

VLR-12/8/93 NRHP-2/25/94

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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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 **Newport Historic District**
other names/site number **VDHR File No. 35-151**

2. Location

street & number **Greenbrier Branch Road, Route 42, Route 796** not for publication **N/A**
city or town **Newport** vicinity _____
state **Virginia** code **VA** county **Giles** code **71** zip code **24128**

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/Title _____ Date _____
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 for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official/Title _____ 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
_____ entered in the National Register. _____
_____ See continuation sheet. _____
_____ determined eligible for the National Register. _____
_____ See continuation sheet. _____
_____ determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
_____ removed from the National Register. _____
_____ other (explain): _____

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**
(Check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>50</u>	<u>13</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>53</u>	<u>13</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**0**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
DOMESTIC	hotel
COMMERCE / TRADE	professional
COMMERCE / TRADE	financial institution
COMMERCE / TRADE	specialty store
COMMERCE / TRADE	department store
COMMERCE / TRADE	restaurant

(see continuation sheets)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	multiple dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
COMMERCE / TRADE	professional
COMMERCE / TRADE	specialty store
SOCIAL	civic
GOVERNMENT	post office
RELIGION	religious facility

(see continuation sheets)

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE
MID-19TH CENTURY
 Greek Revival
 Gothic Revival
(see continuation sheets)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls WOOD
BRICK
roof METAL
other WOOD
METAL
(see continuation sheets)

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.)

Property is:

- 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 fifty years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- A: COMMERCE
- A: TRANSPORTATION
- A: INDUSTRY
- C: ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1832 - 1943

Significant Dates

- 1832
- 1872
- 1901

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

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:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately thirty-five (35) acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	544900	4127760	3	17	544390 4126960
2	17	544900	4127300	4	17	544340 4127080

___ 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	Leslie A. Giles, Architectural Historian; and Dr. John R. Kern, Historian		
organization	VDHR/Roanoke Regional Preservation Office	date	18 August 1993
street & number	1030 Penmar Avenue, SE	telephone	(703) 857-7585
city or town	Roanoke	state	VA zip code 24013

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 see attachments

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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**Newport Historic District
Newport, Giles County, VA**

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6. FUNCTION OR USE (continued)

Historic Functions

- SOCIAL meeting hall
- GOVERNMENT post office
- RELIGION religious facility
- RELIGION church-related residence
- AGRICULTURE / SUBSISTENCE processing
- AGRICULTURE / SUBSISTENCE agricultural outbuilding
- INDUSTRY / PROCESSING / EXTRACTION manufacturing facility
- INDUSTRY / PROCESSING / EXTRACTION waterworks
- HEALTH CARE medical office
- TRANSPORTATION road-related
- TRANSPORTATION pedestrian-related

Current Functions

- RELIGION church-related residence
- TRANSPORTATION road-related
- TRANSPORTATION pedestrian-related
- VACANT / NOT IN USE

7. DESCRIPTION (continued)

Architectural Classification

- LATE VICTORIAN
 - Gothic
 - Italianate
 - Queen Anne
 - Stick/Eastlake
- LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS
 - Beaux Arts Classicism
- LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS
 - Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials

- foundation BRICK
- WOOD
- CONCRETE

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Description (continued)

walls	METAL CONCRETE SYNTHETICS
roof	SYNTHETICS ASPHALT ASBESTOS
other	BRICK CONCRETE

Narrative Description

Summary Description and Integrity Statement

The Newport Historic District is located in the narrow Greenbrier Branch valley at the base of Gap Mountain in eastern Giles County, Virginia.¹ The valley is watered by several mountain spring-fed streams and branches that join Sinking Creek, a tributary of the New River, northeast of Newport. This small rural village takes on a roughly linear shape--with one major axis and an intersecting minor axis--a pattern dictated by its early roads that served as links in regional transportation networks. Typically, Newport's irregularly-sized and -shaped lots, which range in size from one-quarter acre to two-and-one-half acres, are set along these two axes. Most resources remaining within the district are freestanding single-family dwellings or store buildings of one or two stories, featuring wood frame construction, wood siding or ornamental metal sheathing, front porches, and associated outbuildings. Some of these buildings are astylistic or utilitarian in design, but most include exterior and interior elements that exhibit the influence of one or more popular nineteenth- and twentieth-century architectural types, primarily the Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Beaux-Arts, and Craftsman styles. The commercial buildings usually capitalize on their street frontages with full coverage of lots. Most residences, on the other hand, have proportionately less lot coverage, have regular setbacks from public streets, and are set within domestic landscapes with ornamental plantings or kitchen gardens. Additional landscape elements of the district include 1930s poured concrete sidewalks and mature deciduous street trees that line Newport's primary roads.

Approximately thirty-five acres in size, the Newport Historic District encompasses fifty-three (80%) contributing resources and thirteen (20%) noncontributing resources, for a total of sixty-six resources that represent a range of domestic, agricultural, commercial, industrial, and

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religious functional types dating from the 1820s or 1830s to the present. Although many pre-1902 resources were destroyed in a disastrous fire, and other buildings and structures outside the district's boundaries have been lost to fire or demolition, Newport's historic core survives, with few alterations since the end of the period of significance. Some buildings have had porches replaced, others have had foundations rebuilt or roofs resheathed, and a few have had rear or side additions made to them; but besides these minor changes, nearly all contributing resources retain their original or character-defining features. The noncontributing resources within the district include modern (post-1940s) domestic garages and other outbuildings, single-family dwellings, and one institutional structure. Small in scale and dispersed throughout the village, the noncontributing resources have little impact upon the historic character of the district or its contributing resources. Compared to the surrounding rural countryside, the district features a relatively high concentration of buildings within a small geographic area. Natural and man-made features, such as the steep slopes of adjacent hillsides, the U.S. Route 460 earthen causeway, and the construction of modern buildings on lands along the village's perimeter, help to distinguish the district from its surroundings.

Architectural Analysis

The Newport Historic District, at an average altitude of about two thousand feet, falls within the Ridge and Valley geographical province near its junction with the Appalachian Plateaus province. Steep limestone and sandstone ridges, narrow valleys with residual soils, streams and branches fed by natural springs, and forests made up of many hardwood and softwood species, especially chestnut, white oak, yellow poplar, and hemlock, characterize the area's general landscape.² The village of Newport is situated in the first valley west of the gap between Gap and Sinking Creek mountains, along the waters of Greenbrier Branch, half a mile south of Sinking Creek. While the Greenbrier Branch valley is narrow and constricted, the adjacent Sinking Creek valley and Clover Hollow valleys to the north and northeast are wide and well-suited to agricultural production. These topographic features have influenced, and in several cases dictated, the historic architectural development of Newport.

The Newport landscape was well suited for water-powered industries, an opportunity which was exploited by the earliest settlers in the community. Newport originated as a regional agricultural processing center, counting a tanyard, several grist mills, and an oil mill among the buildings constructed during the antebellum era to process hides, wheat, corn, and flaxseed produced in nearby valleys. No antebellum industrial resources appear to survive above ground within the district, although archaeological investigations may help to identify their specific locations and

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characteristics.

Beginning in the 1830s, when the Cumberland Gap Turnpike passed through Newport, the settlement became more commercial and domestic in character; the construction of store-houses, taverns, residences, and churches during the antebellum period signalled a new trend in growth for the village beyond its mills and tanyard. One historic illustration of Newport, sketched in the 1850s by artist Lewis Miller (Exhibit One), depicts more than twenty buildings in the crossroads community, including at least one mill (two stories, with overshot waterwheel), one steepled church (two bays deep), two large (two-story, four- and five-bay) gable-roofed taverns, several smaller one- and two-story dwellings and store-houses, one log dwelling, and one other log building.³ Post-and-rail, picket, and worm fences defined property boundaries in places, and the landscape surrounding Newport was one of cleared crop- and pastureland, with isolated pockets of thick forests. Today, the path of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike remains one of the primary roads through the village; it is approximated by Route 42, which proceeds from the Sinking Creek Valley into Newport. At that point, the historic road turns west and follows present-day Route 796. Other early roads in the region passed through Newport because of its proximity to the gap between Gap and Sinking Creek mountains: an early-nineteenth-century road between the courthouse towns of Christiansburg (Montgomery County) and Pearisburg (Giles County) was joined in the 1850s by the Mountain Lake and Salt Sulphur Springs Turnpike, which took a separate route through Montgomery and Giles counties to resorts in the mountains of Virginia and present-day West Virginia. These early roads, which all passed through the main intersection at Newport, remain important features of the historic landscape; much of the village's architectural development took place along their routes.

Several residences from this era appear to have survived in Newport to the present. All are located south of the intersection of Route 42 and Route 796 (also known as old Route 460). This section of town survived a 1902 fire relatively untouched, so its percentage of extant nineteenth-century buildings is much higher than in other areas of Newport. The original portion of the Epling-Dunkley[or Dunklee]-Smith House (VDHR File #35-151-4) appears to be the earliest of these buildings. Its two-story, three-bay, center-passage plan utilizes an unusual structural system: brick piers with timber-frame-infill make up the first floor structure, supporting massive twelve-inch by twelve-inch hewn sills and a mortise-and-tenon-framed second floor. This structural system, previously undocumented among single-family dwellings in Virginia, may indicate a vernacular house form or the adaptive use of an other-than-domestic building type.⁴ Otherwise, the house incorporates architectural features (Federal-inspired mantels, beaded chair rail and baseboard moldings, and *cyma reversa* door and window trim) that are indicative of an 1820s or 1830s construction date. During that period, various members of the Dunkley family

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owned the property; the building was complete by 1849, when Philip Epling sold it and two-and-one-half surrounding acres to physician John B. Harding.

More conventional construction techniques were used in other antebellum dwellings in Newport. The 1846 Keister-Miller House (VDHR #35-151-8) is a two-story, three-bay, center-passage-plan weatherboarded frame I-house with rubble stone pier foundation, six-over-six sash windows with molded surrounds, and original interior stair. Two other period examples, altered at the turn of the century, also remain within the district. The Mason-Miller House (VDHR #35-151-24), as built, nearly replicated the Keister-Miller House in size, materials, and form; its interior featured simply-wrought transitional Federal-Greek Revival mantelpieces. The 1850s Robert Payne House (VDHR #35-151-17), in its original form, was a two-story, side-passage-plan weatherboarded frame dwelling with a rubble stone foundation and Greek Revival eared window surrounds. At least one antebellum domestic outbuilding, reputedly a combined kitchen and slave dwelling, survives on the Albert Price House property (VDHR #35-151-18). Built into the north slope of an embankment, the ground-level kitchen retains its stone foundation, brick fireplace with arched header course over the opening, a "warming oven" niche, and simple pilastered wooden mantel. The outbuilding's main level, of timber-frame wall construction with weatherboard siding, a boxed cornice, and six-over-six sash windows, includes such interior features as horizontal flushboard sheathing, a fireplace with stuccoed surround and iron lintel, an enclosed stair with batten doors, and a semi-finished garret with exposed vertical-sawn rafters.

