

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Old Fort Commercial Historic District

Old Fort, McDowell County, MC0100, Listed 4/29/2011

Nomination by Sybil Argintar

Photographs by Sybil Argintar, March 2010



North side of East Main Street, looking west



Rockett Motors, 49-61 East Main Street



East side of Catawba Avenue, looking south



Railroad Depot, 35 West Main Street

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Old Fort Commercial Historic District

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

Bounded roughly by E. Main Street on the north, Spring Street on the east, Commerce street & number Street on the south, and W. Main Street on the west not for publication N/A

city or town Old Fort vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county McDowell code 111 zip code 28762

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Old Fort Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

McDowell, North Carolina
County and State

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(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>13</u>	<u>5</u>	Total

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

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: _____ Sub: _____
Commerce/Trade financial institution
Commerce/Trade specialty store
Commerce/Trade department store
Commerce/Trade restaurant
Transportation rail-related
Recreation/Culture theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: _____ Sub: _____
Commerce/Trade financial institution
Commerce/Trade specialty store
Commerce/Trade restaurant
Social meeting hall
Recreation/Culture museum
Government public works

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

- Commercial Style
- Italianate
- Romanesque Revival
- Art Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation brick
- roof asphalt
- walls brick
- concrete block
- other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation 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.

Criteria Considerations

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

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

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a 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

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Transportation

Period of Significance

1894 - 1960

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more 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: Western Office, Archives and History

Old Fort Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

McDowell, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property approximately 9.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 392980 3943410
2

Zone Easting Northing
3
4
 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sybil H. Argintar, Preservation Planning Consultant

organization Southeastern Preservation Services date December 31, 2010

street & number 166 Pearson Drive telephone (828) 230-3773

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28801

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name fewer than fifty owners

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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 listings. 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 the 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 Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Old Fort Commercial Historic District
McDowell County, North Carolina

Summary

The Old Fort Commercial Historic District in Old Fort, McDowell County, North Carolina, is located in the center of town, with Highway 70 (East and West Main Street) running in an east-west direction through the district, and Catawba Avenue running in a north-south direction. Most of the north and south sides of the first block of E. Main Street before its intersection with Spring Street and the east side of the first block of Catawba Avenue before its intersection with Commerce Street are included in the district boundary. The depot, arrowhead monument, and railroad right-of-way, located along the south side of W. Main Street, make up the western edge of the district. The district, which encompasses approximately nine and one-half acres, incorporates within its boundaries a concentration of one-and two-story brick and concrete block commercial and government buildings, along with the railroad depot and an historic monument, and forms an intact grouping of Old Fort's downtown buildings from the late-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries.

Generally, the buildings lining East Main Street and Catawba Avenue are contiguous, with uniform setbacks of approximately five feet from the street. The exceptions to this are the free-standing depot and monument at the corner of West Main Street and Catawba Avenue and Rockett Motors, 49-61 E. Main Street. The topography of the district is flat along East and West Main Street, but Catawba Avenue slopes downhill from north to south. Sidewalks line both sides of the streets, with sidewalks on the north side of East Main Street stepped up approximately one foot from the street level. The sidewalk steps down in elevation from north to south on both the east and west sides of Catawba Avenue. Outside the district to the east and north are residential areas, with a large hillside on the north that also topographically separates the commercial area of the district from the residential area. Newer commercial properties are located to the south and west of the district and also at the east end of Main Street before it intersects with Spring Street. The historic district has retained its architectural integrity despite the loss of a handful of historic buildings replaced by modern structures or parks and some minor architectural changes to individual buildings.

The district consists of eleven contributing buildings, one contributing object, one contributing structure, three non-contributing buildings, one non-contributing site, and one non-contributing structure. Of the non-contributing buildings, two are severely altered and one was constructed after the period of significance.

The majority of the buildings in the district have a commercial form, many with corbelled cornices and segmental-arched upper-story windows. The most recent of the contributing buildings within the district is the theater at 66 East Main Street, in an Art Moderne style. Most of the buildings are brick, with the theater constructed of concrete block. Exceptions to the primarily brick or block commercial buildings that comprise the bulk of the district are the concrete, granite, and river rock arrowhead monument located east of the depot at the intersection of Main Street and Catawba Avenue and the frame depot itself. Unless noted otherwise, all buildings have a flat roof with parapet walls, typical of the commercial form.

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Inventory List

The inventory is arranged alphabetically by street name and buildings are listed in numerical order. Street addresses are noted on the district map. Dating of buildings, and some historic uses, is based upon field work, documentary photos, survey or existing National Register files, oral history interviews, owner-provided information, and Sanborn maps from 1918, 1924, and 1937. There are no city directories available for Old Fort. All sources are noted for each entry. If the original owner, business occupant, use, or resident of the building is known, it is noted. Otherwise, properties are named by their historic use such as commercial building, town hall, or theater. Contributing buildings are those that are at least fifty years old, with minor architectural changes to the facades. Typical alterations to contributing buildings include minor changes to storefront materials, covering of transoms, new awnings, and the addition of wood decks or small additions to the rear of the building. Non-contributing buildings are either those that date after the period of significance, 1894 to 1960, or have been significantly altered through major changes to the structure and materials on the façade, such as the enclosure of the storefront of Mashburn's Drug Store at 11 E. Main St. with glass block and tile.

Catawba Avenue:

33 Catawba Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1900; later alteration of façade ca. 1940.

This one-story Commercial Style brick building is two stories at the rear due to the slope of the lot to the east. It retains its original storefront configuration including recessed, single-light, double-leaf wood doors. The display windows and transoms are currently covered with plywood. There is an inset corbelled brick panel at the corbelled cornice, with a soldier course above the storefront. The north (side) and east (rear) elevations are painted. Documentary photos from the 1920s indicate there was a different façade with segmental arch windows and drip moldings similar to the buildings to the south, but this is a separate building. The current façade appears to have been added later, perhaps in the early 1940s, but the date is unknown. Windows on the side elevation are segmental-arched, with six-light fixed sash. Two window openings at the rear are boarded and the central original multi-light-over-panel double-leaf door with covered transom remains, with a later wood entry stoop. In 1918 the building was in use as a general store; in 1924 and 1937 the use was noted as a store. In the 1940s, this building was known as the Nesbitt and Hughes Building, and was operated by Bob Hughes as a department store featuring a bargain basement, general merchandise and clothing on the first floor, and ladies' clothing on the second floor. The store remained in operation until the 1980s (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; "Down Memory Lane" by Arwyn Allison, p. 25; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010; documentary photos).

