

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: THE NEW RIVER COMPANY GENERAL OFFICE BUILDING
other name/site number: _____

2. Location

street & number: 411 Main Street not for publication: N/A
city/town: Mt. Hope vicinity: N/A
state: WV county: Fayette code: 019 zip code: 25880

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally.

(___ See continuation sheet.)

Susan M. Pierce 3/5/04
Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau Date

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 Date

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4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of 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): _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- _____ public-local
- _____ public-State
- _____ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building
- _____ district
- _____ site
- _____ structure
- _____ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

Name of related multiple property listing N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Current Functions

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Materials

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH
CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:
Commercial Style

Foundation: Concrete
Walls: Brick
Roof: Asphalt
Other: Wood

Narrative Description

(See continuation on sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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.

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Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

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.

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1917-1954

Significant Dates

1917

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance

(See continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: Less Than One

UTM References

Quad Map Name: Oak Hill

Zone: 17 Easting: 485436 Northing: 4194125

Verbal Boundary Description

(See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(See continuation sheet)

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11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Alan Rowe & Erin Riebe, WV SHPO, with Charles Howard, owner

Organization: West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office Date: January 7, 2004

Street & Number: 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East Telephone: 304-558-0240

City or Town: Charleston State: West Virginia ZIP: 25305-0300

Property Owner

Name: Howard Family, LLC

Street & Number: 411 Main Street Telephone: 304-877-6665

City or Town: Mt. Hope State: WV Zip: 25880

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Location and Setting

The New River Company General Office Building is located at 411 Main Street in Mt. Hope, Fayette County. The building, located near the commercial area, faces south. The front lot is enclosed by a wrought iron fence supported with concrete posts.

The building is in context with its surroundings, which tend to fall into the same time-period and method of construction. Buildings in this area of town, including the one under consideration, tend to have set-backs from the street. The building located to the west is the 1940 US Post Office, designed in a Colonial Revival mode popular during the New Deal, and built in red brick. To the east is the Garrett House, a ca. 1917 Neo-Classical Revival dwelling, set on a slight rise and built in red brick on a raised sandstone foundation. Across Main Street, to the south, is the Mount Hope Presbyterian Church, built in 1915 in a Neo-Classical Revival mode, using a combination of blonde and red brick. To the west and downhill from the church is a brick, ca. 1917 commercial building, which served as The New River Company store in this area until 1941. The New River Company General Office Building meshes with these neighbors, appearing in approximately the same time period, and by sharing a similarity in lot placement and use of materials.

Description

The New River Company General Office Building was constructed in 1917. It is a two-story, U-shaped, commercial-style, common bond brick building. The open end of the U is on the side, or west, elevation. The building has a flat roof and a stepped parapet with clay tile coping.

The symmetrical facade is five bays wide. Each bay is separated by a brick pilaster spanning the height of the building through a decorative brick cornice to the coping. Each bay displays three, one-over-one, double-hung sash windows on both stories with the center window being larger than the two side windows. Each window opening is also flanked by a brick pilaster, slightly smaller than those that separate the bays, that rises to the bottom of the cornice.

The main entrance, located in the center bay of the first floor, is reached by a set of concrete steps and small landing. The landing is flanked by two cast-iron lamp posts positioned on concrete posts that support the iron fence. The original, single-lite double doors have side lights and a transom. The transom is back-painted with the original company logo and reads "New River, White Oak Smokeless Coal and Coke." Flanking the centered logo is a small, "safety first" cross. The wood door surround is topped by a simple cornice. A large plaque to the west of the main entrance reads, "The New River Company; General Offices." A similar plaque to the east of the entrance reads, "White Oak; Smokeless Coal."

The decorative cornice is continued around the asymmetrical side elevations. As the parapet steps up, the brick is corbeled for support. Fenestration on the side elevations (east and west facades) include several one-over-one, double-hung, wood sash windows with simple brick sills, and decorative brick lintels. The open end of the U, or the light well, is located off the west

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elevation of the building. There are two entrances situated in the light well; one on the south wall and one on the west wall. Each entrance is reached by four concrete steps with a short brick wall with concrete coping. An iron lamp post is situated on top of one of the walls. Each entrance has a single glass pane and a simple transom. The windows in the light well are similar to others located on the side elevations.

