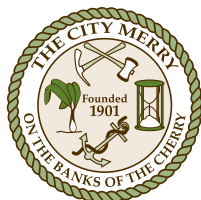


# City of Richwood

WEST VIRGINIA



## Historic District

LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
OF HISTORIC PLACES IN 2001

A panorama of buildings and events



MAIN STREET RICHWOOD IN 1908

# A LUMBER BOOMTOWN



At the remarkably late date of 1900 the Baltimore and Ohio railroad pushed into Cherry Tree Bottoms and what had previously been a few small farms surrounded by the vast eastern wilderness suddenly blossomed into the thriving town of Richwood. By 1901 the Cherry River Boom & Lumber Company completed a band saw mill to process the virgin timber holdings of the company's 200,000 acres.



Other major businesses soon followed. These included J. B. Dodge Clothespin Factory (largest in the world), Wm. F. Mosser Tanning Company (which used hemlock bark to tan shoe soles), Sherwood Manufacturing Company (which made wheel hubs), J.D. Westcott Handle Factory (which made shovel and broom handles from "waste" wood), and Cherry River Paper Company.



By 1910 the City's population was over 3,000. By the 1920's it had more than doubled to 7,000 people, making Richwood one of the largest cities in the state. Residents had many needs and a variety of shops sprang up to serve them. This was Richwood's heyday.



The buildings which housed those early shops form the core of today's federally designated historic district.



Before the City's 1915 project to pour concrete sidewalks, shopkeepers had to "take up" the wooden sidewalks on weekends. The heavy foot traffic of lumber workers ("wood hicks") with spiked boots (or "corks") would shred the boards to pieces.



In 1917-18 Richwood men left for basic training at Camp Lee, Virginia before deployment to fight in World War I. Back at home, Richwood ladies contributed to the war effort as shown in the picture below. The Central West Virginia Chapter of the Surgical Dressing Class posed in the window of the Sagraves & Richardson Hardware Store (later known as the G. C. Murphy Building).



By the end of World War II most of the independent feeder mills had vanished and only the big mill remained. It was purchased by Georgia-Pacific and most recently, by Collins Family Lumber Company who is still operating to date.

Located at the east end of Main Street, Richwood's largest mill is the oldest continually operating manufacturing site in the State of West Virginia.



## A DECADE OF TRAGEDY

"The town that wouldn't die" was one of the headlines to announce a series of tragic fires and floods during the 1920s. The first fire started on upper Main Street on a windy afternoon on Aug. 15, 1921. It started in the Busy Bee Restaurant, whose proprietors were of Greek descent.

The hungry fire consumed the town's buildings from the corner of Oakford and Main (where the Boston Candy Kitchen was housed) up to the E. E. Buck Tailor Shop.



The Richwood Volunteer Fire Department kept the inferno from passing the tailor shop by using dynamite to create a fire break. On lower Main Street, the Star Theatre and everything east of it, were destroyed. The fire was stopped at the brick and stone Richwood Banking and Trust building. The intense heat gutted a large portion of the bank, including breaking all of the windows.



The blaze spread northward where it engulfed the First Methodist Church and several homes along East Walnut Street.

In all 32 structures were lost at a cost of \$300,000. This was an era when a postcard could be purchased for a penny and mailed for another.

Evidence of the rebuilding that followed is shown on the builders plaques of the J. Cerre, Joe Pallone buildings on South Oakford Ave. These buildings are directly east of the Richwood Depot, which was renovated in 2006.

There were many heroic acts during the fire. **Nicholas Republican** reporter C. Donee Cook told this story, "Four men were caught between flames in a third floor room of the Richwood Banking and Trust Company. Had it not been for the catlike climbing of Mr. Perey Peak up the outside of the building to bring them a rope, they would have all perished. All survived to praise his name."



On June 11, 1922, a cloud burst brought a raging torrent of water streaming down Oakford Ave. towards the Cherry River. The surface of the recently bricked Avenue was literally peeled from the ground and pushed into heaps at the junction of Oakford Ave. and Main Street.

Another early morning fire ravaged the town on April 20, 1928. Ironically, this fire destroyed much of the business district which had survived the previous fire. The fire's origin was pinpointed to the



Oakford Theatre, located where the Richwood Post Office sits today.

Stiff winds lifted the flames across Main Street on an eastward march through the business district. From the second story windows of their family store, the Harmans watched in horror as the flames leaped to their building. They had time to grab a few clothes and memories as they escaped to the back alley.



After the fire, Mr. Harman immediately rebuilt his store on the same site (you can still read the roofline plaque dated 1928). However, the two-headed calf which Mr. Harman had displayed to attract shoppers was lost forever.

Flames ate their way from one building to the next until reaching the Carskadon Funeral Parlor where a large charge of dynamite was set off. "It blew the huge building into smithereens," according to reporter L. A. Thomas of **The Advance**, one of the era's newspapers.

There was no loss of human life, but many homes were destroyed.



