

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Todd Historic District

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number Located along Todd Railroad Grade Road, Big Hill Road  not for publication  
and Carter Miller Road

city or town Todd  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Ashe & Watauga code 189 zip code 28684

### 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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey J. Crow SHPO 11/15/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Todd Historic District  
Name of Property

Watauga, NC  
Ashe, NC  
County and State

**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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>24</u>	<u>8</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>25</u>	<u>8</u>	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

see continuation sheets

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**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

see continuation sheets

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

see continuation sheets

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**Materials** See continuation sheets  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_

walls \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

see continuation sheets

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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce
- Community Planning and Development
- Transportation
- Architecture

Period of Significance

Circa 1840 - 1940

Significant Dates

1915

1933

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Western Office of the Division of Archives & History

Todd Historic District  
Name of Property

Watauga, NC  
Ashe, NC  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of Property approximately 19 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sherry Joines Wyatt, Historic Preservation Specialist

organization David E. Gall, A.I.A., Architect date September 7, 1999

street & number 938 West Fifth Street telephone 336-773-1213

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple (see list of owners)

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 6  
7 Page 1

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Function

- DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
- DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure
- DOMESTIC/Hotel
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Financial Institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE/General Store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Specialty Store
- GOVERNMENT/Post Office
- RELIGION/Religious Facility
- RELIGION/Church-related Residence
- AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/Agricultural Outbuilding
- HEALTH CARE/Medical Business/Office
- LANDSCAPE/Natural feature
- TRANSPORTATION/Rail-related
- OTHER/Photo Studio

### Current Function

- DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
- DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure
- COMMERCE/TRADE/General Store
- RELIGION/Religious Facility
- RELIGION/Church-related Residence
- LANDSCAPE/Natural feature
- VACANT/NOT IN USE
- OTHER/Storage

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

- NO STYLE
- LATE VICTORIAN/OTHER: Victorian Influenced
- LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman
- MODERN MOVEMENT/OTHER: Minimal Traditional

### Materials foundation

- STONE/OTHER/fieldstone
- OTHER/concrete block
- WOOD/OTHER/wood blocks
- BRICK

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7  
10 Page 2

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

**walls**

- METAL/tin
- WOOD/weatherboard
- WOOD/OTHER: board and batten
- WOOD/OTHER: German siding
- BRICK
- ASBESTOS

**roof**

- METAL/tin
- ASPHALT

**other**

- BRICK
- WOOD

## 10. Geographical Data

### UTM References

	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
A.	17	446170	4018450
B.	17	446640	4018400
C.	17	446560	4017920
D.	17	446100	4017960

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for the Todd Historic District, irregularly shaped, are delineated by the black line on both the Ashe County tax map and the Watauga County tax map. Additionally, the boundary is indicated by the bold dash-dot-dash line on the accompanying map titled "Todd Historic District" and labeled as Exhibit A. The boundary follows property lines and roadway edges in most instances except where it follows the center line of Elk Creek and along the southwestern edge where it follows a ridge and an elevation line indicated on the Todd Quadrangle of the U.S. Geological Survey Map.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Todd Historic District encompass the greatest concentration of pre-1940 contributing resources associated with the original community development along with appropriate landscape settings for each property. The boundaries include an appropriate amount of setting to convey the rural character of the district. In some cases, property lines are not followed because they contain more than the amount of acreage necessary for setting. Only those properties or portions of properties that are directly associated with or visible from the district are included.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina**7. Narrative Physical Description**

The Todd Historic District encompasses much of the rural community of Todd, which lies on the border between Ashe and Watauga Counties in North Carolina. Located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of the Appalachian chain, the village is situated in a narrow valley along Elk Creek, which empties into the South Fork of the New River at the southeastern end of the district. Elk Creek serves as the county line between Ashe and Watauga Counties, thus, some of the properties within the district are in Watauga County, though most are in Ashe County. The area surrounding the district is rural with houses and farms randomly scattered.

Todd Railroad Grade Road (SR1100), Todd's principal road, winds through the center of the community from the southeast and follows (up to the intersection with South Fork Church Road) the old Virginia-Carolina, "Virginia Creeper," railroad bed, which paralleled the South Fork of the New River. The tracks of the "Virginia Creeper" were removed by the railroad company in the 1930s. Todd Railroad Grade Road continues northwest to the intersection with North Carolina Highway 194 (outside of the district boundary). There is no formal street plan in Todd, instead, the buildings are tucked into the base of the slopes that rim the little valley. Two gravel roads, Big Hill Road (SR 1347) and Carter Miller Road (SR 1115), and one paved road, South Fork Church Road, branch off of Todd Railroad Grade Road within the district.

The historic commercial buildings of Todd are clustered on the slope to the north of Elk Creek, along Todd Railroad Grade Road. On the flat valley floor at Elk Creek, the Elkland Depot remains, representing the historic use of this area as lumber and rail yards (see historic photograph, Exhibit B). The residential structures tend to be further up the slopes, either along the Watauga bank of Elk Creek or along Carter Miller Road.

The commercial buildings in Todd are simple versions of common early twentieth century commercial buildings types. They are all wood frame structures that originally had flat or low-pitched shed roofs, most of which have been changed to front gables. All of the commercial buildings are sheathed in galvanized pressed tin that is thought to have been added as fire protection after a major fire in February of 1920. A good example of a typical Todd commercial building is the Cook Brothers Mercantile building. It is two stories with a basement feed room. It retains its original front porch, a significant feature that is the rural interpretation of the urban commercial building's awning or canopy. The most highly ornamented commercial building is the Bank of Todd, which displays decorative eave brackets and a recessed entry.

Todd's residential buildings date primarily from the circa 1914 period and display a combination of bungalow and miscellaneous Victorian details with traditional house forms that are typical of this transitional architectural period. A good example of a bungalow is the Cook House which has an engaged porch, shed roof dormer, and wide eaves. Contrasting with the Cook House is the Ester McGuire House which shows strong Victorian influence in the wrap-around porch, and triple-A roof form.

In addition to commercial and residential structures, the district contains specialized building types such as the church and hotel. Blackburn's Chapel is typical of the Minimal Traditional churches built after World War II, but the Todd Hotel is a notably atypical building. The hotel incorporates a circa 1840 Greek Revival, central-hall plan house with significant renovations made around 1912. During the renovations, a rear two-story ell was added, as well as a wealth

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

of Victorian details such as turned porch posts, lattice porch supports, a rosette in the front triple-A pediment, and decorative shingles. The two level porch on the rear ell provided access to the doors of the guest rooms.

The outbuildings within the district are primarily of two sorts: agricultural, such as barns and sheds, or residential, such as garages. The most spectacular is the large barn at the Todd Hotel, which displays the local method of sheathing with diagonally placed boards taken to a high degree of finish creating a decorative diamond pattern. The barns within the district are indicative of the modest agriculture that was practiced by those who lived and worked in what was then a bustling town.

