

VLR-6/20/89 NRHP-1/10/91

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)...

1. Name of Property

historic name Cambria Historic District other names/site number 154-48

2. Location 500-600 blocks Depot St., 500-600 blocks Montgomery St., 900-1000 street & number blocks Cambria St., and railroad depots N/A not for publication city, town Christiansburg N/A vicinity state Virginia code VA county Montgomery code 121 zip code 24073

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/district/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: Prehistoric and Historic Resources of Montgomery County

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 nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places...

Signature of certifying official

Date 21 Nov 1990

Director, Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks 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**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: rail-related  
 Commerce/trade: speciality store  
 Commerce/trade: restaurant  
 Domestic: single dwelling  
 Health care: hospital

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: rail-related  
 Commerce/trade: speciality store  
 Commerce/trade: organizational  
 Vacant: not in use  
 Domestic: single dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate  
 Queen Anne  
 Colonial Revival  
 Bungalow

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
 walls brick  
 wood: board-and-batten  
 roof metal: tin  
 other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Cambria Historic District is located about one mile from downtown Christiansburg on the Norfolk-Southern Railroad tracks that follow Crab Creek. It is on the north side of Zion Hill, a steep ridge that separates the downtown from the district. The most significant historic buildings surround three sides of a rough square that has on its north side the railroad tracks. The earliest building is the already-listed Christiansburg Depot of 1869 (154-48-1), a dramatic Italianate structure of frame construction clad in board-and-batten. It is equipped with a hip-roofed central tower and a long freight wing to the rear (east). Opposite the station is a three-story, brick-clad, heavy timber-frame commercial building. The Surface-Lee Block (154-48-5) has a finished first floor with an ornamental stamped metal ceiling and tongue-and-groove sheathing on the walls, many original counters and shelves, and an early twentieth-century freight elevator. The first floor is reached through a recessed central entry on the east front, flanked by a pair of arched tripartite windows. The remaining windows on the north front and the upper floors of the east front are six-over-six sash double-hung windows with a white painted keystone in the jack arch above.

The south side of the square is occupied by a pair of commercial buildings joined into one structure once known as the Dew Drop Inn (154-48-4). The two-story brick building is built in two equal sections. The first floor has intact original wood and glass storefronts with recessed doorways to each. Each half of the second floor is reached by a separate stair opening onto the sidewalk. Each section of the building has a different elaborate pressed metal cornice, metal window hoods, and quoins. A shed roof is concealed behind the parapet walls. The interior of the west section has intact features including a pressed metal ceiling and an old original bar. The building is currently vacant on the first floor and owner-occupied on the second. It is in a good state of repair. The second floor retains the room layout of the Altamont Hospital, the county's first hospital, which operated during the early twentieth century.

 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)

Architecture  
Transportation  
Commerce

Period of Significance

1854-1930

Significant Dates

1854  
1869  
1906

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cambria Historic District is significant under criteria A and C as an important and well preserved town built principally in order to take advantage of the advent of the railroad. It functioned as a "port" for the nearby town of Christiansburg and did not develop its own identity until the late nineteenth century. The district houses one of the region's finest railroad depots, which is also one of the earliest in the state (already listed in the National Register). It also houses two of the county's most important commercial and institutional buildings. The three-story Surface-Lee Block (154-48-5) was built as a wholesale grocery business dependant upon the railroad and good roads to bring produce to Cambria, while the Dew Drop Inn (154-48-4) originally housed the county's first hospital over a drug store. Both buildings are among the most architecturally significant and substantial commercial buildings in the county. The district's houses and other buildings illustrate Cambria's relative importance as a transportation and commercial center by their fine detailing and substantial size. Their vernacular and popular forms detail the changes allowed by access to ready markets for mail-order homes and precut lumber and decorating material between the 1850s and the 1910s.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1851 the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad chose a site along Crab Creek, nearly a mile north of the Montgomery County Courthouse at Christiansburg, for the location of the Christiansburg Depot. The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, originally chartered in 1836, was the first railroad to cross the Blue Ridge Mountains into Southwest Virginia, enabling farmers and manufacturers to reach desirable markets in eastern Virginia and beyond. The railroad was unable to locate any closer to Christiansburg due to the steep grade up from Salem and down to the New River.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Ansell, Annette. "Historical Documentation and Rehabilitation Design Concept of the Surface-Lee Block Building." paper for class at UPI&SU, June 1987.
- Barnard, Susan. "Cambria Antique Mall." adaptive reuse project report, UPI&SU, April 1987.
- "Prudawn Fire Destroys Entire Block." Montgomery News Messenger, February 13, 1947, p. 1.
- "M. T. Lee Dies" Montgomery News Messenger, September 1942, p. 10.
- Crush, Charles. The Montgomery County Story. Christiansburg, VA, the Montgomery County Jamestown Festival Committee, 1957.