Dr. W.E. Echols

Mr. Thomas wrote, "One of the heart-rendering occurrences connected with the fire was the burning of seven horses and a Jersey bull, which were kept in barn near the rear of the burned theatre... one horse belonged to Dr. W.E. Echols and another to American Express... the three-year-old bull was the property of Pete Cougar."

Low water pressure was a factor which allowed the fire to spread quickly. Most of the town's water pressure was diverted to protect the lumber mill's huge stacks which were within 200 feet of the fire's path.

On this end of town the fire was stopped by the metal-clad Breckstein building, which was constructed in 1901 and dismantled in 1997. Additional parking was created where it stood. A beautiful mural can be seen in the area once occupied by the Breckstein building depicting local history, regional landmarks, and the Nancy Hart Civil War spy gravesite. The mural was commissioned by Mayor Jeromy Rose and completed in 1999.

Some residents expressed their feeling that the fires were blessings in disguise, removing unsafe wooden buildings which would be replaced with more modern materials such as brick and stone.

## THE CRASH

In 1929 the New York Stock Market crashed. Reverberations of this enormous economic collapse started the "Great Depression" and had a profound impact on Richwood. Richwood Banking and Trust Com-

pany, opened in 1902; First National Bank, opened in 1906; and Citizens Bank, opened in 1916 all eventually collapsed. Fortunes – large and small – were lost by many depositors. The resulting economic ripple ran through all the downtown businesses.



First National Bank reorganized and opened in 1932 as Cherry River National Bank. Before the depression, any designated “National Bank” in the United States could print their own legal currency. The now failed First National Bank had circulated currency with its name and the name of the town.

## ECONOMIC REVIVAL



Coal mining began replacing jobs lost by the slow retraction of the timber industry. To the town's good fortune, the Cherry River Boom & Lumber Company sold 175,000 acres of its holdings to the federal government in 1934 to greatly expand the Monongahela National Forest.

A promotional newspaper from June 9, 1937 boasted that “Richwood, home of the Lumberjacks, was the gateway to the largest national forest in the eastern United States.” With its population of 7,300, Richwood was the largest incorporated city between Charleston, Capitol of West Virginia and the great valley of Virginia.

Although isolated since its birth in 1900, Richwood was the center of a vast area perceived as wilderness. Millions of feet of the world's finest lumber had been manufactured in this industrial city. Throughout the many decades of Richwood's “boom”, a ride from the distant hollows, where people lived, to Richwood was the equivalent of a trip to a major metropolitan city.

In 1937 the First Annual Homecoming Spud and Splinter Festival was organized. A featured part of it was the only dry land navy in the world, “The Cherry River Navy.” Conceived by James “Bugs” Teets, Lee Reese and A. B. Campbell, the navy's original purpose was to promote building a road to connect Richwood and Marlinton. Their slogans “On To Marlinton” and “The Missing Link” were displayed on floats and banners everywhere.

In parades, a giant self-propelled model battleship named “The Clothespin” was the flagship that led the admirals in their purposeful march down Main Street. Their armament shot wooden clothespins up over the heads of the crowd. The first group photo (shown at the top of the next page) was taken on Oakford Ave. There are at least 200 admirals in the picture with shoulder epaulettes and giant clothespins hanging at their sides.



## A GLIMPSE OF CIVIL ABUSE

Just prior to World War II, many in the United States were caught up in political hysteria resulting from their fear of Communists, Nazis, and other factions. These fears led to the abuse of a group of Jehovah's Witnesses in Richwood in 1940. The event has been documented by Professor Chuck Smith of West Virginia State University.

Two Jehovah's Witnesses were in Richwood petitioning against an action taken in Ohio that they viewed as being unjust. They soon caught the attention of American Legionnaires and authorities who asked them to leave town.

The next day, when the Jehovah's Witnesses returned with seven other members, they went to City Hall and requested police protection. Instead, the Sheriff, assisted by Richwood's Chief of Police, detained the party and alerted fellow Legionnaires of their presence and of their anticipated refusal to pledge allegiance to the U.S. flag in front of the Richwood Post Office. When they predictably refused to pledge allegiance, the Jehovah's Witnesses were each forced to drink from 4 to 14 ounces of castor oil, were tied together and marched to the west end of town. Their vehicle was attacked and they were verbally assaulted.

What distinguished this from hundreds of similar abuses of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the nation was the fact that just prior to the incident, the Sheriff took off his badge and said, "What is done from here on will not be done in the name of the law."

The recently established Civil Rights section of the Justice Department pursued the unique Richwood case. In a 1942 trial in U.S. District Court in Charleston, West Virginia, the two lawmen were found guilty of failing to protect the civil rights of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Sheriff received the harsher of the two penalties. He was sentenced to a year in the Federal Prison at Mill Point and forced to pay a \$1,500 fine (a huge sum in 1940 dollars). According to Professor Smith, "this was the first interpretation that law enforcement officers were required to protect the civil rights of citizens... Several years later, the U.S. Supreme Court used the interpretation from this case to uphold a similar application, in a case where the civil rights of a group of blacks were not protected by law enforcement personnel."

