

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Depot Square Historic District

Other names/site number: DHR #140-0038

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: Wall Street South, Depot Square SW, Front Street SW, Grand Street SW

City or town: Abingdon State: VA County: Washington

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: Rail-Related: Train Depot

DOMESTIC: hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

VACANT/NOT IN USE

WORK IN PROGRESS

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Tudor Revival

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

NO STYLE

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD; BRICK; STONE; METAL;
CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Depot Square Historic District is located one block south of West Main Street and is situated around the former Norfolk & Western Railway tracks, now under ownership of Norfolk Southern Railway. The historic district extends along Front Street, Depot Square, and Wall Street. Seven buildings and one structure comprise the Depot Square Historic District. All eight resources are contributing to the district. This includes the two Norfolk & Western Railway depots, five associated buildings, and one pedestrian bridge. Three residential buildings are found on Front Street, the two train depots are situated on Depot Square and two commercial buildings are located on Wall Street. The eighth resource is a pedestrian bridge that crosses the railway at the eastern border of the district. The buildings located within the historic district possess characteristics of building styles that originated and proliferated during the Industrial Era including Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, and Commercial. Buildings in the Depot Square Historic District are in good to fair condition, but the district as a whole retains a high degree of historic integrity and serves as a tangible reminder of the significance of the Railroad Era within the town of Abingdon.

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Narrative Description

The Depot Square Historic District is located one block south of West Main Street and is situated around the Norfolk & Western Railway. The historic district extends along Front Street, Depot Square, and Wall Street. Seven buildings and one structure comprise the Depot Square Historic District. This includes the two Norfolk & Western Railway depots, five associated buildings, and one pedestrian bridge. Three residential buildings are found on Front Street, the two train depots are on Depot Square, and two commercial buildings are located on Wall Street. The pedestrian bridge that crosses the railway is located at the eastern border of the district.

The architectural characteristics of the Depot Square Historic District are reflective of building styles that originated and were popularized during the Industrial Era including Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, and Commercial. Most of the buildings within the district do not represent one specific style. Instead they possess characteristics of one or more of these styles, therefore creating more vernacular examples of 19th and 20th century Industrial Era architecture. The two train depots located on Depot Square, which serve as the central focal point of the historic district, are the only high-style buildings in the district. The c. 1910 passenger depot is a one-story, massed-plan Tudor Revival style building featuring a steeply pitched slate roof and a half-timbered, projecting center gable. The older freight depot is a one-and-a-half-story, linear-planned Italianate style building featuring distinctive segmental arched windows and doors. The remaining two buildings are located on Wall Street, northeast of the railway. The oldest is a three-story commercial building with Italianate style details including segmental arched windows and exterior pilasters, and the younger is a one-story Commercial style building with basketweave brickwork along the façade roofline. The three domestic buildings located along Front Street on the southern side of the railway are the oldest members of the district, as evident from their mid-19th century architectural features. These buildings are more vernacular in character. They are all two-story dwellings with simple plans. They possess various details from mid-19th century architectural styles, such as a Gothic Revival roof with wide overhanging eaves, a Greek Revival style entranceway, or Queen Anne style porch details. The early-20th century pedestrian bridge is located along the eastern border of the district and connects the resources on the north side of the tracks with those on the south side. The bridge is constructed of steel I-beams that rest on concrete piers and features wooden deck planks and steel railings with a cross-hatched design.

The primary building materials used in the Depot Square Historic District are wood and brick. Due to their location in a commercial section of Abingdon and their more utilitarian purpose, the resources of the Depot Square Historic District have suffered a higher degree of use and in some cases more alterations than buildings in other areas of town. This has resulted in the overall fair architectural condition of the district. Resources within the Depot Square Historic District, while distinct, share characteristics which are indicative of 19th and early-20th century architecture including their simple plans and designs and symmetrical façades.

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Passenger Depot

1910

Contributing Building

The Passenger Depot, which was designed and built by the Norfolk & Western Railway, was completed in 1910. This one-story, brick, Tudor Revival style building is currently in good condition. The depot features a massed plan and measures roughly 27 feet by 110 feet. The exterior brick is laid in a stretcher (running) bond and the building features a center chimney, and a steeply pitched, hipped slate roof with large, wood and granite triangular knee braces. An original, hipped dormer with wood vents pierces the roof on both the north and south elevations. A half-timbered projecting center gable flanked on either side by a skylight is located on both the north façade and south elevations. Fenestration on the depot is all original, wood topped with thick wood lintels and featuring wood sills. Windows include sets of three, nine-over-one, single-hung windows; single or double, twelve-light, casement windows; and single, twenty-over-one, double-hung windows. Doors on the depot are a combination of double, twelve-light, three-panel, wood doors and single, eighteen-light, one-panel, wood doors with multi-light sidelights and transoms. Access to the cellar is located near the eastern end of the northern façade. The building is currently vacant. The building is in good condition and holds a high degree of material integrity.

Freight Depot

ca. 1866

Contributing Building

The Freight Depot was constructed ca. 1869 by the Virginia and Tennessee Railway to replace the original depot that was burned during the Civil War. (While some information states that the Depot was constructed in 1866, it is unlikely that the railroad was able to reconstruct in the immediate aftermath of the war). The Freight Depot is a one-and-a-half-story, linear-planned Italianate style building with an interior chimney and a side-gable roof of standing seam metal. The building features board-and-batten siding and distinctive segmental arched windows and doors. Windows appear as singles, pairs, or sets of three. Most are original, six-over-six or four-over-four, double-hung, wood sash windows. Some windows and doors appear to be wood replacements. In 1901, a two-story, Italianate style ticket office and a one-story ladies' waiting room were added onto the depot's eastern end. These additions were demolished sometime after 1910 when the new Passenger Depot was constructed. The building now serves as the Arts Depot, a non-profit, community-based art gallery whose mission is to promote and support regional artists. While the interior retains original flooring and wood details, the configuration of space has been altered by the installation of light partition walls dividing some of the formerly large spaces into smaller units. Despite some interior alterations, the building is in good condition and holds a high degree of material integrity.

