

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 Property

Historic name Dunlap Mercantile
Other names/site number Dunlap Products Company; Dunlap Automobile Company
Name of related multiple property listing N/A
(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

2. Location

Street & Number: 15664 Rankin Avenue
City or town: Dunlap State: TN County: Sequatchie
Not For Publication: ☐ N/A Vicinity: ☐ N/A Zip: 37327

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☐ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

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 ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Two-Part Commercial Block

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

BRICK; GLASS; WOOD; RUBBER

Narrative Description

The Dunlap Mercantile is a two-part commercial block, built of unpainted red common bond brick and covered with a flat rubber roof. It is located at 15664 Rankin Avenue in Dunlap, Sequatchie County, Tennessee. Completed around 1899, the original rectangular plan and configuration, and iron columns are all intact. Additionally, the original storefront entrance and multiple façade windows are back in place after a 2010 restoration project. A number of interior character-defining features also remain, including a freight elevator shaft, beadboard ceiling, wooden stairway, and several lighting fixtures. The Dunlap Mercantile therefore retains its historic integrity from the Period of Significance through setting, materials, design, location, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Setting

The Dunlap Mercantile (Figure 1) sits on a less than one-acre lot in downtown Dunlap (population 5,176),¹ the county seat of Sequatchie County. The facade is bound by Rankin Avenue (Highway 127) to the west and the rear by Walnut Street to the east with buildings immediately adjacent to the north and south. Across Rankin Avenue is a large parking lot for the County Chamber of Commerce, a shopping center, and a bank. The commercial property is located in a row of other commercial buildings from the early twentieth century,

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/dunlapcitytennessee,US/PST045219> population estimate July 1, 2019.

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with little alteration to their facades over the years. The rear of the Mercantile lot features a small yard with a tree, landscaped vegetation, and sidewalk in front of a parking lot along Walnut Street. The Dunlap Community Building (NR 11/21/1994) is also at the corner of Rankin Avenue and Cherry Street, situated diagonally from the Dunlap Mercantile.²



Figure 1: Aerial photo of the Dunlap Mercantile (highlighted), TN Property Viewer parcel viewer, Vexcel Imagery 2023.

Exterior

The façade/west elevation of the Mercantile is six bays wide with a brick parapet and corbeled brick cornice. While the building is of brick construction laid in the common bond pattern, the façade is a brick veneer over wood framing. Below the cornice is a soldier brick course and two courses of protruding bricks extending across the façade with six louvered brick vents, each situated directly above a window bay. Six double-hung 1/1 wood windows stretch across the façade grouped in two sets of three with three-course row lock arches, segmental arched tops, and limestone windowsills. Artist Kat Morris completed a white and grey mural reading “The Dunlap Mercantile, est. 1894” during renovations in 2020.³ The mural is located directly above the series of double-hung windows, and below the louvered brick vents on the façade. The foundation is limestone and can be seen to the north and south of the main storefront system. The flat roofline is covered with rolled rubber and tar.

² National Register of Historic Places, Dunlap Community Building, Dunlap, Sequatchie County, Tennessee, National Register #94001337.

³ The mural artist used the date commonly used in local oral history; however, available written documentation appears to substantiate a construction date around 1899.

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At the south end of the ground level is a wood door with a single-panel window leading to the second floor with 2 transom windows hung above. To the north of this entrance, separated by a vertical section of brick, is the full primary storefront with a central, angled recessed entry and wood bulkhead with inset panel detailing. The ceiling of the recessed portion is beadboard painted white, with a single pendant light fixture hung at center. The floor is comprised of black and white penny tiles, laid there by the current property owners during the 2020 renovation. The entry door is framed by two single-panel windows on each side with aligned transoms, matching those above the door. Flanking the recessed entry are the original cast iron fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, painted black and white to match the black wood frame of the current storefront. Four single-panel windows with wood framing are also located on either side of the columns. Of note, all sixteen transom windows on the façade are vertically oriented, matching the twelve tall panes hung across the storefront. The Dunlap Mercantile previously underwent renovations in the 1960s that removed the original materials in favor of an aluminum storefront. However, the property owners saved the original material and kept it in storage upstairs. Five of the original tall glass panels are now integrated into the current windows on the ground level, reinstalled during a 2010 renovation. The others are lost and had to be replaced with appropriately similar glass. The transom windows were never removed and are all original (Figure 2). Additionally, the building also retains its six original windows on the second floor of the façade.



