

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: Dante Downtown Historic District

Other names/site number: VDHR# 083-5153

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: Bunch Town Road, Straight Hollow Road & Lower Bearwallow Road

City or town: Dante State: VA County: Russell

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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

 Signature of certifying official/Title:	<u>6/30/2023</u> Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title:	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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>6</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution: bank

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXACTRACTION: energy facility

TRANSPORTATION: rail-related

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

GOVERNMENT: post office

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE, BRICK, STONE, METAL,  
SYNTHETICS

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Dante Downtown Historic District encompasses the commercial core of Dante (pronounced Day-nt), Virginia, a rare surviving example of a company coal town that sprang into existence in the hollows of northwest Russell County in Southwest Virginia during the first decades of the twentieth century. Originally known as Turkey Foot and developed by the Dawson Coal Company in 1903, Dante officially became a company coal town in 1906 when it was acquired by Clinchfield Coal Corporation and fully developed as a company town. The US Postal Service established a post office in the nascent settlement in 1903. Typical of company coal towns, the company supplied its employees with all infrastructure, including utilities and rail transportation, and commercial services as well as housing, churches, schools, and entertainment. This roughly 3.46-acre district comprises a small collection of commercial buildings and a train depot that are typical of the company towns established and developed by large coal corporations in southern Appalachia from the late-nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century. Bunch Town Road, the north-south main artery in the district, splits into Straight Hollow Road to the northwest and Lower Bearwallow Road to the southeast in the center of the district. The former Clinchfield Railroad (currently CSX) extends along the western edge of the district and Lick Creek flows through the center of the town. Residential buildings, which are not included in the commercial district, are located along the hollows, created by Lick Creek and its tributaries, which radiate from the commercial core of town. Built by and for the Clinchfield Coal Corporation, the surviving buildings in the district – including the bank, dry cleaning building, depot, commercial building, and steam heat plant – represent the operations of the coal company as well as the services it provided for its workers and their families. The US Postal Service has continued to operate a post

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office here; the office has occupied leased space within a 1945 commercial building (083-5153-0002) since the mid-1950s. Architecturally, the buildings comprise a range of stylistic influences, including Richardsonian Romanesque, Classical Revival, Main Street Commercial and International Style, that reflect the periods in which they were built. Although their respective functions, styles, and materials vary, all buildings are of masonry construction and modest in scale and detailing. The Dante Historic District retains sufficient integrity to convey the influence of the Clinchfield Coal Corporation in its development of Dante as an early-twentieth century company coal town. Five of the six surviving primary resources, and one of the two secondary resources, are historic and contribute to the significance of the district as they retain a relatively high level of integrity.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Dante Downtown Historic District is in the unincorporated Town of Dante, which is situated at an elevation of 1,765 feet in northwest Russell County, Virginia. Created and developed by Clinchfield Coal Corporation during the early- to mid-twentieth century it was the largest company coal town in Russell County. Located in the western coalfields of Southwest Virginia, Dante sits on the Appalachian Plateau, which features mountains and valleys created by the erosion of sizeable plains of sedimentary rock rich in coal deposits.<sup>1</sup> The entire community of Dante occupies approximately seven square miles within the valleys and hollows formed by Lick Creek and the three smaller branches of Bear Wallow, Straight Hollow, and Sawmill Hollow. Lick Creek, a tributary of the Clinch River, flows through the center of town. Prior to development by coal operatives, this community was originally called “Turkey Foot,” as the three smaller creeks appeared in the shape of “toes” for the larger “leg” of Lick Creek.<sup>2</sup> The layout of the town is shaped by the challenging geography of the region. The primary historic transportation route in Dante, the former Clinchfield Railroad tracks, follows Lick Creek and its branches as it winds through the valleys to access the steep coal deposits. Dante’s commercial core, which comprises the district, is sited on the flattest and widest topography. Beyond the district boundaries, worker housing is located along the railroad tracks, while management housing is sited on the hilltops that rise steeply above downtown Dante.

The Dante Downtown Historic District encompasses the surviving buildings of the town’s commercial core that supported the various commercial, industrial, and transportation needs of the town’s residents. By 1950, this area included a company store, railroad depot, hotel, steam heat plant, icehouse, jail, post office, theater building, stables, barbershop, bank, dry cleaning building, filling station, automobile dealership, and a commercial building housing a pharmacy, dress shop, and office space. Presently, the remaining resources include the bank, dry cleaning building, depot, commercial building, and steam heat plant. Due to the challenging topography of the town, this commercial district is not laid out in the typical gridded system, but rather follows the trajectory of the roads that extend along the railroad tracks and Lick Creek as they weave through the mountain hollows. Located in the small valley area, the district is relatively flat. Bunch Town Road extends north from the depot (083-5153-0001) to the commercial store (083-5153-0002), then branches into Lower Bearwallow Road to the southeast, and Straight Hollow Road to the northwest, along which stand the dry-cleaning building (083-5153-0006), bank (083-5153-0003),

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and steam heat plant (083-5153-0004). Bunch Town Road was formerly the route of a railroad spur line which extended north between the steam heat plant to the west and the bank to the east. This track has since been removed and replaced with Bunch Town Road and a gravel drive. The only sidewalk in the district extends along the front of the commercial building at 506-508 Bunch Town Road .

At the north end of the district stands the *steam heat plant (083-5153-0004; 50 Straight Hollow Road)*, known locally as “steam heat.” Constructed ca. 1910, it is the oldest existing building in the district and was one of the first built by the Clinchfield Coal Corporation in the early-twentieth century. Its rough-cut stone walls and substantial brick arches exemplify the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Although the arched openings have been infilled with concrete block, the rhythm of voids and solid walls are readily apparent. The building is also representative of the craftsmanship of Italian immigrants who erected masonry buildings and bridges throughout the Appalachian region for industrial and railroad interests. Historically, the building had three central boilers which produced steam heat that was piped to the commercial buildings and nearby homes of the managerial and administrative employees. As steam was not economical to transport longer distances, the coal mines and machinery were not powered by this plant but by a separate electrical plant.

Across the street to the south of the steam heat plant is the *Dante Bank (083-5153-0003; 30 Straight Hollow Road)*, constructed ca. 1915 as the local branch of Dickenson County Bank. The building, although small in scale, exemplifies the Classical Revival style with its red brick construction, stone detailing, and arched window and door openings that feature fanlights in the transoms. After the bank closed on March 27, 1931, it became a popular local restaurant known as the Beer Garden until after World War II. The former bank building currently serves as the location of the Coal and Railroad Heritage Museum.

On the other side of the bank is the ca. 1915 modest commercial building which historically housed the *dry-cleaning plant (083-5153-0006; 30 Straight Hollow Road)*. The two-story brick building retains its historic brick parapet, brick chimney, and soldier courses of brick capping window and door openings. According to a historic photograph, the dry-cleaning plant originally featured two single-leaf door entrances and six industrial steel-sash windows on the façade. Currently only one of the historic door openings remains. The other door opening and all window openings are infilled with brick.