Newport saw limited action during the Civil War; although little growth took place, the village survived the period without extensive damage. The 1870s, in contrast, initiated a period of intensive building activity in Newport: between 1870 and 1875, the number of town properties with taxed improvements rose from twelve (valued at \$7,000) to twenty-one (valued at \$14,400).⁵ Descriptions of "improvements" for Newport properties listed in the 1870s Giles County land books include a tavern, factory, oil mill, residences, store houses, a hotel, and professional offices. The "factory," also referred to in the land books as a carding machine, is the extant Newport Woolen Mill, located on the northwest side of Greenbrier Branch Road. Established in 1872 by R.H. Moomaw and Samuel Early and later owned by W.J. Payne, the water-powered mill carded and spun wool brought to Newport from surrounding farms. When Payne purchased the mill, he also started a cabinet shop on the site.⁶ The overshot waterwheel originally associated with the woolen mill no longer survives, but the earthen race on the hillside behind does remain as a contributing site in the district. The mill is a simple, utilitarian building of circular-sawn studs, which are mortised and tenoned into hewn sills and plates; two stories tall and three bays wide, its exterior is sheathed in weatherboards. The mill's first floor is mostly open space, with various mechanical devices around the room, including the intact belt-

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Description (continued)

and-pulley system that drove the milling operations. An open stair in the northeast corner leads up to the second floor, which retains an original tongue-and-groove partition wall and another open stair that leads to a semi-finished attic storage area. The building apparently remained in use for various industrial and manufacturing purposes through the first decades of the twentieth century. The building still houses machinery and mechanical equipment that include a small grist mill with wooden hopper, iron and wooden gears, and a box for the grinding stones; a gasoline engine for portable cider mills; a "G.W. O'Brien's Crusher and Automatic Grinding Mill;" a forge and assorted blacksmithing tools; and a "Boss Wood Polisher." In the 1910s, a board-and-batten shed-roofed garage was added to the southwest side of the building; since that time, the former mill has had few changes. At present, the Newport Woolen Mill is threatened with deterioration from water infiltration and many years of deferred maintenance.

Most extant resources in the district that date from this late-nineteenth-century period are domestic in character--primarily single-family dwellings and associated outbuildings. While some continued to be built along traditional lines, others began to exhibit more high-style architectural features. In its simplest form, high-style design could be incorporated into an existing building by adding ornamental elements. The Robert Payne House (VDHR #35-151-17) was enlarged during this period, at which time it became the first Methodist Parsonage; the alterations included the addition of paired ornamental wood brackets to the cornice frieze, which give the building a distinctly Italianate look. New construction also utilized stylish ornamental features along with traditional building forms. The Smith-Keister House (VDHR #35-151-19), for example, is a large, two-story, three-bay weatherboarded I-house with a two-story, two-tier pedimented central portico. Greek Revival and Italianate motifs employed on the house's exterior include corner pilasters with molded caps; cornice and friezeboard returns; milled window surrounds with bracketed, pedimented hood moldings; and elaborate molded door surrounds at the first- and second-floor central entrances. The interior features elaborate milled woodwork at doors, windows, and a curving center-passage staircase; the first-floor northwest room also includes a decorative pressed-metal ceiling. Although primarily used as a residence, the building was pressed into service as a hotel in 1902, when it was one of the few buildings on Newport's main street to have survived the fire that destroyed most of the commercial buildings.

A board-and-batten cottage, the Payne-Price House (VDHR #35-151-12), is another relatively stylish late-nineteenth-century residence remaining in Newport. Of wood frame construction, the one-and-one-half-story house is distinguished by its pair of front-facing gabled pavilions with decorative rake and frieze boards, two-over-two sash windows with peaked lintels, and a central entrance door surround with pilasters and panels. Similar trimwork occurs within the house at mantelpieces and door and window surrounds; additional decorative trim highlights the double-

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ramped, center-passage stair, which has turned balusters and newels and recessed paneling under the stringer. The form and plan of the house are not typical of traditional regional construction practices, and seem to have been influenced by the "cottage residences" and "country houses" popularized during the mid-nineteenth-century by domestic housing reformers such as Andrew Jackson Downing. For example, the house's external appearance recalls an illustration in Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1872 edition)--"Design IX. Cottage in the Italian or Tuscan Style."⁷ This house design, actually prepared by Philadelphia-based architect John Notman, also features symmetrical, one-and-one-half-story, front-facing gabled pavilions that flank a central entrance hall entered beneath a sheltered portico. The Notman design includes scalloped vergeboard trim, apparently meant to imitate Romanesque arched corbel tables; the Payne-Price cottage develops a similar effect with a scalloped friezeboard. While it does have these "Italian" or "Tuscan" features, the Payne-Price cottage also conveys an overall impression of the Gothic Revival style with such elements as vertical battens, peaked window lintels, and sawn vergeboard trim with decorative lozenge-shaped cutouts. These elements were not employed by traditional builders in the region, so their use on the Payne-Price cottage suggests that some other influence brought them to rural Giles County in the late nineteenth century. While there is no direct evidence that a published design was the literal model for the Payne cottage, it seems certain that the owner as well as the builder or carpenter were familiar with, and influenced by, the concepts and architectural styles available through nineteenth-century pattern books such as *Cottage Residences*.

The influence of popular architectural styles upon the character of Newport became especially evident at the turn of the century. Between 1902 and 1910, four of the five extant commercial buildings in the district were constructed. All were built upon the sites of nineteenth-century buildings burned in the 1902 fire. The Miller Building (VDHR #35-151-1), simplest of the four, features a two-story, four-bay facade with overhanging boxed cornice, a shed roof, two-over-two sash windows, and full-length front porch with turned wooden brackets. Constructed as office/residential space, it does not have display windows. The other three commercial buildings do retain retail spaces on their first floors, with residential or storage areas located at their second floors. The Pent Taylor Store (VDHR #35-151-22) is a two-story, three-bay weatherboarded frame building with inset wood and glass shopfront, a cantilevered upper floor, bracketed cornices above the display windows and the false-front parapet, a shed roof, and an intact interior with beaded tongue-and-groove ceiling. An early one-story addition at the northwest front corner of the store adopts the same architectural features. Across the intersection, the Miller Brothers General Mercantile Store (VDHR #35-151-9) employs similar materials and features; its decorative details include novelty siding, a parapet cornice with two bracketed friezes--the larger, more elaborate frieze used on the predominant northwest and southwest elevations and the

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smaller, less grand frieze employed on the southeast, "alley" facade. Presently in use as an antiques and gift shop, the store remains in excellent, nearly original condition.

Across the street, next door to the Pent Taylor Store, stands the 1902-1903 F.E. Dunkley [Dunklee] Store (#35-151-3). A two-story, three-bay, gabled store-house with false-front parapet, the wooden frame structure retains a highly decorative metal facade with various embossed designs: the second floor includes imitation rock-faced concrete block, inter-window panels with arabesque (acanthus, candelabrum, and adorsed dolphins) motifs, egg-and-dart moldings, and anthemion moldings; the shopfront entablature includes a classically-derived frieze of triglyphs and festoons; the parapet cornice is ornamented with swags and *fleur-de-lis*; and the central upper parapet also features *fleur-de-lis* at both ends. This *fleur-de-lis* motif is an identifying characteristic of galvanized iron storefronts designed, manufactured, catalog marketed, and sold throughout the United States by a St. Louis firm, Mesker Brothers, during the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s.⁸ The Dunkley Store facade was erected near the end of this period and may be an example of the Mesker Brothers' work. Although the first-floor shopfront is currently concealed behind plywood panels, the store--a rare surviving example of a building with a complete ornamental metal facade in western Virginia--retains its overall architectural integrity and contributes to the historic character of the Newport Historic District.

The turn-of-the-century period also witnessed the construction or remodeling of non-commercial buildings in Newport. Some new dwellings, like the Butler-Smith house (VDHR #34-151-2)--a two-story, three-bay I-house--continued to employ traditional or regional forms. Others adopted larger, double-pile forms with complex plans, hipped and gabled roofs, projecting bays, wraparound porches, and exterior and interior architectural ornamentation in the Eastlake, Queen Anne, and Classical Revival styles. The two-story, six-bay, Queen Anne-style Pasterfield House (VDHR #35-151-14), built in 1903, features a multi-gabled roof, scalloped wood shingles and weatherboard siding, rectangular and semihexagonal two-story bays, and two-over-two sash windows. The seven-bay, wraparound front porch incorporates elaborate Eastlake-style turned and sawn detailing for posts, balusters, spindle frieze, and brackets. The Dr. Walter Miller House (VDHR #35-151-11), one of the finest extant Queen Anne-style residences in the region, was also begun in 1903. Completed in 1904, it is apparently modeled upon townhouses located along Franklin Street in Richmond (Miller attended the Medical College of Virginia in that city, and greatly admired the style of those townhouses).⁹ The two-story house upon a raised basement features a rounded corner turret with conical roof, a second-story tripartite window framed by an arched screenwall, turned block apex panels in the gable ends, and one-story rectangular side bays. The original one-story, nine-bay curved wraparound porch exhibits turned posts with spindle friezes and brackets, a balustrade with square balusters and turned blocks, and

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lattice screening between pier supports. The building's interior retains additional millwork, including turned corner blocks and sawtooth cresting at door and window surrounds, mantelpieces, and stair balusters; the staircase also includes a square newel with ornamental carving and diagonal paneling under the stringer.