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:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approximately thirty-four acres.

UTM References

A	17	552600	4110360	B	17	552540	4110700
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	17	552960	4110680	D	17	552940	4110420

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at point A on the south side of Depot Street 400 feet west of the southeast corner of the intersection of Schaeffer Street and Depot Street, proceeding 225 feet along the west side of lots on the south side of Depot Street, to point B, proceeding east 1,200 feet along the rear (south) lot lines of houses on the south side of Depot Street to point C, thence north along the east lot line of site 154-48-3, 300 feet to point D on the north side of Depot Street, thence east along the north side of  See continuation sheet Depot Street 800 feet to point E 25 feet beyond the east wall of site 154-48-32 (the new Christiansburg Depot), thence

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were chosen based upon visual changes in the character of the area due to a construction of buildings which do not share similar architectural traits, historical periods, or forms with the contributing resources in the district.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Gibson Worsham  
organization Gibson Worsham, Architect date June 1988  
street & number Route 2, Yellow Sulphur Springs telephone (703) 552-130  
city or town Christiansburg state Virginia zip code 24073

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Other commercial buildings line Cambria Street to the north, including the 1920s Epperly Pontiac dealership (154-48-6) and the Cambria Hardware Company Building (154-48-13). Both are built of rusticated concrete blocks, a popular building material of the period. The two-story buildings are well preserved and both are in use. Diagonally across the street from the Cambria Hardware Building stands the late nineteenth-century Palmer Store (154-48-8), a two-story frame building covered with bricktex and housing a well preserved wooden storefront in its gable front. The building is in good condition and is currently used as a residence. Among the dwellings in the district which line Depot and Montgomery streets is the Daniel Brown House (154-48-7), which was built in the post-Civil War era to house one of Cambria's first developers. The two-story brick center-passage dwelling resembles a number of other substantial vernacular houses from the mid-nineteenth century in form and material. It features wood lintels with bull's-eye cornerblocks and a hipped roof. It has been renovated for use as apartments. At the far west end of the Montgomery Street part of the district stands the Lee House (154-12), an elaborate balloon-frame Queen Anne-style house with inset porches, bays, and carved shingle walls under a high hipped roof. The interior features parquet floors, stained glass, and oak wainscoting. The Charlie Morgan House (154-49) is a small log house of apparent hall-parlor form. The three-bay house, which has a two-story brick chimney at its east gable end, was the home of the family of Charlie Morgan, a black who lived in the town during the early twentieth century, when Cambria thrived. It is the oldest house in the district. It has projecting log plates and probably dates from the 1850s, when Cambria was first settled. The other houses are for the most part typical of the mass of vernacular dwellings built during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including one- and two-story frame T-plan houses with elaborate decorative woodwork along the south side of Depot Street, on the hill above the railroad tracks, and conventional large frame center-passage and T-plan houses on Montgomery and Cambria streets. A pair of identical frame gable-fronted bungalows (154-48-10), both with clipped gables, concrete foundations, and porches with fluted Doric columns were very likely ordered from a mail-order catalog in the 1910s.

The Cambria Baptist Church of 1928 (154-48-12) has Gothic details. The brick church has a two-stage corner tower with brick soldier courses for contrasting relief over openings.

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Stone panels and label molds are used over a pair of entry doors, and buttresses divide the side wall bays. The New Christiansburg Depot of 1906 (154-48-32) is also built of brick. The one-story structure has a hipped roof with a wide overhang on all sides. A gable-roofed projecting element on each front houses toilets on the south and the ticket office observation bay on the north. On the interior two waiting rooms flank the central ticket office in the east end. The western end housed the freight rooms. The station is used for offices by the Norfolk-Southern Railroad.

Noncontributing buildings include the rebuilt sections of the Surface-Lee Block's south end, which burned in 1947. The Bane Coal and Oil Building on the northeast corner of the railroad intersection was built after 1940. Several non-contributing modern residential and commercial buildings are dispersed throughout the district, most of which were built within the last thirty years.

