

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Harris Clay Company General StoreOther names/site number: Robinson General Merchandise; Micaville Country Store

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 573 Micaville LoopCity or town: BurnsvilleState: NCCounty: YanceyNot For Publication: ☐N/AVicinity: ☐x**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewideX local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A BX C D**Signature of certifying official/Title:****Date**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.**Signature of commenting official:****Date****Title :****State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/department store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: gable-front frame store

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: Concrete
Wood posts
Walls: Stucco/pebbledash
Synthetics
Roof: Metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Harris Clay Company General Store is gable-front frame store building prominently sited at the intersection of NC 80 and SR 1186 (Micaville Loop) in Yancey County, North Carolina. The vacant store building stands at 573 Micaville Loop, approximately five miles east of Burnsville, the county seat, in the rural community of Micaville. Built around 1914 with funding from the Harris Clay Company, a regionally active mining operation, the store occupies a 0.28-acre site between the crossroads intersection of Micaville to the south and Little Crabtree Creek to the north. The commodious one-story building is covered with pebbledash stucco and has a metal roof, recessed storefront entry, front porte cochere, and a shed-roof side wing. The interior retains its wood floors, beaded board walls, pressed tin ceiling, and built-in shelves and counters. The building suffered damage from flooding associated with Hurricane Helene in September 2024 but retains a good degree of physical integrity, including on the interior. The building is a good representation of general stores from the early twentieth century and a rare use of the regionally popular pebbledash stucco in Yancey County. The Harris Clay Company, drawn by the area's successful mining industry, began working kaolin mines in

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Yancey and Mitchell counties in the 1910s. In addition to being a local office and mercantile outlet for the company, the store provided a center of commerce and social life for the Micaville community through the twentieth century.

Narrative Description

The Harris Clay Company General Store stands at the intersection of Micaville Loop (SR 1186) and NC 80 in Micaville, a rural community approximately five miles east of Burnsville, the seat of Yancey County. Located on the north side of the “T” intersection—reportedly one of the busiest intersections in the county during tourist season—the store prominently overlooks NC 80 as it extends to the south. NC 80 connects to the Blue Ridge Parkway approximately 13 miles south of Micaville, as well as Mount Mitchell State Park, Carolina Hemlocks Campground, and other popular Yancey County recreation spots. Micaville Loop is a bypassed section of former highway that has been superseded by US 19E, the principal four-lane east-west highway through the county.

Ayles Creek flows south-to-north through Micaville along the west side of NC 80 and joins Little Crabtree Creek at the rear of the Harris Clay Company Store. The building occupies a relatively flat parcel and sits close to the road. The two creeks border the north and west sides of the property, while Micaville Presbyterian Church is located immediately to the east. The rear of the property is grass lawn with a few buckeye trees growing near the bank of Little Crabtree Creek.

Flooding associated with Hurricane Helene in September 2024 caused considerable damage and destruction in Micaville. Rising waters destroyed or severely damaged the post office, an industrial building, and at least three houses. The flooding brought approximately five feet of water into the store building and deposited roughly eight inches of mud. French Broad Electric Cooperative felled a mature sycamore tree along the creek bank in December 2025 due to damage to its root system caused by the flooding.

Harris Clay Company General Store, ca. 1914, ca. 1942, 2015

Contributing building

Built around 1914, the tall, one-story frame building has a pebbledash exterior, broad front-gable façade, and a shed-roof extension on the west elevation. The front-gable roof has modern metal roofing, exposed purlin eave brackets and rafter tails, and a single brick interior chimney projecting above the west slope. Applied decorative boards on the exterior simulate a half-timbered effect and create geometric patterns of pebbledash panels. Pebbledash, also known as roughcast, is a stucco slurry with pebbles or gravel sprayed in as aggregate that gives the stucco a rough, uneven texture. The technique was popularized in western North Carolina by influential architect Richard Sharp Smith (1852-1924) at Biltmore, George Vanderbilt's

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palatial 1895 estate in Asheville. The pebbledash is attached to a lattice of metal straps and wire over a backing of tar paper.