In summary, the Todd Historic District comprises a substantially intact collection of historic resources reflecting the development of the community from the 1840s through the early 1950s. The existing resources primarily date from the 1910 - 1920 period, which represents the principal period of growth spawned by the construction of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad.

## INVENTORY LIST

The inventory list for the Todd Historic District begins with northernmost property in the district and moves south along Carter Miller Road. At the intersection with Todd Railroad Grade Road it turns west to include properties along both sides of Todd Railroad Grade Road and then moves south and southeast along Elk Creek. Finally, the resources on both sides of Todd Railroad Grade Road east of Carter Miller Road are listed beginning with the Cook Brothers Mercantile, which is nearest the eastern most property along Elk Creek, and moves northwest to the intersection with Carter Miller Road.

Each resource is designated as contributing ( C ) or non-contributing ( NC ) to the historic integrity of the district. The designation criteria were based on age, condition, and degree of alteration. The type of each resource is designated as being a building, site, structure, or object. Vacant lots are given neither an inventory number nor an indication of contributing / non-contributing status. Each property is assigned a number and each secondary resource within a property complex, such as outbuildings, is assigned a letter. These number and letter designations are keyed to an overall map of the district and to the photographs.

The methodology utilized in the completion of the nomination included three elements: field survey, research, and oral history interviews. The survey files resulting from the field survey include photographs, historic structures data sheets with property sketch maps. Primary research sources included photocopies of news articles and a plat map from the historic period, historic photographs, and the *Todd Bank News* all of which are held in the collection of Mr. Joe Morgan. Secondary resources included various histories of Ashe County available at the Ashe County Public Library (see Bibliography for a complete list). Interviews were conducted with long-time residents, building owners, former residents, and descendants of families who lived and worked in Todd during the historic period.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5  
Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
1	Weston House	C	c.1940	bldg.	496 Carter Miller Road

*DESCRIPTION:*

The front facade of this simple side gable house is dominated by a massive brick chimney. The house is sheathed in German siding. The house has an engaged front porch that extends into an uncovered deck at the side of the house. Rear additions include a rear ell with a shed addition along its side. The house was the residence of the Paul Weston, a noted photographer and musician and his wife.

1a	Weston (Westbrook) Photography Studio	C	c.1940	bldg.	486 Carter Miller Road
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*DESCRIPTION:*

This small, side-gable building with rear ell (possibly a later addition) was the studio of Paul Weston. The building has German siding. The building is currently used as a vacation home for Cox family members.

1b	Shed or Small Barn	C	c.1935	bldg.	486 Carter Miller Road
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*DESCRIPTION:*

One and a half story, gable roof building sheathed in printed tar paper over vertical board siding. Building is used for storage.

1c	Outbuilding	NC	c.1960	bldg.	496 Carter Miller Road
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*DESCRIPTION:*

This metal Quonset Hut type outbuilding is used for storage.

2	John Cox House	C	c.1935	bldg.	498 Carter Miller Road
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Built for John A. Cox, the owner of the Todd Mercantile Company, after the bankruptcy of that store in 1934. This house is the most sophisticated example of the bungalow form with Craftsman influence in the district. Details include asbestos shingle siding, side gable roof with shed dormer, front pediment stoop, eave brackets, and side porch.

2a	Outbuilding	NC	c.1960	bldg.	496 Carter Miller Road
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Long, narrow, gable roof metal outbuilding used for storage.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6 Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
3	House	NC	c.1955	bldg.	552 Carter Miller Road

*DESCRIPTION:*  
Small, side gable house is sheathed in vinyl.

4	Todd Post Office (former)	NC	c.1952	bldg.	566Carter Miller Road
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*DESCRIPTION:*  
This simple, side gable, concrete block building has a small, projecting, pedimented stoop and numerous six-over-six double-hung windows. The post office had been located in the former Bank of Todd building across Todd Railroad Grade road prior to the construction of this building by Herbert L. Moretz around 1952. Once the concrete slab for the building had been poured, Roby Seatz and his team of huge white horses pulled the old Bank of Todd safe out of the bank and across the street to its new location. The building was then constructed around the safe. The Post Mistress who served in this building, was Eleanor Moretz Newman. This building was replaced by the present post office, built near Elk Creek, in 1969. The former Todd Post Office is NON-CONTRIBUTING to the Todd Historic District only because of its age.

5	Ford Garage	C	1920	bldg.	3956 Todd RR Grade Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*  
This two story, gable roof building housed Herbert Raymond McGuire's Ford Garage business. It is believed that the facility was also used to build cars from parts sent in on the train for sale in Boone and other areas outside of Todd. The southwest corner of the building is truncated on the first floor with the second floor cantilevering out to create a cover for the entry located on the diagonal wall. The garage door is located on the southwest elevation. Like many buildings in Todd, the gable roof replaced the original flat roof, but the exposed rafter tails of the existing gable roof suggest that this change was made during the period of significance. The building has four-over-four double-hung sash windows. The upper floor was used as living quarters for the McGuire family.

Vacant lot; portion of present Baptist parsonage property nearest Todd RR Grade. South Fork Church Rd.  
Ashe County tax parcel No. 04126-013

6	Blackburn's Chapel	NC	1948	bldg.	3986 Todd RR Grade Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*  
The original church building was a log structure built in 1860 and named for one of its founders, Levi Blackburn. It was replaced in 1900 with a building erected on the current site, which was donated by Rev. Hamilton Blackburn. This building was replaced by the existing church in 1948. The building is brick veneer and has a front gable roof with a small steeple. The entry vestibule has a lower front gable roof that creates a front pavilion. Classical motifs include arch windows, quoins, and a soldier course watertable. The building is the home to the Todd United Methodist Church.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
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6a	Parsonage	NC	1953	bldg.	3986 Todd RR Grade Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Located to the rear of Blackburn's Chapel, this minimal traditional, brick veneer house has a pedimented stoop, side porch with carport beneath, and, front gable dormers. This building is deemed NON-CONTRIBUTING to the Todd Historic District only because of its AGE.

Vacant lot in front of Blackburn's Chapel Ashe County tax parcel No. 04126-015				Todd RR Grade Rd.	
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7	Miller's Store (former)	NC	c.1914	bldg.	Todd RR Grade Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Small, front gable building is thought to have originally had a flat roof and would likely have resembled the other commercial buildings in Todd. Presently, the building is clad in vinyl siding with the foundation being covered with faux stone.

