



North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
Linda A. Carlisle, Secretary
Jeffrey J. Crow, Deputy Secretary

Office of Archives and History
Division of Historical Resources
David Brook, Director

September 25, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kate Husband
Office of Human Environment
NCDOT Division of Highways

FROM: Ramona M. Bartos *Re: for Ramona M. Bartos*

SUBJECT: Addendum to Historic Architectural Resources Report for Improvements to US 221 between US 421 and NC 88, R-2915, Ashe and Watauga Counties, ER 06-1023

Thank you for your e-mail of August 28, 2012, transmitting the above report.

For the purpose of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we concur with your finding that the **V. L. Moretz and Son Lumber Company** is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for commerce and Criterion C for architecture, and that the proposed National Register boundaries appear appropriate. We also concur that the **House** at 165 V. L. Moretz Road is *not* eligible for listing in the National Register.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, please contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above-referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT, mfurr@ncdot.gov

AH/WT 465.1



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
GOVERNOR

EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

August 28, 2012

TO: Ramona M. Bartos
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

FROM: Kate Husband
Office of Human Environment
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Subject: R-2915, Improve US 221 Between US 421 in Deep Gap and NC 88 in Jefferson,
Ashe, and Watauga Counties (ER 06-1023)

The Historic Architectural Resources Report for the above-mentioned project was submitted for review by the State Historic Preservation Office in March 2009. The report identified two properties determined eligible for National Register listing, and the project was reviewed in an Effects Meeting in November of 2010. One group of structures was missed in the initial screening and survey report, the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex, located southeast of the intersection of US 221 and US 421. Directly south the complex is a house at 165 V. L. Moretz Rd. Below are the eligibility determinations for the sawmill complex, which we recommend is eligible under Criterion A for event and Criterion C for architecture, and the house, which we recommend is not eligible for National Register listing.

Should you have any further questions, please contact me at klhusband@ncdot.gov or (919) 707-6075.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Husband".

Kate Husband
Architectural Historian

MAILING ADDRESS:
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PDEA - HUMAN ENVIRONMENT UNIT
1598 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NC 27699-1598

TELEPHONE: 919-707-6000
FAX: 919-212-5785
WEBSITE: WWW.NCDOT.ORG

LOCATION:
PDEA - HUMAN ENVIRONMENT UNIT
CENTURY CENTER, BLDG B
1020 Birch Ridge Drive
Raleigh, NC 27610

The V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex

1924- c. 1970

742 Deep Gap Drive, Deep Gap

PIN 2961-03-6246-000

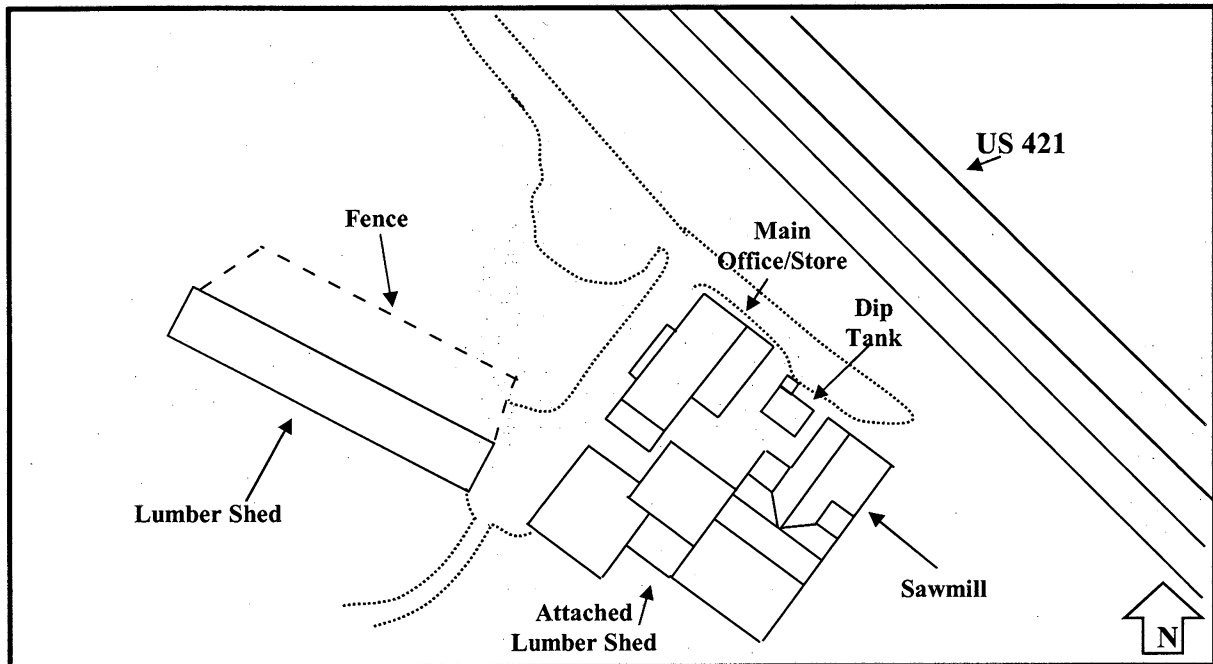


Location of complex.