39-47 Catawba Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1900.

This two-story Italianate-style commercial building has three storefronts, a corbelled cornice, and a row of angled brick above the second-story windows. All windows are under segmental arches with hoods and all have cast-stone sills. There are three single window bays divided by brick pilasters on the second floor. The north storefront (#39) is painted and has an off-center recessed entry framed by round cast-iron columns, a replacement door with a covered transom, and flanking display windows. The center bay

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(#43) has its original storefront, with transoms painted. There is a recessed single-light double-leaf door flanked by round columns. The three window bays above this storefront all have segmental-arched, double-hung, six-over-six sash. The south storefront (#47) has metal-frame second-story sash. Sanborn maps indicate there originally was a porch on this storefront. The display windows and transoms are boarded, but the original recessed entry with its single-light double-leaf door and flanking columns remains intact. The first-story façade has been painted.

In 1918 this building housed a drugstore, a general store, and a hardware store. In 1924 and 1937, the building remained in use as retail space. Mr. J. L. Nichols operated a department store in the building and J. L. Lackey ran a hardware store (it is not known in which storefronts these were located). In the 1950s, Early Brothers grocery was located here in the north section (#39), Harris Supply, a hardware store, was in the center bay (#43), and Western Auto was in the south bay (#47) (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; "Down Memory Lane" by Arwyn Allison, p. 25; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010; documentary photos).

E. Main Street:

3 E. Main Street. Bank of Old Fort. Contributing. ca. 1895.

This two-story Italianate-style commercial brick building has segmental-arch, replacement sash windows under drip molding and recessed panels divided by long brick corbels, with angled brick and corbelling at the cornice. This building and the adjacent one to the east date from approximately the same time (ca. 1895 to 1900) and are similar in appearance. The original storefront, flush with the façade and with a door on either side of the large display window, is intact. The main door on the west is wide and single-light-over-panels. The door on the east is paneled. A cloth awning covers the upper portion of the storefront but the original tall transom windows do remain intact as in the documentary photos. There is a wood handicap ramp added at the front of the building, but it is not attached. All openings at the rear are arched and a modern wood deck has been added. This building was in use as a bank from at least 1918 to 1950. Beginning in 1954 and continuing into the early 1980s, a barber shop was located on the first floor. John Bradley was president of the bank, with his son Fred Bradley assuming the role after his father died (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; survey files; "Down Memory Lane" by Arwyn Allison, p. 19; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010; documentary photos).

5 E. Main Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1900.

This two-story Italianate-style brick building has an unusual Romanesque Revival-influenced arched storefront with large one-over-one display windows flanking the recessed doorway. The single-light, double-leaf door has a multi-light transom and multi-light windows on either side. The second story is three-bay, with long brick corbels between bays, single two-over-two double-hung sash windows under segmental-arches with drip molding, as well as recessed brick panels, angled brick, and corbelling at the cornice. A wood deck with a pergola roof has been added at the rear, and one window on the upper floor has been replaced with a new multi-light door. Rear windows are one-over-one double-hung sash with flat arches. In 1918 and 1924 this building was in use as a retail store, and was in use as a restaurant in 1937. Walter M. Graham, a cabinet maker, may have been the carpenter who worked on the building.

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His name is written inside one of the front windows. William I. Calais, a furniture manufacturer, may have been the original owner, but further documentation is needed. Additional uses of the building may have included a drugstore, a newspaper office, and a restaurant, known as the Arrowhead Grill, in the 1940s and 1950s; a television repair shop, known as Harris Radio and TV Sales and Service, may have been located here in the 1980s (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; survey files; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010; documentary photos).

11 E. Main Street. Mashburn's Drug Store. Non-contributing. ca. 1918; alterations 1990s.

This two-story Commercial Style brick commercial building has a modern storefront and paired replacement windows on its tan brick façade. The building entry is located on the east end of the façade with a replacement door and transom. Single replacement windows are located on its plain brick rear elevation. Modern materials used in the storefront alteration include glass block and tile. The only remaining original features include the brick window sills, a soldier course above the windows and storefront, cornice panels marked by header rows, and inset concrete squares in brick pilasters on the east and west ends of the façade. There is a concrete handicap ramp added at the rear. Uses for this building noted in 1918 include a drugstore on the first floor and the telephone exchange on the second, but in 1924 and 1937, only a drugstore. Pink Mashburn was the owner of the drugstore, which also included a soda fountain where many young people gathered. Dr. Griffin was the pharmacist in the drug store, and Dr. Chaney had his offices upstairs, along with Dr. McIntosh. In the 1940s and 1950s, the building housed Griffin Drug Store (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; "Down Memory Lane" by Arwyn Allison, p. 19; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010).

Northeast corner E. Main Street and Catawba Avenue. Park. Non-contributing site. ca. 1980s.

This wedge-shape lot is in use as a public park, with a wooden gazebo, concrete and wood benches, a concrete picnic table and benches, metal flag pole and light posts, stone drinking fountain, planting beds on the west, and an open grassy area surrounding the seating.

20 E. Main Street. Norton Building. Non-contributing. 1995.

This one-story modern brick office building is currently in use as a bank. The main entry, four bays wide, faces west onto the park, with two side bays fronting onto E. Main Street and another two onto N. Railroad Street. All bays are divided by brick pilasters that extend above the roofline to form crenellation. There are faux multi-light display windows on the north, south, and east elevations, along with two central single-pane single doors on the east. All other doors are metal. There is an entry stoop on the main building and a later one-story brick wing at the rear. This building replaced an older building, likely demolished in the 1990s, which housed a crockery, Lytle & Willis, and a furniture store in the 1950s (date on building; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010).

23 E. Main Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1918.

This two-story commercial brick building retains its original storefront and windows. The recessed entry with single-light double-leaf door is flanked by display windows with painted transoms. The original paired one-over-one, double-hung sash windows capped by decorative and exaggerated keystones, with concrete sills and lintels, are intact on the upper floor. At the cornice, three long brick corbels extend

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down approximately one-fourth of the façade. The concrete panel above the storefront is mostly covered by the current sign. At the rear, there are three bays on the second story, consisting of a door flanked by one-over-one single, double-hung sash windows. In 1918 this building was in use as the post office, with retail stores located here in 1924 and 1937. In the 1940s and 1950s there was a general clothing store located here (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010; documentary photos).