Figure 2: The Dunlap Mercantile Company and Dunlap Automotive Company building was a Ford dealership at one point. Circa 1930s photo provided by the Sequatchie Valley Historical Association – Dunlap Coke Ovens Museum.

The north elevation is mostly obscured by a neighboring building but has a stepped parapet that continues down to the east. The masonry walls are laid in the common bond brick pattern. There are two first floor single-light awning windows that open to the main store space, hung high on the wall. There is one 1/1 double-hung wood sash window hung to the east, opening to the interior stage area. All three windows have segmental arches with two-course row lock arches.

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A one-story brick addition (ca. 1906) in the common bond pattern with a tall parapet and flat roof is located on the rear/east elevation of the original building. This addition is painted white and includes a wooden paneled door with a small window that is used as the secondary entrance to the ground level. To the north of this door is one double-hung 1/1 wood window, with a brick rowlock arch and sill, all painted white. One other four-light vinyl window is located on the south elevation of the addition. Another point of entry into the main building is visible to the south of the central rear door, although it is covered by an arched metal covering. The first story of the brick building is painted white on this elevation, matching the addition.

The second floor of the rear/east elevation of the main, two-story building has four window bays grouped in pairs to the north and south ends of the building. The windows are 2/2 double-hung wood sash with segmental arches and three-course row lock arches. The southernmost window has a hinged metal covering. Elevator shaft equipment room sits on top of the flat roof of the building with metal coping. There is no parapet on this elevation.

The south elevation of the main two-story section of the building is not visible as it is connected via a party wall to the neighboring two-story building. The parapet is visible and stepped on this elevation of the building.

Interior

The first floor of the original block is mostly comprised of one large open retail space. The building was rehabilitated in 2020, and the original wood floors were almost entirely replaced in-kind because of severe flood damage and more than thirty years of neglect when the building was vacant. A small portion of the floors were salvaged and reused in the entry and on the raised entertainment stage added to the east side of the room ca. 2020. The walls are plaster set over brick which is visible near the baseboards since the plaster does not completely cover the walls. This is especially evident in the stage area that is located within the retail space, where the plaster is painted black with another white-painted mural by artist Kat Morris featured. This second mural reads, "The Dunlap Mercantile, Cody McCarver Stage."

The original beadboard tongue and groove wood ceiling remains throughout the space. Square, wood support columns run down the center of the ground level space in their historic locations. The original elevator equipment is situated beside the raised stage on the east side of the main ground-level room. It is locally reported as one of the oldest in the area (Figure 3). The interior storefront along the façade has a raised display area with paneled designs along the bottom bulkhead. An original wood staircase on the south side of the room leads to the second floor. There is a small powder room located under this staircase that was added during the 2020 renovation.

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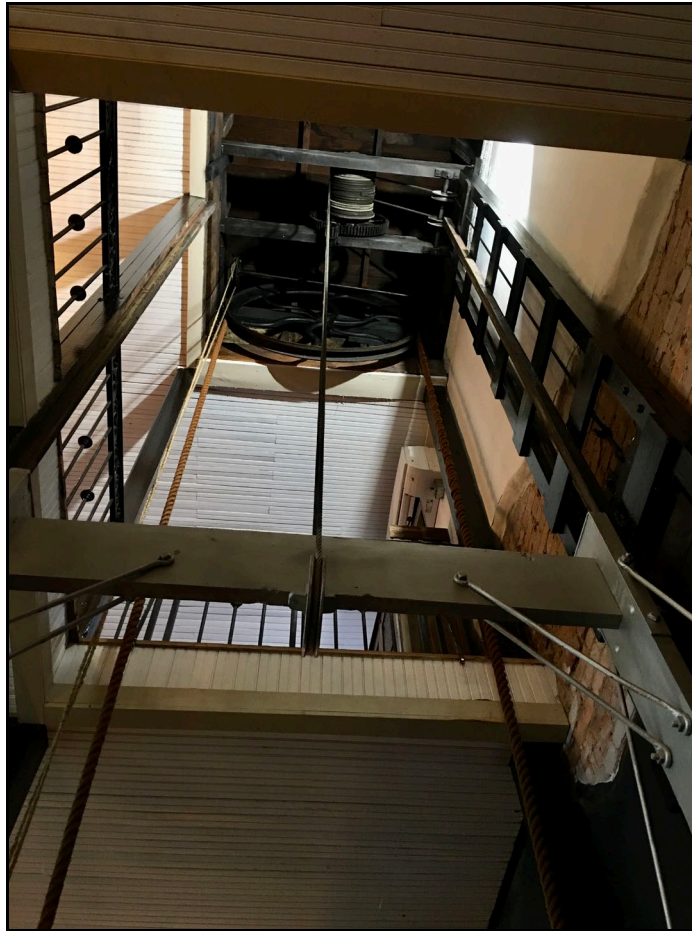