Unfortunately, the Old City Hall building fell into ruin and was demolished in the summer of 2006. It is the City's intent to document this dark moment with a memorial. This sad event ultimately led to a significant enhancement of the civil rights protection of all Americans.

# RAMP IT UP!



In 1938 the first “Feast of the Ramson” was hosted by a small group of “dignitaries.” Ramps are a leek-like plant that grows wild in the Richwood hills. They are known for their strong garlic-like odor. Bato Crites (shown above) was the premier ramp digger and seller of all time. Known as “Ramp King,” he could often be seen peddling his odoriferous wares along Main Street.

The spring ramp festival was very popular from the start and has grown to serve more than 1,200 ramp dinners annually.

Around 1950 Jim Comstock, publisher of the **News Leader** (Richwood newspaper) printed the notorious “ramp edition.” In his autobiography **Seven Decades**, published in 1982, Mr. Comstock relates how he got the idea in the first place. After receiving a paper from Beckley that had a smell in it promoting coffee, Comstock said to his co-editor Bronson McClung, “Here’s another paper with a smell ad in it. Now you know what we ought to do...” “No, let’s not do that. We’ll get into some kind of trouble again.” “Not do what?” “Let’s not put the smell of ramps into the ink.” Later, much later, he admitted that Bronson was right. They should not have done it.

Many people think it was truly ramp juice they used to spike the printing ink. Truth is, Mr. Comstock

employed the chemical genius of Clayton Myers, a native of Richwood and a chemical engineer at Union Carbide, to concoct an elixir that would mimic the smell of ramps. He sent the vial of this elixir to Comstock and McClung with the warning “to be used exceedingly sparingly.”

Apparently they did not – or chose not to – heed that prudent advice. The result was a stern warning from the Postmaster General of the United States to cease and desist from perpetuating further such odoriferous emanations from their paper. In fact, Mr. Comstock used to say the Postmaster General called him directly from Washington and told him in no uncertain terms, “Mr. Comstock, your paper stinks!” Comstock replied, “Yes, I know.” “No Mr. Comstock. I mean your paper **really** stinks.”



This escapade eventually made the pages of National Geographic Magazine which sported a photo of the Richwood Postmaster, Wheeler Green, holding a copy of the offending paper and appearing to read it while pinching his nose closed! It’s been told by more than a few that this incident actually led to postal regulations limiting the amount of odor a commercial publication was allowed to emanate.

# ANOTHER MAJOR FLOOD

On Sunday July 18, 1954 Richwood experienced the worst flood of its history. Lower Oakford Ave. became a virtual lake with water rising nearly to the Main Street traffic light. Monumental road and bridge damage was sustained by the neighborhoods abutting the Cherry River.



On the lighter side, a high number of citizens reported the loss of false teeth during the flood. And... a pig was observed swimming up to the stairs of the Oakford Hotel where it eventually joined the hotel staff who sought refuge on the balcony. This incident appeared in WSAZ's television news coverage.

As a result of this massive flood, the Cherry River was dredged

and channeled and efforts began to create a flood control lake on the South Fork of the Cherry River.

# THE "PAST 80" PARTY

In 1956 Richwood hosted the first "Past Eighty" party which was organized by Jim Comstock and Bronson McClung out of the **News Leader** building on Main Street. It was described by Mr. Comstock as "the only place this side of heaven where you will find so many octogenarians gathered together under one roof."

The purpose of the party was to allow the older folks to associate with fellow octogenarians who were quite rare and often isolated from their peers.

Activities included **Bible** quizzes and prizes for the oldest, most children, most grandchildren, longest distance traveled, etc. A King and Queen of the party are chosen and crowned. A turkey dinner is shared by all. Gifts and flowers are given to the octogenarians who attend. The 2006 Past Eighty Party was the 50th of its kind.



# WHEN COAL WAS KING



Starting in the late 1930s and growing throughout the 1950s, coal employment increased in the region. During the period between 1960 and 1980 approximately 4,000 coal miners lived nearby and shopped regularly in Richwood. Shoppers came from Summersville, Webster Springs, Rainelle, Marlinton, Hillsboro, and many surrounding communities.

Automation of coal extraction techniques and other economic factors resulted in a sudden and substantial decline in the number of local mining jobs in the 1980s.

## “RICH WOOD”

The Aug. 11, 1971 issue of the **News Leader** had this lead headline: “RICHWOOD: THE CITY THAT WOULDN’T DIE REACHES 50TH YEAR.” The story began with an old reprinted quote, “Build it to burn or rot after it’s abandoned, but build it fast. This was the order of the day given carpenters and contractors who built Richwood. Twenty years at the outset was as long as there would be need for a town.” Clearly, Richwood had exceeded its builders’ expectations!

