



## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Christiansburg Depot (ca. 1869) occupies a prominent site at the railroad crossing in Cambria, a community now within the town limits of Christiansburg, Virginia. Since the construction of a new passenger station nearby in 1906, the building has been known locally as the Cambria Freight Station. The frame Italianate structure is sheathed in board and batten siding and is composed of a two-story tower with flanking one-story pavilions on the west end and a long, one-story freight section extending eastward from the rear. The nomination consists of one contributing building.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The Christiansburg depot of ca. 1869 is sited along the south side of the Norfolk Southern tracks on the east side of Cambria Street nearly a mile from the center of Christiansburg. Where Cambria Street ends at Depot Street the intersection widens into a rough square, and the west, or principal facade of the depot is oriented toward this open space, around which are sited the buildings which once formed the commercial hub of Cambria. These two and three-story buildings, while few in number, effectively provide a dense barrier on the west and south of the square and an urban background for the station which clearly is the generator and point of reference for the whole community.

The main block can be described as a wood-framed, one-story, U-shaped structure with a shallow hipped roof and deeply overhanging eaves, a portion of the center section of which rises to form a tower-like second-story room, covered with an even shallower hipped roof. It gives the effect of symmetrical pavilions flanking a tower. A long gabled freight wing stretches to the east. The entire building was probably built in one campaign, but the freight wing may have been added explaining several structural inconsistencies described below. It is sheathed in board and batten siding, topped on the main block with a strip of scalloped trim. The eaves of the tower and side wings of the main block are supported by a modillioned box cornice above a frieze and punctuated by the lengthening of pairs of modillions at regular intervals to form double brackets. The rafter ends protrude over the cornice to push the roof out to double the depth of the cornice.

All of the building's windows have segmentally arched heads, while most of the exterior doors are flat headed, with several exceptions. Most windows are equipped with six-over-six, double-hung sash. The central entry in the west front is flanked by a pair of narrow, four-over-four, double-hung sash windows, as is the window in the west front of the tower room above, although these windows are grouped closer to the taller center window in a tripartite arrangement. An entry to the south wing is located at a right angle to the central door, and evidence in the framing and trim indicates that the window opposite was previously a door opening into the north wing. While photographs taken in the

( See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1868-1870 **Builder/Architect** Unknown (Virginia & Tennessee RR engineers)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The ca. 1869 Christiansburg Depot is one of only two known surviving railroad structures erected during the Reconstruction period in Southwest Virginia. The building is significant not only because it is one of the oldest depots in the state, but also because it embodies elements of high style architecture made popular by the pattern books of the period. Few stations of its size remain which are as imposing. The board and batten, Italianate structure with its central tower, overhanging eaves, and deep, bracketed frieze is a prominent commercial landmark in the region as well as being the most impressive structure in the community of Cambria.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1851, the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad chose a site nearly a mile north of the courthouse square on the north side of Zion Hill for the location of the Christiansburg depot. Secondary sources state that Christiansburg's citizens opposed the location of a train yard within the town's boundaries because of the noise, smoke and danger associated with steam locomotives.<sup>1</sup> An equally plausible explanation for the unusual separation of town and depot is that negotiation of the very steep grades required in climbing the mountain from Salem, the next major stop to the east, dictated the path of the tracks. The railroad company, chartered in 1849 as the Lynchburg & Tennessee, built the first railroad to cross the Blue Ridge mountains into Southwest Virginia, enabling farmers and manufacturers to reach desirable markets in the rest of Virginia and beyond.

The railroad reached Christiansburg in 1854, and a permanent station building was constructed in 1857 at the north end of Christiansburg's Main Street. Union troops burned the depot complex, including commissary buildings and a recreation hall, in the spring of 1864<sup>2</sup> as a part of the destruction of tracks and related buildings between Richmond and Bristol, the principal supply link between Richmond and the deep South.