Vacant lot beside Blackburn's Chapel & above Elkland Depot Ashe County tax parcel No. 04126-018				Todd RR Grade Rd.	
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8	Elk Creek	C		site	
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Large creek has a southwesterly flow that empties into the South Fork of the New River at the southwestern end of the district. The creek is the border between Ashe and Watauga Counties and is a major geographical feature in the district. The creek plays an important role in defining the relationship between flat valley floor on its north bank and the steep slopes on its south bank. The creek is significant in understanding the historic use of the topography of the district. The slopes were utilized as locations for housing and stores while the valley floor served as the location for the lumber and railroad yards.

9	Elkland Depot	C	c. 1888	bldg.	4041 Todd RR Grade Rd
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*DESCRIPTION:*

The original Elkland Depot burned in February of 1920. Shortly thereafter, the existing depot, which had been constructed in 1888, was brought on the train to Todd from Virginia. The depot is typical of modest late nineteenth century railroad architecture in its form and detailing. The rectangular, side-gable building has small cross-gable bays on the front and rear. Exterior details include board and batten siding, curved rafter tails, and diagonal board panels

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
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under the bay windows on the exterior. Two-thirds of the building was an open freight area with the passenger areas being in the opposite end. A loading dock along the freight area is protected by the building's wide eaves. Miscellaneous Victorian details on the interior include beadboard sheathing and molded window and door trim with bulls-eye corner blocks. The depot was moved a second time in 1979 to allow for the expansion of the neighboring church. It was relocated about 100 yards to the northwest of its original location in Todd. The move did not jeopardize the building's integrity since its current orientation is identical to its historic orientation. Furthermore the building's relationship to the former location of the railroad tracks and turntable is still recognizable. The building is extremely well preserved architecturally. Due to its unusual method of arrival, the Elkland Depot is the only depot of this type in Ashe County. Other stations, such as the nearby Brownwood Station, were built in situ in Ashe County around 1910 by the "Virginia Creeper" and did not display the exuberant Victorian character of the Elkland Depot. The building currently houses a river adventure outfitting business.

10	Ester McGuire House	C	c. 1910	bldg.	
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*DESCRIPTION:*  
Triple-A cottage displays a strong Folk Victorian influence in its wrap-around porch with angled corner, and chamfered posts. The plan of the house is rather complex with a side-gable, triple-A, front section and a rear ell with an extension that runs parallel to the main section of the house. McGuire was a night watchman for the railroad.

10a	Can House	C	c.1910	bldg.	
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*DESCRIPTION:*  
The upper part of this small, front gable building is frame and is sheathed in clapboard. The building is built into a hillside which allows an on-grade upper floor entrance in the rear as well as a ground level cellar entrance in the front. The building is built quite close to the rear ell of house.

10b	Barn	C	c.1910	bldg.	
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*DESCRIPTION:*  
Small, front gable barn with central aisle. The barn has distinctive diagonal siding that is common in the Todd vicinity.

10c	Shed	C		bldg	
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*DESCRIPTION:*  
Small, low shed located near barn is of frame construction and is sheathed with horizontal board siding.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 9

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
11	Baptist Parsonage (former)	C	c.1920	bldg.	South Fork Church Rd.

*DESCRIPTION:*

Pyramidal cottage has wrap-around porch and small roof pediments on two sides showing Folk Victorian influence. The transitional period in which the house was built is evident by the Craftsman influence found in the eave brackets. The house served as the residence of Preacher Winkler during the 1930s and 1940s. The early history of the house is currently unknown.

Vacant lot beside and behind Baptist Parsonage  
Watauga County tax parcel No. 2934-40-846  
South Fork Church Rd.

12	Cyrus Howell House	C	c.1915	bldg.	260 S. Fork Church Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Unusual three-room, three front door, single-pile plan one-and-one-half story house has shed roof dormer. The simple details of the house include full-width front porch, four-over-four, double-hung windows, four panel doors, and plain porch posts. Cyrus Howell served as Post Master for the Todd Post Office and was part-owner of the Todd Mercantile. Classical motifs include arch windows, quoins, and a soldier course watertable.

12a	Mobile home	NC	c.1980	bldg.	260 S. Fork Church Rd.
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13	Todd Hotel	C	c.1840/1912	bldg.	Big Hill Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*

The Todd Hotel as it exists today is a large L-plan building that was created by renovations undertaken during the historic period. The original two-story, central hall, Greek Revival house remains as the front section of the hotel. It has a hip-roof front porch with flush sheathing underneath. The front door has side lights and transom. Circa 1912 renovations have strong Victorian influence and include turned porch columns, lattice type porch supports, scallop trimmed bay on the north end of the original house, triple-A pediment with rosette ornament and decorative shingles in the small pediments on the rear (L-shape) double porch. The original house was built for the Brown family. They sold the property to Charles Huckler, who owned it for several years. Huckler ran a small store on the property before he left for Tennessee. The property was purchased by Felix McGuire in 1910, and sold to his son, T.A., in 1912. T.A. McGuire made the 1912 additions in expectation of the arrival of the railroad. The large original tract extended to the southeast, along the New River and included much of the flat valley floor along Elk Creek to the northwest.

13a	Dentist Office	C	c.1912	bldg.	Big Hill Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*

One-room, one-story with cellar, front gable building is located near the original section of the hotel and has four-over-four double-hung windows and a five-panel door. The cellar / foundation walls are brick while the upper frame

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 10

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
<p>portion is weatherboard. The building originally served as a retirement home for Felix McGuire and his wife. The building subsequently housed the office of Dr. J.B. Hagaman. During the 1930s, the building served as the office of the local dentist, Dr. Joe Gaither. The building was used as a rental property and an efficiency apartment after the 1930s. It is now used for storage.</p>					
13b	Barn	C	c.1912	bldg.	Big Hill Rd.
<p><i>DESCRIPTION:</i> Main section of the barn displays a particularly elaborate version the diagonal board sheathing where the boards create a diamond design. It is thought that this unique method of sheathing helps to add strength to the building. The original section of the large barn has a central aisle flanked by stalls. There are two additions to the barn: a side shed addition and a front, drive-through, addition which includes a small corn crib.</p>					
13c	Wood Shed	C	c.1912	bldg.	Big Hill Rd.
<p><i>DESCRIPTION:</i> Larger section has shed roof, vertical board siding, and a single door. It originally served as a wood shed. Addition has horizontal siding, a lower shed roof, and a single door. This section was built to house the one-cylinder gasoline engine used for splitting / sawing wood. The engine is still inside the shed.</p>					
13d	Can House	C	c.1940	bldg.	Big Hill Rd.
<p><i>DESCRIPTION:</i> Small concrete block building built into hillside and used for storage of canned produce and possibly root vegetables. Shelves line the walls.</p>					
14	Cook Brothers Mercantile	C	1914	bldg.	3866 Todd RR Grade Rd.
<p><i>DESCRIPTION:</i> An excellent example of a rural general store, this building consists of a two-story, front-gable roof building with a large, two-story shed addition. The entire building, like the remainder of Todd's commercial buildings, is sheathed in galvanized pressed tin. The existing gable roof replaced the original flat roof. The additional space provided under the gable was utilized as a storage area for herbs that the store took in as trade. Feed was stored in the basement of the shed addition. The interior of the store retains original shelving, sales counter with nail bins below, and pressed tin ceiling. The bull pen around the wood stove and front porch are physical evidence of the store's continued service as a community gathering spot. The store was built by brothers, Walter and Monroe Cook in 1914. Walter purchased Monroe's share of the business around 1917 and continued to operate the store, then known as W.G. Cook Store, until 1960 when he sold it to Kenny Goodman. The business was operated as Goodman's Store until the late 1970s. It was then changed hands four times until it was purchased by the present owners Joe and Sheila Morgan in 1985. The store is now known as Todd General Store.</p>					

