

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: World War Memorial  
other name/site number: Kimball War Memorial Building

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: U.S. Highway 52 not for publication: n/a  
city/town: Kimball vicinity: n/a  
state: West Virginia code: WV county: McDowell code: 047 ZIP: 24853

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally  statewide \_\_\_ locally.  
(\_\_\_ see continuation sheet.)

William G. Parker 2-16-93  
Signature of Certifying Official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau Date

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

World War Memorial  
property name

McDowell, WV  
county and state

=====  
4. National Park Service Certification  
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____ _____ _____	_____	_____

=====  
5. Classification  
=====

Ownership of Property:  
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property:  
(check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITH PROPERTY

(do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings  
sites  
structures  
objects  
TOTAL

1  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
1

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING n/a  
(enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER. 0

World War Memorial  
property name

McDowell, WV  
county and state

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS (enter categories from instructions)      CURRENT FUNCTIONS (enter categories from instructions)

social/meeting hall      vacant/not in use  
recreation and culture/auditorium  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
7. Description  
=====

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: (enter categories from instructions)      MATERIALS (enter categories from instructions)

late 19th & early 20th century      foundation stone  
revivals/classical revival      walls brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof n/a  
other terra cotta  
\_\_\_\_\_

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
=====

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past
- C property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction
- D property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

World War Memorial  
property name

McDowell, WV  
county and state

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

(mark "X" in all the boxes that apply)

property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B removed from its original location
- C a birthplace or grave
- D a cemetery
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F a commemorative property
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

(enter categories from instructions)

architecture  
ethnic heritage/black  
industry  
military  
social history

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

1928-1943  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNIFICANT DATES

February 11, 1928  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNIFICANT PERSON

(complete if criterion B is marked above)

n/a

CULTURAL AFFILIATION

n/a

ARCHITECT/BUILDER

Hicks, Hassell T., architect  
Boone, Eason, and Woods, contractors

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)



World War Memorial  
property name

McDowell, WV  
county and state

=====

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

- USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources

PHOTOGRAPHS

- representative black and white photographs of the property

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====

PROPERTY OWNER

=====

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name: McDowell County Commission

street & number: P.O. Box 967 telephone: 304-436-8348

city or town: Welch state: WV ZIP: 24801

=====

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

section 7 page 1 World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

---

The monumental World War Memorial stands conspicuously on a hill at the eastern end of Kimball, McDowell County. It was designed by an accomplished Welch architect, Hassell T. Hicks, in 1927 and was completed and dedicated in 1928. The memorial stood as a monument to black veterans who served in World War I, but it was also an important cultural and social center for blacks and whites in the isolated coalfields. The site's outstanding characteristics are its size; classical portico; arched, industrial-style windows; and stone foundation. The memorial deteriorated badly during the past several years and suffered a fire in 1991 leaving only a roofless shell. Since it is a ruin of a building, the memorial's property category qualifies as a site but for ease in describing it, the War Memorial will be referred to in the nomination as a building. Although nothing but an exterior shell remains, the memorial still retains the qualities that reflect its unquestionable importance in McDowell County's history.

The War Memorial is located over highway 52, the main route through the county. The two-story, light-brick building stands on a sturdy cut-stone foundation. Its plan is a rectangular box with a small entrance vestibule on the east side. The facade faces south and displays a monumental classical portico centered in the middle. Four terra cotta columns stand on brick bases and support a tall terra cotta entablature. Laurel reliefs decorate the frieze section over each column. A band of dentils extends across the portico just under the cornice. Historic photographs of the building reveal a terra cotta extension over the entablature that held the words "World War Memorial". This section of the entablature has crumbled and no longer displays the building's name. A simple terra cotta parapet at the roofline flanks the centered portico and extends along the other two sides of the building.

Three pairs of door openings stand between the columns and open onto a shallow balcony, each separated by the columns' brick bases. The original doors were wood-framed, multipaned double doors with metal-framed transoms. On the second level centered over each doorway are tall, metal-framed multipaned windows in arched openings. Flanking the portico are single multipaned windows on each level.

