FINAL

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District

other names/site number: VDHR File No. 105-17

## 2. Location

street & number: Downtown Clifton Forge including most of Main and East Ridgeway streets — N/A ☐ not for publication

city, town: Clifton Forge — N/A ☐ vicinity

state: Virginia code: VA county: Clifton Forge (city) code: 560 zip code: 24422

## 3. Classification

| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property: Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [X] private | ☐ building(s) | 57 | 15 | buildings |
| [X] public-local | [X] district | | | sites |
| ☐ public-State | ☐ site | | | structures |
| [X] public-Federal | ☐ structure | | | objects |
| | ☐ object | 57 | 15 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: -0-

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date: 12-12-91

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use see continuation sheets

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

## 7. Description see continuation sheets

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

see continuation sheets

[X] See continuation sheet

## 8. Statement of Significance

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

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

| Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions) | Period of Significance | Significant Dates |
|---|---|---|
| ARCHITECTURE | 1878-1940 | N/A |
| COMMERCE | | |
| TRANSPORTATION | | |

**Cultural Affiliation**
N/A

**Significant Person**
N/A

**Architect/Builder**
Green, E. R.
Frye & Chesterman
Taylor, James Knox

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

see continuation sheets

☒ See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheets

[X] See continuation sheet

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:

- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository:
Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources
221 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 10 acres

UTM References

| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 17 | 603100 | 4185600 |
| B | 17 | 603900 | 4186100 |
| C | 17 | 603900 | 4185600 |
| D | 17 | 604200 | 4185700 |
| E | 17 | 603100 | 4185600 |

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

[X] See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By


name/title Dr. John Kern, Daniel Pezzoni, Roanoke Regional Preservation Office;*
organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date
street & number 1030 Penmar Avenue, SE telephone (703) 857-7585
city or town Roanoke state Virginia zip code 24013
*Amy Hansen, Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia


*U.S.GPO:1988-0-223-918

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS

DOMESTIC
- single dwelling
- multiple dwelling
- hotel

COMMERCE
- business
- professional
- organizational
- financial institution
- specialty store
- department store
- restaurant
- warehouse

SOCIAL
- meeting hall

GOVERNMENT
- city hall
- correctional facility
- fire station
- post office

RECREATION AND CULTURE
- theater
- music facility

AGRICULTURE
- processing

HEALTH CARE
- medical business/office

TRANSPORTATION
- rail-related
- road-related (vehicular)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS

DOMESTIC
multiple dwelling

COMMERCE
business
professional
organizational
financial institution
specialty store
department store
restaurant
warehouse

GOVERNMENT
city hall
correctional facility
post office

RECREATION AND CULTURE
museum

LANDSCAPE
parking lot

TRANSPORTATION
road-related (vehicular)

VACANT / NOT IN USE

## 7. DESCRIPTION

### ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION

Greek Revival
Gothic Revival
Italianate
Neoclassical
Tudor Revival
Spanish Eclectic
Mission
Art Deco
International Style

### MATERIALS

| | |
|---|---|
| FOUNDATION: | Brick |
| : | Stone |
| : | Concrete |
| WALLS: | Wood |
| : | Brick |
| : | Stone |
| : | Metal |
| : | Stucco |
| : | Asphalt |
| : | Concrete |
| : | Ceramic Tile |
| : | Glass |
| : | Synthetics |
| ROOF: | Metal |
| : | Asphalt |

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District is located in the city of Clifton Forge, Virginia. The district occupies approximately ten acres and encompasses the city's business district along Main and East Ridgeway streets. The historic architectural resources in the district include frame, brick, and concrete block commercial buildings dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as two railroad-related buildings, two theaters, two single-family residences, a post office, and several buildings of an industrial character. The commercial buildings in the district generally housed professional offices with apartments in the upper stories. The district contains seventy-two resources, fifty-seven of which (seventy-nine percent) are contributing.[1]

TOPOGRAPHY

The city of Clifton Forge occupies the terraces and slopes on the north side of the Jackson River three miles above its confluence with the Cowpasture River to form the James. The Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District extends across two terraces that are separated by Smith Creek. In its natural state the site of the district was characterized by uneven topography. As one commentator has noted, "It's hard to visualize the abysses, gulches, ravines and deep ditches that were in this town at one time, caused by the rains and snows from the mountains and the

[1]A number of individuals inside and outside the Virginia Department of Historic Resources provided research and editorial assistance for this section of the nomination. Intradepartmental assistance was provided by John Wells. Assistance from outside the department was provided by Carol Davis, Clifton Forge Clerk of Court, and Rose Rizer, former Deputy Commissioner of Revenue, who provided archival assistance; Russel B. Smith, II, and Russel B. Smith, III, who provided early Clifton Forge city directories; the late Jefferson Randolph Kean, Archivist of the C&O Historical Society; Margaret Berry, Business Manager of the C&O Historical Society; and the Clifton Forge Public Library, which made its historic photo archives available.

swollen streams of Dry Creek and Smith Creek."[2] The earliest part of the district (the town of Williamson) developed to the east of Smith Creek on relatively level ground. By the early twentieth century Smith Creek had been bridged by Main and East Ridgeway Streets, and its character as a topographical barrier diminished.

ANTEBELLUM AND EARLY POSTBELLUM DEVELOPMENT

During the early nineteenth century the James River and Kanawha Valley Turnpike passed along the north side of the Jackson River, where it was paralleled in the 1850s by the tracks of the Virginia Central Railroad (later acquired by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad). Beginning in the 1850s the original town of Clifton Forge (then known as Williamson) developed in the narrow strip of ground between the railroad tracks and the river. This earliest section of the city contained the three-story frame McCurdy Hotel (built about 1880), one- and two-story frame houses and stores, and at least one log house.[3] As the rest of the city developed, this section degenerated into a saloon district referred to as "the Bowery" and by the mid-twentieth century it had been leveled.

1880S DEVELOPMENT: MAIN STREET

In 1878 the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad built a roundhouse at Williamson's Station which soon led to the incorporation of Clifton Forge.[4] Lots were laid out along the present Main, Church, and Pine streets on the north side of the tracks. The 600, 700, and 800 blocks of Main Street, contained in the district, developed as the principal commercial area of the young town during the 1880s.

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[2]Elizabeth H. Corron, Clifton Forge, Virginia (Clifton Forge: Alleghany Publishers, 1971), p. 50.

[3]"Overhead view of C&O station/Gladys Inn, original roundhouse, shops and yard area of Clifton Forge, Virginia, circa 1888." Historic photograph in the collections of the Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society, Clifton Forge, Va.

[4]Thomas W. Dixon, Jr., Chesapeake & Ohio Allegheny Subdivision (Alderson, W. Va.: The Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society, 1985), p. 100.

The two-story frame houses and store buildings built on Main Street between 1880 and 1890 represent the earliest surviving resources in the district. Three gable-fronted stores date to this period: the altered Hawkins Brothers Store (708 Main Street) built around 1886, the James A. Ford Store (800 Main Street), and the altered store building at 804 Main Street. In their original form the Hawkins and Ford stores had large display windows, ornate wooden balconies, Greek Revival pedimented window heads, and weatherboarded pedimented gables. The Ford store retains its balcony, gable, and window detailing. By 1891 the Hawkins store had been acquired by Dr. Robert S. Wiley who had built a two-story frame residence next to it (704 Main). The Wiley House combines Italianate and Gothic Revival ornamental elements such as sawn bargeboards, elaborately sawn and molded door and window trim, and round-arched panels in the front door.

POST-1890 DEVELOPMENT: CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILROAD CONSTRUCTION

In 1890 the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad consolidated its various shop facilities at a site on the Jackson River approximately a mile west of Clifton Forge. This resulted in the formation of a secondary commercial and residential district closer to the shops known as West Clifton Forge. In the words of one observer, "There were two towns at the time as everything had gone west. But gradually, as the years went by things began to come back toward the old town."[5] In all probability, the mountainous topography of Clifton Forge and its immediate environs contributed most to the continued vitality of the established sections of Clifton Forge. The steep hillsides adjacent to the new Chesapeake and Ohio shops constrained development. Nearer the original town were the relatively level terraces along Smith Creek and the flat plateau above the town on its north side, both areas more suitable for domestic development. The fact that these areas were further removed from the shops and the attendant noise and smoke probably made them more attractive to prospective home buyers. Consequently, the extensive residential areas that were laid out about 1890 adjacent to the original town of Clifton Forge ensured that Main Street and, slightly later, East Ridgeway Street would remain the focus of commercial development in the growing city.

[5]Corron, p. 30. Corron is quoting from a manuscript entitled "Recollections of Judge George K. Anderson" (1923).

Following the relocation of its shops to the west of town, the Chesapeake and Ohio in 1896 constructed the Freight Depot south of the 700 block of Main Street at approximately the location of the earlier roundhouse. The long, narrow, one-story, gable-roofed structure with bracketed overhanging eaves and segmental-arched door and window openings features gable-end recessed brick panels which define a central pilaster and decorative stepping under the eaves.

In 1893 the Chesapeake and Ohio facilitated construction of the railroad YMCA which was located on the south side of East Ridgeway Street, just west of the intersection with Roxbury Street. Since demolished, the 2 1/2 story frame YMCA had sophisticated Queen Anne styling with wood shingle siding, multiple gables with half timber detailing, and a four-story tower with an observation deck under a pyramidal roof. In 1893 the railroad built a large frame hotel, the Gladys Inn/Depot beside and just to the west of the YMCA (The Gladys Inn, like the YMCA, was demolished during the mid-twentieth century.). Finally, in 1906 the railroad constructed the Office Building which survives at the southwest end of the district (VDHR Site No. 105-15). The two-story weatherboarded frame structure has a hipped roof with bracketed eaves and pedimented dormers. Thus, by 1906 the Chesapeake and Ohio has located three important buildings of public function at the southeast end of the district. The three buildings apparently provided stimulus for the development of East Ridgeway Street. The timing of this development is suggested by the fact that the Sanborn Maps for Clifton Forge did not depict East Ridgeway Street until 1907.

## 1890S DEVELOPMENT: MAIN STREET

Commercial development during the early 1890s centered near Smith Creek on the west side of the original town. In 1891 E. M. Nettleton, a lumber dealer and developer based in Covington, built what was then the town's largest and finest commercial block, the three-story Nettleton Building (520-524 Main Street; demolished). The Nettleton Building had a brightly painted cast iron facade characterized by tiers of paired pilasters and terminated by a cornice with triangular signage plaques and urnlike finials. A year later the Nettleton Building was matched by the Carpenter, Moody & Company Building which stands across Smith Creek at 504 Main Street. The two-story Carpenter, Moody & Company Building has cast iron detailing identical to that of the former Nettleton

mail-order architect George F. Barber in 1898.[9] Barber probably provided plans and a front elevation drawing for the Pendletons and may also have sent them prefabricated milled ornament for the building's parapet. The parapet of the W. W. Pendleton Building incorporates turned knobs and ring-like appliques, sawn brackets, scalloped borders, and Eastlake-inspired sunburst motifs.