Figure 3: Interior elevator shaft with original equipment at the Dunlap Mercantile. Photo provided by the author.

An original sliding metal freight door provides access between the rear addition on the first floor and the main retail space, prominently featuring historic graffiti or markings from prior businesses. A wooden door with 2/2 window openings is located to the right of the sliding door. It is covered from the outside with a hinged metal covering. The walls in this space are of brick construction with no plaster. Upon entering the addition using the exterior door on the east/rear elevation, there is a small room with two interior doors leading to office spaces. A bathroom is also located in this space along the east side of the addition. This space was completely renovated at least two times since the end of the Period of Significance, and was historically used as horse stables, wagon storage, and an automobile mechanic shop.

The second floor of the Dunlap Mercantile interior begins with a large open space, with a sitting area behind the stairway to the east and a small kitchen area located on the west side of the room. There is a wood interior door with a fanlight directly above leading into a bathroom opposite the stairs with a second interior door continuing through into a room at the southeast corner of the building, along the rear elevation. This space is a converted bedroom with two windows and two points of entry, one door leading into the bathroom and another leading into an open kitchen space that can be seen from the stairs. Partially exposed brick walls are included in the kitchen, along with new finishes and cabinetry. The other two windows on the rear elevation are also featured here, next to the elevator shaft with original equipment surviving.

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The second-floor interior walls and ceiling are of original beadboard tongue and groove wood, and the exterior walls are plaster over brick. The interior doors on this level are wood stained brown, with painted white trim outlining the doors, fanlight, floors, and ceiling. The interior doors feature original brass hardware, including doorknobs and decorative hinges. Three kinds of lighting (gas, knob and tube, and electric) are present throughout the building. Although it was eventually brought up to code with its electric system during the 2020 renovation, the hardware for the original gas lighting and knob-and-tube wiring remains. Original hardwood flooring also remains throughout the second level.

From the kitchen space, another interior door leads to a short hallway with a closet and small powder room. This hallway bends into an L to the south, leading to two other rooms, including Homer P. Payne's original office. The windows in these rooms are located along the façade/west elevation, opposite 12-light interior doors with a series of four swinging transom windows set above in a pattern of a single light, two three-light windows, and another single light. The walls also feature a chair rail along three sides of these rooms, with the exterior wall featuring wallpaper as an accent. The hallway continues back out into the open space/foyer with the staircase leading to the first floor. There was previously an enclosed room located in the southwest corner, but a wall was removed during the renovation to open the space into a parlor. An original pot-bellied wood stove is located in the southwest corner of this room, with a vent tube running through the south wall.

Integrity

Despite several alterations and rehabilitation efforts over its more than 130-year history, the Dunlap Mercantile retains a high degree of historic integrity and continues to clearly convey its significance as a late nineteenth-century commercial building. While modifications such as within the circa 1906 rear addition, replacement of flood-damaged first-floor flooring in-kind, selective interior reconfiguration, and the addition of contemporary murals and finishes reflect the building's continued use, these changes have not substantially diminished its historic character. For example, a different storefront was installed in the 1960s with an aluminum frame, plate glass windows, and an aluminum door with sidelights. However, the renovating property owners saved the original wood frame and glass panels, keeping the material upstairs in storage. Separate property owners found the original materials and reinstalled them as the primary entrance in 2010. Five of the original tall glass panels are integrated into the current windows on the ground level, since the others broke and had to be replaced in kind. The transom windows were never removed and are all original. Additionally, the building also retains its six original windows on the second floor of the façade. The building also retains its original form, massing, brick masonry, and corbeled brick cornice, which incorporates surviving original materials from the Period of Significance. Equally considerable, numerous interior character-defining features remain intact, including the original stairway, beadboard ceilings, freight elevator and shaft, historic doors and hardware, surviving lighting systems, and original second-floor finishes. These features collectively preserve the building's integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, allowing the Dunlap Mercantile to continue conveying its longstanding role as a commercial landmark in downtown Dunlap.