The three-bay storefront features a recessed central entrance flanked by large multi-light windows. Each window unit consists of paired 24-light fixed metal sash. The entrance consisted of double-leaf steel entry doors surmounted by a 15-light transom prior to damage sustained by flooding in 2024. The doorway is boarded up, but the entry doors, which are composed of six lights over a single panel, are currently stored within the building. The angled walls of the recessed bay each contain a 24-light metal-sash window. The entrance is sheltered by a front-gable entry porch carried on metal pipe columns. The porch roof has exposed purlin brackets and rafter tails, a beaded board ceiling, and beaded board panels. Attached corrugated metal canopies shade the flanking storefront windows. The upper gable end of the façade exhibits a central four-light round window flanked by wooden louvered vents. The front of the shed-roof extension on the west elevation of the building has an attached shed-roof porch and a flat parapet. The storefront windows and doors of the extension were washed out in the flooding, and the surviving wood framing has been boarded over.

The east side elevation of the store is blind and covered by a grid of pebbledash panels. Applied boards create a grid pattern with three rows subdivided into 11 bays. The pebbledash remains largely intact although a few areas are patched with non-pebbledash stucco, and two sections remain partially uncovered.

The rear (north elevation) displays a grid of pebbledash panels similar to the east elevation but is pierced by three windows and a gable vent. Applied boards create three rows on the main body of the building and three rows in the gable end, which are subdivided into eight bays at its widest. Similar to the east elevation, the pebbledash remains largely intact although several sections are uncovered down to the lattice backing and a few areas have been patched with non-pebbledash stucco. The center window of the rear elevation, which fills four panels of the grid, consists of two 24-light metal-frame industrial sash windows with four-light louvers. A similar single window is positioned to the west of the center, while the window to the east was replaced around 2015 when the staircase on the interior was relocated. The opening has been filled with a single-pane plate-glass window over a solid panel of new stucco. A wooden louvered vent is centered in the upper gable end. A wooden deck was added in 2021 and accessed a rear entry in the west side extension.

The west elevation is relatively plain with only the synthetic weatherboard siding of the one-story extension exposed to view. The side wing appears to have been originally covered with rolled asphalt siding as evidence in places where the synthetic siding has been damaged or removed. The metal roofing of the extension connects to the main building just below the eaves, leaving only the exposed metal-clad roof slope and interior brick chimney visible above. A square window opening in the exterior wall of the extension, which is currently boarded over, was installed around 2015.

The interior of the store consists primarily of a single, large open space featuring a high ceiling covered with pressed tin, tall crown moldings, beaded board walls and wainscoting,

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original wood floors. A brick chimney flue for a wood stove and two metal pipe columns stand in a line off center from the entrance and provide support for the wide ceiling span. Built-in shelves and counters line the two side walls. Partial-height beaded board partition walls along the west side and at the rear of the interior create private work and storage spaces. The opening in the partition wall on the west side of the store enters into a narrow hallway and connects with the side extension, or annex. A restroom for customers was partitioned in the angle formed by the hallway and rear walls, and the space is entered through a single-leaf wood door. Plywood screens atop the restroom enclose a portion of the mezzanine, which is otherwise bordered by a wooden railing. An open passageway in the partition wall across the rear of the store accesses the employee spaces, which are covered by the mezzanine above. Around 2015, the stairs were relocated to rise against the rear wall, and one of the original windows was removed and partially infilled with a single-light fixed-sash window over a wood panel. Two enclosed rooms to the east contained an office partially located below the stairs and a storeroom containing a section of original wood shelving. Two rooms to the west held an employee restroom and a utility closet, but the interior walls separating the spaces were damaged in 2024.

When the stairs to the mezzanine were relocated, the wooden railing enclosing the mezzanine was rebuilt. The space is generally open and retains original wood flooring and is exposed to the beaded board walls and pressed tin ceiling found throughout the interior of the store. Partitions at the west end of the mezzanine informally define a smaller area subdivided from the rest of the space.

