FINAL

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Pearisburg Historic District

other names/site number VDHR File No. 279-12

2. Location

Downtown Pearisburg including North Main Street, South

street & number Main Street, and Wenonah Avenue ☐ not for publication N/A

city, town Pearisburg ☐ vicinity N/A

state Virginia code VA county Giles code 071 zip code 24134

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property: Contributing	Noncontributing	
[X] private	[ ] building(s)	19	0	buildings
[X] public-local	[X] district	1	0	sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site	0	0	structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure	0	0	objects
	[ ] object	20	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

[signature] 12-23-91

Signature of certifying official Date

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[ ] entered in the National Register.
[ ] See continuation sheet.

[ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.

[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.

[ ] removed from the National Register.

[ ] other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use see continuation sheets

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

7. Description see continuation sheets

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
	foundation
	walls
	roof
	other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

see continuation sheets

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

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

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

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

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
ARCHITECTURE	1806-1942	N/A
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT		
COMMERCE		

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Mercer, Thomas

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

see continuation sheets

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheets

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: Giles County Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 4 acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	17	523480	4130920
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Pearisburg Historic District are indicated by the heavy dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Pearisburg Historic District."

[ ] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Pearisburg Historic District are drawn so as to include the historic property lines of the principal commercial and governmental core of the downtown where sufficient historic integrity has been maintained. The district excludes that northern portion of the Public Square which has been substantially altered by the construction of modern buildings and parking lots.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. John Kern, Leslie Giles, Roanoke Regional Preservation Office

organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date November 1, 1991

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★U.S.GPO:1988-0-223-918

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS

DOMESTIC
- multiple dwelling
- hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE
- business
- professional
- financial institution
- specialty store
- department store
- restaurant

GOVERNMENT
- correctional facility
- government office
- post office
- courthouse

RELIGION
- religious facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE
- theater

HEALTH CARE
- hospital
- medical office/business

LANDSCAPE
- plaza
- street furniture/object

CURRENT FUNCTIONS

DOMESTIC
multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE
business
professional
specialty store
department store
restaurant

GOVERNMENT
correctional facility
government office
courthouse

RELIGION
religious facility

LANDSCAPE
plaza
street furniture/object

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION

Federal
Romanesque
Craftsman
Colonial Revival
Art Deco

MATERIALS

FOUNDATION: Brick
: Limestone
: Concrete

WALLS: Wood
: Brick
: Stone
: Metal
: Stucco
: Concrete
: Ceramic tile
: Glass
: Synthetics

ROOF: Asphalt
: Metal
: Slate

7. DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Pearisburg Historic District is located in the town of Pearisburg, the seat of Giles County, Virginia. The district encompasses nineteen buildings located along Main Street and Wenonah Avenue, two streets which form the principal intersection in the town. Physically, the district is dominated by the county government's buildings situated in the Public Square, on the northeast corner of Main Street and Wenonah Avenue. The town of Pearisburg developed around, and in response to, the Public Square. The historic architectural resources within the district's boundaries include early-nineteenth-century governmental and domestic buildings, along with early-twentieth century governmental, commercial, and religious buildings. All nineteen buildings in the district are contributing properties.

TOWN PLAT

Pearisburg, Virginia, was first laid out in 1806, on a terrace between Angel's Rest mountain and a bend of the New River. As originally platted, the town occupied a rectangular area, roughly 1700' x 1300' (fifty-three acres). One of the earliest maps of the town dates to 1813; it indicates large, one-acre lots ranged along the two major streets in the town (Main Street and a "Main Cross Street"). The only other street shown on the map is present-day Church Avenue, which crossed Main Street a block south of the primary intersection in town. By 1832, Pearisburg's large lots had been subdivided into sixty-one smaller units, each approximately 100' x 220', with eight lots to a block. Other acreage in the public domain, along the slope of Angel's Rest, was also platted in the official survey of 1832. Furthermore, additional streets were laid out in the town, and some original streets were given new names: the urban grid was defined by North, Middle, and South Streets, as they crossed West, Main, and East Streets. The only large lot to remain undivided after the 1832 survey was that of the Public Square, which maintained its original size and configuration throughout the nineteenth century.

The dense, commercial character of the downtown arose primarily after 1910; in that year, part of the Public Square along Middle Street (now Wenonah Avenue) was subdivided into seven lots; six were standard 25' x 100' parcels, while the seventh, on the

northwest corner of Middle and East (now Tazewell) streets, was a generous 60' x 100' allotment to the Episcopal Church congregation. The final subdivision of original town lots occurred in 1919, when four large lots in the block located just south of the Public Square (original lots numbers 29, 30, 31, and 32) were replatted as the "Pearson Sub-Division." Sixteen smaller lots, serviced by a twelve-foot wide alley entered from East Street, replaced the four large lots. Along Main Street, five lots were platted at 90'3" x 28'; the lot at the corner of Main and Middle Streets received a larger portion, at 90'3" x 58'. Along Middle Street, seven lots were platted at 31'10" x 100'. Lot number seven in the "Pearson Sub-Division" had a more generous size, about 65'11" x 100' (excepting a 20' x 28' cutback in one corner). Lot number fifteen was only 50' x 40'; along with lot number sixteen, which was the largest parcel at 318'9" x 86', it faced the lesser-traveled East Street. The local Baptist church was located on a donated site within this subdivision, at the southwest corner of Middle and East Streets.

The only other alterations to the original town plat, in the area under consideration for historic district designation, are new street names: Middle Street was renamed Wenonah Avenue, while East Street was renamed Tazewell Street, sometime in the twentieth century.

EARLY ARCHITECTURE

Sited a mile distant from the New River (and, later, from the branch railroad which ran alongside the river), the town of Pearisburg developed around the intersection of two primary roads that linked it with other communities. Main Street was the route of the Newbern-Lewisburg turnpike (present-day Route 100), where it passed through Pearisburg. Middle Street (Business Route 460 today) was the link to the local river crossing; the street's present name, Wenonah Avenue, is apparently derived from Wenonah Station--the branch railroad's depot for Pearisburg, also located near the river crossing [hereafter, this street will be referred to as Wenonah Avenue in the documentation].