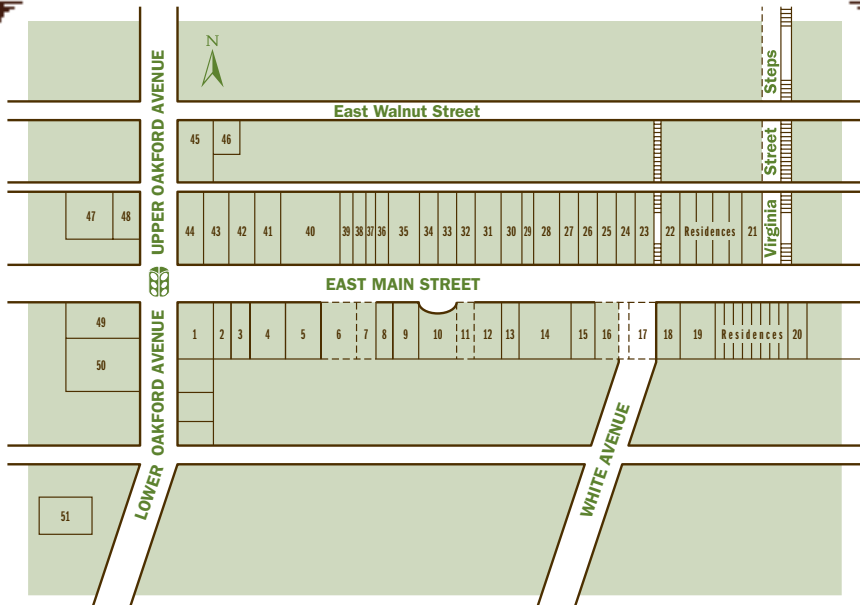
The town began its 2nd century by making strenuous efforts to revitalize itself economically. Civic projects include new sidewalks, historic lighting and renovation of the Depot. Also underway are a reorganization of city government, an anchor tourism study, establishment of broadband service, promotion of ecotourism and recruitment of artisans and retirees.

Most important – since the occurrence of yet another major flood in 2003, Richwood has secured funding from the Army Corps of Engineers to study the creation of the proposed South Fork Lake. By placing a flood control dam on the South Fork of the Cherry River, the city would realize safety, recreation and economic benefits.

Richwood’s dedicated volunteers have maintained a full schedule of quality annual events such as the Ramp Feed, the Triathlon (the oldest in West Virginia, 2006 was its 21st year), the “Past 80” party, Cherry River Festival, and more.



As the city continues to face its future, the key to renewed growth will be found in its name – Rich Wood – and its hardwood heritage. It’s in... “Richwood: The Town That Still Won’t Die!”



## SITE LOCATION MAP

### 1 Richwood Banking & Trust

A three story Romanesque Revival building constructed on the former Dyer Opera House site in 1911. The opera house served as a theater of culture for plays and programs that were produced by local and traveling talent groups. Following the closure of the bank, it served for a time as the Palace Restaurant and later as Weitzel Drug Store noted for its ice cream confections. The basement space was used in the past by the Chamber of Commerce. It has a curved entrance and other stylized architectural features. Currently owned by Kevin and Carma Lawrenson of Florida, the building displays Whitey Blankenship's collection of antiques.

### 2, 3 Main Street Photography

The western building hosted a large variety of businesses including Main Street Photography in the 1990s. In the 1960s the McCroskeys operated a restaurant where the best chili dogs ever served in Richwood were made. The eastern building once housed a smaller version of Nicholas Hardware & Furniture Company and was later occupied by Coburn Jewelry.

### 4 Western Auto Store

For many years the Western Auto Store sold sporting goods, toys, guns, bicycles, motorcycles and other sports-oriented goods. It took over what was previously the well known New Star Theatre, which showed Saturday

matinee specials and double features. This theatre was built soon after the original Star Theatre burned in 1921. Both theatres were operated by members of the Holt family. Since 2006 it has become the new home of the Cherry River Navy.

### 5 The G.C. Murphy Building

Children entering the G.C. Murphy 5 & 10 Cent Store experienced an assault on their senses – an overwhelming mixture of delicious aromas. Chocolate, roasted peanuts, popcorn, pistachios, and a myriad of candies filled your nose. Of course the store also carried the basic required household items including affordable clothing. Nicholas Hardware and Furniture Company occupied the same space from 1916 until moving into smaller quarters (2&3 above). Murphy's closed its doors in 1985 after the opening of Cherry River Plaza and Heck's Store. Currently, the Art Deco building is used by Richwood Technology Center, Kyer Electronics and PowerUp – a group of associated companies which provide internet services, technology education and are establishing wireless broadband service to the area. The building's blonde brick facade is trimmed with brown brick detailing and marble kick panels.

### 6 1915 City Hall

The old City Hall building was dedicated in 1915 while Dr. W.D. McClung was mayor. Its architect and builder was J. A. Tincher, the primary contractor in Richwood. At alley

level was the dreaded city jail where many non-conforming people were held to "cool their heels." Municipal offices, court and council chambers were on the street level. The one and only fire truck that the town owned was garaged in the center section of the building at ground level. Upstairs was a center of public entertainment where a sloped theatre with a balcony looked down on a stage where local, regional and national performances took place. In the late 1970s the New City Hall was constructed on White Ave., next door to the library, which was built in 1976. The building was demolished in 2006.

