Selected Bibliography


Eastern Regional Coal Archives, Craft Memorial Library, Bluefield, WV. The archive holds a trove of historic coal-mining pictures from the Pocahontas Coalfield, taken by photographers for the coalfield’s developer, the Norfolk & Western Railway.


Hope’s Steel Windows & Doors, Jamestown, NY. Detail manual and pamphlets.

Historic American Engineering Record. Kaymoor Coal Mine, South Side of New River Gorge Bridge, Fayetteville Vicinity, Fayette County, WV; available from http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hh:1:./temp/~ammem_RmHh::

Historic American Engineering Record. Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, Coaling Station, A stride Tracks West End Thurmond Yards, Thurmond, Fayette County, WV; available from http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hh:1:./temp/~ammem_ZBkR::


All images by the author except pages iv, 4 and 8.
Appendix A
Captions and technical information for photographs

Page 45: Brick house, Blacksburg, Virginia, 2003. What looks like a humble I-house is executed in very nice common bond brickwork. Like so much of Blacksburg, this house languishes while a new housing development goes up behind it.

Page 46: Storage building, Ideal Lumber, Roanoke, Virginia, 2005. This homely structure guards one of Roanoke’s busier intersections. It’s a bit of old-fashioned working-class honesty in a part of the city whose industrial buildings are yielding to new medical and retail development. I like the patina on the corrugated metal and the building’s aggressively low-slung look.

Page 47: Corrugated metal shack along Norfolk Southern tracks, Roanoke Virginia, 2001. It has since been razed. The corrugated metal had a beautiful patina.

Page 48: Lumber kiln, Cass, West Virginia, summer 2004. Though not a coal tipple, this burned-out hulk of corrugated-metal-covered steel framing is very similar in appearance. It is part of a larger sawmill ruin. Cass is a former lumber town in Pocahontas County and has been a state park since the early 1960s. But for this fact, this building and the others near it would probably have been razed.

Page 49: Farm house, Frost, Pocahontas County, West Virginia, June 20, 2004. Part by design and part by circumstance, most of these pictures were taken on overcast days in the fall or spring. This one was taken on a sunny, late-spring day, which really accentuates the lap siding.

Page 50: Business district, Thurmond, Fayette County, West Virginia, November 2001. Thurmond is a ghost town and is now administered by the National Park Service as part of the New River Gorge National River. Many of the scenes in the 1986 movie “Matewan” were filmed here. The movie, by filmmaker John Sayles, deals with the Matewan Massacre of 1920, just one of the violent chapters in West Virginia labor history.

Page 51: Coaling tower, Thurmond, West Virginia, November 2001. This interesting concrete structure was built by the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad in the early 1920s. At one time it would have had chutes hanging from the sides to supply fuel to steam locomotives. The cables that raised and lowered the chutes passed through the pulleys on the sides. This structure has been documented by the Historic American Engineering Record.

Page 52: St. John’s Baptist Church, Stotesbury Camp, West Virginia. I was photographing the exterior of this very unusual and forlorn-looking church in Raleigh County, West Virginia, on a 40-degree day in November 2001, when I went inside to get out of the wind. The inside is perhaps more interesting than the outside.

Page 53: St. John’s Baptist Church, Stotesbury Camp, West Virginia. The cornerstone of this church was laid in 1918. There is a second story above the nave, though given the condition of the ceiling (p. 50), I did not venture upstairs. Stotesbury is a former coal camp. This church is outside the town, on a dirt road marked with a sign that says “Stotesbury Camp.” I found a web site of coal camp reminiscences that said this was the African-American church, and in fact there is a lesser, but better-preserved church not half a mile away in Stotesbury proper.

Page 54: Ruins of Liberty Hall academy, Lexington, Rockbridge County, Virginia, 2003. Liberty Hall was one of the precursors of Washington and Lee University and the ruin is on its campus. Built about the time of the Revolution, the school burned in 1804. Note the contrast between the smoothness of the worked stone on the exterior with the roughness of the interior. Note also how the fireplaces fit into the walls.


Page 56: Coal tipple, Keystone, McDowell County, West Virginia, May 2004. I went up quite a few hollows this day, chasing leads in search of old, disused tipples. The only tipple I found that day is still working, in Keystone. Traditionally, tipples were built at the mines and the coal would have come out of the mine on the hillside above and been washed and graded on its downward trip through the tipple before being loaded into railcars that run underneath. The coal that this tipple processes is trucked in. This one was doing brisk business the day I was there. I had to set up my camera by the railroad tracks as a steady stream of coal trucks ran on roads on either side and in front of me.

Page 57: Graham’s Forge, Pulaski County, Virginia, May 2004. As I drove down from Roanoke to shoot this building, I feared that I might have to postpone my picture taking because of fog and drizzle. But the messy weather let up long enough for me to take some pictures. The massing of this building has the sort of piled-on look of a coal tipple, except that someone obviously thought about how the pieces fit together. With its wood siding, quasi-gambrel roof, monitor, dormers and cupola, this building is built in the language of barns, but its massing and metallurgical use are industrial. This building is itself a fine marriage of agrarian and industrial vernacular.

Fortunately for the picture, the siding has been removed and the chinking is revealed.

I was so taken with large-format photography, that I soon assembled an outfit of my own, finding that one can assemble a system at a fairly modest cost.

The pictures taken in 2002 and later were taken with an old Calumet view camera I bought on eBay for about $250. The house on page 45, the ruins of Liberty Hall on page 54, the log house on page 55 and the coal tipple on page 56 were photographed with a 1950s press camera lens, an f4.7 127mm Ektar I bought for $130. It’s a fine lens, its chief drawback being its small image circle, which leaves little room for movements. The pictures on pages 46, 48, 49 and 57 were taken with a 90mm f8 Ilex Acugon I bought for $200. It has movements comparable to the f8 Super Angulon, but is much cheaper.

I have tried developing 4x5 film in daylight tanks, open tanks and trays, and after many lessons learned and many negatives ruined, I have settled on tray development as giving the most consistent results, though one must be careful to avoid scratching the negatives during processing when the emulsion is soft.

Developer was either T-Max R5 or HC-110 using Kodak’s suggested times.

Some of these pictures are reproduced from silver prints and others from scans of the original negative.

Page 58: Coal tipple before being loaded into railcars that run underneath. The coal that this tipple processes is trucked in. This one was doing brisk business the day I was there. I had to set up my camera by the railroad tracks as a steady stream of coal trucks ran on roads on either side and in front of me.

Page 59: Stotesbury Camp, West Virginia. I was so taken with large-format photography, that I soon assembled an outfit of my own, finding that one can assemble a system at a fairly modest cost.

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Technical notes: All these photographs were taken with a 4x5 view camera on Kodak T-Max 100 film. Those taken in 2001 were taken with a Sinar view camera outfit belonging to Virginia Tech. Most were taken with a 90mm f8 Schneider Super Angulon lens, though some (most notably the exterior of St. John’s on page 53) were taken with a 75 mm Schneider Super Angulon.

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Master of Architecture, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg VA. 2006.

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