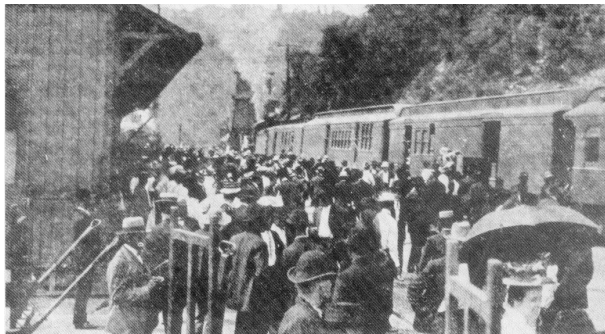


Thurmond in Prosperous Times

The year 1873 marked the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway mainline. It was also the year that Captain W. D. Thurmond acquired 73 acres along the railroad, a strategic position for developing a town.

Thurmond was the heart of the New River Gorge, carrying shipments of coal from the surrounding coal fields. The town of Thurmond grew as the coal and timber industries expanded in the gorge. The rail yard was expanded to meet the railroad's needs. By 1910, Thurmond was the chief railroad center on the C & O Railway mainline.



A bustling day at the Thurmond Depot around 1915. C & O Historical Society photo.

In 1910, the C & O operation at Thurmond was first in revenue receipts, producing more freight tonnage than Cincinnati, Ohio, and Richmond, Virginia, combined. Freight was not the only key to this town's success. Seventy-five thousand passengers passed through Thurmond in 1910, delighting in all it had to offer.

At its peak, Thurmond had two hotels, two banks, restaurants, clothing stores, a jewelry store, movie theater, several dry-good stores, and many business offices. The town continued to thrive through the early decades of the 20th century.

Thurmond in Decline

With the onset of the Great Depression, several businesses closed, including the National Bank of Thurmond. The town's economic vitality waned after two large fires wiped out several major businesses.

By the mid 1930s there were other indications that Thurmond's heyday was ending. The American public had begun its love affair with the automobile, and good roads made travel by car easy. C & O Railway changed from steam to diesel locomotives in the 1940s. Thurmond had been a steam town, its rail yard and crews geared toward the short service intervals of steam locomotives. The switch to diesels left many of the rail yard structures and jobs obsolete.

Once the heart of the New River Gorge, Thurmond remains its soul. Memories continue to be made here in the 21st century. The town is still incorporated and hosts an annual reunion for former residents.

Stabilizing Thurmond's Past for the Future

The Thurmond Depot was restored as a visitor center by the National Park Service in 1995. There are over twenty other park-owned structures in Thurmond. The National Park Service began a stabilization program in 2003, including repairs to preserve buildings until the time that they can be rehabilitated or restored. Work includes removal of overgrown vegetation, improvement of drainage around the buildings, installation of more permanent metal panel roofs and gutters, removal of hazardous porches and additions, the installation of window louvers to provide adequate interior ventilation and some exterior restoration work.



Thurmond Depot was restored as a visitor center in 1995. National Park Service photo.

A Thurmond Chronology

- 1873
 - W. D. Thurmond acquired 73 acres on the banks of the New River
 - The C & O Railway mainline completed through the gorge
- 1888
 - Post Office established in Thurmond
- 1889
 - Thurmond bridge completed
 - First loads of coal shipped out of the gorge from the C & O mainline at Thurmond
- 1891
 - Original depot and Hotel Thurmond built
- 1899
 - Original depot and Hotel Thurmond burned
- 1901
 - Dunglen Hotel built
 - Hotel Thurmond rebuilt
- 1903
 - Thurmond incorporated
- 1904
 - Present depot built
- 1908
 - Thurmond Bridge washed away by major flood
- 1910
 - Thurmond first on C & O mainline in revenue
 - 75,000 passengers roll through Thurmond
- 1915
 - New Thurmond Bridge completed
- 1921
 - Road from Glen Jean to Thurmond completed
- 1930
 - Dunglen Hotel burned
- 1931
 - National Bank of Thurmond failed
- 1958
 - Last steam locomotive operating in the New River Gorge retired
- 1963
 - Lafayette Hotel and other buildings burned
- 1968
 - First commercial rafting in the gorge
- 1978
 - New River Gorge National River designated unit of the National Park System
 - Railroad offices in Thurmond Depot closed
 - Thurmond Historic District listed on National Register of Historic Places
- 1984
 - Engine House burned
- 1993
 - Post Office closed
- 1995
 - Restored Thurmond Depot opens as National Park Service visitor center
- 1998
 - Water tanks and other steam-era structures taken down by CSX