## 7 Spencer Building/Women's and Men's Shops

Mrs. Ollie Deem and her husband once operated twin businesses here. Respectively known as *The Women's Shop* and *The Men's Shop*, they offered ready-to-wear apparel to the citizens of Richwood.

## 8 Smithson's Jewelry Shop

Mr. V. L. Smithson owned and operated one of Richwood's longest-lived jewelry stores. He was the licensed inspector for all railroad engineer pocket watches. In later years Mrs. Smithson was well known for her hobby of collecting antique pocket watches. In 1985 the jewelry store moved east down Main Street to the newly vacated Richwood Newsstand building. This space is now the Richwood Office of the **Nicholas Chronicle** Newspaper.

## 9 Rexall Drug Store

Previously known as the Main Street Drug Store, Rexall Drug Store was last owned and operated by Tom Meadows. He moved the operation to the Depot building which had been occupied by 1st Community Bank. Sam Gwinn's Gun Repair Shop is the current occupant.

## 10 United States Post Office from 1936

Built in 1936 on the site where the Oakford Theatre stood before burning in 1928, the Post Office continues to serve the public. The Colonial Revival detailing is shown in the building's central cupola, heavily dentiled cornice, 12/12 double hung sash windows and, most clearly, its arched entrance surround with Doric pilasters. Each year a pictorial commemorative cancellation stamp of a cluster of ramps (designed by Glen Facemire) can be used during the week of the Ramp Feed.

## 11 Richwood Cleaners

Way in the back of the vacant lot adjoining the Post Office was Richwood Cleaners, a business operated by Ed Judy. Their street sign (and slogan) simply said, "Over Yonder."

## 12 People's Garage

Last operated by Bruce Cutlip, this business sold Gulf Oil products. Currently the building is the office of Richwood Monuments, operated by Don Combs. A mural was painted on the outer wall during the mayoral term of Jeromy Rose which depicts Richwood's coal mining heritage.

## 13 Richwood Newsstand

Opened in 1955 and operated by Bob and Edith Smith, the Newsstand served as a social gathering point for Richwood's youth and other citizens for the next 30 years. In the mornings "the Coffee Club" men gathered to discuss current events or enjoy Meadow Gold sundaes, milk shakes and Coca-Cola drinks. As Christmas time approached, the Smiths opened their basement area, which residents called "Toyland." Children descended the stairs to a fantastic universe with operating train sets, dolls, model kits, chemistry sets and other fascinating toys.

## 14 Vitello's Furniture

Closed in 2005, Vitello's Furniture Company served as the town's primary home furnishing center for many decades. Prior to the 1928 fire a Chinese laundry was located on or near this site.

## 15 J. C. Penney Catalog Store

Owned and operated by Frank Dawson, this establishment served as a receiving center for catalog merchandise and was closed in 2005. Constructed in 1925, the Art Deco building features a stepped parapet and paired 6/1 second floor windows. Earlier businesses included the Firestone Store, Ferguson Tires, and Kessler Tire Company. In the 1920s the Hotel Central occupied this space. Prior to the 1920s a clothier business called "Schatz" did "call the shots" on high-end fashionable apparel.

## 16 Breckstein's Department Store

Started in 1901, Breckstein's served the upper echelons of Richwood society with elegant clothing, shoes, hats, jewelry and accessories. This store survived the 1928 fire and was thus one of the longest running family businesses in town. In its later years, Jim Comstock's Hillbilly Bookshop occupied the building. In 1997 it was dismantled to make way for widening White Ave. and creation of additional parking.

## 17 O'Dell's Meat Market

Once the site of O'Dell's Meat Market, White Ave. was named for businessman Mansel White who donated the land. Interestingly, the first meetings of the Faith Methodist Church were held in the upstairs rooms of the meat market building.

## 18 First National Bank

*This bank was essentially the “movers and shakers” of the Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company who became its number one client. This bank is often included in what some early residents described as Richwood’s calm and peaceful demeanor, in fact, they reputed, “Richwood is so quiet, on some days you can actually hear the First National Bank drawing interest.”*

## 19 Richwood Store Company

*What now looks like an extension of the bank was once the imposing edifice of the Richwood Store Company, owned and operated by the mill. It was what is known throughout Appalachia as a “company store,” although it was associated with a wood industry instead of coal. The store issued its own currency, called “scrip.” The store was the only place scrip could be used, and prices were inflated compared with other local merchants. The store closed in the early 1960s, but the use of scrip had vanished much earlier.*

## 20 Presbyterian Church

*A short walk past some residences will bring you to a beautiful Presbyterian Church. The original structure was built in 1901 and was rebuilt in 1909 by J. A. Tincher after a fire, with additions of the corner square entrance and bell tower. The building is sided with wood shingles and round-headed stained glass windows. It’s a striking sight in winter when huge icicles hang from its roof.*