25-37 E. Main Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1924; alterations 1970s.

This four-bay Italianate-influenced commercial brick building has three one-story bays on the west end (#25, 27, and 31), with a two-story bay (#37) on the east end. A documentary photo from the 1970s or 1980s indicates all the current changes had been made by then except for the addition of windows on the east elevation of #37. The current fixed panes have been added since that time. Long brick corbels are located at each end of the storefronts. There is corbelling and a recessed panel in the cornice on the three east bays (#27, 31, and 37). The storefront at #25 has been heavily altered and is covered with metal and vinyl siding on the storefront, obscuring the cornice. The storefront configuration is intact with its recessed single-pane single-leaf door flanked by display windows and topped by a transom. The store at #27 has the most intact storefront with a recessed entry, single-light double-leaf door under a transom, and display windows. The next bay to the east (#31) has a storefront flush with the façade, with a modern door, display windows over a paneled bulkhead, and intact transom. The easternmost storefront (#37) is also flush with the façade, with an intact transom, replacement double-leaf door, and three-panel door on the east which leads to the second story. Windows are replacement fixed-light panes, but in the original openings. Near the cornice, in the center of the façade, is a small one-over-one window with a segmental arch. In 1924 and 1937 there were two stores and the post office, with a movie theater in #37. In the 1950s, a fruit stand was located in this section (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; Interview by Sybil Argintar with Gary Davis, long-time resident, May 17, 2010; documentary photos).

32 E. Main Street. Commercial Building. Non-contributing. ca. 1924; alterations 1990s.

This one-story brick commercial building has a modernized storefront flush with the facade with multi-light display windows flanking a central door with sidelights and transom. Just below the cornice is a header row of brick. There is a raised platform and a delivery door at the rear. According to long-time resident Gary Davis, the entry to this building originally angled inward and the current flush façade and storefront was created later, in the 1990s. In 1924 and 1937 this building was in use as a retail store. In the 1940s and 1950s it was in use as a furniture store (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; interview by Sybil Argintar with Gary Davis, long-time resident, May 17, 2010; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010).

48 E. Main Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1924.

This one-story brick Commercial Style building has two original storefront bays, flush with the facade. The bay on the east has a single display window and a new brick bulkhead. The west side also has new anodized aluminum framing, and a double-leaf door flanked by display windows with transoms. There is a recessed brick panel and a row of angled brick above each of the storefronts and a second row of angled brick across the entire cornice. There is evidence on the interior that the tin ceiling, which remains, went

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all the way to the front, with no angled entry walls, and there is also evidence of a wall that was removed from the east bay to create one larger interior space. At the rear, there is a raised door with steps on the east and a delivery door on the west. The 1924 and 1937 Sanborn maps indicate this building was in use as retail stores. In the 1940s and 1950s, this building housed a shoe store and a grocery owned by Charlie Knoblet (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; Interview by Sybil Argintar with Gary Davis, long-time resident, May 17, 2010; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010).

49-61 E. Main Street. Rockett Motors. Contributing. ca. 1940.

Built after 1937 (Sanborn map), the original hexagonal portion of this one-story commercial brick building, on the east, projects out to the south and was the showroom in the 1950s and 1960s. At the rear, the alley is much higher in elevation than Main Street, and the building is built into the hillside. Display windows remain on all but the west side where a small loading, auto-bay door is located. All transoms are painted. Windows on the east elevation are boarded. The one-story west wing of this building, the arched-roof service wing, is six bays wide, two of which appear to have originally been garage bays. A door is located in the center of the building under a stepped and crenellated parapet. Three of the bays have been altered with brick infill to make the openings smaller. A 1950s photo indicates that these bays were originally a central entry, an entry to the east service area, and a display window. Semi-circular flat concrete roof coverings are located at the two main entries, on the front of the original section and at the center of the addition. This building appears in a ca. 1950 photo with gas pumps in front of the service wing. Rockett Motors was a Chrysler dealer, with more sales than the Asheville dealer in the 1950s. The building is currently in use as the performance space for Old Fort Mountain Music in the east section and town vehicular maintenance offices in the west wing (Sanborn maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; documentary photograph; Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010).

66-a E. Main Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1940.

This one-story painted brick commercial building has two storefront bays, each bay with a central door framed by display windows. Terra cotta coping is located on the parapet of this otherwise undecorated building. The east side has a single-light door flanked by tall rectangular display windows, and the west side has a central door with transom and sidelights flanked by large square display windows. All window and door framing appears to be replacement aluminum. There are one-story unpainted brick additions at the rear, with multi-light metal windows with brick sills. Rear doors are two-light aluminum frame and three-light-over-panel. This building was in use as retail stores from 1924 to at least 1937, and in the 1940s and 1950s, was Griffin Drug on the west end and a bank on the east end. Gibbs Hardware bought this building in the 1970s and cut through into the adjacent building (the theater) to the east to expand the store (Butch Gibbs, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010).

66-b E. Main Street. Roxy Theatre. Contributing. 1946; alterations ca. 1962.

This two-story painted concrete block late Art Deco-style building with some Art Moderne-influence has a zig-zag cornice, a stuccoed façade which continues around onto the east elevation, and three narrow one-over-one windows on the second story. The design of this building is typical of many theaters of the 1940s. There was an extensive fire in this building in the 1950s, which gutted the interior. The current metal-framed storefront with a hipped roof wooden awning was added ca. 1962, when Gibbs Hardware

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expanded into the newly rehabilitated building. The aluminum-frame storefront currently has three entries, a center entry door flanked by display windows, and metal doors with transoms on either end. On the east and west elevations there are double one-over-one windows on the second story, and the parapet roofline steps down. A wood deck was added at the rear, along with a small one-story, flat roofed concrete block storage building with an attached open area with a shed roof. Other rear additions include a second-story entrance off a small metal-roofed deck and a double-leaf rear entry on the first story.