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Hattie House Hotel (Mercantile Building)
1855
Contributing Building

In 1855 Capt. John J. Broyles and Charles E. Jones constructed a three-story brick hotel building along Wall Street. Known as the Hattie House Hotel, the building originally featured multiple Italian style details. However, the building has been extensively remodeled and some of these elements have been removed including the second- and third-story verandas. The Hattie House Hotel is five bays wide by ten bays deep. It features a hipped standing-seam metal roof with wide overhanging eaves and Italianate style brackets. Brick pilasters are visible on all elevations. The symmetrical façade features centered doors (one on each story), which are flanked on either side by two windows. Windows on the first story are replacement storefront windows. Windows on the second and third stories are six-over-six double-hung windows. The first-story entrance is comprised of a pair of replacement, single-light two-panel wood doors. Doors on the second and third story are comprised of a pair of original, single-light wood doors with single-light sidelights. Fenestration on the façade are adorned with metal and cloth awnings, which are not original to the building. Windows on the other elevations are four-over-four double-hung wood sash windows. Some windows and doors have been infilled with brick or concrete. The building is in fair condition. Due to the extensive interior and exterior alterations, the building holds a moderate degree of material integrity.

West End Barber Shop & Billiard Parlor (Starving Artist Café; Mama Mia Restaurant)
1922
Contributing Building

The West End Barbershop and Billiard Parlor was constructed in 1922 by I.B. Wells to replace an earlier building constructed by the proprietors of the Hattie House Hotel. This one-story Commercial style brick building features a flat roof and basketweave brickwork along the façade roofline. The fenestration has been altered and is now comprised of a single-light metal door and a set of three single-light fixed metal windows. The building is in good condition, but due to alterations has a moderate degree of material integrity.

Section Master's House
ca. 1857
Contributing Building

The Section Master's House was constructed around 1857 and coincided with the construction of Abingdon's first depot and the arrival of the Virginia and Tennessee Railway. The Section Master's House is a two-story, three-bay, linear plan dwelling characterized by Gothic Revival style elements. The dwelling is covered in vinyl siding and features a steeply pitched side-gable roof of standing-seam metal with decorative vergeboards in its projecting gables. Interior end chimneys pierce the roof at the northern and southern ends. The west-facing façade is symmetrical and features a one-story, full-length, shed roof porch supported by square, wood posts. Windows and doors are replacements and consist of one-over-one, double-hung vinyl or

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aluminum sash windows and simple, wood or fiberglass replacement doors. The dwelling also features a one-story rear ell addition. Due to material alterations, the dwelling is in fair condition and holds a moderate degree of exterior integrity.

William Fields House (Nancy's
ca.1860
Contributing Building

The William Fields House was constructed by its namesake, a local brick mason and contractor, around 1860. This two-story, brick dwelling is three bays wide by two bays deep and characterized by Greek Revival and Queen Anne style elements. The Queen Anne style elements were added later (ca. 1900). The dwelling features a metal side-gable roof with center front gable. An interior end chimney is located at the eastern end. A one-story wrap-around porch with a shed roof with pediment over the center bay, supported by decorative, square wood posts is located on the dwelling's north-facing symmetrical façade. Windows on the dwelling are large, one-over-one, double-hung wood sash windows. The upper sash of the windows on the façade feature a single pane surrounded by smaller square panes of stained glass. These were likely later, but still historic additions. The main entrance is a multi-panel wood door with a multi-light transom and sidelights. Greek Revival style elements can be seen in the dwelling's low-pitched roof, symmetrical façade, and entranceway. These elements are consistent with a ca. 1860 construction date. Close inspection of the brickwork shows that the center front gable is a later ca. 1900 addition. The wrap-around porch, turned wood porch posts, and windows are evocative of the Queen Anne style, suggesting it was also a ca. 1900 addition. The dwelling features a large, historic rear addition. Today, the dwelling remains in good condition and retains a high degree of exterior integrity.

The Depot Hotel
ca.1857
Contributing Building

Directly east of the William Fields house is a two-story frame dwelling, known as the Depot Hotel. It was also constructed by William Fields around 1857 and is three bays wide by one bay deep. The dwelling, which is situated on a raised foundation, features a side-gable, asphalt shingle roof and two, brick exterior end chimneys. A one-story, shed roof porch runs the length of the north-facing, symmetrical façade. The porch is supported by turned wood posts with scroll-work details. Fenestration on the first story façade includes a centered entrance flanked on either side by a single window. This configuration is repeated on the second story. Windows are one-over-one double hung wood sash windows and doors are multi-paneled wood doors flanked on either side by three-light sidelights and topped by four-light transoms. A two-story shed addition is located off the rear (south) elevation. The symmetry of the fenestration is evocative of the Greek Revival style; however, porch details are more evocative of the Gothic Revival or even Queen Anne style and might have been later additions. The dwelling is in fair condition and retains a moderate degree of material integrity.

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Pedestrian Bridge
ca. 1920
Contributing Structure

The early-20th century pedestrian bridge is located along the eastern border of the district and connects the resources on the north side of the tracks with those on the south side. The bridge is constructed of steel I-beams that rest on concrete piers and features wooden deck planks and steel railings with a cross-hatched design. At the time of the nomination, the bridge was undergoing maintenance and restoration due to a traffic accident. The exact date of construction is unknown.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1856-1922

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Norfolk & Western Railway

Fields, William

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Depot Square Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Evaluated within the context of Commerce and Transportation, the significance of the Depot Square Historic District lies in its connection to the American Civil War and its existence in relation to the Railroad Era, which transformed transportation in the United States and created scores of industrial, social, and economic changes. The advent of the railroad made Abingdon a center of commerce and trade and spurred the town's growth. Evaluated within the context of Architecture in Southwest Virginia, the district serves as a rare intact example of a collection of 19th and early 20th century buildings associated with the railroad. These buildings represent a variety of architectural styles both high style and vernacular, that were popularized during the Railroad and Industrial Eras.