The most significant parcel of land in the town of Pearisburg is that of the Public Square, located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Main Street and Wenonah Avenue. While the earliest governmental buildings on the site no longer survive, it was in response to them that the oldest intact building in the district

was constructed. In 1827, Guy D. French built a 2-1/2-story residence and ordinary (known historically as the Western Hotel), which faced Main Street and stood directly across from the Public Square, on the south side of Middle Street. Originally six bays wide, the Western Hotel is of Flemish-bond brick construction with a corbelled cornice, built over a coursed limestone foundation and topped by a gambrel roof with dormer windows. Some Federal-period woodwork survives in the interior, as do the original modified center-passage plan and an original staircase leading the third-story "ballroom." The original gable roof was modified to gambrel form around the turn-of-the century, at which time dormers were also installed. Commercial storefront conversions on the first floor in the early twentieth century led to the loss of the some historic fabric on the first floor. An original rear wing, extending from the northwest corner of the main building and along Wenonah Avenue, faced the courthouse; designed to accommodate overnight guests at the ordinary/hotel, it was demolished in the early twentieth century and replaced by a commercial/residential building.

The other antebellum building to survive in the district is the Giles County Courthouse. The original center block of the courthouse was built by Thomas Mercer in 1836; like the Western Hotel, it is of Flemish-bond brick construction with Federal-period details. It features a high, hipped roof surmounted by a large domed cupola, a central entrance ornamented by a semicircular transom, and later additions dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These additions include the two flanking wings, a 3-story rear annex, and the monumental Corinthian portico over the front entrance. The courthouse was individually listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

LATE-NINETEENTH AND EARLY-TWENTIETH CENTURY COMMERCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Although other antebellum-period buildings did exist in Pearisburg, most were residences and storehouses that were lost over time to fires or to the ever-increasing commercial interests centered in the downtown district. After the 1836 courthouse, the earliest structures to survive in the district are a group of three commercial buildings on North Main Street. The Virginian Building, a 2-story brick edifice dating to the turn of the century, housed the publishing offices of the weekly paper, The Pearisburg

Virginian, for several decades. It features elaborate brick corbelling in the parapet, brick piers dividing the facade into three bays, and segmental arched windows. The nearby First National Bank of Pearisburg, built in 1906-1907, is a relatively sophisticated building for the town. Constructed of rock-faced concrete blocks in the Romanesque style, the building takes full advantage of its corner site, by featuring a monumental arch on the front (east) elevation, echoed by arched windows on the side (south) elevation. The third building in the group is an early-twentieth-century gable-front commercial and residential building with novelty siding and a modern storefront; it appears to be the first twentieth-century building in the district designed, from the beginning, to accommodate both functions within a single structure. The Western Hotel did combine two domestic functions, that of an ordinary/hotel and of a private residence, in one building, but it was not originally designed to accommodate retail activities. Many of the later buildings in the district also utilize this mixed-use approach in their designs.

With the subdivision of the parts of the Public Square land along Wenonah Avenue Street in 1910, two other buildings reflecting different architectural styles were erected in Pearisburg. The Pearisburg Law Building, a foursquare office building of two-and-one-half stories, was sited on the lot closest to the courthouse. It features elaborate brickwork (recessed wall panels, corbelling and houndstooth courses at each floor level), pedimented dormers, and plain lintels. A bulky, solid building, it was expressive of the conservativism often associated with the law profession. The other building erected upon a Public Square lot during this period, the Christ Episcopal Church on the corner of Wenonah Avenue and Tazewell Street, was of a more radical Arts and Crafts-influenced design. Originally built in 1910 and apparently patterned after Christ Church (Episcopal) in Bradford, New York [according to local tradition], the church partially burned in 1926. The poured concrete foundation and walls, faced with river cobblestones, survived the conflagration, and by 1933 the church had been rebuilt to its original form. Christ Episcopal Church is the only congregation in Pearisburg to remain in its original downtown location, and is the only religious property within the district boundaries.

Commercial enterprises began construction on several Middle Street sites in the Pearson Sub-Division shortly after it was platted in 1919. The first building to go up was a speculative office

building erected on lot number seven by banker C. L. King and merchant C. A. Hoilman. At three stories in height and approximately sixty-six feet in width, the nine-bay brick building was one of the largest structures in Pearisburg. It featured a central entrance with double-loaded corridors extending the length of the building on all three floors, segmental arched windows, and a corbeled parapet cornice. It was altered and added to in 1924, at which time it was converted to use as St. Elizabeth Hospital. After the hospital was replaced by a modern county facility in 1950, this building was readapted to residential apartments and offices, for which it continues to be used at present.

Adjacent to St. Elizabeth Hospital, local businessman and legislator A. E. Shumate erected the buildings of the Giles County Motor Company on four and one-half lots of the Pearson Sub-Division. The main building is a two-story brick structure with corbeled belt courses on the Wenonah Avenue facade, and a stepped-gable parapet on the alley-side facade. As built, the first floor contained the company sales offices, an automobile showroom, and a repair shop; the second floor housed several offices overlooking Wenonah Avenue. Some alterations to the building have taken place in recent years, with its conversion to individual discount department stores. These changes include modern commercial storefront enclosures of formerly-open automobile entrances, and the addition of aluminum siding that partly obscures the second-story facade.

1929 and 1930 were years of additional new construction in downtown Pearisburg, focused on the available Public Square lots across the street from the Giles County Motor Company. Three buildings were erected which, in those times of economic uncertainty, accommodated multiple uses and, therefore, multiple revenue sources. The 1929 Shumate Building (515-517 Wenonah Avenue) housed the Pearisburg Post Office and a restaurant on its retail-oriented ground floor, with residential apartments on its second floor. Another, single-story Shumate building (519 Wenonah Avenue) was built immediately adjacent to this two-story structure the same year. In 1930, Maude P. Miller erected a three-story mixed-use building (521-523 Wenonah Avenue), which included a basement-level theater, street-level retail units, and second-story residential apartments. All of these buildings have had their commercial storefronts altered in recent years, but the alterations appear to be superficial changes which do not significantly reduce the properties' integrity.

