

TRAMMEL MIDDLE CAMP  
State Route 63  
Trammel  
Dickenson County  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1344

HABS  
VA  
26-TEAM  
1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

HABS  
VA  
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TRAMMEL MIDDLE CAMP

HABS NO. VA-1344

Location: State Route 63  
6.4 miles northwest of Dante  
Dickenson County  
Virginia  
UTM: 17.4096730.385580  
QUAD: Nora, Virginia (photo-inspected 1976)

Date of Construction: 1917-1919, 1920s

Architect:

Present Owner: Virginia Department of Transportation  
1401 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: "The camp was beautiful when I came here, all painted and new."  
Mrs. Lillie Mae Phillips, upon her arrival in 1919

Trammel Mining Camp was established in 1917, one of many such settlements created to support increasing coal production throughout southern Appalachia. Built by the Virginia Banner Coal Corporation, Trammel is important as a rare survival of an early mining camp in Virginia. The mine workers were divided almost equally among local residents whose farms were sold to mining corporations, immigrants from southern Europe, and Southern African Americans. Trammel consists of approximately 100 company houses divided into four sections: Upper Camp, Middle Camp, Main Camp, and Lower Camp. The nine houses documented in Middle Camp are essentially representative of those found throughout the camp. Though Trammel was segregated, all miners lived in virtually identical frame, one-story, three- or four-room houses built along the narrow valley floor, "not much more than a crevice in the earth" (Eller 1982:183). Households were heated by central coal-fired stoves and were lighted by single light bulbs in every room. Each group of three households shared a single privy; none had running water. Before the mines closed, the Trammel community included the company president's house, a company store with a post office, a Baptist church, and a schoolhouse. On July 12, 1986, the town of Trammel and some 50

houses and lots were sold at auction. Middle Camp has since been abandoned, and only the church and some houses in the other parts of Trammel remain occupied.

Project Information:

Documentation of Middle Camp in Trammel Mining Camp was undertaken by the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research (WMCAR) in 1994-1995 under the direction of Donald W. Linebaugh, Co-Director. Anne S. Beckett served as architectural historian, and Charles M. Downing conducted the historical research. In anticipation of the Route 63 reconstruction project, documentation was undertaken for the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Bristol District Office.

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Trammel is situated at the upper (or southern) end of the extremely narrow McClure River Valley. At its widest, the McClure River Valley extends only 500 feet across and "averages approximately 250 feet between the bases of the bordering mountain slopes" (Jones 1990:4). Middle Camp runs along the northeast side of Route 63. Directly across the road, McClure Creek, the main tributary of the river, runs parallel with Route 63 along the southwest side of the right-of-way. A short distance to the northwest, Trammel Branch, as it is now called on the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle, empties into McClure Creek. Most sources refer to the stream as "Trammel Creek." Its name dates from well before the construction of the town.

The name "McClure" came from a late eighteenth-century Washington County militia officer. In 1782, "Captain McClure" and his men are said to have tracked an Indian raiding party and their white captives to a riverside encampment near the present town of Nora. McClure's men overran the camp, defeated the Indians, and rescued the captives (Humbert et al. 1930:8).

Two other similar accounts explain the origin of the name "Trammel." Neither story is wholly substantiated, nor does a specific date appear in either narrative. The stories seem to be set during the late eighteenth century, when Europeans still encountered Native-American hunting and war parties passing through the Cumberland Mountains. One account is similar to the McClure adventure, except that the white hero's name was Trammel. He was pursuing Indians who were traveling with stolen horses rather than human prisoners. Like McClure, Trammel caught up to the Indians near a stream that would later bear his name. An Indian was killed in the fight that followed, and Trammel supposedly recovered the horses. The other rendition holds that Trammel himself had been captured near the Clinch or Holston River and that the Indians took him into Kentucky. In what was perhaps an attempt to guide potential rescuers, the captive managed to carve his name on a beech tree near the mouth of a McClure River tributary. Much later, a group of white hunters came upon the tree and the name "Trammel," and the branch was so named (Sutherland and Reedy 1994:245).

The first permanent settlers in the McClure River Valley arrived during the mid-1830s (Humbert et al. 1930:8). The earliest known resident in the vicinity of Middle Camp was John Ervin. About 1848, he is thought to have built a cabin near the mouth of Trammel Creek (Jones 1990:5). The Ervin family owned land in the Trammel area well into the twentieth century. Currently, Middle Camp lies within Dickenson County's Ervinton Magisterial District on land once owned by the family. Route 63 forms the boundary between the Ervinton and Kenady magisterial districts. Those parts of Trammel lying on the southwest side of Route 63 are within the Kenady District.

Beginning in the 1920s, the late Judge Elihu J. Sutherland began collecting and recording the family and personal histories of some of Dickenson County's older residents. Judge Sutherland spoke with James M. Ervin, the son of the aforementioned John. The younger

Ervin's brief recollections indicate that there was a dispersed community of small farmers and tradesmen surrounding the future site of Trammel by the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Sutherland 1984:183). Between 1858 and 1880, the present site of Trammel fell within the bounds of Buchanan County. In 1860, Buchanan County had less than 2,800 residents (Owens 1983:19). By 1875, a Trammel Creek post office had been established. Between 1880 and 1897, a post office called "Brumfield" operated "near the upper end of the present town of Trammel" (Sutherland and Reedy 1994:245).

James M. Ervin was born in 1860 in a house situated "in the little bottom" opposite the present site of the company store building in Trammel. Thus, the 1860 Ervin house would have been near what is now the lower end of Main Camp. James M. Ervin also recalled that his grandfather, Cage Ervin, lived "a half mile up Main McClure from Trammel." Another local resident from the third quarter of the nineteenth century was John Augustus Cousins, a millwright. He lived about one mile north of Trammel at the mouth of Roaring Fork. Cousins built several "water mills" in the Dickenson County area including one for Mayfield Kiser, who farmed just north of Dark Hollow on Roaring Fork (Sutherland 1984:183). An 1880 county road order suggests that "May" Kiser's mill was a well-known local landmark (Dickenson County Records [DCR] Road Orders 1:13). Like most other nineteenth-century mountain communities, the Trammel Creek area comprised a dispersed settlement. Cabins and houses were seldom built within sight of each other. "Solitude and privacy," historian Ronald D. Eller explains, "were dominant cultural values" (Eller 1982:25).

Before the industrial era, Virginia's Appalachian region was made up of isolated, self-sufficient communities such as the one suggested by James M. Ervin's description of Trammel Creek. Ronald D. Eller emphasizes the family farm as "the backbone of the pre-industrial Appalachian economy." Mountain farmers devoted as much as half their cultivated land to the production of corn, the region's staple. Potatoes, oats, wheat, hay, rye, and sorghum rounded out the major crops. About 187 acres made up a "typical mountain farm." Slightly less than half the acreage was devoted to crop cultivation and pasturage and the remainder contained "virgin forest" (Eller 1982:6, 16-17). Because of the difficult mountain terrain, farming implements were simple and most of the work done by hand. However, after 1900, the aggregate value of farm machinery in Dickenson County steadily increased (Humbert et al. 1930:39).