The theater is noted in town minutes from August 13, 1946, when the Board of Aldermen voted to construct a sidewalk in “front of the new theater.” A Roxy Theatres (Old Fort and Swannanoa, North Carolina) advertisement from ca. 1950 in the collections of the Mountain Gateway Museum notes that “in time of international chaos and calamity, such as the present, two great institutions become the focal point for a befuddled mankind in quest of solace—the church and the Theatre.” Indeed, the theater was a major entertainment center before the beginning of television. Movies were popular with local youth, with tickets nine cents each and popcorn five cents (Butch Gibbs, owner of Gibbs Hardware, interview with Sybil Argintar July 9, 2010; town minute books 1946; Mountain Gateway Museum collections)

Note that 66-a and 66-b are two separate buildings, but are part of the same business and thus have the address of 66 E. Main Street. The common wall between the two buildings was broken through in the 1960s to create connected retail space on the first floor.

W. Main Street:

25 W. Main Street. Railroad Depot. Contributing. 1894; freight room added ca. early 1900s.

Built in 1894 as a passenger depot, the building was expanded by additions on the east and west in the early 1900s, adding the freight room on the west and additional waiting rooms to the passenger area on the east. All additions were in place by ca. 1940. The one-story frame depot, set on the north side of the Southern Railway tracks, has a low-pitched hip roof supported by stick knee braces, two chimneys, German siding, and six-light fixed sash, six-over-six double-hung and four-over-four double-hung windows. There is a concrete walkway on the north and a larger patio to the east, which incorporates the Arrowhead Monument. A modern iron fence surrounds the building on the south and east. The façade, facing W. Main Street, is seven bays in width with single and double windows alternating with doors. At the west end is a double-leaf freight door. The passenger area on the east is delineated from the freight area by a wooden ledge that runs beneath the windows, narrower than the ledge that delineates the freight section. There are seven bays on the south elevation, including a bay window approximately in the center, providing a clear view of the tracks from the passenger area. To the east of the bay window there is a single, five-panel door with covered transom flanked by single and double windows, the same as on the north elevation. In the freight area on the west there is a single-light-over-bead board panel double-leaf door and paneled pocket doors. The east elevation is five bays wide, consisting of a single six-over-six window and four fixed six-light windows. The waiting rooms, offices, and freight areas are all intact on the interior. The only changes to the building are a replacement roof, the removal of the freight

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loading platform on the west elevation, a new stone foundation under the west end of the building, and a parking area to the west.

The Old Fort depot played a unique role in the Western North Carolina Railroad and later Southern Railway systems. Helper engines were stored at Old Fort to guide trains up the steep mountain grade to Swannanoa and on to Asheville. They were also available to assist eastbound trains up the grade to Ridgecrest and then back down the steep decline to Old Fort. In 1905, Southern Railway bought the Western North Carolina Railroad and continued its freight and passenger runs through the area. George W. Sandlin served as station master here until he retired in 1954. The last station master to work at the depot, up until passenger service was discontinued in the late 1970s, was Lloyd Lovik. The depot, renovated in 2005, is currently in use as offices and as a railroad museum and visitor's center (Sanborn Maps 1918, 1924, and 1937; Old Fort Depot Museum display information and collections).

Caboose Car. Non-contributing structure. 2005.

This caboose car, located to the west of the depot building, was moved to the site of the depot when the renovation work was completed in 2005. It replaces the freight loading platform.

South of Railroad Depot. Western North Carolina Railroad Right-of-Way. Contributing structure. 1867.

The railroad right-of-way, located south of the railroad depot, has existed in this same location since the train arrived in Old Fort in 1867. The rail is still used as part of the western North Carolina freight service route, although the trains no longer stop at the Old Fort station.

Southwest corner intersection W. Main Street and Catawba Avenue. Arrowhead Monument and Fountain. Contributing object. 1910s; 1930.

The circular fountain which surrounds the base of this monument was built in the 1910s, before the arrowhead monument. It consists of the circular concrete basin surrounded by a narrow planting bed and a low granite wall with beaded mortar joints. There is a cast-iron fence, added in 2002, approximately fourteen inches tall, on top of this wall. Set within this wall, which narrow at the top, there are two stone drinking fountains. In the center of the fountain, set on a stone base on top of the concrete basin, is the arrowhead monument which was dedicated in 1930. The tapering base of the monument is a mixture of rough granite stones and smooth river rock, with pink-tinted and beaded mortar. The arrowhead at the top is constructed of rough-hewn pink granite from a Salisbury, North Carolina, quarry. Documentary photos from the late 1910s to early 1920s feature the fountain, a centerpiece of the town. The engineering for the fountain was designed by Colonel Daniel Adams (1872-1957), who came to Old Fort in 1913. Colonel Adams was a pioneer in the field of hydroelectric power, designing dams on Mill Creek and the Catawba River to generate power for the mills and electricity for the town. Colonel Adams also designed the monument for the center of the fountain. The dedication for the monument was held on July 27, 1930. The monument commemorated the original Davidson's Fort, which stood in the area ca. 1776 and was the westernmost settlement of the state, and also served as a symbol of peace between the early settlers and the Cherokee nation. Speakers at this dedication included Reverend Clarence Stuart McClellan Jr., J. Hampton Rich, Honorable Zebulon Weaver, and Honorable R. R. Reynolds. Additional brass plaques on

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the monument include the one with the inscription “Appalachian Indian Road” on the west, and the one on the north with the inscription “This marks the site of The Old Indian Fort built A.D. 1756. The western outpost of the united States and of North Carolina until 1776, from which this town was named.” The Appalachian Indian Road marker denotes the juncture of four Cherokee Indian trails, one of which was the Catawba Trail that followed roughly along where Highway 70 now runs (survey files; Ann Swann, local historian with the Mountain Gateway Museum in Old Fort, interview with Sybil Argintar December 20, 2010; scrapbook collection at McDowell County Library in Old Fort; “Old Fort, North Carolina, Saw Al, Thanks to Sandlin”, *AP Wire Service*, 1928; documentary photo collection of Bill Nichols).

The North Carolina Highway Historical Marker, erected in 1956 within the circular basin around the arrowhead monument, denotes the importance of the fort located to the southeast of the marker. The text on the marker reads “Early outpost against Indians. Used by Gen. Rutherford in expedition against Cherokee, September, 1776. Stood nearby and gave name to this town.”

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Summary

The Old Fort Commercial Historic District, with a period of significance of 1894 to 1960, meets National Register Criterion A, for its association with the late nineteenth-to-mid-twentieth-century commercial and transportation development of the town, and Criterion C, for its intact collection of late nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century commercial architecture. The district, of local significance, developed as the commercial center of the town primarily as a result of the arrival of the railroad in 1867. Old Fort played a key role in the expansion of rail lines into other parts of western North Carolina, bringing settlers, visitors, industry, and goods into the area and shipping products out. Both freight and passenger service expanded with the construction of the current depot in 1894 and the district continued to develop through 1960 as commercial buildings were constructed and businesses thrived. Architecturally, the Old Fort Commercial Historic District is important for its collection of late nineteenth-century Italianate-influenced buildings alongside early twentieth-century commercial buildings and the Art Moderne movie theater from the 1940s, showcasing the range of building styles in keeping with national trends.