Few commercial buildings were constructed during the mid-1930s in Pearisburg. One county government building, the Sheriff's Office and Jail, was erected, though, in 1937-1938. Located on the Public Square grounds just east of the courthouse, the building replaced an earlier sheriff's office/jail that had deteriorated beyond repair. With public financing of the construction costs, the county was able to erect a sophisticated Colonial Revival brick building. Its domestically scaled front office section, detailed with a pedimented central pavilion and one-story Ionic portico, is joined at the rear by a three-level cell block of a more utilitarian nature.

The last half of the decade saw a renewal in commercial construction in Pearisburg. Mixed-use buildings remained a continuing theme for new construction efforts. In 1939-1940, the Thomas family of merchants erected a two-story building at 502-504 Wenonah Avenue, in place of the wing of the Western Hotel that had been removed in 1936. The first floor of the Thomas building accommodated retail establishments behind modern storefronts, while the second floor housed residential apartments. In 1940, a more ambitious development was completed on three Pearson Sub-Division lots along South Main Street. That year, cooperative efforts between the Star Amusement Company and the local Witten family led to the construction of the Pearis Theater and the Witten Building. The theater, forming an "L", takes up one full lot for the entrance lobby and the rear half of each of the other lots for the auditorium. The Witten Building, which accommodated retail activities on the first floor and professional offices on the second, was built upon the remaining front half of those two lots. Both had two-story street frontages and were of concrete block construction, but the theater building extended down another level at the rear to accommodate the downward slope of its auditorium seating. The Art Deco theater, a rare example of its style in Southwestern Virginia, remains substantially intact, even to the original marquee, replete with neon and incandescent lights. Unfortunately, the adjoining Witten Building was gutted by fire in the 1950s and insensitively rehabilitated several times in recent decades, so that it no longer retains sufficient integrity to be included within the district boundaries.

The remaining buildings in the district are one- and two-story commercial structures dating to around 1940, which are situated along the south side of Wenonah Avenue. The single storefront at 512 Wenonah Avenue has a brick veneer and parapet, which place it

in context with the adjoining 1920s buildings. Similarly, the one-story building at 520-522 Wenonah Avenue also features stretcher-bond brick veneers on the front and rear facades, a front parapet with blind panels, and two modern storefronts. The final building in the group and in the district (524 Wenonah Avenue) stands on the former site of the Pearisburg Church of God. Constructed of concrete block in 1942, the building has stretcher-bond brick veneers on its front and rear elevations, the original storefront on the first floor, and six-over-six sash windows on the second floor. A modern asphalt-shingled mansard over the storefront appears to be the building's only exterior modification.

SUMMARY

The Pearisburg Historic District includes buildings from almost every period of the town's development. These buildings are primarily commercial and governmental in function, although there are also domestic, recreational, and religious structures within the district's boundaries. Seventeen of the nineteen buildings in the district date to the years between 1900 and 1942, although the two most significant individual buildings pre-date 1840.

Nearly all of the buildings in the district are of traditional masonry construction, and many of them accommodate multiple uses and functions. The fact that all of the buildings within the district boundaries are considered contributing properties is due largely to the compactness of Pearisburg's business district, focused as it is around a single intersection and the Public Square. Most commercial buildings retain their original upper-story streetfronts, although many street level storefronts have been altered, and few historic commercial interiors survive. At the larger scale of the street and block, Pearisburg's business district preserves considerable integrity to the early-twentieth-century period of significance, with no gaps left by demolition and no modern intrusions. The character of Pearisburg's streetscapes has changed over the years; virtually unbroken rows of commercial buildings have replaced earlier, freestanding residences, storehouses, and churches, while the large trees which once shaded the Public Square are long since gone. But some historic landscape features do remain intact in the district, especially the wrought iron fencing around the perimeter of the park-like Public Square.

7. DESCRIPTION -- ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

Properties in the inventory are organized alphabetically by street and numerically by address. Entries list the name of the property, the date or date range of construction, basic architectural features (style or form, story height, construction material and exterior finish, roof type, etc.), and pertinent historical data. The sources for specific dates of construction, when given, are the Giles County Land Tax Books, found in the records of the Giles County Clerk of the Circuit Court. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources site numbers for properties that have previously been surveyed are included in parentheses at the end of each entry. Following each entry is the designation "CB" or "NB", for the status of each building as either a "contributing building" or a "noncontributing building".

Other abbreviations used in the inventory include:

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

7. DESCRIPTION -- ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

N. MAIN ST.

279-12-1

103: First National Bank of Pearisburg (now Eric's Restaurant). 1906. Romanesque, 2-story, rock-faced concrete block, shed roof with perforated parapet evocative of crenelation, full-height arched recess and flanking turrets on front (E.) elevation, two full-height arched windows on side (S.) elevation, 1-story additions to rear (W.) and side (N.) elevations. (DHR #279-41) CB

-2

107: Building. 1st 1/4 20th c. 2-story, gable front, frame (novelty weatherboard, brick pattern pressed corrugated sheet metal), first floor commercial storefront (with later display windows, inset entry, and perma-stone knee wall), second floor residential apartments, 1-story metal-sheathed shed addition to rear (W.) elevation. (DHR #279-42) CB

-3

109: Virginian Building. Ca. 1900. 2-story, brick (stretcher bond), first floor commercial storefront (with recessed entries, later vertical-board-sheathed center bay), second floor office (with brick piers, segmental-arched windows), corbeled parapet, two 1-story shed additions to rear (W.) elevation. Built by C.L. King as The Bank of Giles, which reorganized in 1906 as the First National Bank of Pearisburg and moved to the corner site (now 103 N.Main St.). A local weekly newspaper, The Pearisburg Virginian, was published out of this building for several decades afterwards. (DHR #279-43) CB

S. MAIN ST.

-4

103-105: Western Hotel (Thomas Building). Ca. 1827. 2-1/2-story, six bays, brick (Flemish bond), corbeled cornice, gambrel roof, coursed limestone foundation, pedimented dormer, four exterior end chimneys, center-passage (stair removed between first and second floors), front (W.) elevation altered for two commercial storefronts (with modern display windows and entrances) ca. 1930, original entrance (with intact fanlight) converted to window, two dormers removed ca. 1980. Built ca. 1827 by Guy D.