The period of significance for the Depot Square Historic District begins in 1856, when the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad placed the first railroad through Abingdon and constructed the town's first depot. The period of significance extends to 1922, when the most recent contributing resource, the West End Barber Shop & Billiard Parlor, was constructed.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Commerce and Transportation Context

The Depot Square Historic District is significant in the history of commerce and transportation at the local level. In the article "Closed Station: Passengers (if any) Use Platform" (1966), Wendy Buehr explained the vital role the train depot played throughout the Railroad Era: "For almost a century - roughly from 1850-1940 - the depot was the communications center of the town, the place that symbolized the high drama of travel, of big cities, of distant frontiers, of Opportunity and Progress - in short, of everything that small town Americans yearned for."¹ Abingdon's depots and buildings that developed in direct connection to the railroad encompassed this idea. The Depot Square Historic District was inextricably linked to the success of Abingdon and its rise as a regional center of commerce and trade. For over a century from the mid-19th century through the mid-20th century, the Depot Square Historic District was a bustling passenger and freight station helping to move people and goods from one part of the state to the other. As an area steeped in the timbering, mining, and iron industries, Southwest Virginia relied on the railroad to transport goods and create burgeoning economies. From its role during the Civil War through its eventual decline with the rise of the Federal Highway system, Abingdon's Depot Square Historic District serves as a significant reminder of the importance of the Railroad Era within the United States and within the Town of Abingdon.

¹ Buehr, Wendy and Randolph Bye, "Closed Station: Passengers (if any) Use Platform." *American Heritage*, 57 (February 1966): 33-41, quoted in Ranulph Bye, "The American Railroad Depot," *Pioneer America*, 1, no. 1 (January 1969).

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Criterion C: Architecture Context

As a rare intact example of a collection of 19th and early 20th century buildings associated with the railroad, the Depot Square Historic District is a significant local landmark. The architectural characteristics of the district are reflective of building styles that originated and were popularized during the Industrial Era including Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, and Commercial. Most of the buildings within the district do not represent one specific style. Instead they possess characteristics of one or more of these styles, therefore creating a more vernacular example of 19th and 20th century Industrial Era architecture. This variety is representative of many small, rural Southern towns. The two train depots located on Depot Square, which serve as the central focal point of the historic district, are the only high-style buildings in the district. The Passenger Depot represents the Tudor Revival style, and the older Freight Depot represents the Italianate style. The remaining buildings on the north and south side of the railway feature more vernacular and Italianate, Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, and Queen Anne style elements.

In the early years of the railroad, basic services were housed in existing buildings near the tracks such as hotels or general stores. When towns began to construct dedicated railroad buildings, they were often simple and unadorned. As the influence of the railroad grew, depots and stations became more elaborate and decorative as communities vied to have the most stylish and extravagant depot. As more depots were constructed, often simultaneously over a large railroad system, railroads often used the same plans to construct depots at multiple stops. This resulted in the standardization of designs and forms. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, railroad architecture had developed its own distinct forms and style based on their utilitarian purpose and the need to construct them quickly and inexpensively combined with the desire to impress.² The Freight Depot, with its board-and-batten exterior cladding, is similar to that of many other mid-to-late 19th century small-town depots in Virginia. The Passenger Depot with its Tudor Revival style is an example of a stylish and more elaborate depot. It was one of only two versions built of buff colored brick along the Norfolk and Southern rail network. Other buildings based on the same pattern were located in Shepherdstown and Williamson, West Virginia. Both the Freight and Passenger Depots are characteristic of those constructed at other stations along the Norfolk and Southern Railway.³

Historical Background

The Town of Abingdon

The Town of Abingdon is centrally located in Washington County at the intersection of U.S. Routes 11 and 58 in the Holston River Valley. The town grew out of a small frontier settlement consisting of a courthouse, jail, taverns, and a few dwellings. The area prospered in the 19th and

² Traser, Donald R. *Virginia Railway Depots*. National Railway Historical Society, 1998, IX.

³ *Ibid*, 77-109.

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20th centuries by its strategic siting on the Great Valley Road (now U.S. Route 11) and the Virginia-Tennessee Railroad (later the Norfolk and Western).⁴

The Town of Abingdon was originally part of a 6,780-acre tract of land granted to Dr. Thomas Walker in 1752. The Great Valley Road, which led from the Shenandoah Valley to the Cumberland Gap, passed through the area and helped encourage settlement beginning in the 1760s. By 1774 several families had settled in present-day Abingdon. These families also erected a small fort on Eighteen Mile Creek known as Black's Fort. The Fort was meant to shelter families in the event of conflicts between European settlers and local Virginia Indian tribes.⁵

When Washington County was formed in 1776, Black's Fort was chosen for the meeting of the first Washington County Court. In 1778, Dr. Walker, Joseph Black, and Samuel Briggs donated 120 acres of land to the newly formed county. This land, located near Black's Fort, was donated for the purpose of establishing a county seat to be named Abingdon. When Abingdon was incorporated in 1778, it was laid out in a grid pattern that was repeated as the town expanded throughout the 19th century.⁶

By 1800 Abingdon had become a transportation hub for Southwest Virginia. This was due in large part to its location along the Great Valley Road and the Abingdon-Saltville Turnpike, which was constructed in 1803. Over the next few decades, Abingdon became known as a regional commercial center for Southwest Virginia as well as parts of Tennessee and Kentucky. However, it was also known as important regional political and judicial center. Abingdon grew rapidly during the early 19th century, causing the Virginia General Assembly to expand the town's corporate limits three times: in 1803, 1819, and 1834.⁷ According to the 1986 National Register Nomination for the Abingdon Historic District Extension,

Vigorous development occurred at the western end of town after 1856 when the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad built a depot on the site of the present Norfolk and Western passenger station. After the Civil War rail transport of lumber, livestock, local agricultural products, especially tobacco, and dairy products to eastern markets enabled Abingdon to maintain its regional position as an important transportation and commercial crossroads until nearly the end of the 19th century.⁸

In 1887, the Abingdon Coal and Iron Railroad was constructed from Abingdon to Damascus, Virginia. By 1912 it extended as far south as Elkland, North Carolina. The railroad was originally built to ship iron and coal from the Shady Valley, located south of Damascus. It later became more important as a means of transportation for the region's timber industry. Renamed

⁴ Division of Historic Landmarks Staff, *A National Register Nomination for the Abingdon Historic District Extension*. Richmond, VA: 1986, p. 7-1; 8-1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, p. 8-2.