Historic Background, Commercial, and Transportation Context

McDowell County is located in a topographically transitional area between the mountains to the west and the piedmont counties to the east. British exploration of the county began as early as the 1730s to 1740s, with the area that became Old Fort being one of the westernmost frontier regions for North Carolina's white colonial settlers until the time of the American Revolution. Over time, German and Scots-Irish colonists settled in the region, most of whom came directly from Pennsylvania, or moved further west from the interior settlements of the Yadkin River valley. One of these was Samuel Davidson, who owned the land which later was used, in 1776, to establish a fortified house or fortified stockade known as Davidson's Fort, the origin of the town's modern name. Other prominent early settlers in the county, arriving after Davidson, included members of the Carson, McDowell, Rutherford, and Greenlee families.

During the American Revolution, Davidson's Fort served as a staging ground for operations against the Cherokee. In 1776, North Carolina militia general Griffith Rutherford led a punitive expedition against the Cherokee, destroying numerous villages and crops. For the remainder of the war, small garrisons of North Carolina militia stayed in the area, defending settlers against attacks by Tories and Cherokee warriors. At war's end, the fortification was largely abandoned, but the locals named the town after the site. McDowell County was formed in 1842, and the county seat was established in Marion, named for Francis Marion, South Carolina Revolutionary War hero perhaps better known as "The Swamp Fox."¹

The Western North Carolina Railroad arrived in Old Fort in 1867, signaling the beginning of railroad transportation into the western counties of the state.² In 1871, a 2,200-acre parcel was sold by G. S. F.

¹Cashion, Jerry Clyde. "Old Fort and the North Carolina Frontier" (manuscript report). North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1969.

²<http://www.newrivernotes.com/nc/wnc20.htm> This source notes that the Board of Directors of the Western North Carolina Railway agreed to resume work, which had been interrupted by the Civil War, on the rail line west of Morganton in October, 1866. A contract was let in January, 1868 to continue work from Old Fort up the mountain to Swannanoa. This would date the completion of the rail line to Old Fort to 1867.

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Davidson to the Catawba Vale Land Association, headed up by Sanborn Worthen, who planned to develop the town of Catawba Vale as a railroad workshop.³ In a letter dated July 31, 1871, Worthen notes that he paid \$30,000 for the property, most of which was in agricultural and timber use.⁴ Worthen continued to try to make a go of it and noted in a letter dated September 21, 1871, to his brother and sister that the local houses were “most all made of Loags (logs) or Boreded (boarded) up with clapboards and not furnished any more.”⁵ He also noted in this same letter that he lived “at the foot of the Blue Ridge of mountains near Black Mountain...at the end of the western North Carolina Railroad, the other end is at Salisbury.”⁶ Worthen noted that he had “divided this land off into house Lots and Farm lots to suit purchasers” and that “we expect the Rutherford Railroad to Come here to go through the Blue Ridge Tunnell to Asheville. We are also assured of the Railroad Shops being Located here. Six men have bought lots for stores and shops.”⁷ While several families did buy lots from Sanborn Worthen and settled in the community, the full development of Catawba Vale never happened. Rather, the town of Old Fort, earlier known by the names of Davidson’s Fort, Upper Fort, and Catawba Fort, was chartered in 1872 by the General Assembly, with the name Old Fort granted in 1873.⁸ The town of Old Fort, up until the completion of the rail line west, consisted of wood frame buildings in the commercial section and primarily log or simple wood frame houses.⁹

Until 1879, Old Fort was the “end of the line” for the railroad, with the daunting Old Fort Mountain lying in the path of the continuation of the line to points west. Anyone who wanted to venture further west had to be taken by stagecoach up and across the mountains to Asheville.¹⁰ The continuing economic effects of the Civil War slowed the completion of the rail line to Asheville until 1868 when construction resumed. A total of six tunnels and many extra miles of rails, which switchbacked over the topography, were built between Old Fort and Swannanoa.¹¹ Construction into Ridgecrest, at the top of the mountain, took place between 1873 and 1879, with completion of the Swannanoa Tunnel in 1879.¹² Colonel Alexander Boyd Andrews, a first vice president of Southern Railway, was the chief construction engineer of the enterprise to extend the rail line to Asheville. When the rail lines finally made it over the mountain to Asheville in

³ Johnston, Joanne S., editor. McDowell County Heritage, North Carolina. Marceline, MO: The Walsworth Publishing Company, 1992, p. 24.

⁴ Letter from Sanborn Worthen to his nephew, dated July 31, 1871. Collections of the Mountain Gateway Museum, Old Fort, North Carolina.

⁵ Letter from Sanborn Worthen to his brother and sister, dated September 21, 1871. Collections of the Mountain Gateway Museum, Old Fort, North Carolina.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bishir, Catherine W., Michael A. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin. A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999, p. 168.

⁹ McDowell County survey files essay report.

¹⁰ <http://www.oldfort.org/full%20history.htm>, March 15, 2010.

¹¹ Railroad model in Depot Museum, Old Fort, North Carolina.

¹² Adams, Mary Virginia. “Old Fort—A Railroad Town.” Unpublished article in the collections of the Mountain Gateway Museum, Old Fort, North Carolina, p. 2.