At the south end of the district, between Bunch Town Road and the railroad tracks stands the *Dante Depot (083-5153-0001; 457 Bunch Town Road)*. This 1930 brick depot was built in the Craftsman style and replaced the earlier frame depot, built ca. 1909 on the same site. The 1930 building features brick walls laid in a Flemish-variant bond, brick corbeling, and a polygonal bay projecting from the west (front) elevation. Soldier-brick courses surmount the window and door openings, although all window sash and doors have been removed. The broad hipped roof with overhanging eaves supported by brackets also is not extant. The depot cost \$8,190 to build and functioned as a combination freight and passenger space. The concrete loading dock and platform wraps around the west, north, and east elevations, forming a u-shape. Historically, the interior

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comprised two separate waiting rooms for White and Black passengers and a telegraph office. The building represents the significance of the Clinchfield Railroad to the establishment and success of Dante and survives as the only physical evidence of racial segregation practices in Dante during the Jim Crow era. Despite its essentially ruinous condition, the building remains in its trackside location and no major disturbance of the site has occurred, creating a possibility for intact cultural deposits related to its historic functions.

At the intersection of Bunch Town Road and Straight Hollow Road, across from the dry-cleaning plant, stands a large two-story ca. 1945 brick commercial building (**083-5153-0001; 506-508 Bunch Town Road**). Comprised of two sections, the original ca. 1945 block reflects the Main Street Commercial style with its storefront windows, recessed entrances, and brick parapet obscuring the flat roof. During the mid-1950s, the local post office moved into leased space previously occupied by a dress shop. Constructed by Clinchfield Coal Corporation, the building also originally housed a pharmacy. The post office remains in this leased space today. In 1958, after Pittston Coal Company took control of the Clinchfield Coal Corporation and demolished the Clinchfield Inn, a large two-story addition was constructed on the north (side) elevation of the commercial building. Designed in the International style, the addition reflects a mid-twentieth century Modernist aesthetic with an emphasis on volume over mass, a lack of ornament, asymmetrical elevations, and a steady rhythm of paired and single windows. The addition housed offices for the Pittston Coal Company.

The only non-contributing primary resource in the district is a ca. 2019 open-air shelter (**083-5153-0005; 13 Straight Hollow Road**) with a wood stage, which stands across from the ca. 1945 commercial building, on the former site of the ca. 1920 brick commercial building.

### *Statement of Integrity*

The Dante Downtown Historic District possesses sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association for the period of significance, from 1906 to 1959, to convey its development as a company coal town that flourished in the early- to mid-twentieth century. The downtown district retains integrity of location, setting and association as it continues to be situated on the flattest area within the surrounding hollows with Lick Creek flowing through the center of town and the tracks of the Clinchfield Railroad, which currently operates as CSX, forming a boundary for the district. This topography of mineral-rich mountains and hollows as well as the presence of the railroad are the necessary components for any coal operation. The surviving commercial and industrial buildings as well as the train depot continue to represent the development of a company coal town within this setting during the first half of the twentieth century and retain sufficient integrity of feeling and association. Although several of the primary buildings associated with Dante's growth have been demolished, including the company store, theater, and Clinchfield Inn, the remaining train depot, bank, steam heat plant, commercial building, and dry-cleaning plant continue to convey the significance of Dante as a successful company coal town in Russell County. These buildings represent a variety of functions and styles and retain sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, and materials to convey their historic character. The steam heat plant in particular demonstrates the exceptional workmanship provided

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by skilled Italian immigrant masons in the area. The district encompasses six primary resources, of which five are contributing and one is non-contributing. There are two secondary resources, one of which is a contributing shed at the dry-cleaning plant and the other is a non-contributing shed at the steam heat plant. The two non-contributing resources postdate the period of significance.

## INVENTORY

The following inventory lists the resources within the Dante Downtown Historic District. It is organized alphabetically by street name and then numerically by street number. Each entry provides the address, building name (if applicable), date of construction, architectural style, current building use, the VDHR file number, and the contributing status within the district. Whether a building is considered contributing or non-contributing was determined based on its physical integrity (intact historic materials) as it supported the district's significance under Criterion A (Community Planning and Development, Commerce, and Industry) and Criterion C (Architecture) during the Period of Significance (1906-1959). The two non-contributing resources identified during survey postdate the district's period of significance. Resources are keyed to the Sketch Map/Photo Key by the last four digits of their 11-digit DHR inventory number (e.g., -0001, -0002, etc.).

### BUNCH TOWN ROAD

**457 Bunch Town Road**                      **083-5120**                      *Other DHR Id#: 083-5153-0001*  
*Primary Resource: Depot (Building), Stories 1, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1930*  
**Contributing**                      *Total: 1*

**506-508 Bunch Town Road**                      **083-5131**                      *Other DHR Id#: 083-5153-0002*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1945*  
NOTE: the US Postal Service currently leases space in this building for the local post office.  
**Contributing**                      *Total: 1*

### STRAIGHT HOLLOW ROAD

**13 Straight Hollow Road**                      **083-5153-0005**                      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Shelter (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 2019*  
**Non-contributing**                      *Total: 1*

**30 Straight Hollow Road**                      **083-5153-0006**                      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1915*  
**Contributing**                      *Total: 1*  
*Secondary Resource: Shed (Building)*  
**Contributing**                      *Total: 1*

**30 Straight Hollow Road**                      **083-5119**                      *Other DHR Id#: 083-5153-0003*  
*Primary Resource: Bank (Building), Stories 1, Style: Neo-Classical Revival, Ca 1915*  
**Contributing**                      *Total: 1*

**50 Straight Hollow Road**                      **083-5118**                      *Other DHR Id#: 083-5153-0004*



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*Primary Resource:* **Boiler House (Building), Stories 1, Style: Romanesque Revival/Richardsonian,  
Ca 1910**

*Secondary Resource:* **Shed (Building)**

<b>Contributing</b>	<i>Total: 1</i>
<b>Non-contributing</b>	<i>Total: 1</i>

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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

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION

**Period of Significance**

1906-1959

**Significant Dates**

1912

1924

1944

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

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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 Dante Downtown Historic District in Russell County, Virginia, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Commerce, and Transportation. The district comprises the historic commercial core of the Town of Dante, a company coal town that prospered from the early- to mid-twentieth century. Although initially founded by Dawson Coal and Coke Company in January 1903, Dante's growth accelerated in 1906 when it was acquired by Clinchfield Coal Corporation and fully developed as a company town. In 1912, Dante became the Clinchfield Coal Corporation's headquarters. Constrained by the challenging geography found throughout the region, the town was laid out along the area's hollows, following the smaller branches and trajectory of Lick Creek, a tributary of the Clinch River, and the railroad tracks. In 1904 the first rail line was laid: a seven-mile track that linked Dante to the nearest Norfolk & Western line. In 1908-1909, the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad (which became the Clinchfield Railroad in 1924 and is currently operated by CSX) was organized and placed in service, further stimulating the development of Dante. The production and shipment of coal was the sole industry in Dante. The buildings in the historic district supported the coal industry by providing various goods and services to the Clinchfield Coal Corporation's miners, managerial and administrative employees, and officers. The historic district is also locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the district's collections of buildings clearly express a distinguishable entity that conveys the significance of Dante as a company coal town with some buildings featuring character-defining stonework by Italian stone masons whose work is found through Virginian Appalachia. In 1944, the Pittston Coal Company obtained a controlling (60%) interest in Clinchfield Coal Corporation's stock. The period of significance for the Dante Downtown Historic District begins in 1906, the date the Clinchfield Coal Corporation took over operations in Dante and developed it as a company town. The period of significance ends in 1959 when the mines were closed followed by a decline in the population and economy of the town.