⁸ Ibid.

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the Virginia-Carolina Railroad and then sold to the Norfolk and Western Railway in 1912, the Abingdon Coal and Iron Railroad elevated Abingdon's status as a timber and lumber shipping center in Southwestern Virginia. During this time Abingdon also supported several local industries including tanneries, coach and wagon manufactories, and plug tobacco and cigar manufactories.⁹ At one point in the late 19th century, Abingdon was considered the sixth largest tobacco manufacturing center in Virginia.¹⁰

In 1864 at the height of the Civil War, General George Stoneman and his Federal troops passed through Abingdon on their way to Saltville. Stoneman ordered his troops to burn all buildings related to the Confederate cause.¹¹ This included the first Abingdon train depot, the Washington County courthouse and jail, the Confederate Commissary Department, the Issuing Department, the Quartermaster Department, the Quartermaster's Storing Department, and the Army Barracks.¹²

At the turn of the 20th century, Abingdon experienced a population decline – the only known in the town's history. Between 1890 and 1900, Abingdon lost approximately 20 percent of its population, decreasing from 1,674 to 1,340. This population loss was caused in part by Abingdon's decline as a center for iron and coal shipping and the rise of Bristol and Bluefield as new shipping centers. No railroads connected the mainline of the Norfolk and Western Railway in Abingdon to the rich coal reserves in Tazewell and Wise counties, and Abingdon could not compete with other towns that had this advantage. Despite this loss, Abingdon held onto many of its local industries, most notably those associated with the tobacco industry. Due to these alternative industries, Abingdon remained a commercial trade center for the region through the early 20th century.¹³

Railroad Background

The Virginia & Tennessee Railroad (V&T) was the first railroad located in southwest Virginia. Construction on the V&T began on January 16, 1850, and when completed in 1856 it ran from Lynchburg to Bristol. The construction of the V&T spurred the development of new towns but was also the death knell of others that the line bypassed. The V&T was a major contributor to the establishment of new industries as well as the usual flourmills, sawmills, blacksmiths, and tanneries. In the article "The Virginia & Tennessee Railroad 1830s-1860s" (2006), Josh Jones explains the vital role the railroad played in the economic development of Southwest Virginia,

⁹ Ibid, p. 8-3.

¹⁰ Tilley, Nannie May. *The Bright-Tobacco Industry 1860-1929*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948, p. 547.

¹¹ Napps, Klell. "The Abingdon Train Station." *The Historical Society of Washington County*. Series II; No. 40; 2003, p. 1

¹² Hagy, James William. *After the War Was Over: Reconstruction in Washington County, Virginia 1865-1870*. Abingdon, VA: The Historical Society of Washington County, 2015, p. 2.

¹³ Division of Historic Landmarks Staff, 8-3.

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"Some say that because of the railroad, southwest Virginia possessed characteristics of 'commercial industrialization' that were unheard of until post-Civil War America."¹⁴

The V&T Railroad placed the first railroad through Abingdon in 1856 and constructed the town's first depot that same year. The depot serviced both passenger and freight service. The advent of the railroad in Abingdon resulted in greater access to and from the town and helped the town flourish during the 19th and 20th centuries.¹⁵

The Civil War abruptly stopped all expansion plans for the V&T. Instead, the railroad became largely controlled and utilized by the Confederacy to transport troops, food, and military supplies. Some historians consider the Civil War a "railroad war" because of the vital role the railroad (especially the V&T) played during the conflict. Destruction of the V&T was a major goal of the Union during the war, and the Confederacy would not have lasted as long as it did without the railroad.¹⁶ Federal forces infiltrated Washington County in 1863 when they managed to destroy some of the rails and bridges near Goodson, Virginia.¹⁷ In 1864, General George Stoneman and his Federal troops passed through Abingdon on their way to Saltville. Stoneman ordered his troops to burn all buildings related to the Confederate cause along the way including railroad tracks, bridges and depots. The V&T Abingdon train depot was destroyed during this invasion.¹⁸

After the Civil War, the V&T returned to normal rail operation. By February 1866, they carried more freight than they had prior to the war.¹⁹ Despite this increase in business, the V&T faced financial difficulties. In late 1867, William Mahone, owner of the South Side Railroad and the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad, became president of the V&T. Mahone combined all three railroads and formed the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad. Mahone also encountered financial difficulties due in part to the Panic of 1873, and in 1881 new investors purchased the line renaming it the Norfolk and Western Railroad (N&W).²⁰

As railroad development continued to increase, efforts were made to create an Abingdon line that ran south from Abingdon connecting resource rich areas with the markets in Abingdon and northwards. Development of an such a line took a few attempts before being successful. One of the first attempts began in the mid-1880s when the Southwest Virginia Mining Company was organized. Soon after, in 1887, men associated with this mining company also incorporated the Abingdon Coal and Iron Railroad Company. The railroad company was authorized to survey, locate, construct, equip, maintain, and operate a railway line from Abingdon on the N&W

¹⁴ Jones, Josh. "The Virginia & Tennessee Railroad 1830s-1860s." *The Historical Society of Washington County*. Series II; No. 43; 2006 p. 25-26.

¹⁵ Napps, 1.

¹⁶ Jones, 25-26.

¹⁷ Hagy, 60.

¹⁸ Napps, 1.

¹⁹ Haby, 60.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 61.