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1880 it was after many years of struggle and the loss of many lives.¹³ When completed, it was considered to be the "...marvel of railroad engineering in the United States."¹⁴

In the 1880s, Old Fort became a resort destination, for a short while, for summer tourists from Wilmington, North Carolina, and other points east. Visitors to the area often stayed at the large wood-frame Round Knob Hotel (no longer standing), constructed in 1879, and visited an unusual nearby tourist attraction, Andrews Geysers, also built in 1879 and later named for Colonel Alexander Boyd Andrews.¹⁵

The town's commercial center began to grow with one- and two-story brick buildings constructed from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s, and a handful built in the 1940s. Town Minute Books from 1911 note several ordinances in place including no bicycles on the sidewalks, store closings on Sundays, and a tax levied on property owners to lay sidewalks downtown. Some of the businesses in town included Epley's store and Graham's ten-pin bowling alley.¹⁶ The May 2, 1912 minutes noted that a fire line was to be established, which prohibited construction with any materials other than brick, stone, or concrete and that a permit would be required from the Board of Aldermen.¹⁷ Later in 1912, the Board of Aldermen began discussing the installation of an electric light system.¹⁸ However, it was not until almost a year later, on November 10, 1913, that a bid for construction was accepted for installing a water and electric system. The contract was with White Coal Power Company of Washington, D.C. At this same meeting, a Board of Trade, precursor to a Chamber of Commerce, was organized.¹⁹ On July 3, 1914, the aldermen began discussing the construction of a sewerage system "necessary for the health of citizens." A bond issue of \$12,000 was put up for approval. This amount was increased to \$15,000 and passed on December 26, 1914.²⁰

In July 1916, torrential rains flooded Old Fort, as in many other parts of western North Carolina, with extensive damage to Southern Railway properties closing many of the lines temporarily.²¹ As noted in a Charlotte Observer article from August 18, 1916, much of the line from Old Fort to Ridgecrest had to be reconstructed. While less than five miles apart as the crow flies, the rail line between these two stops, due to the steep terrain, wound around the mountain for over fourteen miles, requiring between 3,000 and 4,000 men to reconstruct it. By 1918, industry had also become important to the economy and

¹³ <http://www.oldfort.org/full%20history.htm>, March 15, 2010.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Fossett, Mildred B. *History of McDowell County*, Marion, North Carolina: McDowell County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976, p. 50.

¹⁶ Town Minute Books May 12, June 2, June 29 and September 11, 1911.

¹⁷ Ibid, May 2, 1912. This fire line area included the nominated historic district. It is not known if a fire previous to this led to the creation of this fire line, but it is likely that earlier wood-frame buildings had burned.

¹⁸ Ibid, December 6, 1912.

¹⁹ Ibid, November 10, 1913.

²⁰ Ibid, July 3 and December 26, 1914.

²¹ <http://www.oldfort.org/full%20history.htm>, December 21, 2010.

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employment of Old Fort. Local industries included Union Tanning Company and Old Fort Extract Works.²²

With recovery from the 1916 flood, the population of Old Fort grew to 931 by 1920. By 1924, the town had one mile of paved streets and a volunteer fire company comprising a chief and twelve men.²³ The 1926 National Publicity Edition of *The Marion Star* newspaper contained ads for many thriving businesses in Old Fort, including Old Fort Drug Store, with the slogan of “Reliable Drugs and Toilet Articles Correctly Priced.” The Bank of Old Fort also had an ad, “Yours for Service.” J. S. Bradley was the bank president; P. H. Mashburn was vice-president; and F. M. Bradley was cashier. ²⁴ The Chamber of Commerce, in an attempt to lure visitors and residents, noted in this publication that Old Fort was “superbly situated in the Catawba river valley in the heart of the Blue Ridge and with a setting of natural beauty unsurpassed, Old Fort presents to the tourist and homeseeker alike everything with which the fancy is intrigued...being on the main line of the Southern Rail and on the Blue Ridge bus line, its location, access, transportation, improvements and permanency of public utility give steadily ascending values.”²⁵ This same publication noted that Old Fort had several schools, four churches, paved streets and sidewalks, civic and religious organizations, a moving picture theater, a bus line to Marion and Asheville, well-built business buildings and businesses that included two drugstores, one bank, four garages, and several mercantiles. Other businesses advertising in this edition included Bradley Drug Company, Sandler & LeFevre real estate agents, Old Fort Motor Company, Adams-Childers & Company real estate, and Bryson-Snyder Company dry goods store, which had relocated from Marion.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century Old Fort was also an industrial center for the county. Industry in the town included the tannery and extraction plants (which extracted tanning chemicals from tree bark) and two grist mills, the City Mill and the T. C. Guthrie Grist Mill.²⁶ Industry in Old Fort expanded when Joseph Bancroft & Son Company of Wilmington, Delaware, purchased 650 acres one mile east of town for a bleachery. The two major industries included Union Tanning Company, build in 1904, and Old Fort Extract Plant, also built at the turn of the century. Together these two industries employed over 375 people during the early twentieth century. The Union Tanning Company served for almost thirty years as one of the major employers in the county. Located on Water Street, one block south of Main Street, the tannery also provided boarding houses for workers, which lined both sides of the street.²⁷ One of thirty-three plants in the country owned by Central Leather Company of New York, at one time it employed 300 men and produced 300 to 350 hides per day for shoe leather and industrial belts. The plant closed in 1931 after a massive fire.²⁸

²² Sanborn map 1918.

²³ Sanborn map 1924.

²⁴ *The Marion Star* newspaper. National Publicity Edition, 1926. Collections of Mountain Gateway Museum, Old Fort, North Carolina, p. 4.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sanborn map 1924.

²⁷ McDowell County Heritage, p. 55.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 95.

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Life in Old Fort in the Depression years of the 1930s was difficult, as in other small towns. The population by 1930 was 866, a slight drop from 1920. Salaries of the mayor and other town personnel salaries were reduced.²⁹ The town had trouble paying its bills and approved a plan to be presented to the North Carolina Municipal Council to refinance its bond debts so it could be in the clear to lure more industry to the area. In a letter to the Council it was noted that the “town has no industry of importance and that many of its residents are without gainful employment... the town’s normal trade territory is not of high agricultural productivity...limits the development of retail trade which is at present the chief source of support.”³⁰ Many residents survived by growing their own food, as jobs were scarce. Town minute books noted the ongoing struggle to collect property taxes, as well as the shutdown of Union Tanning Company after the 1931 fire. In 1932, the Extract Plant also ceased production, putting many more out of work. The closing of these two businesses had far-reaching effects on the community, since no major crops were grown by local farmers other than bark and chestnut wood utilized in their tanning process. The North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration (ERA) made plans in February 1934 to re-establish a tannery to employ Old Fort residents, and a local building was purchased and renovated and expanded by the ERA Works Division. The plant opened on May 29. FERA required that production be stepped up, and hides were soaked, pickled, and stored at the rate of 400 per day, but later reduced to 200 per day. Approximately 130 workers were employed. The ERA program closed on November 18, 1934, but the new tannery remained in operation until January 9, 1936.³¹ In addition, as part of the Works Progress Administration program, a stone community center built in 1937, now housing the Mountain Gateway Museum, provided additional jobs for local residents.

