

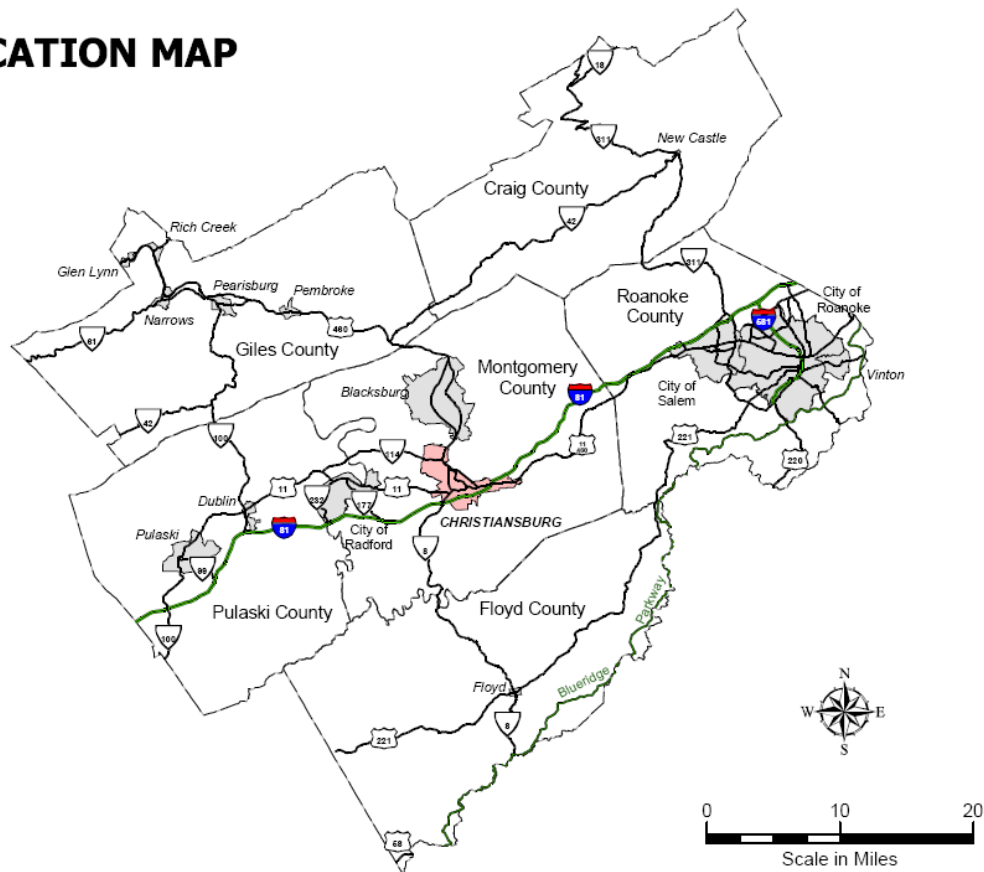
II. Location and Historical Overview

Geographic Setting

The Town of Christiansburg is located in the center of Montgomery County, Virginia. Christiansburg is surrounded by the peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the easternmost range of the Appalachian Mountains, and is situated in the New River Valley of southwest Virginia. As shown on the location map at the bottom of the page, Christiansburg is located at the crossroads of three major highways: Interstate 81, U.S. Route 11, and U.S. Route 460. I-81 forms the primary north-south thoroughfare from Maryland to Tennessee; U.S. Route 460 links Christiansburg with the Town of Blacksburg, approximately a half mile to the north; U.S. Route 11 provides a direct connection with the City of Radford, approximately 10 miles to the west. U.S. Routes 11 and 460 dually connect Christiansburg to Roanoke to the northeast.

Serving as the Montgomery County seat, Christiansburg is one of two incorporated towns within Montgomery County and is a member of the New River Valley Planning District. This District encompasses Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski Counties as well as the City of Radford. Montgomery County has the largest and most rapidly growing population within the Planning District.

LOCATION MAP



Historical Setting

Origin of the Town

The region of southwestern Virginia in which the Town of Christiansburg is located was inhabited by Shawnee and other Native American tribes when settlers began arriving. The area became known as Hans Meadow in the early 18th Century for a Dutch priest, Friar Hans, who arrived in the area in the late 1600's. In the 1700's, the region was settled by Pennsylvania and eastern Virginia pioneers following discovery of the New River in 1671. There were many Native American encampments in the area, particularly along the New River, and conflicts were common between the Native American tribes and the early settlers.