The new depot at Christiansburg was constructed by the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad between 1868 and 1870 as part of the rebuilding of the railroad under the leadership of its new president, General William Mahone,<sup>3</sup> a formidable power in state politics during the next several decades. The new site, 400 yards to the west of the original, may have been chosen as a response to the growth of a village where present-day Cambria

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #7)

- Allen, Emily. "A History of Cambria," Christiansburg News-Messenger, Bicentennial Issue, July 22, 1976, pp. 1-2.
- Biddle, Gordon. Victorian Stations, Railway Stations in England and Wales 1830-1923. Newton Abbot, Devon, England: David and Charles, 1973.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.22 acres

Quadrangle name Blacksburg, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7	5	5	2	9	2	0	4	1	1	0	5	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### JUSTIFICATION:

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nomination consists of 0.22 acres between the railroad tracks and Depot Street containing the Christiansburg Depot and the land immediately surrounding it. The land is leased by the Norfolk Southern Corporation to the owners of the property. (see continuation sheet #8)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gibson Worsham/Historical Architect; Charlotte Worsham/Preservation Consultant

organization Gibson Worsham, Architect date January 1985

street & number Yellow Sulphur Springs, Route 2 telephone (703) 552-1139

city or town Christiansburg state Virginia

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



H. Bryan Mitchell, Director  
title Division of Historic Landmarks

date November 4, 1985

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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CHRISTIANSBURG DEPOT, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA

Continuation sheet #1

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early nineteen-seventies show a window in the position of the center entry, the framing and flat headed exterior trim suggest an original door in this location. Early layers of paint revealed the word "Women" painted on the adjacent door to the south wing, indicating the probable early use of that side of the building as a women's waiting room. A single window is centered in the west wall of each wing.

The north and south elevations of the main block are each punctuated by four windows: on the north the center pair are narrow, and closely flank a wide door with an arched transom, the original appearance of which is visible in the only historic photograph of the building. The photograph shows posts supporting some sort of canopy along the tracks. On the south wall the center pair of windows are grouped closely together. A window looks east along the north side of the freight wing. Chimneys (rebuilt in this century above the roof) rise inside the north and south walls of the tower room from fireboxes in the wings directly below. A pair of high square windows pierce the east wall of the tower room. While the present roofing is of standing seam metal, surviving fragments intact beneath indicate that a former roofing material was slate.

The main block is framed of heavy braced posts with spiked and bolted joints, supplemented by intermediate studs, nailed in place. A pair of shallow timber trusses span each of the side wings from north to south, resting on the two intermediate posts in the north and south wings, and carry joists laid in an east-west direction. The roof is carried on common rafters.

The freight wing is similarly framed, with posts at sixteen foot intervals. All framing members are circular sawn and the wall cladding carried, as in the main block, on a system of horizontal timbers nailed between the posts and subsidiary studs. Modified Warren trusses above each post span the unencumbered space below. Common rafters are carried on principal purlins which span between the trusses. The first of these trusses is located immediately to the east of the tower room. One end of the truss located over the center rear of the south waiting room is supported by being bolted to the subsidiary truss spanning the wing at that spot. On the north side, the corresponding subsidiary truss in that location having failed or never having been completely constructed, the larger truss and the bottom chord of the dismantled subsidiary truss are carried on a boxed post in the room below.

On the interior the walls are clad with horizontal beaded tongue-and-groove boards, as is the thirteen foot ceiling, above a wainscot of wider beaded vertical boards. Surviving plaster in areas concealed for many years in the center section suggests that the entire building was plastered above the wainscot at one time. The window and door trim at the early openings in the north wing are surrounded by a heavy molded architrave.

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The windows in the south wing are distinguished by bull's eye corner blocks and fluted trim.

The north wing was taken up by one large room overlooking the tracks and apparently functioned as the main waiting room. The south room was apparently divided into two rooms of unequal size at some time after construction, through the erection of a stud partition clad with a differing tongue-and-groove boarding, at a point about two-thirds of the way back from the west wall. Doors leading from the north and south wings into the central section, and a door leading from the north wing to the freight section indicate by their size, trim and form that they are likely added.