At the rear of the building, the ground elevation rises to the base of the second story, creating a one-story appearance. On this elevation, there are five symmetrically placed windows similar to the others. Each window has a brick lintel that is flush with the wall surface and a brick sill.

The company offices are reached through a small vestibule and two sets of double-doors on the main entrance at the south elevation. Centered in the building is a narrow hall. Several office spaces of various sizes surround the hall. At the rear of the building, along the entire north elevation of the first floor, is a 945 square foot vault. The second floor is reached by a staircase off the main hall. The second floor hall is also surrounded by several offices.

Significant elements of the interior of The New River Coal Company General Office Building include original light fixtures, unpainted woodwork, and hardwood floors. The floorplan is original and unaltered.

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Statement of Significance

The New River Company General Office Building is eligible under Criterion A for Industry and Commerce, and under Criterion C for Architecture. The areas of significance were chosen to reflect the building's role as the center of business operations for The New River Company, a major business and industrial force in the New River coal fields. Within the town of Mt. Hope, the building stands out architecturally as a handsome and well-preserved commercial building, erected in the years following the disastrous town fire of 1910. Evidencing a solid construction of concrete and brick, The New River Company fell into line with the fire-resistant nature of the rebuilt townscape. The period of significance begins with the construction of the building in 1917, and ends in 1954, a point fifty years before the present. During this span of time, the building served as the General Office of The New River Company.

Genesis of The New River Company:

The New River Company was formed by Samuel Dixon, a native of England. In 1876, at the age of twenty, Dixon left the limited opportunities of his home land for the United States, where the growing coal industry offered places for the ambitious. Dixon had some experience in the Yorkshire coal trade, therefore, upon arrival in the United States he went to work for his uncle as a book-keeper. His uncle, Frederick Faulkner, had purchased a coal mine near Montgomery, in Fayette County, a few years before. Dixon rose quickly in his uncle's mines to become a foreman, the first of several supervisory positions in his early career. Around 1893, Dixon had left his uncle's works and started as superintendent and general manager of the MacDonald Colliery Company, owned by his countryman Symington MacDonald.

Dixon pursued a gradual plan of saving, buying, and saving again in his quest to create his own coal empire. As superintendent of the MacDonald operations, Dixon managed to put away his money, then purchase coal lands at reasonable prices. All the while, he was improving the MacDonald interests. It was Dixon who charted the way into the coke business, which was more profitable than the simple domestic coal business MacDonald had pursued before. Dixon pursued an ingenious policy of using the profits from operating mines to purchase new holdings. Refusing remuneration for his efforts until the operations were profitable, he poured his operation's capital into good, modern mining equipment, well-built railroads, and sanitary worker housing, that guaranteed long term, rather than short term, profits. Dixon also applied English-style management techniques that stressed exhaustive book-keeping and full accountability to top management at all times.

By the early 1900s, The New River field was a patch-work of many independent producers. The trend toward consolidation was a natural shift, spurred on by intense competition and rising costs. It was Phineas W. Sprague, of C.H. Sprague and Co., who sensed the value in joining the several operations together in order to more efficiently supply the national demand for

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steam coal. Sprague approached investors in the Scranton, Pennsylvania area, and in the Boston area, with the idea of buying and piecing together the disparate elements of the coal field. Sprague used the lure of Dixon's holdings portfolio to prove his thesis that the idea was sound. Dixon's capital, added to that of the Scranton and Boston capitalists, resulted in the creation of The New River Fuel Company on June 17, 1905. The New River Company evolved from the earlier merger a year later, in 1906, and the White Oak Coal Company was established to serve as the sales agent for the associated mines. Two railroads, the White Oak Railway Company, and the Paint Creek & Pines River Railway were company owned, and served to connect the mines to the mainline Virginian Railway and the C&O Railway.

Dixon served as president of the newly merged coal interests for only six years. Although his methods were visionary, and his management principles sound, he could not stop an investor revolt in 1912. The result of this event was Dixon's ouster from the leadership of The New River Company. After resigning from the company, Dixon went on to lease a nearby mine, and continued in a smaller, yet still successful, way until his death in 1934.