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 11

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
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14a	Bee House	C	c.1914	bldg.	3866 Todd RR Grade Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Shed-roofed outbuilding has a door in each end and on the front, as well as two four-over-four, double-hung windows (currently covered by sheet metal). The interior contains a work bench that was used in Walter Cook's bee keeping.

14b	Privy	C	c.1914	bldg.	3866 Todd RR Grade Rd.
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Small, shed roof, wood frame building. The privy has recently been moved from its original location at the rear of the store to its current, more visible location at the side of the store.

15	Walter & Virginia Cook House	C	1916	bldg.	3888 Todd RR Grade Rd
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Simple one-and-one-half story bungalow with side gable roof, shed dormer, engaged porch with plain posts, pressed tin shingle roof, and rear addition encompassing original spring house. The house was built for Walter Cook and his first wife, Virginia in 1916. Virginia Cook died shortly after the birth of the couple's second daughter. Walter Cook later married Virginia's sister, Ann who raised the children and worked at his side in the store. Ann and Walter, like most of their neighbors, raised a large garden on the property. The house is located next door to the Cook Brothers Mercantile and has served as the residence for all but two of the six store owners. It is currently used as a rental property and is owned by the owners of the store.

15a	Garage	C	c.1935	bldg.	3888 Todd RR Grade Rd
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Located west of the house and set into the slope of the hill, the front-gable, single-bay garage is constructed of concrete blocks.

16	Todd Mercantile Company	C	c.1910	bldg.	Todd RR Grade Rd
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Built as a cooperative store by a group of Todd businessmen about 1910, the store was purchased around 1918 by John Arthur Cox who ran the business with Cyrus Howell until it closed in 1934. The building originally had a flat roof and three floors; the upper story served as living quarters for the Cox family. The basement served as warehouse for the chestnuts, apples, etc. that the store took in as trade. The building originally had a front porch, but this was removed when Railroad Grade Road was widened. The interior of the building retains its original front door (hidden on the exterior by tin), oak floors, chestnut walls, and pressed tin ceiling. Like the other commercial buildings in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 12

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

NO.	PROPERTY NAME	C / NC	DATE	TYPE	ADDRESS
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Todd, the Mercantile is sheathed in galvanized pressed tin. The basement, which was entered on grade at the rear, faced the railroad and lumber yards.

17	<b>Bank of Todd</b>	C	c.1918	bldg.	<b>Todd RR Grade Rd</b>
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*DESCRIPTION:*

Built around 1918, the one-story bank building is one of the most ornate commercial buildings in Todd. It has a recessed entry with angled walls, three panel door with upper light, and decorative curved eave brackets on the front facade. The building is sheathed in galvanized pressed tin. The bank was founded by Burton K. Barr and local stockholders, but bank was liquidated around 1927. While none of the accounts lost money during the transaction, the stockholders lost their investment. F.C. and Flossie Miller ran the bank for many years before its liquidation. After the bank closed, the building was used as the Todd Post Office for many years.

**Vacant lot; part of lot behind bank and mercantile**  
Ashe County tax parcel No. 04126-011

**South Fork Church Rd**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina

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### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

##### Summary

The Todd Historic District, located at the headwaters of Elk Creek where it flows into the South Fork of the New River in Ashe and Watauga Counties, is a well-preserved example of a rural community that began as a tiny trading center for remote northwestern North Carolina and experienced rapid growth with arrival of the railroad and related industries in the early twentieth century. Todd arose as a trading center during the late eighteenth century and grew into an agricultural crossroads community by the mid-nineteenth century. Around 1910, word reached the area that a branch of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad, later the Norfolk and Western, would extend from Abingdon, Virginia, through Ashe County, North Carolina, terminating at Todd. The first train arrived in Todd in May of 1915, spawning enormous growth and commercial activity. The expansion of the railroad to Todd was part of a broad trend during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Blue Ridge Mountains linked to the promise of mineral and timber industries extracting and developing the rich natural resources of the region. In Todd, the principal industry was timber. By 1934, the Great Depression, the chestnut tree blight, and the deforestation of the area around Todd combined to cause the railroad to pull out of Todd. Despite the loss of the railroad, Todd continued as the social and commercial center for rural portions of Ashe and Watauga counties. The buildings that remain in the district illustrate the community's growth from the mid-nineteenth century through the early 1940s. The district is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of community planning and development, commerce, and transportation and under Criterion C for architecture. Although the Elkland Depot has been moved twice within the district since its construction, the property meets Criteria Consideration B. The building was first moved during the historic period. The second move, in 1979, was for a relatively short distance and did not reduce the architectural integrity of the structure nor alter its orientation or its relationship to the historic location of the railroad and lumberyards in Todd. The period of significance for the Todd Historic District begins circa 1840, the date of the earliest resource, the Todd Hotel, and ends in 1940, the year of a flood that damaged the community; during a lengthy period of recovery, development nearly halted. Today, Todd, a quiet mountain hamlet set amidst spectacular scenery, enjoys renewed vitality and claims citizens who possess a strong loyalty to their community.