Montgomery County is the oldest county in the New River Valley. It was formed from Fincastle County in 1776. The City of Radford as well as parts of Floyd, Giles, and Pulaski Counties were all subsequently formed from Montgomery County land.

The Town of "Christiansburgh" was named in honor of Colonel William Christian, an early settler in the region and one of the first justices of Fincastle County and a member of the Virginia Legislature as well as a brother-in-law of Patrick Henry. Theodore Roosevelt, in *The Winning of the West*, stated that Colonel Christian was a "noted Indian fighter" and a "very gallant and honorable man." Originally a concentration of taverns and rest stops along the Great Wilderness Road (U.S. Route 11 today), the original 1.1-square mile Town was established on November 10, 1792 by an act passed by the Virginia General Assembly and incorporated on January 7, 1833.

Frontiersman Daniel Boone resided in Town for a time. Boone and his axe men made Christiansburg part of the "Wilderness Trail" (now U.S. Route 11), the route carved westward for settlers. Among records in the County Courthouse is a warrant dated 1774 for the arrest of Boone for debt. It is thought that the money owed was borrowed to pay his men and to buy supplies. The warrant was issued under King George's name for the frontiersman's arrest, but marked "Not executed – Gone to Kentucky." The debt was later repaid.

Davy Crockett, legislator and hero, lived in Christiansburg and worked at John Snider's Hattery Shop which was located on W. Main Street. Davy Crockett died at the Alamo on March 6, 1806 buying time for Sam Houston to assemble an army to face Santa Ana in the struggle for Texas independence from Mexico.

Christiansburg experienced significant growth in the early 1800's. In 1835 the population had grown to 335 and there were 45 houses and by 1840 the population was 400. Most residential growth was confined to Main Street and Cross Street (now Franklin Street). Several industrial complexes developed around the Gardner Zink Mill west of Town and the Chrisman Mill along Crab Creek on what is now State Route 661

(Chrisman Mill Road). These two mills were responsible for the centralization of a number of area milling operations in the late 1700's.

New streets were laid out during the early 1800's and a new lot numbering system was introduced. On August 22, 1822, the trustees resolved that "a stone at least three feet long be placed at each corner of the public land belonging to the Town of Christiansburg to be set into the ground two feet." New construction included a number of churches and a public well and pumps, which were placed just north of the Courthouse in 1826. Ten years later a public privy was built near the Public Square. A new courthouse was constructed in March 1836 in the east corner of the Public Square.

Former Town resident Dr. John Floyd was the attending surgeon at the Lewis-McHenry duel in 1808 and later governor of Virginia in 1830 as well as a member of Congress. He also was the father of later governor John Buchanan Floyd. John Buchanan Floyd (1804-1863), governor of Virginia from 1849 to 1852, was born in Christiansburg in 1804. He is buried with his family at Smithfield, adjoining the Virginia Tech campus.

Pennsylvanian artist Lewis Miller was fascinated with Montgomery County's scenery and often stayed in Christiansburg depicting the Town scenes from the 1830's through the 1850's. The Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center, located at 300 Pepper Street, SE, is named for him.

An act passed in 1854 established the Olin Preston Institute at Blacksburg to provide instruction in science, literature, the arts, and foreign languages. This school was the forerunner of the Virginia Agriculture and Mechanics College (1872), which later became the Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech).

The Civil War Period

Many Christiansburg area men served under General T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War. During the War, Christiansburg was invaded several times by Union Forces operating under General W.W. Averell from bases in western Virginia. The Christiansburg Depot in the community of Cambria had been established on the Virginia Tennessee Railroad line in 1854. The Union Army burned all of the structures but the passenger station in 1864.

Confederate forces were also active within the Christiansburg area and occupied a number of buildings in and around the Town. The Lattimer Plantation, which once stood on the Christiansburg High School site, was used as a Confederate headquarters. The nearby Montgomery White Sulphur Springs resort in Ellett Valley was utilized as a hospital from 1861 to 1865.

Near the end of the War, Union General George B. Stoneman and his men were in Christiansburg April 4-9, 1865. General Stoneman established headquarters in the Rice D. Montague home, which still stands at 109 E. Main Street. The army went into camp along what is now First Street behind the former Angle's store. The main force stayed

in Christiansburg and work forces were sent out. This army was in Christiansburg when news came of Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Former Town resident Captain George Junkin is said to be the last person wounded in the Civil War and also constructed the house that still stands today at 203 E. Main Street.