The General Office Building—An Era of Expansion and Modernization:

The present General Office came into existence during the years of modernization that followed the change in management. The new company president, Robert H. Gross, led the company through a series of changes that took advantage of the most modern materials, technologies, and types of organization. Wooden tipples were replaced with steel, new worker's housing was constructed and old stock rehabilitated, and all mines were electrified using power from a new power plant at Cabin Creek Junction on the Kanawha River.

The company selected Mt. Hope as the center of its operations. Mt. Hope had been a slow-growing community prior to the coal boom of the late-19th century. Gradually, the town increased in size, but its growth was stopped short by a fire in 1910 that destroyed forty businesses and one hundred and fifty houses. The fire caused the aggregated loss of five hundred thousand dollars, and left one thousand people homeless. Reconstruction started immediately, using brick, stone, and concrete where once there had been wood. Within two years, most of the town had been rebuilt in a fire-resistant fashion. It was into this spirit of renewal that The New River Company added their building to the town inventory.

Prior to the construction of the General Office building, the management functions of the company had been scattered among the many coal towns. By building in Mt. Hope, the company could consolidate its management functions in one place, thus saving the loss in time and money coping with a widely scattered industrial complex. It helped that the town (incorporated as a city in 1921) was at the center of an expanding network of hard-surfaced roads, thus easing transportation difficulties between the company's far-flung mines and towns. Work on the building moved quickly, with the footprint (with a notation "from plans") indicated on the May,

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1917 edition of the Mt. Hope Sanborn fire insurance map. The company followed a similar pattern when it moved its outmoded repair facilities from Carlisle to a plot just to the west of the General Office in 1920. The new facility included a large machine shop for the repair of the company's vast inventory of mining equipment, and a central warehouse that stored spare parts for quick replacement and return to service turnaround times. The new General Office and the nearby shop buildings were solidly constructed from concrete and brick.

Postscript—1930s to 1954:

Good times continued for The New River Company through the decades of the 1920s and 1930s. The company was often recognized for its paternalistic interest in the well-being of its employees, characterized by the lawn and garden competitions held every year. The company also encouraged safety in its mines by requiring that all employees be certified in first aid and mine rescue techniques, and by engaging in competitions to encourage participation. During World War Two, the company was honored by the National Victory Garden Institute for its fine performance in the 1943 victory garden drive. The New River Company employees did their part in the total national production of 8,000,000 tons of food for the victory garden movement.

In 1940, The New River Company secured its immediate future by purchasing 20,000 acres of minable coal from the McKell heirs. This accomplishment was joined by the inauguration of forest conservation activities to secure future timber needs, and the expansion into strip mining, a method of exploiting coal reserves that was new to the company. The decade of the 1950s witnessed changing fortunes not just for The New River Company, but for the coal industry as a whole. Deep mine automation, strip mining, and the advent of the Diesel locomotive reduced the need for coal as the decade went on. Coal usage for industrial and domestic use likewise diminished. Ever so slowly, the company began to retrench, but in the early 1950s, the company's eventual demise in the 1980s must have seemed remote, indeed.

Summary:

The New River Company General Office Building evidences recognizable historic significance and integrity that warrants recognition under Criterion C for Architecture. In addition, the building served for decades as the center of operations of one of the state's leading coal companies, and was built as part of their movement to centralize their management operations. This renders the building significant under Criterion A for Commerce and Industry between the years 1917 and 1954. The building continues in its historic use as an office building, housing the operations of Thomas W. Howard, Inc. on the second floor, and rented office space on the first floor.