One of the largest examples of Classical Revival-style architecture in the district, the *circa* 1904 Albert Price House (VDHR #35-151-18), extends two stories over a raised stone basement. Three bays wide, it also features pedimented gabled dormers, a hipped roof with pressed-metal shingles, overhanging eaves with boxed cornice and wide friezeboard, paired two-over-two sash windows, and front and side porches with slender Tuscan columns. The interior exhibits milled wooden trim (including turned corner blocks) for window and door surrounds, baseboards, and staircase; a decorative leaded-glass window at entry hall; an arched opening at second-floor stairhall; and a wooden mantelpiece with mirrored overmantel. Other examples of period dwellings with Queen Anne or Classical Revival detailing include the 1904 Yancey and Flora Payne House (VDHR #35-151-5), the 1909 Charles Hardwick House (VDHR #35-151-15), the 1909 Methodist Parsonage (VDHR #35-151-6), and the 1913 George Buchanan House (VDHR #35-151-10). A hotel building, the *circa* 1910 Hunter House-Newport Inn (VDHR #35-151-7), was constructed along similar lines: two stories high, with numerous pedimented gables sheathed in sawtooth-pattern wood shingles and ornamented with spindlework, two entrances with arched openings and double doors, and a one-story, nine-bay wraparound porch with pyramidal-roofed balcony above the pedimented entry bay. The interior is similar to others of the period, with unusual detailing that includes two-tier flue mantelpieces with turned colonettes, a built-in china cabinet, and double four-panel doors between parlor and dining room spaces.

Domestic outbuildings constructed in Newport during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often reflected the close relationship the village-dwellers maintained with the surrounding agricultural landscape. Well houses, spring houses, wash houses, corncribs, chicken houses, stables, small barns, and storage sheds were often built in close proximity to dwellings, using local materials and less permanent construction techniques than those used for commercial or residential buildings. Although some outbuildings have been demolished or altered in recent years, many still remain as contributing resources in the district. The earlier extant outbuildings typically employed stone, brick, or wooden foundations, weatherboard sheathing, and gabled roofs. Later versions usually utilized poured concrete or block foundations, board-and-batten or vertical-board siding, and shed roofs. Some outbuilding types also retain distinctive functional features: a wash house with brick flue remains at the Mason-Miller House (VDHR #35-151-24), while a springhouse with concrete spring box remains at the Epling-Dunkley-Smith House (VDHR #35-151-4).

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Description (continued)

Not all building activity during this period was devoted to new construction. Several nineteenth-century houses and one church were modernized according to the prevailing styles. Typical residential alterations included replacement porches with Queen Anne or Classical Revival detailing (Keister-Miller House, VDHR #35-151-8), one- and two-story rectangular or polygonal bays at front or side elevations (Smith-Keister House, VDHR #35-151-19), and rear kitchen ell additions (Payne-Price House, VDHR #35-151-12). Interior improvements, emulating the features of the newer houses in the village, were also introduced to older houses: column screens replaced some interior walls (Mason-Miller House, VDHR #35-151-24), colonnetted mantelpieces with beveled-mirror overmantels superseded simpler pilastered mantels (Dr. C.C. Wingo house, VDHR #35-151-23), and ornate turned and carved woodwork supplanted the plainer newels and balusters of earlier staircases (Mason-Miller House, VDHR #35-151-24).

The most extensive program of alterations during this period occurred at the Newport Methodist Church (VDHR #35-59). Originally constructed in the 1850s, the one-story, three-bay church was remodeled or rebuilt in the Gothic Revival style in 1906. It includes many architectural elements found on other Newport buildings of the same period, such as pressed-metal roof shingles, turned blocks used as exterior sheathing, and bracketed cornices. But it also utilizes other distinctive treatments, such as stained-glass Gothic windows made up of paired five-over-two sash separated by wooden mullions; a central three-stage entrance/bell tower with steep pyramidal roof, recessed Gothic arched openings, and semicircular pediment; wide pilaster strips that mark the building's bay divisions; and a Gothic-arched chancel bay at rear. The interior features decorative woodwork: trusses, bracketed cornice, wainscoting, and paneling; it also retains 1906-period altar furniture, lectern, altar rail, and pews. The only alterations to the building after 1906 appear to be the addition of modern paneling to the plastered wall surfaces and the compatible 1973 fellowship hall added to the northeast side of the sanctuary.

Only two contributing buildings in the village of Newport were built after the 1910s. Both appear to have been located so as to take advantage of increased automobile traffic along the state highway through the county (Route 24, now known as Route 796 or old U.S. Route 460), which was under construction in 1925. The Sinking Creek Valley Bank (VDHR #35-151-21), erected in 1927, is a one-story, six-bay brick office building. In form it resembles two connected three-bay pavilions; one is slightly set back from the other. Each pavilion features a one-story, gabled entry portico with fluted Doric columns. The purpose of separately accessed pavilions is not evident, although it is likely that each provided a unique service; i.e., one may have been the banking lobby and the other a loan office. Stylistically, the bank is the only example of Beaux Arts Classicism in Newport; its notable architectural features include buff-colored brick (this is the only historic brick building in the district) and such classical details as Doric columns, a

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Description (continued)

projecting molded cornice, and a proportionate roof parapet. It remained in use as a bank for less than five years; since 1932, it has also served as the United States Post Office and as retail space. Currently it is being used as a residence. The other historic building post-dating the 1910s, the Francis Payne Service Station (VDHR #35-151-20), is the only example of Craftsman-style architecture in the district. Built around 1930, the one-story, three-bay building features a front-facing gable that extends as a canopy over the concrete-paved service area. The enclosed office and shop area has a trussed ceiling, is of weatherboarded frame construction, and is lit by six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the sides and an original picture window at the front. The canopy is supported by brick pillars and features overhanging eaves and eaves brackets.

Since 1930, Newport's architectural development has occurred mostly outside its historic core. In 1933, the Works Progress Administration funded construction of a new consolidated school to the northeast of town on Route 42; the federal program also provided paved concrete sidewalks in the village. Although not perfectly level, the sidewalks do remain along the narrow streets of Newport, providing pedestrians with an alternative to walking in the paths of automobiles. Street trees were planted along Greenbrier Branch Road and Route 42 during the period as well, and in their maturity lend great presence to the residential sections of the district. Most of the noncontributing buildings in the district today (a total of thirteen resources) are modern outbuildings (garages, storage buildings, etc.) unobtrusively located to the rear of contributing dwellings. Two larger noncontributing buildings are located within the district boundaries: a two-story concrete block building that houses the Newport Masonic Lodge and the volunteer fire department's equipment and vehicles; and a one-story brick ranch-type dwelling across Route 42 from the fire company. Two mobile homes, placed on lots in the district, round out the list of noncontributing resources. None of these resources visually intrude upon the overall historic character of the Newport Historic District.

Leslie A. Giles

End Notes

1. The project leading to this National Register nomination was initiated with a comprehensive survey of the village of Newport by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR)'s Regional Preservation Office in Roanoke (RRPO). Conducted in the summer and fall months of 1989 by RRPO Architectural Historian Daniel Pezzoni with assistance from intern Cabell Crowther, the survey was undertaken upon the request of numerous Newport residents. Upon completion of the survey, a Preliminary

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- Information Request form (PIF) for the Newport Historic District was prepared by Pezzoni. The State Review Board determined the Newport Historic District eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on 12 December 1989.
2. This information on natural resources of Newport and vicinity is derived from R.L. Humbert, A.M., *Industrial Survey/Giles County/Virginia* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Engineering Extension Division, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, March 1929), 17-31.
 3. Photocopy of "Newport--Newport A Small village at the foot of gap mountain, in Giles County." Original sketch by Lewis Miller, photographed by Colonial Williamsburg. Negative #78-DW-2810, Accession # CROP.
 4. The origin of this structure remains a mystery; various interpretations of the form (by architectural historians Jeffrey M. O'Dell, Ann McCleary, Edward Chappell, J. Daniel Pezzoni, and Leslie Giles) suggest that it could have been part of a mill or warehouse, the foundation of a bank-type barn, or some other industrial or agricultural structure. According to McCleary and Chappell (personal communication with Pezzoni, 1989), it does not appear to have any precedent in Continental [ethnic German] architecture, and is probably an idiosyncratic invention of the original builder.
 5. "Table of Town Lots for the Year 1870--Town of Newport," in Giles County Land Book, 1870; and "Table of Town Lots for the Year 1875--Town of Newport," in Giles County Land Book, 1875.
 6. *Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia* (1883), page 14.
 7. Andrew Jackson Downing [George E. Harney, ed.], *Cottage Residences; or, A Series of Designs for Rural Cottages and Cottage Villas, and their Gardens and Grounds. Adapted to North America*, with additional material by Henry Winthrop Sargent and Charles Downing (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1873). Republished as *Victorian Cottage Residences* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1981) 152.
 8. Lee H. Nelson, "The 1905 Catalogue of Iron Store Fronts Designed and Manufactured by Geo. L. Mesker & Co., Architectural Iron Works, Evansville, Indiana," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (1977), pages 3-5. Mesker Brothers shop was begun in 1881 at St. Louis, Missouri, by Ben and Frank Mesker. Their brother, George L. Mesker, also designed and manufactured iron store fronts at his facility in Evansville, Indiana; a stylized morning glory motif is characteristic in the work

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Description (continued)

of his firm.

9. This information was provided during by Hattie Early Miller (Walter Miller's niece), during an interview conducted on 8 March 1990.

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Description (continued)

Inventory of Resources

The following inventory includes all buildings, structures, and sites within the historic district boundaries. Each entry (one per property) includes the following information: a number keying the property to the district map (there are no numbered street addresses in the village); the historic name of the property; the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) file number for the property, if available; the architectural style of the primary resource, if applicable; the construction date(s) of the property, as derived from county land books, architectural evidence, historic photographs, or other reliable sources; a notation as to whether or not the primary resource is contributing (C) or noncontributing (NC); and a brief narrative description of the property's architectural characteristics, with information on secondary resources and landscape features (also noted for their contributing or noncontributing status), and in some cases, brief historical information on the property. The inventory is organized alphabetically by street, progressing in geographical sequence up one side of the street and then down the other side before going on to the next street.