During the two decades following the Civil War, inadequate supplies of specie fostered the creation of a "barter economy" in the Appalachian region. The retail merchant was the central figure in these isolated, and thus largely unintegrated, local economies. Local merchants took surplus agricultural products in payment for retail goods. In many mountain communities, farm families added to their income during the non-agricultural seasons. Some foraged for local medicinal roots and herbs. Most merchants willingly accepted small amounts of "ginseng, yellow-root, witch hazel, sassafras, galax, golden-seal, and bloodroot" instead of cash. The merchant then dried and packed them for urban markets (Eller 1982:22).

Before the railroad came through the McClure River Valley, travel was an often torturous undertaking. About the turn of the century, Henry Hopkins Sutherland began a freight-hauling venture not far from what is now Trammel. Sutherland had already tried his hand at farming on the uplands of Sandy Ridge, a promontory that forms a semicircle around Trammel to the west and south. In 1899, Sutherland opened a post office on Sandy Ridge that he called Wampler, after an early German settler. At that time, the nearest rail connection was situated at Cleveland in Russell County on the Clinch Valley Division of the Norfolk and Western Railroad. Sutherland employed as many as three teams and drivers hauling bulk quantities of "salt, sugar, soda, coffee, and kerosene" to area stores such as Dolphus Kiser's on Frying Pan Creek. However, Sutherland abandoned his freight enterprise after losing several mules (and perhaps a few loads of cargo) along the precipitous roads from Cleveland up to Wampler on Sandy Ridge (Sutherland and Reedy 1994:244-245).

The industrial and economic transformation that resulted in the construction of the coal town of Trammel (and hundreds of others in the region) began in earnest after Reconstruction in the South. Crandall A. Shifflett determined that "the building of coal towns began in the 1880s, peaked in the 1920s, and virtually ended with the coming of the Great Depression" (Shifflett 1991:33). Trammel, which was built between 1917 and 1919, came into existence just before Shifflett's "peak period." However, land speculators, railroad companies, lumbermen, and local coal investors had been active in the immediate area since the 1880s.

Dickenson County was formed in 1880 from portions of Russell, Wise, and Buchanan counties. The Trammel area had been part of Buchanan. The new Dickenson County government immediately appointed commissioners to supervise the improvement of the primitive road system. In Ervinton Magisterial District, the McClure Road was divided into precincts. At present, Route 63 generally follows the course of the old McClure Road. A local resident from each precinct was designated as an overseer and charged with organizing the local citizenry into work crews when needed. John D. Ervin supervised the work on the McClure Road from the mouth of Trammel Creek southward to the Russell County line. The county commissioners required that Ervin "open the road to twelve feet wide" and that "the road be dug & leveled to twelve feet and cut smooth thirty feet as required by law" (DCR Road Orders 1:56).

John D. Ervin was the brother of James M. Ervin and the son of John Ervin. He served not only as a county road overseer, but as a justice of the peace. In 1878, John Ervin had granted his son and namesake a 946-acre tract of land that would ultimately contain the Upper Camp and Middle Camp parts of Trammel. The property lay on both sides of the McClure Road and was then situated in Buchanan County (DCR Deed Book [DB] 3:200). Given the large amount of land that John D. Ervin owned and his obvious social standing in the Trammel Creek community, he seems to fall into what Eller calls the "larger yeoman-farmer class." Eller argues that the pervasiveness of subsistence agriculture in late nineteenth-century Appalachia limited the wealth and power of "mountain élites," but nonetheless gave the prosperous yeoman farmer a high social standing in the community. Their social standing translated into "political

influence, access to resources, and contacts with the outside" that "placed mountain elites in a strategic position to benefit from economic change" (Eller 1982:11-12). Similarly, Shifflett found that the "native middle class paved the way" for industrialization (Shifflett 1991:5).

In 1885, just as lumber and coal speculators were beginning to move into the region, Buchanan County's courthouse was burned and its records largely destroyed. The 1878 Ervin deed was lost in the fire. According to local historian Pauline Owens, "bogus land deals followed this loss of county records which cost many citizens large sums of money to clear up their land titles" (Owens 1983:18). In July 1888, John D. Ervin convinced a court-appointed commissioner of the validity of his claim, and a new deed was issued (DCR DB 8:434). It was a good thing for Ervin. In January 1887, he had already sold a 388-acre "mineral tract" near the mouth of Trammel Creek and along the McClure Road to Jesse Beam of Clarion, Pennsylvania. Beam paid less than one dollar per acre for the land (DCR DB 3:200). It is not certain whether Beam was an individual speculator or represented a larger concern.

Speculators used a variety of methods to acquire land in the Appalachians in the late nineteenth century. In 1962, Harry M. Caudill published *Night Comes to the Cumberland*s, an indictment of the effects of industrial exploitation in Kentucky's Cumberland Plateau. Dickenson County is bounded on the north by the region treated in Caudill's study. Many mountain families had obtained legal title to only a small part of the land they traditionally claimed. "Vast areas had lain unpatented," Caudill explains, "their title reposing in the state and available under the law to any person to lay claim to it, survey it, and pay a nominal fee to the state treasury" (Caudill 1962:71). Eller points out that "obscure land titles, lost deeds, and poor records were common in most mountain counties, and speculators were quick to turn this to their advantage" (Eller 1982:56). Writing about Dickenson County in 1926, Judge E. J. Sutherland commented that "in years gone by the citizens had sold perhaps half their holdings in the county to large corporations for a song, so to speak" (Sutherland and Sutherland 1926:14).

In the mid-1880s, William D. Wagoner of Russell County obtained a patent from the Commonwealth of Virginia for 1,006 acres between the McClure and Roaring Fork rivers. It seems that the land had been traditionally used, but not owned, by the Ervin family. Wagoner referred to his newly acquired land as the "Irving [*sic*] tract." Almost immediately, Wagoner began selling the land to other speculators. A later deed indicates that when Wagoner sold the first parcel he excepted 40 acres of land for "John Ervin," perhaps the father of John D. Ervin. It is not certain whether this was a placating gesture or if John Ervin was somehow involved in the land deal (DCR DB 4:73; 8:144). The 1,006-acre patent contained the present site of Middle Camp.

Wagoner sold an unspecified amount of the patent land to J. Tivis Puckett of Russell County. Between 1887 and 1890, Puckett sold the mineral and timber rights and ultimately the land itself to a three-man partnership that came to own much of the future site of Trammel and its environs. In June 1887, James D. Johnston of Giles County, Isaac C. Fowler of Washington

County, and J. W. McBroom, an Abingdon attorney bought the mineral rights to an unspecified portion of the patent land for "\$500 cash in hand and \$1,000 to be paid in thirty days" (DCR DB 4:73). By two deeds recorded in 1889 and 1890, Johnston, Fowler, and McBroom acquired a total of 845 acres of the Wagoner patent. Johnston and Fowler were to hold 645 acres in common and McBroom 200 acres by himself (DCR DB 9:176).