The addition on the west side of the building encloses a long, narrow space with original wood floors and beaded board walls and ceilings. The storefront, which was destroyed by flooding in 2024, has been boarded up, and portions of the beaded board wall on the west side have been removed due to water damage sustained in the flood. A single-pane fixed-sash window is located on the west wall, along with two horizontal louvered windows added in the upper wall. Two door openings located on the east wall connected to the main building. The doorway at the rear of the extension was created in 2021, when the rear deck was constructed. At the time the single-leaf door was installed, an adjacent window opening was sealed.

Statement of Integrity

The Harris Clay Company General Store generally retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Built on this site around 1914, the one-story gable-front frame store building displays original pebbledash siding, large multi-light front display windows, a recessed entrance bay, and an attached front canopy with few exterior alterations. The attached one-story annex on the west elevation is somewhat altered with the addition of synthetic siding, and the office, stairs, and storeroom at the rear of the store's interior were remodeled around 2015 to improve the functionality of the mezzanine. The store building occupies a prominent site in the community of Micaville and has been a visual landmark since the early twentieth century.

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The building's integrity of materials and workmanship has been impacted by damage caused by flooding associated with Hurricane Helene in September 2024. Floodwaters rising from Ayles Creek immediately west of the store infiltrated the building, destroying the entrance to the annex and depositing approximately eight inches of mud and silt on the interior of the store. While the flood damage caused some loss and removal of original materials, primarily in the annex, the vast majority of historic material remains intact on the interior including wood floors, beaded board walls, pressed tin ceiling, and built-in shelves and counters. On the exterior, aside from the loss of the annex storefront, relatively small areas of stucco and glazing have been damaged in comparison to much larger areas that remain intact.

[Statement of archaeological potential]

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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.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture
Commerce

Period of Significance

ca. 1914 – 1976

Significant Dates

ca. 1914

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Harris Clay Company General Store is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C in the areas of commerce and architecture. The property embodies the distinctive form and characteristics of general store buildings in rural areas of the region and is a rare use of pebbledash stucco in Yancey County. The store building exhibits a simple front-gable form and recessed storefront entrance commonly associated with rural stores in the region and retains its original exterior and interior finishes, as well as original shelving on the interior. Associated with the regionally active Harris Clay Company, a kaolin mining company, the store served as a key local business in the Micaville community and as the company's local office for its nearby mining operation. The Harris Clay Company worked at least four mines in Yancey and neighboring Mitchell County and operated a store at each location. Located along the route of the Black Mountain Railway, Micaville became one of Yancey County's centers of population and mining activity. After it was sold by Harris Clay in 1942, local residents J. Leland and Hettie Robinson owned and operated the general merchandise store and added gas pumps as one way of adapting to the changing times. The store continued into the second half of the twentieth century as a local landmark and community gathering place even as its business gradually came to favor tourists and visitors. The period of significance for the locally significant property begins ca. 1914 with the store's construction and initial operation and ends in 1976 with its continued, but waning, use by the Robinson family before its closing in the early 2000s.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Background and Early Twentieth-Century Commerce in Yancey County

Yancey County was one of the earliest counties established in the western region of North Carolina, formed in 1833 from Buncombe and Burke counties. The county's present boundaries were not fully defined until 1872, when part of Yancey was annexed to neighboring Mitchell County to the east. The steep terrain of the Black Mountains, which are the highest in the eastern United States, stretches across the southern part of the county and yields to fertile forests and farmland in the northern portion of Yancey County as the ridges and streams fall toward the Toe River, the county's northern border. Thirty-five creeks feed the Toe and Cane rivers that drain the county and join in forming the Nolichucky River as it flows out of the

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northwest section of Yancey and into Tennessee. The rich bottomland of the numerous creeks and rivers has supported productive agriculture since the early nineteenth century.¹

Yancey County was strongly defined by its agricultural production throughout much of the nineteenth century, but in the aftermath of the Civil War, new economic influences began to shape and alter the character of the county. Mica mining, especially sheet mica used in the production of stoves, lamps, and glazing, grew significantly with eight mines operating in the 1870s. Industrial mining and mineral extraction continued to develop through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, employing large numbers of people and bolstering the construction of railroad connections into the region. The railroads supported not only the mining industry but also encouraged timber cutting and passenger service in the county.²