Two other early commercial buildings on the street that are of particular interest are the buildings at 434 and 419 East Ridgeway Street. These buildings are of concrete block construction and exploit the decorative possibilities of the material. The three-story street front of the building at 434 East Ridgeway Street uses rock-faced blocks that alternate with smooth blocks at the outer edges of the facade creating an effect similar to quoining. The blocks of the top course under the pressed metal cornice are molded so that they form a running scroll interspersed with floral motifs. The one-story building at 419 East Ridgeway Street has a rock-faced block parapet, side piers, and curbs under the display windows. The parapet has a cornice supported by corbeled blocks. The building at 419 East Ridgeway Street housed Rule V. Van Horn's marbleworks in 1907.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT: FRYE & CHESTERMAN

During the first decade of the twentieth century a number of large commercial buildings were constructed at the heart of the district in the vicinity of the three-way intersection of Main Street, East Ridgeway Street, and Commercial Avenue. Three of these buildings--the 1904 Carpenter & Boxley Office Building (507 East Main Street; demolished), the 1905 Alleghany Building (505-511 East Ridgeway Street), and the 1905 Masonic Theatre (510 Main Street)--were designed by the Lynchburg architectural firm of Frye & Chesterman. The Masonic Theatre and the Alleghany Building utilize buff-colored brick and assorted classical elements in their facades; the Carpenter & Boxley Office Building was also classically detailed and was probably constructed of buff-colored brick. Near these buildings are three or four smaller Neoclassical buildings constructed of buff-colored brick that may also have been designed by Frye & Chesterman. Together, in their unaltered original state, these buildings created a stylistic unity that extended over three city blocks.

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[9]Wells.

Building, and evidence suggests that it too originally had a polychromatic facade treatment.

The Nettleton and Carpenter, Moody & Company buildings were designed by E. R. Green of Clifton Forge, who also designed the former J. C. Carpenter Opera House Building that stood at 512 Church Street.[6] Green appears to have relied heavily on the stock cast iron detailing available from national building supply wholesalers of the period. Another individual who had an influence on the early architecture of Clifton Forge was Andrew Jackson Acord, who settled in Clifton Forge in 1879. According to one account, Acord built 183 houses in the Clifton Forge area between 1879 and 1894, a figure that probably includes some of the earlier commercial buildings in the city.[7] Acord's lumberyard and mill were located on Church Street at the northern corner of the district. A third important early builder was Edward P. Fisher, who arrived in Clifton Forge from Brooklyn, New York, in 1890. Initially Fisher built bridges for the city, but for most of the 1890s he concentrated on building construction.[8] In addition to Green, Acord, and Fisher, a half dozen or so carpenters worked in Clifton Forge at any given time.

1890S DEVELOPMENT: EAST RIDGEWAY STREET

The C&O Development Company, formed around 1890, acquired the area to the southwest of the original town and laid out lots along East Ridgeway Street. Louis and Henrietta Sachs built a two-story brick commercial building at 408 East Ridgeway in 1891 but otherwise development along the street was sporadic until the first decade of the twentieth century.

One of the first buildings erected on East Ridgeway Street in response to the railroad's activities was the W. W. Pendleton Building, the present Chesapeake and Ohio Archives (312 East Ridgeway Street). Pendleton, who with his brother ran a general merchandise business, commissioned the building from Knoxville

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[6]John Wells, unpublished research on Virginia architects.

[7]Corron, p. 37.

[8]Ibid, pp. 49-50.

Edward Graham Frye (1870-1942) developed a substantial architectural practice in Lynchburg during the 1890s. Frye was conversant in most of the popular turn-of-the-century styles, but a common denominator in his work was the use of buff-colored brick, of which he is said to have been particularly fond.[10] In 1902 Frye associated with Aubrey Chesterman (1874-1937) and together Frye & Chesterman designed many important institutional buildings in Lynchburg during the first decade of the twentieth century. The firm also expanded into other western Virginia cities such as Roanoke and Clifton Forge.[11] Both Clifton Forge and Lynchburg were major hubs on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, and the business elites of the two cities may have been in collaboration on development projects, thereby providing contacts for Frye & Chesterman in Clifton Forge.

Frye & Chesterman's buildings in Clifton Forge are distinctive because of their extensive use of buff-colored brick; presumably the material was shipped by rail to the city from Lynchburg.[12] The buildings are also characterized by raised quoining at corners and at major facade divisions, by pressed-metal modillion cornices at the parapet level, and by pressed-metal cornices with triglyphs, paterae, or other classical elements at the division between the first and second stories. In the probable Frye & Chesterman building at 508 Main Street the second-story facade is rusticated with narrow recessed bands similar to those forming the individual blocks of the quoining on the other buildings. On the 1905 J. C. Carpenter & Company Building (314 Commercial Avenue), the Virginia Western Power Company Building (439 Ridgeway Street) of about 1913, and the 1907 Clifton Forge Presbyterian Church (105-14; located outside the district), all of which are attributable to Frye &

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[10]S. Allen Chambers, Lynchburg, An Architectural History (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), pp. 317, 337.

[11]Ibid, p. 357.

[12]Another possible source for the brick would be Covington, where two brickyards operated during the early twentieth century. However, only one major downtown Covington building was constructed of buff-colored brick during the early twentieth century (the former Covington High School), suggesting Covington was not the source. Apparently no brickyard operated in Clifton Forge during the period.

Chesterman, ornate wood and cast concrete cartouches appear in archways, parapets and elsewhere on the facades. Similar detailing appears on Frye & Chesterman buildings of the period in Lynchburg.[13]

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT: FRYE & CHESTERMAN: MASONIC THEATRE AND ALLEGHANY BUILDING

The grandest of Frye & Chesterman's buildings in the city is the 1905 Masonic Theatre (510 Main Street; 105-6). The three-story building was constructed for $40,000 and contained offices and a performance hall in the first two stories, the meeting rooms of the Low Moor Lodge No. 166 on the third story, and a furniture warehouse in the basement.[14] The rich Neoclassical detailing of the exterior also characterizes the interior spaces of the building, most notably in the cove-ceilinged lobby and the performance hall with its enriched proscenium. The facade of the theater is similar in its composition to that of the Lynchburg Academy of Music designed by Frye & Chesterman during the same period.[15]

Also imposing, but less finely detailed, is the three-story 1905 Alleghany Building, which faces the Masonic Theatre across the intersection of Main and East Ridgeway streets. The Alleghany Building was built by the Alleghany Construction Company (successor to A. J. Acord's lumberyard and construction firm) as its office building and as rental commercial and apartment space. The second-story offices are reached by a wide staircase rising from the street and are served by a hallway with pressed-metal-sheathed walls and ceilings. The basement, originally used by a wholesale grocer, has the character of an undercroft with interior load-bearing walls regularly broken by broad archways (now bricked up).

The Alleghany Building represents the only surviving example of a building type that was formerly more common in Clifton Forge. The 1891 Nettleton Building and the 1904 Carpenter & Boxley Building, both now demolished, and the Alleghany Building were built by

[13]Chambers, pp. 376, 378.

[14]Wells.

[15]Chambers, p. 376.

leading construction and development firms and featured banks as their principal street-level tenants. The Alleghany Building's principal early tenant was the Clifton Forge National Bank, which was presumably connected financially to the Alleghany Construction Company. Through their scale and the importance of the activities carried out in them, these buildings dominated the commercial life of turn-of-the-century Clifton Forge.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT: BUILDERS

The majority of the early-twentieth-century commercial buildings built in Clifton Forge were the work of local contractors. In 1914 the Dixie Lumber Company (based at the Acord/Alleghany Construction Company mill) and L. A. Emswiler were listed as contractors and building material suppliers specializing in house construction. other contractors and builders of the period included W. R. Haynes, F. M. Reynolds, J. C. Downer and F. C. Hart. Two other contractors, S. R. Wickline and Major Brothers, specialized in concrete work. Only one architect advertised himself as a resident of the city: Lee Persinger, who worked out of a second-story office on East Ridgeway Street.[16]

By the 1920s Clifton Forge contractors and building material suppliers had experienced a near total turnover. In 1924 Deaton & Linkenhoker and Eugene Mathews & Company were listed as building material suppliers, and J. W. Evans, L. W. Ferrier, A. J. Hicks, F. M. Reynolds, and W. H. Smith, Jr. were listed as contractors and builders.[17] During the 1910s and 1920s the firm of Carpenter & Major Brothers & Company, Inc. advertised itself as a general contractor specializing in railway and highway construction.[18] J. C. Carpenter, Jr. of the firm was also an associate of Roanoke business leader and political figure W. W. Boxley. As Carpenter & Boxley the two engaged in railroad construction.[19]

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[16]A. B. Davies, Davies' Directory, Clifton Forge and Selma, 1914 (Clifton Forge, Va.: A. B. Davies, 1914.)

[17]A. B. Davies, Davies' City Directory, Clifton Forge, Virginia for 1924 (Clifton Forge: A. B. Davies, 1924.)

[18]Davies, 1914 and 1924.

[19]Corron, p. 56.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT: INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS

Two important institutional buildings were built in the district during the early twentieth century. The Clifton Forge City Hall (549 Main Street; 105-13), built in 1910-11, is a two-story Neoclassical building with red brick walls divided into sections by buff-colored brick piers. The building's original Ionic portico, modillion cornice, hipped roof, and clock tower were damaged by fire in the 1940s and replaced with less refined construction and detailing. In 1910 an elegant post office building was completed on the 300 block of Commercial Avenue (105-11). Designed by Treasury Department architect James Knox Taylor, the Clifton Forge Post Office combines a crisply detailed, red brick Georgian Revival main level with a tile-roofed, octagonal Palladian rotunda. The building's lobby has a vaulted plaster ceiling supported by marble-faced pilasters.[20]

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT: EAST RIDGEWAY STREET

In 1907 the section of East Ridgeway Street passing through the district remained sparsely developed with buildings clustered principally on the south side and at the northeast end of the street. By 1921 East Ridgeway Street had achieved its current density of construction with virtually uninterrupted building fronts along the entire length of the street (See excerpts from 1907 and 1921 Sanborn maps at end of Section 7.). Of the thirty-seven buildings located on East Ridgeway Street within the district, twelve were built between 1907 and 1921. Another seven were built between 1921 and 1941; most of these buildings were brick replacements of earlier frame buildings. Only four buildings on the street were built wholly after 1941; these were typically small-scale or impermanent commercial buildings such as barber shops and produce stands that filled vestigial open spaces.

Perhaps the most unusual building built on the street during the period was the 1929 Ridge Theatre (418 East Ridgeway Street). In 1928 Samuel Sachs sold the Family Theatre to Warner Brothers Theatre Corporation which either remodeled the preexisting building or, more likely, built anew. The Ridge Theatre is a lively rendition of the Spanish Eclectic style. The theater's facade

[20]Wells.

relies on economical allusions to various stylistic elements for its effect. The parapet is coped with several courses of ceramic or metal mission tiles, suggesting a foreshortened tile roof. The second and third story windows have round-arched heads; the top two windows are connected by a decorative metal grille that projects slightly from the facade and is meant to evoke a balcony. The stuccoed facade is banded with bas-relief decoration suggestive of arched corbeling.

Most commercial buildings built on East Ridgeway during the early twentieth century were more conventional than the Ridge Theatre. These buildings, generally of brick construction, are one, two or three stories in height and rely on decorative brickwork and wood, concrete, or metal detailing to create visual interest. Several buildings have facade features ascribable to a particular style. The two-story brick building at 421 East Ridgeway Street, built around 1910, has segmental-arched second-story windows with stone or concrete keystones that give the facade a Neoclassical flavor. The large two-story Bridge Pharmacy Building, built in 1926 at 501 East Ridgeway Street, features a shaped parapet with a quatrefoil motif indicative of the Mission style.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT: MAIN STREET

Early-twentieth-century development along Main Street was not as extensive as along East Ridgeway Street, due to the fact that many lots were already occupied by buildings and, perhaps more importantly, because the focus of development had shifted to East Ridgeway Street by this period. Like the commercial buildings on East Ridgeway Street, the buildings built along Main Street tended to be of brick construction, although they were usually smaller in scale, none exceeding two stories in height. An exception to this was the E. A. Snead Furniture Company Building (500 Main Street), actually a late 1890s two-story brick building enlarged to three stories during the 1910s. The Snead Building retains many early interior features such as a glassed-in office on the first-story sales floor and an American Steel and Hardware Company "Tiger Brand" elevator.

