

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 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. 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 Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

Bounded roughly by Oak Avenue on the north; Locust Street and the railroad tracks on the south; Topaz Street on the street & number east; and State Highway 226 on the west not for publication N/A

city or town Spruce Pine vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Mitchell code 121 zip code 28777

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 A. Crow SHPD
Signature of certifying official

7/11/03
Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or 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 or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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): _____

Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District

Name of Property

Mitchell County, North Carolina

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	
33	7	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
33	7	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

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Transportation</u>	Sub: <u>rail-related</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>specialty store</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>restaurant</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>department store</u>
<u>Government</u>	<u>town hall</u>
<u>Recreation and Culture</u>	<u>theater</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Transportation</u>	Sub: <u>rail-related</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>specialty store</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>restaurant</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>professional</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

- Commercial Style
- Tudor Revival
- other: Regional stone masonry

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation brick
- roof asphalt
- walls brick
- stone
- other wood

Narrative Description

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

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a 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)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1909-1953

Significant Dates

1909

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Greene, Dave, stonemason

Mitchell, Charlie, stonemason

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, Archives and History

Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District
Name of Property

Mitchell County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 9.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 403460 3974980
2

Zone Easting Northing
3
4
 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 Sybil Argintar Bowers, Preservation Planning Consultant

organization Bowers Southeastern Preservation date May 2, 2003

street & number 166 Pearson Drive telephone (828) 252-0110

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28801

12. 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name less than fifty

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District
name of property
Mitchell County, North Carolina
county and state

SUMMARY

The Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District in Spruce Pine, North Carolina encompasses the core commercial area of the town, along the North Toe River, roughly bounded by Oak Avenue on the north, Locust Street and the railroad tracks on the south, SR 1403 on the west, and Topaz Street on the east. The district is located along steep hillsides that extend upward from the river below, with an upper street (Oak Avenue) and a lower street (Locust Street) both functioning as the main commercial arteries. The district, which encompasses approximately nine and one-half acres, extends for three blocks. Buildings in the district, primarily one to three-story commercial brick and native stone buildings, along with the railroad depot, line the streets in attached rows (forming an intact configuration of the commercial core of a small mountain town), with a period of significance that extends from 1909 through 1953. In addition to the use of popular building styles, it is also important to note how the buildings are set in a steady rhythm lining both sides of Oak Avenue and the north side of Locust Street, often with alleys to the rear. Building lots are small, often no more than thirty feet in width, with some buildings occupying two of the originally platted lots. Despite the changes that have taken place on some of the lower levels of the buildings, the rhythm and overall integrity of the district has only been minimally affected, maintaining a distinctive commercial core.

Outside of the district boundaries to the east is newer commercial development and clusters of residential neighborhoods. To the west of the district is the SR 1403 bridge which divides the commercial area from the western sections of the town. North of the district is additional non-historic commercial development and residential neighborhoods, and to the south is the river. While some storefronts and upper facades have been remodeled, the Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District retains its historic architectural character of a small mountain town of the first half of the twentieth century. One building in the district, the **Gunter Building** has been listed in the National Register (2002).

The nominated district consists of thirty-three contributing buildings, seven non-contributing buildings, and one vacant lot. Buildings are typically one or two-story, with buildings located on the south side of Oak Avenue built on a steep hillside and having one or two-story raised basements that are utilized as storage areas or as separate retail spaces. The contributing buildings are primarily brick or stone Commercial Style, were built within the period of significance, and have retained their overall architectural integrity. Typical alterations include changes to storefronts, remodeling of facades which took place during the period of significance, or rear additions. Non-contributing buildings were either built after the period of significance or have been significantly altered on their facades in recent years and have thus lost their historic architectural integrity.

Notable buildings in the district include the **Spruce Pine Depot** (#38, 1909), a stuccoed and half-timbered Tudor Revival style one-story depot with flared eaves; **Crystal Place** (#40, 1937), another building constructed of local micaceous biotite stone with an unusual arched entry; the **(former) Town Hall** (#19, 1940), a one-story building constructed of local cut micaceous biotite stone; the **Gunter Building** (#20, ca. 1941, NR 2002), an outstanding building constructed of local river-tumbled micaceous biotite stone; and **Day's Drug Store** (#1, 1950), an excellent example of a mid-twentieth century commercial building with

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metal frame windows, representative of the building boom in Spruce Pine during the 1940s and early 1950s.

INVENTORY LIST

Streets in downtown Spruce Pine run in a northwest-southeast orientation. Buildings are listed in the order of east-west streets first, with the north side of the street listed first. North-south streets contain only one building each, both of which are on the east side of the street. Dating of buildings is based upon 1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps used in the field, documentary photographs, newspapers, oral history interviews, and owner information. These sources are noted with each entry. Some buildings have the same address, even though they are historically separate buildings. This is due to the fact that in recent years one business may expand into two or more buildings. These are denoted by A, B, C by the address, as if they are separate buildings.

Oak Avenue--north side:

1. 271 Oak Avenue. Day's Drug Store. Contributing. 1950.

Two-story late Commercial Style building with flat roof, yellow brick walls, and slightly altered original storefront. West wall has been stuccoed. Some carrara glass remains around the door on the east leading to the second floor. Storefront replacement materials include black metal panels and new door framing. Metal multi-light casement windows with transoms and row of soldier course brick above. Day's Drug Store was established by Dr. L. G. Day as a business in 1929, and was located originally on Locust Street. Building is located on a portion of the site of the former Topliff Hotel, which burned in 1948. This building was constructed by his son, Harold Vann Day. Current use is a bookstore. (owner information, oral history).

2. 269 Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1950.

Two-story late Commercial Style brick building with flat roof and original storefront configuration. Transoms above storefront have been painted. West wall has been stuccoed; rear of building is exposed concrete block. Metal multi-light casement windows with transoms and soldier course brick above, modern door and new storefront windows. Built on a portion of the site of the former Topliff Hotel. Current use is an art gallery and offices for the Toe River Arts Council. (owner information, oral history).

3. 275 Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1949.

Two-story late Commercial Style brick building with flat roof and original storefront configuration. Narrow metal multi-light casement windows with transoms and soldier course above. Door to second floor on east side of building has been bricked in. Built on a portion of the site of the former Topliff Hotel. Current use is an ice cream shop. (oral history).

4. 279 Oak Avenue. Ray Howell Hardware Store. Contributing. 1949, 1951.

Two-story late Commercial Style brick building with flat roof and two original storefront configurations with square metal-frame multi-light awning style windows. The storefront aprons were covered with bark

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shingles, and a bark shingle awning was installed in recent years. The doors are replacements. Second story added in 1951. Built on a portion of the site of the former Topliff Hotel. Current use is a furniture store. (newspapers, oral history).

Oak Avenue--south side:

5. 110-114 Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1948.