Following the Civil War, the population of Christiansburg experienced a decline that continued through the remainder of the Nineteenth Century. In 1870 there were 864 people in the Town; in 1880 there were 766, and by 1900 there were only 659. Gray's map of 1877 Christiansburg shows that most of the buildings of the Town were still clustered along Main Street and Cross Street (now Franklin Street). Large homes and institutional buildings occupied elevated sites around the Town. A few houses and shops lined Center Street (now College Street) immediately below the Town. Further west along Center Street and on C Street (now Depot Street) clustered the houses of freedmen.

Captain Charles S. Schaeffer, an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, founded the Christiansburg Normal Institute (renamed the Christiansburg Industrial Institute) in 1866. The school was formed as a private primary school for the education of Negro children and was located on Zion Hill, between the Town and the old Christiansburg (Cambria) Depot. Booker T. Washington served as superintendent of the Institute from 1896 to his death in 1915 and was instrumental in expanding the curriculum to include both classical instruction and practical instruction in industry and the trades. The school was relocated to Lattimer Plantation in 1898 and was significantly expanded in following years, growing to 14 buildings and 185 acres. The Institute came under lease by the Montgomery County School system in 1935. The property was transferred to Montgomery County Schools in 1947, establishing it as a full-fledge public school. It remained in operation as a segregated high school until 1966 when desegregation brought its closure.

The Early Twentieth Century

By the early 1900's, Christiansburg had taken on many of the functions of a regional center, with a bank, newspaper, Temperance Hall and photographer. Telephone service was provided by the Montgomery Intelligence Company, which was incorporated in 1886. Agriculture played an important part in the local and regional economy and livestock were regularly driven to market down Main Street or to the Christiansburg Depot.

A fire following a temperance march in 1900 destroyed many buildings along West Main Street in the downtown area. Despite this fire, Christiansburg experienced vigorous growth in the first decade of the Twentieth Century, growing from 659 persons in 1900 to 1,568 in 1910. The success of the Norfolk and Western Railroad's Christiansburg Depot may have been responsible for much of this growth. Many new houses were built between the Town center and the Depot, especially along Park Street.

Considerable growth also occurred between the downtown and Christiansburg Depot around the turn of the Twentieth Century. The Depot was the main shipping point for a

wide area of Montgomery County. Business around the Depot included five grocery stores, a drug store, jewelry store, ice plant, the Phoenix Furniture Factory, Southern Dairies, two hotels, a hospital, two hardware stores, three churches, a planing mill, N & W freight and passenger stations and a stockyard. The Depot area community was eventually incorporated as the Town of Cambria in 1906.

Christiansburg continued to grow through the first half of the Twentieth Century, although not as quickly as during the first decade. The completion of US Highway 11, the first interstate highway in America, was celebrated in Christiansburg when the last link passing through downtown was hard-surfaced in 1926. By 1929 Virginia Polytechnic Institute provided employment for the area's citizens that included academic positions and mining jobs related to the school's coal operated power plant.

The depression years were notable for Christiansburg for an unusual reason: Christiansburg's Post Office at 2 East Main Street was one of approximately two dozen locations in Virginia to receive Mural American Artwork or sculptures. These works were created through Roosevelt's Works Project Administration. Christiansburg's mural is entitled *Great Road* and was done in 1939 by John DeGroot.

Post World War II Christiansburg

Following World War II, Christiansburg rapidly industrialized. The Southern Dairies Plant (which later became a part of Sealtest) opened in 1940 at 885 Roanoke Street (the current Southern States building). The Roberts' Motel, the first of its kind in Southwestern Virginia, also opened after the war. Virginia Tech continued to expand and by the mid-1950's owned 2,000 acres in Montgomery County and employed over 1,400 persons.

The 1950's were most noted for the number of devastating fires that occurred in Town. In 1954, Roses' 5&10 and Cavalier Furniture were both destroyed. Catastrophe struck again in 1956, destroying most of the businesses on East Main Street. In a single fire, the Town lost the City Market, Royal Cafe, Smith & Jones, Jennings Barber Shop and Interiors by Richard. Fires in 1957 claimed Simmons Shoe Shop, the Blue Moon Lunch and the rebuilt Jennings Barber Shop. A major fire on Main Street (now Cambria Street, NE) in Cambria in 1959 destroyed the oldest and most historic buildings there. In 1950, Town resident and poet, author, editor and former newspaper reporter Ruby Altizer Roberts was the first woman to be named poet laureate in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Having lost most of its tax-paying enterprises, the Town of Cambria proposed and was accepted for consolidation with the Town of Christiansburg on December 31, 1965. The necessity for the consolidation stemmed from orders issued by the State Water Control Board and Health Department to cease the discharge of untreated waste into Crab Creek and construct a wastewater treatment plant. Compounding Cambria's problems, a spring in Ellett Valley that it relied upon for its water supply was deemed to be inadequate. Faced with these pressures, consolidation was the only recourse for the Town of Cambria.