The central section consists of two rooms. The west room, which serves at present as an entry hall behind the center entry in the west wall, is divided from the smaller room to the east by a stud partition, apparently original, which carries lath and plaster on its western face above the present low wood clad ceiling, as does the interior of the wall above the exterior door. The walls and ceiling of both rooms have been sheathed with a wide beaded tongue-and-groove board. The west room communicates with the north waiting room through a small window, suggesting a ticket sales function. The opposite door to the north waiting room, which physical evidence suggests is not original, may indicate the previous existence of a similar window in that location.

Against the south wall in the eastern room in the central section is located the steep flight of winders that provides access to the second-floor room. The stair and the small closet under it show evidence of lath and plaster. Across from the stair are located two clearly added toilet cubicles, one of which until recently opened only into the west room. Spanning the width of the room at the eastern end is the framed opening of a skylight shaft, lined with lath and plaster, which rises to a point near the ridge of the roof of the freight wing just behind the tower room. The skylight is no longer in existence.

The early functional layout is suggested by the foregoing analysis. The central section functioned as the official area, entered by a central door on the west and through a door in the east wall from the freight room. The west room incorporated ticket sales, while the east room and the tower room were apparently offices. Passengers entered their respective waiting rooms and purchased tickets through small grilles in the wall of the central section. Passengers in the trackside waiting room exited through the wide door facing the track, while those in the more private south waiting room reached the train through the single exterior door.

It is at the junction of the main block and the freight room that the chief alterations to

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which the building has been subject become apparent. There is a misalignment in every part of the building, the eaves, roof, floor, sills, amounting to 25". The gable projecting from the east wall of the tower room has been cut off at the freight room wall and the ends of its purlins left unsupported. The discovery of the remains of brick piers in the ground approximately the same distance below the sills confirms that the freight wing has been raised off its original foundation and set on creosoted pilings. These alterations were possibly carried out when the depot was converted to a freight station in 1906, and/or in connection with a raising of the track bed. In response to the raising of the freight section, instead of correspondingly raising the main block, the railroad chose to cut off approximately the same amount from the bottom of its frame. Workmen then installed a new floor system at the higher level, thus maintaining the differences in floor levels between the two sections while altering the exterior appearance. This resulted in significant interior changes, causing the ceiling (now thirteen feet), wainscot, fireplaces, lintels and sill heights to be reduced. Doors were raised into the space formerly occupied by transoms. The change is particularly apparent in the low height of the ticket window between the south waiting room and the central section, which is located approximately two feet above the floor. The difference in door height is apparent by comparing the present north waiting room door with the same door in the historic photograph. In addition, the east window in the north waiting room was raised in order to clear the newly heightened loading dock outside. Some anomalies in wainscot height in the two wings have yet to be resolved. Evidence in the center section supports the probability that the entire building was plastered, and, if so, it may have been removed as a result of this work.

The station was altered little during the balance of the railroad's occupation, but in 1965 upon its purchase by the Cash Lumber Company, the interior of the main block was entirely sheathed in gypsum board. A loading dock was installed at the southwest loading door, resulting in the alteration of that door.

8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

Street crosses the tracks. Mahone had purchased sufficient shares of stock in the company to ensure his election with the object of consolidating the unwilling Virginia & Tennessee with several other railroads he controlled to form a company which would link Norfolk with the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Businessmen in Richmond and Lynchburg opposed the move fearing a loss of commerce to their cities, but in 1870 the legislature overwhelmingly approved Mahone's plan and the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad came into being. The A.M.&O. went into receivership in 1876, as a result of the depression following the panic of 1873. Purchasers of the railroad in

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8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

1881 renamed it the Norfolk and Western Railroad.<sup>4</sup>

In 1873 a post office was opened near the depot and the community which had grown up around the railroad was named Bangs. The station continued to be identified as Christiansburg Depot, however. In addition to the Christiansburg market, the depot served as a transfer point for the resort at Yellow Sulphur Springs, a popular watering place six miles to the northwest which had relied on the stages before the advent of the railroad. Passengers bound for the springs boarded coaches which met each train and were carried to the hotel over the Yellow Sulphur Turnpike (now Cambria Street), a road constructed in 1857 in direct response to the railroad's arrival.<sup>5</sup> The railroad made possible the development of another nearby resort, the Montgomery White Sulphur Springs, which was served by the station at Montgomery.