Elisha B. Clapp (1835-1874) and his business partner, John G. Heap (1833-1891), introduced large-scale mica mining to Mitchell County in the 1870s. Working as hardware merchants in Knoxville, Tennessee, in the late 1860s, the two men and their families came to North Carolina around 1869 or early 1870. Heap and Clapp began working the Sink Hole mines and acquired mineral leases for other properties including the Cloudland, Hawk, and Clarissa mines.³ The growth of the mining industry led the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad (CC&O) to extend a line into North Carolina from Johnson City, Tennessee. The CC&O snaked along the North Toe River and reached Spruce Pine in 1903. Located nine miles east of Micaville in Mitchell County, Spruce Pine developed into the mining industry's regional hub.⁴

A main contributor to the area's concentration of mineral resources is a rich feldspar vein extending southwest-northeast from eastern Yancey County, through central Mitchell County, and into Avery County. The feldspar belt through the area is approximately 35 miles in length and six miles wide. Feldspar, which was used in the manufacture of soap, chinaware, sanitary fixtures, tile, opaque glass, and glazes, typically appears in combination with mica and

¹ Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide To The Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 239; Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina – Vol. III*, (Raleigh, NC: Sharpe Publishing Company, Inc., 1961), 1642.

² Marvin A. Brown, "Phase II Historic Architectural Survey of US 19E from SR 1186 to existing multi-lane section west of Spruce Pine, Mitchell and Yancey Counties, North Carolina, TIP No. R-2519B" (Report for North Carolina Department of Transportation, May 2004), 16-17; Michael C. Hardy, *The ca. 1840 McElroy House: A Glimpse of Yancey County, North Carolina's History* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 2004), 27-28 and 30-32; Elaine McAlister Dellinger and Kiesa Kay, *Yancey County*, Images of America Series (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 7-8.

³ US Census 1870 and 1880; Lloyd Richard Bailey, Sr., *The Heritage of the Toe River Valley, Vol. I* (Durham, NC: L. R. Bailey, 1994), 264-265.

⁴ Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina – Vol. I* (Raleigh, NC: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1954), 225-230; "Spruce Pine Is Perhaps Most Important Mining Center in Western Section of the State," *The Asheville Citizen*, July 20, 1924, 26.

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kaolin, which is decomposed feldspar that has lost its potash content. By the mid-1920s, an estimated 60 percent of all feldspar in the country was being shipped through Spruce Pine.⁵

The small crossroads community of Micaville is located in the eastern part of Yancey County and lies along the east-west route of US 19E, which roughly bisects the county. Outside of Burnsville, the county seat, Micaville and Bald Creek were the two next largest “towns” in Yancey County in the early twentieth century. The community of Micaville initially developed as a processing and trading center for the mica and feldspar industries with two feldspar grinding mills operating near Micaville. The Black Mountain Railway, originally built in 1907 to haul timber out of the mountains, was completed to Micaville around 1910 and shipped minerals and lumber out of the area. Ownership later transferred to the CC&O Railroad.⁶

Prominent businessman Charles J. Harris (1853-1944) founded the Harris Clay Company in Dillsboro, Jackson County, where he had settled in 1888 to be near his brother’s family. Born in Connecticut and educated at Yale, Harris attempted several unsuccessful enterprises before investing \$75,000 with his nephew to purchase the Hog Rock Mine in Jackson County, for the excavation of kaolin and clay. By the 1890s Harris Clay established an office in Dillsboro and was shipping significant quantities kaolin and clay to manufacturers and potteries in New Jersey and Ohio. Harris became an influential figure in Jackson County, branching out into other industries, developing hydroelectric plants, and serving as president of the local bank. He ran as the Republican nominee for governor in 1904 and built the stately Jackson County Courthouse in Sylva in 1914. In 1910, Harris Clay expanded its operations to include the Beaver Creek Mine in Mitchell County. As Hog Rock became depleted, the company’s mining operations shifted to Mitchell and Yancey counties, although Harris Clay maintained its company headquarters in Dillsboro.⁷

C. J. Harris founded the Sylva Supply Company in 1898, which served as the company store for the Harris-Rees Tannery, another Harris enterprise in Jackson County. The Sylva Supply Company occupied the Harris Building on Main Street in Sylva, and the store remained in business for 100 years, closing in 1999. During its association with the tannery, Harris-Rees employees used coupon books, or scrip, to purchase items they needed from the store.⁸

⁵ J. A. Holmes, “Notes on the Kaolin—and Clay—Deposits of North Carolina,” *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (July-December 1895), 1-4; Beryl Whiteman, “Odd Mine Industry Here Thrives Almost Unknown,” *The Asheville Citizen*, December 26, 1926, 8.