The Town of Christiansburg continued to grow in the 1970's through natural growth, immigration, and also with the December 31, 1974 annexation which added 1,072 persons. After more than half a century of pulling the "Huckleberry" on the Christiansburg-Blacksburg branch of the Norfolk and Western Railway, No. 449, a Class M Baldwin locomotive built in 1905, made its final run in August 1978.

Another annexation in 1988 added large areas on the northern and eastern ends of Town as well as approximately 2,727 persons. This annexation incorporated Belmont Farms, the New River Valley Mall (which was under construction on the effective date), and what had been the Virginia Tech Horticulture Farm (on the northern end of Town) as well as Top of Christiansburg Mountain (on the eastern end of Town).

The Town underwent two boundary adjustments in the 1990's, which incorporated the Falling Branch Industrial Park and a portion of the Market Place in 1995 and a portion of the Christiansburg Industrial Park in 1997. In 2000, the Spradlin Farms area began development adding an additional retail area to the Town. In 2002, a large portion of the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg as well as a portion of Montgomery County were designated as a part of an "urbanized area" based 2000 Census figures.

Christiansburg Today

Christiansburg today is a charming town nestled among the eastern Appalachian Mountains. Despite its recent surge of growth, it has managed to maintain the warmth and appeal of a small community. Designated by the Governor's Office of Economic Development as a *Certified Business Community*, Christiansburg is maintaining a proactive stance with regard to its economic future. It is a town committed to providing quality services and amenities that will enhance the lives of its citizens.

Historic Sites

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources inventories historic resources for all Virginia localities. Sites that are inventoried and meet appropriate criteria may also be placed on the *Virginia Landmarks Register* and/or the *National Register of Historic Places*.

The *Virginia Landmarks Register*, currently containing over 1,800 entries, is established in state law; the Board of Historic Resources makes entries into this register, with the consent of the interested property owners. The *National Register of Historic Places* is established in federal law; the National Park Service, pursuant to nomination makes additions to this register from individual states. Both registers reflect sites prominently identified with the history and culture of the Commonwealth. All properties listed on the state register are nominated to the National Register. Formal recognition is voluntary and places no restrictions on the property owner's use of private funds.

Sites indicated in the following table (and on the map on the next page, with districts indicated by shading and structures indicated in red) are recognized historic landmarks on the *Virginia Landmarks Register* and the *National Register of Historic Places*.

Christiansburg Historic Sites

DHR Inv. #	Common Name(s)/Site Description	Address	Original Construction	Original Use	Current Use
154-0001	East Main Street Historic District	--	--	--	--
154-0001-05	The Oaks/Major W.L. Pierce house	311 E. Main Street	1889	house	bed and breakfast
154-0003	Christiansburg Presbyterian Church	107 W. Main Street	1853	church	church
154-0007	Phlegar Building (formerly T.F. Sullivan's Law office in 1880)	4 S. Franklin Street	Early 19 th c.	offices	Montgomery County Magistrate office
154-0010	South Franklin Street Historic District	--	--	--	--
154-0027	Christiansburg U.S. Post Office	2 E. Main Street	c. 1940	Post Office	Post Office
154-0043	Surface house	515 High Street, NE	3 rd ¼ 19 th c.?	house	house
154-0048	Cambria Historic District	--	--	--	--
154-0048-01	(old) Christiansburg (Cambria) Depot	610, 630 Depot Street, NE	1868-70	depot	True Light Photography, offices, residence community center / church
154-5004	Hill School/(old) Christiansburg Industrial Institute / Schaeffer Memorial Baptist Church	570 High Street, NE /	1883-85 /	school /	community center / church
154-5008	Edgar A. Long Building (Christiansburg Industrial Institute – second site)	580 High Street, NE 140 Scattergood Drive, NW	1885 (church) 1927	church school	vacant (museum planned)

