

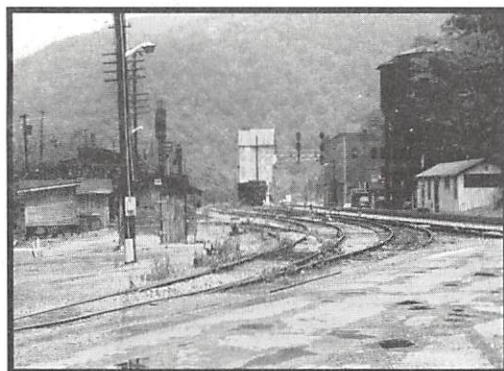
## The Story of Thurmond

The year, 1873, was significant to the growth and development along the New River with the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio mainline. It was also the year Captain W. D. Thurmond acquired seventy-three acres along the north bank of the river, through which the railroad ran, resulting in his land having an important strategic position for developing a town.

The town of Thurmond grew along with the expansion of the coal and timber industries in the gorge. The rail yard was expanded to meet the railroad's needs. Thurmond became the chief railroad center on the C&O mainline by 1910.

Thurmond, West Virginia was the heart of the New River Gorge, carrying shipments of coal from the surrounding coal fields. In 1910, the C & O operation at Thurmond was first in revenue receipts, producing more freight tonnage than Cincinnati and Richmond combined. Freight alone was not the key to the railroad town's success. Seventy-five thousand passengers passed through Thurmond in 1910, delighting in all it had to offer them.

At its peak, the town had two hotels, two banks, restaurants, clothing stores, a jewelry store, movie theatre, several dry-good stores, and many business offices. Thurmond 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 faded. The vigor waned after two great fires wiped out several major businesses. The 1930 fire that engulfed the Dunglen Hotel was the most disastrous. By the mid 1930s there were other indications that Thurmond's heyday was ending. The American public had begun their love affair with the automobile, and good roads made travel by car easy. The gradual decline was also impacted by the C&O Railroad's need to change from steam to diesel locomotives in the 1940s. Thurmond had been a steam town. Its rail yard and crews were geared toward the short service intervals of steam locomotives. The switch to diesels left many of the rail yard structures and jobs obsolete.

Thurmond, once the heart of the New River Gorge, continued on a gradual decline. Plagued by other fires and the changing technology, the town struggled to survive to the 21st Century. As you look around, note the silent reminders of this once flourishing town.



## Significant Dates

- 1873 • W.D. Thurmond acquired 73 acres on the banks of the New River.
- The C&O mainline completed through gorge.
- 1888 • Post Office established at 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 • Major flood washes away the Thurmond bridge.
- 1910 • Thurmond first on C&O mainline in revenue receipts.
- 75,000 passengers roll through Thurmond.
- 1915 • New Thurmond bridge completed.
- 1921 • Road from Glen Jean to Thurmond completed.
- 1930 • Dunglen Hotel burned down.
- 1931 • National Bank of Thurmond failed.
- 1958 • Last steam locomotive operating in the New River Gorge retired.
- 1963 • Lafayette Hotel burned among others.
- 1968 • First commercial rafting began in the gorge.
- 1978 • New River Gorge National River designated as a unit of National Park System.
- 1984 • Railroad offices in Thurmond Depot closed.
- 1993 • Engine House burned down.
- 1995 • Post Office closed.

In 1995 ... the Depot was restored as a visitor center by the National Park Service. Exhibits relate the significance of the region's railroading and coal mining heritage and contributions to the industrial history of the United States in the early 1900's. Will you remember?

**New River Gorge National River**  
P.O. Box 246  
Glen Jean, WV 25846  
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[www.nps.gov/neri](http://www.nps.gov/neri)



**New River Gorge  
National River  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior**



# THURMOND

'The Heart of the New River Gorge'