⁶ “Yancey County,” *Our State*, (May 2, 1942), 2; The Jaeger Company, “Phase II Intensive Level Historic Resources Survey Report and Evaluations of Eligibility for Widening of US 19E from SR 1336 to SR 1186 with a Proposed Extension from SR 1186 to NC 80, Yancey County, North Carolina, TIP No. No. R-2519A” (Report for North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh, NC, March 2000), 12-13; Tom Oliver, “Yancey Railroad – Still Going, Still Hoping,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 12, 1977, D1.

⁷ Lynn Hoatling, “C. J. Harris: Jackson County’s Economic Titan,” *The Sylva Herald*, March 27, 2019.

⁸ Hoatling, “C. J. Harris: Jackson County’s Economic Titan.”

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As early as 1908, Charles Harris began acquiring land and mineral rights in Yancey County. In May 1908, Harris purchased a sawmill on Ayles Creek from Robert Stamey for \$600.⁹ Harris and his company recorded more than 50 transactions in Yancey County, mostly in Crabtree Township, over the next 25 years. The store in Micaville appears to have been constructed in 1914 and originally operated by John Thomas. Newspaper reports from April 1914 note that the Thomas Mercantile Company of Micaville was chartered with \$10,000 in capital stock and \$25,000 subscribed by C. J. Harris.¹⁰ Beginning that same year, *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* recorded Thomas as a merchant based in Micaville.¹¹ By 1916, however, Thomas' business was no longer listed in the directory, having been replaced by the Harris Mercantile Company.¹² In addition to the store, Harris engaged C. G. Logan of Waynesville in 1914 to build an electric plant in Micaville. The plant was designed to supply power to the nearby kaolin mines.¹³

Just as he had in Jackson County, C. J. Harris became one of the leading businessmen in the Spruce Pine District, an area comprised of Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties, and the Harris Clay Company dominated the excavation and processing of kaolin in western North Carolina. Between 1904 and 1916, the value of kaolin production in North Carolina more than doubled. C. J. Harris, along with his sons David and Robert, operated a large kaolin mine and refining plant near Spruce Pine that became their base of operations in the district. Harris organized and served as president of the Spruce Pine Store Company, which operated a substantial general merchandise store in downtown Spruce Pine. The store opened in 1910 and moved into a two-story 16,000-square-foot brick building in 1923.¹⁴ The Spruce Pine Store sold virtually everything needed at home, on the farm, in the mines, or for automobiles. It did an "immense volume of business" and was regarded as one of the largest stores in the region.¹⁵ Through the 1920s, Harris Clay Company was operating mines at Spruce Pine, Penland, Lunday, and Micaville, and the company, which handled the largest payroll in Mitchell County, had a store at each location. C. J. Harris served on the Board of Directors of the Mountain Bank and Trust Company of Spruce Pine and donated a large tract of land for the local school, which was named in his honor. He also contributed more than \$30,000 towards the construction of the school buildings.¹⁶

⁹ Deed book 35, page 521, Yancey County Register of Deeds, Burnsville, NC.

¹⁰ "Important Ruling by Corporation Commission," *The Asheville Gazette*, April 3, 1914, 1; "The Thomas Mercantile Company," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), April 3, 1914, 5.

¹¹ *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* (Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1914), 465.

¹² *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* (Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1916), 576.

¹³ "Waynesville Man Builds Another Electric Plant," *Jackson County Journal*, September 4, 1914, 2.

¹⁴ Sybil Argintar Bowers, "Downtown Spruce Pine Historic District" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Bowers Southeastern Preservation, Asheville, NC, 2003), 9.