One of the more significant buildings of the period located on Main Street is the 1930 Farrar Building (525 Main Street). The Farrar Building was built to accommodate George M. Farrar's drugstore, one of the oldest businesses in Clifton Forge. The building makes innovative use of concrete and brick with stretcher-bond wall

panels enframed by poured concrete trabeation--an approach that calls to mind the modernist separation of structure and enclosure. The building is also notable for its restricted but otherwise lavish Art Deco detailing with a flamboyant signage panel in the parapet and a concrete transom panel over a secondary entrance depicting stylized birds and foliage and tinted with a dark bronze-like finish.

Other Main Street buildings of note are the two-story brick building built at 531-533 Main Street during the 1920s, which has a dentil cornice, quoining, and an arched street entry in the Neoclassical style; and the Pure Oil Company Service Station at 603 Main Street, built in 1932 with the steep gabled roofs and diminutive arched doors and windows of the Tudor Revival style. The district's two industrial buildings are located on Main Street: the Clifton Forge Ice and Bottling Works Building, a utilitarian two-story brick building built in 1924 at 720 Main Street; and at 537 Main Street, a two-story poured concrete cold storage building built in two phases during the 1910s and 1920s in conjunction with the former Westerman Meat Packing Plant.

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

As noted in the summary, the Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District has a high ratio of contributing resources to noncontributing resources, about four to one. The historic character of the district is enhanced by the integrity of its streetscapes; East Ridgeway Street in particular retains a virtually unbroken wall of building fronts. Most parking in the downtown is accommodated on street or relegated to alley lots screened by buildings. Several of the smaller commercial buildings on Main and East Ridgeway streets postdate 1941; however, they generally share the same forms and materials of the earlier buildings and are for the most part difficult to distinguish from their predecessors. In counterpoint to the architectural reserve of most of the modern construction in the district are the two present banks on Main Street--the 1966 First National Bank of Clifton Forge at 511 Main Street and the 1960s Mountain National Bank at 540 Main Street--and the former Clifton Forge National Bank at 441 East Ridgeway Street, remodeled in 1960. These buildings display sophisticated, even exuberant modernism that was clearly intended to contrast with the traditional forms and materials of the downtown.

ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

Properties in the inventory are listed alphabetically by street and numerically by address. Entries list the name of the property, the date or date range of construction, basic architectural features (style or form, story height, construction material and exterior finish, roof type, etc.), and pertinent historical data. The designation "(SM)" following a date or date range indicates that the dating is based on an examination of the Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps for Clifton Forge. These maps were printed for Clifton Forge in 1891, 1892, 1897, 1902, 1907, 1913, 1921, 1927, and 1949 (the 1949 corrected version of the 1927 map). References are occasionally made to Elizabeth H. Corron, Clifton Forge, Virginia, a history of the city. A number of references to architects and precise building dates are taken from unpublished research on Virginia architects by John Wells, architectural historian with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources site numbers for properties that have previously been surveyed are included in parentheses at the end of each entry. Following each entry is the designation "CB" or "NB", for the status of each building as either a "contributing building" or a "noncontributing building".

Other abbreviations used in the inventory include:

| | |
|---|---|
| N. = North | St. = Street |
| E. = East | Ave. = Avenue |
| S. = South | c. = century |
| W. = West | ca. = circa |

CHURCH STREET

500 Block

105-17-1

512: Clifton Forge Grocery Company Building. 1917. Neoclassical, 3-story, brick, shed roof with parapet and corbeled cornice, round-arched doors and windows on first-story front, upper-story front facade with piers. According to the corner stone, the company was organized in 1892. Originally wholesale commercial function. CB

(also 105-154)

COMMERCIAL AVENUE

300 Block

Clifton Forge Post Office. 1909-10. Neoclassical, 2-story, steel frame with brick veneer, flat roof, limestone belt courses and cornice, front entry with classical wood architrave painted white and semicircular fanlight, tall round-arched and flat-arched windows, prominent brick flue for boiler. The second story of the building is contained in a stuccoed, octagonal, rotunda-like structure with Venetian windows and a red tile hip roof. The lobby has a vaulted ceiling and is lined by coupled marble pilasters. The second story is accessed by an iron circular stair. Architect: James Knox Taylor. (105-11) CB

-2

314: J. C. Carpenter and Company Building. 1905. Neoclassical, 2-story, brick (buff colored), shed roof with parapet and elaborate corbeling, round-arched doors and windows on first-story front with cast cartouches in arches, rusticated piers extend from ground to parapet on front facade, 2-level frame porch across back. The 1907 Sanborn map shows an office occupying the first floor of this building. This building may have been designed by the Lynchburg architectural firm of Frye & Chesterman. CB

-3

MAIN STREET

500 Block

500: E. A. Snead Furniture Company Building. 1897-1902, 1907-13 (SM). 3-story, brick, shed roof with corbeled parapet, segmental-arched windows, cast-iron storefront. The third story was added between 1907 and 1913 explaining the three different types of brickwork on the front facade. The interior of the building retains early features such as a glassed-in office on the first floor and a Tiger Brand elevator. E. A. Snead was a prominent local merchant and politician. According to Corron (p. 40) the earliest portion of this building was built by J. C. Carpenter Sr. in the late 1890s and was originally occupied by Frank P. Staley's furniture store. CB

.4

504: Carpenter, Moody & Company Building. 1892. 2-story, brick, shed roof, elaborate cast-iron facade. Clifton Forge architect E. R. Green designed this building built in two phases around 1892. Formerly the building had triangular name plaques above the parapet. According to Corron (p. 36-37), William C. Moody and J. C. Carpenter Sr. entered into the hardware business in 1888 and moved into this building in 1893. CB

.5

508: Building. Ca. 1905. Neoclassical, 2-story, brick (buff colored), shed roof with parapet and heavy pressed metal cornice, rusticated second-story of front facade, remodeled storefront. Originally retail commercial and office function. Stylistic similarities between this building and the adjoining Masonic Theatre suggest that it was designed by the Lynchburg architectural firm of Frye & Chesterman. CB

.6

510: Masonic Theatre. 1905. Neoclassical, 3-story, brick (buff colored), hip roof with parapet and heavy metal cornice, upper-story front facade with Ionic pilasters and quoining, street-level facade with early metal marquee flanked by pedimented entries. The interior of the building retains a lobby with cove ceiling, original proscenium, and a third-story Masonic meeting room. The theater was used for opera, plays, and

.7

vaudeville, and - after 1908 - movies. A local orchestra known as the "Merry Makers" played before features. Architects: Frye & Chesterman. (105-6) CB

-8 511: First National Bank of Clifton Forge. 1966. International-style, 2-story, steel, brick, and granite, drive-up window, fountain. Architects: Wells and Meagher. NB

-9 512: Building. 1921-27 (SM). 3-story, brick, shed roof with corbeled parapet, stack-bond panels under windows of upper-story front facade, later storefront, advertisement for Jamison's Grocery Store painted on side. Originally retail commercial function with a lodge hall in an upper story. CB

-10 525: Farrar Building. 1930. Art Deco, 2-story, brick and concrete, shed roof with parapet, angled corner with entry, original shop windows, and cast-concrete ornament. The Farrar family has operated a drugstore in Clifton Forge since the late 19th c. and in this building since 1930. CB

-11 527-529: Building. Mid-20th c. 1-story, concrete block and brick veneer, shed roof, aluminum storefront. NB

-12 528: Building. Ca. 1940. 1-story, brick, shed roof with peaked front parapet, storefront with decoratively setback display windows. Originally retail commercial function. CB

-13 530: Building. 1902-07, 1927-49 (SM). 2-story, brick (front) and concrete block (rear), shed roof with parapet, later aluminum upper-story front facade, aluminum storefront. The original brick front section was built between 1902 and 1907; the concrete-block rear addition was made between 1927 and 1949. Since 1907 the building has contained a retail commercial establishment. NB

-14 531-533: Building. 1921-27 (SM). Neoclassical, 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet and dentilated cornice, quoining, round-arched central entry to stair, 1-story

concrete-block rear addition, later storefronts. The building contained offices in 1927 and 1949. CB

-15 532-538: Building. 2nd 1/2 20th c. 1-story, concrete block, shed roof with vertical-board-sheathed parapet, wood-shingled mansard roof. NB

-16 535: Building. 3rd 1/4 20th c. Brick, shed roof. NB

-17 537: Building. 1913-21, 1921-27 (SM). 2-story, poured concrete and later brick veneer, flat roof. The narrower west side of this building was built between 1913 and 1921 as a cold storage facility associated with a meat market that formerly operated on the lot. The wider east side of the building was added between 1921 and 1927. CB

-18 540: Mountain National Bank. 1960s. International-style, brick or brick veneer, flat roof, marble portico. NB

-19 549: Clifton Forge City Hall. 1910-11. Neoclassical, 2-story, brick, hip roof with brick parapet, colossal pedimented Doric portico topped by a brick parapet, cupola with clock and belled octagonal roof, stuccoed paneled cornice, buff-colored brick pilasters, front entry with peaked surround, windows with limestone flat arches. Inside is a center passage with a mid-way arch leading to a grand stair in the rear. To the rear is a lower 2-story brick jail that was probably built at the same time as or shortly after the main block. In the 1940s a 1-story brick rescue squad office was added to the west side of the jail. A 2-story brick fire department building with Neoclassical detailing was built to the east side of the city hall between 1913 and 1921. Originally the city hall featured a more elaborate cupola, a modillion cornice, and Ionic column capitals; this fabric was apparently removed or replaced after a 1944 fire. (105-13) CB

600 Block

600: Service Station. 3rd 1/4 20th c. 1-story, concrete block, set at an angle to the corner. NB

21 603: Pure Oil Company Service Station. 1932. Tudor, 1-story, brick, steep gable roof, two service bays. CB

22 606: Building. Ca. 1940. 2-story, brick, shed roof, utilitarian detailing, inset second-story front balcony, aluminum storefront. NB

23 610: Building. Ca. 1890, 1921-27 (SM). 2-story, brick and frame, shed roof with corbeled parapet. This building may represent a ca. 1890 structure that was bricked during the 1920s. Originally retail commercial function. CB

24 612: Building. 1892-97 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with corbeled and houndstooth parapet and cornice with sawn wood brackets, segmental-arched second-story front windows, aluminum storefront, 1-story concrete-block. On the 1897 and 1902 Sanborn maps this building is identified as a grocery and books and stationary store; later the building contained a flour and feed store, a bakery, and, from 1921 on, an automobile dealership and garage. According to Corron (p. 113), in the late 1920s or early 1930s the building was acquired by the Nicely family which currently operates an automobile repair business at the location. CB

25 614-618: Building. Ca. 1930s (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet, utilitarian detailing, 1-story concrete-block rear garage addition. This building may represent an earlier frame structure that was bricked around the 1930s. Frommer's Meat Market stood on this site during the first two decades of the 20th c. CB