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

### **Justification of Criteria**

#### *Criterion A: Community Planning and Development*

The Dante Downtown Historic District is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development because the town is an excellent example of a company town established and developed solely by a coal company, initially Dawson Coal and Coke Company in 1903 and subsequently Clinchfield Coal Corporation beginning in 1906. Characteristic of a coal town in southern Appalachia, development centered alongside the railroad corridor that provided the critical transport of coal from the nearby mines to markets. Meticulously designed by engineers to work within the topographical constraints of the region, the railroad line followed the natural path of the waterways and radiated with spur lines extending to the mines and

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miners' housing located in the surrounding hollows; another spur was removed to make way for the current alignment of Bunch Town Road within the district. The commercial district is located on the flattest and widest terrain in town with the depot serving as the nucleus. Although not included in the commercial district, residential development consisted of modest cottages for the miners located along the spur lines leading into the hollows and larger houses for managerial or administrative employees and company officers located closer to downtown or on the adjacent hillsides. Similar to southern textile mill villages, Clinchfield Coal Corporation built and owned all buildings in town, along with the mining operations and the railroad. Like other company coal towns in southwestern Virginia, Dante developed in three phases. The first was characterized as the pioneering phase when towns were established and growth accelerated at the turn of the twentieth century. The second phase, the paternalistic phase, lasted from World War I until the Great Depression, when the coal industry peaked and companies provided for all of miners' social, recreational, educational, and entertainment needs to encourage company loyalty. This was followed by the third phase which comprised the mid-1930s through the mid-twentieth century, when the development of company towns slowed as demand for coal declined and as mining operations became increasingly mechanized.<sup>3</sup> While many of the buildings associated with the company and mining operations have been demolished, most notably the company store, the Dante Downtown Historic District continues to convey its significant history as a company coal town owned by the Clinchfield Coal Corporation and its subsequent evolution and decline that paralleled national trends in the coal industry.

*Criterion A: Commerce*

The Dante Downtown Historic District is also significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Commerce as it has served as the commercial center of the town from its initial establishment in 1903 and subsequent development as a company coal town by the Clinchfield Coal Corporation beginning in 1906 through the 1950s. Dante was a self-sufficient company town, and the historic district encompasses the commercial buildings constructed by the Clinchfield Coal Company to support the retail, entertainment, social, and banking needs of the company's employees and their families. Known as welfare capitalism, this trend was considered by many to encourage employers to treat their highly skilled workers well in order to limit turnover. In instances where employees were required to purchase all of their goods from company-owned stores (a method enforced by paying workers with company-issued scrip instead of legal tender) and wages were insufficient to attain basic necessities, employees who became indebted to their employers had few other employment opportunities and little recourse for obtaining higher pay.

Dante's primary commercial building, the company store (demolished) was prominently located at the center of the district and served as the nucleus for the surrounding commercial development that remains. The bank (30 Straight Hollow Road) and dry-cleaning plant (30 Straight Hollow Road) stand at the north end of the district. The commercial building at 506-508 Bunch Town Road, across the street from the site of the company store, was built ca. 1945 to house a dress shop and pharmacy and currently is leased by the US Postal Service to serve as the local post office. A large addition to this building was constructed in 1958 to provide offices for the Pittston Coal Company, which had acquired controlling interest in the Clinchfield Coal Company in 1944. The steam heat plant (50 Straight Hollow Road), also located at the north end of the district, represents

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the overarching control of the coal company as it served as the central heat plant and provided heat to all the businesses in the commercial district. In addition to the company store, other amenities that once occupied the commercial district included a theater, another commercial buildings housing a barbershop, jewelry repair shop, the Clinchfield Inn, a hotdog and candy shop, filling station, icehouse, shoe shop, and automobile dealership and repair shop. Although these buildings and services are no longer extant, their historic presence within the commercial district provides a testament to the importance of this geographically isolated area. The district's remaining resources continue to communicate that the historic district served as the commercial center of Dante.

*Criterion A: Transportation*

The Dante Downtown Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Transportation as the establishment and development of Dante as a company coal town depended directly on the construction and operation of the railroad to transport the coal from the mines in the surrounding hollows to markets. Dante became one of the most successful coal towns in Southwest Virginia with the emergence of the railroad. While railroads were a necessity for transporting the coal to markets, establishing rail service in the area was not an easy feat given the challenges of the mountainous topography. Tazewell Coal and Iron, the first major coal company in Turkey Foot, formed in the late 1880s and began grading for the Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago Railroad in 1886 before it failed in 1893 without completing the rail line. Stilson Hutchins and William Dante established the subsequent Dawson Coal and Coke Company in 1901-1902 and founded the Lick Creek and Lake Erie Railroad Company to bring rail service to town. Using a rail bed that had been partially graded years before by the Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago Railroad, Hutchins and Dante laid the tracks and completed the line in 1904. They leased a Norfolk and Western Railway engine to run the seven-mile track to Fink, where it connected to the Norfolk and Western main line. The development of this railroad track greatly increased coal activity and the town of Dante began to flourish. The next major coal operator in Dante, the Clinchfield Coal Corporation under the direction of George L. Carter, enhanced rail service to town by creating the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad (CCO) in 1908, which eventually connected Dante directly to markets in Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina. In 1924, the CCO became the Clinchfield Railroad, operated by the Atlantic Coast Line and the Louisville and Nashville railroads. Not only did the railroad allow for the exportation of coal, but it provided passenger service to residents in Dante, most of whom did not own automobiles. The railroad also imported commercial goods for the town's residents, thereby supporting the businesses within the historic district. The main line of the Clinchfield Railroad, now used by CSX, is adjacent to the historic district's western boundary, providing a tangible expression of the importance of the railroad to the success of Dante. Although now in ruinous condition, the brick depot remains in its original location alongside the tracks and is directly associated with the movement of passengers and goods into and out of Dante.

*Criterion C: Architecture*

The Dante Downtown Historic District is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the district's collection of buildings clearly expresses a distinguishable entity that conveys the significance of Dante as a company coal town. Constructed by the Clinchfield Coal Corporation, the buildings represent the paternalism of the company in providing steam heat for

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upper-level employee housing and commercial goods and services for employees as well as the coal corporation's need for financial services through the local bank branch. The siting of the one- and two-story buildings of masonry construction is based on the distinct topography of Southwest Virginia. Rather than following a gridded system, the buildings are situated on roads that parallel railroad lines which follow the creeks and extend into the hollows of the mountains formed by large pieces of sedimentary rock. The buildings are designed in a variety of styles, including Richardsonian Romanesque, Classical Revival, Craftsman, Main Street Commercial, and International Style that collectively represent the craftsmanship and materials of the region as well as nationally popular architectural styles of the period. The brick and stone buildings feature architectural detailing such as corbelling and articulated arched openings. At 50 Straight Hollow Road, the stonework on the steam heat plant (083-5153-0004) is exemplary of work by Italian immigrant masons who worked throughout southern Appalachia during the early twentieth century. Its character-defining rusticated stone walls and arches outlined with brick are the most notable elements the building's Richardsonian Romanesque style. In contrast, the 1945 commercial building at 506-508 Bunch Town Road (083-5153-0002) is an austere example of the Commercial Style defined by two storefronts with large display windows flanking glass-framed entrance doors and unadorned window openings along the second story. Brick corbeling along the low parapet roof is the only ornamentation feature. The building's mid-1950s International Style rear addition is accented with a recessed entrance bay flanked by brick wing walls. At 30 Straight Hollow Road (083-5153-0003), the former bank's Classical Revival design is the most sophisticated in the district. Although modest in scale, the building features the balance and proportions that typify academically correct revival designs of the early twentieth century. The centered entry and flanking windows are within round-arched openings defined by molded stone surrounds. A stone water table extends along the edge between the concrete block foundation and the stretcher bond brick walls, while a stone string course extends above the window and door openings. A molded frieze topped with soldier bricks defines a narrow space below the low parapet's stone coping where signage has been installed. Thus, while only a single story in height, the building's form conveys the base, shaft, and capital of a classical column. Although in varying levels of condition, these buildings as a whole communicate the investments made by the company to develop a fully functioning commercial district.