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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.)

Property is:

N/A

- ☐ 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce

Period of Significance

1899-1976

Significant Dates

1906

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

The Dunlap Mercantile building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in the area of commerce for the Sequatchie Valley. The rectangular plan, two-story building was completed circa 1899, establishing it as the first brick commercial building ever constructed in Dunlap, Tennessee. Serving as a major general merchandise store for more than eighty years, it played a central role in daily life for generations of residents in the Sequatchie Valley and surrounding mountains. The Sequatchie Valley Railroad Depot was once located across the street, so freight from outside the region was easily accessible for the successful enterprise. Everything from coal and tomatoes to horses and buggies were purchased from the Mercantile. Over the decades, the building also adapted to the town's changing needs, housing at least three prominent businesses including the Dunlap Mercantile Company, Dunlap Products Company, and the Dunlap Automobile Company. The building also briefly served as the democratic headquarters for Sequatchie County and contained an Olan Mills photography studio upstairs. The State of Tennessee constructed Highway 111 from 1988-1994 and finally opened the Sequatchie Valley to more retail options, leading to a decline in business and Dunlap Mercantile's eventual closing in 1988. The Period of Significance therefore begins in 1899 with the construction of the building and ends in 1976, the current default 50-year cutoff, so chosen because the business's activities continued within the last 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Dunlap, Tennessee lies about center of the Sequatchie Valley, a narrow 40-mile-long area between the South Cumberland Plateau and Walden's Ridge. This mountainous region was the ancestral home of Indigenous Americans, although the 1835 Treaty of New Echota allowed for White settlement and led to the Trail of Tears three years later. Since then, the Valley has been steeped in agriculture and coal mining history, but the remoteness deterred many potential newcomers when horses and wagons dominated transportation. Historians J. Leonard Raulston and James W. Livingood stated of the isolation, "The Sequatchie country remained a region of scattered rural homes. The populations statistics for 1890 show: Bledsoe County, 6,100; Sequatchie County, 3,000; and Marion County, 15,400."⁴ The people who settled the Valley all gave up certain luxuries which might have been available to them in a more urban setting. But through their efforts to thrive in a remote area, they created Dunlap, named after William Dunlap of Knox County.⁵ This lively town has served as the Sequatchie County Seat since the Tennessee State Legislature enacted its founding on December 9, 1857.⁶

Several mercantile businesses existed in early Dunlap, including a dry goods store operated by prominent merchants Daniel J. Rogers and Will T. Alley.⁷ But in early 1882, Alley & Rogers dissolved, and D.J. Rogers & Sons moved into their old building. Daniel Rogers had two sons involved with the new firm, James Stewart Rogers and H. Clay Rogers. After the 1882 dissolution, W.T. Alley bought a separate business from H.T. Kell with J.A. Stewart and the firm continued in the name of Stewart & Alley out of a wood frame building along Rankin Avenue.⁸ Just a few years later, the *Southern Standard* out of

⁴ J. Leonard Raulston and James W. Livingood, *Sequatchie: A Story of the Southern Cumberlands* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), 169.

⁵ Ellen O. Hiatt, *Sequatchie Valley, A Historical Sketch* (Nashville, Tennessee: M.E. Church, 1916), p. 23.

⁶ "An Act to Establish the County of Sequatchie, in this state, and to change the county lines between the counties of Grundy and Franklin, Marshall and Lincoln, Hardeman and McNairy," *Acts of Tennessee 1857-58, Chapter II*, December 9, 1857.

⁷ They occupied a house formerly used by J.F. Smith & Company. "Rogers & Alley," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, November 10, 1880.

⁸ "Stewart & Alley," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, February 12, 1882.

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McMinnville, Tennessee boasted of the two Dunlap businesses: “Both the firms Stewart & Alley and D.J. Rogers & Son, of Dunlap, have immense stocks fresh and new from market. There are more goods now in Dunlap than perhaps at any time ever before.”⁹ *The Dunlap Tribune* followed up on October 23, 1890, that the town was still in need of a shoe shop, hardware store, and furniture store to keep up with local demand.