26 620-622: Building. 1907-13 (SM). 2-story, frame, bricktex siding, shed roof with parapet and wood cornice, 2-over-2 sash windows with bracketed lintels on the second-story front facade, wood storefronts with dentil cornice and corner entry, rear elevation with window guards and balcony. On the 1913 Sanborn map this building is labeled "Feed"; in later years it contained an automobile repair service. CB

700 block

27 Clifton Forge C&O Railroad Freight Depot. 1896. 1-story, brick, gable roof, overhanging eaves with brackets, segmental-arched door and window openings. This freight depot was apparently built to service the Main Street area of Clifton Forge after the C&O shops were moved to West Clifton Forge. CB

28 700: Buildings. Mid-20th c., 1980s. On this lot is a small mid-20th-c. bricktex-sided frame booth (perhaps an office for a used car lot) and a 1980s particle-board-sided frame produce stand. NB

29 704: Robert S. Wiley House. Ca. 1890 (before 1891) (SM). Italianate, 2-story, frame, novelty weatherboard siding, gable roof, off-center 2-story front and rear wings giving the house a cross-shaped plan, 1½-story extension of ell, brick chimneys and flues, 1-story hip-roofed front porch with chamfered and molded posts and sawn brackets and balustrade, enclosed 1-story rear porch, milled gable vents, bargeboards, and door and window surrounds. Wiley was a physician who moved his practice from Selma to Clifton Forge in the early 1880S. CB

30 708: Hawkins Brothers Store. Ca. 1886. 2-story, frame, weatherboard, bricktex, and vertical-board siding, gable roof, modern wood storefront with wood-shingle mansard, 1-story open side shed. The interior of the store retains an early pressed metal ceiling and molded shelving. According to Corron (p. 41-42), this store was established (and the building probably built) by Robert P. and Erastus B. Hawkins in 1886. An 1880s photograph shows a front-facade balcony with sawn balustrade and second-story windows with peaked lintels. The building was owned by Robert S. Wiley in 1891. CB

31 720: Clifton Forge Ice and Bottling Works Building. 1924, 1927-49 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet. The east half of the block is the original bottling plant, built in 1924 according to Corron (p. 59). The west half, which is partially set back from the street

and has first-story garage doors and display windows, was originally an automobile dealership built between 1927 and 1949. CB

800 block

32 800: James A. Ford Store. 1880s. 2-story, frame, weatherboard siding, gable roof, 1-story concrete-block rear addition, modern brick storefront with mansard, second-story front-facade balcony and windows and door with peaked lintels. Ford, a general merchant, owned this store building in 1891. CB

33 804: Building. 1880s. 2-story, frame, bricktex siding, gable roof, 1-story rear shed addition, wood storefront (early but not original). Originally retail commercial function. CB

34 808: House. 1902-07 (SM). 2-story, frame, weatherboard siding, hip roof, 1-story hip-roofed front porch, 1-story rear shed wing, brick chimney. This house apparently replaces a house of similar size and form that stood on the site in the 1880s. CB

35 812-816: Building. 1902-07, 1921-27 (SM). 2-story, frame, weatherboard siding, shed roof, 2-level porch across rear. This 1921-27 retail commercial building appears to incorporate a 1902-07 dwelling with a front wing that housed a restaurant. CB

EAST RIDGEWAY STREET

300 block

36 Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Office Building. 1906. 2-story, frame, weatherboard siding, hip roof with bracketed eaves and pedimented dormers with decorative windows, classical stoop and 1-story bay window with bracketed cornice on south side of building facing railroad tracks. (105-15) CB

37 Clifton Forge Chamber of Commerce Building. 1921-27 (SM). 1-story, frame, weatherboard siding, hip roof,

front display window. This building has served as the Chamber of Commerce ever since it first appeared on the 1927 Sanborn map. CB

312: W. W. Pendleton Building. 1898. 2-story, brick, shed roof with elaborate Eastlake-inspired milled wood parapet, aluminum storefront with architectural glass surround. This building was designed by Knoxville mail-order architect George F. Barber for the Pendleton Brothers hardware business. The building was occupied by the Smith-McKinney hardware store during the early 20th c. CB

38

400 block

400: Building. 1921-27 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with recently vertical-board-sheathed parapet, windows with concrete keystones in lintels, aluminum storefronts. On the 1927 Sanborn map this building is identified as a double store with lodge rooms on the second floor. CB

39

404: Produce Stand. 4th 1/4 20th c. 1-story, frame, corrugated metal siding, shed roof. NB

40

406: Building. 1950s. 1-story, concrete block with front brick veneer, shed roof with corbeled parapet, two vertical-board-sheathed storefronts. NB

41

408: Building. 1891, 1913-21 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet with pressed metal modillion cornice, 2-over-2 sash second-story windows (front ones with molded lintels), aluminum storefront with dentil cornice, partial signage on side wall reading "Sold Everywhere," "5c." According to Corron (p. 30), 408 Main was built in 1891 by Louis and Henrietta Sachs and contained a bakery and later a pool hall. In 1904 Joseph Otto purchased the building and operated a dry goods store from it. The 2-story rear extension was made between 1913 and 1921. CB

42

410: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907) (SM). 2-story, brick (with partial vertical board siding), shed roof with parapet with wood bracketed and paneled cornice,

43

segmental-arched second-story front windows, wood storefront with pressed metal cornice. This building has housed many different functions: in 1907 it contained C. C. Yarborough's flour and feed store; in 1913 it contained a grocery; in 1921 a grocery and dry goods store occupied the building; and in 1949 it contained an automobile dealership. CB

411-413: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907), 1907-13 (SM). 3-story, frame, bricktex siding, shed roof, ornate wood storefront with milled muntins and decorative transoms. Edmund F. Scott was an early owner of this building; the restaurant that operated in the original, northeast half of this building in 1907 was one of his businesses, as was the hotel that operated from the upper stories in the 1920s. The southwest section of the building was added between 1907 and 1913 and contained E. F. Scott's barber shop. CB

44

412: Building. 1907-13 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet and pressed metal cornice with swags and triglyphs, segmental-arched second-story front windows, mid-20th-c. tile storefront surround and aluminum awning, rear balcony. On the 1913 Sanborn map this building is identified as a restaurant. CB

414: Building. 3rd 1/4 20th c. 1-story, concrete block with front brick veneer, shed roof, two wood and aluminum storefronts, rear shed addition. NB

415: Building. 1913-21, 1927-49 (SM). 1-story, brick, shed roof, rear brick shed addition made between 1927 and 1949. The building may have received its present brick front facade in the 1930s. On the 1921 Sanborn map this building is identified as a lunch room. CB

416: Building. 1940s. 1-story, concrete block, sheet metal street facade, garage door and aluminum storefront. NB

417: Building. 1913-21 (SM). 1-story, brick, shed roof, segmental-arched rear windows, aluminum sheathing above aluminum storefront and awning. On the 1921 Sanborn map this building is identified as a grocery. By 1949 it was used for its current function as a cleaners. NB

49

418: Ridge Theatre. 1929. Spanish Eclectic, 3-story, brick, stuccoed front facade with decorative bands, shed roof with parapet with mission tile coping, arched windows on upper stories of front facade, story windows with false metal balcony and flanked by round-arched slit windows with decorative glazing and pendentives, aluminum store front replacing original lobby entry and marquee. In 1928 Samuel Sachs sold the Family Theatre to the Warner Brothers Theater Company which either remodeled the earlier theater building or razed it and built anew. CB

419: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907) (SM). 1-story, rock-faced concrete block, shed roof with corbeled parapet, wood storefront with molded concrete-block cornice. Behind the building is a 1-story, frame, vertical-board-sided storage shed with gable roof. In 1909 Louis and Henrietta Sachs sold this building to Rule V. Van Horn who operated a marbleworks on the property (He apparently rented the building from the Sachs's earlier.). The 1907 Sanborn map identifies this building as a marble works, a function it also housed in 1913. CB

420: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907), 1921-27 (SM). 2-story, brick (or brick veneer), shed roof with corbeled parapet, utilitarian detailing, aluminum storefront with architectural glass surround. The 1907 Sanborn map shows a 2-story building on the site identified as a restaurant. In 1913 the building contained a "Moose Club"; in 1921 it contained a stationery store. The building probably attained its present form between 1921 and 1927. CB

421: Building. 1907-13 (SM). Neoclassical, 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet and pressed metal modillion cornice, second-story street front with two recessed bays containing segmental-arched windows, aluminum storefront with pressed metal cornice, frame accretion with weatherboard and bricktex siding to rear. On the 1913 Sanborn map this building is identified as containing a stone cutting establishment in a 2-story rear wing, probably an annex to R. V. Van Horn's marble works. CB

54

422: Building. 1913-21 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet, vinyl sheathing above aluminum storefront and awning. During the 1910s and early 1920s a restaurant operated at the address; on the 1927 and 1949 maps the building is identified as a store. NB

423-425: Building. Ca. 1930. 1-story, brick, shed roof with corbeled parapet with diamond-shaped concrete accents, dual aluminum storefronts with translucent transoms. Originally of retail/commercial function, this building may have been built by Samuel Sachs. CB

424: Building. 1907-13 (SM). 3-story, brick, shed roof with parapet and pressed metal modillion cornice with swags, segmental-arched upper-story front windows, aluminum storefront with pressed metal cornice. On the 1913 Sanborn map this building is identified as a store; on the 1921 map it is shown as being partitioned down the middle with a shoe repair shop in the southwest half and a fish and oyster bar in the northeast half. CB

426: Building. 1907-13 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with corbeled parapet with lancer-arched vents, segmental-arched second-story front windows, aluminum storefront with pressed metal cornice, 2-story asbestos-shingle-sided frame addition to rear. Deed information suggests that this building was built in 1907. On the 1913 and 1921 Sanborn maps this building is identified as a grocery; on the 1927 and 1949 maps it is identified as a store. CB

427-429: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907), Ca. 1930 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with corbeled parapet with diamond-shaped concrete accents, aluminum storefronts (one with cloth awning), 1- and 2-story rear brick wings with segmental-arched openings, 1-story mid-20th c. concrete-block addition. This building probably received its present facade around 1930. Originally retail commercial function. CB

59

428-430: Building. 1907-13 (SM). 1-story, brick, shed roof with decorative pressed metal parapet, aluminum storefront flanked by rusticated brick piers. On the

1913 and 1921 Sanborn maps this building is identified as a pool room; on the 1927 map it is identified as a store. CB

431: Building. 1900-13 (SM). 1-story, brick, shed roof with decorative pressed metal parapet, modern vertical board storefront. This building may appear on the 1907 Sanborn map, identified as a drugstore; the building definitely appears on the 1913 map. CB

60

431B: Building. 1921-27 (SM). 1-story, brick, shed roof with elaborately corbeled parapet, aluminum storefront. This building, which fills a narrow vestigal lot, first appears on the 1927 Sanborn map identified as a store. CB

432: Building. 1913-21 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet and bracketed pressed metal cornice, second-story front divided into three sections by piers and pierced by windows with decorative multipane transoms, aluminum storefront. The Virginia Garage Company, Inc. purchased this lot in 1915. On the 1921 Sanborn map the building is labeled "Garage / Cap'cy 80 cars / Lights: Electric / Heat: Steam ... " The building is identified as a garage on the 1927 map and as "Auto Sales and Service" on the 1949 map. CB

433: Building. 1913-21 (SM). 1-story, brick, shed roof with parapet, dual wood storefronts. On the 1921 Sanborn map the northeast half of the building is labeled "Tel. Office" and the southwest half is labeled "Barber." On the 1927 map the northeast half is labeled "Western Union Telephone (?) office" and the southwest half is labeled "store." This building was probably built by a member of the Woodward family. CB