One-story brick commercial building with flat roof, parapet walls on the east and west, two distinct storefronts, and a two-story raised basement visible at the rear. The east storefront is original, with recessed single-light double leaf doors with transoms elevated up three steps above the street and original display windows with textured glass transoms. West side storefront has two modern doors opening into each side of the store, replacing the original double leaf door. All other elements of this side are original. West wall of building curves around to the south, and appears to have been added in recent years. Fenestrations in this applied curving wall include glass block, one-over-one wood sash, and some metal sash. First floor at the rear of the building facing Locust Street has fixed pane windows and two modern doors; second floor has one-over-one windows; and third floor has metal multi-light casement windows. Current use is a retail store for Native American goods. This building, along with the adjacent ones to the east (#6 and #7) were all built at the same time, and were known locally as the Culberson Buildings. They were built after the Topliff Hotel burned in 1948, to house some of the offices and businesses that had been in the former hotel building. (Interview with David Blevins, long-time Spruce Pine resident, by Sybil A. Bowers, 23 April 2003).

6. 118 Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1948.

One-story brick commercial building with flat roof that drops in elevation to the rear to a full three stories facing Locust Street. Two original storefront bays at the front with single light doors and transoms. Awnings added. Windows at rear of building are metal multi-light. Current use is a retail shoe store. (Interview with Gladys Duncan, building owner and long-time Spruce Pine resident, by Sybil A. Bowers 23 April 2003)

7. 120 Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1948.

One-story brick commercial building with flat roof, parapet wall at front, and two stories at rear. One intact original storefront at front. Opening on west side of building covers steps that lead down to the lower level of building. Windows at rear are one-over-one and multi-light metal. Deck added on east side of building. Dr. Webb bought this building new for his medical offices after his former office located in the Topliff Hotel burned in 1948. Dr. Phillips, who also had an office in the Topliff Hotel, soon joined him in medical practice in this building. Dr. Webb later moved to Burnsville. Current use is a beauty shop. (Interview with Celine Phillips, widow of Dr. Phillips, by Sybil A. Bowers, 23 April 2003).

8. 174 Oak Avenue. Burleson Store Company. Contributing. 1924.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with flat roof, dropping in elevation to three full stories at rear. Two storefront bays at front, on either side of central recessed entry. Original storefront

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configurations and pressed tin ceiling in center bay are intact. Transoms have been painted. Door to second floor located at northwest corner of front of building. Windows on the front of the building are boarded over; rear windows are one-over-one, single and double, with some boarded over. Windows on east side of building are bricked in. Rear of building has intact storefront configurations, with an added wood awning. Original pressed tin ceiling on the interior is intact. Built by R. M. Burleson as Burleson Store Company, replacing a frame building which was located to the rear of the present building. Peebles-Kimbrell opened in the lower level of this building in 1952, and remained through at least the 1970s. Current use is a furniture store on the upper level and a retail shop for a Christian ministry on the lower level facing Locust Street. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, newspapers, documentary photographs, oral history).

9. 186 Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1935.

One-story brick commercial building with a flat roof, modern doors and display windows. Original use was a plumbing supply warehouse. Current use is an employment office. (1939 Sanborn map)

10. 198 Oak Avenue. Floyd Smith's Hamburgers. Non-contributing. ca. 1950.

One-story commercial building built of rusticated concrete block. Flat roof with decorative parapet at front added approximately five years ago. Facade been modernized with brick on lower half of walls, stucco above, and modern doors and windows. Built as a diner, and still in current use as a cafe. (documentary photos, oral history).

11. 208-210 Oak Avenue. Mitchell County Savings & Loan. Non-contributing. 1955.

Two-story coursed ashlar stone commercial building with a flat roof; drops in elevation to three stories at rear. Original storefront door to second floor at northwest corner. Triple one-over-one wood windows with corbelled stone and stone sills. A single one-over-one wood window is above the door at northwest corner. Rear windows are single and triple one-over-one wooden. Original use of the building was the Mitchell County Savings & Loan and Mitchell Savings Bank on the main floor, with offices upstairs including attorneys and the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce. Current use is a Latin-themed retail store on the first floor and offices on the second. (owner information, oral history).

12. 216-218 Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1925.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with flat roof, parapet wall at front. Brick on lower half of facade has been painted. Slopes to three stories at rear. Two distinct recesses storefront bays, with the west side retaining the original double leaf door. Aluminum framing around remaining display windows and doors. Front and rear windows are single and double one-over-one wooden sash with soldier course brick lintels. This is one of the oldest buildings on Oak Avenue. One of the earliest uses was a plumbing store, with apartments on the second floor. By 1939 there were two retail stores in the building. Mitchell Distributing, manufacturer of mining and road construction machinery, was located in this building; the sign is painted onto the east wall. This company was founded in Spruce Pine, but is now a large corporation which sells machinery throughout the country. The current owner did not know the exact

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dates Mitchell Distributing occupied the building. Current use is a print shop. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, oral history, owner information).

13. 266 Oak Avenue. Ellis Building. Non-contributing. 1954.

Two-story brick commercial building which drops to three stories at rear. Flat roof, with parapet wall at front, metal multi-light windows. Two original storefronts and a door to the second floor at the northeast corner. Rear of building faces an alley, with one-over-one wood frame sashes and two-over-two metal windows as on the front. West elevation has the same metal-frame windows and additional display windows. Plaque on wall denotes the construction date and name. The post office, there by 1928, was located at the rear of this lot, and is encased inside the present building at the southwest corner. It is unknown why this was preserved within the current building. Current use is a furniture store and art gallery. (owner information).

14. 274-A Oak Avenue. Loven Company. Non-contributing. 1956.

Modern one-story coursed ashlar stone commercial building with a flat roof and two original angled storefront bays. Two stories at rear. Original aluminum frame door and garage door at delivery bay at rear. No additional windows. Built by Carl Loven and operated for several years as Loven Company, a furniture store. Later uses included a sandwich shop, newspaper stand, and Felts Furniture. Felts Furniture sign is located at the rear delivery bay. Building is currently part of the People's Furniture business. Current use is a furniture store. (owner information).

15. 274-B Oak Avenue. People's Furniture. Contributing. 1944.

Two-story brick Commercial Style brick building with a flat roof which retains all of its original interior and exterior features, including original storefront and double one-over-one wooden sash windows. Storefront features include double leaf door with transom. Transom over display windows has been covered with plywood. Building drops in elevation to three stories at rear. Rear windows are all single openings, currently boarded over. Original garage door delivery bay at rear. Built by Arnold Phillips as People's Furniture, which began operation as a business in 1936 on Locust Street. This building was constructed eight years later. Current use is a furniture store. (owner information, newspapers, oral history).

16. 274-C Oak Avenue. People's Furniture. Non-contributing. 1985.