French as a residence and ordinary, the building was operated as the Western Hotel from the 1860s through the early twentieth century, and was the retail headquarters of several Thomas family businesses (Thomas Hardware Company, Thomas Haberdashery, Thomas Grocery) beginning in 1927. (DHR #279-6) CB

109: Pearis Theater. 1940. Art Deco, 2-story, concrete block (stucco finish), shed roof (lobby, office), gable roof (auditorium), L-shape plan, 2-bay facade (with monumental piers, decorative panel), trapezoidal marquee with neon and incandescent lights, inset entry, shallow barrel vault in lobby. Built by the Star Amusement Company in conjunction with the adjacent Witten Building, 111-115 S. Main St. (DHR #279-35) CB

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WENONAH AVE.

Giles County Courthouse. 1836. Federal, 2-story, brick (Flemish bond), hipped roof, octagonal cupola, located on Public Square, alterations to original include 2-story flanking wings, Corinthian portico, and 3-story addition to rear (N.) elevation. Individually listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places (1982). (DHR #279-3) CB
The Public Square is counted as a contributing site.

-6

Giles County Sheriff's Office and Jail. 1937-38. Colonial Revival, 2-story, brick (4-course American bond), raised limestone foundation, pedimented central pavilion, 1-story Ionic portico, gable roof (offices), flat roof (cell block), located on Public Square adjacent to county courthouse. (DHR #279-20) CB

-18

502-504: Thomas Building addition. Between 1936-1940. 2-story, brick (stretcher bond [veneer?]), blind panels in parapet, shed roof, first floor commercial storefronts (aluminum display windows with inset entries), second floor residential apartments (metal casement windows, stair from ground floor). Replaced 2-story wing of Western Hotel/Thomas Building (destroyed 1936), maintains connection to Western Hotel/Thomas Building through second floor hall. (DHR #279-34) CB

-7

506-508: St. Elizabeth Hospital Building. 1920. 3-story, brick (multi-course American bond), corbeled parapet cornice, shed roof, 9 bays, segmental arched windows, later storefront alteration on first floor, 1-story concrete block addition at rear. Built by Pearisburg businessmen C.A. Hoilman and C.L. King as an office building, converted to a private hospital by Dr. W.C. Caudill and his brother, E.L. Caudill, in 1924. Saint Elizabeth's served as the only hospital in Giles County ~~until~~ a modern replacement was built in 1950. (DHR #279-33) CB

-8

510: St. Elizabeth Hospital [Office] (now J. Bentley Hall Insurance). 1924. 1-story, brick (multi-course American bond), corbeled parapet cornice, shed roof, 2 bays, segmental arched window and door openings. Built in 1924 for St. Elizabeth Hospital (function not clear), employing the same architectural materials and detailing as the adjacent building. (DHR #279-32) CB

-9

512: Building. Ca. 1940. 1-story, brick (stretcher bond [veneer?]), parapet, aluminum storefront (inset entry, ceramic block knee wall). Rear section (ca. 1925) originally associated with adjacent Giles Motor Company building. (DHR #279-31) CB

-10

513: Pearisburg Law Building. 1910. 2-story, brick, recessed bays, corbelling and houndstooth belt courses at floor levels, hipped roof, pedimented dormers, plain lintels. Office building on first subdivision ~~of land~~ originally reserved for the Public Square. (DHR #279-21) CB

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514-518: Giles County Motor Company Building. 1923-1924. 2-story, brick (stretcher bond), corbeled courses at first and second story ceiling levels, shed roof (office section), gable roof with stepped parapet (auto storage section entered from rear), first floor commercial (aluminum storefronts), second floor offices (paired 1/1 sash windows, some obscured by aluminum siding). Sales and service of Studebaker and Plymouth automobiles, an enterprise of prominent local businessman and senator, A.E. Shumate. Presently in use as two discount department/clothing stores. (DHR #279-30) CB

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515-517: Shumate Building (Woods Building). 1929. 2-story (front), 3-story (rear), brick (stretcher bond), shed roof, parapet, houndstooth and corbeled courses, 1/1 sash windows, first floor commercial (modern wood shingle mansard), second floor residential apartments. Originally housed Pearisburg Post Office and the "Rainbow Inn," a restaurant operated by prominent local businessman Bob Woods. Built by A.E. Shumate. (DHR #279-22) CB

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519: Building. 1929. 1-story (front), 2-story (rear), brick (stretcher bond), corbeled parapet, modern wood shingle mansard, modern vertical board-sheathed storefront. Built by A.E. Shumate. (DHR #279-23) CB

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520-522: Building. 1939. 1-story, two units, brick (stretcher bond [veneer?]), shed roof, blind panels in parapets, commercial storefronts (aluminum display windows, inset entries, brick knee walls), 6/6 sash windows at rear (alley) entrances. (DHR #279-28) CB

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521-523: Miller Building. 1930. 2-story (front), 3-story (rear), brick (stretcher bond), blind panels in parapet, first floor commercial (modern vertical board-sheathed shop front, asphalt shingle mansard), second floor residential apartments (entry on side [E.] elevation), basement level movie theater (arcaded rear [N.] elevation blocked up). Built by Maude P. Miller, local businesswoman, and designed for a theater, drug store, and apartments. (DHR #279-24) CB

-16

524: Building. 1942. 2-story, concrete block (stretcher bond brick veneers at front and rear elevations), shed roof, ceramic parapet coping, 6/6 sash windows, original storefront on first floor (large display windows, inset entries), modern asphalt shingle mansard, rear (alley) loading dock, entry, and windows. Church of God building formerly stood on site. (DHR #279-27) CB

-17

Christ Episcopal Church. 1910, rebuilt 1926-1933. Arts and Crafts influence (Craftsman), 1-story, concrete and wood frame construction (river cobblestone facing, pebbledash stucco), massive buttresses, 5 side bays (triple 15-light casement windows in each), steeply-

-19

pitched gable roof (slate shingles), decorative exposed rafter ends under eaves, gabled vestibule, basement addition with shed roof. According to local tradition, this structure was a replica of Christ Church, Bradford, New York. Built of stone furnished by local banker, C.L. King, from his farm. The original church burned 26 March 1926; immediate rebuilding, using the original stone walls, began after the fire and included an addition (basement) to the rear of the church. (PHR #279-25) CB