##### Historical Background and Context Statement:

##### Criterion A - Community Development, Commerce, and Transportation Contexts

Located on the South Fork of the New River at the southwestern border of Ashe County with Watauga County, the quiet, unassuming character of Todd belies its former importance as a center of activity for trade, the railway, and the timber industry. As the "end of the line" of the Norfolk and Western "Virginia Creeper" line from Abingdon, Virginia, Todd served as the commercial center for an area including parts of both Ashe and Watauga counties. The early history of Todd is much like any of the numerous crossroads communities found throughout northwestern North Carolina.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetTodd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watagua County, North CarolinaSection number 8 Page 14

The location of the community at the junction of Elk Creek and the South Fork of the New River was advantageous because of the abundance of flat, fertile flood plain ideally suited to agriculture. The pattern of settlement along the New River was well established when early English, Scots, and Scots-Irish settlers claimed land in the area after the Revolutionary War. Native Americans had long used the fertile flood plain of the river and the earliest settlers followed suit. With its excellent location at the convergence of two major waterways, it is little wonder that Elk Cross Roads (later Todd) was a noted trading center as early as 1781. By the early nineteenth century the trading center had grown into a crossroads community as evidenced by the 1833 organization of South Fork Baptist Church and the establishment of the first post office at Elk Cross Roads in 1837.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to understand that despite its growth into a crossroads community, Elk Cross Roads was still very much a rural place where agriculture remained the primary focus of life. The lack of urban refinement was noted by Charles Dudley Warner in his account of his 1889 horseback tour of Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. It was with high expectations that Warner traveled:

...all the ten miles to Elk Cross Roads; it was on the map, it was down in the itinerary furnished by a member of the Coast Survey. We looked forward to it as a sweet place of repose from the noontide heat. Alas! Elk Cross Roads is a dirty grocery store, encumbered with dry goods, boxes, flyblown goods, flies, loafers.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps it was the need for greater sophistication that brought about the 1890 change in the post office name from "Elk Cross Roads" to "Todd."<sup>3</sup> The name was chosen in honor of Joseph Warren Todd (1834 - 1909), a Captain in the Confederate Army. He earned local fame from his post-war commission to form a company to guard against lawless bands known locally as "bushwhackers." He also served as a lawyer and a state senator.<sup>4</sup> The community's name change was a precursor of the major transformation about to take place in the area.

By the early years of the twentieth century, significant changes were afoot both for Todd and the Blue Ridge region as a whole. The driving force behind this change was the expansion of railroads into the Blue Ridge Mountains. In 1870, the only line that existed in the region was one connecting Norfolk, Virginia, with Knoxville, Tennessee. By the early 1900s various railway companies had extended lines into West Virginia, southwest Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as western North Carolina.<sup>5</sup> It was as a part of this overall trend that the newly reorganized Virginia - Carolina Railway Company laid track from Abingdon to Damascus, Virginia, in 1900, and on to the

<sup>1</sup> Sherry Jane Joines, "Up Before Dawn: Farms and Farm Ways in Alleghany County, North Carolina" (Master's thesis, University of Georgia, 1998), 7 - 8 and Jim Thompson, "A Look Back at Todd's History," *Mountain Times*, 5 June 1997, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Dudley Warner, "On Horseback: A Tour in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee in 1889," in *A Factual History of Early Ashe County, North Carolina: Its People, Places, and Events* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1986), 117 - 118.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Joe Morgan, "Where Todd Got Its Name," *General Store Ledger*, February 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Joines, 13.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

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sawmills of Konnarock, Virginia, by 1905. The line expanded slowly through Virginia to White Top where it entered Ashe County continuing south through Lansing, Warrensville, and on to West Jefferson (a town constructed specifically for the railroad), finally passing through Bowie (now Fleetwood) and terminating in Todd in 1915.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for the expansion of the railway into Todd and other destinations in the Blue Ridge region was simple -- availability of natural resources. The natural wealth of the area around Todd is expressed in a May 31, 1915, advertisement for a lot auction in Todd by England Realty & Auction of Greensboro:

Property at Todd will increase in value and the town will grow as North Wilkesboro did, for it is the terminal of the V.C.R.R., and has a good back country to draw from.<sup>7</sup>

The author of the above advertisement may have had mica and timber in mind when he wrote about the bountiful "back country."

The early 1910s saw an interest in mica mining in the area. The October 3, 1912, edition of the Watauga Democrat claimed that the proposed railroad "...will touch not only fine timber boundaries but some of the best mining properties in the State."<sup>8</sup> In actuality, the mining operations around Todd were quite limited. A small pit mine was excavated up the slope from the present Todd General Store (Cook Brothers Mercantile) during this period, but it seems that large-scale mining never occurred. Herman Greer recalls that mica was mined in the area prior to the arrival of the train and was taken to Tennessee for sale, but he does not remember mining operations continuing after the arrival of the railroad.<sup>9</sup>

It was clear by the time the train arrived in Todd that the area's true industry would be timber. The rise of the timber industry in Todd was part, albeit relatively late, of an important regional trend. In 1900, the southern Appalachian region's 1,770 timber establishments, which employed some 11,751 workers, contributed 30 percent of the total amount of hardwood timber cut in the United States. The industry peaked in 1909 when the region contributed nearly forty percent (4 million board feet) of the total national production. By 1919, timber production had fallen to 2.4 million board feet.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, it is during the late 1910s and early 1920s that the production in Todd grew and reached its peak. The reason for this is related to the late date of arrival of the railroad and the relatively poor transportation links to the community prior to the railroad's arrival.

The timber industry in Todd had four important components: lumber, tan bark, pulp wood and extract wood. The lumber business was handled by the various lumber companies, such as J.L. Wright, Blue Ridge, and Scott & Brown, which had lumberyards in the flat valley floor along Elk Creek. At the age of nine, Herman Greer drove the

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<sup>6</sup> Doug McGuinn, "The Virginia Creeper: Ashe County's Train," in *The Heritage of Ashe County, North Carolina*, Vol. II (Charlotte: Delmar Publishing Co., 1994) 30.

<sup>7</sup> Reprint of 31 May 1915 advertisement, *Jefferson Times*, 2 September 1982, Mountain Living Section.

<sup>8</sup> Todd Notes, *Watauga Democrat*, 3 October 1912.

<sup>9</sup> Anne Cook, Interview by author and Herman Greer, Interview by author, 14 July 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1982), 104.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 16

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team of horses or steers that pulled the logs out of the mountain to the semi-portable, steam operated saw mills where the logs were cut into rough lumber. After the lumber had dried it was loaded onto wagons and brought to Todd.<sup>11</sup> Early photographs of Todd show a sea of stacked lumber awaiting shipment.