## **Historical Background**

### *Early Settlement*

Before European pioneers settled in the area, the land that would become Russell County in Southwest Virginia was inhabited by the Cherokee tribe. The area became Augusta County in 1745 with early pioneers coming from Scotland, Ireland, England, Germany, and Africa.<sup>4</sup> Augusta County was subdivided into smaller counties in 1769, 1772, and 1777, until ultimately Russell County was formed on January 6, 1786, and was named for General William Russell, the member of the Virginia House of Delegates who crafted the legislation to form the county.<sup>5</sup> Early settlers in the county settled near the Clinch River and along previously established transportation routes. They were primarily small-scale farmers who grew a variety of crops including corn, wheat, oats, rye, buckwheat, tobacco, peas, beans, potatoes, clover, and flax.<sup>6</sup> The area that would become

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Dante was first known as Turkey Foot. When viewed from above, the creeks take on the appearance of a turkey's foot with Lick Creek as the leg and the three branches of Bear Wallow Creek, Straight Hollow Creek, and Sawmill Hollow Creek forming the toes.<sup>7</sup> Turkey Foot was largely inaccessible during this period due to the mountainous terrain, narrow hollows, and lack of overland roads.

### *Late Nineteenth Century and Industrial Beginnings*

During the Civil War, engineers came to survey the region and discovered the natural wealth the northwestern portion of the county offered with vast reserves of timber above 84 square miles of bituminous coal.<sup>8</sup> After the war, Northern capitalists sent agents to visit the land identified in the surveys as rich in natural resources, including the area known as Turkey Foot. These capitalists began acquiring massive amounts of mountain land at low prices, built railroad lines to export the natural resources, and ultimately made the previously isolated Appalachian coalfields accessible. Coal towns in these areas quickly appeared around the region.<sup>9</sup> The formerly agricultural economy shifted to an industrial one with coal, railroads, and timber becoming the main economic drivers. The new company coal towns were typically established in existing communities, but the names often changed from landscape descriptors, such as Turkey Foot, to names associated with men involved with the industrial developments. Dante, for example, was named for William Dante, the vice-president of Dawson Coal and Coke Company.<sup>10</sup>

The industrial boom profoundly changed Dante and Russell County demographically as well as economically. The first men recruited to work the newly established mines were generally natives to Russell County who previously worked in agriculture. As coal production soared, an influx of labor came into the region including European immigrants, such as Hungarians and Italians, and southern Black sharecroppers. These immigrants brought a diverse mix of races, religions, and cultures to the area. Dante, typical of other coal towns in the region, "became a melting pot of European immigrants, black sharecroppers, and local farmers."<sup>11</sup>

### *Establishment of Dante*

Southern Appalachian coal towns, including Dante, boomed in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The unincorporated village of Dante would become one of the largest company coal mining towns in Southwest Virginia in the first half of the twentieth century. This industrial development first began in the late 1880s when heirs of the Phillips and Dickenson families, early settlers in Turkey Foot, sold their land to the Virginia and Tennessee Coal and Iron Company and Tazewell Coal and Iron, respectively. At this time, Cyrene Boice and W. W. Clark engaged with Tazewell Coal and Iron to acquire the timber and opened a sawmill in Turkey Foot. They extracted and processed the timber to construct mining infrastructure and mining camp buildings. Although Tazewell Coal and Iron tried to establish a rail line to Dante to export the coal, they were unsuccessful and sold their land holdings in 1901.<sup>12</sup>

Stilson Hutchins acquired the land that would become Dante in 1901 and organized the Dawson Coal and Coke Company in 1902. Hutchins was an accomplished businessman in Washington D.C. as well as an investor in coal mines and real estate. In addition to being the founding editor and publisher of the *Washington Post*, Hutchins also built the Washington and Great Falls electric



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railroad along the Potomac River. William Joseph Dante acted as Hutchins's personal secretary. Dante was a native of Washington, D.C., and the treasurer of Hutchins's railroad company. When Hutchins formed Dawson Coal and Coke Company, he promoted Dante to the role of vice-president.<sup>13</sup> Hutchins and Dante realized the urgency of bringing rail service to Turkey Foot for the success of their coal mines. They formed the Lick Creek and Lake Erie Railroad and laid a track on a partially graded rail bed started by the unsuccessful Charleston, Cincinnati & Chicago (3-C) railroad. The 3-C project was halted during the Depression of 1893. In 1904, an engine leased from Norfolk and Western Railway ran seven miles to Fink to connect with the Norfolk and Western track.<sup>14</sup> On January 12, 1903, the coal town formally became Dante when the Dante Post Office opened.<sup>15</sup>

#### *George L. Carter and Clinchfield Coal Corporation in Dante*

In 1903, George L. Carter purchased the coal lands in Dante. Carter, a native of Carroll County, Virginia, was an experienced industrial capitalist who began his career in coal in 1877 working at the Wythe Lead Mine Company. Carter worked his way up the ranks from buyer to manager before acquiring coal lands and selling off the land and mineral rights. Carter continued his coal ventures both in Southwest Virginia and in the Pennsylvania coalfields. In 1898, he eventually established his own organization, the Carter Coal and Iron Company, operating 700 coke ovens in Wise County. At the end of the same year, due to financial troubles, he sold off his company and created a new one, Virginia Iron Coal and Coke, with headquarters in Bristol, Virginia.<sup>16</sup> In the early-twentieth century, Carter continued to acquire coal companies, both large and small. On June 6, 1906, he consolidated all of his coal property, including Clinchfield Coal Corporation, Cranes Nest Coal and Coke (formerly Virginia Iron Coal and Coke), and Dawson Coal and Coke, into one company, Clinchfield Coal Corporation.<sup>17</sup> In October 1906, geologist Ralph Stone reported that the four mines operated by the new organization and located along the Middle Fork of Lick Creek in Straight Hollow produced about 15,000 tons of coal a month.<sup>18</sup> Initially the Clinchfield Coal Corporation's headquarters were located in Bristol before moving to Johnson City, Tennessee.<sup>19</sup>

