



**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Abingdon's Main Street presents a fine collection of nineteenth-century domestic and commercial buildings, the importance of which is enhanced by the town's location in Southwest Virginia, an area that remained frontier long after the town's founding in 1778. The eight-and-one-half block section of Main Street which constitutes the preservation zone covers two ridges with rather steep slopes between. Lined along these hilly streets are fine Federalist and nineteenth-century revival designs. Among the more notable structures are the Doctor Pitts House, 247 East Main Street, a stuccoed brick, two-story building with stepped gable ends which adds formality to the steep grade east of the court house, and, far to the west, the General Francis Preston House, the center block of the present Martha Washington Inn. Located in between are the stuccoed Tavern, which dates from the late-eighteenth century; the Barter Theatre; the Virginia House, an early-nineteenth century brick hotel; the fine Victorian bank, and many others.

The variety of functions as well as design is important, and while the majority of the buildings are dwellings, several churches, offices and stores, as well as the county court house, demonstrate the various elements that appeared on a main thoroughfare in the nineteenth century. Although some of the overall effect has been marred by twentieth-century intrusions, the historic area of Abingdon still survives and retains the essential elements of its earlier development.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

**PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

**SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)**

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal          | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric         | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic            | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art      | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater   | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation        |   |   |  |

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Originally called Wolf Hills and later named Black's Fort in honor of the defence erected to protect the settlers from Indian attacks, the town of Abingdon was officially established in 1778 when 120 acres were given for that purpose. By 1793 the town had prospered and become the clearing house for all mail sent to Southwest Virginia. It had also served as the county seat of Washington County when the first court met there in 1777. By 1845 a visitor described Abingdon as a "town ... on an elevation; it is substantially built, with many brick buildings; the principal street is macadamized, and the town is surrounded by a fertile, flourishing, and thickly-settled agricultural county. It contains several large mercantile stores, 2 newspaper printing offices, 1 Presbyterian, 2 Methodist, and 1 Swedenborgian church, a variety of mechanical and manufacturing establishments, and a population of over 1000." The town suffered partial destruction during the War between the States when Union troops under General George Stoneman burned various storehouses of Confederate supplies on 14 December 1864. The next day a Yankee straggler set fire to much of the remaining part of Main Street.

It should be remembered that Abingdon was the home of John Campbell, Secretary of the Treasury (1829-39); General Joseph E. Johnston, Confederate general, and three Virginia governors, Wyndham Robertson (1836-37), David Campbell (1837-41) and John Buchanan Floyd (1849-52).

The area that is being designated a preservation zone is a particularly fine example of the development of a "main street" in a rural Virginia town during the nineteenth century. Buildings of particular note include the Abingdon Bank and Cashier's House, the Washington County Court House, the Virginia House, the King House, the White House, the Doctor Pitts House and the Martha Washington Inn which was built in the 1830's by General Francis Preston. Of especial note is the Barter Theatre of Virginia, which has won international acclaim since its establishment in 1933 by Robert Porterfield.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