## 21 Mountaineer Hotel

*Crossing to the north side of Main Street and heading toward the traffic light, one notices a wide open space stretching up the hill with a series of cement steps for pedestrians to access the downtown area. Believe it or not, this right-of-way was once Virginia Street. The first historic structure along this path is the Mountaineer Hotel. Dr. Jim McClung constructed the first building on this site. It served as the town’s first hospital. Doc McClung also owned a drug store leading some to quip that he had the medical business in Richwood “pretty well sewed up.” The hospital was eventually moved to Oakford Ave. and the building was converted to be used as the Virginia Hotel. The hotel’s name was later changed to the Mountaineer Hotel.*

## 22 Richwood Banking & Trust – 1st location

*On the current site of the Richwood Laundrymat once stood the Richwood Banking and Trust Company. It was built in 1902 but moved to the southeast corner of Main Street and Oakford in 1911. After the move the building found a new purpose. It became the Richwood Community House*

*and served as a meeting space for various causes and concerns. Still later it became the Richwood Flower Shop operated by Bill and Ann Harris, who relocated to Main Street in 2000.*

## 23 Finley Taylor’s Art Studio/ Richwood Tax Company

*This space was the Finley Taylor Photography Shop which was commonly called the “Art Studio.” Mr. Taylor was a renowned photographer who chronicled much of Richwood’s logging, commercial and industrial past. He also did family and individual portraiture as well as senior yearbook pictures. Before the high school yearbook became known as “The Lumberjack,” it was titled “MNEMOSNYNE,” an Indian word which meant “mountains and streams of memories.”*

## 24 Richwood Public Library

*What is now Alternatives, a public service shop which sells custom-made T-shirts, arts and crafts, candles and memorabilia, was once the Richwood Public Library. The new library was built in 1976.*

## 25 Richwood Maytag/Faulkner’s TV/Helen’s Treasures

*Operated by Ted Thomas, this store provided Richwood with household appliances and related equipment. Edgel Faulkner followed with a television repair shop. Today Helen’s Treasures occupies the space selling antiques and glassware.*

## 26 Barber & Dunn Law Offices

*For decades the partnership of James Barber and Ralph Dunn offered a range of legal services for Richwood and regional clients. It was operated by Mr. Dunn alone until just a few years ago. In 2005 the office, along with the office next door, were purchased and remodeled for the High Rocks Girls Academy, which provides mentoring and activities for Richwood teens.*

## 27 Dr. Eddie Prendergast – Optometrist

*For the latter part of the 20th century Dr. E. L. Prendergast provided friendly and personalized optometry services to a loyal base of customers.*

## 28 Richwood Bakery

*You can still see the name etched in the glass on the front windows of the building that now adjoins the sculpture garden. Originally, it was owned by Mr. Purtz whose name was associated with the building. Later the bakery was owned and operated by the Tom Hicks family. Merle White, who was Tom Hicks’ brother-in-law, and who later became a multi-term Richwood mayor, spent many years of his life baking there. The bakery was well-known for its*

windows filled with delectable cakes, pies, pastries, doughnuts, breads and other tasty selections. After the bakery closed in the late 1960s, Peg and Tuff's fancy clothing shop used the space. Still later, Charlie Meadows had an antique shop there.

## 29 Commercial Hotel/Northern Hotel/Sterling Spencer Sculpture Garden

Named for Sterling Spencer, one of Richwood's most charming people and an expert wood-carver, the sculpture garden is built on the site of a hotel first called the Commercial Hotel, and then called the Northern Hotel. Serving traveling salesmen, loggers, vacationers, and other travelers for decades, the hotel had sweeping wooden staircases from the lobby to the upstairs rooms. After years of disuse, it was removed in the 1990s and the space became the property of the City of Richwood. Under the Jeremy Rose administration, grant funds were secured and the sculpture garden was created. The space now features a fish pond, shady benches that provide a resting place for pedestrians, and an ideal place for gatherings. As a gift to the city in 2005, Len and So, two visitors to the Rainbow Gathering lingered long enough to create a stone sculpture for the garden. The Richwood Garden Club maintains the flowers and shrubberies on a volunteer basis.

## 30 Pimstein Building/Fork Mountain Pottery Shop

The Pimstein Building was destroyed by the 1928 fire. Thereafter the **Nicholas Republican** Office reoccupied a new edifice which was constructed in its place. This newspaper merged with the **News Leader** in 1963. Soon thereafter, Eugene Deitz opened his State Farm Insurance Agency. Lori Doolittle, noted Richwood potter who exhibits her work at Tamarack, creates and sells her wares in this space.

## 31 Richwood Flowers

Two mortuaries were housed here. The earlier one, the Homer Stanley Funeral Home also operated an ambulance service to facilitate the "capturing of the trade." In 1963 the Simon family, who succeeded the Stanley's ownership of the business, sold it to the Coleman family who combined the well-known name and reputation of the Simons with their own. They vacated the building in 1968 and then the H&P Chain Store, managed by Arnold Comer took its place. For a time Suzi's Sassy Scissors took her first Main Street location in this building. In 2000 Richwood's oldest independently owned business, started in 1959 and still operated by the Harris family, took occupancy where

they remain today. The store offers fresh flowers for all occasions, West Virginia-made products from the Fenton Glass Company, and antiques.