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Verbal Boundary Description

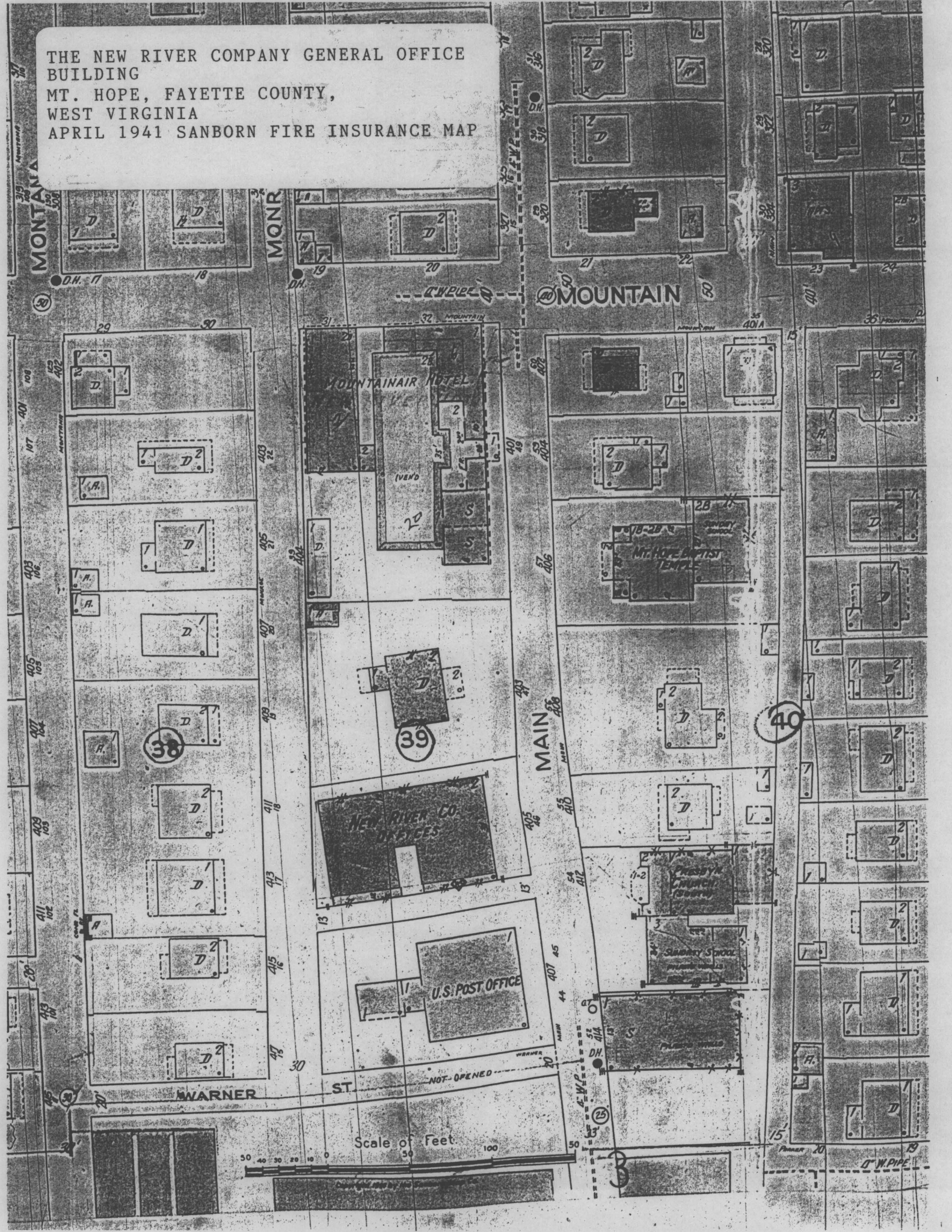
All that said lot or parcel of land situate in the town of Mt. Hope, Fayette County, which is bounded and described as follows: Beginning at a point on Main Street, Mt. Hope, at the corner of Lot No. 5 of the Warner Addition to the town of Mt. Hope, thence Northwest 119 feet to Monroe Street, thence Southwest 100 feet with Monroe Street to the corner of Lot No. 8, thence Southeast 131 feet 6 inches to Main Street, thence following Main Street in a Northeasterly direction to the place of beginning.

Taken from a deed dated December 12, 1916, from Alex McNabb and Wife to The New River Company.