For Park Information:
New River Gorge National River
P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846
304-465-0508 www.nps.gov/neri

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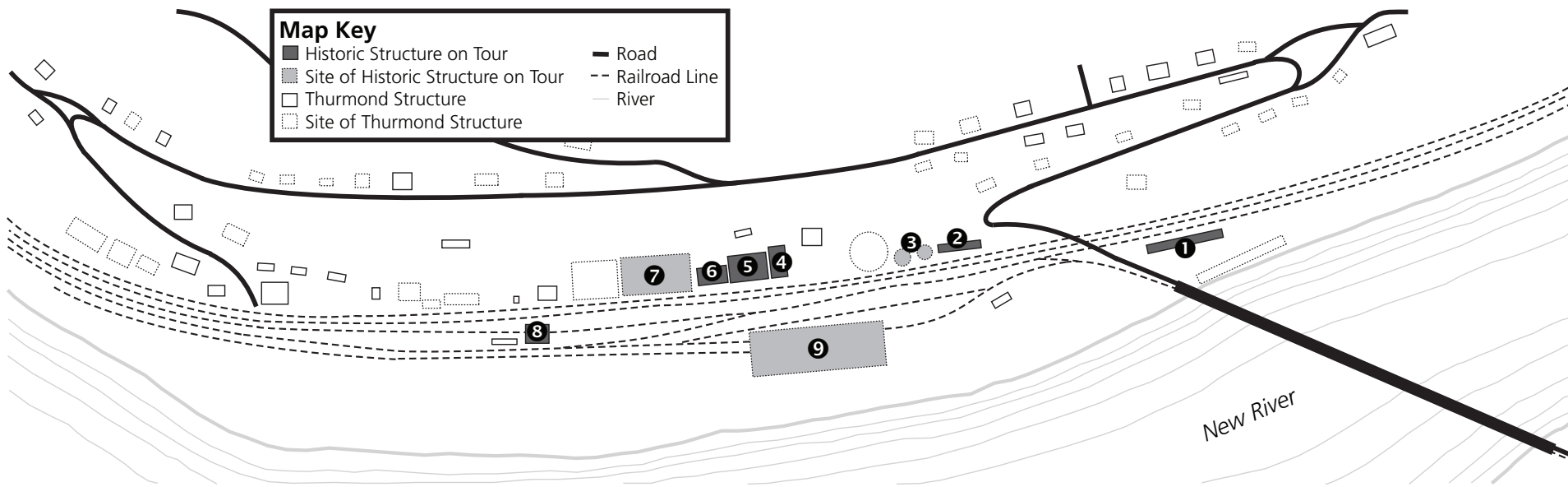
Thurmond: Heart of the New River Gorge



The year is 1925. You have just traveled from Cincinnati, Ohio, on the eastbound train pulled by the C & O Railway Engine No. 4.

Arriving at the Thurmond Depot, you collect your bags and buy a *Washington Post* from the union news room clerk. Walking toward town, you watch and listen for the roar of the mammoth steam engines, a constant danger. They haul people, freight, mail, lumber, and coal from nearby mines across the country.

The air is heavy with dirt, cinders, and locomotive smoke and the town is noisy and crowded. The Dog Wagon vendor gladly sells you a bite to eat. You look for a place to stay, and are assured that the Hotel Thurmond or the Dunglen will satisfy your every need. *Silas Green from New Orleans* is playing in town, and there may be a dance as well. You know that you will enjoy your time in Thurmond, for there is much to see and do.



Tour of the Town

What remains of Thurmond today helps give us a sense of the spirit of this place during its heyday. Each building added to the rich fabric of this community. Take this tour and learn the story of Thurmond, a place that was truly the heart of the New River Gorge.