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through Washington, Smyth, and Grayson counties to points bordering on Tennessee and North Carolina. The charter also granted the company the right to construct a line from Abingdon through Washington, Russell, Scott, Dickinson, Buchanan, and Wise counties to points bordering on Kentucky.²¹

In 1889, the railroad company began grading the route from Abingdon to Damascus after first securing acres of real estate and miles of right-of-way. By 1893, approximately 16 miles of grading had been completed, but no work had begun on construction of the actual tracks or bridges. In 1892, the Abingdon Coal and Iron Railroad Company was dissolved due to lack of revenue. In 1894, the assets were transferred to the newly formed Virginia Western Coal and Iron Railroad Company and W.P. Fortune and Sons who had been previously contracted to complete the grading of the line.²² According to Mike Hicks article, "A History of the Abingdon Branch Line,"

The new railroad company and the Fortunes never accomplished anything, so in 1896 the Virginia General Assembly amended and re-enacted the original charter of 1887 and thus extended the time for the completion of the rail line. In March 1898 the Virginia Assembly changed the name of the railroad to the Virginia-Carolina Railroad Company.²³

These first two unsuccessful attempts to build a railroad from Abingdon southeast to the North Carolina border were based on iron and manganese ore speculation, which while potentially very profitable, were unpredictable sources of traffic for a railroad. When one developer, Wilton B. Mingea, a N&W traveling freight agent, changed tactics and capitalized on the area's rich timber reserves, the railroad finally saw success in southwest Virginia. Abingdon, like the rest of the southern Appalachian Mountains, was surrounded by land known during the late 19th century for its swaths of hardwood and evergreens. However, exploiting this resource was made difficult by the area's lack of navigable roads, which made shipping products to market near impossible. This problem was rectified when Wilton B. Mingea moved his family to Abingdon at the turn of the 20th century. Mingea knew that logs and finished lumber were more dependable traffic for the burgeoning railroad than iron and coal. So, armed with the promise of help from several land companies anxious to harvest their timber for profit, Mingea acquired the assets of the recently organized Virginia-Carolina Railway (V-C). This included a few miles of graded right-of-way located just outside of Abingdon in the direction of Damascus. Mingea soon secured new deeds for the former railroad's right-of-way, some of which he relocated. He then graded and built bridges for 16.2 miles connecting Abingdon and Damscus in less than two years. The first train operated along this line on February 7, 1900.²⁴

²¹ Hicks, Mike. "A History of the Abingdon Branch Line". *The Historical Society of Washington County*. Series II; No. 39; 2002 p. 27-28.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, p. 28.

²⁴ Lewis, Lloyd. "An Abingdon Branch Accolade: A Line from Another Time." *Trains Magazine*, June 1984, p. 22.

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In 1913, the North Carolina General Assembly granted Mingea permission to extend his rail line into North Carolina and work began as soon as he obtained the financial backing from the N&W. Before Mingea had completed this new stretch of line, the N&W had begun to take notice of his accomplishments and purchased the first-mortgage bonds and 51 percent of the capital stock of the V-C. By doing so, the N&W also assumed greater control over Mingea and soon appointed G.P. Jonson to replace Mingea as President of the V-C Railroad Company. By June 1916, the N&W had acquired full control over the V-C Railroad, but it was not until August 1919 that stockholders conveyed all V-C property to the N&W.²⁵

Rail traffic along the Abingdon Branch remained steady through the mid-1920s as there was plenty of timber and no other way to haul it to markets in Abingdon except via train. However, by the late 1920s and early 1930s, many sawmills in the area began finishing their supply of timber. Then came the Great Depression, which hit this part of the Appalachian Mountains hard, and with it came the steady decline of the Abingdon Branch of the N&W Railway.²⁶ As the lumber industry declined, the N&W limited daily operations on the Abingdon Branch to two local freights, two first class passenger trains, and one extra freight that only serviced the southern end of the line. Due to a lack of roads and highways and Abingdon's good connections to areas north, the passenger service continued to prosper despite the decline of lumber freight.²⁷ In early 1930, the Abingdon line was badly damaged by summer floods and mudslides. The line remained out of commission for six months. Once the line was rebuilt, service was restored for a short time. However, in 1933 the Interstate Commerce Commission allowed the N&W to discontinue rail service between West Jefferson and Elkland and take up the track. That same year, the N&W began operating a daily mixed train that provided freight, passenger, express, and mail service all in one. The N&W ran two mixed trains daily throughout the mid-1930s, which included hauling stone to North Carolina for the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway.²⁸

The second wave of abandonment consisted of the official abandonment proceedings. As the highway system was improved throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, rail business continued to decline. In 1957, diesel locomotives replaced steam engines on the branch line.²⁹ Mixed-Train discontinuance came in two waves. First, on May 20, 1962, the Virginia State Corporation Commission gave the N&W permission to discontinue mail and passenger service. At the same time the N&W made attempts to reduce property taxes by removing sidings, water tanks, and structures at all stations except Abingdon, Damascus, Green Cove, and West Jefferson. Locomotive servicing facilities in Abingdon were also abandoned. By the late 1960s, freight-train frequency had declined from daily-except-Sunday to every-other-day to twice-weekly to weekly.³⁰

²⁵ Hicks, 33.

²⁶ Lewis, 25-26.

²⁷ Hicks, 33.

²⁸ Ibid, 33-34.

²⁹ Ibid, 34.

³⁰ Lewis, 27.

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Before filing an abandonment petition with the Interstate Commerce Commission, N&W considered the idea of selling the Abingdon Branch for tourist excursions or for common-carrier service. However, without any firm offers, the N&W officially filed on December 1, 1972, and abandonment proceedings began soon after. One major argument of the opposition was that if the Abingdon line shut down, Ashe County's lumber industry would suffer due to a continued lack of paved roads in the area. Proceedings dragged on for years until July 30, 1976, when the Commission adopted an abandonment order. The final train ran on March 31, 1977.³¹

Depot Square

The V&T Railroad placed the first railroad through Abingdon in 1856 and constructed the town's first depot that same year. The depot serviced both passengers and freight until it was burned during Stoneman's raid of Southwest Virginia.