By the mid-1890s, the lumber industry had arrived in the upper McClure River Valley. In 1894, the Yellow Poplar Lumber Company built a splash dam at the mouth of Roaring Fork, one mile north of the future site of Trammel. The splash dam, which took several months to construct, was designed to contain the waters of Roaring Fork. Logs cut from the surrounding hillsides were piled up downstream of the dam. When the spring thaw reached its peak, the water was released through the dam, and the logs were carried through the mouth of Roaring Fork and down the McClure to the breaks of the Cumberland Mountains in Kentucky. Yellow Poplar ran logging operations on several Dickenson County streams, including the McClure, Pound, Cranesnest, and Russell Fork rivers (Reedy 1994c:92-93).

The partnership of Johnston, Fowler, and McBroom also profited from the logging boom that began in the Big Sandy River Basin in the late 1880s (Eller 1982:93). The three partners and the De Busk Brothers Lumber Company were actively involved in cutting timber along the McClure and Roaring Fork. An agreement recorded in 1901 indicates that the De Busk brothers had leased the land from Johnston and company and erected "diverse improvements and saw mills, etc." on the heights that now overlook Middle Camp (DCR DB 21:527). Lumber could be profitably, if wastefully, transported down the waters of the McClure River. Large-scale coal mining in the Trammel Creek-Roaring Fork area would become possible only after one of the most impressive feats of railroad construction in American history—the Elkhorn Extension of the Clinchfield Railroad.

In 1891, the Norfolk and Western Railroad reached the new town of Norton in Wise County, Virginia. Within months the first rail shipments of Wise County coal left the region. Between 1880 and 1900, Wise County's population more than doubled to almost 20,000 (Hibbard 1990:31-32). The railroad also passed through the town of St. Paul in 1891. Trammel is located about 25 miles east-northeast of Norton, and 12 miles due north of St. Paul. Nevertheless, access to the Trammel area was still difficult at best. By 1902, the Clinchfield, Carolina, and Ohio Railroad (CC&O) had completed an eight-mile spur from St. Paul to the newly opened mines at Dante in Russell County, Virginia (Hibbard 1990:36). Trammel lies less than seven miles northwest of Dante.

By the 1890s, George L. Carter had emerged as one of the largest coal entrepreneurs in the region. Carter purchased the CC&O and several other small railroads in the region. His expansion into railroads was the outgrowth of his massive speculation in coal lands and his formation of several companies. Before 1900, Carter amassed more than 300,000 acres of coal and mineral lands in Dickenson, Wise, and Russell counties. Ultimately, he combined his coal



interests in the three counties and formed the Clinchfield Coal Company. In 1908, with financial support from Northern investors, he consolidated his railroads into the Clinchfield Railroad (Eller 1982:59-60). Soon after, Carter decided to build the Elkhorn Extension from Dante through the breaks of the Cumberland Mountains to Elkhorn, Kentucky. Although only 35 miles long, this railroad would cut through some of the most difficult terrain in the eastern United States and at last make coal-mining at Trammel a viable enterprise. Based on the expense per mile of laying track, the journal *Scientific American* in 1909 termed the \$4 million Elkhorn Extension "the costliest railroad in America." Twenty tunnels and eight bridges were required to complete the 35-mile route (Bogart 1994:185-186).

The Elkhorn Extension's longest tunnel was the 7,854-foot passage under Sandy Ridge (Goforth 1989:51). The northern entrance to the Sandy Ridge Tunnel lies only 2,000 feet from the center of Main Camp in Trammel. Exiting through the north end of the tunnel, a train follows the path of Trammel Branch down to its confluence with the McClure just behind Main Camp in Trammel. From Trammel, the track closely follows the narrow river valley as it winds and descends for several miles north.

Construction began simultaneously along the entire Elkhorn Extension in 1912 and was completed in 1915. William Cary Hattan was the engineer in charge at Sandy Ridge. He supervised a workforce composed of Italian, German, and Russian immigrants as well as local whites and African Americans. The labor camps, which were probably situated somewhere between the tunnel entrance and Main Camp in Trammel, have been described as "tarpaper shacks and tents that reeked of garlic, sweat, and corn whiskey." Dangerous working conditions and camp violence exacerbated the rough existence of railroad workers on the Elkhorn Extension (Bogart 1994:188).

The Sandy Ridge Tunnel took two years to complete and may have cost the lives of 30 or more laborers. Accounts vary regarding the most serious accident. A single mistimed dynamite blast killed between 11 and 21 African-American tunnel workers. In May 1914, the northbound and southbound construction crews met amid smoke and dust in the middle of the tunnel. On February 9, 1915, George L. Carter arrived in Trammel, the site chosen for the ceremonial driving of the last spike in the Clinchfield Railroad's Elkhorn Extension (Bogart 1994:188; Reedy 1994a:247). The McClure River Valley and its large coal reserves were irreversibly connected with the industrial world.

The Sandy Ridge railroad camp comprised the beginnings of the town. A bakery and a boarding house were constructed along the stretch of Route 626 between its intersections with the Clinchfield (now CSX) railway line and Route 63. In 1898, a school house had been built along Route 626; a larger school building was built on the same site after the coal town was completed. Trammel School continued in operation until the mid-1960s, but has since been demolished. A "double-wide" house trailer now rests on the site (Boyd and Boyd 1995; Reedy 1994a:249).

During 1912 and 1913, the USGS surveyed the area for the 1915 edition of the Clintwood quadrangle. Conducted during the height of the Sandy Ridge construction, the topographical survey shows eight buildings within the present limits of Trammel (USGS 1915). The cartographers did not designate the small cluster of buildings as a town, but Trammel School was shown. At the current intersection of Routes 626 and 63, there were four buildings. Two of the structures stood on the south side of the McClure Road (Route 63) in the same locations now occupied by the company store building and the V. L. Bird house—the two largest buildings in Trammel. It is conceivable that these two structures were built before the coal camps. A two-story house called the “Cowan Kiser place” once stood on the present site of the company store (Reedy 1994a:245).

On the 1915 quadrangle, two other buildings are shown on opposite sides of Route 626 between the school and the present site of Main Camp. The one on the north side of Route 626 may have been the bakery operated by Dominic Travato, an Italian immigrant who arrived in the area during the railroad and tunnel construction. Travato's bakery was a rectangular stone building. Once the railroad crews left, Travato built a three-story structure that housed a store, restaurant, and barber shop (Reedy 1994a:254). The three-story building no longer stands. Some Trammel residents recall a boarding house and a “beer joint” that later operated out of the same building (Austin 1995; Boyd and Boyd 1995). The 1915 quadrangle also shows two buildings near the upper or southeastern end of what is now Middle Camp. They may have been the cabins of local farmers (USGS 1915).