In July of 1882 a duel was fought near the depot, with no injury to either party, over political issues, by J. Stuart Crockett of Wytheville, and John S. Wise of Richmond. Both combatants arrived by rail with their seconds and physicians, having settled on Bangs by previous agreement, and walked to a site a short distance up the Yellow Sulphur Road. The duel was Wise's last, and led to his much publicized decision to fight no more duels, an example which was instrumental in ending the practice in Virginia.<sup>6</sup>

In 1885 the community was renamed Ronald in honor of local Confederate hero, Charles A. Ronald, but in 1892 took the name Cambria from the geological stratum underlying the adjacent ridge. In 1906 the town, having experienced considerable growth, was officially incorporated as Cambria. In the same year a new passenger station was constructed at the site of the original station, 400 yards to the east, and the old depot was converted for use solely as a freight station. It was perhaps at this time that the station was renovated, resulting in the raising of the freight section approximately two feet, an action that may have been in response to a raising of the track bed. It was possibly at the same time that the main block was altered by the raising of its floor level and the corresponding removal of a section of its lower walls, with the resulting interior changes.

The survival of the station would seem to be indicative of the volume of freight handled at Christiansburg. Pre-1900 depots in larger centers such as Roanoke and Petersburg were altered to freight usage when new passenger facilities were constructed. The depot continued to be used as a freight station until the early 1960's when it was sold to a lumber company which further altered it by covering all interior surfaces with gypsum board. A civil engineer employed by the Norfolk & Western in the 1940's recalled the

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8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

use of the north waiting room as the general freight office, heated by a large stove in the center of the floor, and the south wing as the offices of the engineering department for the local section of the railway.<sup>7</sup> The railway, now Norfolk Southern, continues to own the land on which the depot stands.

The station is typical of the intermediate grade of depot erected by the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad and other companies controlled by Mahone in the immediate post-war period. Few survive, having fallen victim to fiscal and modernization policies in the railroad industry. The station at Rural Retreat, a stop on the same line to the south, is the only other depot built by the Virginia & Tennessee known to survive. It is very similar in detail, incorporating nearly identical decorative features and fenestration patterns, but has two squat hipped roof towers, and is considerably different, and smaller, in plan and elevation. Two other very similar stations survive, at Windsor and Ivor on the Norfolk & Western line. The nearly identical buildings were built by the Norfolk & Petersburg Railroad in 1866, one of the Mahone group. While smaller and without towers, they and the now vanished Suffolk station which had a tower, share with the Christiansburg depot similar but not identical stylistic features. These include board and batten siding, modillioned cornice and a shallow hipped roof, as well as the same configuration of a pair of waiting rooms and an office grouped in a main block, with a freight wing extending from the rear along the track.

All of these depots share sources with larger prototypical stations designed in what was known as "the railroad style", the Italianate. These include the New Haven station by Henry Austin of 1848-49, which was equipped with towers, and a station design in Henry Holly's Country Seats of 1865, the first American pattern book to include a railroad depot among its plates. Holly stated that the Italian style was "appropriate for stations in rural settings, where they set a good example and result in improving the taste of the community."<sup>8</sup> In addition, the style was easily adapted to a variety of building types and materials and was inexpensive and efficient to construct and maintain.