Citizens from Bledsoe, Sequatchie, and Marion counties knew that the valley had more potential and they coalesced around the idea of extending the Jasper rail line to Dunlap. By December 1889, the first passenger and postal train left the Dunlap Depot, once located at the northwest corner of Rankin Avenue and Cherry Street. The new line connected the small but bustling town directly with Chattanooga and Bridgeport, Alabama, carrying thirty-two passengers on the first trip.¹⁰ New business and residential opportunities abounded for the valley after this infrastructure development.

In fact, the local newspaper *Dunlap Tribune* reported on several business moves on October 23, 1890, including the J.B. Martin Harness Shop moving into “Rogers’ old store building” and Stewart & Alley’s new Store opposite the Dunlap Depot. The two Rogers brothers also went into business together with Walter Clack in 1892, occupying the Walker House.¹¹ In 1898, Stewart & Alley opened a second location in Whitwell, about 15 miles southwest of Dunlap, with the slogan “Stewart & Alley propose to do the leading business of the valley this fall and the way they propose to do it is by using plenty of printer’s ink.”¹² These large advertisements promoted the variety and cost of their stock and featured their franchise locations. This approach illustrates early marketing successes in the Sequatchie Valley after the rail line was completed. This same newspaper also reported that J.A. Stewart ran the Dunlap location and traveled with Sam B. Stewart to northern and eastern markets to buy goods for both stores.

George F. Alexander and his brother H.M. Alexander started their own general merchandise store in Dunlap during 1898, staying in business there for two years. The *Chattanooga Daily Times* reported in early 1899, “Alexander Bros. of Dunlap have purchased the store property occupied by Rogers Bros.”¹³ By then, Rogers Bros. bought out the Stewart & Alley lot on the corner of Rankin Avenue and Cherry Street” so they could “erect an up-to-date business house.”¹⁴ The *Sequachee Valley News* also excitedly reported that “Rogers Bros. and Alexander Bros. exchanged places of business last week [and] Rogers Bros. contemplate building a brick store house. Hurrah! For Dunlap, for she can then boast of not being in the backwoods. Hurrah for Dunlap! She has more business houses to her size and is still holding on through the hard times. She has seven stores, one broom factory, one planning and sawmill, one flour mill, six attorneys-at-law.”¹⁵ This is the earliest printed mention of a brick store house in Dunlap, establishing 1899 as the most probable construction

⁹ *Southern Standard* (McMinnville, Tennessee), October 10, 1885.

¹⁰ “Dunlap Accommodation, The First Through Train Arrives on Time: Great Achievement of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad Company in Affording Accommodations to Its Patrons,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, December 31, 1899.

¹¹ *Chattanooga Daily Times*, March 8, 1892.

¹² *Sequachee Valley News*, September 14, 1899

¹³ *Chattanooga Daily Times*, February 2, 1899.

¹⁴ *Sequachee Valley News*, March 16, 1899.

¹⁵ *Sequachee Valley News*, July 13, 1899.

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year for the Dunlap Mercantile. However, oral history holds that the building was finished in 1894.¹⁶

Regardless of the exact date of construction for the Dunlap Mercantile, it is evident that merchants in Dunlap worked especially hard before the turn of the century to present the town as a progressive and fast developing haven. For example, local newspapers called on local firms to be more like Stewart & Alley or Walker Moore & Company, since they repainted their prominent businesses while the Rogers Brothers worked on the brick building, and both improved the look of Dunlap.¹⁷ Unfortunately, an extensive fire started in the Stewart & Alley Dunlap location during September 1904.¹⁸ It was quickly contained but the business could not withstand the financial impact of the disaster. In 1906, Davenport Brothers, Dan C. Wheeler, and the Mountain City Mills petitioned Stewart & Alley into involuntary bankruptcy.¹⁹ Carl Everett Burrow, William Vernon Freiley, Jeremiah Tillman Walker, and Homer Perwin Payne organized around this time to buy out W.A. Moore and then Stewart & Alley's remaining property, assuming the dominant roles in the local mercantile business for the next several decades.²⁰