434: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907) (SM). 3-story, rock-faced concrete block, shed roof with parapet and bracketed pressed metal cornice, upper-story front with foliated molded concrete block belt course and smooth blocks alternating with rough blocks suggestive of quoining, early storefront with colored glass transom and cloth awning, 1-story concrete-block addition to rear. CB

64

435: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907) (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet, second-story front with corbeling and flush panels, modern wood storefront with wood-shingled mansard, wood-paneled late Art Deco restaurant interior. This building has contained numerous enterprises since 1907: a print shop, a grocery, a pool hall, a bakery, a store, and--from the 1940s on--a restaurant. CB

65

436-438: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907), 1921-27 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet, second-story front with decorative brick work and centered metal balcony, aluminum storefronts with aluminum awnings and earlier multipane transoms, wedge-like 2-story addition along northeast side with a storefront on Commerce Street, small two-level porch to rear, 2-story rear brick wing with large segmental-arched opening accommodating four windows. In 1916 this building became home to Zimmerman & Company clothiers and the present facade was added. CB

437-439: Building. Ca. 1900 (before 1907), 1913-21 (SM). Neoclassical, 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet, second-story of 437 with diamond-shaped panels over two 1-over-1 sash windows, second-story of 439 with pressed metal cornice with modillions, triglyphs, paterae, and a cast concrete cartouche with the inscription "VWPCo" and coupled 1-over-1 sash windows in shallow arched recesses. The street-level of both 437 and 439 is unified by a modern concrete, aluminum, and glass storefront with cloth awning. The interior features pressed metal ceilings and a VEPCO demonstration kitchen (ca. 1950) for TV demonstrations. This building is actually two separate buildings unified stylistically during the late 1910s--437 is the earlier component; it is identified on the 1907 Sanborn map as a clothing store. 439 first appears on the 1921 map, identified as VWPCO. According to Corron (p. 60-61), the Virginia Western Power Company was organized in 1913; presumably 439 was built soon afterward. The styling of 439 suggests that it may have been designed by the Lynchburg architectural firm of Frye & Chesterman. By 1928 VWPCO had been absorbed by the Virginia Public Service Company, which later became

67

VEPCO. On the 1949 map both 437 and 439 are labeled "Virginia Electric Power Company." CB [2]

441: (Former) Clifton Forge National Bank. 1916, 1960. International-style, 3-story, brick, shed roof, front facade of metal and glass panels divided by vertical brick strips, aluminum canopy and yews in brick planter boxes defining dual front entries; rear elevation retains original segmental-arched windows. Originally this building had a limestone or cast stone facade with colossal Corinthian columns in antis. According to Corron (p. 99-100), the facade was modernized by the Bank Building and Equipment Corporation of America in 1960 for the Mountain National Bank, which succeeded the CFNB in 1934. NB

68

500 block

501: Bridge Pharmacy Building. 1926. 2-story, brick, shed roof with Mission-style parapet containing quatrefoil panel in front crest, pressed metal modillion cornice, second-story front with large blocked-up windows with rock-faced concrete sills, aluminum storefronts and aluminum awning (with older support chains); rear is elevation faced in ceramic fire block and has bricked-up windows. Geeden Surber built this building on the Ridgeway Street bridge over Smith Creek in 1926 for his pharmacy and other commercial functions including offices and a print shop. In 1936 the building was acquired by Leggett's Department Store. CB

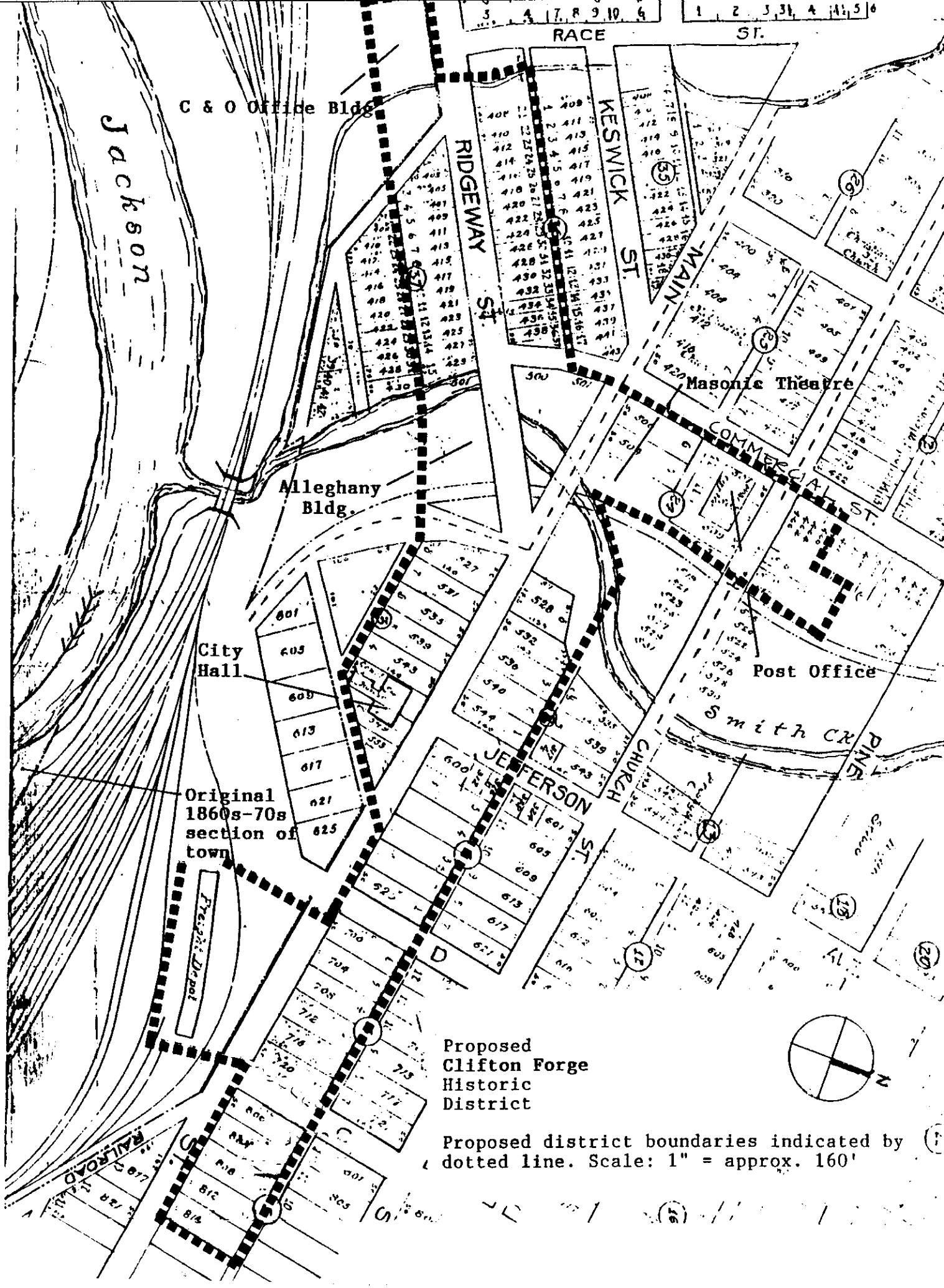
503: Building. 1921-27 (SM). 1-story, brick, shed roof with parapet with yellow and red decorative brickwork, aluminum storefront with stained-glass transom, modern rear deck. This narrow building represents infill between 501 and 505-511 Ridgeway. Originally retail commercial function. CB

505-511: Alleghany Building. 1905. Neoclassical, 3-story, brick (buff colored), shed roof with decorative parapet and pressed metal modillion cornice, front facade divided into five bays by brick quoining, third-story front windows surmounted by round arches, aluminum storefronts with aluminum awnings and linked across the

71

top by an original cornice with paterae; segmental-arched fenestration on 4-story rear elevation. The hallways on the interior have pressed metal walls and ceilings. The Alleghany Building was designed by the Lynchburg firm of Frye & Chesterman in 1905 and was then known as the Alleghany Construction Company store and office building. Early occupants of the building were the Clifton Forge National Bank, Sentz Jewelry Store, a clothing store, a billiard parlor, a wholesale grocery, and professional offices. Apartments on the third story were occupied primarily by C&O workers during the 1910s. CB

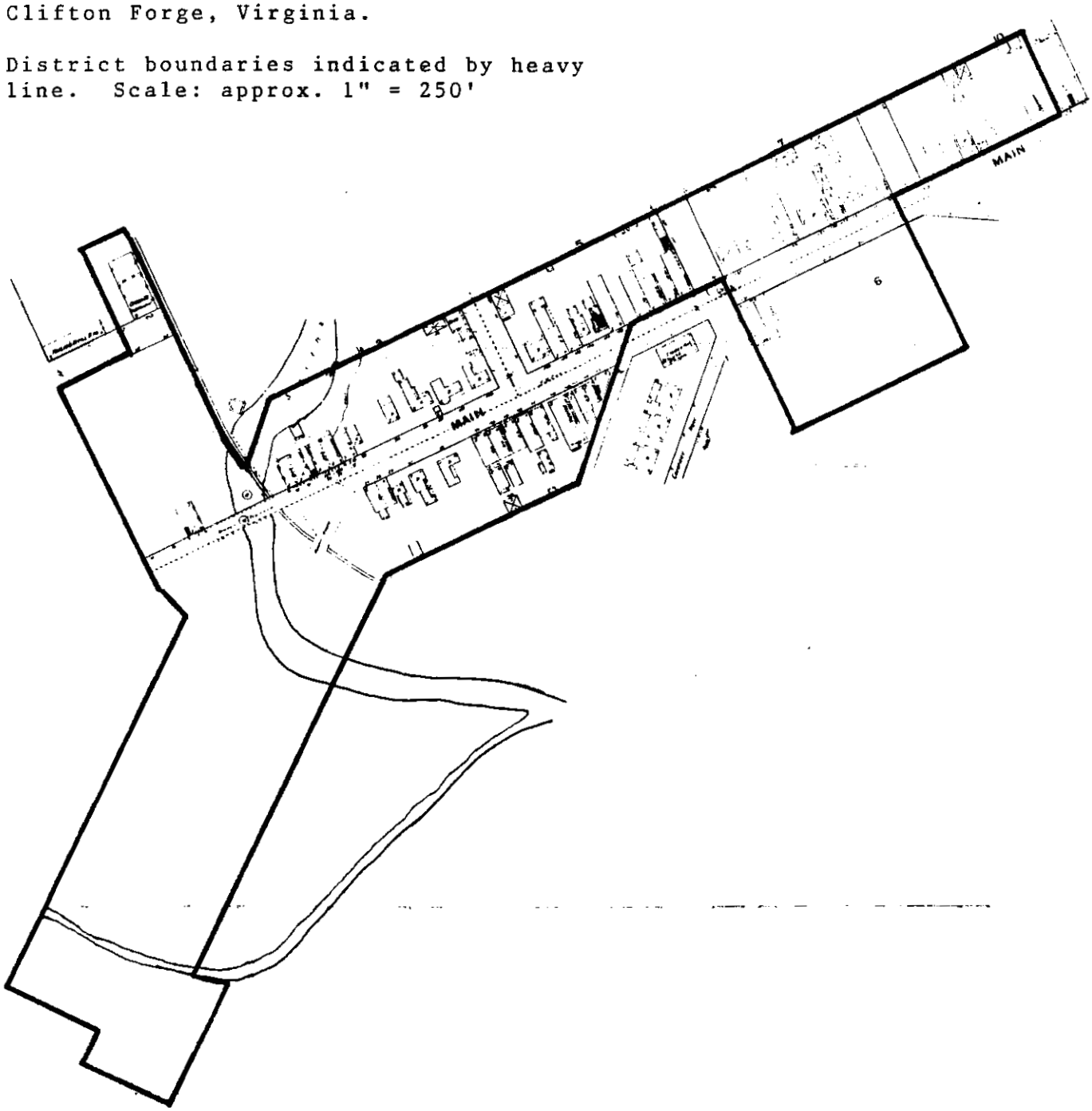
515-521: A. O. Surber Building. 1897-1902, 1907-1913 (SM). 2-story, brick, shed roof with parapet and pressed cornice, segmental-arched windows, aluminum storefronts with aluminum mansard, partial stone foundations evident to rear. A 1907-13 2-story wedge-shaped rear brick wing bears signage for a dry goods store. Changes in the color of the brickwork on the front facade are evidence of a former (but not original) recess near the southwest corner. This building was built by Surber to house his meat market. S. S. Griffith, an early photographer in the city, had an upstairs studio in the building during the early 20th c. The building also formerly contained a doctor's office and a millinery shop. CB