Google Maps

Description

The V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex consists of several early to mid-20th century buildings on a 2.34 acre parcel southeast of the intersection of US 221 and US 421 in Deep Gap. The buildings face northeast towards US 421, and a paved and gravel drive runs southwest through the complex. The complex was used as a sawmill, lumber yard, and building supply store and office from 1924 to the early 1970s.



Site Plan, V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex

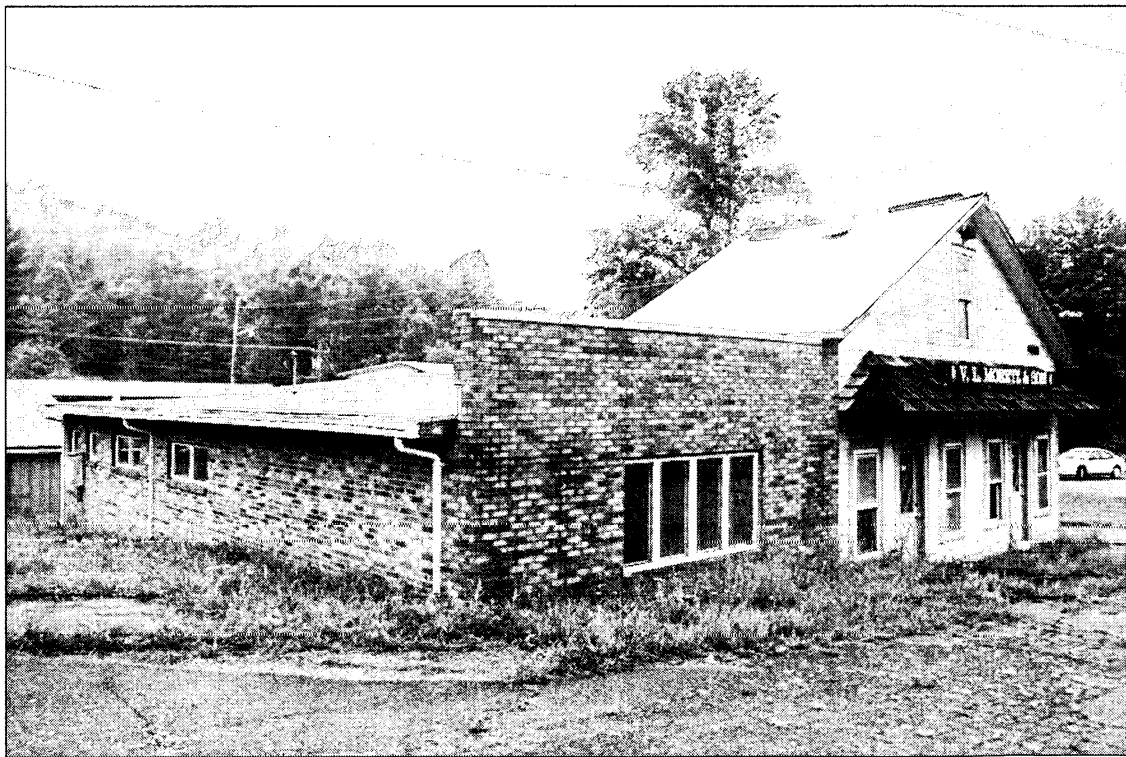
The main office and store, built in 1924, is a one-story warehouse with a two-story gable-roofed portion on the northeastern end. Two entrance doors punctuate the northeastern façade. The frame structure is sheathed in weatherboards, and as the building is built on a downward slope, the southern portion of the building rests on wood posts. Loading doors reached by wood steps and a narrow platform are sheltered by a shed roof on the west elevation. A one-story brick addition capped by a parapet on the façade is located on the southeast elevation and was most likely constructed in the mid-twentieth century. On the southwest elevation is a one-story concrete block addition with a shed roof and sliding corrugated metal doors.

A partially-enclosed T-shaped frame sawmill is situated east of the main office and store. The gable roof is sheathed in standing seam metal, and the enclosed portions of the structure are sheathed in a mix of vertical weatherboard and standing seam metal siding. The structure shelters machinery and rolling tracks for the production of finished lumber. Centrally located inside the structure is a rolling track leading up to a planer for sizing and smoothing boards. Circular saws of varying sizes are also sheltered under this structure. Attached to the south elevation of the building is a connection of several additions that form a two-story, shed-roofed frame lumber shed and yard with a concrete block foundation and a central passage through half of the structure. A wide eave overhang shelters the open portion not covered by the central passage.