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Cambria Historic District 154-48Section number 7 Page 3**CAMBRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY**NOTE: All resources are contributing unless marked (NC) for noncontributing  
CAMBRIA STREET

- 1 900 Cambria Street 1869, 1-story, 5-bay, hip-roofed, frame with board and batten, Italianate Cambria Depot
- 5 915 Cambria Street early-20th-century, 3-story, 3-bay, flat-roofed, brick, Colonial Revival Surface-Lee Block (commercial)
- 17 920 Cambria Street 1940s, 2-story, 9-bay, flat-roofed, brick, modern Bane Oil Company (NC)
- 6 930 Cambria Street 1920s, 2-story, 4-bay, flat-roofed with parapet, rusticated concrete block, commercial vernacular Virginia Mountain Housing (originally Epperly Pontiac)
- 18 936 Cambria Street 1990, 1-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, steel-frame with aluminum siding, modern garage (NC)
- 19 938 Cambria Street 1990, 1-story, 9-bay, gable-roofed, steel-frame with aluminum siding, modern IPP Plumbing Supply (NC)
- 20 940 Cambria Street 1970s, 1-story, 2-bay, gable-roofed, frame and vertical wood siding, modern Vaughn Brothers Construction (NC)
- 8 1025 Cambria Street ca. 1900, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame and bricktex, Victorian commercial Palmer's Store
- 12 1030 Cambria Street 1928, 1-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed, brick, Gothic Revival Cambria Baptist Church

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- 16 1035 Cambria Street  
1960s, 1-story, 6-bay, gable-roofed, concrete-block, modern Linkous Plumbing and Heating/R.P.M. Motorcycle Accessories (NC)
- 11 1050 Cambria Street  
late-19th-century, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame dwelling
- 15 1070 Cambria Street  
1920s, 1-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, brick, Bungalow-style dwelling
- 14 1075 Cambria Street  
ca. 1920, 1 1/2-story, 2-bay, hip-roofed, frame, Craftsman-style dwelling; garage - contributing
- 10 1085 Cambria Street  
early-20th-century, 1 1/2-story, 2-bay, hip-roofed, frame, Craftsman-style dwelling; garage - (NC)
- DEPOT STREET
- 40 515 Depot Street  
ca. 1900, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian T-plan dwelling
- 39 525 Depot Street  
ca. 1900, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian T-plan dwelling
- 38 535 Depot Street  
ca. 1900, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian vernacular dwelling
- 37 555 Depot Street  
ca. 1900, 1 1/2-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian Cottage
- 36 565 Depot Street  
ca. 1900, 1 1/2-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian Cottage
- 35 575 Depot Street  
1990, 1-story, 7-bay, gable-roofed, steel-frame with aluminum siding, modern garage (NC)

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- 34 591 Depot Street 1950s, 1-story, 5-bay, gable-roofed, concrete-block, modern garage with concrete-block addition (NC)
- 33 594 Depot Street 1970s, 1-story, 5-bay, flat-roofed, modern Electrical Supply (NC)
- 4 605 Depot Street ca. 1900, 2-story, 8-bay, flat-roofed, brick, Victorian commercial Home Maintenance Service (originally Dew Drop Inn)
- 41 615 Depot Street 1950s, 1-story, 5-bay, flat-roofed, concrete-block, modern Cambria Service Center (NC)
- 42 635 Depot Street 1970s, 1-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed, frame, modern dwelling (NC)
- 2 645 Depot Street early-20th-century, 2-story, gable-roofed, frame and brick Sidney's Trading Post
- 43 647 Depot Street ca. 1920, 1-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed frame, vernacular dwelling
- 3 655 Depot Street late-19th-century, 2-story, 3-bay, hip-roofed, frame, vernacular dwelling
- 32 Depot Street 1906, 1-story, 11-bay, hip-roofed, brick, Cambria Railroad Depot

MONTGOMERY STREET

- 154-12 470 Montgomery Street 1906, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame, modified Queen Anne-style John Turner Lee House; garage - contributing  
also 154-48-44.
- 28 500 Montgomery Street 1960s, 1-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed, brick, Modern dwelling (NC)