RACE ST.
C & O Office Bldg.
Jackson
RIDGEWAY ST.
KESWICK ST.
MAIN
Masonic Theatre
COMMERCIAL ST.
Alleghany Bldg.
City Hall
Post Office
Smith Cr
JEFFERSON ST.
CHURCH
Original 1860s-70s section of town
Freight Depot
RAILROAD
Proposed Clifton Forge Historic District
Proposed district boundaries indicated by dotted line. Scale: 1" = approx. 160'

Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District

Section of 1892 Sanborn Map Company map of Clifton Forge, Virginia.

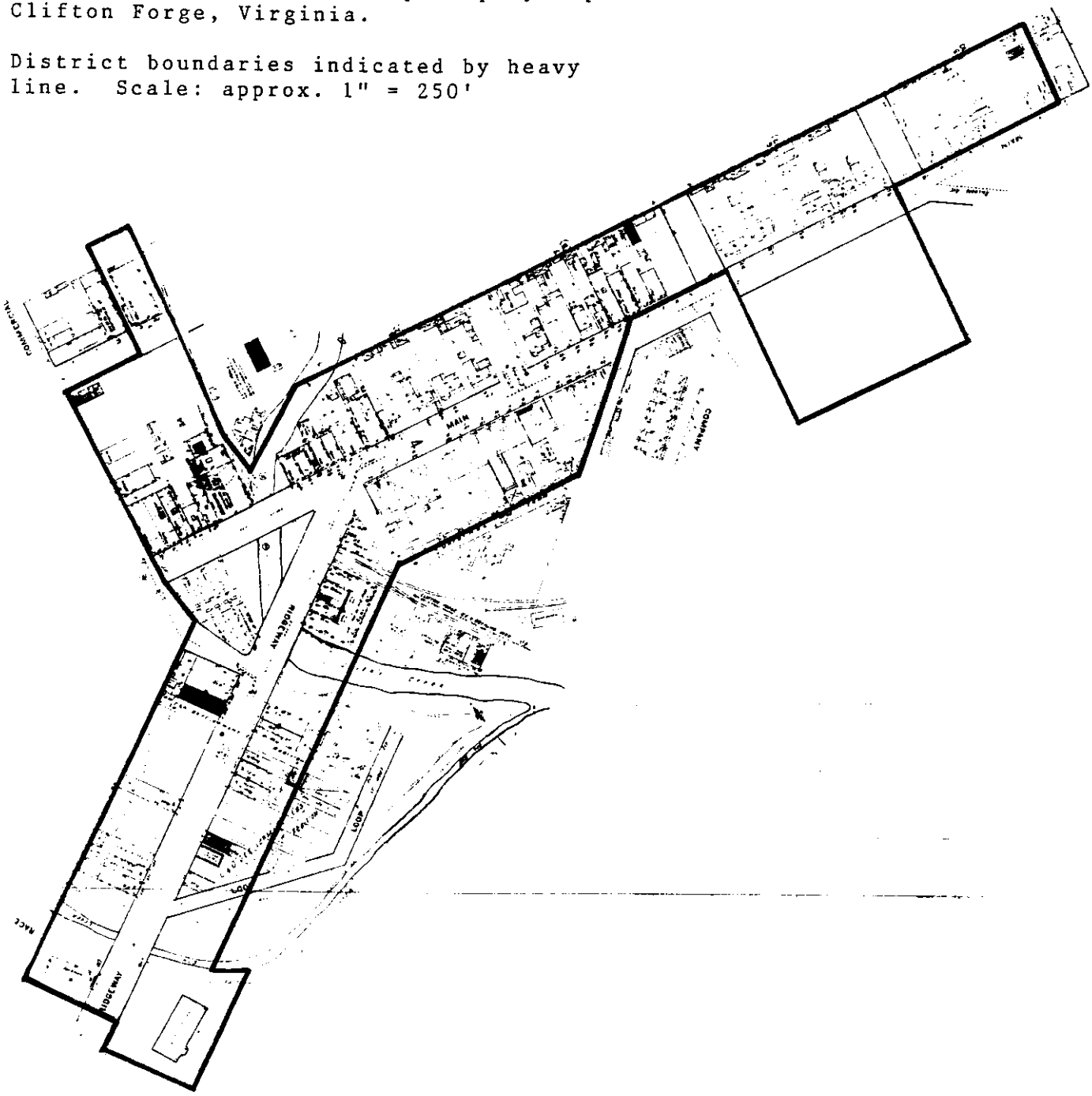
District boundaries indicated by heavy line. Scale: approx. 1" = 250'



Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District

Section of 1907 Sanborn Map Company map of Clifton Forge, Virginia.

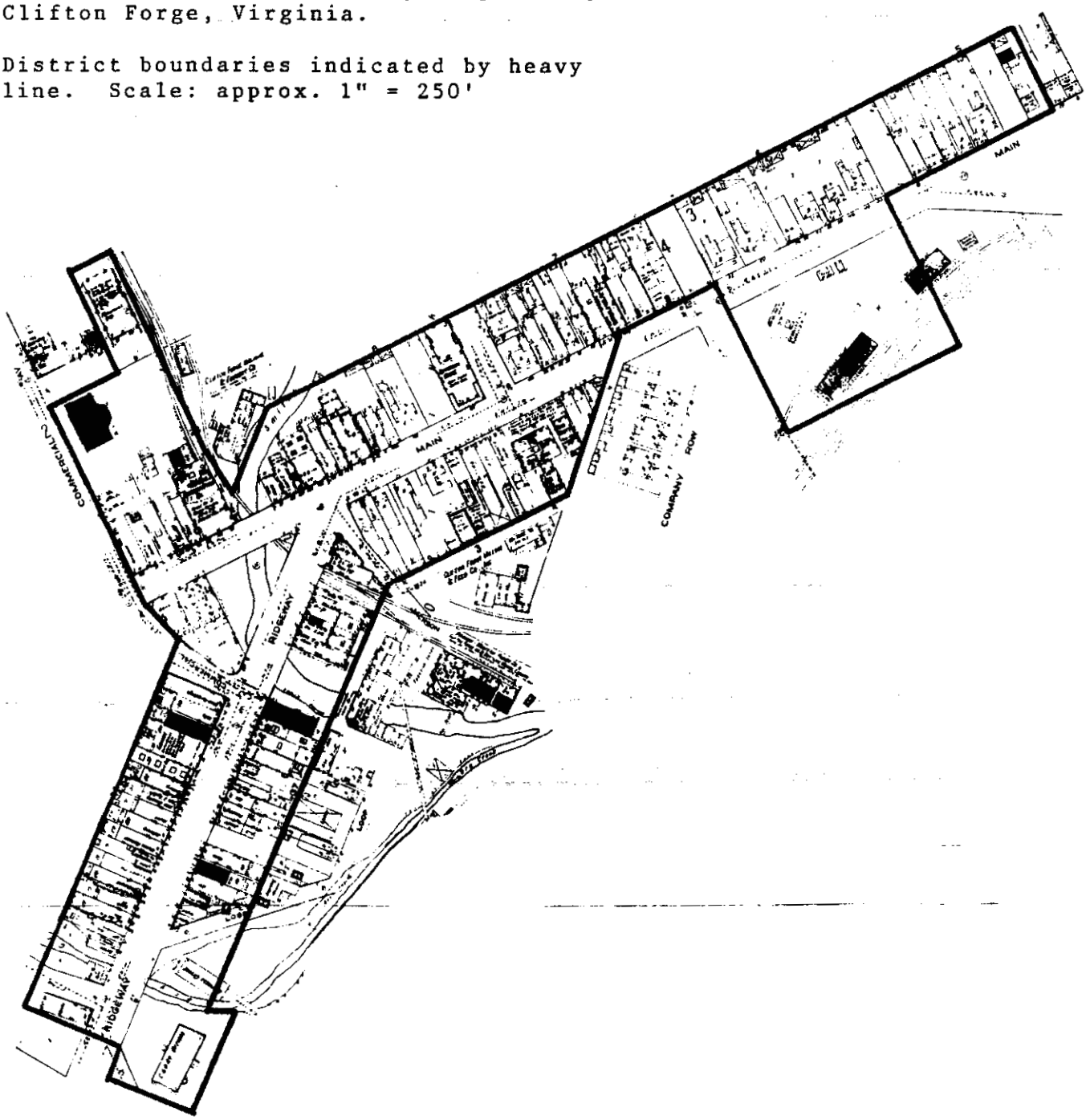
District boundaries indicated by heavy line. Scale: approx. 1" = 250'



Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District

Section of 1921 Sanborn Map Company map of Clifton Forge, Virginia.

District boundaries indicated by heavy line. Scale: approx. 1" = 250'



8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District encompasses the business district of the city of Clifton Forge located at the confluence of Smith Creek and the Jackson River in western Virginia. The majority of buildings in the historic district date from the last decade of the nineteenth century through the first decade of the twentieth century. In addition to a fine collection of little-altered commercial buildings, the district includes two railroad-related facilities, two notable public buildings, and a Masonic Theatre which hosted vaudeville shows, lodge meetings, and, later, a movie house. Clifton Forge is situated on the main line of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, one of the nation's great east-west trunk lines, and the city dates its modern origin to the construction in 1878 of railroad shops just downstream from the mouth of Smith Creek. In 1890 Clifton Forge became a major division point on the Chesapeake and Ohio, and the town then began two decades of rapid commercial expansion, growth which continued, though at an abated pace, until 1940.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

The Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A with three pertinent Areas of Significance: for its association with commerce as reflected by the survival of more than forty structures which provided the community with shops, stores, business offices, banks, and places for lodging and meals; and for its association with transportation services provided by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad mail line, shops, Office Building, and Freight Depot. The district is eligible for listing under Criterion C for its historic architectural qualities. The district includes a rich collection of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial architecture, a Masonic Theatre and other commercial structures representing the work of the Lynchburg architectural firm of Frye & Chesterman, and an elegant post office building designed by Treasury Department architect James Knox Taylor. The period of significance for the Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District ranges from 1878--the construction date of the original Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad shops--to 1940--a date marking the peak of the city's population growth and its final phase of significant architectural development.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1770 the land that would eventually become Clifton Forge was patented by Robert Gillespie, formerly of Augusta County, Virginia. Possession of the tracts of land on the north side of the Jackson River and on both sides of Smith's Creek passed through several hands before becoming the property of Henry Smith in the 1820s. The property was subsequently acquired by Smith's brother-in-law and fellow Scotsman Andrew Williamson. The area became known as Williamson's and remained a quiet place of little growth until the arrival of the Virginia Central Railroad in the 1850s.