J. W. McBroom, an Abingdon lawyer and investor, eventually bought out most of his partners' interest in the coal and lumber lands surrounding Trammel. In 1905, McBroom sold the coal, lumber, and mineral rights of four of his tracts to the Dawson Coal and Coke Company for more than \$13,000. One property was the 1,006-acre patent taken out by William D. Wagoner in the 1880s (DCR DB 21:448-449). In 1906, Dawson Coal and Coke bought G. Cowan Kiser's homeplace and two nearby tracts totaling just more than 340 acres for \$5,000. Kiser's was the house noted above that stood on the present site of the company store building in Main Camp. Kiser had purchased the 112-acre tract in a chancery suit involving the Ervin family's property in the area and was still living there in 1906 (DCR DB 26:583). Kiser's home tract would eventually contain Trammel's Main Camp.

The research for this project revealed little information about the Dawson Coal and Coke Company. It seems almost certain that its holdings around Trammel were ultimately acquired by George L. Carter's Clinchfield Coal Company. In fact, the absence of deed records suggests that the Dawson company may have merged with Clinchfield Coal. The bituminous coal deposits in the Trammel vicinity comprise portions of the Upper Banner, Lower Banner, and Kennedy coal beds (Hinds 1916:89-95). The entire southern Appalachian region contains bituminous coal. Anthracite coal was mined in Pennsylvania and other regions of the northern United States. Anthracite coal burns longer and more cleanly than bituminous. However, anthracite seams run deeper, often beneath the underground water table, and are more expensive and dangerous to

mine. By 1910, bituminous coal production had surpassed that of anthracite in the United States (Shifflett 1991:30).

With the completion of the Elkhorn Extension, mining operations began on a small scale near Trammel. The 1915 quadrangle designated several sites near Trammel as having "measured coal exposure" (USGS 1915). In 1916, Henry Hinds, a geologist at the University of Virginia, produced an overview of the coal resources in the immediate area. He reported that a mine opening into the Kennedy coal seam near Trammel, Location #137 on the 1915 USGS quadrangle, had been used for the recent railroad construction in the McClure Valley. By 1916, two small mines near Trammel had tapped into the Lower Banner seam. Location #158 near Knot Hollow Branch lay only a short distance east of the future site of Middle Camp. Just north of Trammel another "small mine" at Location #159 near Bear Hollow was also in production (Hinds 1916:94-95).

On April 3, 1917, a group of investors met in the town of Big Stone Gap in Wise County to form the Virginia Banner Coal Company. The previous month, Lee Long had purchased two tracts of 847 and 95 acres from the heirs of J. W. McBroom for \$26,792 (DCR DB 41:482). The larger of the two tracts comprised the land on which Middle Camp would be built. Lee Long, an early president of Virginia Banner, would later serve a long tenure as vice-president of the Clinchfield Coal Corporation at Dante (Reedy 1994a:249). In September 1917, Long formally conveyed the property to Virginia Banner (DCR DB 42:151). When the company was first formed, it was headed by two men whose names were synonymous with large-scale coal production in southwestern Virginia. The company's first president was H. J. Ayers; its vice president was C. S. Carter (State Corporation Commission of Virginia [SCCV] Charter Book [CB] 95:122). Ronald D. Eller identified Rufus A. Ayers and George L. Carter as the two most prominent native Virginians in the state's coal industry (Eller 1982:59-60). It seems likely that the Ayers and Carter of Virginia Banner were related to the two more famous entrepreneurs.

No records have appeared indicating whether Trammel's four coal camps were built simultaneously. Dennis Reedy suggested that the differences in the construction of similar houses at Middle and Upper Camp may correspond to different building periods (Reedy and Reedy 1995). Middle Camp contains two distinct types of houses. Most of the construction seems to have been completed within a two-year period at most. The Dickenson County land books do not show large assessments for improvements on Virginia Banner's Trammel lands until 1923, but this seems unlikely as a construction date (DCR Land Books 1917-1923). Judge E. J. Sutherland, who was a prominent man in the county at the time, wrote that "about 1918 a prosperous coal mining camp was built [at Trammel] with some 100 residences and necessary office buildings" (Sutherland 1955:133).

The building of Trammel probably began soon after the formation of Virginia Banner in April 1917 (SCCV CB 95:122). In late 1917, the company increased the maximum value of its capital stock from \$150,000 to \$500,000 (SCCV CB 95:444). In April of 1919, Virginia

Banner's board of directors voted to relocate its principal office from Big Stone Gap to Trammel. They declared that the move was "desirable and necessary for the expeditious transaction of the corporation's business" (SCCV CB 103:51).

Once conceived and financed, the mines, and thus the camps, at Trammel were probably put into operation as quickly as possible. Eller found that "the average mining town evolved in a random, haphazard manner, reflecting a greater concern for ease and speed of construction and economy of operation than for permanence, comfort, or appearance" (Eller 1982:190). The First World War (1914-1918) caused an increase in the demand for coal from southwestern Virginia. "During the last years of the war and the year following," Judge E. J. Sutherland recalled, "wages in the mining and lumber camps—at Trammel, Nora, Fremont, Clinchco ... and other points in the county—shot upward and drew laborers from the farms and governmental works in swarms." Sutherland claimed that for a brief period "labor conditions were chaotic" and county clerical and teaching positions became difficult to fill (Sutherland and Sutherland 1926:26).

Between 1919 and 1922, three major strikes crippled coal production in mines worked by organized labor. "Nonunion southern mines," Eller pointed out, "took advantage of the situation and gained a greater share of the market, thus maintaining for a time their expanded level of production" (Eller 1982:156). Labor unions were not introduced into the region surrounding Trammel until the end of World War II (Boyd and Boyd 1995).

Trammel consists of four "camps" or groups of buildings separated by exceedingly narrow stretches of the McClure Creek Valley. Lower Camp forms the northern extremity of Trammel and is separated from Middle and Upper Camp by Main Camp. Lower Camp was initially designed to be occupied by African-American miners and their families. Throughout the southern Appalachian coal fields, company-owned worker housing was routinely segregated along racial and even ethnic lines. In most coal towns, blacks were allotted the least desirable area in which to live (Shifflett 1991:38-39). In 1920, less than 300 African Americans resided in Dickenson County (Humbert et al. 1930:14). It is not certain how long Lower Camp continued to be occupied exclusively by African Americans. By all local accounts, the last black families left Trammel decades ago. Currently, Trammel has no African-American residents.

Initially, most coal companies in the region provided separate accommodations for immigrant and native-born whites (Shifflett 1991:60). However, this does not appear to have been the case at Trammel. Mr. Glenn Boyd recalled that in the late 1930s and early 1940s there were a few Italian and Hungarian immigrant miners who worked at Trammel, but they were not housed apart from native whites (Boyd and Boyd 1995). None of the local residents interviewed for this study had first-hand knowledge of life in Trammel during its first two decades. Middle or Upper Camp might have been set aside as an "immigrant camp," but a major demographic change in coal-industry labor intervened.