Two-story building of solid masonry with brick veneer facade that drops in elevation to three stories at rear. Central door and display windows on either side. Small one-over-one wooden sash windows on second story. Original building on this site was the J. L. Baker Building built by Carl Baker in the late 1920s as an auto repair and sales shop. This burned in 1982, and was replaced by the current building. Current use is a furniture store. (owner information, oral history).

17. 280-A Oak Avenue. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1945.

One-story brick building with a flat roof and two intact original storefront bays. Building drops in elevation to three stories at the rear. Storefront features include double leaf doors with transoms; transoms

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on the east side are painted, on the west are covered by an awning. Rear windows include metal and six-over-six wood sashes. Built by Kelly Poteat, and remained in the family until the current owners purchased in 1986. The original building use is unknown. Current use is a furniture store. (owner information, oral history).

18. 280-B Oak Avenue. Baker Motor Company. Contributing. ca. 1925; 1940s remodeling.

One-story brick building with a flat roof and two storefront bays. Building is two stories at rear, with metal windows on the second floor. Storefront on the east appears to be the original configuration with double leaf door, and painted transom. Center bay is currently a display window, but was probably originally a central door. Storefront display areas on the east and west both appear to have originally been garage bay openings, in keeping with the original use of the building. Current storefront configurations were probably made in the 1940s. The storefront on the east has a recessed entry with projecting display windows and the one on the west has an angled display wall on one side, and a recessed entry. An auto repair and sales company was located in this building from the late 1920s through the 1930s. Current use is a furniture store. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, owner information, newspapers, oral history).

19. 286 Oak Avenue. (former) Town Hall. Contributing. 1940.

One-story cut biotite black stone building with a flat roof, which drops in elevation to two stories at the rear alley. Windows at the rear are boarded over, but some are one-over-one wood sashes. On the front of the building, it appears the display window on the west is original, but the current storefront configuration is a later alteration to the building. In 1928, according to Sanborn maps, a fireproof jail building was located at the rear of this lot, with the fire department at the front of the lot. These were later torn down and replaced by the current building, a Works Progress Administration project. The thirty by sixty foot building was constructed by stonemasons Dave Greene and Charlie Mitchell, who also built the Gunter Building (#20). It originally housed the fire department, town hall, police station, and public library. Current use is a real estate office. (town minute books, newspapers, oral history).

20. 288 Oak Avenue. Gunter Building. Contributing. ca. 1941. NR 2002.

The picturesque two-story commercial building is three bays wide and drops to three stories at the rear. The building serves as an excellent example of the use of locally available materials for construction. The interior framing, floors, and trim are all constructed of oak and hickory, readily available in the local lumberyards. The river-tumbled micaceous biotite stone walls form a solid masonry frame to the interior, with a field stone foundation and concrete slab basement floors. Stone on all exterior walls is set within a hard, deeply recessed mortar bed which helps to accentuate the round face of the unusual rock. Small stones are laid horizontally for the most part with vertical courses forming the lintels and sills of the windows. Vertical courses also divide the first and second floors and form the cornice and the parapet coping above. The larger boulders are laid in a seemingly random pattern among these courses, yet with intentional location of the largest stones which contributes to the overall massive appearance of the building.

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The storefront and display windows are nearly intact, with the only changes being the modernizing of the original wood storefront and window framing to aluminum, and the addition of a modern aluminum-frame door. It is interesting to note that the front entrance into the building is off-center, with no pilaster above. Stone pilasters divide the front and the east elevations into bays. Windows are one-over-one; single, double, or triple. The window at the northeast corner wraps around the side of the building.

On the east elevation, facing Topaz Street, the basement level is delineated from the first floor by a course of vertical stones. The original double leaf door is located at the southeast corner. Smaller single-pane windows break up the otherwise continuous stone surface of the first floor level, with double hung windows above. The rear, or south elevation of the building is also three bays wide, with detailing much like the remainder of the exterior. Original glazed and paneled doors are located on this elevation, at the southwest corner, next to an original coal chute.

Charles Smith Gunter, a mica industrialist, bought the lots on September 16, 1941 for \$4001, and had skilled local stonemasons Charlie Mitchell and Dave Greene construct the building as a retail store for the Belk-Broome Company. These two stonemasons worked in Spruce Pine from the early 1920s through at least the 1950s, and built other structures in the downtown, including the Town Hall (#19) and Crystal Place (#40). Dave Greene lived in Spruce Pine, and it is likely that Charlie Mitchell also lived there. Current use is a restaurant. (owner information, oral history, National Register nomination).

Locust Street--north side:

21. Locust Street. Tax lot #6599. Taxi stand. Contributing, ca. 1945. Building moved to site ca. 1955.

One store, single room commercial building with side gable roof, asbestos siding, and three single pane windows. Metal awning added. Entry on east side; glazed and paneled door. Set on stone piers. The original building use was an office for a used car lot located on Oak Avenue. Once the building was moved in the mid-1950s, it was in use as a taxi stand until 1999. In the 1960s and 1970s railroad workers were often transported from Spruce Pine to Erwin, Tennessee, where the company headquarters was located. Building is currently vacant. (Interview with Gladys Duncan, building owner and long-time Spruce Pine resident, by Sybil A. Bowers, 23 April 2003)

22. 89 Locust Street. Commercial Building. Non-contributing. 1970s.

One-story brick building with a flat roof, a recessed corner entry, and no facade windows. Current use is offices. (oral history).

23. 91 Locust Street. Carolina Theater. Non-contributing. 1937.

Large two-story brick building that has undergone considerable alteration, including brick veneer on lower portion of facade and stucco over the original brick. The street level contains a storefront on either side of the central theater entrance. Storefronts have been slightly altered, and the original recessed entrance has been infilled with two doors and paneling. Multi-light metal casement windows on the

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second floor. Original Art Moderne-style marquee remains on the building. A modern sign for the theater is located to the rear facing Oak Avenue. The Carolina Theater officially opened December 16, 1937. It served for many years as the main entertainment and educational center for the town. The 1939 Sanborn notes a center entrance flanked by a restaurant on the west and a store on the east. The building was modernized in 1942 with new lighting, a new heat plant, and new paint. Sullins Music Center was located in the theater building beginning in 1945. The theater remained open until approximately 1985. Current use is a church. (1939 Sanborn map, newspapers, oral history).

vacant lot to east

24. 125-127 Locust Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. 1926; remodeled 1940s.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with a flat roof and parapet wall at front. Decorative yellow brick bands on the upper facade contrast with the red brick walls. Stucco on the east and north elevations. Storefront retains its original configuration, although it has new aluminum frame doors and display windows. Corrugated metal aprons cover the original, and transoms are covered with wood panels. Multi-light metal windows on the front and rear. On the east elevation windows are boarded over or replaced with modern sash. Loading platform at rear was added after 1939, and windows on front and rear may have been part of a 1940s remodeling. Original use of the building was a wholesale grocery. By 1939 it was in use as a retail store and as the Tri-County Printing Press. Current use is an antiques store. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, owner information, oral history).