The Virginia Central Railroad extended its track southwest from Staunton to the Jackson River by 1857. After the Civil War, the Virginia Central laid track west to Covington in 1867 and connected there with the Covington and Ohio Railroad. The next year the two lines merged to form the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, and Williamson's Station (formerly Williamson) began its role as a railroad service center on one of the nation's great east and west trunk lines.

The Chesapeake and Ohio built a roundhouse at Williamson's Station on the north side of the Jackson River downstream or east of Smith Creek in 1878. The shops and yard became more important in 1881 when the Richmond and Alleghany Railroad completed its water-level line from the east along the James River to a terminal connection with the Chesapeake and Ohio at Williamson's Station. The Chesapeake and Ohio expanded its Williamson's Station roundhouse in 1882 and added a machine shop. At that time, the community had about 700 inhabitants, and two years later the town was incorporated under the name of Clifton Forge.

In 1888 the Richmond and Alleghany became part of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, and the Chesapeake and Ohio then had in its possession all of the line which enabled it to transport the vast resources of coal and lumber from West Virginia to the manufacturing centers of the midwest and to the docks, warehouses, and shipyards of Hampton Roads, where the James River joins the Chesapeake Bay. In 1890 Chesapeake and Ohio executives decided to make Clifton Forge a major division point because of its strategic location at the juncture of the railroad's three major lines: the Mountain subdivision with its original Virginia Central tracks to Staunton and points east, the Alleghany subdivision with its former Covington and Ohio line to the west, and the newly acquired James

in a hardware business. In 1884 George M. Farrar opened the town's first drug store with Mrs. M. H. Early. Upon Mrs. Early's retirement, her brother W. L. Williamson took her place as Farrar's partner. During the late 1880s, E. A. Snead arrived and initially worked for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. The arrivals of Scott, Carpenter, Farrar, and Snead were significant as all four would become prominent businessmen of Clifton Forge.

The early 1890s saw many new businesses established, and 1890-1891 served as a key economic year for Clifton Forge. According to the 1891 Landbook, 149 people owned property in Clifton Forge, and 120 of the owners lived in Clifton Forge. Two hundred and two buildings were appraised in Clifton Forge at that time, and the average value of the buildings was $917. The buildings that survive in the district at 704 and 708 Main Street were owned by Robert S. Wiley in 1891. Wiley, a physician, owned the building that is the Hawkins Brothers Store at 708 Main Street and the house at 704 Main Street. The values of the buildings were $1,200 and $1,600, respectively. The buildings at 800 and 804 Main Street that still exist were valued at $1,800 and $1,400, respectively, and were owned in 1891 by James A. Ford, a general merchant and one of the town's original trustees. In 1891 there were forty-seven buildings on Main Street in the district, and Mrs. L. M. Carpenter owned the land on which the Farrar building at 525 Main Street would later be constructed.

In 1892 E. A. Snead was the owner of a small cigar store on Main Street and was chosen as town magistrate. After assuming office, Snead opened the first Ice and Bottling Works on Commercial Street. Soon Snead purchased the interest of F. P. Staley, Clifton Forge's first mortician, and opened a furniture store. The Snead building at 500 Main Street was built between 1892 and 1897 and is said to have become one of the largest stores in western Virginia. During this period, E. F. Scott also experienced success, and the 1893 Chataigne's Gazetteer lists him as the owner of a saloon and the Hotel Scott. Clifton Forge had fifteen saloons at this time, and two of the other saloons were owned by black men.

In 1893 Farrar bought Williamson's share of the drugstore and assumed complete ownership. The drugstore housed the first circulating library in town and had the first telephone line that connected with the railyard. Also by this time Clifton Forge had five attorneys, two dentists, and five drugstores. The town continued to develop new businesses, and by 1897 the Anheuser Busch

Brewing Company had arrived. Clifton Forge's population continued to grow and the census records indicate that the town's population had grown from 1,800 in 1890 to 3,200 in 1900.

In the early 1900s Joseph Otto bought the property at 408 Ridgeway Street from Louis and Henrietta Sachs. Louis Sachs and his brother Julius were Polish Jews who emigrated to Clifton Forge in 1890-1891 and soon ran successful clothing stores. Otto was a German-born butcher who had gained citizenship in 1888, while his wife and daughter became citizens in 1891. Also during the early 1900s, Scott became the owner of the building at 411-413 East Ridgeway Street in the district and ran a restaurant. In 1905 J. C. Carpenter built the Carpenter and Company building at 314 Commercial Avenue. During E. A. Snead's presidency of the town council in 1906, Clifton Forge was incorporated as a city.

Around 1900 America began to invest more money in theaters and entertainment, and Clifton Forge soon followed the trend. Built in 1905 as an opera house, the Masonic Theatre at 510 Main Street replaced an earlier theater. The third floor of the opera house was to be used exclusively by the Masonic Lodge (Low Moor Lodge No. 166 A. F.), which moved to Clifton Forge in 1882 and changed its name to Clifton Forge Lodge No. 166. The Masons began meeting in the opera house in 1906, and the establishment changed its name to the Masonic Theatre in honor of the Masons. The theater presented plays, operas, and vaudeville shows, and a local orchestra called the "Merry Makers" played every night before the shows. In 1908 the theater changed its format and began to show movies. Samuel Sachs bought the theater in 1918, and then sold the building to Universal Films in 1926. The Ridge Theatre at 418 East Ridgeway Street became Clifton Forge's second theater in 1929. The Ridge Theatre was also purchased by Samuel Sachs who subsequently sold it to Warner Brothers.

By 1910 the population of Clifton Forge had grown to 5,700, and an examination of the manuscript census for that year shows that F. Powell, a merchant, owned and lived in property on Main Street. Powell's residence included his wife, two sons, one daughter, one son-in-law, and a grandson. In addition to his family, there were six lodgers living in the house. By 1914 Powell had purchased the properties at 704 and 708 Main St. from Robert S. Wiley and was using one of the properties as a residence. In 1910 W. G. Frommer, a German-born butcher, had his shop on Main Street. Frommer owned the property and lived above the butcher shop with his wife,

River subdivision which ran east/southeast to Richmond and Hampton Roads.

In the early 1890s the Chesapeake and Ohio embarked on a major building campaign which replaced the earlier roundhouse and shops east of Smith Creek with machine shops, roundhouse, boiler house, blacksmith shops, passenger stations, and offices. The new shops were located approximately one mile west of Smith Creek. The present Freight Depot, constructed in 1896 and located south of the 700 block of Main Street, occupies approximately the site of the earlier roundhouse. Constructed in 1906, the Chesapeake and Ohio Office Building across Ridgeway Street from the W. W. Pendleton Building is the other structure included in the historic district which dates from the post-1890 relocation of the Chesapeake and Ohio shops. The Chesapeake and Ohio made its last major changes at the engine offices, terminal, and shops west of Clifton Forge between 1923 and 1925.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad's decision to invest in Clifton Forge was significant for it made the town a center of activity and greatly increased its population. Between 1884, the time of the incorporation of Clifton Forge, and 1910 the town's population increased eight fold, from 700 to 5,700 inhabitants.

The State Assembly officially approved the incorporation of Clifton Forge on December 1, 1884. Thomas D. Bowles, magistrate; Ham Michael, J. A. Ford, G. W. Huddleston, and W. C. Moody, general merchants; J. F. Hughes, doctor; and J. G. Woodward (profession unknown) were appointed as trustees. Six of the seven men are listed in the 1884 Chataigne's Gazetteer. It is interesting to note that although the railroad was vital to the formation of Clifton Forge, railroad officials did not dominate town politics.

The decade of the 1880s marked the construction of four buildings which survive in the Clifton Forge historic district at 704, 708, 800, and 804 Main Street and the arrival of several important entrepreneurs. Edmund F. Scott arrived in Clifton Forge in 1881 and soon became one of the community's first black leaders. As a successful businessman, he donated and helped solicit funds in 1884 for construction of the new First Baptist Church when the congregation outgrew its older church. 1881 also marked the arrival of J. C. Carpenter, Sr., who initially worked for the railroad before entering into a partnership with William C. Moody

daughter, and son, who were all born in Virginia. A prominent renter on Main Street in 1910 was William Terrel, a black laborer, who also ran a boarding house with sixty-two lodgers. Blacks comprised approximately one-fifth of Clifton Forge inhabitants in 1910. It is also interesting to note that in 1910 there were fifty-six Italian miners living and working in or near Clifton Forge.

Fifteen heads of households lived on Ridgeway Street in 1910. Six of the fifteen were employed in retail; all six were renters who probably lived with their families in flats above the shops where they worked. Thirty-two (or thirty percent) of the 105 heads of households who lived on Ridgeway and Main streets in Clifton Forge in 1910 worked for the railroad.

The 1910 census lists E. A. Snead's residence on McCormick Boulevard, where he lived with his wife, daughter, son, brother-in law, and a servant. One of Snead's neighbors on McCormick Boulevard was Fred B. Westerman, a butcher who is listed in the 1914 Clifton Forge City Directory on Main Street.

By 1914 there were two buildings in the district on Commercial Avenue, while there were sixteen buildings on Main Street, and twenty-six on Ridgeway Street. The 1917 Clifton Forge City Directory contains advertisements for Snead's store on Main Street that tout a variety of goods including furniture, stoves, ranges, go-carts, clocks, pianos, victrolas, and Victor records. In addition to his business expertise, Snead was also a successful politician; he served on the town council in many capacities until the 1940s and also served three terms from 1925 to 1933 as a representative in the Virginia House of Delegates.

By 1924 Joseph Otto had expanded from his original butcher shop and also owned a clothing store, a taxi office, and the American Railway Express Office, which were all on East Ridgeway Street. E. F. Scott also expanded his business holdings. By 1924 he owned the restaurant and hotel, as well as a barber shop. In 1930 the Farrar building at 525 Main Street was constructed, and Farrar continued to be an important town leader.

The importance of the businessmen as well as the railroad is shown in the 1936 University of Virginia Record Extension Series which states that the town had a thriving Chamber of Commerce. Also during this period, the city was ranked by a University of Virginia

survey as "first among cities in Virginia and fourth in the United States in home ownership. Fifty-seven and six-tenths percent of the homes here are owned by the people who live in them." These statistics suggest that the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad did not operate as a significant absentee landlord in Clifton Forge during the 1930s. The population of Clifton Forge continued to increase and peaked in 1940 at 6,461.

Perhaps the Depression restricted the enterprise of some of the more active businessmen of Clifton Forge. The 1941 Clifton Forge City Directory only lists E. F. Scott as the operator of a restaurant, and only mentions Joseph Otto as the operator of a department store. The district now contained the Clifton Forge Grocery Company Building at 512 Church Street, two buildings on Commercial Avenue, twenty-seven buildings on Main Street, and thirty-six buildings on Ridgeway Street.

During World War II, a major fire destroyed six commercial buildings on Main Street. The final major change to the commercial streetscape of Clifton Forge occurred with the construction in 1966 of the present First National Bank on the triangular parcel bounded by Commercial Avenue and Main and East Ridgeway streets. Today CSX, the Chesapeake and Ohio's successor, only provides employment for 300 people in Clifton Forge, and the town's population has dropped to 4,679 inhabitants.