Greenbrier Branch Road

RH Moomaw House

1. Payne-Price House (VDHR #35-151-12): Italianate/Gothic Revival. 1870s (C).
One-and-one-half-story, three-bay, board-and-batten-clad, wood frame dwelling; one-story wooden portico (hipped roof, chamfered pilasters, tapered wooden supports, sawn brackets, molded slatted board ceiling). Interior features include a center-passage-plan; milled wood trim at door and window openings, staircase, and mantelpieces. Alterations include *circa* 1930s square column-framed opening between first-floor west room and center passage, rear one-story ell, rear one-story addition. Outbuildings include a slatted corner crib with shed roof, pier foundation of wooden posts (C); a two-level vertical-board-sided frame barn/stable with gable roof, exposed rafter ends, open side shed (C); and a modern one-story, three-bay board-and-batten gabled garage (NC). Landscape features include mature trees, foundation plantings, concrete steps and front walk. An unusual local interpretation of nineteenth-century "cottage residence" design, with Italian-Gothic features.
2. Payne-Walker House (VDHR #35-151-16): Late 19th century (C).
Two-story, two-bay, weatherboarded frame dwelling with exterior end brick chimneys; original or early one-story, one-bay front porch; interior features side-hall stair (turned newel, paneling under stringer), pilastered mantels, horizontal flush board wainscot and two-panel doors; alterations include one-story additions to rear ell. Outbuildings include

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a vertical-board-sided wood house and storage building (C) with metal gabled roof, diamond-shaped gable-end vents, pegged four-panel door; and a weatherboarded circular-sawn frame barn (C). Landscape features include a sloping site, mature silver maples that flank the front walk, and a modern collection of artisan-crafted bird houses. W.J. Payne, who owned the Newport Woolen Mill in the late-nineteenth century, apparently had the house built; it was later owned by John Walker, a local mechanic, cabinetmaker, and metal roofer who installed the first telephone line in Newport and who worked out of the old woolen mill. Of conventional form and detailing, this house is representative of the smaller-scale dwellings erected in Newport during its late-nineteenth century period of development.

3. Keister-Miller House (VDHR #35-151-8): *Circa* 1846-1850, porch *circa* 1900 (C).

Two-story, three-bay weatherboarded frame I-house with interior brick flue; two-story rear ell with partly-enclosed two-tier porch; one-story, eight-bay wraparound porch with Doric columns; several rear one-story shed additions. Interior features include center-passage stair with square balusters, tapered newel with unusual hand rail; four- and five-panel doors with pottery knobs; simple pilastered mantel. Extant outbuildings include a frame chicken house (C) with vertical board siding and shed roof, and a shed shared with the adjacent property. The property is located on a sloped site, with the front entrance on grade at Greenbrier Branch Road. According to Miller (71-73), the house was built in 1846 by J. Barringer and sold to William Keister around 1850. It remained in the Keister family until 1904, when it became the Lutheran parsonage. Later owners included the William Echols family, the James Miller family, and the Grover Duncan family. A well-preserved example of typical mid-19th century I-house form, with unusual hand-crafted stair detailing.

4. Walter Miller House (VDHR #35-151-11): Queen Anne. 1903-1904 (C).

Two-story, three-bay, double-pile frame dwelling with central brick chimney mass (angled fireplaces), turret, arched screen facade, bay windows, gables with semicircular windows and apex panels of turned blocks; original one-story, ten-bay wraparound porch with turned posts, spindle brackets and frieze, and balustrade with turned blocks; alterations include modern rear one-story wing and deck at the south corner. Interior features include milled and carved woodwork at doors, windows, mantelpieces, front stair, and paneling under stair stringer. Three outbuildings remain on the property, a vertical-board-sided gabled carriage house/garage (C), a vertical board-sided, shed-roofed pump house (C), and a board-and-batten, shed-roofed, frame chicken house (C).

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Landscape features include a brick retaining wall along Greenbrier Branch Road, with piers flanking the brick-paved entry walk, and several mature specimen trees. The house is located on a sloping site, so that the front entrance is raised several feet above grade and must be accessed by a flight of stairs. According to Miller family tradition, the turned block ornament on this house is the mark of local carpenter-cabinetmaker Robert Wysong, who worked in a shop at the Newport Woolen Mill building at the turn of the century. The property remained in the Miller family until the 1950s. Today, it is one of the most elaborate and best-preserved Queen Anne-style houses in the New River Valley region of Virginia.

5. Epling-Dunkley [Dunklee]-Smith House (VDHR #35-151-4): 1820s, 1890s (C).

Two-story, three-bay, center-passage-plan dwelling with unusual pier-with-frame infill structural system; interior features Federal-era wooden trim at mantelpieces, doors, windows, chairrail, and baseboards; early decorative painting; integral two-story, gable-roofed frame ell; 1890s alterations included replacement windows, dining room extension, and two-story, two-tier rear porch; 1920s one-story, three-bay front porch with Doric columns. Adjacent outbuildings: 19th-century kitchen (C) with stone-faced brick rotated-flue chimney, six-over-six sash windows, hewn sills, weatherboard siding, gable roof, cornice returns, associated stone foundation of former distillery; early-20th-century shed with board-and-batten siding and six-light casement window (C); early-20th-century stable (C) with board-and-batten siding, shed roof; early-20th-century frame springhouse/well house (C) with board-and-batten siding, gable roof, lattice vent; modern frame garage/storage building (NC) with vertical board siding, gable roof. Landscape features include terraced, sloping site, boxwood-lined curved front walk, sites of former barn and distillery. Paul Epling transferred 100 acres (including this parcel) to Isaac Epling in 1826; Isaac later willed the property to Philip Epling, who operated a tanyard with William Keister in Newport during the antebellum period. Later owners included physician John B. Harding (1849-1856), merchant and resort owner F.E. Dunkley [or Dunklee] (1894-1903), and distillers and hoteliers John and Susan Smith (1906-1932). The property is notable for the dwelling's unusual (perhaps unique in Virginia?) structural system and for its collection of intact domestic outbuildings.

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6. George Buchanan House (VDHR #35-151-10): 1913 (C).

One-story, three-bay, weatherboarded frame dwelling; pedimented entrance portico with Doric columns; one-story, three-bay porch with Doric columns; one-story kitchen ell with brick flue. House faces away from Route 605, towards an old road trace passing between it and the Epling-Dunkley-Smith House. Property includes a one-story, gable-roofed,

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weatherboarded, two-bay frame garage (C) with weatherboard siding, gable roof, tripled panel doors. According to the owner, the house was built by carpenter Jim Hickerson, on land owned by Mason Miller, for George Buchanan--the first cashier of the Sinking Creek Valley Bank; the house is a typical dwelling form of the period, in a good state of preservation.

7. Butler-Smith House (VDHR #35-151-2): Late 19th century (C).

Two-story, three-bay gable-roofed, weatherboarded frame I-house dwelling with brick chimney, two-story bay at east gable end, six-over-one sash windows; one-story rear ell with interior brick flue; one-story hip-roofed porch. One extant frame outbuilding with vertical-board siding, shed roof, stone foundation (C). A typical dwelling form of the period, with an unusual rear ell configuration, the Butler-Smith House is one of several nineteenth-century buildings to have survived the 1902 Newport fire.

8. Newport Woolen Mill (VDHR #35-151-13): 1872; 1911 (C).

Two-story, three-bay industrial building (circular-sawn studs and joists mortised-and-tenoned into hewn sills and plates; two thick posts support second floor; six-over-six sash windows with louvered shutters; standing-seam-metal-sheathed gable roof; boxed cornice and returns; exterior end brick flues). Interior features include open staircase in northeast corner; whitewashed and wallpapered finishes; first-floor grist mill (wooden hopper, box for stones, iron and wooden gears) and other machinery powered by an intact belt and pulley system that was driven by a series of generators (first an overshot waterwheel, later a turbine, finally the extant 1914 model International gasoline engine); other first floor equipment include a "Boss Wood Polisher," a forge, a one-cylinder gasoline engine that powered cider mills in the vicinity, a drill, a "G.W. O'Brien's Crusher and Automatic Grinding Mill," a horseshoeing box, and a work bench; the second-floor housed a shoemaker's shop (tongue-and-groove partition wall); open stair to attic level. A *circa* 1911 board-and-batten-sheathed frame garage was added to the southwest corner of the building--it has a wood post foundation, shed roof, and garage door that rolls open on a track. Landscape features include Greenbrier Branch, which flows directly behind the mill, and traces of the old mill race (C Site) on the hillside above. The Newport Woolen Mill, established by R.H. Moomaw, is a rare surviving nineteenth-century industrial building for the region; it served as a local center of manufacturing (at times owned or utilized by millers, cabinetmakers, carpenters, a shoemaker) and ultimately as a vehicle repair shop. Its relatively complete collection of machinery and equipment is unusual and probably quite significant as a record of the industrial history of Newport.

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9. Yancey and Flora Payne House (VDHR #35-151-5): 1904 (C).

Two-story, two-bay, gable-fronted, weatherboarded frame dwelling with side-hall-plan, projecting front wing, two-over-two sash windows, shutters, sawn eaves brackets, and brick flue; interior features curving side-hall stair with vertical and diagonal paneling, turned newel and balusters; one-story, eight-bay wraparound porch with Doric columns; one-story addition with concrete block flue. One adjacent outbuilding (NC), a frame aluminum-sided shed. Landscape features include mature deciduous trees and shrubs in residential yard, with Greenbrier Branch running through the rear of the property. The house has an unusual form for Newport; its interior vernacular detailing appears to have been inspired by the more sophisticated woodwork being produced in Newport in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

10. Dr. C.C. Wingo House (VDHR #35-151-23): *Circa* 1877 (C).

Two-story, three-bay, vinyl-sided, frame center-passage-plan dwelling with gable roof, pedimented gable ends, interior end brick chimneys, replacement windows; two story rear ell; full-length one-story, seven-bay front porch with Doric columns; one-story enclosed rear porch. Interior features include wood trim at colonnetted mantel, doors and windows, principal stair in ell, and baseboards. Outbuildings include a vertical-board-sided shed (C) and a modern vinyl-sided garage (NC). Landscape features include Greenbrier Branch, which flows directly behind the house; and a low brick wall with brick piers along the front property boundary. C.C. Wingo served Newport and vicinity during the late nineteenth-century as a doctor; his house, although somewhat altered in recent years, has some unusual features not found in other Newport buildings of its period.

11. Robert Payne House-Former Methodist Parsonage (VDHR #35-151-17): 1850s, 1870s (C).

Two-story, three-bay, weatherboarded frame dwelling (eastern two-thirds, with side-hall plan, *circa* 1850; western addition, which creates a center-passage plan, *circa* 1873); exterior features Greek Revival eared window surrounds, frieze with paired sawn brackets, interior end brick flue; one-story, three-bay shed porch; additions include one-story rear ell with brick flue, *circa* 1950 screened porch. Outbuildings include a small turn-of-the-century frame outbuilding with gable roof and five-panel door (C) and a small mid-twentieth century concrete block pump house (NC). Landscape features include Greenbrier Branch, which flows directly behind the house, beyond which the hill slopes up steeply; and old grapevines trained along a post and wire fence. Originally built in the 1850s for the Robert Payne family, the house and lot were deeded to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church on 27 January 1873 (DB M:165); the church retained it

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as the Methodist Parsonage until 1907. This dwelling is a representative example of mid- and late-nineteenth-century domestic forms, with interesting Greek Revival and Italianate detailing.