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pearisburg Historic District encompasses much of the downtown business district of Pearisburg, Virginia. In 1806 Pearisburg was laid out as the seat of newly formed Giles County. The fifty-plus acres of land in the town's original plot were donated to the county government by Colonel George Pearis, one of the area's earliest settlers. As the center of Giles County politics, Pearisburg also became an important social and commercial locale. The historic resources of Pearisburg reflect its ongoing significance to the county throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Early survey maps depicted the principal geographic features of Pearisburg: the large Public Square on the northeast corner of two major intersecting streets, with the surrounding grid divided into smaller lots. Pearisburg's downtown is defined by, and developed in relation to, these omnipresent features of the urban landscape. The historic district's earliest buildings date to the antebellum period, but the overwhelming majority of contributing properties are of post-1900 construction and reflect Pearisburg's ongoing commercial and political leadership to the commencement of World War II.

Justification of Criteria

The Pearisburg Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A, with two pertinent Areas of Significance: for its association with commerce, as reflected by the survival of nearly twenty buildings that provided the community with shops, stores, business offices, banks, and places for lodging and meals; and for its association with local government and politics, having served as the Giles County seat and as the location of major county buildings, such as the courthouse and sheriff's office/jail. The district is also eligible for listing under Criterion C for his historic architectural qualities. The district includes Federal period governmental and domestic buildings, as well as early-twentieth-century governmental, commercial, and religious buildings that exhibit a variety of architectural styles. The period of significance for the Pearisburg Historic District ranges from 1806--the date of Pearisburg's establishment as the seat of Giles County and the date of the original town plat--to 1942--when the commercial development of the business district completed the downtown streetscape.

1942

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pearisburg is located in the Allegheny Range of the Appalachian Mountains on an eastern terrace of Wolf Creek Mountain approximately one mile south of the New River. Maps drawn during the third decade of the nineteenth century show "Parisburg" at the intersection of a road running northwest from Blacksburg, the present business route of U.S. 460, and a road running north from Newbern, the present Virginia route 100. These routes and the New River traverse Sinking Creek Mountain and Walker Mountain to the south of Pearisburg and Peters Mountain to the north.

Pearisburg traces its origin to the creation of Giles County by an act of the Virginia General Assembly passed in January 1806. Giles was formed from portions of Montgomery, Monroe [now in West Virginia], and Tazewell counties. The first Giles County court met in a house owned by George Pearis. Of French Huguenot ancestry, Pearis had settled at Peppers Ferry in Montgomery County. After rising to the rank of colonel in command of Montgomery County militia during the Revolutionary War, in 1782 Pearis moved downstream to pioneer settlement of land on the New River in what would become Giles County. There he established a ferry and maintained a trading post and tavern.

At the first meeting of the Giles County court at the Pearis house in May 1806, the following men were among those who received commissions as justices of the peace: George Pearis, Thomas Shannon, Christian Snidow, David French, David Johnston, Isaac Chapman, and John Peck. Col. Pearis donated fifty-three acres of land for the creation of a county seat and offered timber and stone sufficient for the erection of public buildings necessary for the use of the county. In January 1808 the Virginia General Assembly noted the fifty-plus acre conveyance of land to the Giles County justices of the peace, stated that the land "is already laid off in lots and streets," and thereupon established the town "by the name of Pearisburg" with Andrew Johnston, Isaac Chapman, David French, Thomas Shannon, David Johnston, Christian Snidow, and John Peck named as trustees.

By 1813 Pearisburg had been surveyed and laid off into lots and streets in the basic configuration which the town's commercial district retains today, with a Public Square bordered by Main Street to the east and a cross street, now Wenonah Avenue, to the south. Col. Pearis retained the lot south of the Public Square;

Pearisburg trustees Johnston, Chapman, French, and Peck owned land southeast of the Public Square. John Chapman, James Thompson, Gordon Cloyd [of Montgomery County], and William Smith owned land to the west and north of the Public Square. All told, the Pearisburg trustees and other Giles County resident property holders listed in this paragraph headed households which contained seventy-one whites and fifty-six slaves in 1810. Pearisburg's population in 1810 included six licensed attorneys. The Giles County court had permitted five ordinaries or taverns in Pearisburg by 1814. The Johnstons had opened a store and a tannery. A 40' x 30' two-story stone courthouse faced Main Street, and a 36' x 24' stone jail had been built by 1814. Pearisburg now functioned as a county seat and as the center of Giles County politics and commerce. By 1815 five Pearisburg town trustees had served nine terms as Giles County delegates to the Virginia General Assembly.

Commercial activity continued in Pearisburg during the 1820s. In 1820 the Johnston and Chapman Tanyard processed about 300 cow hides and 600 deer and hog skins, with total production valued at $2,600. In 1827 Guy D. French, son of David French and son-in-law of the Chapmans, received permission from the Giles County court to erect a brick house on the southeast corner of Main Street and Middle Street [now Wenonah Avenue], directly across from the courthouse. Guy French operated this two-story brick structure, the oldest building to survive in the Pearisburg Historic District, until his death in 1865. His wife reopened the establishment in 1869 under the name of the Western Hotel, and thereafter the building continued to function as a tavern and store for more than a century.

The present Giles County Courthouse stands as the second oldest building in the Pearisburg Historic District. In 1834 a courthouse committee reported that the stone courthouse constructed twenty-four years before was in danger of collapse. The court provided $5,000 for construction of a two-story brick structure to be built by contractor Thomas W. Mercer. Mercer completed his work on the handsome new building by September 1836.

In 1836 Joseph Martin's New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia reported that Pearisburg received daily stage service on a line that ran from Newbern to Lewisburg. The village contained about thirty dwellings, many built of stone, four stores, two taverns, two common schools, two saddlers, two hatters, three furniture makers, one boot and shoe factory, one wheelwright, one tailor, and

one brick and stone mason. Pearisburg had 170 whites, including 2 resident attorneys and a physician, and 34 blacks. Methodists outnumbered practitioners of other religious faiths, but Pearisburg had not yet erected a "house of worship deserving notice."