While organizing his new coal operation, Carter was concurrently working on constructing a major railroad, utilizing the old 3-C tracks, that would link the coalfields to both the Great Lakes and Atlantic Coast.<sup>20</sup> The railroad was necessary for coal companies to succeed as it made the shipment and, therefore, sale of coal viable. Coal towns in the Appalachian south were located in isolated areas with difficult terrain, necessitating construction of a cohesive network of railroad lines connecting the coalfields to regional markets. In 1908, due to financial troubles Carter was forced to scale back his plans of a major railroad and instead worked to create a shorter line that would connect to other major lines. With the help of engineers, including his general manager and chief engineer, M.J. Caples, Carter constructed a new railroad corridor with 80 trestles and 55 tunnels that snaked through the Appalachian Mountains and eventually terminated at Elkhorn, Kentucky, to the north and Spartanburg, South Carolina, to the south.<sup>21</sup> Named the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio (CCO) Railroad and "deemed by *Scientific American* as the costliest railroad in America at the time, the line was placed in operation in 1909 and stimulated the further development of Dante as a premier company coal town."<sup>22</sup>

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Although the development of Dante began prior to Carter's involvement, the town boomed under the paternalistic control of Clinchfield Coal Corporation beginning in 1906. The company launched the construction of a comprehensive coal town to provide for the basic (i.e., food and housing), commercial, social, and religious needs of its workers and managers in order to encourage their loyalty and productivity. In 1906, there were 500 men on the Clinchfield Coal Corporation payroll.<sup>23</sup> The company store, the heart of every company coal town, opened in 1906 and operated continuously until November 1977 when all Clinchfield stores across the coalfields closed. The company store, known as "Store B," was located in a prominent location within the downtown, on a large flat parcel between two railroad tracks.<sup>24</sup> The store sold a variety of products such as groceries, clothing, toys, candy, and more and served as the social hub where people could meet and swap local gossip and news. Name-brand goods were shipped into Dante by rail, dropped off directly on the loading platforms, and then sold at Store B at marked-up prices. The company store was the only place where mine employees could spend their scrip, the currency of the coal companies, at full value.<sup>25</sup> Across from Store B stood the Clinchfield Inn. Constructed in 1904, the hotel featured an assortment of rooms for company officials traveling from cities such as New York as well as administrative employees and single miners.<sup>26</sup> South of Store B stood the original frame depot, opened in 1909. While an electric plant powered the mines, a steam heat plant, sited north of Store B, powered the downtown buildings, company officials' houses on Roanoke Hill, and a small hospital staffed by coal company-employed doctors. The use of steam heat to power buildings was limited to those in close proximity to the plant as the transfer of steam heat became inefficient at long distances.<sup>27</sup> In 1906, the water supply plant was built north of the steam heat plant with water supplied directly from a well. Fire protection lines were installed at this time as well.<sup>28</sup> In 1907 the first private telephone system was placed in service.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Continued Growth and World War I*

While construction of the town of Dante flourished, Carter turned his attention to his other real estate and coal ventures and established the *Bristol Herald Courier* newspaper. He also donated to the State of Tennessee 150 acres and \$100,000 to create the East Tennessee Normal School, which eventually would become East Tennessee State University.<sup>30</sup> The headquarters of Clinchfield Coal Corporation moved from Johnson City to Dante in 1912 when Carter moved on to his next endeavor in West Virginia.<sup>31</sup> The town continued to grow under the leadership of Lee Long, who came to Dante in 1911 as the general superintendent for Clinchfield Coal Corporation. By 1914, he was promoted to vice-president and placed in charge of the company's operations. Long also served as president of the Virginia Coal Operators Association and as a director of the Breaks Reserve and Reforestation Association.<sup>32</sup> Lee occupied the most prominent house in Dante, sited on a hill overlooking downtown Dante; the house was known as "Lingerlong."<sup>33</sup> The house still stands overlooking the historic district, but is currently vacant.

World War I created increased demand for coal, and the company coal towns throughout the region thrived. Coal production in Russell County peaked in 1920 with an average yield of 3,000 tons a day and 2.1 million tons a year.<sup>34</sup> Although Dante, as the headquarters of Clinchfield Coal Corporation, was the largest company coal town in the county, there were several other company coal towns, including South Clinchfield, Wilder, Carbo, Clinchfield, and Cleveland.<sup>35</sup> From 1908 to 1913, there were 2,300 men employed at Dante.<sup>36</sup> More labor was needed to keep up with the

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required production of coal, especially as some workers left to serve in the war. Company officials were sent out to recruit Black sharecroppers and European immigrants, particularly from Hungary, Italy, Yugoslavia, and Greece, to work the coalfields. These immigrants were given jobs that required little to no skill and were easily replaceable, either with other, namely White, laborers or eventually with machinery.<sup>37</sup> Increased labor in Dante spurred further development of worker housing. Small one-story cottages were constructed along the railroad tracks throughout the various hollows, spreading out from the nucleus of the downtown commercial district. The geography of Dante lent itself to distinct communities for various ethnic groups. The Hungarian workers lived in upper Straight Hollow, while “the Greeks lived further up near the head of Straight Hollow.”<sup>38</sup> Black miners lived in a separate section of Straight Hollow and in Sawmill Hollow.<sup>39</sup> Larger houses were constructed closer to downtown for administrative employees, and on a steep, hilly neighborhood above the hollows, known as Roanoke Hill, for managers and officers, all of whom were White. The houses on Roanoke Hill not only differed in size but also in that they featured indoor plumbing and heat.<sup>40</sup> Although separated by residential communities, mine employees of different racial and ethnic backgrounds came together in downtown Dante, shopping at the same businesses and traveling from the same depot (albeit from racially segregated waiting rooms).

In addition to housing, coal companies throughout the Appalachian South relied “heavily upon paternalism to hold their miners in the towns.”<sup>41</sup> Clinchfield Coal Corporation also provided for the religious needs of its workers by building Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Catholic churches that reflected the rich ethnic diversity of the community. The company maintained two separate cemeteries, “one at Trammel Gap for Appalachian whites and one on the east side of Route 63...for African Americans and Europeans.”<sup>42</sup> Educational and medical needs were provided through the construction of schools and a hospital administered by the company doctors. Baseball teams and fraternal organizations as well as the company store and theater in downtown provided for the social and recreational needs of the community.

The 1910s and 1920s saw continued growth of Dante, particularly downtown. One of the earliest buildings constructed by the Coalfield Coal Corporation was the ca. 1910 steam heat plant to provide heat to the buildings downtown. A movie theater, the first of its kind in the area, was constructed around 1912 directly north of Store B. Offices for company officials, including Lee Long, were located on the second floor of the theater building.<sup>43</sup> During this time the downtown also featured an ice house, post office, morgue, jail, stables, lumberyard, and grist mill.<sup>44</sup> The CCO Railroad was completed on February 9, 1915.<sup>45</sup> Around this time the Dante branch of the Dickenson County Bank was built east of the steam heat plant. The bank, which currently houses the local history museum, operated until March 27, 1931, when it closed due to the onset of the Great Depression. After it closed, the building became the Beer Garden, a popular restaurant known for its soup, sandwiches, ice cream, and beer.<sup>46</sup> Next to the bank stands the former dry-cleaning plant, built ca. 1915 and also known as “the pressing shop.” Around 1920 a two-story brick office building was erected directly north of the theater. Various businesses occupied the first floor of this building, including a newsstand, jewelry repair shop, and barber shop. On the second floor were offices for the coal company’s engineering department; a pedestrian bridge connected these offices to the offices on the second floor of Store B.<sup>47</sup> Other businesses in town