25. 159-161 Locust Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. 1910.

Two-story tan brick building with flat roof. Two storefronts have replacement doors and windows. Center bay between storefronts projects forward with a modern door. One-over-one wood sash and some replacement sash on second floor on facade and on west side. One-story wing at rear with a stepped parapet roofline. In the late 1920s the building housed three shops, including a print shop at the rear. In 1939, there were still three stores in the building, with a lodge hall on the second floor. Current use is a beauty shop and coffee shop. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, owner information, oral history).

26. 163 Locust Street. Spruce Pine Pharmacy. Contributing. ca. 1925.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with a decorative brick panel at the cornice. Flat roof, two modernized storefront bays which have brought them out flush with the sidewalk. The bay to the east is now part of the adjacent business. Transoms are covered with metal panels, and a flat roof awning has been added. A modern door to the second floor replaces the original. Original single and double one-over-one wood sashes at front and rear. In the 1920s, there were three retail stores in the building, with Spruce Pine Pharmacy located in the westernmost store space. Original pressed tin ceiling remains intact. In 1939, there continued to be three retail spaces on the first floor, with the town hall located on the second. Current use is a clothing and furniture store. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, documentary photographs, oral history).

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27. 165 Locust Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1925.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with a decorative brick panel at the cornice. Windows are boarded over, but are double configuration. Storefront replaced ca. 1960s with metal panels covering transoms, modern doors and display windows. Flat roof awning extends from the adjacent building to the west (#26). Original double leaf doors at rear. Use of the building from the late 1920s through the 1930s was as part of the department store to the east (#28). Current use is a clothing store. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps)

28. 167-169 Locust Street. Spruce Pine Store Company. Contributing. 1923, ca. 1955.

Large two-story Commercial Style brick building with a flat roof, decorative brick panels and corbelling at the cornice, and tile coping. Soldier course brick stringcourse divides the second floor from the upper parapet. The three original storefronts retain their historic configurations, with ca. 1955 replacement aluminum doors and display windows. "Belk's" is set in tile at the center entry. Windows are double and triple four-over-one wooden sashes. Original two-panel loading doors at rear. Building is over 16,000 square feet in size, with original pressed tin ceilings and heart pine floors inside. The Spruce Pine Store Company was one of two general stores in town (the other was Burleson's Store, #8), serving as a retail store for a large rural population in other parts of the county as well. The original wood frame Spruce Pine Store Company building was built in the same location as the present building in 1910, by C. J. Harris, founder of Harris Clay Company. In the late 1910s the store was located in part of the Burleson Store, and in 1923 this large brick building replaced the old store on the same site. The Spruce Pine Store Company stayed open during the Depression and did business on credit. The building remained in use as a general store until the Belk-Broome Company remodeled the building and occupied it beginning October 15, 1955. Current use is a gift shop and offices. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, documentary photographs, owner information, newspapers, oral history).

29. 199-201 Locust Street. J. M. Wellborn Building. Contributing. ca. 1925.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with flat roof and flat brick panels at the cornice. Two original storefront bays, with a third on the east side which has been modernized. Single and double one-over-one wood sash windows, single light original doors and modern door in eastern storefront. There were two retail stores here in the late 1920s, and J. M. Wellborn, a general store, and a cafe were located here in the 1930s. Current use is a Latin-themed retail store and offices. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, documentary photos, owner information)

30. 203 Locust Street. Felts Furniture Company. Contributing. ca. 1935.

Two-story Commercial Style brown brick building with lighter decorative bands of brick above the storefront and at the cornice. Double windows on upper facade with modern sash. One-over-one wood sash windows remain at rear. Modern infill storefront on first floor. Original use was a retail store. Current use is a restaurant. (1939 Sanborn map, newspapers, oral history).

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31. 207 Locust Street. Garland Building. Contributing. 1953.

Two-story brick building with a flat roof and metal multi-light casement windows with soldier course lintels with decorative corner blocks. The two storefronts are replacements. Current use is a barbershop and offices. Granite plaque with incised letters on building notes construction date. This building appears to have replaced an older building which shows up on the 1939 Sanborn map (1939 Sanborn map, plaque).

32. 209 Locust Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1935.

One-story brick commercial building with two original storefronts, a flat roof, and one-over-one wood sash windows at rear. Flat roof metal awning added at front. Original uses included a drugstore and a bank. This building does not appear on Sanborn maps until 1939, but the owner notes a date of 1911. There was no building in this location on the 1928 Sanborn map, indicating there may have been an older building here that burned and was replaced in the 1930s by the current structure. Current use is a clothing store. (1939 Sanborn map)

33. 215-A Locust Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1925.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with decorative bands of soldier brick courses with concrete accents. The building has a flat roof, a corbelled cornice, and a row of windows on second floor with replacement sash. The storefront is a replacement, and a metal awning has been added. Rear portion of building added between 1928 and 1939. The building was in use in the 1920s through the 1930s as a retail store. Current use is a clothing store. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps).

34. 215-B Locust Street. Commercial Building and Lodge Hall. Contributing. ca. 1921.

Two-story rusticated concrete block building with pilasters at the corners and flanking the center entrance. Row of single and double windows with replacement sash. The storefront door and display windows are replacements. In 1928, the building was in use as two retail stores on the first floor, with a lodge hall on the second. It is not known what the lodge was, but it is likely it was masons. By 1939 there was a retail store and a restaurant on the first floor. Current owner notes that this building and the adjacent building to the east (#35) were built by Charlie Gunter. Buildings are solid masonry, with each block poured on site and weighing approximately ninety pounds. Current use is a clothing store. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, owner information)

35. 221 Locust Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1921.

Two-story rusticated concrete block building almost identical to the one to the west (#34), with pilasters at the corners and flanking the center entrance. Row of single and double windows with replacement sash. The storefront door and display windows are replacements. Two retail stores were located on the first floor of this building, with a photo shop on the second floor in 1928. There were two retail stores still in the building by 1939. Current use is an art gallery. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps; owner information)

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36. 225 Locust Street. Piedmont Theater. Contributing. ca. 1925.

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with a flat roof, recessed entry which originally served as the theater entrance, and original door to the second floor. Double one-over-one wood sash windows, flat roof with parapet walls on the east and west. In 1928, the building was in use as a movie theater (Piedmont Theater) with a small retail store in the southeast corner, although the front was not a typical theater facade. The Piedmont Theater was the first theater in town, remaining active until the Carolina Theater was built in 1937. The building use then changed into a retail store. Current use is a gift shop. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps, documentary photos, oral history).

37. 229 Locust Street. Garland's Dry Goods. Contributing. 1942.