In 1914, the outbreak of the World War I drastically reduced European emigration to the United States. Moreover, the war caused many recently arrived coal miners to return home to Europe. Others were lured away from the Southern mines by better-paying jobs in the war-boom economies of the Northern steel-mill cities. In 1921, the U.S. Congress passed a series of laws that effectively ended the flow of immigrant labor into the southern Appalachian coal fields (Caudill 1962:108; Eller 1982:179; Shifflett 1991:79). Thus, as the construction of Trammel began in 1917, an immigrant exodus of sorts was occurring. This situation no doubt contributed to the increase in wages and the "chaotic" labor situation that Judge Sutherland described in his writings on Dickenson County during World War I. In 1920, Dickenson County had a population of 13,542. Only 74 county residents were classified as "foreign-born whites." There were less than 300 African Americans in the entire county (Sutherland and Sutherland 1926:5).

When it was completed, Main Camp comprised the social and economic center of the town of Trammel. The now-abandoned company store building housed the Virginia Banner corporate offices, as well as the store and post office. The "clubhouse" provided temporary accommodations for company officials and was also situated in Main Camp (Sutherland and Reedy 1994a:250). The clubhouse is now usually referred to as the "Bird House" owing to V. L. Bird's having resided there for more than 30 years. At its height, Main Camp had a gas station, restaurant, and even a small movie theater. The latter was operated in one of the Main Camp houses (Boyd and Boyd 1995).

By 1919, a large coal tipple stood on the northeast side of Route 63 almost directly across from the present site of the Trammel Baptist Chapel. A curved wooden railroad trestle carried coal cars from the tipple over Route 63 and Trammel Creek to the opposite hillside and the Clinchfield Railroad line. For 20 years, the tipple and trestle dominated the Main Camp landscape. But by the late 1920s, the railroad deemed the trestle unsafe for large locomotives. The coal company then purchased a smaller engine known as a "dinkey" and only three coal cars at a time were run across the trestle and spur line (Sutherland and Reedy 1994:249). Finally, in the early 1940s, the trestle was torn down. The tipple was subsequently removed (Austin 1995; Boyd and Boyd 1995; Reed and Reedy 1995). At one time, a line of 14 or 15 houses extended up the hillside parallel to the tipple and perpendicular to Route 63. These houses were essentially part of Main Camp, but were called "Tipple Row." All of the Tipple Row houses have been demolished (Austin 1995; Boyd and Boyd 1995).

Southward from Main Camp lies Middle Camp, which comprises two groups of houses situated on the north side of Route 63. Currently, only eight of the nine Middle Camp houses are standing. It appears that the cluster of six "Type C" houses lying furthest to the south were constructed first. The three less substantial "bridge" houses lying to the north seem to have been built later. Traditionally, the group of three "newer" houses was known as "P-Camp." When asked about the name, Mr. Ace Austin stated that since he could remember the name has been applied to the three houses. His recollections extend back to the early 1940s. He did not know the origin of the name "P-Camp." In 1980, the Bird estate, i.e., the town of Trammel and

surrounding coal lands, was surveyed preparatory to the subdivision and auction sale of the property (DCR Plat Cabinet 1:317-318). All of the lots with buildings were laid off and assigned numbers. The three P-Camp houses were designated as "P-1, P-2, and P-3," while the lower six houses at Middle Camp were listed simply as Lots 86 through 91.

The worker housing at Middle Camp and Trammel is fairly consistent with that of other contemporary coal camps in the Appalachian South. Between 1922 and 1923, the U.S. Coal Commission surveyed 713 "company-controlled communities." The government researchers found that

one-third of the company dwellings in the southern bituminous fields were still finished on the outside with board and batten among the cheapest, if not the cheapest, type of finish. Among all United States mining areas, the southern fields contained 93% of all dwellings of this construction type. Weatherboard and clapboard were the outside finish on most of the houses, but less than one-third were plastered inside, and less than one-tenth had shingled or slated roofs. Wood sheathing covered the interior walls of most of the company-owned dwellings, and composition paper covered the roof (Eller 1982:183-184).

None of the Middle Camp houses were or are equipped with indoor plumbing. Water was obtained from a "pump house" located near Walnut Grove Road (DCR DB 237:447). In the mid-1920s, only 14 percent of company houses in the coal camps of Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky had indoor running water as opposed to 30 percent in Pennsylvania and 90 percent in Ohio. Only two percent of southern company towns had sewage systems (Eller 1982:184). Much of Trammel's sewage still empties untreated into Trammel Branch and McClure Creek (Edwards 1987:23).

The residents of Middle Camp were rank-and-file white miners. By 1925, two-thirds of all Virginia coal miners lived in company-owned towns (Shifflett 1991:53). Middle Camp was generally considered the least desirable housing for whites in Trammel. When asked about its past, Mr. Ace Austin bluntly stated that Middle Camp had "a rough history." The families who occupied the Middle Camp houses were usually the least well off in Trammel. While the mines were in operation, Middle Camp residents were often looked down upon by the residents of the other camps. The geographic separation and economic stratification of the three lower camps helped to engender a turf mentality among Trammel's white miners. Middle Camp miners were looked down upon and were sometimes unwelcome guests in other parts of the town. In return, Middle Camp residents were sometimes less than hospitable to the miners from other camps (Austin 1995).

The periodic disputes between residents of rival camps at Trammel seem to have been largely unrelated to labor unrest. According to Mr. Glenn Boyd, the union, i.e., the United Mine Workers of America, did not arrive in the area until 1945. While V. L. Bird did not employ union miners, he rented houses at Trammel to union members who worked in the

Clinchfield mines at Dante. According to Mr. Boyd, in the 1940s and 1950s, union and non-union miners were often amicable neighbors (Boyd and Boyd 1995). It should be noted that by the end of World War II, unionized labor was an established part of life in the Appalachian coal fields. Shifflett observed that "the violence and rancor that accompanied the union movement in West Virginia seems absent from the mines of southwestern Virginia" (Shifflett 1991:135). Brief disturbances occurred at Dante in 1934 and again in 1943, when the United Mine Workers of America unsuccessfully attempted to organize the Clinchfield mines (Tate 1981:1).

P-Camp and the lower six houses at Middle Camp are separated by a dirt road that leads up a steep hill to a group of domestic buildings known as "Walnut Grove." Two of the Walnut Grove houses appear to date from the original construction of the town. Virginia Banner's mining engineers and other company "big shots" resided at Walnut Grove (Boyd and Boyd 1995). Upper Camp, the southernmost section of Trammel, was occupied primarily by "middle foremen" and more experienced miners (Austin 1995).

During the 1920s, Virginia Banner's Trammel operation seems to have been highly profitable. Between 1919 and 1926, Virginia Banner employed about 300 people in various capacities (Reedy 1994b:348). Virginia Banner had leased the 85.85-acre tract on which Main Camp was situated from Clinchfield Coal since 1917. In December 1925, Virginia Banner and Clinchfield reached an agreement. According to its terms, "the right was given to Virginia Banner or its assigns to purchase within two years from January 1, 1926 the premises described in the lease agreement for \$8,000." In April 1927, "all rights and privileges were assigned by Virginia Banner to Wakenva Coal Company" (DCR DB 58:184). "Wakenva" is an acronym of sorts formed from the three states in which the company operated mines—West Virginia, Kentucky, and Virginia (Sutherland and Reedy 1994:253).