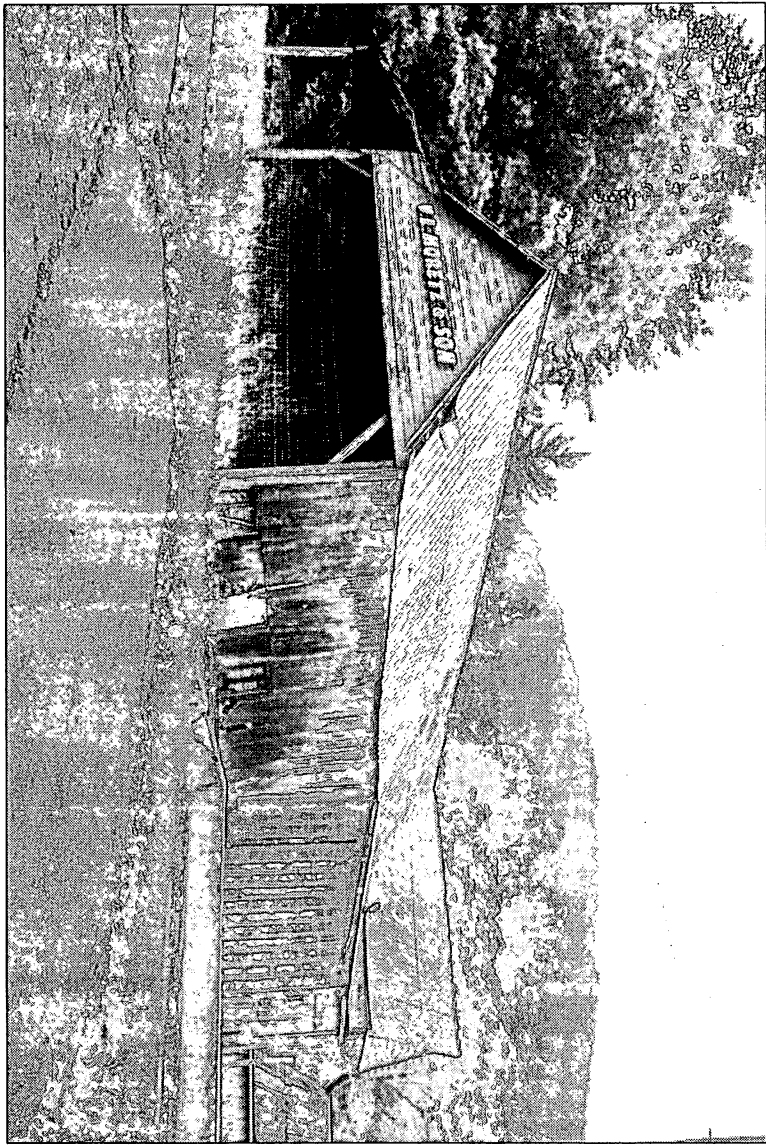
West of the sawmill and east of the office and store is a concrete dip tank for treating lumber. Across the drive, which runs parallel to the northwest elevation of the main office and store, is a rectangular, one-story partially-enclosed frame lumber shed sheathed in corrugated metal. The lumber sheds within the complex date to the mid-20th century.



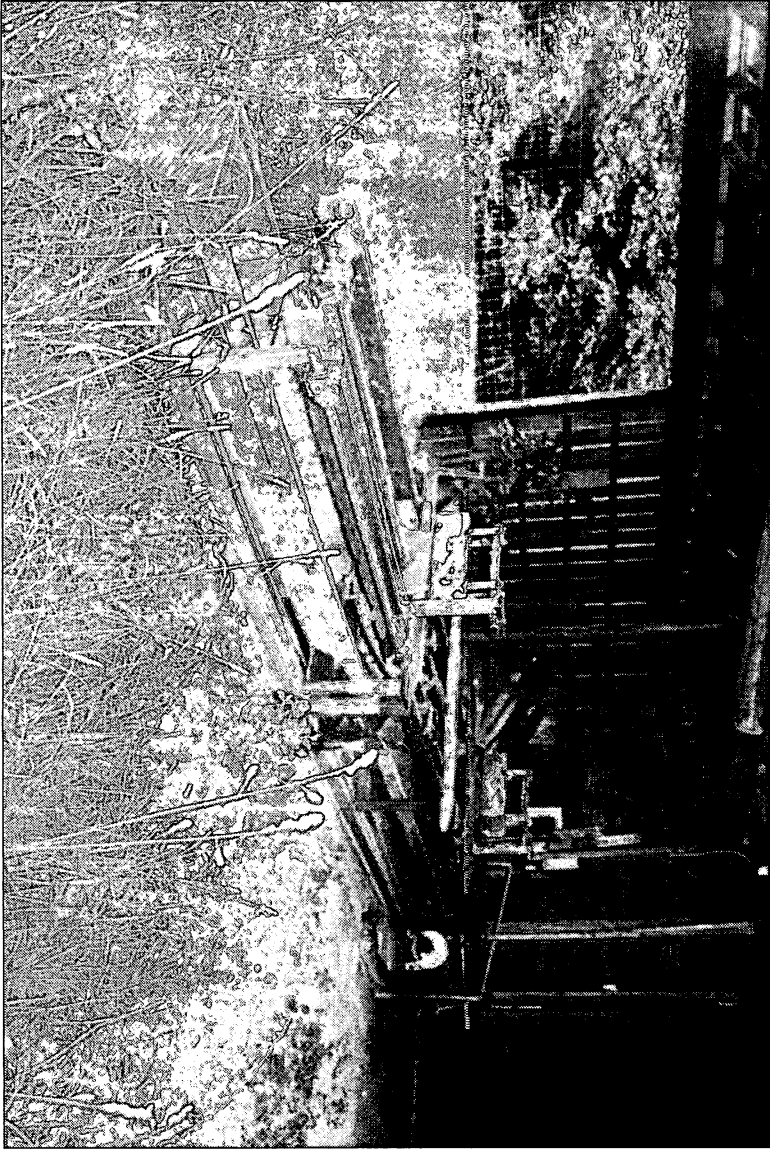
Office and store, looking south.