¹⁵ "Mineral Resources Contribute to Spruce Pine's Growth," *The Asheville Citizen*, June 27, 1926, E1; H. M. Berry, "The Open Forum – North Carolina Resources," *The Charlotte Observer*, March 18, 1918, 4.

¹⁶ Mrs. Romulus Duncan, "Underground Wealth in W.N.C. Mountains Being Developed," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, July 5, 1931, 8B.

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As a processing and trading center for the mining industry, Micaville experienced an extended period of prosperity beginning in the early 1900s and continuing for several decades. The Harris Clay Company worked a kaolin mine south of Micaville, while North State Feldspar had its own mine and processing plant nearby. A second kaolin mine in Yancey County opened in 1925. Owned and operated by the Pollard Clay Company, the mine was located near Windom, approximately three miles east of Burnsville. Much of Yancey County's kaolin, regarded as some of the finest in the world, was sent to Ohio and manufactured into tiles and pipes. The output of kaolin from the two Yancey County mines was reported to be 250,000 tons per year.¹⁷ W. F. Deneen of Micaville organized a third firm, the Carolina China Clay Company in 1931, and developed a kaolin mine and refining mill on the old Bailey estate approximately halfway between Micaville and Spruce Pine.¹⁸ In addition to houses, a service station was constructed at the central intersection in Micaville in the 1930s, and a small concrete block building on the west side of Ayles Creek became the post office. In 1936, the WPA erected a new one-story stone school building in Micaville, one of five such schools that were built in Yancey County.¹⁹

The Micaville store was robbed in May 1928, one of a string of robberies in the area. The newspaper account reported that "thieves entered the Thomas Mercantile Store at Micaville" and made off with approximately \$300 worth of merchandise including men's suits, women's silk dresses, and traveling bags."²⁰ Authorities believed the same group robbed the Robertson Brothers Drug Store in Burnsville the previous night.

In 1942, the Harris Clay Company sold the store to J. L. and Hettie Robinson for \$1,000.²¹ James Leland Robinson (1907-1991) operated the store as Robinson General Merchandise and had two gas pumps located in front of the store, just inside the two metal posts supporting front canopy. It is likely that the side extension was added around this time with its storefront containing paneled double-leaf wooden doors, flanking six-over-six double-hung wood-sash windows, and flat parapet roofline. Robinson also ran the gas station that stood across the road from the general store. The Robinsons operated the store into the latter part of the twentieth century before deeding the property to their son, Thomas H. Robinson, in 1982 while maintaining a life estate.²² After the death of J. L. Robinson, his widow transferred

¹⁷ Yancey County Teacher Training Class, *History and Geography of Yancey County* (Burnsville, NC: Teacher Training Class, Yancey County, 1931), 37.

¹⁸ Brown, "Phase II Historic Architectural Survey of US 19E," 33-35.

¹⁹ "YC0015 Micaville Historic District," HPO Survey File, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

²⁰ "Rob Micaville Store; Seventh in Two Weeks," *The Asheville Times*, May 10, 1928, 16.

²¹ Deed book 89, book 435, Yancey County Register of Deeds, Burnsville, NC.

²² Deed book 190, book 301, Yancey County Register of Deeds, Burnsville, NC.

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her life estate to Thomas Robinson in 1991.²³ The current owner purchased the building from the Robinson family in 2014.²⁴

Diversification of Yancey County's economy in the twentieth century and improved transportation routes in and out of the area introduced new opportunities for residents, who have historically remained near family within the county. Significant amounts of forested acreage in Yancey County have been given over to national forests and forest conservation, and as a result, industrial production and mining have been supplemented with tourism and outdoor recreation among the important sectors of the local economy in the late twentieth century. Competition from modern gas stations, convenience stores, supermarkets, and large chain retailers has superseded the small rural stores. The few such stores that have survived into the early twentieth-first century often cater to local residents and tourists by carrying local products, crafts, and seasonal items.