To the citizens of Todd, the lumber industry provided a source of employment for wages, known locally as "public work." A dollar a day could be earned by working for the lumber companies, a goodly sum for the area's farmers who saw little cash money. The new industry also drew men from outside Todd who lived in rented quarters in Todd or built little shacks wherever they could for their families. The large numbers of men were necessary to the operation of the industry considering that companies such as Wright's might employ as many as ten to twenty men on their lumberyard. The extent of the industry is captured in Herman Greer's simple observation: "There was a sawmill up every holler."<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the large lumber companies, local merchants dealt in tan bark, pulpwood, and extract wood. Tan bark was the bark of the Chestnut Oak tree which had a high degree of the chemical tanin, used in the leather tanning process. The bark could be peeled only from the New Moon in March through July because the sap that was running during this time was necessary to the process of peeling the bark around the circumference of the tree. Other chemicals were gained from what was known as extract wood. Extract wood was taken from dead chestnut trees that were prepared for shipment by cutting into cords. Cutting the timber into five-foot lengths and stacking it into piles eight feet wide and four feet tall created a cord of wood. Each pile was a cord. Pulpwood, which was used in paper-making, comes from soft woods like poplar and was also corded and hauled by wagon into Todd. A wagon might hold as little as three-quarters of a cord or as much as a cord and a half. Each driver loaded his wagon by hefting the large logs up onto the wagon one end at a time. The loaded wagons were driven down the steep slopes into Todd for purchase by Graham's store for later shipment on the train.<sup>13</sup>

Though Todd may have been a late bloomer in respect to the timber industry, its citizens worked quickly to act upon their good fortune. The community pinned their economic dreams to the coming of the railroad as expressed in Z.T. Watson's letter of April of 1913 to the editor of the *Watauga Democrat*. Watson encouraged the area's youth to join in the construction effort:

The boys and young men who lounge along her [the New River's] green and shaded bank, fishing for suckers in the darkening eddies, will receive an inspiration to change his vocation of life and become brighter lights in the firmament of Commercial geography.<sup>14</sup>

Mr. Watson need not have been concerned about the state of the "firmament of Commercial geography" in Todd. The efforts to make Todd ready to receive the railroad and make a profit in the bargain were underway as early as 1910 when a co-op of wealthy local farmers built a general store (this building later housed the Todd Mercantile

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<sup>11</sup> Herman Greer, Interview.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Z.T. Watson, "Letter to the Editor," *Watauga Democrat*, 24 April 1913.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

Company). In 1912, T.A. McGuire updated his hotel with ambitious additions and ornamentation. By December 1913, Todd boasted two stores, a grist mill, saw mill, post office, two churches, two lodges and several good dwellings in addition to a big lot of cross ties for the Virginia-Carolina Railroad.<sup>15</sup> The number of stores had increased to three by June of 1914.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the construction of the railroad and growth of Todd, the anticipation was heightened by periodic updates on the progress of each. The *Watauga Democrat* reported on July 2, 1914, with great relief that the series of rumors claiming the rail line would stop short of Todd were unfounded as Callahan Construction Company was moving its camps to begin grading the final leg of the line between Todd and McGuire.<sup>17</sup>

It was not, however, until May 15, 1915, that the first passenger, mail and express arrived at Elkland Depot.<sup>18</sup> The first train was met with great joy as recalled by Roger Graham of Todd:

Grownups and children alike lined the tracks and hillsides to get a glimpse of the train with its big billow of smoke coming into the Elkland Station for the first time.<sup>19</sup>

In its June 24, 1915, edition, the *Watauga Democrat* reported that the arrival of the train three weeks previous had initiated an "...air of business heretofore unknown in that section." The ground breaking for a twenty-four-room hotel and the report that Todd currently claimed four mercantiles evidenced this fact.<sup>20</sup> The intense commercial activity in Todd during this period is best described by Herman Greer, who stated that the place was "just like a bee gum."<sup>21</sup>

The booming growth of Todd is mirrored in the series of Acts of Incorporation and Expansion. The town was first incorporated on March 3, 1915, with limits extended one-quarter square mile in each direction from the depot. These boundaries were expanded one-half mile on March 7, 1917, before finally reaching a three-quarter mile octagon on May 4, 1931.<sup>22</sup> At its highest point, the population of the Todd area was approximately 500 people.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Todd Notes, *Watauga Democrat*, 14 December 1913.

<sup>16</sup> Todd Notes, *Watauga Democrat*, 4 June 1914.

<sup>17</sup> Todd Notes, *Watauga Democrat*, 2 July 1914.

<sup>18</sup> Frank Edwards, "Telling the Story of the Railroad Days," Letter to the Editor, *Watauga Democrat*.

<sup>19</sup> Joe Morgan, "The 'Virginia Creeper,'" *General Store Ledger*, July 1989.

<sup>20</sup> Todd Notes, *Watauga Democrat*, 24 June 1915, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Herman Greer, Interview.

<sup>22</sup> *An Act to Incorporate the Town of Todd in Ashe County*, North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 173 (3 March 1915); *An Act to Extend the Corporate Limits of the Town of Todd in Ashe County*, Chapter 204 (7 March 1917); and *An Act to Incorporate the Town of Todd in Watauga and Ashe Counties*, Chapter 165 (4 May 1931), from photocopies held by Joe Morgan.

<sup>23</sup> Cary Boshamer, "The Train comes to Elkland Bringing Growth and Prosperity," *The Skyland Post*, 18 November 1987, 9A.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 18Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

The growth of the area allowed for the charter of the Bank of Todd on November 16, 1918, with local investors providing \$5000 in start-up capital.<sup>24</sup> A number of businesses thrived in Todd during the early 1920s as illustrated by a list published in the December 1920 edition of the Todd Bank News. The list includes:

Elkland Supply Company - General Merchandise, Cox & Howell [Todd Mercantile Co.] - General Merchandise, A.G. Miller - General Merchandise, Cook Brothers Mercantile - General Merchandise, Burton K. Barrs - Ground Limestone, silos, and autos, Dr. John B. Hageman, Dr. W.R. Blackburn, Graham Brothers - General Merchandise, Will H. McGuire - job printing, Scott & Brown Lumber Co. - Lumber buyers and dealers, and L.D. Graham - Blacksmith and wheelwright.<sup>25</sup>

The heralded arrival of the train did cause changes in the life style of Todd's citizens. Mr. Lesley Norris recalls: "Many a time I heard the whistle a blowing about 5 o'clock. A lot of people got up by the train whistle."<sup>26</sup> In addition to the morning call of the train, afternoons in Todd were also bustling with preparations for the train's morning return trip. The engine had to be turned around on the manually operated turntable located on the flat valley floor near the present South Fork Church Road. The engine also had to take water from the nearby water tank. Three cabooses were kept on the siding at Elkland Depot and were used as the railroaders' overnight accommodations.<sup>27</sup>

Despite these changes and the tremendous growth of Todd, the surrounding area continued to maintain its traditional agricultural rhythms. The July 9, 1914, edition of the Watauga Democrat reported that "the farmers are busy harvesting their wheat and rye which is very good in this section. This section is having plenty of rain now and the corn crop is very promising."<sup>28</sup> While most of the citizens who lived in Todd proper did not engage in intensive agriculture of this sort, almost everyone planted a large garden, kept a milk cow, and perhaps raised a few chickens.<sup>29</sup>

At the general stores of Todd, such as Cook Brothers Mercantile, most of their business was trade rather than cash. Chickens, eggs, and butter were all accepted in addition to herbs such as witch hazel, horehound, lobelia, pennyroyal, catnip, gilly buds (balm of gilead), may apple root, and mullen. These dried herbs were an important source of extra income. Witch hazel leaves, for example, brought two cents a pound.<sup>30</sup>

The connection to the land and the continued tradition of agriculture is important in understanding Todd as it functioned not only as a rail terminal and center of local industry, but in its continuing role as a crossroads community as well. Ruby Trivette's family lived on a farm a short distance from Todd, where agricultural patterns were much like those found in neighboring Alleghany County where no rail line was available. Wheat, buckwheat,

<sup>24</sup> Arthur L. Fletcher, *Ashe County: A History* (Charlotte: Heritage Printers, 1963), 261.