The Memorial Building's main entrance stands on the east side behind an entrance vestibule that has an arched opening. Concrete stairs with wrought iron railings ascend from the street level to the entrance. An arched window identical to the windows on the facade, is located directly above the entrance. The rear of the building holds two second-level doorways that open at ground level to the steep grade behind. The building's west side simply has a narrow chimney and two windows on each level.

(NPS Form 10-900)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

section 7 page 2

World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

---

Years of abandonment and a tragic fire have left the War Memorial in a sad state of ruin. Aside from its remarkable historical significance, the most important aspect of the building is the exterior which remains intact except for the absence of windows and the roof. Even in its current condition, the memorial is a well-known and admired landmark that deserves recognition for its exceptional historical and architectural significance.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

section 8 page 1

---

The World War Memorial is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its outstanding historical importance and under criterion C for its architectural significance. Constructed in 1928, the building is reported to be the first ever that was dedicated to black veterans. Although it was a commemorative property, the memorial also served as an important recreational and cultural center for blacks and whites in the booming southern West Virginia coalfield. The building is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of the classical style in a rural, industrial environment where few so architecturally-refined buildings were located. Although it remains only a shell, the memorial retains its exterior integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and association.

Before northern businessmen discovered the value of southern West Virginia's coal, the area was sparsely settled and contained only a few scattered farms. Natives used the resource but because of its inaccessibility, the resource remained largely untapped. As the nation became more industrial-minded, however, capitalists from Pennsylvania explored ways to access the coal. Ambitious and farsighted businessmen began to acquire huge tracts of coal land in the great Pocahontas field, organized land holding companies, and constructed railroads into the isolated mountains. After the completion of a rail tunnel through Flat Top Mountain from Mercer County, large scale development of McDowell County forged ahead. Mines quickly sprang up all along the N & W line in the narrow valleys.

Along with the mines came a spectacular increase in population. The number of people living in McDowell County grew phenomenally at the turn of the century. In 1880, there were only 8,515 inhabitants in the county, but by 1910, the population exploded to 30,000. During the coal industry's earliest years, the number of native workers was adequate to satisfy the labor requirements. By the late 1880s, however, the number of new mine operations forced operators to attract thousands of workers from outside West Virginia. At first, mine managers recruited workers from the older coal fields of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. As demands for labor became more intense, operators sent agents to Europe and the South to seek workers for the booming industry. They lured potential miners to southern West Virginia with enticing descriptions of comfortable housing and steady work with good wages. Foreign immigrants from Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Russia poured into the remote county.

Black miners made up another large portion of the work force in southern

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEETsection 8 page 2World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

West Virginia, but they were not necessarily new to the coal fields. As early as the 1850s, blacks had mined coal in the Kanawha Valley and others were part of railroad construction crews throughout the region. The black population, however, was not sizable until recruiters visited the southern states in search of miners. By 1907, about thirty-five percent of the labor force in the Pocahontas coal field was black. In 1920, forty-three percent of all black miners employed in the United States worked in West Virginia, with the majority of them in the southern part of the state. McDowell County had the largest concentration of blacks in the entire Appalachian region.

The newly-arrived black population, which had faced oppression and harsh discrimination in the south, arrived by rail into the coalfields and found a tremendously improved lifestyle in the company towns. They were provided a comfortable place to live in company-built housing, a steady job, and access to the company store and other facilities. Although company towns were somewhat segregated, the practice was not strict and it was by choice that blacks and members of each ethnic group tended to be neighbors. Most importantly for black miners is that they earned the same amount of money for the same work that white miners earned. Blacks holding the same economic status as whites throughout an entire industrial region was perhaps unheard of anywhere else in the nation. Word of this economic opportunity quickly spread and more blacks poured into the southern coalfields in search of this freedom.