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- 29 515 Montgomery Street 1890s, 1-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian T-plan dwelling
- 27 520 Montgomery Street 1960s, 1-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed, frame and brick, Modern dwelling (NC)
- 30 525 Montgomery Street late-19th-century, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian I House
- 9 540 Montgomery Street late-19th-century, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame Victorian I House
- 31 545 Montgomery Street 1920s, 1 1/2-story, 5-bay, gable-roofed, frame vernacular dwelling
- 26 560 Montgomery Street 1890s, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, frame, Victorian vernacular dwelling
- 7 565 Montgomery Street mid-to-late-19th-century, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed, brick, vernacular I house
- 13 615 Montgomery Street early-20th-century, 2-story, 4-bay, flat-roofed, brick N.R.C. Management Services (formerly Cambria Hardware Company)
- 21 630 Montgomery Street ca. 1900, 2-story, 3-bay, hip-roofed, frame, Victorian vernacular dwelling; garage - contributing
- 22 645 Montgomery Street 1950s, 1-story, 5-bay, flat-roofed, concrete-block, modern Christiansburg Senior Center (NC)
- 24 655 Montgomery Street 1940s, 1-story, 1-bay, shed-roofed, frame, commercial garage (NC)

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25 665 Montgomery Street ca. 1900, 2-story, 3-bay, gable-roofed,  
frame, Victorian T-plan dwelling;  
garage - contributing

25 680 Montgomery Street ca. 1900, 1-story, 2-bay, gable-roofed,  
frame, vernacular T-plan dwelling

154-49  
154-48-45 →  
PLUM STREET

1030 Plum Street mid-19th-century, 1 1/2-story, 3-bay,  
gable-roofed, log and weatherboarded,  
vernacular Charlie Morgan House

(also 154-48-45)

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The railroad reached Christiansburg in 1854, and a permanent station was built in 1857 where the main north-south road, the Jacksonville and Christiansburg Turnpike (completed in circa 1855), crossed the tracks. There it joined the road to Blacksburg and the Yellow Sulphur Turnpike (completed in 1854 to give access to the resort by rail). The site of the depot and the right of way for the tracks were given by prominent landowner and county clerk Rice D. Montague in return for the significant profits he would realize as land around the depot increased in value (Deed Book 5, p. 81).

The next year in 1855, Montague sold a parcel just south of the tracks and on the Jacksonville and Christiansburg Turnpike to Daniel A. Brown. In 1869 Brown bought an adjacent lot from Montague and mention was made in the deed of Brown's Store and Montague's Store. In this and a contemporary deed to the railroad company, Montague reserved a rectangular space to "forever remain open for the public accommodation in connection with their interactions and dealings with the Railroad." This is the first time that the square is mentioned and, not incidentally, the year before a new depot was built to replace the first one, which had burned to the ground by the Union Army several years before. The new depot (154-48-1) was a dramatic addition to the village, representing to the community the latest in architectural fashion and a dramatic towered silhouette. Brown continued to buy land on the north side of the tracks as well. His brick house (154-48-7), built before 1880, is one of the district's oldest structures. When Brown died in 1900 his land south of the tracks was divided into lots. His store stood on lot number one, located on the west side of the square.

The village meanwhile had been known as Bangs from circa 1873 to 1885, when its name was altered to Ronald in honor of a local Confederate hero. In 1892 it took the name Cambria from the underlying geological stratum and, in 1906, having experienced considerable growth, was officially incorporated under that name.

A group of businessmen, principally C. W. Surface, of Riner, and G. W. Mitchell, of Christiansburg, purchased the Brown lots in 1908 and removed the Brown Store. The Surface Grocery Company, with Surface and Mitchell among the officers, built a large brick-clad wholesale grocery building on the lot nearest the tracks in the same year, the building known today as the

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Surface-Lee Block (154-48-5). The Bank of Cambria, founded at the same time as the grocery company and with a similar roster of officers, built a matching building on the remaining lots to the south, forming a large coherent block. It housed the bank, the Cambria post office, and a general store. The store was located on lot number one, the original site of the Brown Store (Ansell p. 19), and was apparently operated by the Brown daughters who lived upstairs. A club or lodge meeting room was located over the bank and post office, and a pool room behind it (Sanborn Insurance map, 1913).