Towers were features early associated with depots, where they were often employed to house a bell and a clock to signal train arrivals and departures. The tower at Christiansburg also suggests domestic villa designs of the Italian style as promulgated by Andrew Jackson Downing and others in the 1840's and 1850's, as does the use of board and batten siding, which later became a trademark of minor railroad architecture. In the second half of the nineteenth century railroad architecture in both Europe and the United States was characterized by the use of standardized plans for buildings and building components, and in many cases the identity of a company could be recognized by its stations just as in the case of the color of its

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8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

locomotives and cars.

The railroad's engineering department undoubtedly designed and supervised the building of all company property, although the records which might demonstrate how the design process operated do not survive. The engineers' training and background would suggest that the buildings they built would be modern, stylish, and efficient. The intent of the railroad company in erecting the station was to create an impressive landmark advertising their services, but also, in so doing, to raise the standards of architecture in the rural landscape, as suggested by popular architectural theorists like Downing and Holly, and to stimulate further economic and cultural development. The depot remains the most impressive and architecturally sophisticated in Cambria.

The recently completed restoration will permit the depot to be successfully reused with a minimum of alteration to its fabric. The building will be the focal point for a proposed revitalization of the Cambria town center.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael S. Dawson, "Old Cambria Station, 1868 through 1979," May 27, 1979, paper prepared for Dr. George G. Shackelford, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, n.p.

<sup>2</sup>C.W. Crush, ed., The Montgomery County Story 1776-1956 (Christiansburg, Virginia: 1957), n.p.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Virginus Dabney, Richmond, The Story of a City (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1976), pp. 225-26.

<sup>5</sup>Gibson Worsham, "A Place so Lofty and Secluded, Yellow Sulphur Springs, Montgomery County, Virginia," Virginia Cavalcade, Summer 1977, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup>Curtis Carroll Davis, "The Small Bang at Bangs," Virginia Cavalcade, Autumn 1961, p. 7. Son of Gov. Henry A. Wise, John S. Wise was a Republican congressman and noted duelist.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Daniel Jennings, Former civil engineer with the Norfolk & Western Railway, employed at the Christiansburg Depot, 1940-1947.

<sup>8</sup>Carroll L.V. Meeks, The Railroad Station, an Architectural History (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 75.

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4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

- (2) Norfolk Southern Corporation  
Real Estate Management Department  
136 Marietta Street SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bixby, Arthur. Director, Roanoke Transportation Museum. Roanoke, Virginia. Interview.

Crush, C.W., ed. The Montgomery County Story 1776-1956. Christiansburg: n.p., 1957.

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Meeks, Carroll L.V. The Railroad Station, an Architectural History. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1956.

(See Continuation Sheet #8)

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Montgomery Deed Books S, p. 81; V, p. 1; 48, p. 276.