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included a shoe shop, candy shop, and cab stand. A filling station stood between the bank and steam heat plant. In 1922, Appalachian Electric Power company began providing power to the Clinchfield Coal Corporation.<sup>48</sup> In 1924, the Atlantic Coast Line and the Louisville and Nashville railroads leased the CCO line and renamed it the Clinchfield Railroad.<sup>49</sup> In 1930, the frame railroad depot was replaced with a new brick building for \$8,190. The combined passenger and freight station had separate waiting rooms for White and Black patrons and a telegraph office.<sup>50</sup>

### *Great Depression and World War II*

The coal industry began to feel the effects of the Great Depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Unemployment levels rose while railroad transport and steel mill production fell. The demand for coal plunged as well and many coal miners either lost their jobs or experienced severe pay cuts. Working conditions worsened for miners who were anxious for any work. Clinchfield Coal Corporation was a large and successful enough operation to survive the economic climate. The company gave miners enough work a week to earn the necessary wages to pay rent for their company-owned houses. The Red Cross sent necessary food items by rail to keep the mining families nourished in addition to the food they grew and hunted for themselves. Clinchfield also extended credit at the company store to provide aid and hope to the people of Dante, although lines of credit were expected to be repaid.<sup>51</sup> In 1934, the total production of the Dante mines was 614,166 tons, a considerable decline from the 2.1 million tons in 1920. This downturn was not only a result of the Great Depression, but also of the nation's growing reliance on oil, gas, and hydroelectric power. However, Clinchfield was still able to continue operating three mines, one of which, Mine #2, was the largest in the country at that time.<sup>52</sup> Construction generally halted in Dante's downtown area during the 1930s, after the new depot was erected. In 1937, there were a total of 516 houses and 59 company buildings in Dante, all constructed by Clinchfield Coal Corporation. Not all miners stayed in Dante and kept their jobs during the Great Depression. In his geologic work, *The Geology and Mineral Resources of Russell County*, Herbert P. Woodward found that the population of Dante decreased from 3,800 people in 1930 to 2,000 in 1938. However, Dante was still the largest town in the area, greatly surpassing the population of approximately 1,000 people living in Lebanon, 700 in Honaker, and 400 in Cleveland.<sup>53</sup>

Although the coming of World War II increased demand for coal, it did not climb to the levels of World War I. Young men left Dante, most for the first time in their lives, to serve in the war and some women traveled to work at defense plants in other cities.<sup>54</sup> The increased demand for coal and availability of workers during World War II still did not create the same labor shortage as World War I, namely due to the increased mechanization of mining work which allowed coal companies to improve production with fewer miners.<sup>55</sup> There were almost 3,000 employees working for Clinchfield in 1943, with about half working at Dante (the other half worked at the nearby Clinchco mining operation).<sup>56</sup>

By the 1940s, commercial activity began to rebound and a new automobile dealership, owned by W.A. Turner, was operating at the north end of downtown. The dealership sold Chevrolets and Buicks. Ray Roller and Theodore Williams, Sr. worked in the repair shop.<sup>57</sup> Around 1945, a new commercial building was constructed across from Store B, south of the Clinchfield Inn. Currently the location of the post office, the building originally housed a pharmacy and dress shop that

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occupied the two storefronts on the first floor while the second floor provided office space. Dante's fortune appeared to be moving in a positive direction.<sup>58</sup>

### *Dante's Decline*

In 1944, the Pittston Coal Company, a coal company that was chartered in 1838 as the Pennsylvania Coal Company, obtained a controlling (60%) interest in Clinchfield Coal Corporation's stock. At the time, the stock's value was \$11 per share. When Joseph P. Routh, chairman and president of Pittston Coal Company, took over, he expanded the company's territory from along the Clinchfield Railroad line and opened vast new coal seams in Kentucky and West Virginia. In 1956, Pittston absorbed Clinchfield, and operated it as Clinchfield Coal Company. By 1959, the company's stock was valued at \$600 per share.<sup>59</sup> The long-time vice president and most senior local officer of Clinchfield Coal Corporation, Lee Long, left Dante in 1944 when Pittston came into power. A. R. "Army" Matthews replaced Long as the vice president and Rush Adams became the production manager.<sup>60</sup> In 1947, Pittston decided it was not in the company's best interest to maintain the houses in Dante, particularly when new regulations banned the deduction of rent from employees' paychecks. The company sold its residential building stock through a subsidiary, the Swannanoa Corporation, and miners and their families were granted the first option to purchase the houses in town.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1950s a number of factors led to the decline of company towns, including Dante, such as changes in the fuel industry with the rise of gas, oil, and hydroelectric power; the rapid proliferation of personal automobiles and the decline of train transportation; and the increased mechanization of the mines which put many miners out of jobs.<sup>62</sup> The physical makeup of Dante began to deteriorate with the demolition of the Clinchfield Inn in 1956 and the destruction of the Dante Central School by fire in 1958. Despite this decline, Pittston made a large investment in town with the construction of a large brick addition in 1958 onto the ca. 1945 commercial building across from Store B to provide additional office space for Clinchfield Coal Company employees.<sup>63</sup> The general population of Dante also began to change during this time. The Black community in Dante was particularly hard hit as Black miners were limited to the jobs that required the least amount of skill, and therefore were most easily replaced with new machinery. Many of the Black miners and their families left Dante and their housing settlements. Other ethnic groups, such as the Hungarians, were also laid off before native White employees, and those communities left town quickly as well. Many churches associated with the Black and ethnic communities, such as Mount Calvary Baptist Church and St. Catherine's Catholic Church, also closed.<sup>64</sup>

Pittston fully closed the Dante mines in 1959, although they still leased the mines to private operators for several more years.<sup>65</sup> The Clinchfield Coal Company headquarters remained in Dante until October 1972, when Pittston moved the administrative staff to Lebanon.<sup>66</sup> Since the unincorporated town of Dante was fully dependent upon the coal companies, the town failed when the mines shut down and the headquarters of Clinchfield Coal Company moved to Lebanon. Many of the miners left town and abandoned their houses.<sup>67</sup> The hospital closed in 1974 and Store B was closed in 1977 and demolished in 1978.<sup>68</sup> By the early 1990s, all the schools in Dante had closed and students began attending schools around Russell County. In 2020, Dante's population totaled 572. Although many of the buildings downtown are now vacant, a museum operates out of the

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former bank building, the post office remains in leased space in one of the storefronts in the ca. 1945 commercial building, and the 1958 addition contains apartments. In spite of the decline in population and loss of physical fabric, the town of Dante continues to retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as an early- to mid-twentieth century company coal town. In 1997-1998, records of the Clinchfield Coal Corporation along with oral histories and historic photographs were collected as part of a community-based research project to document the history of Dante. This collection, known as the Dante History Project Records, is part of the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University. In 2016, the Dante Community Association formed to redefine and revitalize the town as the regional economy continued to shift away from coal production. Local efforts are currently focused on saving the historic resources in Dante, including the renovation of the train depot, to preserve its history and legacy as a company coal town.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

André, Elizabeth M. and William H. Moore. "Comprehensive Survey Report: Survey of Architectural Resources in Russell County, Virginia." Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2009.

Francaviglia, Richard V. *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts*. Iowa City, IA, University of Iowa Press, 1997.