Route 42

- 12. Mason-Miller House (VDHR #35-151-24): Mid-19th century; *circa* 1900 (C).

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Two-story, three-bay, vinyl-sided frame dwelling with pedimented gabled roof, exterior end brick chimneys, one-story bay window; one-story, three-bay front porch with turned posts and eaves brackets; two-story ell with other one-story additions, including a springhouse room with concrete trough. Interior features include main stair in rear ell, simple Federal/Greek Revival mantels, built-in china cabinet, colonetted mantelpiece, Tuscan column screen. Outbuildings on the property include a frame chicken house with shed roof, vertical-board siding and poured concrete root cellar (C); a two-room wash house with vertical-board siding, shed roof, and strut-supported brick flue with corbelled brick cap (C); a one-bay shed garage with vertical-board siding (C); and a two-level gabled barn with board-and-batten siding and side shed addition (C). Landscape features include dramatic hilltop site overlooking Newport; two terraced ponds for watering livestock; and mature trees. According to Hattie E. Miller (Interview, 8 March 1990), previous owners and dates of occupation were as follows: Philip Epling (1821-1849), William B. Mason (1853-1875), Shelton Dowdy (1875-1898), Miller brothers/Mason Miller (1898-1918 and later). One of the earliest extant buildings in Newport, the Mason-Miller House was remodeled around 1900 and exhibits architectural features typical of both periods of construction.

- 13. Albert Price House (VDHR #35-151-18): Four Square/Classical Revival. *Circa* 1904 (C).

*inc.
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slave
gtrs.*

Two-story, three-bay, weatherboarded frame dwelling with interior brick chimneys, gabled dormers, decorative window at entry hall; one-story kitchen ell; one-story, three-bay porch and one-story, one-bay entry portico; interior features milled wooden trim at window and door surrounds, baseboards, staircase, archway in upper hall, mantelpieces. One extant outbuilding, an antebellum kitchen and putative slave house (C) with gabled roof, exterior end brick chimney, frame and sandstone raised foundation built into embankment; basement-level kitchen (fireplace opening with brick header arch, niche, simple pilastered mantel, cast iron andirons); first floor living area (frame walls, weatherboard exterior, horizontal flushboard interior, box cornice, six-over-six windows, fireplace opening with stuccoed surround and iron lintel, steep enclosed stair with vertical-board doors, simple wooden trim); garret space (knee wall with horizontal board

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sheathing, vertical-sawn rafters and roof boards, flue hole into chimney stack). The 1902 fire destroyed an earlier house and a store on this site. The Albert Price House property includes one of the least-altered examples of antebellum architecture in the village of Newport in addition to one of the largest dwellings erected immediately following the 1902 fire.

14. Mobile home: Late 20th century (NC).
15. United States Post Office: Late 20th century (NC).
Portable office trailer, probably a former mobile home residence.
16. House: Last 1/4 20th century (NC).
One-story, raised basement, modern brick ranch-type house (NC).
17. Newport Methodist Church (VDHR #35-59): Gothic Revival. 1853 (?), 1906 (C).
One-story, three-bay weatherboarded frame church with steep-pitched gable roof, pressed-metal shingles, Gothic stained glass windows, central three-stage bell tower, decorative wooden trim including turned blocks, sawn brackets and consoles, wide pilasters; rear chancel bay. Interior features decorative wooden trim also: trusswork, cornice brackets, wainscot, paneling, and rose window-like tracery; original (*circa* 1906) altar furniture, lectern, altar rail, and pews. Post-1973 fellowship hall addition on northeast side of sanctuary, matches original in materials, details, and proportions. Land for the church was donated in 1852 by David Price Brown, who may also have constructed the first church building in 1853; local tradition holds also that the church was remodeled in 1906 by local carpenter-cabinetmaker Robert Wysong (turned block detailing is apparently a hallmark of his work). A prominent local landmark, the Newport Methodist Church remains one of the most elaborate and well-preserved examples of Gothic Revival architecture in the area.
18. C.A. Hardwick House (VDHR #35-151-15): Queen Anne/Classical Revival. 1909 (C).
Two-story, five-bay, weatherboarded frame dwelling with gambrel roof, cross and side gables, kicked eaves, decorative semicircular, elliptical, and stained-glass windows, milled and carved wooden ornament; one-story, six-bay wraparound front porch with slender Doric columns, turned balusters, and gabled entry bay; one-story rear ell with one-story side additions. Interior features include milled and carved wooden trim for picture rails, door and window surrounds, mantelpieces, staircase, and built-in bench. Outbuildings include an altered springhouse or cellar with rubble stone foundation (NC)

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and a modern garage (NC). Landscape features include large specimen trees along the streetside property boundary and a steep hillside that rises just behind the house. This house was built by Charles Hardwick in 1909 on the site of the former oil mill in Newport; it is one of several Queen Anne-style houses built in Newport after the 1902 fire, and remains in excellent condition.

19. Methodist Parsonage (VDHR #35-151-6): Queen Anne/Classical Revival. 1909 (C).
Two-story, three-bay, double-pile weatherboarded frame dwelling with pyramidal hipped roof, brick flue, leaded glass window bays, gabled dormers, Queen Anne-style five-over-one sash windows; one-story rear wing; original one-story, three-bay front porch with tripled Doric columns, projecting central pedimented bay. Landscape features include Fry Branch, a tributary of Greenbrier Branch, which runs through the property west of the house; an old road trace adjacent to Fry Branch (C Site); and a sandstone/limestone chimney with sloped shoulders, a remnant of a one-and-one-half-story building that once stood on the property (C Site). This property's dwelling is another well-preserved example of Queen Anne-style domestic architecture built in Newport following the 1902 fire.
20. Pasterfield House (VDHR #35-151-14): Queen Anne/Eastlake. 1903 (C).
Two-story, six-bay, weatherboarded frame dwelling with multiple gables, decorative scalloped wood shingles, polygonal and rectangular bays, interior brick chimneys; one-story, seven-bay wraparound front porch with turned posts and balusters, spindle frieze, elaborate sawn and turned brackets; two-tier back porch. Adjacent outbuildings include a vertical-board-sided shed with wood post foundation and gable roof (C); a *circa* mid-20th-century gable-roofed frame storage building (NC), and a modern metal shed (NC). Landscape features include Fry Branch, which passes immediately behind the house, and mature trees to the sides and rear of the house. The Pasterfield House is one of several Queen Anne-style houses in Newport post-dating 1902, and exhibits well-executed and well-preserved exterior woodwork.
21. Newport Masonic Lodge and volunteer fire department: Mid-20th century (NC).
Two-story, concrete block building with garage bays at ground level (for fire & rescue equipment) and meeting room at second level.
22. Francis Payne Service Station (VDHR #35-151-20): Craftsman. *Circa* 1930 (C).
One-story, three-bay, gable-fronted, weatherboarded frame building (front drive-through canopy with brick pillars, tongue-and-groove ceiling; front gable with eaves brackets;

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Description (continued)

brick flue; six-over-six sash windows; celotex-and-batten office enclosure; interior shop area with open truss ceiling). Built for Francis Payne around 1930, this service station is the only extant example of the Craftsman style in Newport.

Route 796 (Old Route 460)

23. Smith-Keister House (VDHR #35-151-19): 1860s-1870s (C).

*also
35-52*
Two-story, three-bay, weatherboarded frame I-house with exterior end brick chimneys, Greek Revival/Italianate wooden trim (corner pilasters with molded caps, cornice and friezeboard returns, milled window surrounds with bracketed crowns, entries with elaborate molded surrounds, sidelights), bay window with bracketed eaves; two-story rear ell; two-story, two-tier, three-bay front porch (square columns and pilasters with molded caps, sawnwork balusters, pedimented gable with horizontal flushboard sheathing). Interior features elaborate pressed-metal ceiling, curving center-passage stair, milled and carved woodwork at staircase, door and window surrounds, mantelpieces, and baseboards. Adjacent outbuildings include a one-story, three-part frame building (shed and gable roofs, weatherboard and board-and-batten siding) used as a wood shed, stable, and for storage (C); and an early-twentieth-century frame garage (C). Landscape features include a sloping site, mature deciduous and coniferous trees, a low retaining wall, and a modern pressure-treated wooden deck.

24. Miller Building (VDHR #35-151-1): 1904 (C).

Two-story, four-bay, shed-roofed weatherboarded frame commercial building (two-over-two sash windows, brick flue, overhanging boxed cornice, wide friezeboard) with one-story front porch (wooden posts, decorative notched rafter ends, Stick-style brackets); property is site of former Williams "long house" (guest cottages), burned in 1902. A vertical board-sided frame shed (C) remains on the property. Built by J.W. Miller to provide office space for dentist Walter Pack Miller and other businesses or professional offices. Currently (8/93) under renovation.

25. Sinking Creek Valley Bank (VDHR #35-151-21): Beaux-Arts Classicism. 1927 (C).

One-story, six-bay brick bank building with shed roof, parapet, twelve- and sixteen-pane metal awning windows, projecting cornice; building consists of two three-bay wings, one recessed from the other; two gabled entry porches (one on each wing): one-story, one-bay, with fluted Doric columns. The Sinking Creek Valley Bank was organized in 1912, moved into this building in 1927 and closed down in 1931 or 1932. Since that time, the building has also served as the local post office, a residence, and as retail space. The

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bank building is one of the more academically-sophisticated buildings in Newport, and is the district's only example of Beaux-Arts style architecture.

26. F.E. Dunkley [Dunklee] Store (VDHR #35-151-3): Italianate. *Circa* 1902-1903 (C).

also 35-57
Two-story, three-bay, gable-roofed frame commercial building with decorative pressed-metal sheathing and ornamentation above shopfront on front facade. Side elevations feature beaded-board frieze, sawn brackets; two-story frame extension at rear with two diagonal tongue-and-groove doors; and gabled stair enclosure on northwest side. The most decorative commercial building in Newport today, the Dunkley Store was built to replace an earlier building on the same site which burned in the 1902 fire.