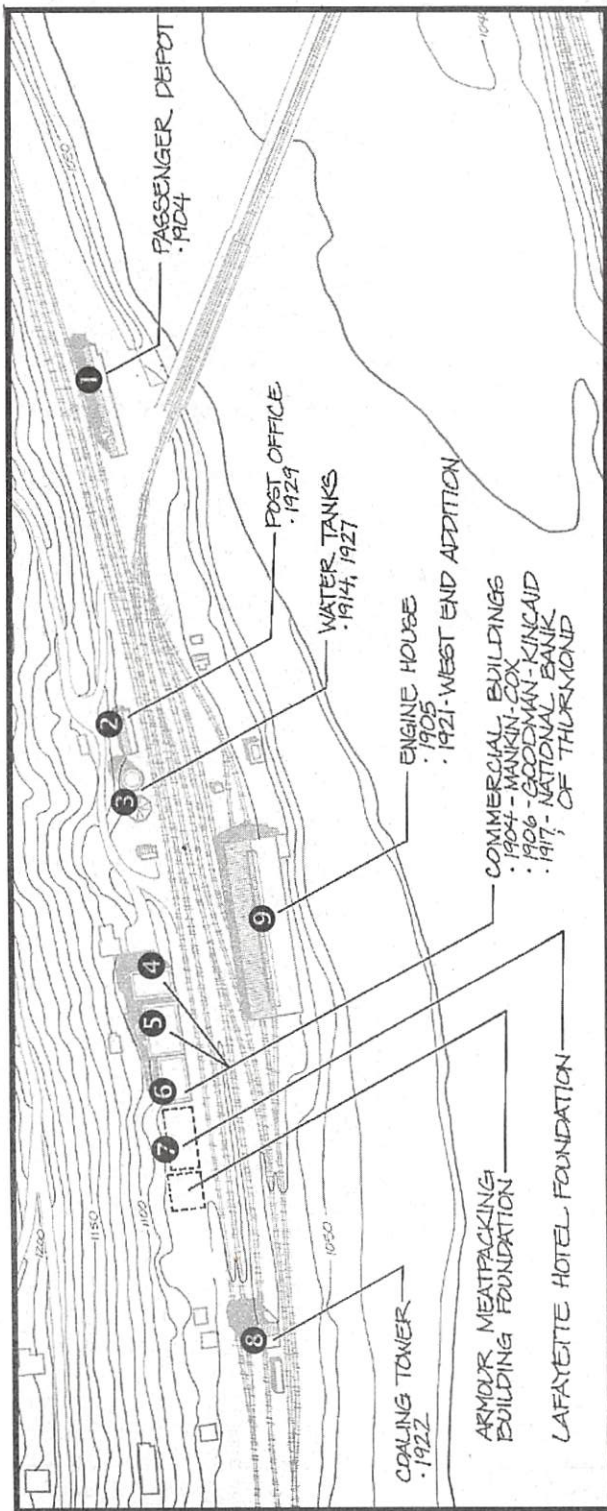


**The year is 1925.** *You have just traveled from Cincinnati, Ohio on the eastbound C&O Engine No. 4*

...arriving in Thurmond, you collect your bags and buy today's *Washington Post* from the Union News Room clerk in the Depot. As you walk to town, take care to watch and listen for the roar of the mammoth steam engines. They are a constant danger—hauling people, freight, mail, lumber, and coal from nearby mines to places across the country.

You notice the air is heavy with dirt, cinders and locomotive smoke and the town is noisy and crowded. When you are hungry the "Dog Wagon" food vendor gladly sells you a bite. At the end of the day the Hotel Thurmond or the Dunglen will be sure to satisfy your needs. Enjoy your time in Thurmond—for there is much to see and do.

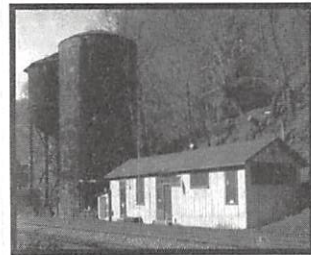




### 1 Thurmond Depot

This two story Depot was built in 1904 to replace the original station destroyed by fire. The upper level, housed the signal tower, dispatcher office, train master office, and conductors office. The lower level served travelers coming and going through Thurmond. The ticket agent office, baggage room, waiting rooms, restrooms, and a snack and news room were at track level.

In 1995, the building was restored by the National Park Service for use as a visitor center. It is still a flag stop for Amtrak passenger trains.



### 2 Commissary

The small building is the Commissary, built in 1929 by Fitzgerald & Co. The store provided supplies to the hundreds of railroad workers in Thurmond. In 1963, it became the U.S.

Post Office after fire destroyed the Lafayette Hotel, the Post Office's original home. In the late 1990s, it housed the last business in Thurmond, which sold snacks and mementos.



### 3 Water Towers

The two water tanks, taken down in 1998 by CSX, provided the water supply for C&O's use of steam. They 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.



### 4 Mankin-Cox Building

Constructed in 1904 by Dr. J.W. Mankin, it is the oldest building in the commercial district. It also marked the town's southern limits. On the right side was the Mankin Drug Co., and the left side housed the New River Banking and Trust Co.



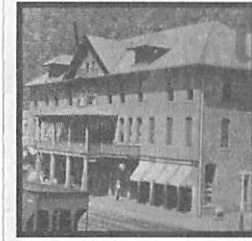
### 5 Goodwin-Kincaid Building

Constructed in 1906 by the Standard Dry Goods Co., the building's two upper levels were used as apartments. The second floor included the offices of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Exchange Co., and Dr. C. F. Ridge. The main floor has been home to two stores and several restaurants, including Mrs. McClure's.



### 6 Bank of Thurmond

1917 marked the completion of this building by the Bullock Realty Co. It originally served as home to a jewelry store, clothing store, the Western Union Telegraph Co., and apartments. In 1923, the National Bank of Thurmond moved here from its original site within the Hotel Thurmond. More recently the building housed the Banker's Club Hotel and Restaurant for boaters and tourists.



### 7 Lafayette Hotel

also known as "Hotel Thurmond"

This thirty-five room structure was completed in 1902, replacing the original Hotel Thurmond, which burned in 1899.

There were several businesses and shops located within the hotel. It also boasted seven bathrooms, steam heat and four-hundred electric lights. The first and second floor veranda extended to the railroad tracks.

The hotel's main competition was the Dunglen, located just across the river. The Dunglen was infamous for its luxury and entertainment. Many of the activities that went on across the river from the Hotel Thurmond, contributed to the town becoming know as the "Dodge City of the East."



### 8 Coaling Station

The five-hundred ton capacity structure was built in 1922. Train tracks ran underneath the coaling station where coal chutes dropped coal into the trains coal tenders, which fueled their engines. It was abandoned in 1960 by CSX (formerly the C&O Railway.)



### 9 Engine House

Built in 1905, the Engine House served as one of the rail yards most important structures. In its most active days, fifty to seventy men worked here daily. At peak operation, machinists, boilermakers, and steam fitters serviced sixty steam engines daily. In 1963, the building was used as a repair shop until its abandonment in 1985. The building was destroyed by fire in 1993.