Glass, Jared. "Dante Downtown Historic District PIF." Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2017.

Russell County Heritage Book Committee. *The Heritage of Russell County, Virginia, 1786-1986, Volume 1*. Marcelline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1986.

Shearer, Katherine C. *Memories from Dante: The Life of a Coal Town*. Abingdon, VA: People Incorporated of Southwest Virginia, 2001.

Shifflett, Crandall A. *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960*. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

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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, VA

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**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DHR File No. 083-5153

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 3.46 acres (approximate)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

A. Latitude: 36.979237                      Longitude: -82.297694

B. Latitude: 36.979308                      Longitude: -82.297219

C. Latitude: 36.977574                      Longitude: -82.297011

D. Latitude: 36.977215                      Longitude: -82.298547

E. Latitude: 36.977347                      Longitude: -82.298829

**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 historic boundary includes all tax parcels as shown on the attached Dante Downtown Historic District Sketch Map/Photo Key, which shows the district's true and correct historic boundaries.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary for the Dante Downtown Historic District comprises the area of Dante most closely related to the town's commercial development between 1906 and 1959. All



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remaining historic commercial resources as well as the district's historic setting as a commercial center of a company coal town in Southwest Virginia are captured within the boundary.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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date: February 2023

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### 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: Dante Downtown Historic District  
City or Vicinity: Russell County, Town of Dante  
State: Virginia  
Photographer: Kate Kronau  
Date Photographed: October 2022

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

Photo 1 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0001  
Bunch Town Road, view north

Photo 2 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0002  
Straight Hollow Road, view NW

Photo 3 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0003  
Railroad Tracks and Dante Depot, view NE

Photo 4 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0004  
Steam Heat Plant, view north

Photo 5 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0005  
Bunch Town Road, view south

Photo 6 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0006  
Dante Bank, view east

Photo 7 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0007  
Lick Creek and Straight Hollow Road, view north

Photo 8 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0008  
Commercial Building, 506-508 Bunch Town Road, view NE

Photo 9 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0009  
Bunch Town Road, view north to Straight Hollow Road

Photo 10 of 10: VA\_RussellCounty\_DanteDowntownHistoricDistrict\_0010  
Straight Hollow Road, view SE

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Elizabeth M. André and William H. Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report: Survey of Architectural Resources in Russell County, Virginia, (Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2009), p. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County, Virginia, 1786-1986, Volume 1*, (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1986), p. 87.
- <sup>3</sup> Crandall A. Shifflett, *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960*, (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 48-49.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 7; Katherine C. Shearer, *Memories from Dante, the Life of the Coal Town*, (Abingdon, VA: People Incorporated of Southwest Virginia, 2001), p. 17.
- <sup>5</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p. 8-9.
- <sup>6</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 13.
- <sup>7</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 87.
- <sup>8</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p. 10; Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 13.
- <sup>9</sup> Shifflett, *Coal Towns*, p. xi.
- <sup>10</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 17.
- <sup>11</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p. 10, 101.
- <sup>12</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 43-44.
- <sup>13</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 44-45.
- <sup>14</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 45.
- <sup>15</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 46.
- <sup>16</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 51.
- <sup>17</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 56-57.
- <sup>18</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 65.
- <sup>19</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 404.
- <sup>20</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 52.
- <sup>21</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 52-53.
- <sup>22</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p. 159.
- <sup>23</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 87.
- <sup>24</sup> Richard V. Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts*, (Iowa City, IA, University of Iowa Press, 1997), p. 39.
- <sup>25</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 18, 182; Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 87.
- <sup>26</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 192.
- <sup>27</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 175.
- <sup>28</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 177.
- <sup>29</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 176.
- <sup>30</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 56.
- <sup>31</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 57.
- <sup>32</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 79.
- <sup>33</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 79, 255.
- <sup>34</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 73.
- <sup>35</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p. 101.
- <sup>36</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 87.
- <sup>37</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p. 102.
- <sup>38</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 218.
- <sup>39</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 418.
- <sup>40</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 255-256.
- <sup>41</sup> Shifflett, *Coal Towns*, p. 66.
- <sup>42</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p. 107, Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 249.
- <sup>43</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 175, 182.
- <sup>44</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 210-211.

Dante Downtown Historic District

Name of Property

Russell County, VA

County and State

- 
- <sup>45</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 55.  
<sup>46</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 205.  
<sup>47</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 180, 182.  
<sup>48</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 87.  
<sup>49</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 57.  
<sup>50</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 189.  
<sup>51</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 412, 445.  
<sup>52</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 75.  
<sup>53</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 214.  
<sup>54</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 418.  
<sup>55</sup> Shifflett, *Coal Towns*, p. 206.  
<sup>56</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 87.  
<sup>57</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 209.  
<sup>58</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 445.  
<sup>59</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 57, 445.  
<sup>60</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 84.  
<sup>61</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 445.  
<sup>62</sup> Shifflett, *Coal Towns*, p. xiv, 32.  
<sup>63</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 350, 200.  
<sup>64</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 454, 448.  
<sup>65</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 463.  
<sup>66</sup> Russell County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Russell County*, p. 87.  
<sup>67</sup> André and Moore, "Comprehensive Survey Report", p.107.  
<sup>68</sup> Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, p. 463.