27. Pent Taylor Store (VDHR #35-151-22): Italianate/Queen Anne. *Circa* 1902-1910 (C).

Two-story, three-bay, shed-roofed, weatherboarded frame store building with Queen Anne sash windows, bracketed cornices above shopfront and second-story parapet; original inset porch and shopfront display windows; modern awning affixed to building front; one-story, three-bay wing on northwest side shares awning and shopfront cornice with main building; one-story shed extension at rear. Interior features beaded tongue-and-groove ceiling on first floor, rough-finished second floor. Immediately adjacent to Greenbrier Branch, this post-1902 fire commercial building is apparently located on the site of a former tanyard; although in most respects a typical commercial form of the period, this building does have an unusual inset front porch.

28. Miller Bros. General Merchandise (VDHR #35-151-9): Italianate. *Circa* 1902-1910 (C).

Two-story, three-bay, shed-roofed, frame commercial building with novelty siding, full bracketed cornices above shopfront and second-story parapet, intact first-floor wood frame shopfront with large display windows and beaded matchboard soffit; early enclosed exterior stair on southeast side; interior finishes include matchboard ceiling and beaded tongue-and-groove walls. Modern alterations: basement level rear addition, one-story side addition. Built after the 1902 fire, on the site of the former McPherson Hardware Store; operated by brothers Mason and John William "Billy" Miller until 1944. Miller Brothers Store is one of the better-preserved early-20th-century commercial buildings in the town of Newport.

29. Hunter House-Newport Inn (VDHR #35-151-7): Queen Anne. *Circa* 1902-1910 (C).

Two-story, seven-bay, weatherboarded frame hotel/dwelling (sandstone foundation, numerous pedimented gables with decorative sawtooth wood shingle sheathing and sawn decoration in the apex, brick chimneys and flues, two front entries with double arch

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doors); one-story, nine-bay wraparound porch with modern square wood posts on brick bases, second-story pyramidal-roofed balcony over entry bay with two half-turned post pilasters. Interior features include plastered walls and ceilings; milled baseboards, door and window surrounds; center-passage stair with chamfered square newel post, concavely-curved lower steps, closed stringers and turned balusters; unusual two-stage flue mantels with turned colonettes; parlor with double four-panel doors that lead into dining room with vertical beaded matchboard wainscoting, built-in china cabinet, and a service opening in the wall shared by the adjoining kitchen; kitchen with cooking fireplace. Hunter built the hotel on the site of his earlier hotel, which had burned in 1902. The hotel's name was changed to Newport Inn in 1912, and in 1919 it became the private residence of merchant John William Miller.

Leslie A. Giles

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary Statement of Significance

The Newport Historic District includes the contiguous historic commercial, residential, and industrial areas of the village of Newport, Virginia. Situated in the narrow Greenbrier Branch valley at the base of Gap Mountain in eastern Giles County, Newport's historic development began in the early nineteenth century, focused around an industrial center consisting of a tanyard, oil mill, grist mill, and blacksmith shop. Beginning in the 1830s, the village began as an important transportation crossroads and regional commercial center--the Cumberland Gap Turnpike, a major regional thoroughfare that linked southwestern Virginia with points further west, intersected with the road between the courthouse towns of Christiansburg (Montgomery County) and Pearisburg (Giles County), spurring additional investment in the community. At first a loose collection of lots ranging in size from one-quarter acre to four acres, the village's layout was that of the typical rural crossroads community, where little formal planning was employed. By the mid-nineteenth century, Newport also became a popular overnight stop for the spring resort-bound tourist trade--one popular route, the Mountain Lake and Salt Sulphur Springs Turnpike, led through town. The 1870s brought a resurgence of industrial activity as the Newport Woolen Mill and the nearby Sinking Creek Furnace began operations; Newport's growth and regional importance during this period led the General Assembly to grant the village

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its town charter in 1872. Much of the historic fabric remaining in the district dates from this period, since a 1902 fire destroyed many of the earlier commercial, residential, and industrial buildings in town. The village's commercial core and adjacent residences were quickly rebuilt during the first decade of the twentieth century, providing opportunities for skilled local carpenters and cabinetmakers to ply their trade within the community. Until automobiles replaced the more traditional methods of transportation in later decades, Newport also remained the bustling commercial and social center of the area, with stores that catered to area farmers and resort-bound tourists, churches that served the community, and hotels, boarding houses, and saloons that provided accommodations and entertainment. Now bypassed by most through traffic (along U.S. Route 460), Newport retains a small number of businesses, but remains a predominantly residential community.

Justification of Criteria

The Newport Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, with three pertinent areas of significance: for its association with industry, as reflected by the survival of several buildings, structures, and sites that processed local agricultural produce and natural resources; for its association with commerce, having served as the mercantile and banking center of a region comprised of the adjacent valleys in eastern Giles, southwestern Craig, and western Montgomery counties; and for its association with significant regional transportation networks, such as the Cumberland Gap Road and the Mountain Lake and Salt Sulphur Springs Turnpike. The Newport Historic District is also eligible for listing under Criterion C in the area of architecture. Building types represented in the district include a woolen mill, a church, a bank, stores, a service station, single-family dwellings, domestic and agricultural outbuildings, and a hotel. Architectural classifications within the district include the Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Beaux-Arts, and Craftsman styles. The period of significance for the Newport Historic District ranges from 1832, the date of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike survey, to 1943, when the town's latest domestic outbuildings were constructed.

Historical Background and Significance

Newport is located on the Greenbrier Branch of Sinking Creek in a narrow valley bounded by Gap Mountain to the south, Spruce Run Mountain to the west, and Clover Hollow Mountain to the northeast. Greenbrier Branch runs northeast from Newport for less than a mile until it joins Sinking Creek. Sinking Creek rises about twenty miles northeast of Newport and flows another

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seven or eight miles west from Newport to its confluence with the New River. Spruce Run comprises a lesser drainage which rises two miles west of Newport and flows west for about four miles to the New River at the present site of Goodwins Ferry, a point about four miles upstream from the mouth of Sinking Creek. Earliest accounts place a handful of pioneers on the New River near the mouth of Sinking Creek by 1750, but no permanent settlement occurred there until the era of the American Revolution. A Botetourt County court in 1773 ordered the construction of a "road from Craig's Creek across the mountains to Sinking Creek." The western portion of Sinking Creek came under the jurisdiction of Montgomery County in 1776, and a year later the Montgomery County court appointed Charles Lucas "Constable in the Neighborhood of Sinking Creek."¹ The Lucas family, the Cassidys, the Eplings, the Frys, and the Prices lived at the head of Spruce Run or in Greenbrier Branch valley of Sinking Creek by the 1780s.²

Following the creation of Giles County in 1806, the principal road in the study area linked the Giles County seat of Pearisburg with the Montgomery County seat of Christiansburg. This Pearisburg Christiansburg road (now approximately U.S. Route 460) crossed the New River at Snidow's Ferry, ran east overland and along Sinking Creek to Greenbrier Branch, turned southeast to cross into Montgomery County at Gap Mountain, and then ran south to its terminus in Christiansburg, where it connected with the Great Valley or Wilderness Road. The road running east from Greenbrier Branch up Sinking Creek to Craig Creek (now Route 42) is shown on two maps drawn around 1810 but is not depicted on maps drawn twenty years later. Apparently by 1830 most commercial transport from Greenbrier Branch valley traveled along the Pearisburg Christiansburg road: west down Sinking Creek to the New River and Pearisburg; or south through Blacksburg to Christiansburg.³

Between the formation of Giles County in 1806 and the completion of Cumberland Gap Turnpike improvements in the 1830s, the number of inhabitants in Giles County increased more than 40 percent, and settlement on Greenbrier Branch and at the head of Spruce Run grew accordingly. Giles County will and deed books recorded that Charles Lucas willed land and possessions on Sinking Creek to his wife and son in 1808; of English ancestry, members of the Lucas family would remain in and around Greenbrier Branch into the twentieth century. Paul Epling's will of 1809 left land on Sinking Creek and Spruce Run to sons John, Daniel, Isaac, and Paul. Epling's inventory lists the tools of his occupation as a farmer, and possessions that attest to his German heritage and bilingual literacy: "3 English books," and "dutch books of various descriptions." When Henry Price, also of German ancestry, died in 1824, property from his estate included one mill saw and one apple mill purchased by David Price, Jr., and one set of saw mill irons purchased by Isaac Epling. David Price, Jr., and Isaac Epling both lived in or

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near what would become Newport, and we can thus date the operation of a cider mill and saw mills in that vicinity to the mid-1820s. An 1830 deed entry also recorded the purchase by Paul and Henley Epling of land on both sides of Greenbrier Branch, land which adjoined a tanners shop occupied by John Keister. Thus by 1830, Giles County families of English and German origin farmed and operated mills and a tanyard on the Greenbrier Branch of Sinking Creek.⁴

Construction of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike after 1833 improved transportation to the east up the course of Sinking Creek to Craig Creek, thereby upgrading the course of the original road ordered by Botetourt County justices in the 1770s. The rural community of Newport began in the mid-1830s at the time of completion of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike, road construction which placed the Greenbrier Branch valley at the junction of two important transportation routes. Entrepreneurs from outside of Giles County began to purchase land and establish places of trade and commerce which led to formation of the rural community of Newport following completion of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike in the second half of the 1830s. The Virginia General Assembly authorized the survey of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike in 1832. State enabling legislation instructed the principal engineer of the Board of Public Works to survey the best route for a turnpike from Cumberland Gap to Russell courthouse, Tazewell courthouse, and Giles courthouse; thence to Snidow's Ferry on the New River (the Cumberland Turnpike joined the Pearisburg Christiansburg road on this segment); thence up the valley of Sinking Creek; thence down the valley of Craig Creek to end at Prices Turnpike. Prices Turnpike ran from Craig Creek to Fincastle and Buchanan, and the portion of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike east of Greenbrier Branch valley would eventually become known as the Fincastle Cumberland Gap Turnpike. The General Assembly authorized construction of the 243-mile Cumberland Gap Turnpike in 1834, and the road soon became a principal route for transportation of agricultural products shipped from Giles County, through New Castle and Fincastle, to Buchanan at the head of navigation on the James River.⁵ Constructed at the beginning of the era of Virginia's vigorous promotion of internal improvements, the Cumberland Gap Turnpike provided Virginians west of the Blue Ridge Mountains with an important new avenue for trade and commerce.