Two-story late Commercial Style brick building with a flat roof, original storefront configuration, and one-over-one wood sash windows. Flat roof awning added. Some windows on east side are bricked in. This building, built of solid brick, and over 4000 square feet in size, replaced the earlier Garland's Dry Goods building on the same site which burned. Garland's occupied most of the building, but beginning in 1947 Thomas Furniture Store opened on the lower level, facing Locust Street. Current use is a furniture store. (newspapers, oral history).

Locust Street--south side:

38. 164 Locust Street. Spruce Pine Depot. Contributing. 1909.

Well-preserved Tudor Revival style one-story depot with half-timbered and pebbledash walls, a hip roof with exposed rafter ends and flared eaves, and a hip roof dormer on the north side. The building is nine bays long, with the six easternmost bays comprising the passenger section and the remaining bays comprising the freight section. A beaded board wainscot encircles the building. A portion of the original porch roof remains on the east end, supported by knee braces. There are two interior brick chimneys, along with some original six-over-six wood sash windows. Original bay window is located at the rear, facing the tracks. Original diagonal board loading doors still exist on the north and south elevations. Some of the more recent changes to the building include retrofitting of one-over-one sash into the lower portion of some of the original window openings, and removal of a portion of the original freight platform on the west side. The oldest building in the district and the last of the Clinchfield depots in the mountains, this depot is typical of those built by the Clinchfield Railroad throughout western North Carolina. It was built as a combination passenger and freight station at a cost of approximately \$1470.00. The freight portion of building was enlarged in the 1920s to accommodate larger shipments of minerals and timber. CSX Transportation still maintains an office in the building. Freight cars on site note this is currently part of the Georgia-Clinchfield-West Point route. (1928 and 1939 Sanborn maps; owner information; oral history; survey files; Bishir, Catherine, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina, p. 234)

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Link Street--east side:

39. 11 Link Street. Office Building. Contributing. ca. 1950.

Two-story brick building with five bays on the first floor and multi-light metal casement windows on the second. All first floor windows appear to be original fixed pane openings. Flat roof, parapet walls on the north and south. Stairs on south side of building to second floor entrance. Current use is offices. (oral history interview with Bill Norman, long-time Spruce Pine resident; owner information)

Crystal Street--east side:

40. 29 Crystal Street. Crystal Place. Contributing. 1937.

Three-story random coursed micaceous biotite stone commercial building originally built as three stories, with a fourth story set back from the original elevations on three sides added soon after. This is said to have been a penthouse. This story has recently been stuccoed. Stone pilasters divide the three-bay facade. The center entrance is recessed within a segmental arch with "Crystal Place" sign above. Original tripartite storefront display windows with transoms flank the entrance. Original upper level windows are double one-over-one wood sashes. All have soldier course stone lintels and sills. Built by mica industrialist Charles Gunter, who also built the Gunter Building on Oak Avenue (#20), the building remained in the ownership of the Gunter family until 1976. Local stonemasons Dave Greene and Charlie Mitchell built this building of locally quarried stone. Retail stores occupied the first floor of this building, including a barber shop, a beauty shop, a restaurant known as Happy Home Dining Room, and "Doc" White's Music Store. The Bureau of Public Roads had an office in the building in 1938. There were apartments on the upper floors. Current use is offices. (1939 Sanborn map, owner information, survey files).

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SUMMARY

The Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District is significant as an intact collection of early to mid-twentieth century commercial buildings, representative of an industrial community's boom times from 1909 to 1953. Once the Clinchfield Railroad arrived in 1903, the town experienced two major construction periods, one from the 1910s to the 1920s and a second from the 1940s to the mid-1950s. Spruce Pine, due to its concentration of mines and mineral refineries, coupled with rail transportation, was the Toe Valley's commercial center, with the largest concentration of retail stores, banks, automotive businesses, and other commercial enterprises from the 1920s to the 1960s. The Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District meets National Register Criterion C for the local architectural significance of the downtown buildings and meets Criterion A for its important associations with the historic commercial development of the town. Although the town continued to prosper after 1953, this period is not exceptionally significant, and therefore the period of significance ends with the fifty-year cut-off date for Criteria A and C.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND COMMERCE CONTEXT

Spruce Pine became the railroad, furniture, hosiery, textile, and mineral processing center of the county, seeing its period of largest growth from 1903, when the Clinchfield Railroad arrived, to the late 1920s, and again in the 1940s to the 1950s when the mining industry flourished during World War II.

Settlement in what would later become Mitchell County began as early as 1778. Most of this settlement was located along creeks, where there were small pieces of arable land available within an area of steep hillsides and mountains. Small subsistence farms were a way of life. Mitchell County was created in 1861 from portions of Yancey, McDowell, Burke, and Watauga counties. Bakersville became the county seat in 1868.¹ Early discovery of the minerals available in the area began in 1870, but the land was rugged, with little development, and remained cut off from much of the rest of the state of North Carolina until the early twentieth century when the county was finally connected to the industrialized piedmont by the arrival, in 1903, of the Clinchfield Railroad. The Clinchfield, as the only competitor to the Southern Railway system in western North Carolina, ran from Kentucky to South Carolina, through Spruce Pine and Marion, and provided an alternate line through the rugged mountain terrain. It followed the route of the Toe River, connecting Spruce Pine with the outside world and spurring the development of the rich mineral industry in the county.²

Even though the railroad had arrived in Spruce Pine by 1903, there were only a handful of merchants in town from the late 1890s to the early 1910s. A 1905 documentary photo shows a few frame store buildings and houses. Two of the earliest merchants in the town, appearing in the *North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory* as early as 1896, were J. A. Bailey & Brothers, general store, and L. A. Berry & Company. Merchants appearing at the turn of the twentieth century included Tom English, J. E.

¹"Historical Sketch of Mitchell County", Archives & History files, western office.

²Bishir, Catherine W., Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin. *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999, pp. 33-35.

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Burleson & Son, W. M. Fowler & Company and L. A. Berry & Company. These early shops were located in wood frame buildings by the tracks.³ The depot was built in 1909, and the town began to develop, with additional merchants located in town along with several doctors by 1915.⁴ Discovery of the mineral richness of the area and development of the mining industry began in the 1910s and expanded greatly into the 1920s.

Spruce Pine remained a scattered rural settlement until the town was formally platted by the Sprucepine Land Company on September 15, 1916.⁵ Streets running east-west through the town were named for trees and north-south streets were named for minerals, representing the natural resources that abounded in Mitchell County.⁶ The southwestern portion of this plat, adjacent to the rail line, developed into the commercial district of Spruce Pine. A 1910s documentary photo shows one block of frame one and two-story stores on Locust Street. Within the district today there are two buildings dating from the first two decades of the twentieth century, including the **Spruce Pine Depot** (#38, 1909) and the **Commercial Building** at 159-161 Locust Street (#25, 1910).