Architectural Context

Rural stores, specifically those carrying a wide range of general merchandise, developed, in part, from the economic hardships of the post-Civil War period and changing labor systems. In an era dominated by small subsistence farms, entrepreneurs established community stores along principal transportation routes and provided goods and products rural families could not produce at home. Nineteenth-century stores often supplemented an owner's principal activity such as farming or operating a sawmill or grist mill. Rural stores became, by default, important community gathering places where farm families would acquire needed goods, transact business, pick up news or mail, and socialize. The stores were stocked with foodstuffs, tobacco, medicines, clothing, shoes, household goods, hardware, feed, seeds, and fertilizers. Most general stores displayed their wares on built-in counters and shelving, tables, and storage bins. Customers occasionally bartered or traded farm products for merchandise from the store, and in the case of company-owned stores associated with a local industry or business, employees were paid in scrip, or other substitute currency, that could be used to purchase goods.²⁵

Throughout the region, one- and two-story rural stores dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century typically have rectangular footprints and a front gable or parapet façade. The earliest store buildings were constructed of log, but the vast majority were frame construction with voluminous interiors and covered with weatherboards. The use of brick and concrete block increased in the early twentieth century for their fire-resistant qualities. A five-

²³ Deed book 230, book 295, Yancey County Register of Deeds, Burnsville, NC.

²⁴ Deed book 707, book 439, Yancey County Register of Deeds, Burnsville, NC.

²⁵ Heather Fearnbach, "Historic Store Context: Burke, Caldwell, Cleveland, McDowell, and Rutherford Counties" (Report for North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh, NC, April 2012), 6-8.

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county survey of rural stores in the western Piedmont section of North Carolina identified only one store finished with exterior stucco.²⁶

The Harris Clay Company General Store is among a small number of surviving rural store buildings in the area and the only general store in Yancey County to be finished with pebbledash stucco. The use of pebbledash was popularized in the first decades of the twentieth century by the work of English-born architect Richard Sharp Smith of Asheville, who came to the area in 1889 as the supervising architect for the construction of Biltmore (NHL, 1966). Following the completion of the grand estate in 1895, Smith designed more than two dozen buildings for George Vanderbilt's manorial village at the entrance to Biltmore, including residences, offices, and an infirmary, that employed pebbledash, brick accents, and half-timbered exteriors. Through the influence of Biltmore and Smith's prolific private practice, the use of pebbledash and his favored English modes of design spread beyond Asheville to the surrounding counties. Smith deployed pebbledash stucco as the primary exterior material for public buildings like the Young Men's Institute in Asheville and for houses like the Mary Mills Coxe House in Hendersonville or Teneriffe in Flat Rock. Two of Smith's three main projects in neighboring Madison County, including Dorland Memorial Presbyterian Church in Hot Springs and the J. H. White House in Marshall, were finished with pebbledash. While the use of pebbledash is most closely associated with Smith, its popularity expanded throughout the region and was picked up by others to a limited degree.

While the use of pebbledash in Yancey County was certainly rare, surviving rural store buildings in general are becoming increasingly rare. A one-story abandoned frame store at 125 Star Branch Road in the Jacks Creek section offers a unfortunate but typical example. The frame building is covered with weatherboards and is capped by a narrow front-gable roof. Two sides of the store, including the façade, are overgrown with vegetation, and the stone pier foundation at the rear of the building is failing. A metal advertising sign is visible beneath the vegetation covering the facade.

Good surviving examples of frame rural store buildings in the county include the A. O. England General Store, C.C. & Grover Ray General Store, and the J. C. Bailey Store. The ca. 1900 England Store is a two-story structure with a rock foundation, weatherboard siding, front-gable roof, and an overhanging second story that shelters the entrance. The ca. 1892 Ray Store, situated in an old logging community known as Vixen, is a neat two-and-a-half-story building with a front-gable roof, board-and-batten siding, and six-over-six double-hung windows. The recessed entrance contains double-leaf five-panel wooden doors topped by a ten-light transom. The Bailey Store, located on US 19W in the northern part of the county, is a one-story frame building resting on a foundation of wood posts. A stepped-parapet façade screens the metal-clad front-gable roof with exposed rafter tails, and the building is covered with narrow weatherboard siding. The storefront consists of a recessed central entrance bay with a single-leaf glazed-and-paneled wooden door flanked by large one-over-one double-hung windows, which are paired on the façade and single windows in the recessed bay.