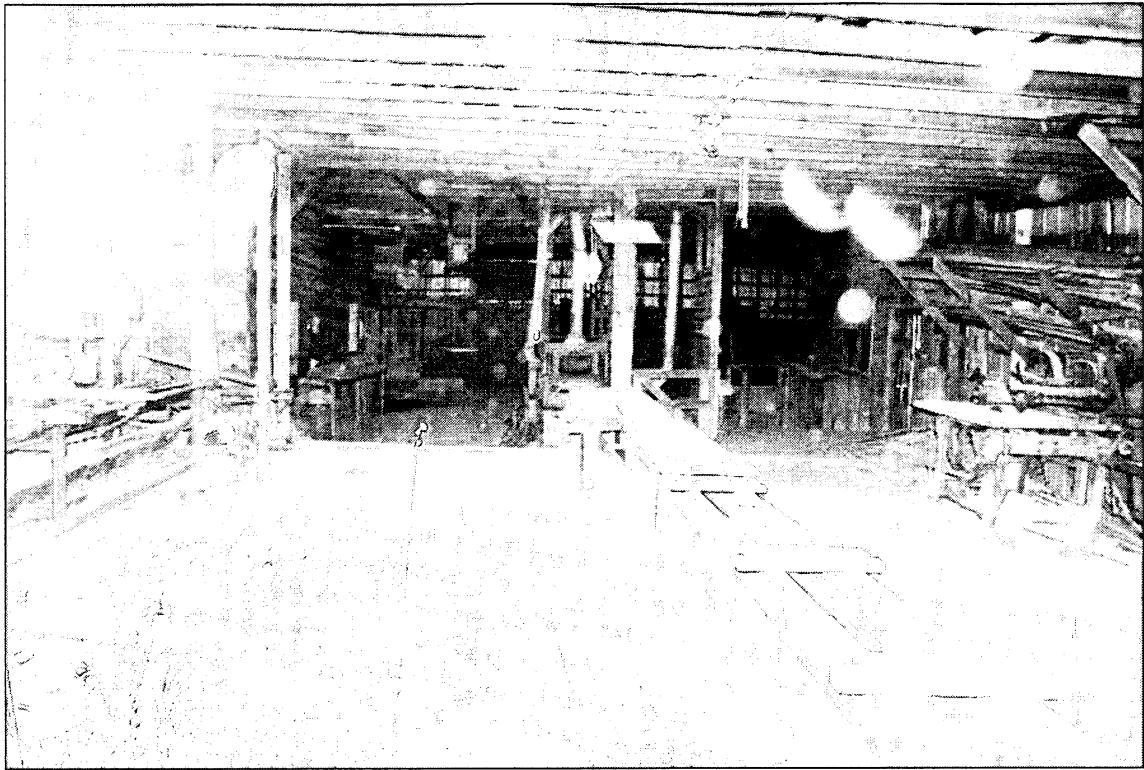
Office and store, looking west. One-story brick addition.



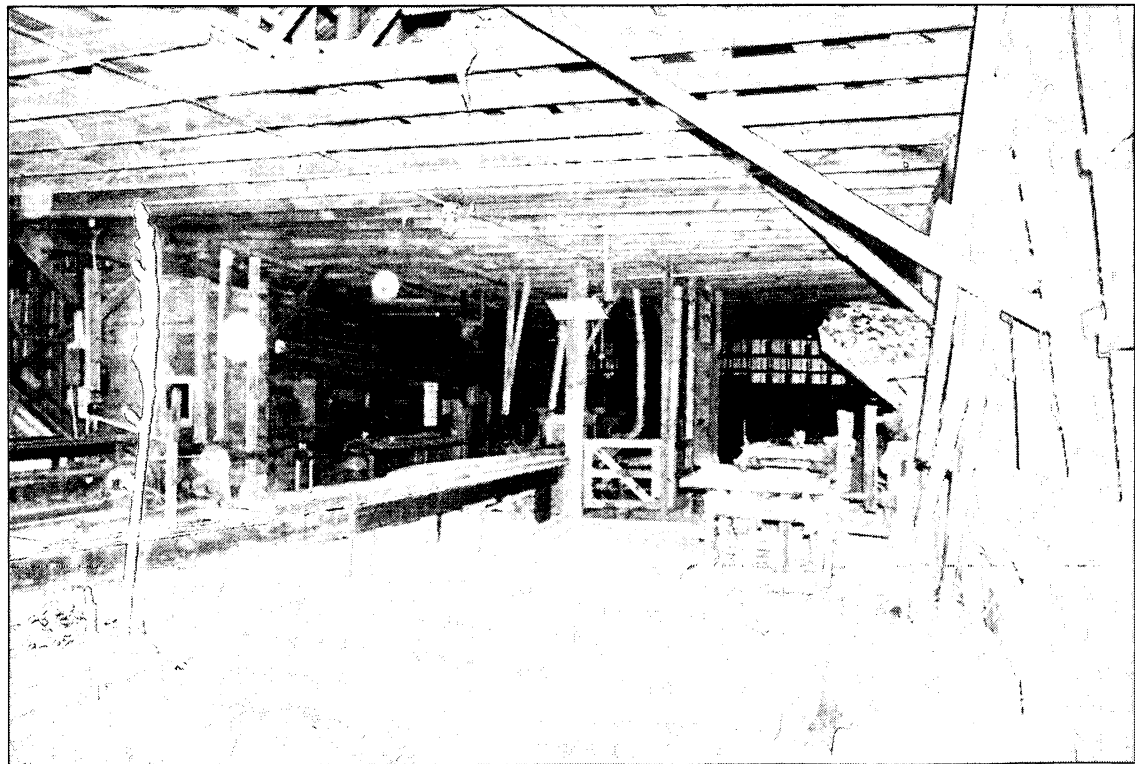
Sawmill, looking south.