Spruce Pine was incorporated in 1913, and by 1923 was known as the "mining capital of the state." It became a central shipping area for minerals and the timber industry. The commercial and residential construction in town boomed.⁷ In the 1920s, two blocks of brick commercial buildings had replaced most of the early frame stores. During Spruce Pine's early boom years in the 1910s to 1920s, there were many boarding houses in or near the downtown area, some of which housed mine employees.⁸ Many building owners rented their upper floors as apartments. As the town began to develop as a major mining center, the Topliff Hotel and the Spruce Pine Hotel, both built by the early 1920s on Oak Avenue, also took in boarders, including many local government officials, geologists, and mining engineers. Both hotels also served as social centers for the town. The Topliff burned in 1948 and the Spruce Pine Hotel was torn down in recent years.⁹

By 1920, the population in Spruce Pine was 717, doubling to 1546 in 1930.¹⁰ Most of the commercial core of the downtown had developed by 1930. Locust Street ("Lower Street"), which runs along the north side of the railroad tracks, developed first, with most buildings constructed by 1928, followed by later

³North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory, 1903-1910.

⁴Ibid, 1913-1915.

⁵Mitchell County plat records, Book 1, p. 34.

⁶"Spruce Pine Built on River's Banks." Ridgerunner, May 1980, p. 3.

⁷Ted Alexander. Mitchell County essay, survey files, Archives & History, western office.

⁸Presnell, Lowell. Mines Miners and Minerals. Alexander, North Carolina: WorldComm, 1999, p. 227.

⁹Stories Neath the Roan: Memories of the People of Yancey, Mitchell, and Avery Counties at the Foot of Roan Mountain in North Carolina, 1993, p. 87, and Sanborn Map 1928.

¹⁰North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory, 1939.

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development on Oak Avenue ("Upper Street") which took place in the 1930s to the 1950s.¹¹ Locust and Crystal Streets were paved in 1924. Sidewalks on the north side of Locust Street to Topaz Street, on the west side of Crystal Street, and on the north side of Oak Avenue were constructed in 1924. In 1925 Crystal and Topaz Streets were made one-way, to help alleviate some traffic congestion on Locust Street. Also in 1925, Southern Bell Telephone & Telegraph Company erected poles for electrical and telephone service.¹² Some of the buildings constructed in the district in the 1920s include the **Commercial Building and Lodge Hall** (#34, ca. 1921); the commercial building at 221 Locust Street (#35, ca. 1921); **Spruce Pine Store Company** (#28, 1923); **Burleson Store Company** (#8, 1924); the **Piedmont Theater** (#36, ca. 1925); the **Commercial Building** at 216-218 Oak Avenue (#12, ca. 1925); **Spruce Pine Pharmacy** (#26, ca. 1925); and the **Commercial Building** at 125-127 Locust Street (#24, 1926);

The Depression years of the early 1930s in Spruce Pine were difficult, and the town struggled to meet its budget requirements, but overall the town fared better than most small communities in other parts of western North Carolina. Many businesses stayed open and banks did not close their doors. Some businesses active in downtown in the 1930s included general stores, groceries, cafes, banks, car dealerships, and clothing stores. The Spruce Pine Store Company and Burleson's Store, two of the largest general stores, extended credit to its customers in the form of "googiloos", a form of local metal scrip money which could be used as currency in most stores in town. Harris Clay Company, owner of the Spruce Pine Store Company, also used paper scrip which could be exchanged for "real" money.¹³ Harris Clay Company, founded by Sylva native Colonel C. J. Harris at the turn of the twentieth century, mined the rich kaolin clay deposits in Mitchell County, as well as a refining plant located in Spruce Pine. This company was the largest employer in the county, and also donated land for schools and other commercial buildings in Spruce Pine.¹⁴ The mining industry picked up again in the late 1930s and 1940s with new plants such as the United Feldspar Grinding Plant, near Spruce Pine, opening in 1936. Families would mine feldspar at small mines throughout the county and take it to grinding plants such as this one.

A second building trend occurred in Spruce Pine from 1930 through the early 1950s, with many of the town's buildings constructed in the 1940s. C. S. Gunter, a mica industrialist, built several commercial structures in the downtown in this time, including the **Crystal Place** (#40, 1937) and the **Gunter Building** (#20, ca. 1941). A town ordinance in 1930 noted that all new buildings within the fire limits of town, including new additions, must be brick, stone, concrete, or other non-combustible materials. Roofs were to be slate, tile, tin, zinc, copper, or iron. Any rebuilding of fire-damaged structures also had to meet these specifications.¹⁵ While not documented as to why this ordinance was passed, through the years

¹¹Sanborn maps from 1928 clearly show this development trend, with the majority of current buildings along Locust Street built by the late 1920s, and only scattered buildings along Oak Avenue.

¹²Town Minute Books, April 7, 1924; July 14, 1925; and September 22, 1925.

¹³Brown, "Pee Wee". Resident of Spruce Pine since 1926 and postal carrier in the town for thirty-six year. Interview by Sybil A. Bowers, 21 March 2002.

¹⁴"Spruce Pine", Asheville Citizen-Times, 4 July 1931.

¹⁵Town Minute Books, January 21, 1930.

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several wood frame buildings in downtown Spruce Pine had burned. In addition, there was a significant fire in the county seat of Bakersville in 1923 which destroyed several buildings there. This likely prompted the passage of such a strict construction ordinance in 1930.¹⁶ Several new buildings were constructed in the downtown in the 1930s, including **People's Furniture** (#15, 1936); **Carolina Theater** (#23, 1937); **Felts Furniture** (#30, ca. 1935); and the **Crystal Place** (#40, 1937).

The amount of minerals mined in the Spruce Pine and Mitchell County area, including feldspar and wet and dry ground mica, doubled during World War II. Mica, also mined locally, was needed in the electric industry and the demand for this mineral continued in the 1930s and even into the 1940s and World War II.¹⁷ The mountains of western North Carolina had more mica deposits than anywhere else in the country, thus leading to the tremendous growth in Spruce Pine during this era. Three depots were designated by the United States as acquisition points, Spruce Pine, North Carolina, Keene, New Hampshire, and Custer, South Dakota. Domestically and in the military, mica was used for roofing, wallpaper, rubber, paint, and plastics. Large sheets of mica sold for \$73.00 per pound. In 1942, at the height of World War II, there were 175 sheet mica mines in or near Spruce Pine and adjoining counties.¹⁸ Many women were employed in the mica industry, processing the delicate mica mineral sheets into thin layers for use in industries. Logging also continued as an industry.¹⁹