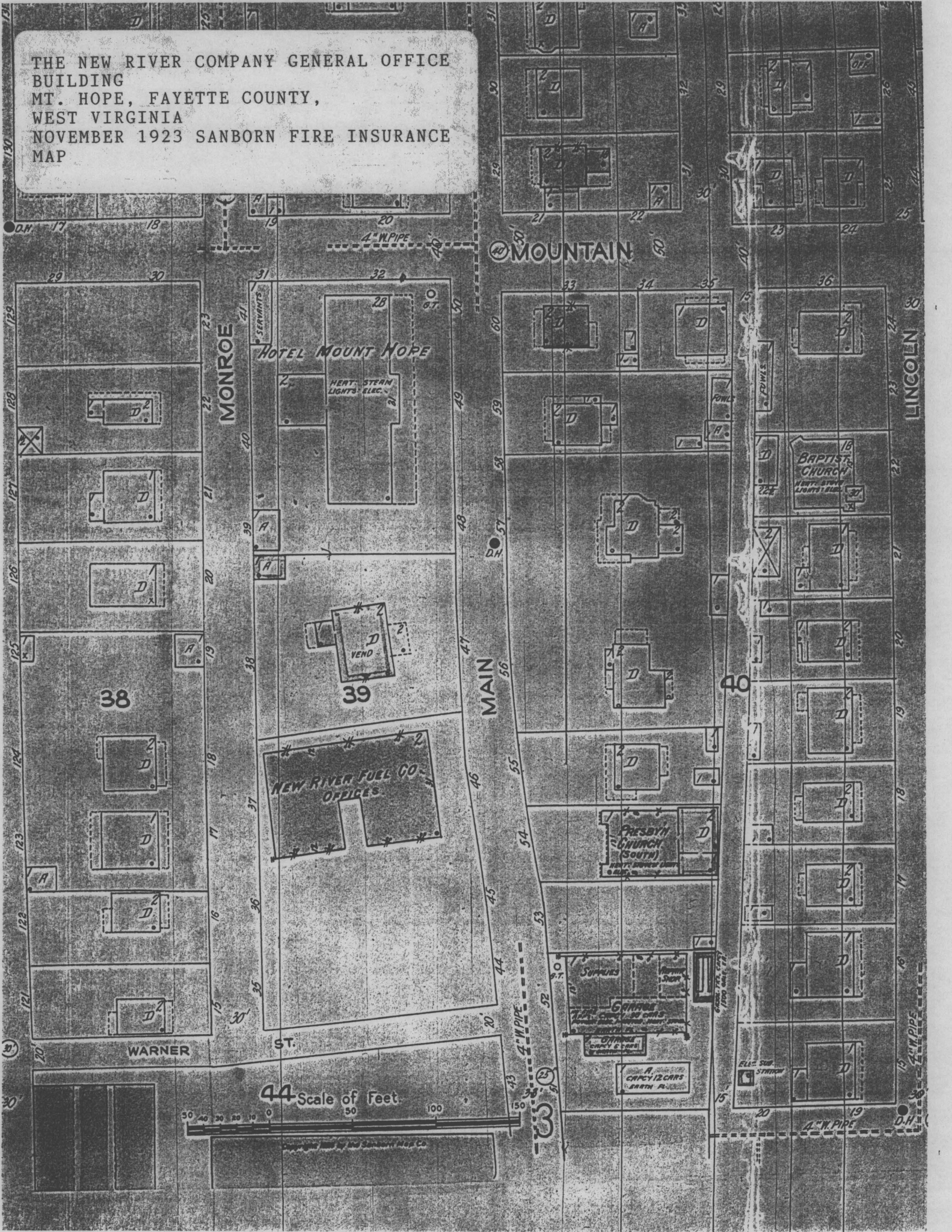
Boundary Justification

The property described above is the plot historically and currently associated with the New River Company General Office Building.