For Clifton Forge, the railroad played a vital role in the town's development, growth, and importance. Without the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, Clifton Forge would have probably remained a small community of only local importance. Since railroad officials never dominated the town's politics, businessmen such as Snead and Carpenter rose to political prominence. Although Clifton Forge did not become a booming metropolis, it did become a city of much activity, both commercially and socially. The railroad provided the base for the commercial activity, but the arrivals of different merchants further added to the growth and prosperity of the city. The fact that Clifton Forge built two different theaters further illustrates its commercial support for social and cultural activities.

Clifton Forge is a community that wishes to recognize and preserve its past. A fitting example of the city's desire to preserve history, cited by Elizabeth Corron in Clifton Forge, Virginia--Scenic, Busy, Friendly, was the dedication of a historic marker on

the lawn at City Hall on May 30, 1933, to honor the original land that had been patented by Robert Gillespie in 1770. Present public support for designation of the historic district in Clifton Forge was expressed by a Clifton Forge City Council resolution adopted December 10, 1990. That resolution commended the City's Downtown Revitalization Committee for its efforts and endorsed the preparation of this historic district nomination. The city's vote of support represents the community's commitment to preservation of buildings which record the town's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century heritage as an important center for rail service, commerce, and theater entertainment.

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## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

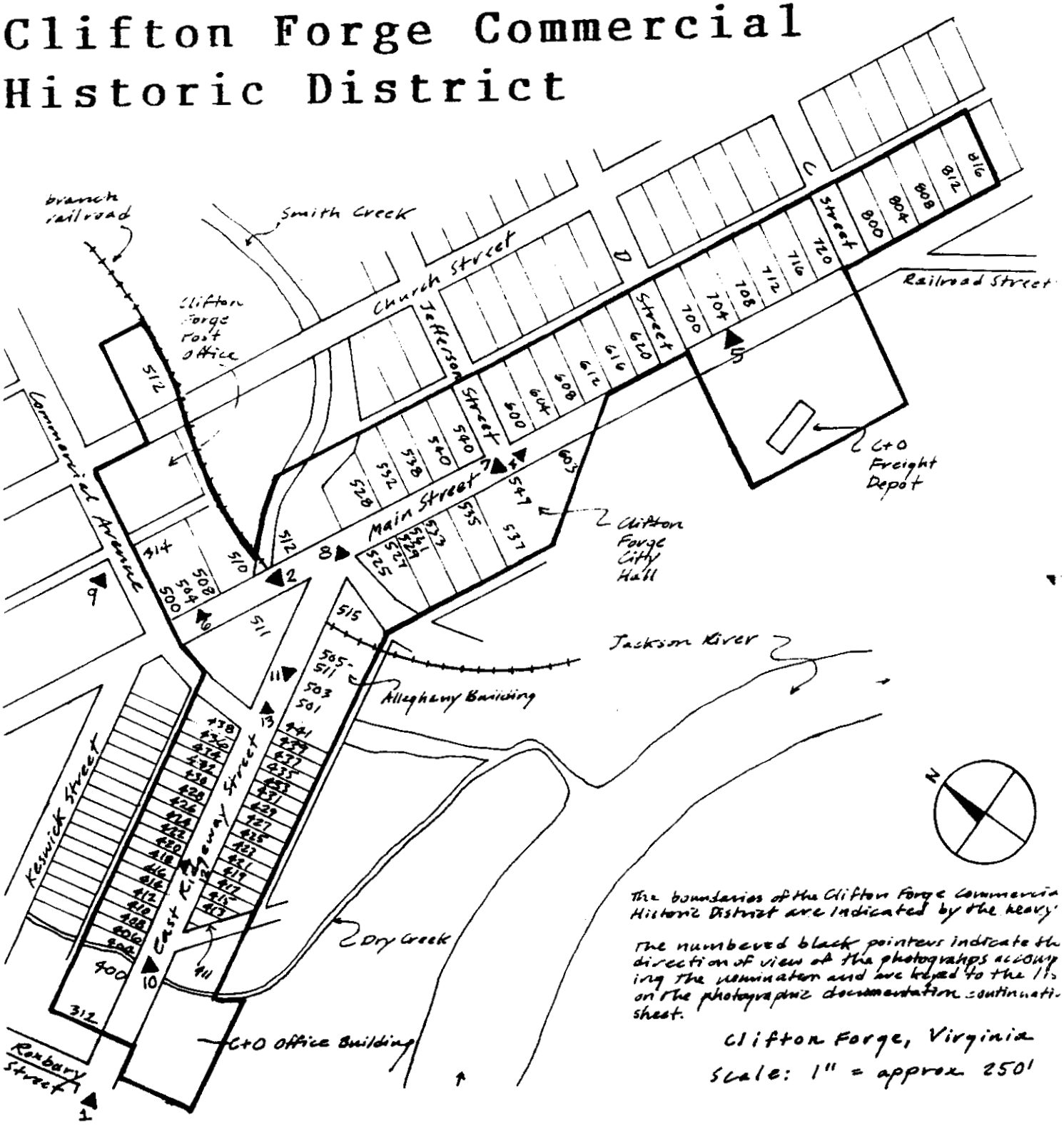
**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries of the Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District, indicated on the map accompanying the nomination (Maps p.1), are as follows: Beginning on Main Street at the southeast corner of the parcel at 816 Main Street, then northeastward with the east side of the parcel to the alley that runs between Main and Church streets, then northwestward with the alley along the back property lines of the parcels on the north side of Main Street to a point on the west bank of Smith Creek, then down the west bank of Smith Creek southwestward to the point where the east side of the branch railroad right-of-way intersects Smith Creek, then up the east side of the railroad right-of-way northeastward to a point across from the northeast corner of the parcel at 512 Church Street, then across the railroad right-of-way and with the northeast and northwest property lines of 512 Church Street to a point on the south side of Church Street, then northwestward with the south side of Church Street to Commercial Avenue, then southwestward with the east side of Commercial Avenue across Main Street to a point approximately midway between Main and East Ridgeway streets, then westward across Commercial Avenue and with the back property lines of the parcels along the north side of East Ridgeway Street to the northwest corner of the parcel at 312 East Ridgeway Street, then with the west side of the parcel to a point on the south side of East Ridgeway Street, then westward with the south side of East Ridgeway Street to a point opposite the northeast corner of the intersection of East Ridgeway and Roxbury streets, then southward and eastward to the west bank of Dry Creek so as to include the C&O Office Building, then up Dry Creek northward a short distance to a point on a line with the back property lines of the parcels on the south side of East Ridgeway Street, then eastward with the back property lines to the southeast corner of the parcel at 515 East Ridgeway Street, then southeastward across an alley and with the back property lines of the parcels on the south side of Main Street to a point behind the Clifton Forge City Hall, then with the northwest side of an alley northeastward to a point on the north side of Main Street near the southeast corner of the parcel at 612 Main Street, then southeastward along Main Street to the north east corner of Main and D streets, then southwestward, southeastward, and northeastward to the northwest corner of Main and C streets so as to include the C&O Freight Depot on the south side of Main Street, then southeastward along Main Street to the beginning.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries of the Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District are drawn so as to include the central, principal historic commercial area of the city. Adjoining the district on its north side are late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential areas that are clearly differentiated from the commercial area. Adjoining the district on its south side is a diffuse landscape of abandoned small-scale industrial buildings and railroad tracks.

# Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District



CLIFTON FORGE
COMMERCIAL
HISTORIC DISTRICT

CLIFTON FORGE,
VIRGINIA

UTM REFERENCES:
Zone 17 for all coördinates

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B. E 603900
N 4186100

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D. E 603420
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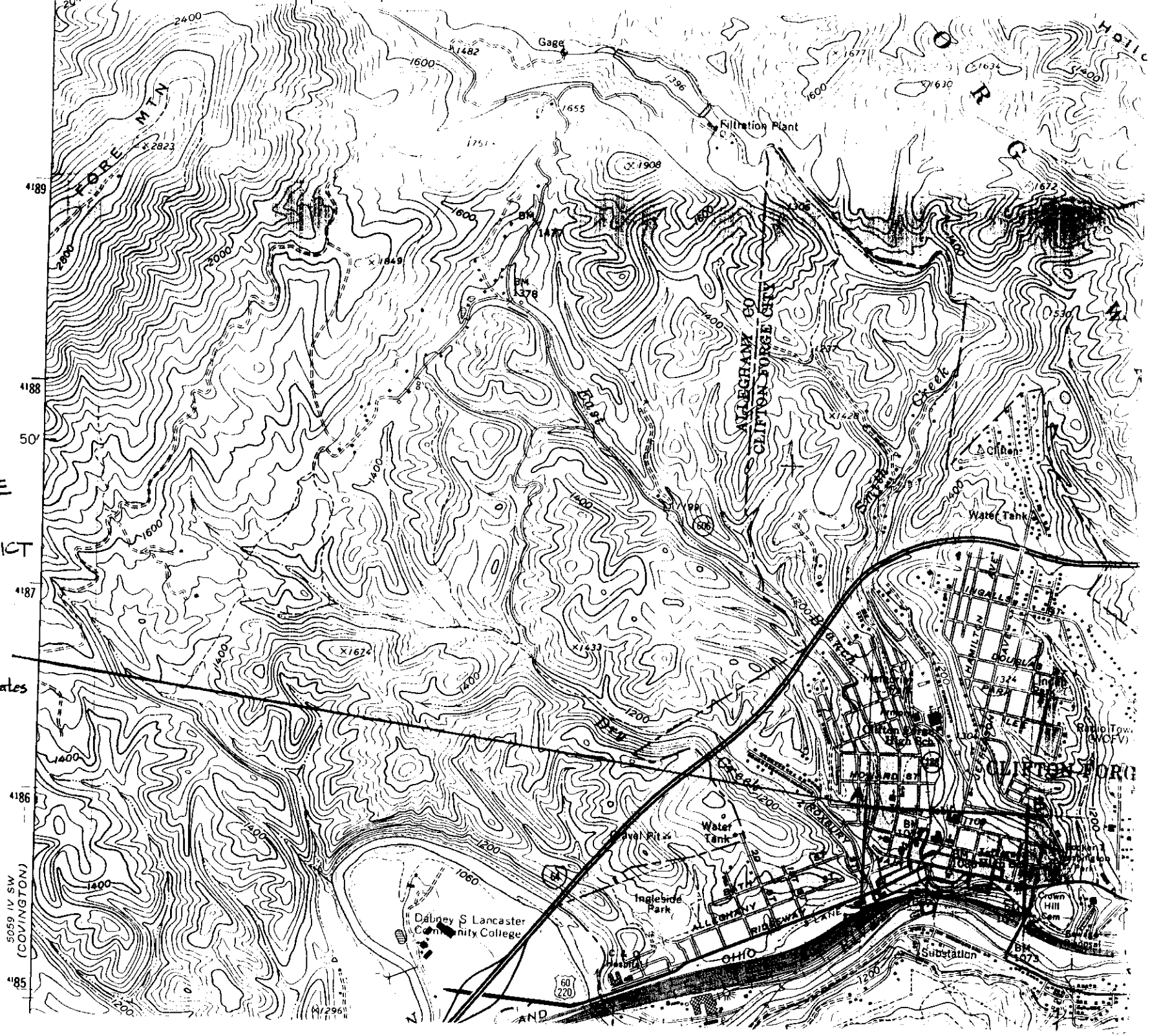
Clifton Forge, VA Quad