A plat of the 85.85-acre tract showed none of the buildings in Main Camp but did indicate the locations of the Upper and Lower Banner seams of coal (DCR DB 57:148). In January 1928, a collection of trustees from Clinchfield Coal and Virginia Banner conveyed the tract to Wakenva. The deed noted that the 85.85-acre parcel comprised portions of two tracts "now occupied by the houses and other structures placed thereon by Virginia Banner Coal Corporation and now used by Wakenva Coal Company in and about its mining operations" (DCR DB 58:320).

Wakenva Coal's operation at Trammel was destined to be short-lived. The Great Depression had a devastating impact on the coal industry in southwestern Virginia. By the spring of 1930, falling coal prices and a host of attendant economic problems forced Wakenva to close its mines at Trammel and elsewhere (Russell County Records [RCR] Chancery File [CF] #242, cause of *V. L. Bird vs. Wakenva Coal Co., Inc.*). "The depression decade," Ronald D. Eller wrote, "was a period of extreme hardship for most mountaineers. Coal production in the region dropped drastically, and the number of miners employed fell to its lowest point in twenty-five years." In 1923, a coal miner's average annual per capita income had been \$851. By 1933, the

figure stood at only \$235 (Eller 1982:239). "With the failure of the region's industrial base," Eller noted, "mountain families struggled to return to a way of life they had known prior to the turn of the century" (Eller 1982:238). Mr. Glenn Boyd was born in one of the Middle Camp houses at Trammel in the late 1920s. When the mines closed, Mr. Boyd's father moved his family to a tract of land on Sandy Ridge and took up farming (Boyd and Boyd 1995). The houses at Middle Camp along with other parts of Trammel may have stood empty through most of the early and middle 1930s.

While the Great Depression brought financial ruin to many in southwestern Virginia, Vance Lamont Bird significantly improved his economic status. It seems that Bird first came to Trammel as a bookkeeper or accountant for the Virginia Banner Coal Company. By 1928, he had apparently become a major shareholder in the firm. He was listed as one of the three grantors in the deed that conveyed the Virginia Banner property to Wakenva Coal (DCR DB 58:320). Apparently Wakenva Coal had not yet paid off the debt on the Trammel property when the company went under. In 1930, Bird and his two partners, B. W. Jennings and Margaret H. Powell filed suit against Wakenva (RCR CF #242, cause of *V. L. Bird vs. Wakenva Coal Co., Inc.*).

In May 1930, the Russell County Circuit Court ordered that the "real estate and leasehold estates of Wakenva Coal Company grouped about and tributary to their Trammel operation in Dickenson County together with equipment and personal property" be sold to pay outstanding debts and delinquent taxes. At the auction, V. L. Bird, Jennings, and Powell offered the modest sum of \$20,000 for the property. A. A. Skeen, the commissioner in chancery refused to accept the bid and protested to the court that the offer from Bird and company constituted a mere fraction of Trammel's pre-depression value. It was soon apparent that this was the highest bid that the court could expect given the region's blighted economy. In 1930, the Dickenson County real estate assessor valued Wakenva's improvements at Main Camp at \$8,340. The following year, the assessment fell to \$3,200 (DCR Land Books 1930-1931). With extreme reluctance, the commissioner and the court approved the sale of Trammel to V. L. Bird and his partners (RCR CF #242, cause of *V. L. Bird vs. Wakenva Coal Co., Inc.*).

In May 1931, Skeen formally conveyed to Bird, Powell, and Jennings the entire Main Camp tract of 85.85 acres, and a 35 percent interest in three other tracts totaling more than 1,000 acres. The larger of the three tracts contained Middle Camp. The sale also included a 964-acre tract lying between the Wagoner patent and the Jesse Beam land that J. D. Ervin had sold to Virginia Banner in 1923 (DCR DB 62:417; 48:452). It is not certain how Bird acquired Margaret Powell's share in the property, but in 1937 he bought out Jennings's interest (DCR DB 69:254). Thus, from 1937 until his death 40 years later, V. L. Bird was the proprietor of the town and the surrounding mines.

In October 1939, V. L. Bird incorporated his business ventures and holdings as the Big Banner Coal Corporation of Trammel, Virginia. Bird became president of the firm and he



appointed W. E. Russ and H. D. Becton, both of Castlewood, Virginia, to serve as vice-president and secretary-treasurer, respectively. A. E. "Ad" Young was listed as the manager of the Trammel operation (SCCV CB 193:115). Young's duties included the operation of the company store, which he ran until the early 1960s (Reedy 1994c:254).

The Big Banner corporate charter set forth the scope of the company's business activities. First mentioned was the firm's intent "to purchase, lease, or otherwise acquire, and to own, develop and mine cannel, bituminous, and other coal in the state of Virginia and elsewhere." "Cannel" is a type of bituminous coal that burns brightly, but gives off an unusually high amount of smoke. Besides mining, marketing, and "generally dealing" in coal, Big Banner also sought "to purchase, lease, build, sell, maintain, and operate stores, shops, warehouses, dwellings, and all other buildings and structures and to buy, sell, and generally deal, at wholesale or retail, in merchandise of all kinds and descriptions necessary or convenient for carrying on its said business." Concentrating his efforts on the Trammel operation was apparently Bird's intent. The charter set a limit of 2,000 acres as the maximum amount of real estate the company would own and administer (SCCV CB 193:115).

Trammel's local economy differed from many other company towns in that neither Virginia Banner, Wakenva, nor V. L. Bird's Big Banner ever used the "scrip system." Briefly, "scrip" consisted of paper or metal tokens issued by coal companies instead of cash. Scrip could then be redeemed at the company store for food, clothing, rent, and other necessities. By issuing its miners' wages in scrip, a coal company did not have to keep large amounts of cash on hand and could curtail bookkeeping costs. Ultimately, as Dennis Reedy has explained "scrip was a great thing for the companies while its use lasted but was a hardship on the men because it helped insure their constant indebtedness to the company" (Reedy 1994b:346). The Clinchfield mines at nearby Dante and Clinchco used the scrip system. If a miner insisted, Mr. Glenn Boyd recalled, the Dante mines would "pay off in cash," but money did not go as far as scrip at the already overpriced company store (Boyd and Boyd 1995). If a miner attempted to use scrip elsewhere "it was discounted about thirty cents on the dollar" (Reedy 1994b:347). Reflecting on the scrip system in general, Mr. Boyd added that "there was always a catch" that worked against the miner (Boyd and Boyd 1995).

The absence of the scrip system and the fact that some town residents were miners not employed by Big Banner or V. L. Bird suggests that Trammel lacked the pervasive and often constraining paternalism of other coal towns. Eller found that large coal companies usually sought to control what they perceived as a "transient and undisciplined labor force" (Eller 1982:193). Unlike Trammel, residence in most company coal towns was contingent upon employment in the company's mines. If a miner challenged a foreman or other company official, he stood to lose not only his job, but housing for his family as well. In the early decades of the century, many coal companies required their prospective employees to sign so-called "yellow-dog contracts." In these agreements, a miner pledged to abstain from any contact or involvement

with labor unions. If he violated the promise, he was dismissed from employment and evicted from his rented home (Tate 1981:1).