THE NEW RIVER COMPANY GENERAL OFFICE
BUILDING
MT. HOPE, FAYETTE COUNTY,
WEST VIRGINIA
APRIL 1941 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP



THE NEW RIVER COMPANY GENERAL OFFICE
 BUILDING
 MT. HOPE, FAYETTE COUNTY,
 WEST VIRGINIA
 NOVEMBER 1923 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE
 MAP

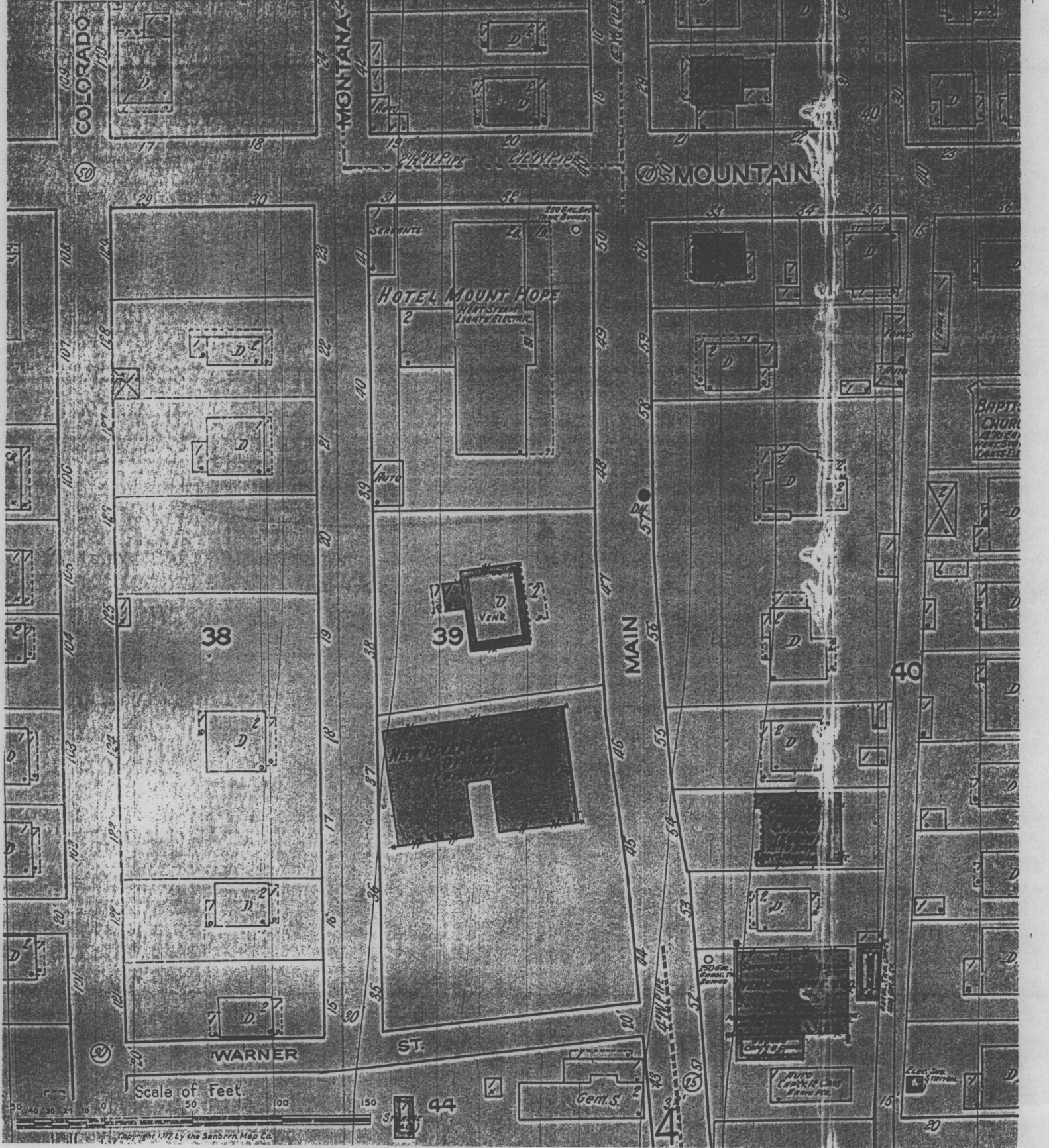


Scale of Feet



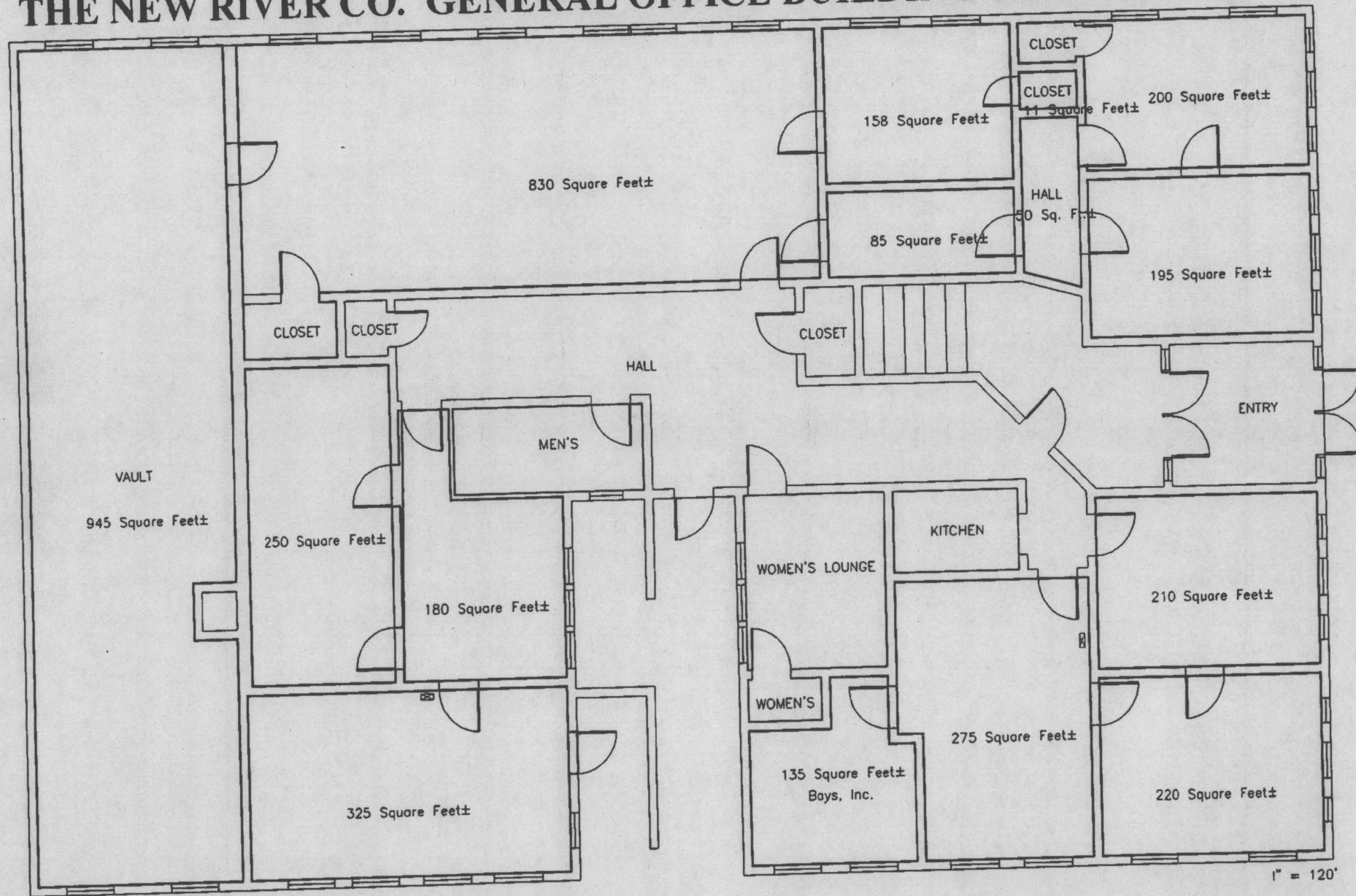
Copyright 1923 by The Sanborn Map Co.