Blacks, European immigrants, and natives worked and lived together in the newly-established industrial empire that was known world-wide for its highest quality coal. McDowell County quickly surpassed older West Virginia mining centers to become the state's largest bituminous coal producer and even one of the most productive in the nation. World War I interrupted this most active period as thousands of workers, including 1,500 blacks from McDowell County, left the mines to serve in the armed forces during the conflict. Even with so many able-bodied men absent from the mines, McDowell County coal proved indispensable to the war effort, providing coke to the steel industry for weapons manufacture. Following the war, Southern West Virginia veterans returned home to continue mining with a renewed sense of pride and patriotism.

In the spirit of nationalism, it is no wonder that Americans wanted to honor their troops with monuments and memorials. McDowell County was a leader in this effort to commemorate its veterans and, with county funds, constructed an impressive classical-style memorial building in Welch. In

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

section 8 page 3

World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

---

the meantime, blacks became increasingly organized politically and veterans petitioned for recognition in the form of a memorial building to commemorate their role in the war. Black veterans presented the petition to the county commission along with a proposal for the construction of a war memorial. The county court approved of the request and appropriated \$25,000 for the building's construction.

The county commission hired a prolific local architect, Hassel T. Hicks to design the memorial. Hicks, a Virginia native, attended Virginia Military Institute in Lexington and, following service in World War I, located in Williamson, Mingo County, West Virginia. Realizing a tremendous opportunity in Welch, McDowell's county seat, he relocated his practice there in 1924. Projects from this office included the Rhodes Realty Building, the Stevens Clinic Hospital, the addition to Grace Hospital, the McDowell County Vocational Schools, and the First United Methodist Church, all in Welch. Also to his credit are the Welch Municipal Parking garage, which local sources claim was the first multi-level parking garage in the nation; the famed Coal House Chamber of Commerce building in Williamson; and school gymnasiums in Welch, Gary, Northfork, and Elkhorn.

For the World War Memorial, Hicks designed a monumental classical-styled building to honor the black veterans. The plan is basically a simple two-story box but with a distinctive classical portico and round arched windows. Its size and the evenly arranged metal-frame windows gives the building a somewhat industrial appearance which is perfectly appropriate for an industrial community. The classical detail, the building's perfect proportions, and the arched windows, however, add high-style architectural character to an industrial environment. Hicks reserved the grandeur for the exterior and designed a simple, functional interior that included an auditorium, a trophy room, lounge, and library.

Hundreds of enthusiastic McDowell County citizens gathered at the site for the World War Memorial dedication on February 11, 1928. Proud McDowell County residents and local newspapers hailed the memorial as the first one in the nation dedicated to black soldiers. The patriotic dedication ceremony included speeches by the architect and other prominent West Virginians and performances by local high school bands and choral groups. Each speaker paid tribute to the thousands of black soldiers who served in World War I and in particular, those 1,500 from McDowell County.

Charleston native Captain G.E. Ferguson, the only black captain from West Virginia to serve in World War I, presented an eloquent address where he paid tribute to all soldiers and asked Americans to remember their

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

section 8 page 4

World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

---

sacrifice. Captain Ferguson referenced the memorial building in his address and assigned each column a symbolic meaning. The pillar faith, he claimed, represents faith in our country and its institutions; the pillar hope stands for the hope that injustices will cease; another column represents charity; and the service column should remind everyone of their obligation to community, county, state, and nation.

Following its dedication, the War Memorial housed many functions and activities. The American Legion Post, named for Luther Patterson, the first black from McDowell County to be killed in the war, was made up of black veterans who met regularly in the War Memorial. The building provided a center of community activity for all county residents, black or white. Its auditorium with a one hundred-person capacity, kitchen facilities, meeting rooms, pool tables, and a library made it a popular social and cultural center that was used day and night. Pictures of the building's founders and plaques dedicated to veterans decorated the walls and a trophy room displayed wartime paraphernalia such as weapons and foreign currency. The War Memorial was a most functional multi-use facility that never failed to remind visitors of the important role that blacks played in World War I.