Several businessmen from more commercially developed counties to the east of Giles recognized that Greenbrier Branch marked the point where the Cumberland Gap Turnpike left the Christiansburg road to make a new trade link with the head of navigable waters on the James. They began to purchase land for shops and stores on Greenbrier Branch, and Newport was established in name and as a post office in 1836 and 1837. The first reference to Newport as a place name in the Giles County deed books occurred in 1836 when Isaac and wife Anna Epling sold three-fourths of an acre of land to David Sperry and Aron Barnes of Botetourt County, part

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of a tract "on a hillside below Newport." Spery and Barnes' deed also established their right to ditch the Greenbrier with a mill race "leading to the entending oil mill." The oil mill thus secured by the Botetourt County businessmen would use a water-powered mill to press flaxseed to produce linseed oil, a drying oil used in making paints. Also in 1836 Tyree Newbill of Franklin County bought land on Greenbrier Branch from Andrew Lucas of Giles County. Newbill soon operated a storehouse on that property and purchased adjoining land from Isaac and Henry Epling. The following year, 1837, marked the establishment of the Newport post office.⁶

Deed book entries commonly referred to the town of Newport by the 1840s, when they recorded more capital investment in land on Greenbrier Branch. Between 1844 and 1848 John Bonsack of Roanoke County bought the oil mill and several other mills on the Greenbrier. In 1846 and 1847, the intermarried families of Snidow and Peck, German-ancestry pioneers on the New River and Sinking Creek, purchased at least three parcels "in the town of Newport" where they established a tavern and a store.⁷

The 1850 census and the 1851 land book provide evidence to indicate that the town of Newport functioned as a small community engaged in agricultural manufacturing and commerce. Lot sizes ranged from one-quarter acre to four acres, and the unplatted town apparently developed by random division of land parcels. Snidow and Peck owned a tavern valued at \$1,350 and a store building valued at \$800. Absentee landlord Bonsack owned the oil mill valued at \$800 and five other mills valued in total at \$400. Farmer William Keister owned buildings in town, presumably including the tanyard, valued at \$800. Farmers Philip Epling, Daniel Easley, and Robert Payne owned separate lots in town with buildings respectively valued at \$200, \$400, and \$200. Philip Epling's neighboring kinsmen Allen and Isaac Epling raised 10 bushels of flax seed in 1850; the 120 farms closest to Newport harvested 350 bushels of flax seed that year, much of which may have been processed at Bonsack's oil mill.

Newport in 1850 was home to perhaps another fifteen heads of household who rented their dwellings and worked in commerce, service professions, and agricultural industry and crafts. Merchant William Mason probably ran the Snidow and Peck store, while Christiana Price kept their tavern. Two other merchants, a shopkeeper, a physician, and two school teachers lived and worked in Newport, as did two tailors and two shoemakers. The town also employed a carpenter, a cabinet maker, three millers, two saddlers, a wagon maker, and a horse trader. In addition to the white property owners and renters mentioned above, the town employed two free black blacksmiths who owned no real estate.

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Newport continued to prosper during the 1850s, partly because of completion of new trade routes. The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad laid its track between Lynchburg and Bristol, and the station at Christiansburg provided Newport with ready access to the new rail line. Also Newport became a stop on another improved road; the Mountain Lake and Salt Sulphur Springs Turnpike ran north from Christiansburg, passed through Newport, ascended Salt Pond Mountain to Mountain Lake, and continued north across Peters Mountain to Salt Sulphur Springs and the Monroe County seat of Union, where it connected with the turnpike to Lewisburg. Prospects of increased trade may have prompted the General Assembly to pass an "Act incorporating the Newport savings bank" in 1852.⁸ That same year David Price deeded land to trustees for the Methodist Episcopal Church in Newport. Christopher Wingo established his medical practice in Newport in 1855. In 1859 a guide to Virginia springs instructed travelers destined for Salt Sulphur Springs near Union to disembark from the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad at Christiansburg and then to proceed north "forty miles . . . by stage" on the route which passed through Newport and by Mountain Lake.⁹

On the eve of the Civil War, Newport functioned as a small but well established center of agricultural manufacturing services and commerce, located at the intersection of the Pearisburg Christiansburg road and Fincastle Cumberland Gap Turnpike and on the road which ran north to Mountain Lake and Union. Snidow and Peck still owned the most valuable buildings in town as absentee landlords, but resident merchants William B. Mason and Gustavus Butler now owned buildings valued respectively at \$1,200 and \$1,300. Physician Christopher Wingo was the next most prosperous property holder in town with buildings valued at \$800. Blacksmith James Smith owned three lots with buildings valued at \$300. By 1860 Newport supported perhaps another twenty households of renters whose residents included four shoemakers, three carpenters, two millers, tanner William Keister, two free black blacksmiths, Daniel Moss and his son Jeremiah, two salespersons, a tailor, a school teacher, and constable A. J. Porterfield. Approximately 240 people lived in Newport or on adjacent farms. The number included about 190 whites; 16 free blacks: the 8-member Moss household and 5 domestic servants with 3 dependents; and 32 slaves, owned principally by the Payne, Price, and Mason families.

Giles County, with a population of less than seven thousand in 1860, provided more than six hundred troops who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Casualties were high. Recruited in Giles County, Company D of the Seventh Virginia Infantry listed 118 men in its ranks: 67 men in Company D were wounded or killed in battle; 14 died of disease; 17 were taken prisoner; and 19 deserted. Commanded by Newport constable A. J. Porterfield, Giles County's Company H of the Thirty-Sixth Virginia Infantry included numerous enlisted men from

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the Newport families of Dowdy, Epling, Lucas, Porterfield, Price, Snidow, and Wingo. Company H saw duty and suffered casualties at the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain on 9 May 1864 but apparently did not participate in the skirmish around Newport which followed on 12 May.¹⁰

After the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain, six thousand Federal troops commanded by General George Crook destroyed the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad bridge at New River on 10 May 1864 and then turned north to reestablish base operations beyond the Alleghany Mountains. Crook's troops encamped at Blacksburg on 11 May and marched on Newport the following day. Col. Horatio Sickel of the Third Brigade Pennsylvania Reserves reported that on 12 May his troops encountered a small force of Confederates at the base of Gap Mountain "near the village of Newport." Sickel's brigade moved west of the road to Newport, crossed "a deep ravine," probably Greenbrier Branch valley, and engaged in rifle fire which forced outnumbered Confederates to withdraw to New River Narrows. After the skirmish, Federal troops resumed their march north on the road to Mountain Lake, camped there that night, and continued on the road to Union which they reached on 15 May.

Newport suffered more than troop casualties during the Federal campaign against the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in May 1864. General Crook reported that his army "subsisted on the county the greater part of the way." And Col. Sickel recorded the capture of "immense amounts of stores" including 195 bushels of grain, 50 bushels of potatoes, 34 horses and mules, 47 head of cattle, and 130 pounds of bacon.¹¹ Some of these captured supplies may have come from Newport.¹² Certainly Federal destruction of the rail line through Christiansburg to the New River and military confiscation of local livestock and food disrupted normal trade and commerce in Newport and throughout the region.

Newport recovered sufficiently from the ravages of the Civil War to obtain an act of incorporation from the Virginia General Assembly in March 1872. The act named as mayor George W. Hines, an injured Confederate war veteran who moved from Montgomery County to Newport in 1865 and became a mercantile partner with store owner Gustavus Butler; Hines would later serve as Giles County's superintendent of free schools and as a justice of the peace. Town councilmen named in Newport's 1872 act of incorporation included William Keister who then owned several town lots with buildings valued at \$4,200, Newport farmers David Price and Flayl Payne, and physician Christopher Wingo.

During the 1870s, Newport appears to have prospered from incorporation and from post-war restoration of trade and commerce. Property changed hands as Snidow and Peck sold most of

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their commercial interests in town, William Keister sold some of his industrial lots, and merchant William Mason moved to Pulaski. Numbered for the first time in 1876, Newport town lots included twenty-two parcels with buildings valued at an average of \$500 per lot. William Keister remained the largest property holder with three lots and buildings valued at \$1,500. R. R. Butler of Tennessee now owned the Gustavus Butler lots with buildings valued at \$1,300.

Industrial ventures in the vicinity of Newport may also have provided some stimulus to the local economy. In 1872 E. P. Williams of Pulaski County leased land from Shelton Dowdy and purchased mineral rights from Henry Price to establish an iron furnace on Dowdy's land bordered by the Cumberland Gap Turnpike about two miles east of Newport. The furnace reportedly operated for several years during the 1870s and transported its pig iron by wagon team to the rail line at Christiansburg. J. Wilcox Brown of Baltimore in 1878 and 1879 procured iron ore mineral rights from the Newport area families of Payne, Criner, Price, Keister, and Dowdy. Despite these investments of capital by industrialists who lived outside of Giles County, the 1880 census for the Newport magisterial district contained no reference to individuals employed in mining and only listed one founder Thomas Beck of Ohio and one moulder James Rodenhizer, who probably worked at the iron furnace on Dowdy's property.

Shelton Dowdy himself apparently prospered sufficiently from the iron furnace ventures to deed land for the Newport Baptist Church in 1879 and to open a store in Newport by 1880. Flayl Payne deeded land for the Lutheran Church in Newport at the time of his death in 1881. In 1880 the Rev. A. G. McManaway led the Newport Baptists; the Rev. J. H. Byrd ministered to the Methodists; and the Rev. N. Aldrich served the Lutherans.

The 1880 *Virginia Gazetteer*, and the 1880 land book and manuscript census for the Village of Newport, provided a detailed picture of the rural community as a center of trade and agricultural commerce. The principal property owners of 1876, farmer William Keister and absentee R. R. Butler, were joined in 1880 by store owner Shelton Dowdy, blacksmith John Martin, and hotel owner Charles Payne, all of whom owned buildings in Newport valued at or in excess of \$1,000.

Newport craftsmen and manufacturers in 1880 included property owner and blacksmith John Martin and property owner W.J. Payne, who had opened a cabinet shop. Robert Moomaw operated a woolen mill and carding machine in Newport which he would sell to W.J. Payne by 1885. Samuel Payne and John Fry lived in Newport and worked as cabinet makers. Jeremiah Moss and his father Daniel continued to live and work as free blacks and blacksmiths in 1880; Jeremiah Moss would be recorded as a black property holder in Newport in 1891. Another black

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blacksmith, Samuel Cogel, headed a household and worked in Newport in 1880 but was never recorded as a Newport landowner. White craftsmen who headed households in Newport as renters included carpenters James and Robert McCroskey and shoemakers Aaron Harless and John Smith.