*Note: All entries are listed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.
Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The Town of Christiansburg has three historic districts recognized by the *Virginia Landmarks Register* and the *National Register of Historic Places*. The East Main Street Historic District (VLR 06-20-1989, NRHP 01-10-1991) includes East Main Street from Roanoke Street and Pepper Street, NE to the old high school at 404 E. Main Street (presently the E. Main Street Apartments) and Park Street, NE from E. Main Street to Lester Street, NE. The South Franklin Street Historic District (VLR 06-20-1989, NRHP 01-10-1991) is located between 100 and 308 S. Franklin Street. The Cambria Historic District (VLR 06-20-1989, NRHP 01-10-1991) is comprised of 500 to 600 blocks of Depot Street, NE, the 500 – 600 blocks of Montgomery Street, NE, and the 900 -1000 blocks of Cambria Street, NE and the railroad depots.

The United States Post Office at 2 E. Main Street (VLR 06-20-1989, NRHP 02-01-1991) was one of approximately two dozen locations in Virginia to receive Mural American Artwork or Sculptures. These works were created during the Depression through Roosevelt's Works Project Administration. Christiansburg's mural is entitled *Great Road* and was done in 1939 by John DeGroot.

The Hill School, part of the (old) Christiansburg Industrial Institute, and Schaeffer Memorial Baptist Church are at 570 and 580 High Street, NE (VLR 05-16-1978, NRHP 04-06-1979). The construction of these buildings was financed by the Friends Freedmen's Association of Philadelphia in the 1880's in efforts to sponsor education for emancipated slaves.

Historic Sites Map

Full page, color, map – structures in red and put a label for the DHR #, use a different color for each Historic District.

The Christiansburg Institute, Inc. (CII) has received \$300,000 in federal funds, which will support the renovation of the Edgar A. Long Building (VLR 12-06-2001, NRHP 03-05-2001), one of the last remaining buildings of the Christiansburg Institute campus. The program will incorporate the history of CII, 1866-1966: archives of the history of CII and of African American education, a museum and historical park to commemorate the excellence of the CII educational experience, a Community Learning Center which will offer educational opportunities for all citizens, and community building in order to engage citizens in exploring the histories of their communities.

Located at 140 Scattergood Drive, NW, the Edgar A. Long Building is a two-and-a-half story, brick structure that was built in 1927. Famed educator Booker T. Washington advised the Friends Freedmen's Association on the purchase of farmland for a campus. The Edgar A. Long Building has statewide significance as the only pre-1950 building that stands on its original site at the campus, begun in the early 1900's as a regional center for secondary and higher education of African Americans.

Other sites on both the *Virginia Landmarks Register* and the *National Register of Historic Places* are the Oaks at 311 E. Main Street (VLR 04-20-1994, NRHP 07-15-1994) (currently a bed and breakfast); Christiansburg Presbyterian Church at 107 W. Main Street (VLR 06-21-1977, NRHP 01-30-1978), the Phlegar Building at 4 S. Franklin Street (VLR 06-20-1989, NRHP 11-13-1989) (currently Montgomery County offices), the Surface house at 515 High Street, NE (VLR 06-20-1989, NRHP 11-13-1989), and the old Christiansburg Depot at 630 Depot Street, NE (VLR 04-16-1985, NRHP 12-12-1985).

Historic Highway Markers

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources administers the Historic Highway Marker Program, which was begun in 1927. The program is a partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation, which handles erection and maintenance of the signs. Today more than 2,300 roadside markers carry approved historic inscriptions commemorating facts, events, individuals, and places of national, statewide, or regional importance. Local governments, private organizations, or individuals fund each marker's cost. The Board of Historic Resources approves markers. The Town of Christiansburg contains Historic Markers as follows:

- K-68, located on the eastern side N. Franklin Street south of Scattergood Drive, NE, commemorates the Christiansburg Industrial Institute and its organization by Captain Charles S. Schaeffer in 1866.
- K-71, located in the Downtown Christiansburg Square (on W. Main Street on the southwestern side of the intersection with Franklin Street), details the Lewis-McHenry Duel of 1808. The rifle duel between Thomas Lewis and John McHenry, which killed both men, led to the passage of the Barbour Bill in 1810 outlawing dueling in Virginia. Dr. John Floyd, later governor of Virginia and member of Congress, was the attending surgeon.
- K-72, located on Roanoke Street on the northeastern side of the intersection with Depot Street, NE, details the founding of Christiansburg in 1792 in the community formerly known as Hans Meadow as well as provides information regarding 1864 raids by Averell and Stoneman during the Civil War.