The 1850 census, when correlated with the 1851 Land Book for Pearisburg, records that the community had grown to forty households at mid-century. In 1850 Pearisburg provided employment for ten laborers, six saddlers, five merchants, four blacksmiths, four lawyers, four carpenters, three tanners, three doctors, three clerks, two wagon makers, two house painters, a preacher, a surveyor, a bar keeper, a school master, and a wagoner. The forty households in Pearisburg in 1850 provided shelter for 284 whites, 2 free blacks, and 66 slaves.

Census records from 1850 and the 1851 Land Book show Guy French as the wealthiest resident of Pearisburg. He owned fifteen slaves, more than anyone else in town, and real estate valued at $32,000, four times more than any other town resident. In 1850 Guy French lived at the brick hotel across from the Public Square with seven other family members and ten boarders and owned all of the other lots on the south side of the block which faced the Public Square.

One of the sons of Guy French, Captain David A. French, commanded a company of light artillery whose members enlisted in Giles County and fought with the Army of Northern Virginia from 1861 to Appomattox. More than 600 men from Giles County fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Pearisburg was the site of a Civil War skirmish in May 1862, an encounter which involved two future Presidents of the United States, Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley. Lt. Col. R. B. Hayes commanded the Twenty-third Regiment of Ohio in a spring campaign which fought its way up the New River with the objective of capturing the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad around Dublin. On 6 May 1862 Hayes received the following field report from one of his majors at Giles Courthouse [Pearisburg]: "Took the place completely by surprise. No house burnt. Citizens all here. Large amount of commissary stores." Hayes and his aide Major McKinley reportedly established their Pearisburg headquarters for the Twenty-third Ohio in the doctor's office of Harvey Green Johnston and took their meals at a nearly hotel. Two days later, Hayes wrote his company officer, "This is a lovely spot, a fine, clean village, most beautiful and romantic surrounding country, and

polite and educated . . . people." Lt. Col. Hayes proposed to reorganize his brigade at Pearisburg, but the Twenty-third Ohio was forced out of town on 10 May 1862 by Confederate forces from the Army of New River commanded by Brigadier General Henry Heth. Heth reported that the battle for the "approach to the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad by way of Giles Court-House" cost his company two killed and four wounded. Federal troops suffered comparable losses in the engagement, two killed and five or six wounded.

By the time of the Civil War, several prominent Pearisburg families had intermarried, and their combined descendants held important property and political office well into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Pearisburg founder David French served as Giles County clerk until his death. Guy French, David's son, married Araminta Chapman, daughter of the first Giles County commonwealth attorney. Guy French, Pearisburg's wealthiest property holder until his death in the 1860s, fathered David A. French who survived his Civil War command to serve as Giles County surveyor and treasurer in the 1870s and 1880s. William French, another son of Guy, in 1871 married Nellie Snidow Johnston, a descendant of two other Pearisburg founding families; William French doubtless played on these important family ties to win election to the Virginia Senate in 1879. Pearisburg founder David Johnston married Sarah Chapman and held the office of Giles County sheriff. David's son Chapman Johnston married Eliann Snidow and served as Giles County deputy sheriff. Andrew Johnston, brother of David and also an original trustee of Pearisburg, also served as Giles County sheriff. Andrew's son James D. Johnston married a daughter of Pearisburg founder Isaac Chapman, served as the Giles County commonwealth attorney in the 1850s and 1860s, and served as a Giles County delegate to the General Assembly in the 1870s and 1880s. James Johnston owned property in Pearisburg valued at $2,600 in 1880, the second highest appraisal in town for that year.

New families gained property and economic influence in Pearisburg during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1880 Thomas J. Pearson owned the Western Hotel and all of the lots which faced the south side of Public Square, the town's most valuable property at that time. By 1884 Pearson owned a general merchandise store, worked as a druggist, and edited the town's weekly newspaper, The Pearisburg Virginian. Pearson had sold The Pearisburg Virginian by 1897, but by then he worked as a lumber dealer, sold furniture, still owned his general store, and worked as a druggist. Pearson continued to

own his general store in 1917. He died shortly thereafter, and in 1919 the Pearson Subdivision divided his estate into sixteen parcels which fronted on Wenonah Avenue across from the courthouse and around the corners to the south on Main and Tazewell streets. These Pearson Subdivision lots became the sites of several significant commercial buildings constructed between 1920 and 1940.

Lafayette Woolwine became the proprietor of the Pearisburg Hotel in 1878 and owned property in Pearisburg by 1880. C. C. Woolwine owned a general store by 1884, was still a Pearisburg merchant in 1897, and owned the lot on the northwest corner of Main Street and Wenonah Avenue by 1900--the future site of the First National Bank. James Woolwine ran a hotel and livery stable in Pearisburg in 1897. William D. Woolwine was a Pearisburg physician in 1910.

In 1900 Pearisburg continued to function as a county seat and as a center for local commerce. The town had five attorneys' offices, three hotels, three general stores, two saw mills and a flour mill, and two tanneries. In 1900 Pearisburg's 485 inhabitants lived in eighty-one households. Sixty percent of the homes were owner occupied. Thirty percent of the town's inhabitants were black. In addition to the people employed in the professions related to the enterprises mentioned above, several women worked as teachers and seamstresses, and several men worked as teamsters and day laborers.

New commercial institutions had been established in Pearisburg by 1910, but the town continued to maintain its nineteenth-century tradition of political leadership. In 1906 and 1907 the First National Bank built its two-story, rock-faced concrete block edifice on the C. C. Woolwine property at the northwest corner of Main Street and Wenonah Avenue. William Woodrum, son of Giles County treasurer Jesse Woodrum, worked as the bank's bookkeeper. By 1910 Pearisburg had a telephone company with an operator, Rhoda Gordon, who boarded on Main Street in the house of printer Thomas Johnston. Two members of Pearisburg's founding family of Snidows, Floyd and John, lived in town and respectively served Giles County as clerk and sheriff.