Around 1869, a new and largely identical depot was constructed on the same location as the first depot. It was constructed with board and batten exterior siding and provided both passenger and freight service, like its predecessor. In 1901, a new section was added to the depot's eastern end that housed a ladies' waiting room and two-story ticket window tower.³²

In 1910, the railroad (now owned by the N&W) constructed a second train depot, located just east of the 1866 depot. The new depot (Passenger Depot) was constructed to service passengers only and featured two racially segregated waiting rooms, each with its own restroom. The waiting rooms were connected by a hallway with the ticket office. The Passenger Depot also contained a room for baggage and freight. When the 1910 Passenger Depot was constructed, the older 1869 Freight Depot was reduced back to its original size and began providing only freight service.³³

The Passenger Depot continued to provide passenger service until the 1970s when passenger service was discontinued. In 1982, the town of Abingdon acquired the depot and housed the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Abingdon Police Department for the next five years. After this the Chamber of Commerce relocated, and the police department took over the entire building until 2001 when they moved to a new building. In 2002, the Historical Society of Washington moved into the building.³⁴ At the time of the nomination, the building was vacant.

The Freight Depot closed in 1981, and the Town of Abingdon purchased the property. A total of 4,000 hours of volunteer work and financial contributions of local citizens were invested in renovating the aging landmark to create a new home for the Depot Artists Association (formerly the William King Artists Association).³⁵

³¹ Ibid.

³² Napps, 1.

³³ Ibid, 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "The Arts Depot: Old Train Depot Building Houses Community Artists Working Together." *Abingdon Virginian*. 24 June 1998, p. 3B.

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During its height, the Abingdon train depot served as the center of town and the surrounding neighborhood became known as Depot Square. This includes the contributing properties along Front Street and Wall Street. In 1854, when the V&T began negotiations with the Town of Abingdon for permission to enter the town and use the streets and cross streets, Thomas L. Preston gave the railroad three acres of land at the western end of town. Part of this land was used for the 1856 depot. The Section Master's House and houses for the road hands were also constructed on this tract around this time.³⁶

After the Abingdon depot was constructed, the land within close proximity to the depot became more valuable as people scrambled to make a profit off the influx of visitors and trade brought by the railroad. William Fields, an accomplished brickmaker and contractor, anticipated this change. During his lifetime he constructed a number of homes and commercial buildings in and around Abingdon using his own bricks. Around 1860, Fields purchased two lots opposite the depot on the south side of the railroad. That same year he built the two-story brick house, now known as the William Fields House. The other was the Depot Hotel, which provided boarding for rail passengers and workers. Although the William Fields House was built as a private, single-family dwelling, its construction was a direct result of the advent of the railroad in Abingdon. Fields died in 1862, and the property was sold in 1879 as a result of litigation concerning his estate. The house was bought and sold a number of times over the next 100 years. A. Mack Bradley acquired the house in 1883 and owned it until 1907. Then C.W. and Mattie Huges owned the house from 1919 until 1945. Between 1945 and 1977 the property belonged to H.C. and Drucy Wiles. Their daughters sold the house and lot to Abingdon's Senior Services.³⁷

Directly east of the William Fields house is a two-story frame dwelling, known as the Depot Hotel. It was also built by William Fields shortly after he purchased the lot in 1857. According to Nanci King's *Places in Time, Vol. I* it is likely the same place advertised in the 1859 newspapers as The Central Hotel, a place of entertainment in the west end. By 1866 it was referred to as the Rail Road House, and in 1882 Alexander Yonce advertised it as the Depot Hotel, stating that he had refurnished the house and was prepared to accommodate guests. A deed in 1895, conveying the property to Sallie Jane Martin Burch, mentions that this house was formerly owned by William Fields and at one time occupied by Mr. Yonce. The house was subsequently owned by W.M. Worley, Jennie Holdway, H.C. Wiles and R. C. Hall.³⁸ The Depot Hotel's siting near the Abingdon depot was vital to its success. The hotel was able to provide accommodations to a variety of individuals who arrived by railroad. Some were likely there to conduct business in Abingdon, while others might have been passing through on their way to another destination, using Abingdon as a stop along the way.

In 1855 Capt. John J. Broyles and Charles E. Jones constructed a three-story brick hotel building along Wall Street. It was named the Hattie House Hotel after Jones' daughter Hattie McChesney

³⁶ King, Nanci C. *Places In Time: Volume I, Abingdon, VA 1778-1880*. Abingdon, VA: Abingdon Printing Services, 1989, p 62.

³⁷ King, Vol. I, 63.

³⁸ King, Vol. I, 64.

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Jones. Her wedding supper on December 9th, 1855, was the first banquet held in the new hotel. In 1908 the hotel was sold to W.F. Robertson, D.A. Preston and J.W. Bell and renamed the Hotel Abingdon. The building was remodeled to include modern amenities such as electric lights, steam heat and telephone connections. New furnishings were also added to the hotel including all 40 rooms, the lobby, the parlors, and the verandas on the second and third floors.³⁹ Due to its prime location northeast of the Abingdon depot, the Hattie House Hotel drew most of its business from those travelling via railroad. Passengers stopping in Abingdon for a quick break on their journey elsewhere or those planning a longer stay to conduct business associated with trade or the county government were enticed by the hotel's proximity to the depot. "Later owners were I.B. Wells (1920-1941), H.H. Scott (1941-1948), R.C. Hall (1948-1975) who converted the hotel to apartments, Steve Wise and W.C. DeBusck, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hedgpeth, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fox and Carol Fox."⁴⁰ J.H. Coombs purchased and remodeled the building in 1987 and opened Abingdon Mercantile, which featured antiques and a picture framing shop. At the time of this nomination the building is vacant.

When the Hattie House Hotel was built in 1885, proprietors Broyles & Jones also constructed a store building and small office located between the hotel and railroad. These buildings were replaced in the 1920s. The building closest to the railroad was constructed in 1929 by James Bradley Crozier, but was later demolished.⁴¹ The building next to the hotel was replaced in 1922 when I.B. Wells constructed the West End Barbershop and Billiard Parlor. The building's proximity to the Abingdon depot drew customers traveling via railroad. The West End Barbershop and Billiard Parlor provided both a service and a source of entertainment for those staying in Abingdon for business. Over the years the building served as a bus station, restaurant, and taxi stand, all businesses driven by presence of the railroad and depot. In 1988, Shawn and Kimberly Crookshank purchased the building and opened the Starving Artist Café.⁴² The Crookshanks sold the building in 2013.⁴³ It currently houses Mama Mia restaurant.