²⁶ Fearnbach, "Historic Store Context," 10.

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The A. J. Edwards General Store in the Bee Log section of the county dates from the early twentieth century. Standing vacant, the two-story frame building has a stone foundation, weatherboard siding, and a steeply pitched metal-clad front-gable roof. A concrete slab stoop across the front of the store rests on a concrete block foundation. Metal advertising signs affixed to the façade are located above the central double-leaf entry doors, and the façade windows are boarded over. Ghost marks on the east elevation suggest that a one-story hip-roof addition once adjoined the building.²⁷

The O.C. Whitson Store in Green Mountain occupies a two-story brick building in a modest row of commercial buildings along the North Toe River. Built in 1927, the Whitson Store is one of the more substantial store buildings in the county and features a recessed entrance storefront. It was also severely damaged by flooding in 2024.

The Harris Clay Company General Store is a largely intact early twentieth century rural general store in Yancey County. Although impacted by flooding from Hurricane Helene in 2024, the building retains its front-gable form, recessed entrance and multi-light storefront windows, and pebbledash and half-timbered exterior. The interior preserves the original wood floors, beaded board walls, pressed tin ceilings, and built-in display shelves along the side walls. The use of pebbledash stucco on the exterior, which was popular in Asheville and across the region though rare in rural areas, distinguishes the Harris Clay Company General Store from other surviving rural stores in Yancey County. The only other recorded use of pebbledash in the county appears on the Wray Villa, located in the Price Creek valley. Built ca. 1900 for William B. Wray, the commodious two-story Queen Anne style house is covered with pebbledash and has an oversized octagonal corner tower, multi-gable roof, and wraparound porch. The dwelling was the seat of a prominent farm in the valley and operated for a time as a small resort. The Harris Clay Company General Store is a well preserved rural store significant for its distinctive form and materials.

²⁷ Bishir, et al, *A Guide*, 245.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): YC0042

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.35 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Latitude: 35.907680 | Longitude: -82.215698 |
| B. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| C. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| D. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: 17 | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: 17 | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: 17 | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: 17 | Easting: | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The eligible boundary is shown by a thick dashed line on the accompanying Yancey County tax map. The boundary encompasses the full 0.28-acre tax parcel containing the store building [PIN 0840-2070-8743] plus some additional area from the road right-of-way, which encroaches on the building. The boundary generally follows the legal parcel lines on the north, east, and west sides of the property, but the boundary is drawn beyond the parcel line on the south side to follow the edge of pavement along Micaville Loop (SR 1186).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The eligible boundary for the Harris Clay Company General Store encompasses the full parcel associated with the store and containing the historic resource. The boundary for the store, which sits close to the road, extends to the edge of pavement because the presumed 60-foot right-of-way for the state-maintained road otherwise extends into the building.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Clay Griffith
organization: Acme Preservation Services, LLC
street & number: 825 Merrimon Ave., Ste. C, #345
city or town: Asheville state: NC zip code: 28804
e-mail: cgriffith.acme@gmail.com
telephone: 828-281-3852
Date: July 30, 2026

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

The following information pertains to each of the photographs:

Name of Property: Harris Clay Company General Store
Location: 573 Micaville Loop, Burnsville, North Carolina
County: Yancey
Name of Photographer: Clay Griffith / Acme Preservation Services
Date of Photographs: September 16, 2025 (unless otherwise noted)
Location of Digital Master: Historic Preservation Office
North Carolina Division of Archives and History
109 E. Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2807

Photographs:

1. Store, façade, view to north
2. Store, east elevation, oblique view to northwest
3. Store, north elevation, oblique rear view to southwest
4. Store, north elevation, oblique view to southeast
5. Store, west elevation, view to east
6. Store, oblique front view to northeast
7. Store, storefront entrance detail, view to north
8. Store, interior, overall view to southwest from mezzanine
9. Store, interior, overall view to west
10. Store, interior, overall view to northeast
11. Store, interior, rear offices and stairs to mezzanine, view to northeast
12. Store, interior, view across mezzanine to west
13. Store, annex interior, view south to front wall

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.