Thurmond lacked a main street, but had a prosperous block of businesses. National Park Service photo.

Should you decide to walk this tour, please use extra caution when crossing the road and railroad line. This track is still a CSX mainline, with over a dozen trains passing through Thurmond daily. Cross only at the designated railroad crossing and do not walk on the track line.

1 Passenger Depot

The two-story Thurmond Depot was built in 1904 after the original station was destroyed by fire. The upper level

housed the signal tower, and the offices of the dispatcher, train master, and conductor. The lower level served travelers coming and going from Thurmond. The ticket agent's office, baggage room, waiting rooms, restrooms, and a snack/news room were at track level.

In 1995, the building was restored by the National Park Service for use as a visitor center. Rebuilt to its early 1900s look, this place gives us a glimpse of Thurmond's lively days. It remains a flag stop for Amtrak passenger trains.

2 Commissary

Fitzgerald & Company built a commissary to provide supplies to the hundreds of railroad workers in Thurmond in the 1930s. It later became the U.S. Post Office after fire destroyed the Lafayette Hotel and the town post office. In the late 1900s, it housed the last business in Thurmond — Thurmond Supply.

3 Water Tanks

Two water tanks provided the water supply for the steam that powered C & O engines. The tanks served five water columns, the engine house, and the fire hose house. The elevated tower was built in 1914 and had a 100,000-gallon capacity. The standpipe tower was erected in 1927 and

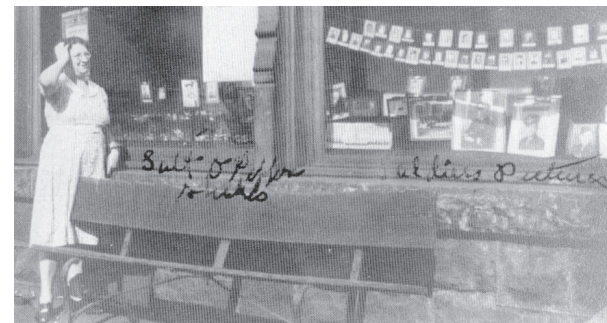
could hold 210,000 gallons of water. CSX Railroad, the former C & O Railway, removed the tanks in 1998.

4 Mankin-Cox Building

Marking the southern limits of the commercial district and constructed in 1904 by Dr. J. W. Mankin, this building is the oldest in the district. The Mankin Drug Company was on the right side; the left side housed the New River Banking and Trust Company.

5 Goodman-Kincaid Building

Constructed in 1906 by the Standard Dry Goods Company, the building's two upper levels were used as



Mrs. McClure's restaurant was a favorite eatery in Thurmond well into the 1940s. National Park Service photo.

apartments. The second floor included the offices of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Exchange Company and Dr. C. F. Ridge. Over time, the main floor has been home to two stores and several restaurants, including Mrs. McClure's.

6 National Bank of Thurmond

The year 1917 marked the completion of this building by the Bullock Realty Company. It originally housed a jewelry store, clothing store, the Western Union Telegraph Company, and apartments. In 1923, the National Bank of Thurmond relocated there from its original site within the Hotel Thurmond. More recently, the building housed the Banker's Club Hotel and Restaurant, serving boaters and other visitors.

7 Lafayette Hotel

Replacing the original Hotel Thurmond, this thirty-five room structure included a veranda which extended to the railroad tracks. It housed several businesses and shops. The hotel boasted seven bathrooms, steam heat, and four hundred electric lights.

Its main competition was the Dunglen Hotel located across the river. Known for its luxury and entertainment, the activities of the Dunglen contributed to the town becoming known as the "Dodge City of the East."

8 Coaling Tower

Tracks ran underneath the coaling station to allow as much as 500 tons of coal to drop via chutes into the coal tenders of the engines. The tower was abandoned in 1960 by CSX.

9 Engine House

Built in 1905, the Engine House was the workplace of fifty to seventy men. At peak operation, machinists, boilermakers, and steam fitters serviced sixty to one hundred railroad cars daily. In 1963, the building was used as a repair shop until it was abandoned in 1985. Fire destroyed it in 1993.