Several hotels, stores, and businesses had been built north of the tracks and west of the Surface-Lee Block. The Economy Lumber Company, the Phoenix Furniture Factory, the Rigby and Son Flour Mill, as well as many smaller businesses and factories, flourished near the depot by the time the 1913 Sanborn Insurance map was prepared. A funeral home, blacksmith shop, Dixon's Jewelry, Sam Moses Dry Goods, and the Cambria Hotel were lined up along the west side of Cambria Street north of the tracks (Ansell p. 12). A store had been built at the intersection of Montgomery and Cambria streets (the Palmer Store, 154-48-8) some years before, and a hotel (no longer standing) was directly across the tracks from the depot.

The east half of the Dew Drop Inn (154-48-4) was built at approximately the same time as the Surface-Lee Building and, by 1913 the west half had been built. The second floor of the east section housed Christiansburg and Montgomery County's only hospital, Dr. Showalter's Altamont Hospital, above Hickok's Drug Store. The buildings were constructed during Cambria's boom years before 1930. The Epperly Pontiac Company built a large two-story rock-faced concrete block building (154-48-13) and the Cambria Hardware Company built its second building (154-48-6) of the same material, both on the east side of Cambria Street, north of the railroad tracks.

The Christiansburg Depot was relegated to use as a freight station in 1906, when a new depot (154-48-32) was built a short distance to the east. The value of Cambria as an outlet to the farmers of Floyd County, to the south, is shown by the acquisition of the Surface Grocery Company Building in 1918 by the Farmers Supply Company of Floyd for use as a farm supply store. J. T. Lee arrived in Cambria at about the same time from the town of Floyd, possibly in connection with the Farmer's

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Supply purchase. He managed a store in the original location of the Brown Store. In 1931 he bought the farm supply business. Jack Mitchell, a nephew of G. W. Mitchell, opened a feed store in the general store building in 1938 (Barnard p. 35).

A fire leveled the bank, post office, and store building next to Lee's Store in 1947. These were rebuilt on a smaller scale, but the Surface-Lee Building remains largely as it was after its construction in 1908. Both it and the 1869 depot have received substantial rehabilitation since their purchase by members of the Cambria Development Corporation, who hope to restore the vitality of the district.

Although a number of the buildings that stood to the north of the railroad before 1940 have been gone for many decades, and the depot square suffered a serious fire in 1947, the architectural fabric of Cambria comprises one of the densest commercial and residential neighborhoods in the region. The district's structures represent architectural changes throughout the period of significance, from the log and frame structures of the mid-nineteenth century through the concrete-block commercial structures of the 1930s. It shows the change of the county's most vital transportation and industrial center and many of its various ancillary structures. Restoration and rehabilitation efforts now under way are striving to follow the Secretary's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects in every respect, in order to enhance the district's historical assets. Buildings built outside of the period of significance account for many of the noncontributing structures. In a number of cases they take their form from earlier building types and thus echo the form and materials of contributing buildings.

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100 feet north to point F on the south side of the Norfolk-Southern Railroad tracks, thence 500 feet west along the north side of the tracks to point G, thence north 425 feet along the east property line of a house on the south side of Montgomery Street to point H on the south side of Montgomery Street, thence west 150 feet to point I 25 feet east of the house at 154-49, thence north 175 feet to point J, thence 375 feet west following the rear property line of the lots on the north side of Montgomery Street, to point K, thence 300 feet north following the rear lot lines on the east side of Cambria Street to point L, thence 350 feet west along the south side of Church Street to point M on the rear lot lines of the properties on the west side of Cambria Street, thence south following those lines to point N on the rear lot lines of the lots on the north side of Montgomery Street, thence 575 feet to point O on the east side of Acorn Street, thence south 150 feet to point P on the north side of Montgomery Street, thence 225 feet east to point Q, thence 175 feet to point R on the rear lot lines of the properties on the south side of Montgomery Street, thence east 500 feet to point S on the east lot line of site 154-48-7, thence north 125 feet to point T on the north side of Montgomery Street, thence east 125 feet to point U on the east side of Cambria Street, thence south 450 feet to point V on the southside of the Norfolk-Southern Railroad tracks, thence west 150 feet to point W on an alley, thence 200 feet south following the west side of the alley to point X on the south side of Depot Street, thence 800 feet west to the point of origin following the south side of Depot Street.



# CAMBRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT

Stafford County, Virginia

SHAM, ARCADE

## KEY MAP