Not much is known about the history of the Pedestrian Bridge. It was likely constructed in the early 20th century. It is not present on Gray's New Map of Abingdon from 1880 or on the 1885 Sanborn Map, so an exact date of construction is unknown.

Today, the railroad tracks are still in use by the Norfolk Southern Railroad Corporation.

³⁹ King, Nanci C. *Places In Time: Volume II, Abingdon, Meadowview & Glade Spring, Virginia*. Abingdon, VA: Abingdon Printing Services, 1989. 107.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ King, Vol. II, 107.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴³ Washington County Land Records

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Collections website, accessed January 2020, <http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/index.php> and <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/railroad/rrintro.htm>.

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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR No.140-0038

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.5

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

Depot Square Historic District
Name of Property

Washington County, VA
County and State

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 36.707671 | Longitude: -81.981587 |
| 2. Latitude: 36.708301 | Longitude: -81.979567 |
| 3. Latitude: 36.708038 | Longitude: -81.979439 |
| 4. Latitude: 36.707546 | Longitude: -81.979353 |
| 5. Latitude: 36.707197 | Longitude: -81.979691 |
| 6. Latitude: 36.706989 | Longitude: -81.980313 |
| 7. Latitude: 36.707397 | Longitude: -81.980500 |
| 8. Latitude: 36.707470 | Longitude: -81.980330 |
| 9. Latitude: 36.707448 | Longitude: -81.981490 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Depot Square Historic District is located along and around the Norfolk Southern Railway in the western end of the Town of Abingdon, one block south of West Main Street. Running in an east/west direction, the Norfolk & Western Railway bisects the district. Depot Square, located north of the railway, runs parallel to the tracks and serves as the northern border of the district. The three contributing domestic buildings located on the southern side of the railway, at the end of Front Street, also run parallel to the tracks and serve as the southern border of the historic district. Wall Street constitutes the eastern border of the district as it runs perpendicular to the railway and adjoins the pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks. Fuller Street comprises the western border of the district.

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses all eight contributing resources (seven buildings and one structure). Areas directly outside of the boundary cannot be considered contributing to the Depot Square Historic District as the buildings were not related to the railroad and were not constructed within the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Caitlin Herrnstadt, Architectural Historian
organization: Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson, Inc. (JMT)
street & number: 1130 Situs Court, Suite 200
city or town: Raleigh state: NC zip code: 27606
e-mail cherrnstadt@jmt.com
telephone: (984) 269-4917
date: March 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Depot Square Historic District

City or Vicinity: Abingdon

Depot Square Historic District
Name of Property

Washington County, VA
County and State

County: Washington

State: VA

Photographer: Caitlin Herrnstadt

Date Photographed: January 8-9, 2020.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Passenger Depot, façade, looking south.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0001)
2. Passenger Depot, rear elevation, looking north.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0002)
3. Freight Depot, façade, looking west-southwest.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0003)
4. Freight Depot, looking west-southwest.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0004)
5. Depot Square, general view, looking west.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0005)
6. Hattie House Hotel looking east-northeast.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0006)
7. West End Barber Shop & Billiard Parlor looking east.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0007)
8. Section Master's House, looking southeast.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0008)
9. William Fields House, façade, looking south.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0009)
10. The Depot Hotel, façade, looking south.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0010)
11. Pedestrian Bridge, looking southeast.
(VA_WashingtonCounty_DepotSquareHistoricDistrict_0011)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