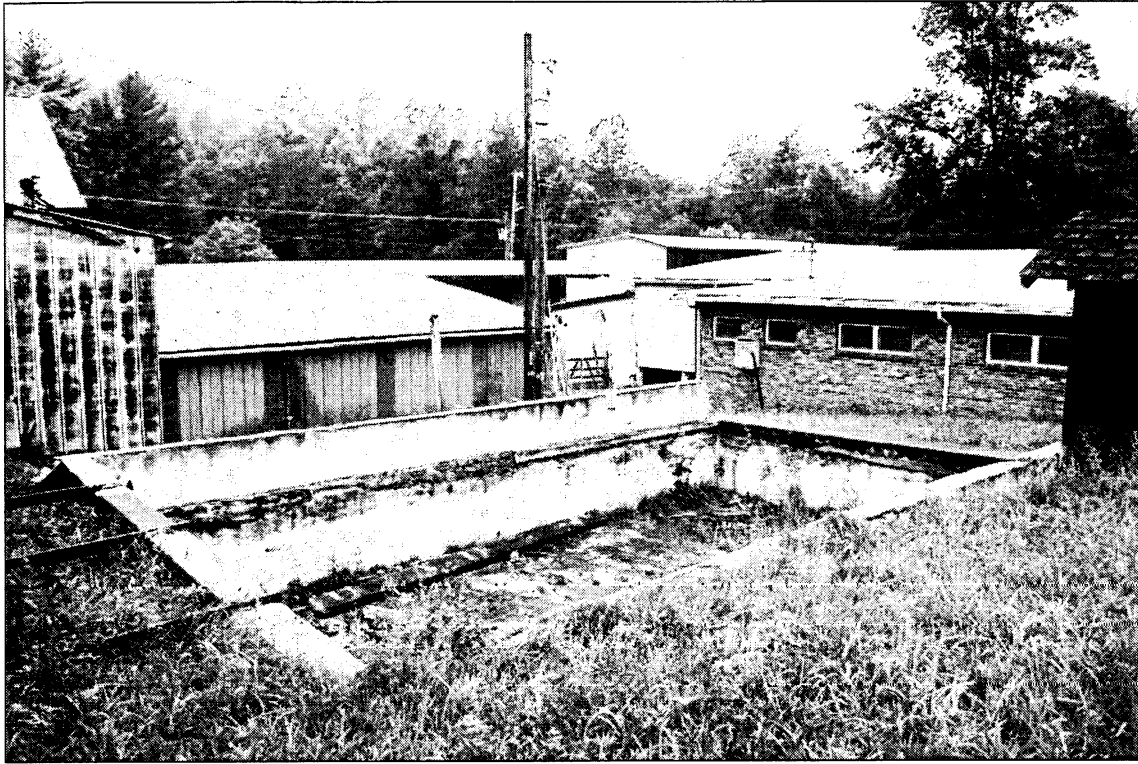
Machinery within sawmill.



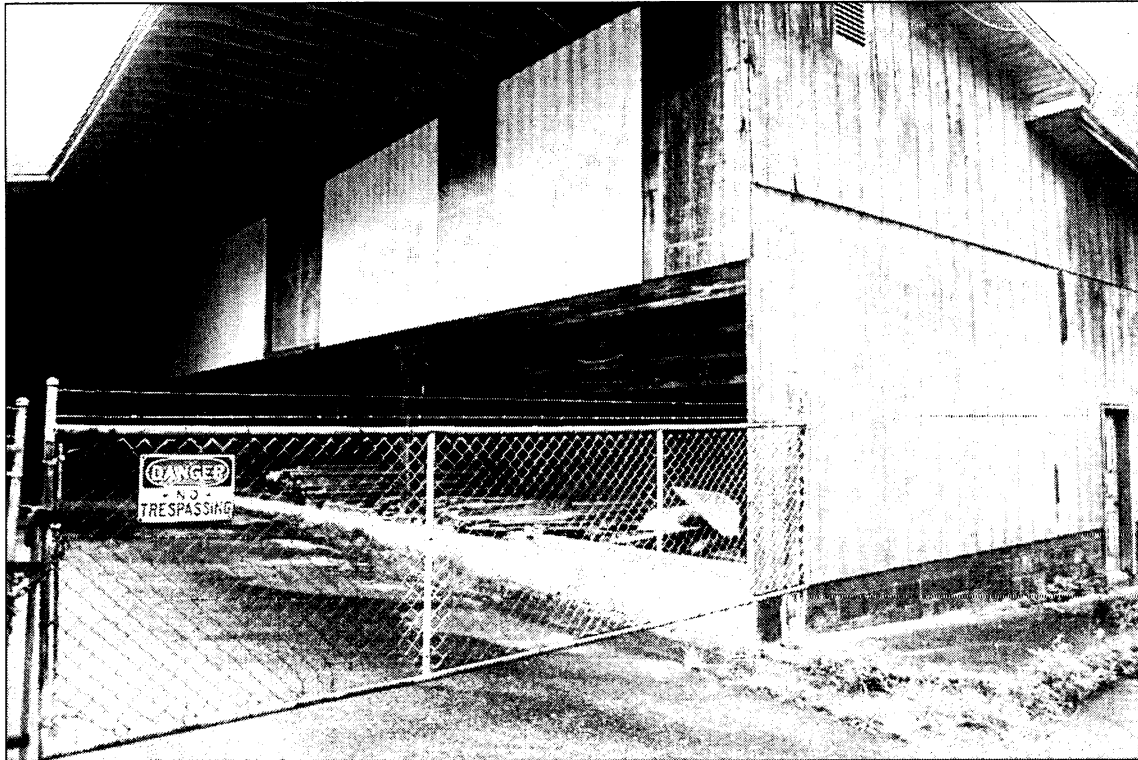
Machinery within sawmill. Rolling track running to planer in center of picture.