**Legend**

County Boundaries

**TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**

**Dante Downtown  
Historic District  
Russell County, VA  
DHR No. 083-5153**

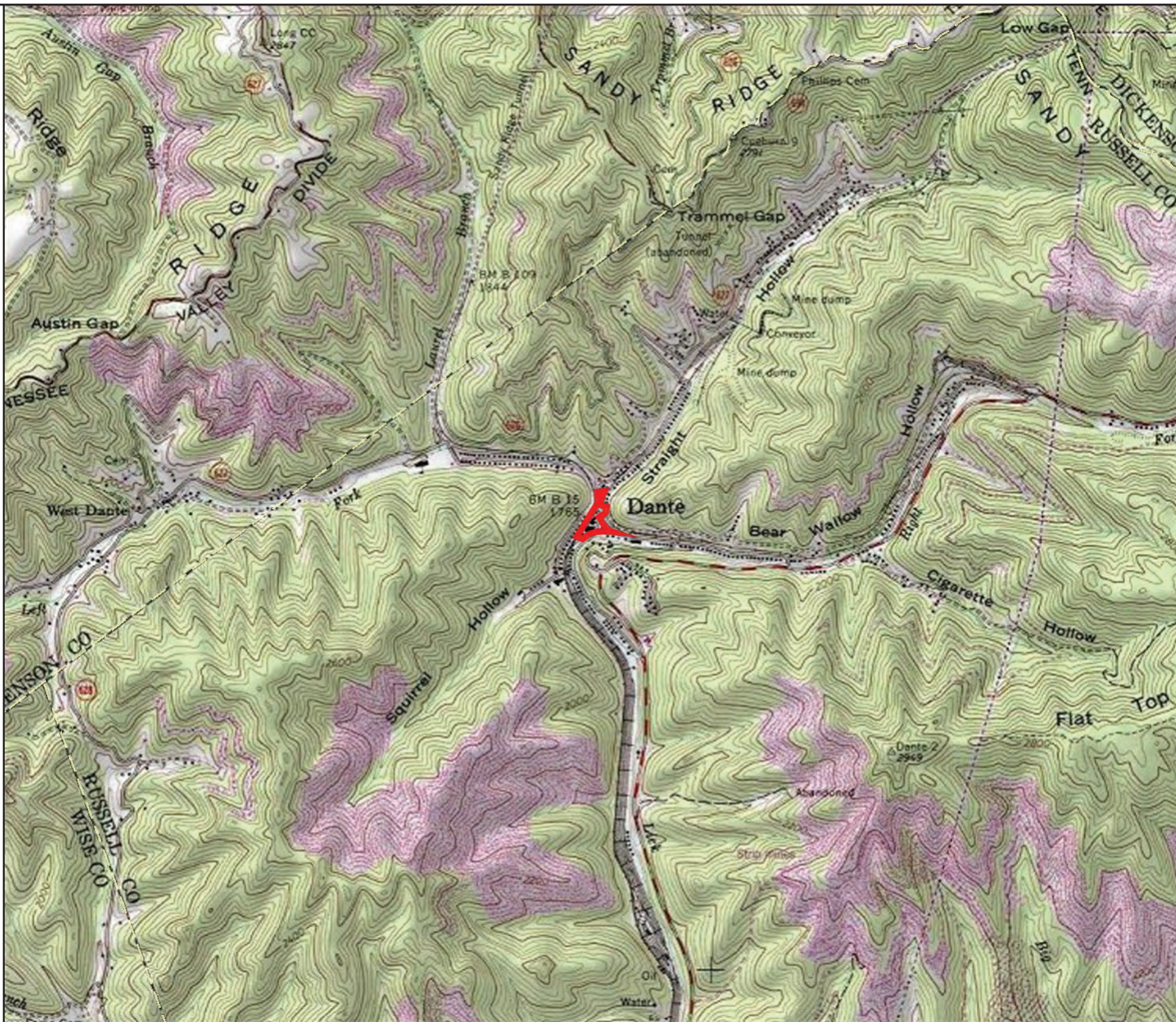
Historic Boundary



Feet

0 600 1200 1800 2400

1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet



**Title:**

**Date: 5/18/2023**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

*Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.*





**Legend**

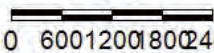
County Boundaries

**AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY**  
**Dante Downtown Historic**  
**District**  
**Russell County, VA**  
**DHR No. 083-5153**

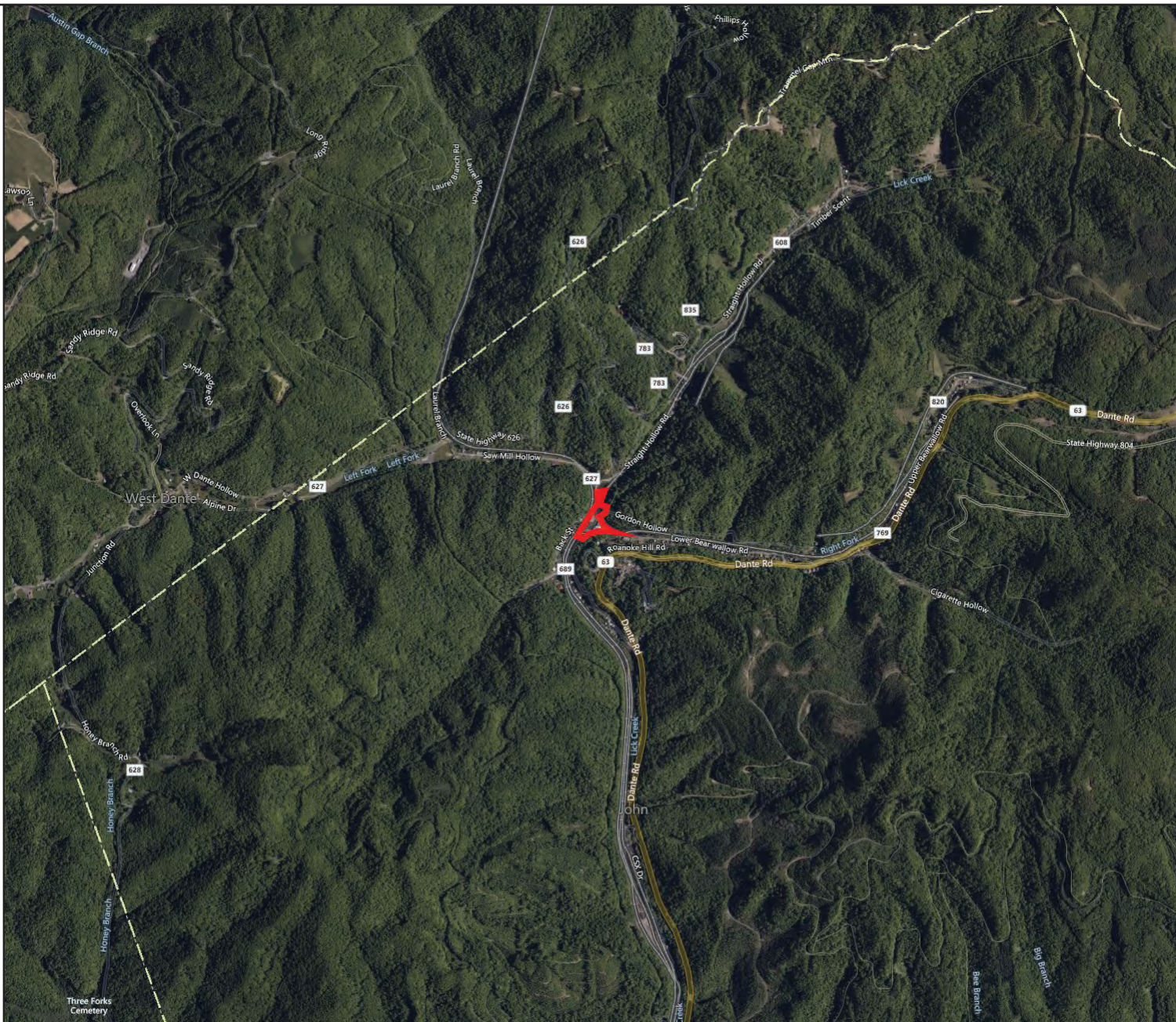
Historic Boundary



Feet



0 600 1200 1800 2400  
1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet



**Title:**

**Date: 5/18/2023**

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**Legend**

County Boundaries

**ROAD MAP**

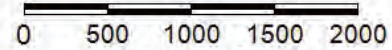
**Dante Downtown Historic District**  
**Russell County, VA**  
**DHR No. 083-5153**



Historic Boundary



Feet



1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 5/18/2023**

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Digital Location Map

Dante Downtown Historic District  
Russell County, VA  
VDHR ID# 083-5153  
Dante, VA

A. Latitude: 36.979237 Longitude: -82.297694

B. Latitude: 36.979308 Longitude: -82.297219

C. Latitude: 36.977574 Longitude: -82.297011

D. Latitude: 36.977215 Longitude: -82.298547

E. Latitude: 36.977347 Longitude: -82.298829

WGS84

Map Source: VCRIS



Historic Boundary



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

**Title: Dante Downtown Historic District**


**Date: 1/9/2023**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*


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**Sketch Map/Photo Key**  
**Dante Downtown Historic District**  
**Russell County, VA | DHR ID# 083-5153**  
**January 9, 2023**

 Historic District Boundary

 Contributing

 Non-Contributing