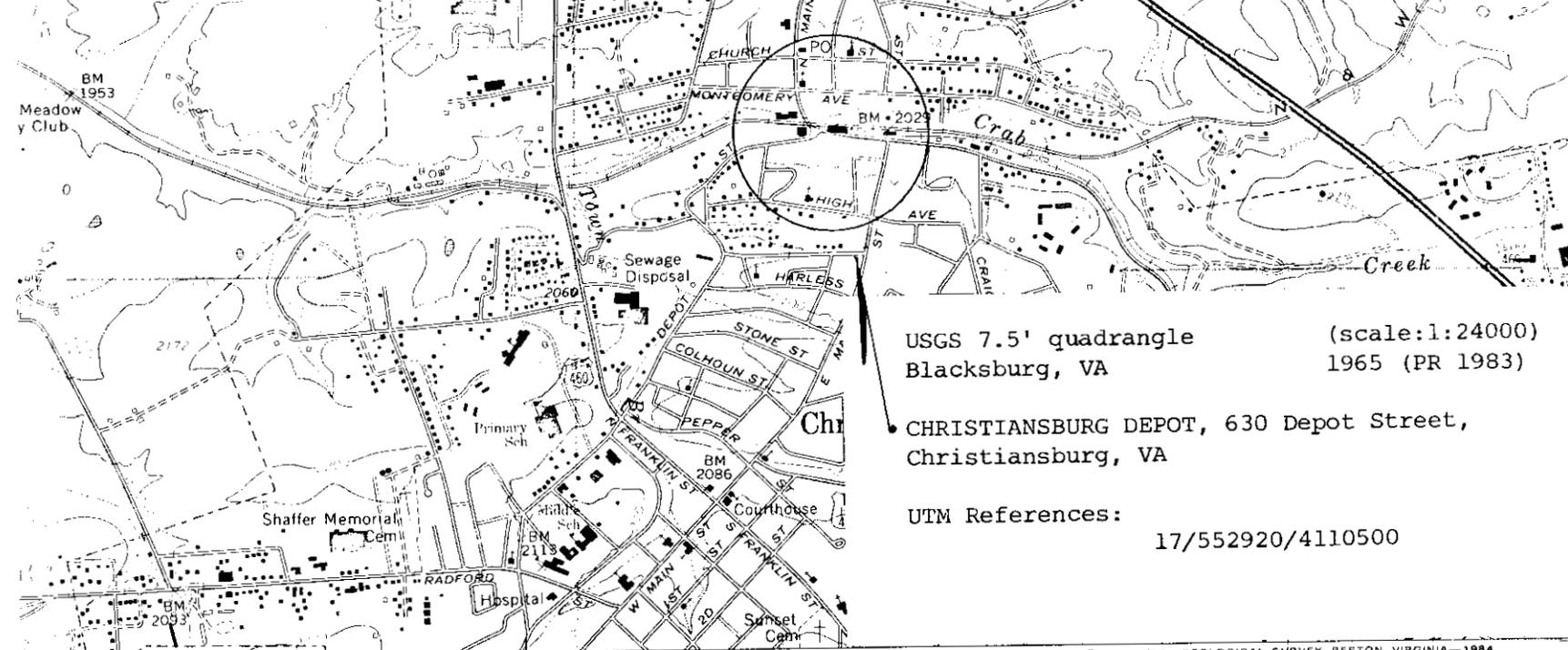
"Virginia and West Virginia Demurrage- Complete Record of Cars from Arrival to Release, Inclusive." Unbound daybook, Christiansburg Depot, January to September 1918 in possession of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Dorsett.

Williams, Andrew E. "A History of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad." Paper prepared for Dr. George G. Shackelford, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, Virginia, 1963.

Worsham, Gibson. "A Place so Lofty and Secluded, Yellow Sulphur Springs, Montgomery County, Virginia." Virginia Cavalcade. Summer 1977, pp. 30-41.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

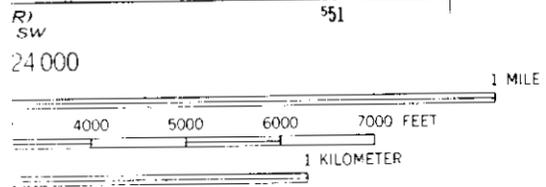
Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at a point on the S side of Norfolk Southern railroad tracks on the E side of Cambria St. and approx. 500' W of intersection of E. Main St. with VA Rt. 111; thence extending approx. 75' N to a point on S side of tracks; thence approx. 200' W; thence approx. 75'S; thence approx. 200' E to point of origin.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
 Blacksburg, VA 1965 (PR 1983)

CHRISTIANSBURG DEPOT, 630 Depot Street,  
 Christiansburg, VA

UTM References:  
 17/552920/4110500



INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1984  
 554 555000m E 80° 22' 30"

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
 Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———  
 Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt - - - - -  
 Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route

(PILOT)  
 4958 III SE



AL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 URCES, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903  
 AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

BLACKSBURG, VA

37080-B4-TF-024

1965  
 PHOTOREVISED 1983  
 DMA 4958 III NW—SERIES V834

D. T. G. 1980  
 806 916 811  
 CALZAL VA. 22118  
 198-210-9113