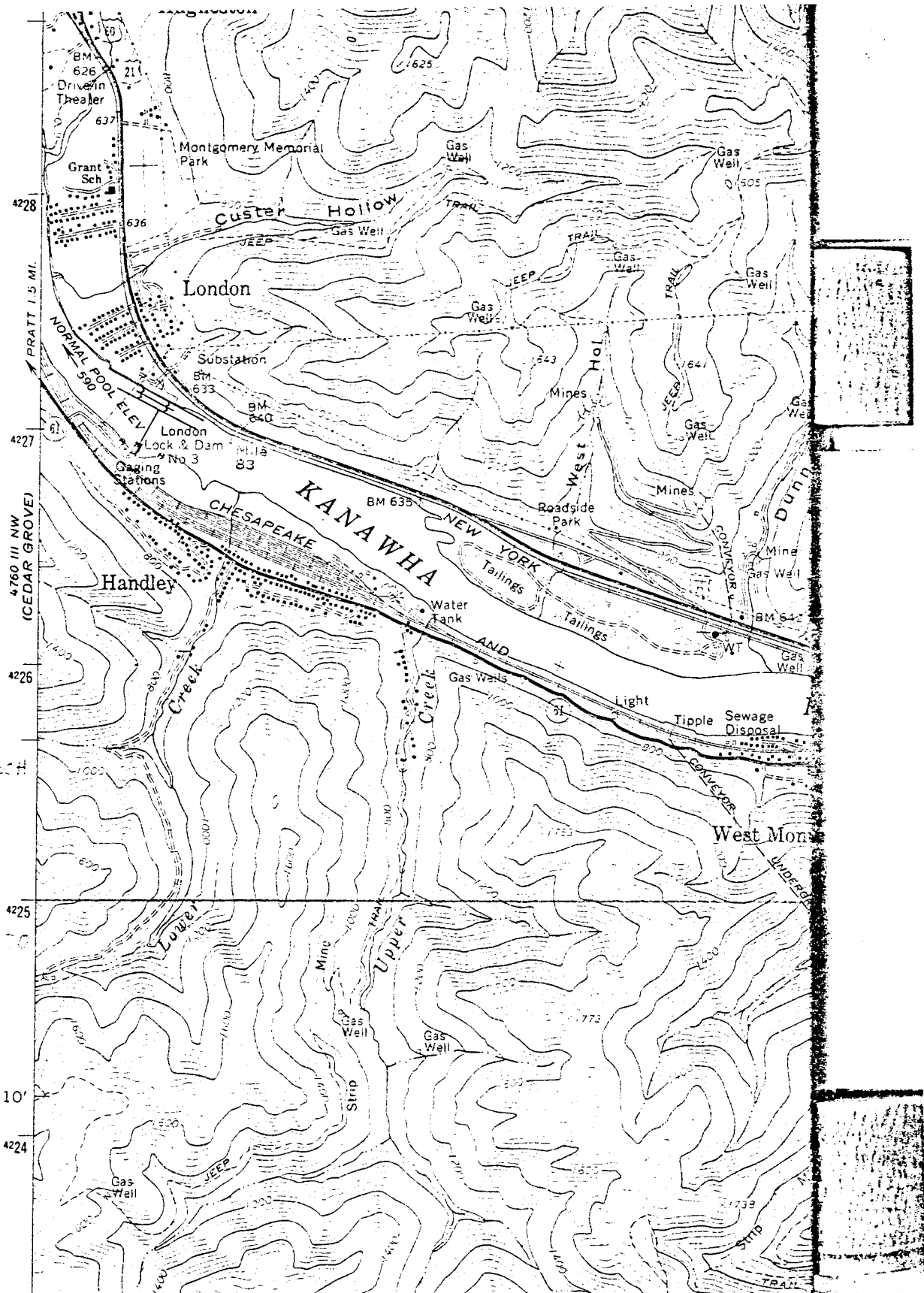
PAGE 2

Interview of Professor Ronald Alexander, Department of History, West Virginia  
Institute of Technology, February 8, 1980.  
Shawkey, Morris Purdy. West Virginia: In History, Life, Literature and Industry.  
Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1928, Vol. 2, pp. 9-13.



Montgomery Road.





"OLD MAIN"  
 WEST VIRGINIA TECH  
 MONTGOMERY  
 FAYETTE CO. W.V.

UTM

11/471500/4225700