Most other Newport heads of households in 1880 worked in trade and commerce. James Porterfield practiced law in town. John Lucas operated a retail store; Robert Jordan ran a clothing store; and four Newport residents worked as store clerks. John H. Smith kept one of Newport's two hotels in 1880; the two hotels employed five black servants, cooks, and hostlers and two white barroom keepers and clerks. In total, the village of Newport census enumeration for 1880 listed thirty-two households and a population of 202 residents, including 46 blacks.¹³

Newport's commerce continued to prosper between 1880 and 1900, but the town's industrial activity seems to have declined during those years, and the overall number of town buildings and building values changed little. At the turn of the century the town had twenty-six lots with buildings on them valued at an average of \$450 per lot. C. H. Payne built a new store valued at \$900 in 1885. Hardware merchant M. W. McPherson had purchased Payne's store by 1891 and still held it in 1900 when the store was valued at \$1,000. The Snidow and Peck store building was valued at \$350 in 1885 and 1891; by the time Mrs. S. A. Hunter owned the Snidow and Peck property in 1900, she had made improvements which raised the value of the store building to \$1,000. The hotel property owned by Charles Payne in 1880 was owned by Mrs. S. H. Smith in 1900, when it still retained its building value at \$1,000. Thomas Hunter continued to own the second hotel in Newport; the building was valued at \$700 in 1880 and at \$850 in 1900. By 1900, hotel proprietor F. E. Dunklee [or Dunkley] owned a store valued at \$600 and a residence valued at \$700.

The prosperity of Newport industry seems not to have kept pace with the town's commercial trade during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. When James Hutchins owned the oil mill in 1880, the building was valued at \$400; but when Mary Camper owned the oil mill in 1900, the building was only valued at \$100. When Robert Moomaw owned the wool carding machine in 1880, its building was valued at \$700. Apparently W. J. Payne made some improvements because the wool carding building was in Payne's possession and valued at \$850 in 1885, a value it retained in 1891. But by 1900 the wool carding building, then owned by Mrs. V. C. Payne, was valued at \$400. Likewise, the value of the industrial shop and yard buildings on William Keister's property fell from \$1,500 in 1880 to \$700 in 1900.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

A devastating fire destroyed much of Newport on the first night of April 1902. The fire reportedly began in residential quarters above the Dunklee store and swept east, burning commercial properties on both sides of the Christiansburg road and dwellings and businesses on both sides of the Fincastle Cumberland Gap Turnpike. A contemporary photograph showed the ruins of chimney piles, all that survived from at least nine structures to the north and east of the Smith-McPherson house. The photograph showed that the fire did no damage to the residential and industrial properties on Greenbrier Branch west of the Christiansburg road. In addition to the Dunklee store, the fire destroyed the McPherson store, the Hunter store, and the hotels owned by Hunter and Smith.¹⁴

Newport merchants moved quickly to reestablish their businesses after the fire. By 1905 the Dunklees had rebuilt their store, which was then valued at \$950. The Hunters had also rebuilt their store by 1905, when it was valued at \$850. The McPhersons rebuilt their store by 1910, when it was valued at \$900. Though the Smiths never replaced their hotel after the fire of 1902, the Hunters rebuilt the hotel on their property, which was valued at \$900 in 1905 and at \$1,000 in 1910.

In fact Newport in 1910 differed little from the community it had been before the devastating fire. The town had lost one hotel but had rebuilt its other commercial structures, and by 1910 Mason and William Miller had established the new Miller Brothers store. In 1910, Newport retained most of its industrial facilities. The Paynes still owned the carding machine building, though the building's value had depreciated to \$225 by 1910. William Keister's industrial properties by 1910 were owned by blacksmith Frank Keister, A. P. Taylor, and F. Payne, with their respective buildings valued in 1910 as they had been in 1905. The remarkably complete reconstruction of Newport by 1910 can be seen by the fact that the town then had twenty-four lots with buildings on them valued at an average of \$475 per lot, figures almost identical to those recorded in 1900.

Newport has experienced few changes since the town's reconstruction after the fire of 1902. The town built its first high school around 1912, a six-classroom frame building with an auditorium which could seat two hundred people. By 1924, four school buses brought students to the school from all parts of the Newport magisterial district. Organized in 1912, the Sinking Creek Valley Bank in Newport was housed in a commercial building owned by the Millers until the brick bank building was constructed in 1927 on the former site of the Smith hotel. By 1917, enterprising blacksmith J. W. Walker and his sons also worked as plumbers and operated Newport's first garage, located at the old woolen mill. Automobiles first reached Newport around 1912. Giles

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Statement of Significance (continued)

County voted a \$300,000 bond issue for construction of improved roads, and the state highway through Newport to Glen Lyn on the New River at the West Virginia border (now U.S. Route 460) was under construction in 1925.

The years around 1925, when the town had a population of 225 inhabitants, probably marked the high point of growth and prosperity in Newport. In 1920, Newport had twenty-five lots with buildings on them valued at an average of \$500 per lot. In addition to the blacksmith shop and garage, the bank, and the high school, the town continued to support one hotel and at least two general stores.

Into the 1920s, the roads were good enough for people to travel down Sinking Creek to Newport to trade -- but not good enough for them to drive on past the village on Greenbrier Branch. The Craig County families of Givens, Jones, Sarver, and Taylor had moved down Sinking Creek following the course of this trade to make their homes in or around Newport from the late 1800s to World War I. Local historian Hattie Early Miller described life around Newport in the early twentieth century with great charm. Men still drove flocks of turkeys and sheep from Newport to freight cars in Christiansburg around 1900. They played checkers, dominoes, and card games in the stores. And she remembered Newport "for its beautiful parties. As a very small child I remember one, a progressive party where each house was decorated to represent a different country I still remember how beautiful they were."¹⁵

Newport's relatively sheltered and self-contained character, which the community had enjoyed since the Civil War, began to change around 1930 at the time of construction of the Francis Payne service station. By then the state highway from Christiansburg to Pearisburg had been hard-surfaced, and the exodus by automobile started as people began to shop and then to live in the larger commercial centers of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and points beyond. When the Sinking Creek Valley Bank closed in 1931, people from Newport drove to larger towns like Pearisburg or Christiansburg to do their banking. In 1951, Newport High School consolidated with Giles High School in Pearisburg. As the emigration from Newport continued, the town's population fell to one hundred inhabitants by 1960.

Transportation continues to shape the history of Newport. U.S. Route 460 bypassed Newport entirely in 1966. When engineers widened Route 460 for four-lane traffic in 1977, they added graded fill so that Greenbrier Branch now runs through a culvert under the highway three-tenths of a mile above its entrance into the town of Newport. Thus isolated, the town has avoided the encroachment of franchise stores and vending machines which dot the sides of major highways.

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Newport Historic District
Newport, Giles County, VA

Statement of Significance (continued)

At the same time, Newport has become a quiet and attractive place of residence for people who commute to work at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and at modern plants and factories on the New River. Today Newport is home to about one hundred inhabitants, and the community has preserved a remarkably intact collection of buildings that attest to the town's profitable practice of rural commerce and agricultural industry from the 1830s through the 1920s.

John R. Kern

End Notes

1. Charles P. Summers, *Annals of Southwest Virginia* (Abingdon, Va.: Lewis Preston Summers, 1929) 171, 677.
2. Giles County Historical Society, *Giles County, Virginia: Histories - Families* (Marceline, Mo.: Walsworth Publishing Co., 1982) 2-33, 245.
3. *A Correct Map of Virginia* (c. 1810). James Madison, *Map of Virginia* (1807). J. H. Young, *Virginia* (Philadelphia: A. Finley, c. 1827). *New Map of Virginia with its . . . State Map and Steamboat Routes* (Philadelphia: H. S. Tanner, 1833). All four referenced maps are in the special collections of the Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library, Roanoke, Va.
4. Giles County Will Book A, 22, 27-32, 387. Giles County Deed Book C, 652.
5. Commonwealth of Virginia, *Session Laws of American States and Territories, 1776-1899*, microfiche (1832) 93; (1834) 106.
6. Giles County Deed Book E, 58-59, 563, 326. "A Guide to the Counties of Virginia, Giles County," *Virginia Genealogist* 11 (1967): 14.
7. Giles County Deed Book H, 370, 345. Giles County Index to Deeds.
8. Virginia, *Session Laws* (1852) 192. The Newport Savings Bank authorized by this legislation apparently never began operations.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

9. J. J. Moorman, *The Virginia Springs and Springs of the South and West* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1859) xiv.
10. *Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia Special Virginia Edition* (1884; Pearisburg, Va: Painter's Print Shop, 1973) 5-7. *Giles County, Va.* (1982) 60-61.
11. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* Series I, vol. 37, pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891): 8-28.
12. Hattie E. Miller, *A Story of Newport and its People* (Blacksburg, Va.: Kopy Korner, 1978) 27-28.
13. Only the 1880 manuscript census enumerated the Village of Newport as a separate entity from the Newport magisterial district. Comparison of the 1880 manuscript census for the Village of Newport and the 1880 *Virginia Gazetteer* entry for 1880 indicates that the *Gazetteer* heading for Newport listed trades and professions for the magisterial district at large rather than for the town. For example, the *Gazetteer* listed three Newport attorneys; but the manuscript census recorded that only one attorney J. H. Porterfield lived in town and that the other two lived at some distance from the town. Likewise the *Gazetteer* listed five flour mills and three saw mills in Newport, but the census recorded that only two of the mill owners lived in town and that some of the others lived a considerable distance from town.
14. Miller, *Story of Newport*, 43.
15. Miller, *Story of Newport*, 56-57.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (continued)

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Newport Historic District are indicated on the accompanying sketch map drawn at a scale of 1" = 200'.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Newport Historic District are drawn so as to include the contiguous historic resources within the village of Newport. The boundaries follow the current property lines as indicated on Giles County Tax Maps, which approximate the historic property lines, except where modern construction has been introduced. In those cases, the boundaries include only the contiguous historic portions of a property.

Proposed
Newport
Historic
District

from Newport,
Va. USGS quad

Scale:
1" = 2000'