By the 1940s, economic recovery was well on the way. New industries that opened during the decade included Clearwater Finishing Plant (rayon finishing), United Rayon Mills, and Parker Hosiery.³² Public improvements also were made. The Board of Aldermen passed an agreement in the early 1940s to raise the sidewalks in certain areas of the downtown and install steps as needed, and in 1941 traffic in the town increased, traffic lights were installed.³³ Some of the businesses located in downtown on the north side of Main Street included Old Fort Drug Company, J & B Press Shop, Cline’s Beer Parlor, the post office, Ideal Fruit Store, Smith’s Clothing Store, and Rockett Motors (49-61 E. Main Street).³⁴ The railroad, both passenger and freight, continued to serve as the main connection to other areas through the 1940s. Soon after, more roads were built through the county and the automobile began to take prominence over

²⁹ Town Minute Books July 30, September 28, 1931; September 16, 1932; May 20, 1935.

³⁰ Ibid, July 10, 1939.

³¹ <http://www.oldfort.org/full%20history.htm>, December 21, 2010.

³² “Old Fort Was Early Western Outpost” and “Old Fort, A Growing Town.” The Robin Hood Collection of McDowell County Historical Material, Volume 1, 1981. Located in McDowell County Public Library, Marion, North Carolina.

³³ Town Minute Books February 8, March 20, 1941, and May 27, 1941.

³⁴ Ibid, April 11, 1947. These minutes noted the widening of the alley behind this group of buildings. It is not known where the other businesses were located.

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the rails. Numerous permits for taxi services were granted by the Board of Aldermen during the late 1940s.³⁵

In Old Fort's commercial heyday through the first half of the twentieth century, businesses located in downtown included stores, restaurants, a tourist court, a photo studio, and an automobile service center.³⁶ In the 1950s to early 1960s, the town was so busy on Saturdays that often pedestrians could not fit on the sidewalks. Street dances were common forms of entertainment in the summer, along with movies. Groceries, of which there were five in the downtown area, delivered directly to customers' homes.³⁷ One industry that appeared in Old Fort in the 1950s was Ethan Allen, Inc., which made furniture in the facility that was originally Old Fort Manufacturing Company, also a furniture manufacturer.³⁸

The Old Fort Commercial Historic District continued to thrive into the early 1960s, and as highway travel became easier, with the construction of Interstate 40, begun in 1959, residents often traveled elsewhere for services and entertainment.³⁹ Interstate 40 in effect bypassed Old Fort so visitors no longer stopped there as a destination as they had when Highway 70 had been the main east-west route. The town saw a major economic downturn when industries began to close in the 1970s and 1980s. Old Fort Finishing Plant, Ethan Allen, and Parker Hosiery Mill are the only industries still in limited operation in the town. Southern Railway ended passenger service in 1975, but the freight lines still continue through the town today, although they do not stop.⁴⁰ As businesses in Old Fort struggle to survive, the McDowell County Tourism Authority and the all-volunteer economic development group, Old Fort Mountain Heritage Alliance, are developing programs to draw visitors to the area again.

Architectural Context

The predominant architectural form in the Old Fort Commercial Historic District is the commercial building. The Commercial Style, a style popular from 1900 to 1930 and typically built as a reaction to the more ornate buildings of the Queen Anne style from the late nineteenth century, features elements such as one, two, or three stories, with some masonry patterns such as soldier courses or corbelled cornices, flat roofs, parapet walls, large windows, often in a one-over-one configuration on the upper stories, and storefronts on the first story with large display windows. A good example of this style is the building at 33 Catawba Avenue, with its plain façade and recessed storefront with double-leaf door. Several of the older buildings in the district such as #39-47 along the east side of Catawba Avenue and the building at 3 E. Main Street display the Italianate style in their windows with drip moldings and extensive brick corbelling at the cornice. The Italianate style was popular from the mid- to late nineteenth centuries,

³⁵ Ibid, late 1940s.

³⁶ History of McDowell County, Marion, North Carolina: McDowell County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976, p. 58.

³⁷ Gibbs, Butch. Long-time Old Fort resident, who grew up in the town in the 1940s and 1950s, interview with Sybil H. Argintar, July 9, 2010.

³⁸ McDowell County Heritage, p. 44.

³⁹ Town minutes from July 20, 1959 note that the town billed the State of North Carolina for a \$3750.00 bill as the cost for relocating water lines in "connection with the construction of Highway No. I-40."

⁴⁰ Depot Museum, Old Fort, NC. Display information about the railroad.

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including features such as heavily molded window surrounds, and highly decorative corbelled cornices. The building at 5 E. Main Street has slight Romanesque Revival influence in its arched opening, although its heavily corbelled cornice and hooded moldings are more characteristic of the Italianate style. The Romanesque Revival style, popular at the same time as the Italianate style, features details such as rounded arches and corbelled cornices. An example in the district of a nationally popular style is the sleek, late Art Deco-style, Art Moderne-influenced Roxy Theatre (#66b E. Main Street) located at the east edge of the district on the south side of East Main Street. The Art Moderne style, popular from 1930 to 1945, was used frequently in theater designs of the 1930s and 1940s, and included streamlined design with smooth wall surfaces, rounded corners, and bands of windows. However, the zig-zag cornice on the building is a late example of an Art Deco design element. The Art Deco style, popular from 1925 to 1940, most typically included geometric designs, the use of polychromatic tiles, zig-zag parapet trim, metal-frame windows, and a vertical emphasis.⁴¹ The Railroad Depot at 25 W. Main Street is typical of many depot buildings constructed at the end of the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, including a long-linear form, hip roof with heavily bracketed wide overhangs, lapped or German siding, and loading platforms to one or both ends. There are several examples of this type of building in western North Carolina, including the depots in Hendersonville and Black Mountain.

Marion, the county seat of McDowell County, has a larger commercial core with more elaborate architecture, including the Beaux Arts courthouse (1922), the First National Bank building (1903) with its curved parapet and corner tower, the Italianate-style Merchant's and Farmer's Bank building (ca. 1902), and a wide variety of church buildings including the Gothic Revival-style First Baptist Church (1912-1914), and St. John's Episcopal Church, with a carpenter Gothic-style design (1883-84). However, Old Fort, for its size also contains many great examples of Commercial Style, and Italianate-, Art Deco-, and Art Moderne-style buildings, an indication of the importance of this small community in McDowell County's architectural history.