In 1910 the eastern portion of the Public Square on Wenonah Avenue was divided into six parcels. The two-story, brick foursquare Pearisburg Law Building, constructed on the Public Square lot closest to the courthouse, provided office space for several attorneys who attended Giles County courts. The first Christ Episcopal Church was built between 1910 and 1912 on the easternmost

Public Square lot at the corner of Wenonah Avenue and Tazewell Street. The church burned in 1926 and reconstruction began immediately thereafter.

New buildings constructed on the Public Square and in the Pearson Subdivision from 1920 to 1940 completed the streetscape of the Pearisburg Historic District. The town's population doubled from 500 to 1,000 during those years, and two newcomers associated with buildings constructed during the 1920s, Anderson E. Shumate and Dr. Walter C. Caudill, brought Pearisburg into a new era of political leadership by representing the town and Giles County in the Virginia Senate for fourteen consecutive sessions from 1928 to 1955.

In 1924 A. E. Shumate, formerly of nearby Bluff City on the New River, built the two-story brick Giles County Motor Company Building which stands on a Pearson Subdivision lot on Wenonah Avenue directly across the street from the Pearisburg Law Building. The building was used for automobile sales, service, and parts--commercial services required by Pearisburg residents who had supported a bond issue of $300,000 in 1920 for construction of improved county roads suitable for automobile traffic. Shumate constructed the two-story brick Shumate Building on the lot just east of the Pearisburg Law Building in 1929. In 1931 the Shumate building housed the Pearisburg Post Office, a facility which may have been located there because of Shumate's influence as a member of the Virginia Senate, an office he held consecutively from 1928 to 1940

In 1920 merchants C. A. Hoilman and C. L. King acquired the Pearson Subdivision lot located just east of the Western Hotel and across Wenonah Avenue from the courthouse and constructed there a three-story brick commercial building. Four years later Dr. W. C. Caudill and his brother Dr. Estill L. Caudill converted the building into an eighteen-bed private medical facility known as St. Elizabeth Hospital. Dr. W. C. Caudill continued to operate St. Elizabeth hospital until 1950 when its facilities were replaced by the new Giles Memorial Hospital. Born in North Carolina, W. C. Caudill studied medicine at the Medical College of Virginia, interned in Roanoke, and moved to Pearisburg in 1914. He served in the U.S. Medical Corps in World War I and then returned to Pearisburg to practice medicine. The first president of the Bank of Giles County, W. C. Caudill served as chairman of the Giles County Democratic Party for fifteen years before being elected to

the Virginia House of Delegates in 1936 and 1938 and then holding consecutive terms in the Virginia Senate from 1940 to 1955. During his final term in the Senate, Dr. Caudill served as president *pro tempore* and as floor leader. Newspaper accounts written at the time of the dedication of Giles Memorial Hospital in 1950 noted that Dr. Caudill had served as past president of the Medical Society of Virginia and that he combined his medical experience with his political influence in Richmond to expedite completion of the new $600,000 medical facility.

In 1930 businesswoman Maude Miller built the two-story brick Miller Building on the Public Square lot between the Shumate Building and Christ Episcopal Church. In 1931 the Miller Building housed a ground floor drugstore, second-story apartments, and a movie theater in the basement. The Miller movie theater was supplanted in 1940 when the Star Amusement Company built the two-story concrete block Pearis Theater on parts of four Pearson Subdivision lots which fronted on the east side of Main Street just south of the Western Hotel. The 1940 Land Book valued the new Pearis Theater at $6,000, the Miller Building at $4,800, the Giles County Motor Company Building at $3,500, the First National Bank at $2,540, the Western Hotel at $2,000, St. Elizabeth Hospital at $1,600, and the Shumate Building at $1,500.

Since 1940 Pearisburg's population has grown to about 2,000 inhabitants, largely because of the addition of three residential subdivisions which have provided housing for some of the 2,000 employees of Celco, a Celanese Fibers Company plant built nearby on the New River just before World War II. Notwithstanding the post-1940 annexations of the Fort Branch and Sunnyside subdivisions, the Pearisburg Historic District today retains the architectural heritage of the antebellum Western Hotel and Giles County Courthouse, and its early- to mid-twentieth century commercial buildings. The town and its public and commercial buildings are also associated with the economic and political leadership which began with the families of the original county justices and town trustees and continued into the mid-twentieth century under senators Shumate and Caudill.

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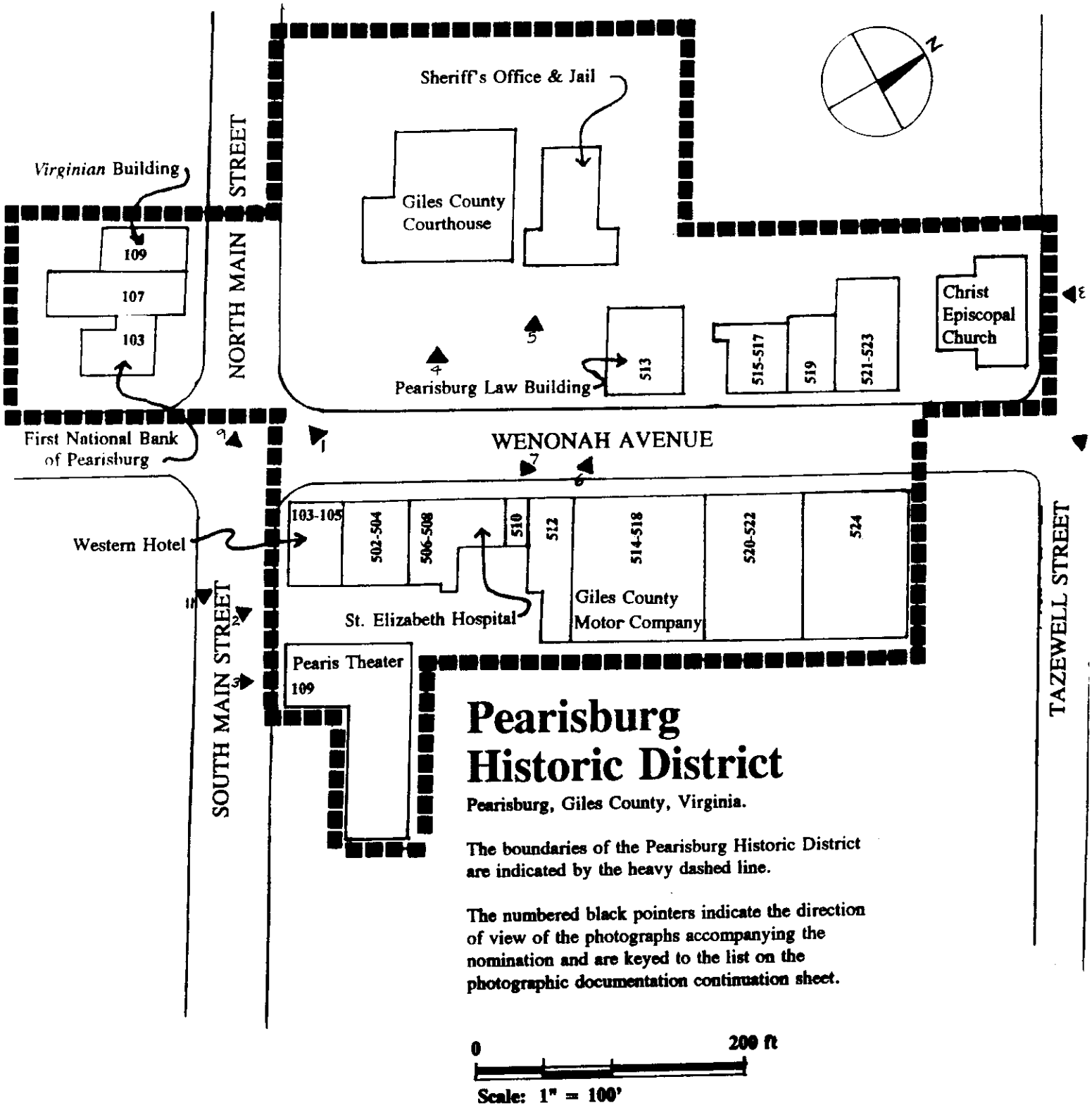