<sup>25</sup> Todd Bank News, Vol. I, No. 5, December 1920, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Linda F. Nicholson, "You Ain't Been Nowhere 'Til You've Been to Todd," in *Forever Alive* (Boone: Appalachian State University Press, 1978).

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, July 1989.

<sup>28</sup> Todd Notes, *Watauga Democrat*, 9 July 1914.

<sup>29</sup> Ruby Trivette, Interview by author, 14 July 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Anne Cook, Interview by author, 14 July 1999, Ruby Trivette, Interview, and Herman Greer, Interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 19

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

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rye, and corn were raised and ground at the roller mill in Todd and later at the small grist mill there. Extra cabbage and potatoes were "peddled" in Wilkes County from the back of a pick-up truck. The family owned a sorghum mill and boiler for the production of "molassy" for their own use and for sale. Neighbors "killed a beef" and shared the meat among them. Most farmers ventured into Todd only once or twice a week to collect their mail and trade at the stores.<sup>31</sup>

The economic success of Todd was not to last, however. The fragility of the economy of Todd was recognized as early as 1920 and was expressed in the December edition of the Todd Bank News:  
...Todd still needs some factories to work up its lumber, some woolen mills to consume its wool, tanneries for its hides, a drug mill to grind its crude drugs, a brickyard to supply brick to the countryside....<sup>32</sup>

By the 1930s, the timber supply in the area around Todd had been exhausted. Thus, as the lumber companies pulled out and the shipments on the railroad dwindled, the railway discontinued service to Todd on March 31, 1933.<sup>33</sup> Anne Cook remembers:

When it pulled out of there for good - saddest time I've ever seen. I thought I would be so glad. Because, you know, when they pump that ol' soot, it got all over everything. But that morning it went out of there it was so sad - it just made us all cry.<sup>34</sup>

The quick succession of the onset of the Great Depression and the discontinuance of the railroad exacerbated the economic difficulties in Todd. Slowly most of the businesses in Todd closed. The devastating flood of 1940 was a final severe blow to the community. Seven buildings were washed away including the Masonic Lodge Meeting Hall.<sup>35</sup> Anne Cook remembers that many Todd citizens left the area for work in Baltimore. Times in Todd may have been harder than in other communities due to the combination of the loss of the railroad and the 1940 flood, but the pattern of emigration was not unusual. Many people from the Blue Ridge region left their homes to work on dairy farms in Baltimore and Bel Air, Maryland during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>36</sup>

In light of the economic and social transition occurring in Todd, it is not surprising that relatively few buildings were constructed in the district during this period. Yet the continuing development of the community is illustrated by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Weston and the construction of their home and photography studio around 1940 near the home of Mrs. Weston's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Cox. Mr. Weston's photography business included individual sittings as well as work with the local schools. Other construction included a new gymnasium built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for the Todd School and a voting shack, or small shed, that was built around

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<sup>31</sup> Ruby Trivette, Interview.

<sup>32</sup> *The Todd Bank News*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Frank Edwards, Letter to the Editor.

<sup>34</sup> Anne Cook, Interview by author, 14 July 1999.

<sup>35</sup> Joe Morgan, "The 1940 Flood," *General Store Ledger*, August / September 1989.

<sup>36</sup> Anne Cook, interview and Joines, 20.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 20Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

1932 to serve as a voting place for Todd's Watauga County residents.<sup>37</sup> Both the gym and the voting shack are located outside of the district boundaries, but aid in the understanding of the continued community life in Todd.

After World War II, a modicum of prosperity returned to Todd and is evidenced by the construction of Blackburn's Chapel (Todd United Methodist Church) in 1948 followed by the parsonage in 1953 and the construction of a new post office beside the Ford Garage in 1952. Outside the district boundaries, a new elementary school was constructed in the early 1950s near the site of the old Todd School and WPA gym.<sup>38</sup>

Mr. Lynn Moretz, who grew up in Todd during the 1940s and 1950s remembers a very happy childhood in Todd. The Cook Brothers Mercantile was still in business as was the small grist mill operated by Ira Whorlly next door. Without the railroad, automobiles gained importance in the area and McGuire's Ford Garage had a steady repair business.<sup>39</sup>

Today, after a slow process of decline, Todd claims two churches, a post office, the Todd General Store in the old Cook Brothers Mercantile, and a river outfitter located in the old depot. While the rich fabric of historic resources offers a glimpse of the former bustling character of the town, Todd is a quiet community of life-long residents and others who have adopted the place as their home. The strong sense of community that has carried the citizens of Todd through hard times has helped them to stabilize their community and is behind their desire to preserve their unique history. Todd is not the "bee gum" it once was, but folks there don't seem to mind.

### Criterion C - Architectural Context

The Todd Historic District exemplifies the small railroad communities that developed in the Blue Ridge region during the early twentieth century. The extension of the railroad into the rural areas was associated with mining or, in the case of Todd, the timber industry. In many cases, these industries provided the first taste of outside investment and "public work" for cash wages to people whose lives had been focused on subsistence farming, along with supplementary trade, for generations. The new industries provided money, expanded availability of manufactured goods, and outside influences that helped create small towns where only crossroads communities or perhaps just a few farmsteads had been before. It was in the midst of this important social change that the majority of the buildings in the Todd Historic District were constructed.

It is little surprise then that the architecture of Todd's buildings is an amalgamation of traditional forms and details with new stylistic influences intended to be more modern and progressive. While the availability of new technology and machine made materials via the railroad may have played a role in the transitional architecture of Todd, it seems that the driving force was an effort to "spruce-up" before the arrival of the railroad in May of 1915. The desire to create a modern and appealing town is aptly expressed in the following excerpt from the July 2, 1914, *Watauga Democrat*:

<sup>37</sup> John A. Cox, Jr., Interview by author, 13 July 1999 and Ruby Trivette, interview.

<sup>38</sup> Fletcher, 164.