## 32 Country Lane Florists

One of Richwood's fraternal organizations, the Moose Lodge met regularly in the upstairs of this building which housed the H&P Clothing Store, part of a national chain. The Moose building was constructed in 1929. Its current business, Country Lane Florists has been owned and operated by Walter and Yvonne Rose since 1993. In addition to providing lovely floral arrangements, the Rose's offer a wide variety of antiques, refinished furniture, paintings by local artists, and memorabilia.

## 33 Country Lane Florists Antiques Showroom

Toon Brooks and his wife Myrtle started a furniture company in this building after the 1928 fire and operated it until the Nettles family purchased the company in 1978. They closed their business in the early 1990s and sold the property to the Roses who use the building for a merchandise showroom.

## 34 Harman Store "Yellow Brick" Complex

This triad building has housed many businesses including: Hinkle's Barber Shop, Whitman's Jewelry, Union Finance Company, the Star Shoe Shop, Patrick's Pizza, Richwood Electronics and Video Rental, Suzi's Sassy Scissors, Pat Copley's Jewelry Store, and others. Since 1985 State Farm Insurance has occupied the space. The newest addition to this business parade is Deborah Dorland's "Rainbow Weaver" art and portraiture gallery. If one was to identify the most notable of the building's occupants, it might be C. Donee Cook who coined the phrase "The City Merry on the Banks of the Cherry." His business was a printery and bookshop. Mr. Cook was a strong supporter of the temperance movement. In the early days he created a card which he presented to the over-inebriated. Neatly inscribed on this card was a poem he himself had coined, "If it makes you sick - if it makes you ill - just remember it's the product of a West Virginia still."

## 35 Dean's Variety Store

The first store to occupy this space was the E. E. Buck Tailoring Shop which was dynamited in 1921 to stop the first major fire. Many occupants preceded the coming of the now defunct but famous A&P Store (Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company food chain) in the building constructed on this site in 1925 following the fire. The red brick facade has a recessed storefront with a metal canopy. Later Clay Cole's Sport

Shop offered fishing supplies, guns and camping equipment. Then Dean's Variety Shop became the new "coffee club" after the Newsstand closed.

### 36 Pat Copley's Fine Jewelry

*Murray's Drug Store opened just one week before the 1921 fire. After the 1928 fire, Jake Juergens opened a drug store at this site, which was open for 37 years. It was here that the Juergens' famous peanut butter fudge was first concocted. In 1970 Gale and Mary Fraley purchased the building from Jiggs McKenzie and Ardelia Spencer for their fashions store, then sold it to Bud and Pat Copley in 1980. The Copleys moved their jewelry store into the building.*

### 37 The Jewel Box

*A well known and reputable dealership, where many Richwood couples purchased their wedding rings. The Jewel Box closed in the mid 1960s and was followed by another jewelry store. Over time the building fell into disrepair and was recently purchased by John Ryan who plans to open a cafe/coffee shop at this location.*

### 38 Dale's Barber Shop

*Part of the Deitz Shoe Store, Dale's Barber Shop opened under that name in 1969. Before that, Bud Wilson cut hair there. Bus Bailes and Coeburn O'Dell started the first barber business on this site in 1936.*

### 39 Deitz Shoe Store

*The Deitz Shoe Store complimented the larger Deitz Spencer building directly to the east. Opened in 1949 and operated by Howard Deitz, the store carried Florsheim, Ball Band, Outdoorsman, Dr. Scholl's, Hushpuppies and Red Goose shoes for children. The store's slogan was, "Where Fit is First." Proof of this claim was found in 2002 when shoe boxes full of customer names and sizes were meticulously recorded.*

### 40 Deitz - Spencer Clothes Store

*First opened in 1919 beside the Breckstein building, the Deitz-Spencer Clothes Store moved to this building with two recessed storefronts in 1924. It incorporated in 1925 with officers Huling Spencer, George and Martha Spencer, and Millard Hinkle. Millard worked as the bookkeeper until he retired at the age of 96! In the late 1920s they held give-away drawings for cash prizes awarded in gold coins. In the 1930s the store was partially consumed by fire, prompting the only real "fire sale" in its history. Bob Spencer, who also served as mayor, took over management in 1963. In 1965 the Deitzs and Spencers separated their interests with the Deitzs taking the shoe store and the Spencers taking the clothes store. The doors closed in 1996, leaving the building vacant for a time. In*

*2002 Habitat for Humanity had an office in the building where they sold local crafts and handcrafted Cherry Valley furniture, made in Richwood. The large building features a stamped tin ceiling and hardwood floors.*

### 41 Dysard's 5 & 25 Cent Store /Lloyd Adkins Dentistry

*P. L. Dysard was the owner of Dysard's 5 & 25 Cent Store whose slogan was, "Run Right to Dysard's." The Dysard building was destroyed in the 1921 fire. Mr. Dysard also bought and sold real estate and life insurance and was co-owner of the original Star Theatre with the Holt Brothers. From 1960 to 1975 Straley's Q & P Market occupied this site. The "Q" and "P" stood for quality and price.*