Pearisburg Historic District

Pearisburg, Giles County, Virginia.

The boundaries of the Pearisburg Historic District are indicated by the heavy dashed line.

The numbered black pointers indicate the direction of view of the photographs accompanying the nomination and are keyed to the list on the photographic documentation continuation sheet.

PEARISBURG
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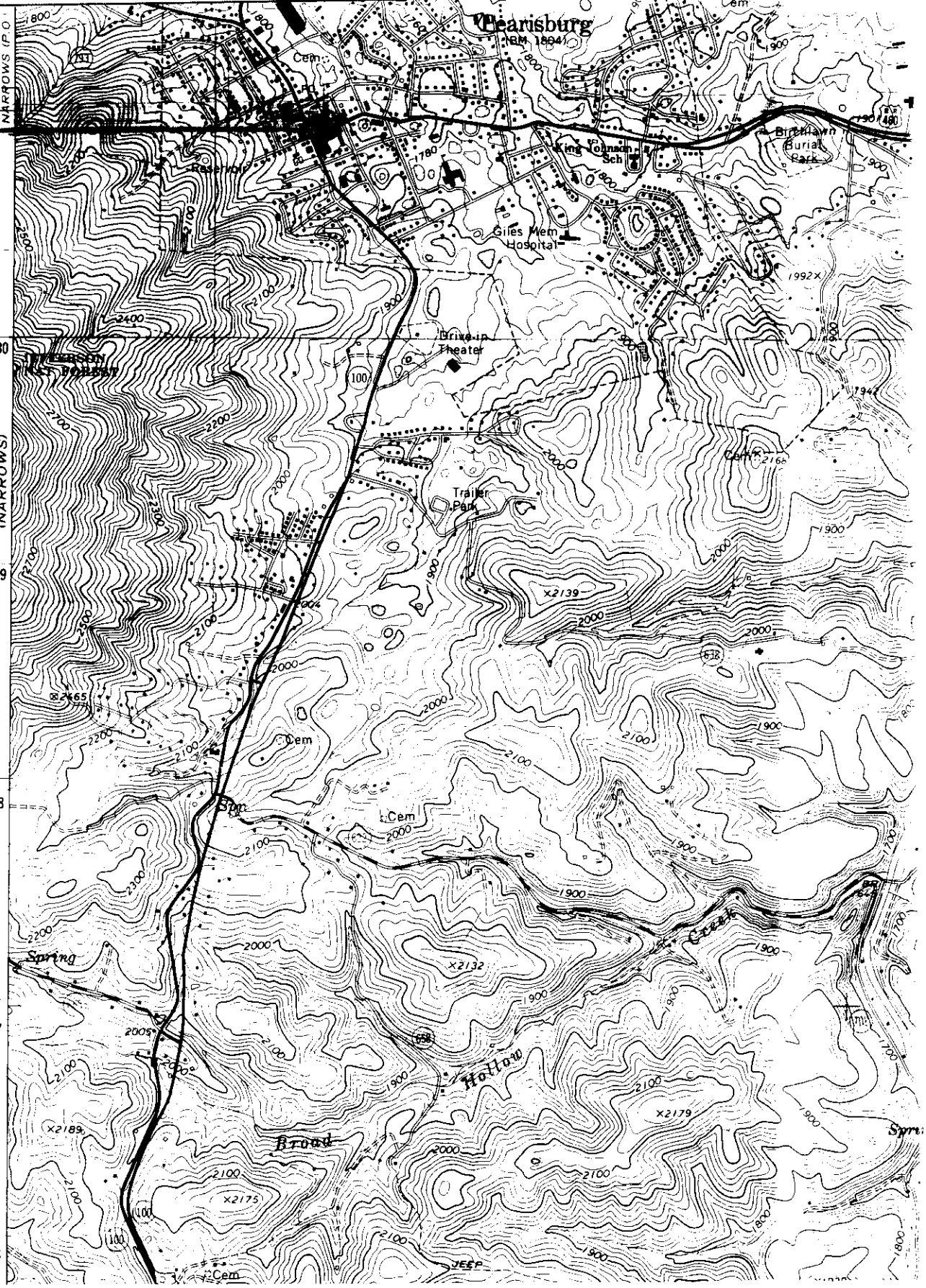
Pearisburg, Virginia

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