THE NEW RIVER COMPANY GENERAL OFFICE
BUILDING
MT. HOPE, FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
MAY 1917 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP



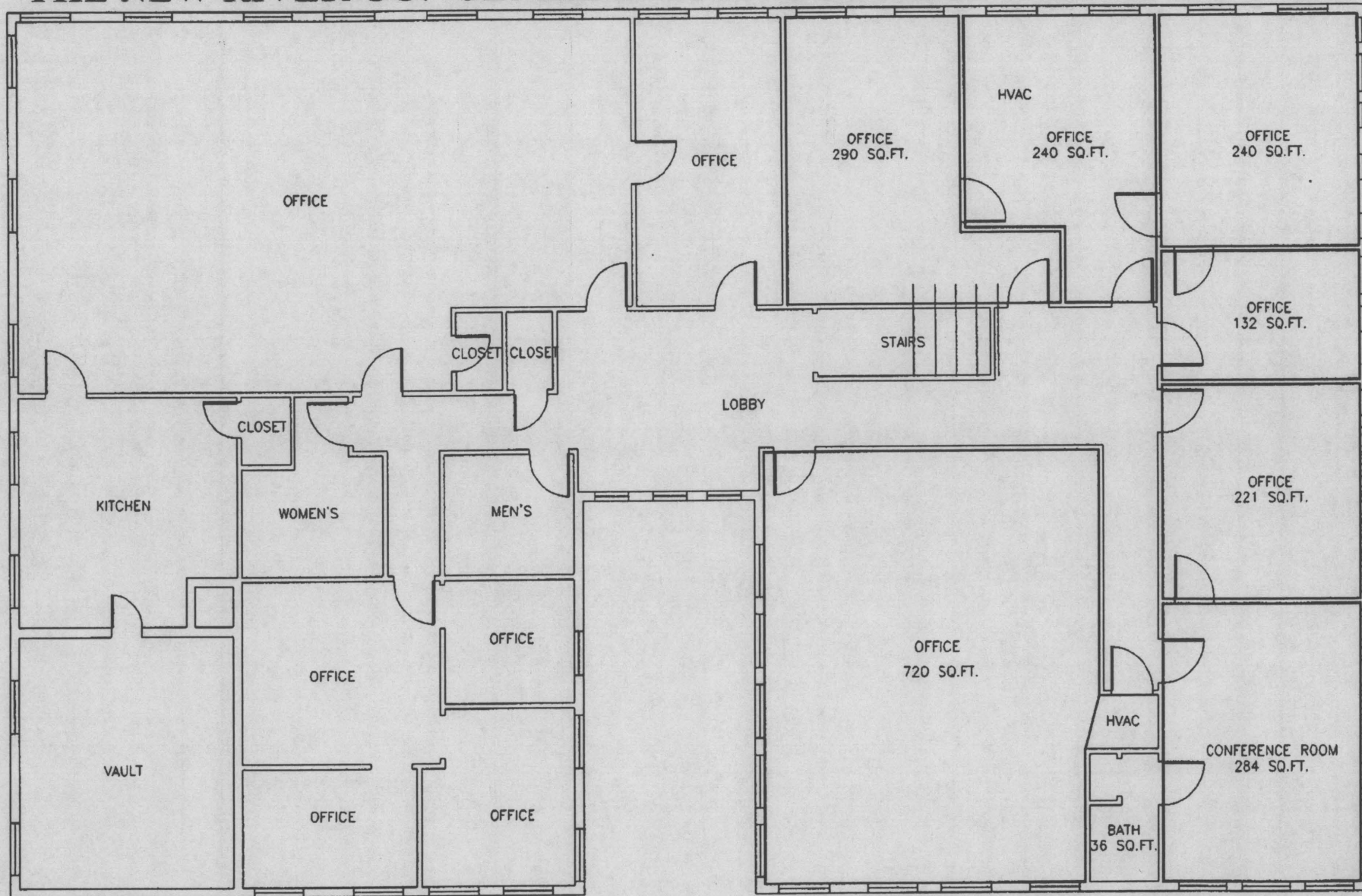
THE NEW RIVER COMPANY GENERAL OFFICE BUILDING
MT. HOPE, FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
FLOORPLAN

THE NEW RIVER CO. GENERAL OFFICE BUILDING-FIRST FLOOR



THE NEW RIVER COMPANY GENERAL OFFICE BUILDING
MT. HOPE, FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
FLOORPLAN

THE NEW RIVER CO. GENERAL OFFICE BUILDING-SECOND FLOOR



1" = 120'



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