<sup>39</sup> Lynn Moretz, Telephone Interview by author, 5 August 1999.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 21Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina /Watauga County, NC

Todd Mercantile Company has built an addition to their already commodious store and have painted it, which gives it the appearance of a city store. McGuire Brothers and Co. our other merchants have also been repairing and painting their store and dwelling.<sup>40</sup>

An analysis of Todd's architectural resources reveals some buildings where the builder deviated little from traditional forms and stylistic influences that had been in place for several years. The Todd Hotel is a good example of this pattern. The alterations and additions made around 1912 to the original 1840s house reflect the ornate and picturesque ideals popularized by the availability of factory-made ornamentation during the late nineteenth century. This influence is evident in the use of a triple-A roofline with decorative scallop trim and rosette window, the addition of a bay window, and turned porch columns with decoratively cut brackets. The reliance on more traditional forms is also evident in the Ester McGuire house, believed to have been built around 1910. The triple-A cottage has a series of gable-roof rear ells that create a complex roof form. Although ornamentation is limited to the turned spindle balustrade, the wrap-around porch gives the house its picturesque character.

Contrasting with the above examples is the Cook House, built in 1916. Although this house was constructed only four years after the addition to the hotel, it has a completely different character. This house is Todd's earliest example of the bungalow form. The side gable roof shelters the engaged front porch and is punctuated by a shed roof dormer bringing light into the upper floor. Similar to the Ester McGuire house, there is little ornamentation, instead the form of the house is the primary focus.

The former Baptist Parsonage sheds further light of the transitional nature of the architecture in Todd. Here a pyramidal cottage, a popular early twentieth century house form, is accented by pediments on two sides. These pediments are similar in appearance to the "triple-A" pediment of the Ester McGuire house, but are wider with a lower pitched gable and squat appearance. The eaves of this pediment are also deep, allowing for Craftsman influenced eave brackets rather than picturesque ornamentation such as decorative shingles or fretwork. Furthermore, a wrap-around porch with simple columns surrounds the house on two sides.

The commercial architecture of Todd also expresses its unique period of development. The most ornate example is the Bank of Todd building which displays a parapeted shed roof, decoratively curved brackets at the cornice level of the front facade, and a recessed entry. Originally, all of the commercial buildings in Todd had flat or low-pitched roofs similar to the Bank of Todd building. This would have given them an appearance similar to other commercial buildings found in larger towns during this era except for three important differences. First, all of the buildings were wood, sheathed with either wood siding or felt paper until after 1920. There were no masonry buildings in Todd until the 1940s. Second, several of the buildings originally had front porches similar to the one existing on the Cook Brothers Mercantile building. These porches may have been intended to resemble the awnings or canopies of commercial buildings in larger towns, but in practice they became community gathering places. The third difference between Todd's commercial buildings and those found in larger towns is that none of the buildings are contiguous. They are all closely clustered along Todd Railroad Grade Road, but no building touches or shares a wall with

<sup>40</sup> *Watauga Democrat*, 2 July 1914.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 22Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

another. The reasons for this is related both to the difficult topography of the area as well as the manner in which Todd developed.

An early plat map of Todd laid out many tiny lots in a grid pattern that ignored the mountainous topography, and was therefore impossible to execute. Instead, the builders of Todd built forms that they were already familiar with - rural forms most often found in the small crossroads communities from which many new residents of Todd had originally hailed. A crossroads community might consist of one or two church buildings, a school, a general store, and a post office, although this was usually located in the store or at a local residence. Larger communities might have a sawmill or a grist mill nearby, but even the largest crossroads community was merely a collection of buildings at the crest of a hill or on the valley floor near a waterway. Thus, the character of Todd at its height in the 1920s and early 1930s, was somewhere between a crossroads community with its collection of commercial and service buildings and a town with multiple non-farm residences.

By comparing the historic resources of Todd with other communities which developed along the Norfolk and Western rail line in Ashe County it is possible to understand both the unique importance of Todd as "the end of the line" and its remarkable degree of integrity. Many of the communities along the railroad were never more than a flag stop and therefore had more in common with the traditional crossroads community. Brownwood, just a few miles southeast of Todd is an excellent example of this. At its height, the community boasted a depot, a store, a stockyard, and a few farms such as the Cooper farm which is within view of the depot. In Brownwood, only the Cooper farm remains along with a store building and the depot, which is in a deteriorated state.

It should be noted that the Elkland Depot in Todd, along with the depot at Brownwood, are rare surviving examples of the depots along the "Virginia Creeper" line. The Elkland Depot is unique because of the fact that it was actually brought into Todd on the railroad after fire destroyed the original depot. Thus, its Victorian influenced architecture is extremely rare among Ashe County's railroad architecture. Furthermore, unlike the Brownwood Depot, the Elkland Depot is in excellent condition and retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

Northeast of Brownwood was the little town of Bowie, now known as Fleetwood. The N & W spur to Deep Gap departed from Bowie. A major fire destroyed much of this town, which originally consisted of two stores, the depot, and several houses. Today four early twentieth century bungalows survive along Todd Railroad Grade Road in addition to Calvary United Methodist Church, a simple Gothic Revival edifice.

Several miles north of Bowie is the community of Warrentown. This is probably the closest to Todd in size of all the Ashe County railroad towns. It does not, however, retain the degree of historic integrity found in Todd. Today, Warrentown consists of a Gothic Revival Church similar to Calvary United Methodist in Bowie, a few early twentieth century bungalows, and a few commercial buildings. One of these two-story buildings is brick, but the other has been sheathed in vinyl siding. Another one-story brick building is also well preserved. Several early twentieth century bungalows survive, but they are heavily interspersed with modern housing. Overall the character of Warrentown is neither as cohesive nor as representative of early twentieth century railroad communities as Todd.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 23

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

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It is important, in making comparisons, that Todd is not held up against towns that had a much more urban character. The town of Lansing, located several miles north of Todd is much larger than Todd ever was. Thus, the contiguous downtown buildings exhibit more costly masonry construction and are set in a more formal street pattern. The downtown commercial area is surrounded by many dwellings representing both the transitional architecture found in Todd as well as more high style and popular examples of Queen Anne and Victorian.

In sum, Todd is an extremely well preserved example of a small railroad community in the Blue Ridge Mountains that gained some importance as the "end of the line." While individual buildings in Todd may be altered from their original state, the collection as a whole retains its original character and unity in a way that other communities, such as Warrenton, do not. Because contemporary buildings have been placed in the valley floor along Elk Creek where the lumber and rail yards were historically located they are less obtrusive to the character of the district than had they been inserted piecemeal as in Warrenton. Although the Elkland Depot is not on its original site, its continued existence on the flat valley floor near Elk Creek is crucial to the understanding of the importance of the railroad in Todd's history. Finally, the continued operation of the Cook Brothers Mercantile, now the Todd General Store, contributes substantially to the character of the community. Local folks still gather on the front porch or around the stove in the bull pen in winter to talk about politics, neighbors in need, and the past. The high degree architectural integrity in Todd, is reinforced by the continued patterns of community.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 24

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina  
Watauga County, North Carolina

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 25

Todd Historic District  
Ashe County, North Carolina

Watauga County, North Carolina

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