Businesses were thriving in the downtown in the 1940s, with banks, hotels, general stores, auto dealers, insurance companies, furniture stores, Farmer's Federation offices, food markets, jewelry stores, restaurants, newspaper offices, and theaters drawing residents into town for shopping and entertainment. The two theaters in town, the Piedmont Theater which operated in downtown until the late 1930s, and the Carolina Theater, which opened in 1937, served as the main entertainment centers which served to draw residents to town. Saturdays in particular were extremely busy and active downtown. Many residents would come into town to see the passenger trains which arrived daily.²⁰ As a result of the industrial boom in Mitchell County and Spruce Pine during World War II, many buildings were constructed or remodeled in the downtown in the 1940s. Some of these buildings include the commercial buildings at 110-114, 118, and 120 Oak Avenue (#5-7, ca. 1940); the **(former) Town Hall** (#19, 1940), a Works Progress Administration project; the **Gunter Building** (#20, ca. 1941); **Garland's Dry Goods** (#37, 1942); the **Commercial Building** at 280-A Oak Avenue (#17, ca. 1945); the taxi stand on Locust Street (#21, ca. 1945); and the **Commercial Buildings** at 275 and 279 Oak Avenue (#3 and #4, ca. 1949). The former car lot office and later taxi stand on Locust Street (#21, ca. 1945) is a rare example of this building type in North Carolina. There are only a handful of known examples of these small, one-story, freestanding buildings that were used as taxi stands. Some of these, now demolished, were located in

¹⁶Western office, Archives & History, survey files, Mitchell County essay.

¹⁷"More Mineral Expansion Foreseen." *Tri-County News*. 24 October 1946.

¹⁸Bailey, Lloyd Richard, Sr. *The Heritage of the Toe River Valley*. Volume 1. Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1994, p. 41.

¹⁹"More Mineral Expansion Foreseen."

²⁰Ibid.

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Salisbury, Wilson, and Black Mountain. One taxi stand still exists in the Morehead City Historic District, dating from ca. 1960. Although the building was moved to the historic district after the period of significance, it is exceptionally significant for its rarity.

Construction in downtown continued into the 1950s, with the cost of new buildings in 1951 being over \$800,000.²¹ Some early 1950s buildings include **Day's Drug Store** (#1, 1950); the **Commercial Building** at 269 Oak Avenue (#2, ca. 1950); the **Office Building** at 11 Link Street (#39, ca. 1950); and the **Garland Building** (#31, 1953).

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Spruce Pine today remains the commercial center of the county, with a much larger downtown and a greater concentration of one to three-story brick or stone buildings than the county seat of Bakersville. Several buildings in downtown Spruce Pine are distinctive to the area, as they are constructed of local cut stone or river-tumbled micaeous biotite rock. Several mid-1950s buildings are built of a coursed ashlar (#11, 1955; #14, 1956). The mining industry was the source of the economic vitality of the town, and several of the buildings, including the **Gunter Building** (#20, ca. 1941, NR 2002), the **Town Hall** (#19, 1940), and **Crystal Place** (#40, 1937) reflect the importance of this industry and the use of native building materials which complemented the mountain setting. In addition, the stone buildings reflect an aesthetic derived from the early twentieth century Arts & Crafts movement. The use of stone was an important construction material in other mountain communities as part of this movement towards more rustic architecture, and Spruce Pine's stone buildings continue this building tradition. In particular, the river-tumbled micaeous biotite stone used on the **Gunter Building** and other buildings in Spruce Pine outside of the historic district is unique in western North Carolina architecture. The Gunter Building, through its deliberate patterning and placement of native stone is an example of the use of these materials to create beautiful structures and showcase the materials, all common to the Arts & Crafts building era. This aesthetic, utilizing stone as the main building material, was often used in other mountain community buildings of the Works Progress Administration, with many of them, such as the **U. S. Post Office** in Boone (1938); **Cove Creek School** in Watauga County (1941); and the **North Carolina National Guard Armory** in Waynesville (1936) being built out of native stone. The stone (**former**) **Town Hall** (#19, 1940) in Spruce Pine is an example of these design trends promoted by the Federal program.

In contrast to the stone buildings, the brick buildings located in the Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District are more typical of commercial centers throughout western North Carolina, making use of the Commercial Style with little adornment other than soldier coursing around windows or corbelling at the cornice. Most are two story, some have more than one storefront, and most retain the original architectural features of the upper facades even if the display areas have been modernized. Many of these buildings feature Commercial Style details, being relatively plain, but with patterned brick in upper cornices, grouping of windows, recessed entries, and one or two storefronts. Particularly good examples

²¹"Construction in Spruce Pine This Year Up to \$800,000". Tri-County News. 12 July 1951.

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of this style in Spruce Pine include the **commercial building** on Oak Avenue (#12, ca. 1925), with its two recessed storefront entries and soldier course brick lintels; the **commercial building** on Locust Street (#24, 1926, remodeled 1940s) with decorative yellow brick bands contrasting with the red brick walls being its only decoration; the **Spruce Pine Store Company** (#28, 1923, ca. 1955 remodeling), with decorative brick panels and corbelling at the cornice, soldier course brick dividing the second floor from the parapet, and double or triple windows; and **Felts Furniture Company** (#30, ca. 1935), with lighter decorative bands of brick above the storefront and the cornice and double windows. The two **commercial buildings** on Locust Street (#34 and #35, ca. 1921), while employing the Commercial Style in their overall form, are unusual in the use of a rusticated block solid masonry construction, which is not as common as the plain brick facades of the style. The Commercial Style continued to be used for Spruce Pine's later buildings from the 1940s through the early 1950s, with good examples being **People's Furniture** (#15, 1944), which retains its original storefront and double windows; the one-story **commercial building** on Oak Avenue (#6, ca. 1948) with original storefronts, typical of the use of the Commercial Style for one-story buildings; **Day's Drug Store** (#1, 1950), with its yellow brick walls and multi-light casement windows with a decorative row of soldier course brick above;

In addition to the use of the Commercial Style, a handful of buildings in post-World War II Spruce Pine's downtown began to reflect the trends towards further simplicity in the design of commercial buildings, often utilizing materials such as concrete block, plain or rusticated, as their main construction element. Concrete block was readily available, and was often used for its ease of construction. While the front of the building might have retained a brick façade for appearance, the remainder of the building to the rear was often block. An example of this is the **commercial building** on Oak Avenue (#2, ca. 1950), with a Commercial Style front and block to the rear. The more decorative rusticated concrete block, as was used on the **Floyd Smith's Hamburgers** building (#10, ca. 1950), was functional, easily buildable, and more aesthetically pleasing than the plain block used for the rear, more functional building elevation.

Also notable in the downtown Spruce Pine Historic District is the 1909 Clinchfield Railroad depot, with its Tudor Revival style featuring half-timbered, pebbledash walls and hip roof with exposed rafter ends and flared eaves. The last of the depots remaining on the Clinchfield line, this depot most closely resembles the one designed by Richard Morris Hunt in Biltmore Village in Asheville, completed ca. 1896. This building also displays the Tudor Revival style with pebbledash and half-timbered walls and a deep hip roof supported by heavy brackets.