⁴¹ Blumenson, John J. -G. Identifying American Architecture. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1981, pp. 36, 77 and 78.

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Mountain Gateway Museum collections of photos, newspapers, articles, and depot model, Old Fort, North Carolina.

Nichols, Bill. Long-time Old Fort resident and owner of a documentary photo collection.
Interview with Sybil H. Argintar, July 30, 2010.

The Robin Hood Collection of McDowell County Historical Material, Volume 1, 1981. Located
in McDowell County Public Library, Marion, North Carolina.

Sanborn Map Company. Old Fort, North Carolina, 1918, 1924, 1937.

Town Minute Books 1911 – 1959. Located in offices of Town of Old Fort.

Worthen, Sanborn. Letters, located in the collections of Mountain Gateway Museum, Old
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Boundary Description

The boundaries for this historic district are indicated by a dark line on the accompanying tax/sketch map at a scale of 1" = 200'.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries include the area with the greatest concentration of late nineteenth to mid-twentieth-century buildings which retain a high degree of architectural integrity and exclude areas outside of the district boundaries that include new commercial construction, vacant lots, and residential neighborhoods.

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Old Fort Commercial Historic District Photographs

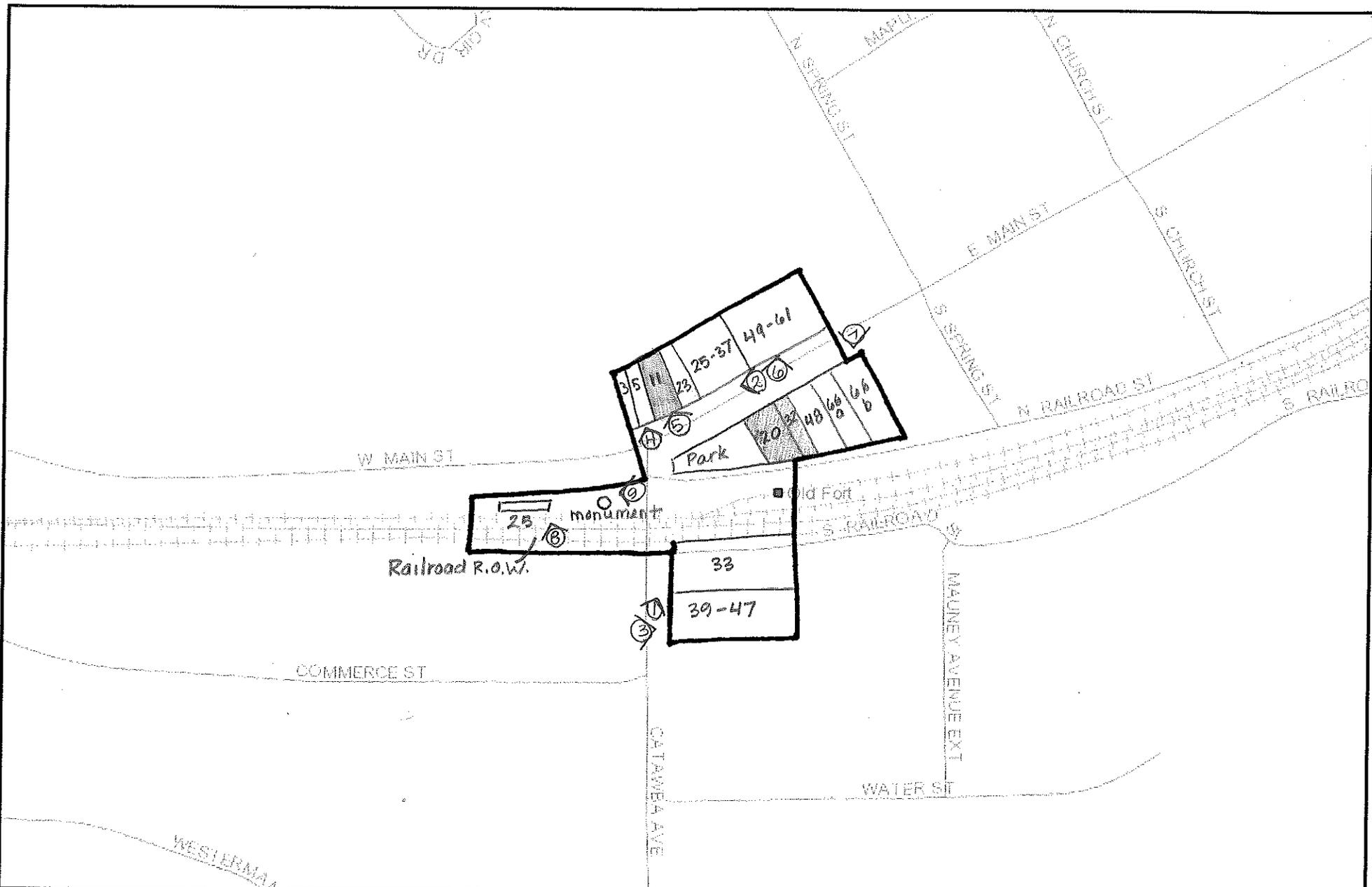
The following information applies to all photographs, except where noted.

Name of property: Old Fort Commercial Historic District
Old Fort
McDowell County
North Carolina

Photographer: Sybil H. Argintar

Date of photos: March 2010 and December 2010

1. Catawba Avenue, view NE
2. E. Main Street, view NW
3. 39 – 47 Catawba Avenue, view W
4. 3 and 5 E. Main Street, view N
5. 11 E. Main Street, view N, non-contributing property
6. 49 – 61 E. Main Street, view NE
7. 66b E. Main Street, view SW
8. Railroad Depot, 25 W. Main Street, view NW
9. Arrowhead Monument, view W



**MCDOWELL COUNTY
TAX MAP**

*Old Fort Commercial Historic District
Old Fort, McDowell County, NC*



Disclaimer:
The data provided on this map are prepared for the inventory of real property found within
McDowell County, NC and are compiled from recorded plats, deeds, and other public records
and data. This data is for informational purposes only and should not be substituted
for a true title search, property appraisal, survey, or for zoning verification.

— National Register boundary
3, 5, ... street addresses

□ C
▨ NC

Ⓛ Photo and direction of view

One Inch = 200 Feet