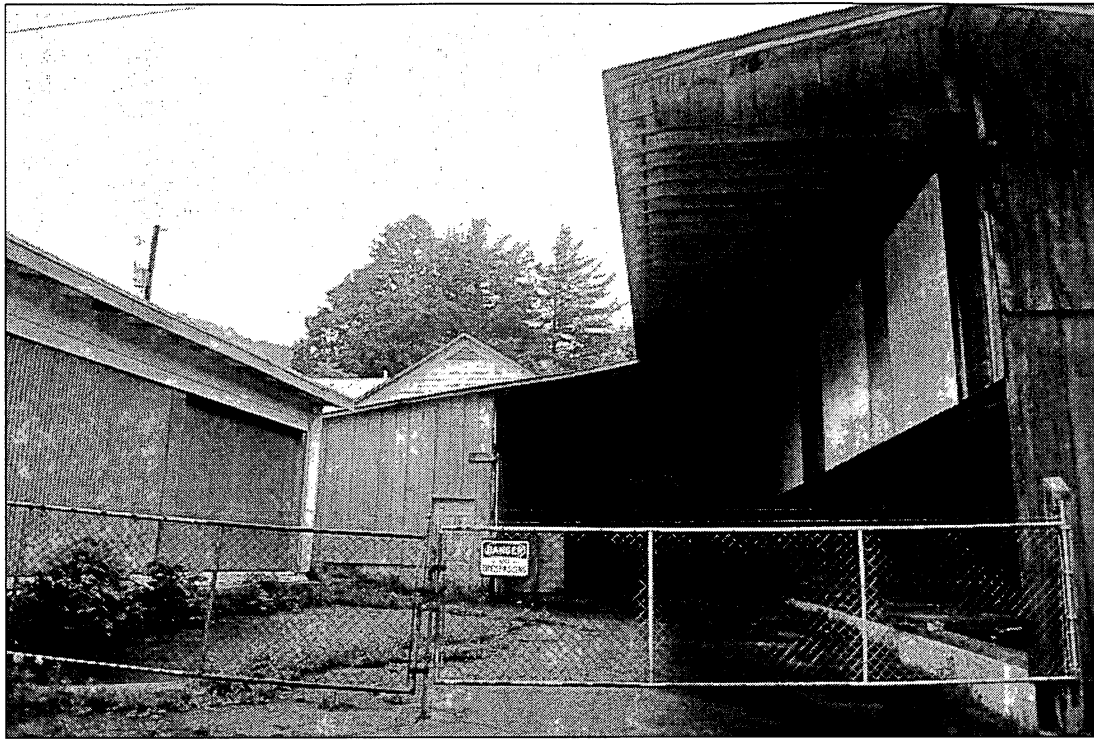
Machinery within sawmill.



Concrete dip tank west of sawmill.



Lumber shed/yard, looking south.



**Center passage, sawmill is in background,
office is to the left in foreground (one-story concrete block addition seen in photo).**



Lumber shed, western side of complex across drive, looking southwest.

History

Logging was the first major industry in Watauga County, as well as the rest of western North Carolina, in the 19th century as companies took advantage of the undeveloped forests of the region. The introduction of railroads to the area after World War I resulted in a logging boom, and logging railroads and sawmills became a significant part of the development of western North Carolina.¹ The history of the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Company begins in the 1920s with the Hassinger Lumber Company of Virginia, which bought logging rights on a tract of land approximately 7 miles north of Deep Gap, near the community of Fleetwood in Ashe County.² In order to facilitate logging the tract, the Hassinger Lumber Co. built a 3.5 mile rail spur off the Norfolk & Western Railway to move the logs from North Carolina to the Hassinger sawmill in Konnarock, Virginia. Once the logging of the tract was completed in 1924, Hassinger planned to remove the tracks and take the railroad equipment and materials back to Virginia.

Five local businessmen in Ashe and Watauga Counties, V. L. Moretz, E. W. Moretz, W. S. Moretz, Conrad Yates and A. G. Miller, who also used the Hassinger tracks, discussed buying the right-of-way for the spur and rail equipment and continuing the rail spur five additional miles south to Deep Gap (the spur followed where US 221 now runs, beside Gap Creek). The men then formed the Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Company with the purpose of buying timber, timber rights and lands, manufacturing lumber and ties, and buying and selling timber products. The company also was in business to buy and sell merchandise, grain, and farm products at a main office in Deep Gap under the name of the Deep Gap Supply Co. When the rail spur down to Deep Gap was completed in 1924, work began on a warehouse and lumber yard at the end of the line and the company began hauling and selling logs, tan bark, and merchandise.