In comparison to Spruce Pine, the much smaller county seat of Bakersville, located northwest of Spruce Pine, contains a grouping of primarily one and two-story brick Commercial Style buildings dating primarily from the 1880s through the 1930s, all with relatively plain upper facades except for some soldier coursing of brick, and some with their original storefronts. Many of these are similar in design to the Commercial Style buildings in Spruce Pine. These buildings line both sides of Mitchell Avenue, with some fronting onto Crimson Laurel Way. Notable buildings include the **McBee Building** (1880s), a one-story gable-fronted frame building; the **Greene Building** (ca. 1900), a two-story commercial building which retains its original storefront and is covered with a pressed metal to look like rusticated block, and

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two ca. 1910s brick buildings with single and double diamond-pane windows and decorative brick corbelling at the cornice. In contrast to the mostly plain brick commercial buildings is the 1907 Neoclassical Revival concrete block courthouse with a cupola, polygonal corner bays, and a pediment over the central entrance. While Spruce Pine contains within its downtown several notable stone buildings, the only stone building in downtown Bakersville is the modern one-story library. While there are a handful of late 1940s to early 1950s buildings, Bakersville did not experience the building boom that Spruce Pine did during World War II and on into the 1950s. Bakersville was not on the Clinchfield Railroad line and even today is in a much more remote location than Spruce Pine, with a population smaller today than a century ago.

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Boundary Description

The boundaries for this nomination are indicated on the accompanying tax/sketch map, with a scale of 1" = 100'.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries include a portion of the original plat of Spruce Pine, and are based upon the greatest concentration of early to mid-twentieth century commercial buildings located within downtown Spruce Pine.

Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District Photographs

The following information applies to all of the photographs, except where noted.

Name of property: Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District
Spruce Pine
Mitchell County
North Carolina

Photographer: Sybil Argintar Bowers
Date of photos: October 2001
Location of Division of Archives and History
original negatives: One Village Lane
Asheville, North Carolina 28803

1. Locust Street, view northwest, March 2003
2. alley at rear of Oak Avenue, view west, March 2003
3. Oak Avenue, view southwest
4. 269 Oak Avenue
5. 110-114 Oak Avenue
6. storefront, 114 Oak Avenue, March 2003
7. 208-210 Oak Avenue
8. 274(B) Oak Avenue
9. 286 Oak Avenue
10. 288 Oak Avenue
11. 167-169 Locust Street
12. 199-201 Locust Street, March 2003
13. 207 Locust Street, March 2003
14. 215(B) Locust Street
15. 164 Locust Street, depot
16. 29 Crystal Street, Crystal Palace

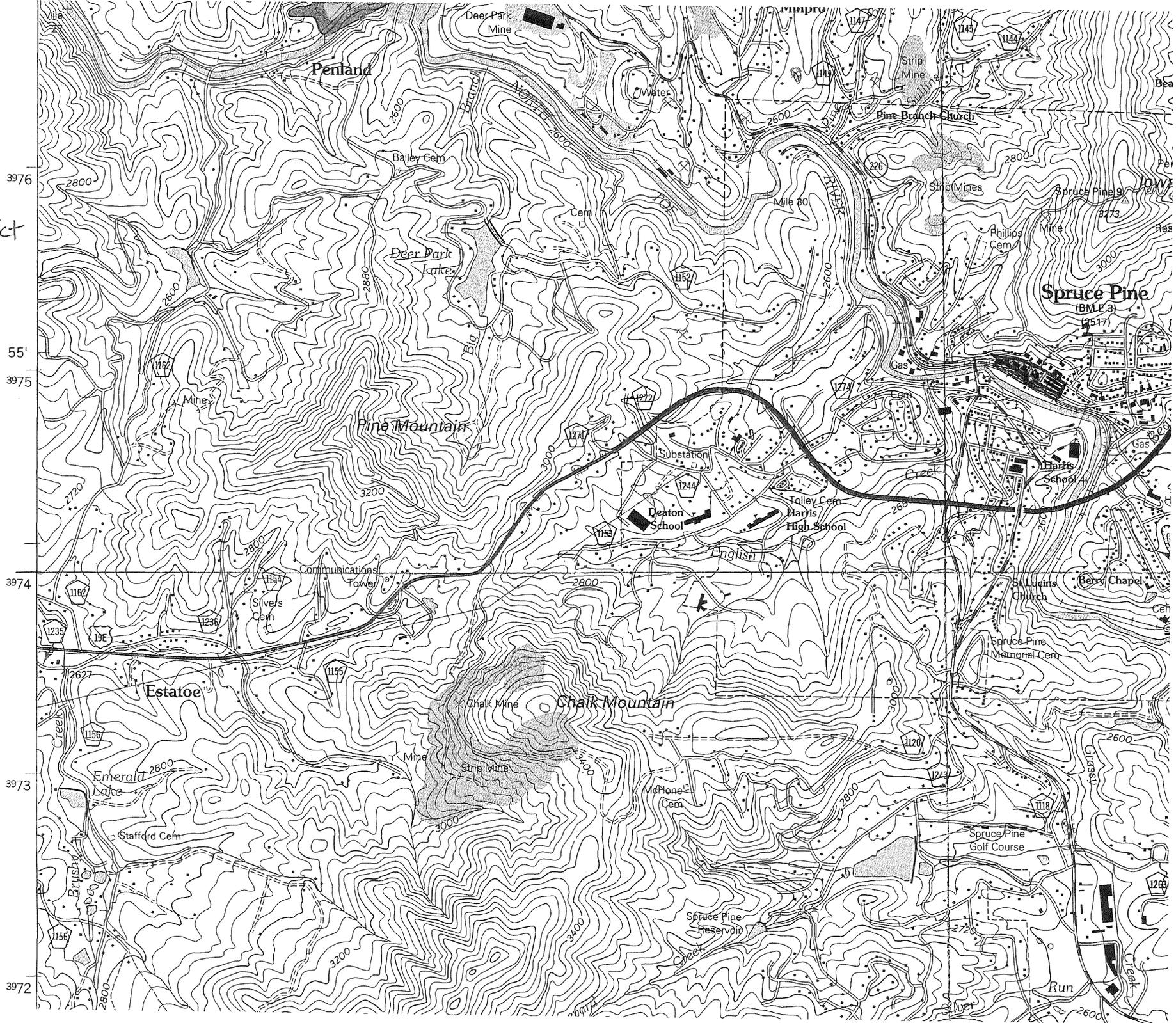
Downtown
Spruce Pine
Historic District

Spruce Pine
Mitchell Co.

Zone 17

UTMs

1403460
3974980





DOWNTOWN SPRUCE PINE HISTORIC DISTRICT
 SPRUCE PINE, NC MITCHELL COUNTY

- — Boundary
- Contributing
- Non-contributing
- ▨ vacant lot
- 1,2,3... inventory #

sketch/Tax Map



SCALE: 1" = 100'

(1.57A)
7900

SPRUCE PINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(1.04A)
8893

PORTIO PARCEL SEE MA 089