### 42 Hotel Justice #2/Sportsmen's Pool Room/Rainbow Weavers Studio

*Owned and operated by Gordon Umbarger, the Sportsmen Pool Room operated for a half century, through the 1980s. The building was then a Pic-n-Save discount store. It has been owned since 2005 by Argil and Beverly Rose.*

### 43 Wilkinson's Men's Store/ Morrison's IGA/S&S Creations

*Another casualty of the 1921 fire, the loss to Frank Wilkinson was \$20,000 for which he had no insurance. His store was a mens and boys clothier. After the fire, the building was resurrected as a series of grocery stores. The Morrison Brother IGA, operated by Victor and Tom Otto, opened in 1926 and closed in 1955. At that time Tom Morrison left the business and started his own store on Edgewood Ave. The IGA was sold to the Coe family who moved their store from Dain Ave. to this new location. In the 1970s the store became part of the Pic-n-Save discount store complex. In 2000 S&S Creations was opened by Carlin Scarbro and Mary Louise Skinner.*

### 44 Hotel Justice #1/Richwood Area Chamber of Commerce

*The Hotel Justice was the first business to stand at the corner of Oakford Ave. and Main Street in an Art Deco building. It was followed by the joint occupation of Fisher's Candy Kitchen and the Boston Bakery, which were there during the 1921 fire. Lewis' Department Store occupied the space during the 1930s. For the past two decades, the Richwood Area Chamber of Commerce has used the building as headquarters to back events including the Ramp Feed, the Scenic Mountain Triathlon, the Mountain Color Art Festival, the Cherry River Festival and provide economic development leadership for projects like the South Fork Lake initiative.*

#### 45 First United Methodist Church

*The First United Methodist Church is just up the steeply inclined Oakford Ave. It burned to the ground in 1921 and was rebuilt the next year. The Romanesque Revival building was designed by Levi J. Dean, a Huntington architect. The church building features an hexagonal corner tower with a stepped parapet.*

#### 46 First United Methodist Church Parsonage

*Adjoining the church building, the Romanesque Revival Parsonage was also built in 1922. It features a gable power parapet wall in the front, a wraparound porch with square brick columns, and tripartite windows on the second floor.*

#### 47 Richwood News Company/ Mountaineer Mart

*The original building on the northwest corner of Main Street and Oakford Ave. held office space that was shared by the Richwood News Company, the Masonic Hall and several law offices. The entire building burned down in 1945. Two gas stations and auto repair shops used the site. Mountaineer Mart, a gas station and convenience store, has occupied the space for several years.*

#### 48 Tommy's Chinese Restaurant

*In 2005 Tommy's Chinese Restaurant opened for those having a "yen" for Asian cuisine.*

#### 49 Citizen's Bank/West Virginia State Store/Main Street USA Antiques

*A three story Romanesque Revival blonde brick building stands on the southwest corner of Oakford Ave. and Main Street with a curved corner entrance. It is one of the largest buildings in the downtown area and once housed Richwood's third bank. Organized in 1916, Citizen's Bank suffered bankruptcy during the Great Depression. The building was used by the West Virginia State Store. It was Richwood's*

*outlet for the state-run ABC liquor distribution. When the state privatized liquor sales, the store was closed. For many years the second story housed the examination rooms of the highly successful dentist, Dr. M. M. Milroy. The third floor was the home of the Richwood Chapter of the I.O.O.F. (Oddfellows). The ground floor is currently an antique shop operated by Ray and Nancy Kinser. Dan Snyder is the owner of the building.*

#### 50 Snyder Building/Juergens Hardware

*D.A. and M.E. Snyder, husband and wife, were partners in a business still in the same location, Snyder's Hardware. This is likely the longest running single-purpose establishment in Richwood - operating for more than 100 years. Jake Juergens took over the store in 1950 and changed the name to Juergen's Hardware. One of the family members developed a recipe for peanut butter fudge which was patented in the late 1940s. The famous recipe was passed to Jake's son Jim along with the rest of the company in 1967. The only place to purchase this famous fudge, made by Jim's wife Gerry, is at the store. Step inside and take a breath of America's hardware past. The store's hand lettered Old English window signs were painted by Troy Barber, whose commercial calligraphy once dotted the town.*

#### 51 Richwood B & O Railroad Depot

*The Depot received major remodeling in 2006. In the town's heyday it was the last stepping-off place for train passengers. Rail spurs visited the mill, the tannery and the clothespin factory. The tracks were laid in 1900 opening Richwood's period of industrial growth. For a period late in the 20th century, People's Bank had a drive-thru facility at the Depot site. Later Richwood Pharmacy called the building home. The recent remodeling was to accommodate the Depot's use as headquarters for the Convention and Visitors Bureau. The Magistrate's Office is also located in the Depot.*

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