As business started picking up, Vergil Lafayette (V. L.) Moretz became more involved with running the Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Co. Before forming the Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Co., Moretz had a store in what was the community of Hopkins, north of the county line in Ashe near the intersection what is now US 221 and West Pine Swamp Road.³ He was also listed as the secretary of the Hendrix Mills in Hopkins in the 1910s⁴ and was a justice of the peace for Hopkins from 1910 to 1920. Moretz, along with the other businessmen who formed the company, were involved with naming the community Deep Gap in the 1910s in order to connect with the geography of the area; the community was previously called Yuma when established in the 1890s. In addition, the extended Moretz family was already heavily settled in Deep Gap in the early twentieth century, and several Moretz family houses are still extant along the US 221 corridor north of Deep Gap.

¹ Donna Gayle Akers and Brian Lambeth, *Watauga County* (Charleston, SC: Acadia Pub, 2008), 52.

² Most of the history of the company comes from the book *The Railroad to Nowhere: The Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Company Railroad and other Northwestern North Carolina Business Ventures* published by Doug McGuinn in 2011. His book covers the history of both the Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Company as well as the V.L. Moretz & Son Lumber Company.

³ John Preston Arthur, *A History of Watauga County, North Carolina, with Sketches of Prominent Families* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2002), 68.

⁴ *Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co.: 1918), 117.

By 1926 rail traffic began to decrease along the Norfolk & Western Railway, which the Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Co. Railroad tied into, and in 1933 the company abandoned 19 miles of its track. This move left Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Co. spur isolated, and because it became a “railroad to nowhere,” the tracks were taken up and materials returned to the Norfolk & Western Railway. The rail spur to Deep Gap is no longer present.

The Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Co. eventually closed in the 1930s, however V. L. Moretz decided to continue the lumber business with his son, Dillard Grady (D. Grady) Moretz. He began the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Company in the late 1930s by purchasing and using the buildings constructed for the Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Co.⁵ A steam-powered saw was brought into the complex by Moretz from a sawmill in Avery County.

The business was successful, and adopted the slogan that it was the “Oldest Lumber Yard in Watauga” in advertising. During this time, V. L. Moretz and his brothers built the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, most likely with lumber from the business, which once stood at the old intersection of US 421 and US 221.⁶ During the Watauga County Centennial in 1949, the company ran an ad in the “History of Watauga County” souvenir program noting that they were “Wholesale Dealers in Soft and Hardwood Lumber, White Pine Lumber a Specialty,” and “serving Watauga County with lumber and all kinds of building material.”⁷ D. Grady Moretz took over management of the company in the early 1950s, and was followed by his son D. Grady Moretz Jr. in the early 1960s.⁸

D. Grady Moretz Jr. was involved in the development of the Blowing Rock Ski Lodge in Blowing Rock in the early 1960s. Moretz supplied the white pine to build the lodge from the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co., as the sawmill on the property could handle the large logs. In payment, he received shares in the company, and by 1968 Moretz took over management of the property and renamed it Appalachian Ski Mountain, which he still runs today.⁹ In the early 1970s the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. was shut down¹⁰ as Moretz took over control of the ski resort, however it wasn't until 1992 that plans were made to liquidate all inventory.¹¹ The complex stands vacant, although equipment remains within the sawmill and some lumber is still stored on the property, and remains within the family.

National Register Evaluation

The V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. Integrity of materials is slightly compromised by replacement of windows and doors on the main office and store and siding on other buildings

⁵ Watauga County Register of Deeds, Book 60 Page 32, 1937.

⁶ Margaret Long Stephenson, “Historic Structures Survey and Evaluation Report: US 421 from Just West of South Fork New River to SR 1361” (Murfreesboro, NC: 1991), 7.87.

⁷ Daniel Jay Whitener, “History of Watauga County: A Souvenir of Watauga Centennial” (Boone, 1949).

⁸ North Carolina Department of Labor, *North Carolina Directory of Manufacturing Firms*, Multiple years (Durham: Christian Printing Company).

⁹ Abigail Sutton, “In Their Shoes,” www.banglemagazine.com, February 2012, 20.

¹⁰ Doug McGuinn, interview with D. Grady Moretz Jr. in 2009.

¹¹ Annual Report, V. L. Moretz & Son, Inc., State of North Carolina, January 4, 1992.

within the complex. The V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex is **eligible** for National Register listing under Criterion A for commerce and Criterion C for architecture.

The V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex is a rare surviving example of the early to mid-20th century lumber industry in the county and in North Carolina as a whole, and is therefore eligible under Criterion A. The complex represents the logging industry's budding to explosive presence in the state. The introduction of railroads to the county around World War I was a boon for the production and trade of lumber, and the complex's construction for the Deep Gap Tie & Lumber Co. makes it a significant representation of this era, even as the original rail spur is no longer extant. As the business continued beyond the closing of the railroad, the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex is a significant and intact example of the lumber industry's continued presence in the county through the mid-20th century.

The V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex is eligible under Criterion C as an architecturally significant and intact sawmill and lumber business from the early to mid-20th century. County surveys have documented only fifteen sawmills across the state, as many sawmills and lumber businesses closed by the 1930s due to a depletion of the state's harvestable forests and the economic effects of the Great Depression.¹² The sawmills documented in county surveys range from early to mid-20th century construction, and follow a partially-enclosed or open frame shed form with offices, lumber yards and lumber sheds completing a complex. Most sawmills were in a deteriorated condition when surveyed in the 1980s and 1990s, some of which had lost machinery. The relatively high amount of integrity possessed by the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex makes it a significant and intact example of the type.