Trammel was not as isolated as some coal towns in the region. From 1915 until 1932, four passenger trains per day passed through Trammel, allowing residents easy access to the larger towns of Dante and St. Paul. Train service was reduced and then discontinued in 1954 (Sutherland and Reedy 1994:248). A bus service also operated up and down the McClure River Valley. The McClure Road (Route 63) was paved in the early 1940s (Boyd and Boyd 1995).

V. L. Bird conducted his business from an office in the back of Trammel's company store building. In practice, Bird acted more as a financier than a coal operator (Boyd and Boyd 1995). At his death he owned more than \$80,000 in stock in such large national firms as Bethlehem Steel, RCA, Chrysler Corporation, and Dominion Bank (Wythe County Records Fiduciary Account Book 27:400). He frequently leased portions of his coal land to other companies (Boyd and Boyd 1995). For example, from 1938 to 1961, many of his mines were leased and operated by the Sandy Ridge Lands Corporation. Eventually, that firm was taken over by the New York Mining and Manufacturing Company (DCR DB 121:178). Bird was seldom involved in the technical aspects of mine operation and hired managers and engineers to handle these duties (Boyd and Boyd 1995).

Bird was a reserved man who maintained a distance from his tenants and employees. His wife, Marguerite S. Bird, was known to have a more gregarious personality. She served as the town postmistress and manager of sorts. It was she who collected monthly rents from tenants and supervised the maintenance and repair of the town's houses. Later, Mr. Milton Sutherland became the bookkeeper and business manager for the Birds and served ultimately as the executor of Mrs. Bird's estate. For decades, Trammel's residential buildings were painted a uniform white and they were usually well maintained. Until the 1950s, the Birds showed a sincere concern for the appearance of the town. In 1943, a number of Trammel residents sought to organize a local church. Mr. Bird was approached by the trustees of the proposed Trammel Baptist Chapel. He agreed to give them a small parcel of land, but only if they spent at least \$2,500 in construction materials. The chapel lot once contained a large stable where ponies were kept. The ponies were used in the mines to pull coal carts out to the tipple. The chapel was completed in 1944 and still serves its original purpose (Boyd and Boyd 1995).

By the early 1960s, coal production had fallen off substantially around Trammel. Portions of the Upper and Lower Banner seams in the Trammel area had largely been "mined out" in the previous decade (Boyd and Boyd 1995). Beginning in the 1950s, Dickenson County experienced a loss in its labor supply. Many of the county's younger workers left the region because mechanization in the mines had reduced employment opportunities (Virginia Employment Commission 1970:5). Increasingly, Trammel's residents tended to be older and poorer. The Trammel Elementary School closed its doors for good about 1965, and the company store soon followed (Boyd and Boyd 1995; Hale 1995). The maintenance of the town began to suffer. One

resident recalled a telling incident from the early 1960s. A miner's house had a serious leak in the roof that drenched the kitchen during rain storms. Frustrated after repeatedly asking the owners to repair the roof, the miner undertook to do the job himself. Not only was the miner not compensated for the much-needed work, but his rent was raised the following month with the explanation that the dwelling was now worth more.

In the early 1970s, V. L. and Marguerite Bird retired to a large farm in Wythe County, Virginia. Mr. Bird died in 1977 and his wife passed away in 1981. The settlement of the Bird estate resulted in the sale of the entire town. The 1986 auction marks a watershed in Trammel's history. Many residents had rented their homes from the Birds for decades. They were understandably concerned that the houses could now be sold without warning or their rents raised to unaffordable levels. By the 1980s, the overwhelming majority of Trammel's residents were either chronically unemployed, disabled, or elderly. The town had a reputation for "rowdiness." Only a few households had members with full-time jobs. "This is the other America," one journalist commented, "a discarded coal camp in the steep middle of a Dickenson County hollow" (Edwards 1987:23).

In response to the potential crisis, residents formed the Trammel Homeowners Association (THA). The organization raised more than \$90,000 to help residents purchase their homes (Edwards 1987:23). Most of the houses in Middle Camp sold for only a few thousand dollars each (DCR DB 237:447; 238:36). Mrs. Jean Hale, who was actively involved in the THA, stated that individual home ownership has enhanced Trammel's sense of community (Hale 1995). Many Trammel residents feel that the county government devotes too few resources to the struggling town. One Clintwood resident stated that many people in the region regard Trammel as the "eyesore of the county," but grudgingly acknowledged that "those people are proud as can be to live there."

### Type C Company Houses

Type C houses, of which there were six in Middle Camp, were wedged in a row along a narrow, curving section between Route 63 and a steeply wooded hillside. House No. 5 was recently moved to be used as the new community center. This company house type, similar to others built across the Appalachian coal fields, is a frame, one-story, five-bay, gable-fronted house resting on fieldstone piers. The three-room-deep, modified shotgun-style house measures 48 feet 5 inches wide by 14 feet 4 inches deep. Due to the narrowness of the valley floor, the house's rear elevation was built against a steep slope, while its front rests on four-foot-high piers. Fieldstone piers, spaced five feet apart, are covered with wood planks varying in width from six to twelve inches. The frame house is covered with four-inch-wide yellow pine weatherboards painted white. The low-pitched gable roof with exposed rafter ends is clad with modern asphalt shingles. The partial-width, shed-roof front porch currently rests on concrete piers, with a pine tongue-and-groove deck, and 4 by 4-inch posts with a square wooden balustrade. A recently replaced string of open wood steps leans against the center of the deck.

The front entrance, as with all openings in the house, is protected with a mass-produced 1920s six-panel wood door, and leads into the living room. A kitchen is located to the left and a bedroom to the right; all three rooms measure 13 feet 6 inches by 13 feet 4 inches. A small, 6 foot 4-inch by 14 foot 4-inch back porch is located through the kitchen and includes an enclosed pantry (6 feet 6 inches by 5 feet 6 inches) lighted by a six-light, single-sash window. The porch has recently been enclosed with plywood, but was originally open and supported by square posts.

The interior finish is largely original. The floor of the house was constructed with 2 by 8-inch joists covered with narrow-width, yellow pine tongue-and-groove flooring and bordered with a 6-inch baseboard. Stud walls and ceilings were covered with lath and plaster. The kitchen was heated with a cast-iron cook stove in the west corner, while the living room and bedroom were heated by a coal-fired fireplace backing onto a shared stack. No cook stoves remain in any of the six units. The small brick-lined fireplaces each measure 2 feet 4 inches high and 2 feet 2 inches wide, including a 3-inch-wide cast-iron surround. The living room contained a narrow, 1 foot 5-inch-deep by 5-foot-wide closet, while the bedroom included free-standing horizontal wood boards on which clothes were hung. All rooms were lighted by 4 foot 10-inch tall by 2 foot 11-inch-wide six-over-six sash windows bordered with 3½-inch plain architraves. Each of these square rooms was also lit from a centrally located light bulb. The kitchen includes a ca. 1950 metal sink and counter. Originally without any running water, each group of three houses shared a common privy.