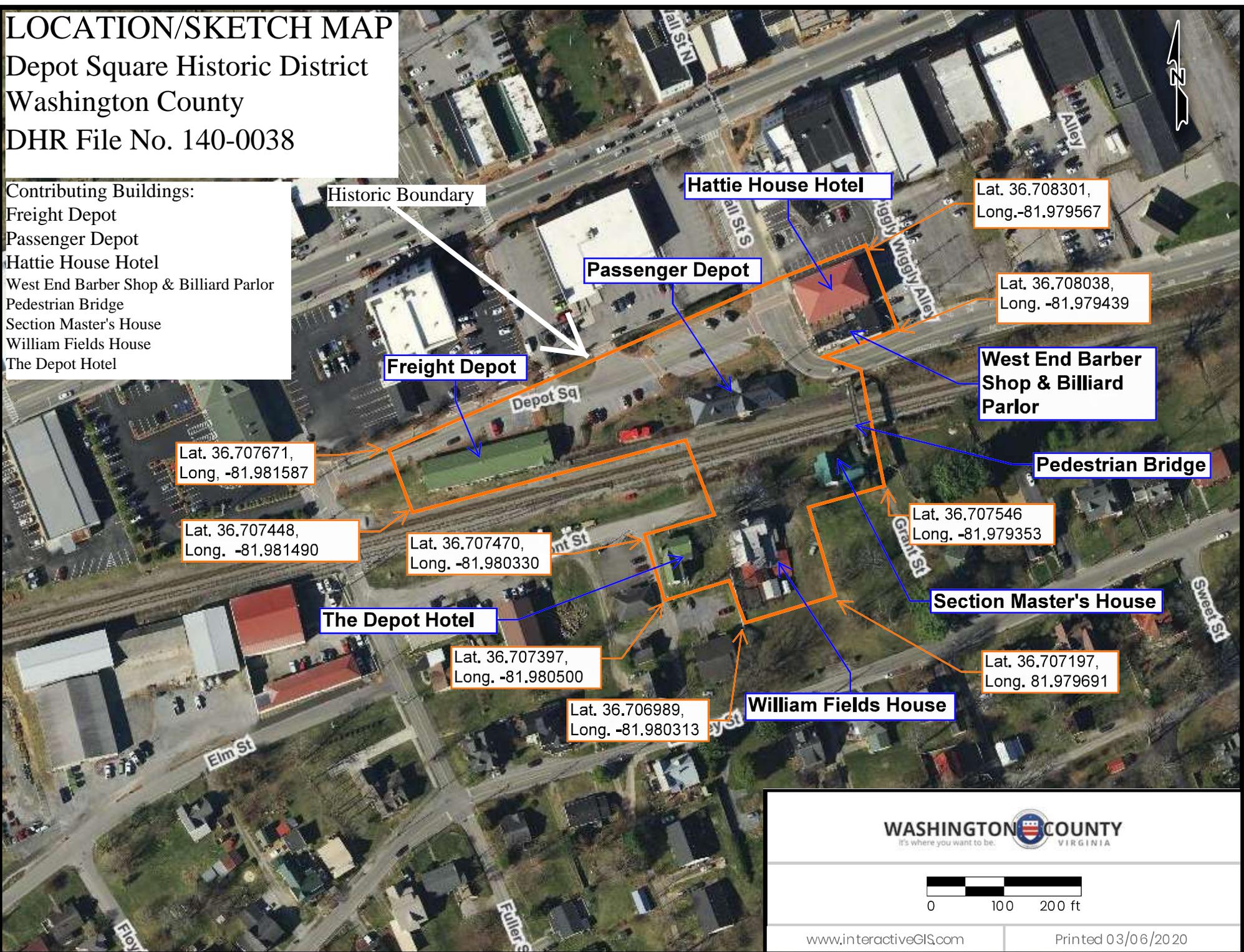
LOCATION/SKETCH MAP

Depot Square Historic District
Washington County

DHR File No. 140-0038

Contributing Buildings:

- Freight Depot
- Passenger Depot
- Hattie House Hotel
- West End Barber Shop & Billiard Parlor
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Section Master's House
- William Fields House
- The Depot Hotel



Historic Boundary

Hattie House Hotel

Lat. 36.708301,
Long. -81.979567

Passenger Depot

Lat. 36.708038,
Long. -81.979439

Freight Depot

West End Barber
Shop & Billiard
Parlor

Lat. 36.707671,
Long. -81.981587

Pedestrian Bridge

Lat. 36.707448,
Long. -81.981490

Lat. 36.707470,
Long. -81.980330

Lat. 36.707546
Long. -81.979353

The Depot Hotel

Section Master's House

Lat. 36.707397,
Long. -81.980500

Lat. 36.707197,
Long. 81.979691

Lat. 36.706989,
Long. -81.980313

William Fields House

WASHINGTON COUNTY
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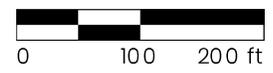
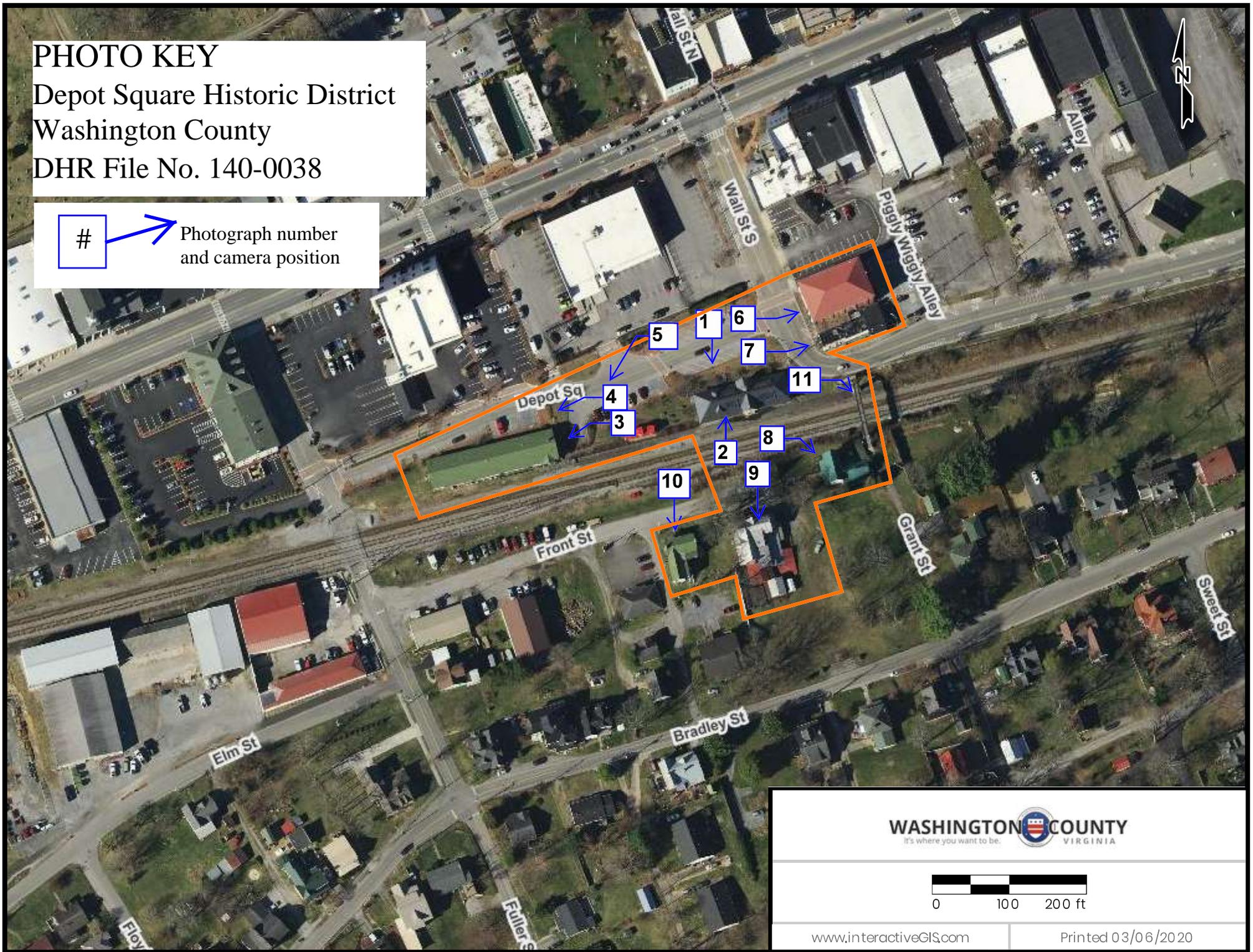


PHOTO KEY

Depot Square Historic District
Washington County
DHR File No. 140-0038

#

→ Photograph number
and camera position



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