The V.L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex is not eligible for National Register listing under Criterion B for Person or Criterion D for Information Potential.

¹² Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 46.

National Register Boundary

The proposed National Register Boundary follows the current 2.34 acre tax parcel boundary (PIN 2961-03-6246-000) that encompasses lots 9-16, part of lots 17-20, and lots 21-24 of the original A. G. Miller property on which the complex was built.



**V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex
Proposed National Register Boundary.**

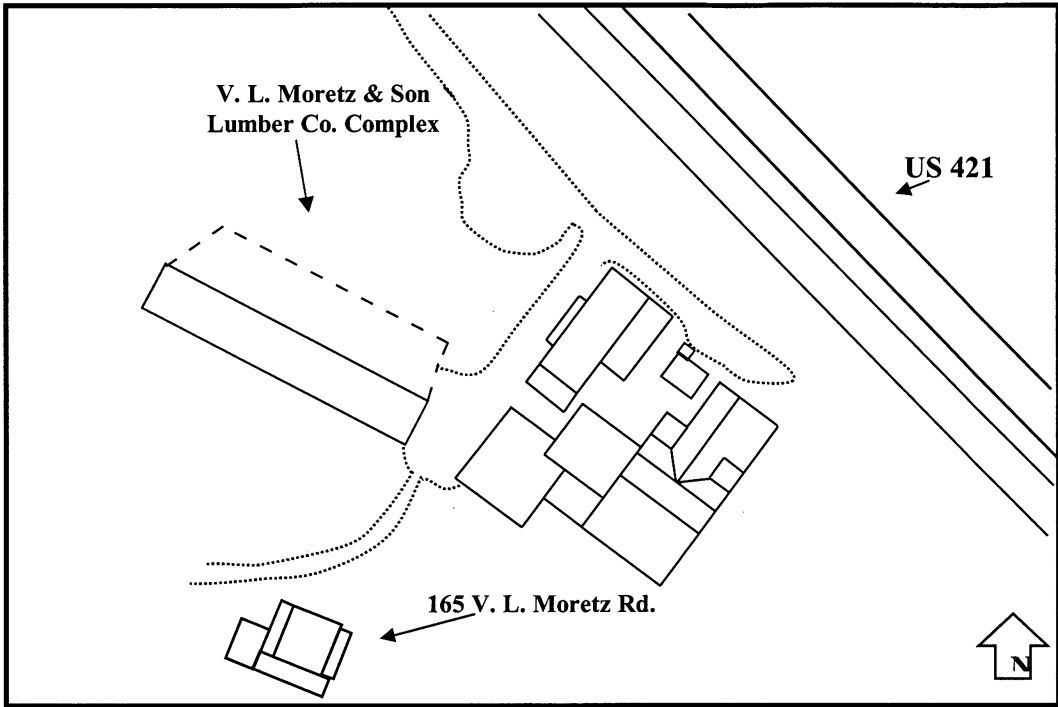
165 V. L. Moretz Road
c. 1929
165 V. L. Moretz Rd., Deep Gap
PIN 2961-03-7089-000



Description

165 V. L. Moretz Rd. is reached by a gravel drive that runs through the V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Sawmill Complex and continues to a modern house and several mobile homes farther south.

The one-and-a-half story frame bungalow, built c. 1929, faces northeast and is capped by an asphalt shingle side-gable roof, is clad in asbestos siding, and is punctuated by one-over-one sash replacement windows. An engaged porch with square wood posts that appear to be replacement posts is located on the northeast façade. One-story additions are attached to the southwest, northwest, and southeast elevations. A one-story shed roof carport is attached to the northwest addition.



Site Plan, 165 V. L. Moretz Rd.



Location of house from V. L. Moretz & Son Lumber Co. Complex, looking south.
A c. 2009 house (191 V. L. Moretz Rd.) in background through trees.

History

165 V. L. Moretz Rd. was built c. 1929 on lots 25-27 of the A. G. Miller Property, and owned by A. G. Miller and Bessie Miller until 1949, when it was passed to John Q. Miller. In the 1950s, the house was sold to Howard and Ruth Steelman, who then sold the property to T. L. Moretz and Lillian Moretz. Lillian Moretz owned the house until 1991, when it was sold to Ada Moretz Reynolds, Linda Stewart, and Karen Ledbetter and Debra Bauer who each owned 1/3 interest in the property. The house is currently owned by Linda Fairchild Day, who purchased the property in 2000. The land associated with the property now encompasses lots 19, 20, 25-29 of the original A. G. Miller property.¹³

National Register Evaluation

The house has retains integrity of location and setting. 165 V. L. Moretz Road has lost integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling with the various alterations and additions to the house.

The house is not eligible under Criterion A or B for event or persons, as there are no significant patterns of events or persons associated with the house. The house is not eligible under Criterion C for architecture as it is not a significant, intact, or remarkable example of an early 20th century bungalow. The house has also lost integrity with the various additions to the structure and the loss of original materials.

The house is not eligible under Criterion D for information potential, as it is unlikely to provide information contributing to our understanding of human history or prehistory.

¹³ Watauga County Register of Deeds.

Bibliography

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Watauga County GIS.

Watauga County Register of Deeds.

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