Located behind House No. 5 (off the back porch) on the wooded hillside is a 4 foot 2-inch-square privy partially sunk into the ground. This frame structure is covered with vertical wood boards and a steeply pitched shed roof. A rotting wooden box remains of the seat; later a metal pipe was installed for ventilation. No other outbuildings are associated with Type C company houses.

### **Bridge Type Company Houses**

The three bridge type houses were probably built in the 1920s. They were constructed on a small patch of level land near where McClure Creek crosses under Route 63 from south to north. Of the three dwellings, Bridge House No. 1 was destroyed by fire, and the remaining two are in rough condition. Bridge House No. 3 is typical of the group. It is of frame construction, one-story in height, two bays wide, square in plan, with four rooms and rests on concrete block piers infilled with concrete block. The 24 foot 7-inch-wide by 24 foot 5-inch-deep structure is clad with board-and-batten siding. The low-pitched, side-gable roof with a rear shed extension and exposed rafter ends is currently clad with rolled asphalt. The front elevation is shaded with an extended full-width shed-roof porch supported by four 4 by 4-inch posts with horizontal railing. The wooden deck rests on a concrete block foundation. No front steps remain. A small side-porch protrudes from the rear of the southeast side elevation (off the kitchen). This

14 foot 2-inch-deep by 6-foot-wide porch has an almost flat side-gable roof that encloses a 5 foot 3-inch-deep storage room.

From the front porch, the off-centered, two-panel wooden door leads into a living room, with the bedroom to the immediate right. The dining room and kitchen are under the shed roof, which has partially collapsed. The narrow-width tongue-and-groove floorboards rest on 2 by 8-inch floor joists. All four rooms are sheathed with sheetrock. The living room and bedroom shared a coal fireplace, as found in the Type C houses, but it was later infilled with concrete and its chimney stack inserted with a stove flue. Both rooms were also lighted by the same six-over-six sash windows as those of the Type C houses. Because of the slope of the rear shed roof, the dining room and kitchen were lighted by six-light, single-sash windows. The kitchen includes a metal sink and counter. A privy is located northwest of the structure in a heavily overgrown area.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Historical research for the Phase III HABS documentation of Middle Camp on Route 63 in the unincorporated town of Trammel in Dickenson County, Virginia, was conducted at the circuit court clerks' offices of Dickenson, Russell, and Wythe counties and at the Library of Virginia in Richmond. Until 1986, most of the Trammel community (including Middle Camp) comprised a single tract of real estate. The Virginia Banner Coal Company started construction of the town in about 1917. Trammel was then owned briefly by another coal concern before being acquired by Vance Lamont Bird.

V. L. Bird bought the town of Trammel and the adjacent coal lands during the depths of the Great Depression. He and his wife, Marguerite S. Bird, owned and largely controlled the administration of the town until their respective deaths in 1977 and 1981. For several decades, the Birds lived and conducted their business affairs in Trammel. In later years, they retired to a farm in Wythe County, Virginia. Because the town was owned by a single individual for such an extended period, deed and land tax records provide virtually no specific information on Middle Camp or the lives of Trammel's inhabitants. In addition, the changes in building assessments on the Bird property seem to be related to the level of coal production. High assessments appear in the profitable years of the 1920s, but fall off significantly during the Great Depression.

Six Dickenson County residents were interviewed regarding Middle Camp and the history of Trammel. Mr. Dennis Reedy and his father, Mr. Edward Reedy, of Clinchco, Virginia, provided information regarding the location and use of several now-demolished industrial and architectural features of the town (Reed and Reedy 1995). Both men are authorities on the local coal mining and railroad industries. In 1990, Dennis Reedy and Clyde Sutherland produced a series of local newspaper articles that chronicled some of the notable residents and events in Trammel's history. In 1994, Reedy combined these articles into a single narrative and published it as *Mountain People and Places: Dickenson County, Virginia and Surrounding Area*, a 600-page collection of historical articles, anecdotes, and reminiscences (Reedy 1994a). His father, Mr. Edward Reedy, shared his extensive knowledge of the region at large, his experience in the coal mining industry, and his recollections of Trammel (Reed and Reedy 1995).

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Boyd, longtime residents of the Trammel area were also consulted. Mr. Boyd is retired from a career in the coal industry, where he worked in both labor and management. Mr. Boyd was born in one of Trammel's Middle Camp houses, but his family moved out shortly afterward. In his youth, he was employed by V. L. Bird, the town's owner. Mr. Boyd has lived in Trammel for all but about a decade of his life. Both he and Mrs. Boyd offered vivid recollections of the town and its people (Boyd and Boyd 1995). Mr. and Mrs. Boyd are still active in the community, particularly through their close involvement with Trammel Baptist Church.

Mr. Ace Austin owned and operated a retail business on the upper (or southern end) of Trammel for several decades. His family has longstanding ties to the area. Mr. Austin made several astute observations regarding the history of the town and Middle Camp in particular (Austin 1995). Mrs. Jean Hale of the Walnut Grove section of Trammel provided helpful insight into Trammel's recent history. Mrs. Hale has lived in Trammel for 20 years and is a strong supporter of the community. She was active in the Trammel Homeowners Association, a cooperative venture established in the mid-1980s to help longtime tenants purchase homes in Trammel from the Bird estate (Hale 1995).

Secondary sources consulted for this project were varied, but they include two notable scholarly works published during the last 15 years. Neither author specifically mentions the town of Trammel; however, both provide an economic, cultural, and social context from which to assess the significance of Middle Camp within the scope of the town and the larger coal-mining region of southwestern Virginia. In 1982, Ronald D. Eller published *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*, which traces the profound social and economic changes that transformed the Appalachian region in the decades surrounding the turn of the last century. Eller's well-documented study emphasizes the deleterious effects of industrial capitalism imposed by outside investors on a region that had previously been largely agrarian and economically self sufficient (Eller 1982).

Crandall A. Shifflett's *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960* offers a closer and more detailed look at the particular economic and social issues related to Middle Camp and Trammel. Shifflett perceptively shows that for the historian the "typical" coal town "is an elusive quarry because of local conditions and the idiosyncracies of management" and also because "the actual towns were always in some stage of development, never frozen" (Shifflett 1991:48). As will be shown below, Trammel, especially under V. L. Bird's management, differed markedly in some ways from other Dickenson County "company towns" such as Clinchco or nearby Dante just over the line in Russell County.

Ultimately, Shifflett challenges Eller's thesis regarding the nature of industrial capitalism's impact on southern Appalachia. It should be noted that Eller's work is not an unrelieved attack on turn-of-the-century capitalism, nor is Shifflett's an apologia for the coal and lumber "barons" who came to dominate the regional economy. Shifflett emphasizes the "chronic misery of rural life" before the 1880s and argues that the people of pre-industrial Appalachia "were strangers neither to exploitation, oppression, political impotence, nor economic hardship" (Shifflett 1991:7).

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