The memorial served for decades as a center of McDowell County activity. The American Legion Post used the building well into the 1970s but maintenance work became too expensive and the building was abandoned. It deteriorated badly and the county commission planned to sell the building at a public auction in 1986. After widespread media attention, the commission abandoned its plan and instead organized the McDowell County Museum Commission to explore ways to restore the memorial and other important historical sites. A devastating fire in 1991 left the memorial in ruins. For a number of determined McDowell County residents, however, the fire was only a minor setback. They have plans to stabilize the memorial as a ruin and to place a marker along the road explaining the site's outstanding historical significance. Although the memorial will no longer be used, it will continue to serve as a monument to black World War veterans and as a reminder of the important position that blacks held and continue to hold in the history of southern West Virginia.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

section 9 page 1

---

9. bibliography

Archer, William. "Historic Preservation: Pride in McDowell Traditions".  
The Observer, October 7, 1987.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Whittico Legacy of Keystone". The Observer February 7,  
1990.

Coal Heritage survey and report, 1990-1991. inventory file, WV SHPO.

Eller, Ronald D. Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers. Industrialization  
of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930. Knoxville, TN: University of  
Tennessee Press, 1982.

"Fire Guts Kimball Memorial Building". Bluefield Daily Telegraph,  
April 12, 1991

Gillenwater, Mack. Cultural and Historical Geography of Mining  
Settlements in the Pocahontas Coal Field of Southern West Virginia,  
1880-1930. Ph.d dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1972.

"Hassel Thomas Hicks, Sr." in Welch and Its People, Rose Marino.  
Marceline, MO: Walsworth Press, 1985.

"Hundreds Gather to See Memorial Dedication Rites". Bluefield Daily  
Telegraph, February 12, 1928.

Hunter, Houston Kermit. "The Story of McDowell County". West Virginia  
Review 17(April, 1940).

Kimball, file. Eastern Regional Coal Archives, Bluefield, WV.

"Kimball Memorial Building First to Honor Negro Vets". Welch Daily News,  
June 3, 1958.

Lambie, Joseph T. From Mine to Market. The History of Coal Transportation  
on the Norfolk and Western Railway. New York: NYU Press, 1954.

"Large Crowd Attended the Dedication of the Colored Soldiers' Memorial  
Building". The Welch Daily News, February 13, 1928.

Lewis, Ronald L. Black Coal Miners in America. Race, Class, and Community  
Conflict 1780-1980. University Press of Kentucky, 1987.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

section 9,10 page 2

World War Memorial  
McDowell County, WV

---

bibliography (continued)

- McDowell County, file. Eastern Regional Coal Archives, Bluefield, WV.
- "McDowell's Memorial Buildings". West Virginia Review 17(April, 1940).
- McGehee, Stuart. "A Salute to the Old Time Black Coal Miners". Coal People Magazine 13(February, 1989).
- Morris, Ron, President, McDowell County Museum Commission. various interviews, November and December, 1992.
- Ross, Donald. "Memorial in Disrepair". Bluefield Daily Telegraph, December 18, 1988.
- Shelton, Nakomis. "Negro Race Plays Important Part in Development of McDowell County". The Welch Daily News, June 3, 1958.
- Trotter, Joe William Jr. Coal, Class, and Color. Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-32. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

10. verbal boundary description  
lot #s20 and 21 in Kimball as shown on the map in the County Clerk's Office, Welch, McDowell County

boundary justification

The boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the World War Memorial.



52 KEYSTONE 4.6 MI.  
 BLUEFIELD 26 MI.

4143 (KEYSTONE) 4758 IV NW  
 4144  
 4145  
 27°30"  
 4146  
 4147

World War Memorial  
 Highway 52  
 Kimball, McDowell Co., WV  
 17145518014141960  
 Welc' quad



SPEED  
LIMIT  
25