Criterion A: Significance in Commerce/Trade

For more than eighty consecutive years, the Dunlap Mercantile served as a general merchandise store – providing essential goods to rural residents while acting as a community hub of economic development. This was especially important for the Sequatchie Valley since the only outside shipping connections to nearby Chattanooga were either a toll road over Signal Mountain (part of Walden's Ridge), rural roads over Jones Gap or Henson Gap, or via the Sequatchie and Tennessee Rivers.²¹ But the Tennessee Valley Authority had not yet controlled the river and its infamous flooding, so water transport conditions were variable. The local *Sequachee Valley News* complained of the situation, "Twenty four miles from Chattanooga and yet the cost of transporting anything there makes the profit, your labor for your pains. O for a competing railroad or a road to the river."²² Indeed, the Sequatchie Valley Railroad was extended to Dunlap by the late 1880s but was not further extended to Pikeville until 1891.²³ Once the new rail line connected to Dunlap, the combined economic impact led to the organization of the first Sequatchie County Bank with a capital stock of \$10,000 in July 1905.²⁴

¹⁶ Oral History from James (Jim) Wyatt in a typed note to Becky Card, page 7 of the Tennessee Historical Commission National Register of Historic Places Information Packet; Henry R. Camp, *Sequatchie County*, ed. Robert B. Jones, of *Tennessee County History Series* (Memphis, Tennessee: Memphis State University Press, 1984), p. 101.

¹⁷ *Sequachee Valley News*, September 28, 1899.

¹⁸ *Sequachee Valley News*, September 29, 1904.

¹⁹ "Involuntary Bankruptcy, Petition Filed Against Stewart & Alley," *The Chattanooga News*, January 17, 1906.

²⁰ Mrs. Moore stayed involved with the business after the group bought out her husband's interest, often traveling to New York City to make purchases on behalf of the store. "Burrows is Leading Dry Goods Merchant for Thirty-Four Years," *Dunlap Tribune*, August 22, 1957.

²¹ The Connor Toll House served as the primary collection point along the route between Chattanooga and Dunlap. National Register of Historic Places, Connor Toll House, Signal Mountain, Hamilton County, Tennessee, National Register #77001273.

²² *Sequachee Valley News*, August 1, 1895.

²³ "Through to Pikeville, Sequatchie Valley Branch of the Nashville Road Completed," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, July 2, 1891.

²⁴ "Bank organized," *Sequachee Valley News*, July 20, 1905.

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Since transportation of goods was made easier by the rail line, Dunlap continued to grow. However, Daniel J. Rogers passed away in March 1906, and his sons moved away soon after.²⁵ Four prominent local businessmen then purchased the Dunlap Mercantile from bankruptcy court later in 1906, including C.E. Burrow, W.V. Freiley, J.T. Walker, and H.P. Payne.²⁶ That same year, a local newspaper made mention of the business in an editorial about several developments in the Sequatchie Valley. The winter holiday season in 1906 proved so busy, in fact, that the Dunlap Mercantile Company was noted for their frequent trips to Chattanooga to stock up on new goods.²⁷

The Dunlap Mercantile was not the only available retail option in the Sequatchie Valley when it was first constructed. The Whitwell Mercantile Company, located approximately fourteen miles south in the valley, was another prominent business. However, a devastating fire destroyed the building on July 3, 1907, along with the Bank of Whitwell, two hardware companies, and one unoccupied residence. The loss was palpable, as recorded by the local news, "We stated last week that the Whitwell Mercantile Co., would resume business in the near future, but since that time it has been decided not to do so. The business will be wound up. A receiver has been appointed and the Whitwell Mercantile Co. is a thing of the past, so far as selling goods is concerned."²⁸ While the president of that company continued to operate on a small scale out of the Odd Fellow's building in Whitwell, the Dunlap Mercantile building likely served the needs of residents who lost access to the only other major general store in the valley. Its proximity to the Sequatchie Valley Railroad Depot on Rankin Avenue further allowed the company to become regionally competitive in imports and exports, despite the rural setting of the business. Dunlap's growing population led to more economic success and opportunity, and the Douglas Coal and Coke Company built the Dunlap Mines between 1902 and 1920.²⁹ This attracted more people to the area, and the Dunlap Mercantile Company kept up with demand. The business was even represented and acknowledged at the 1912 Merchants' Transportation Association of the Nashville Board of Trade.³⁰

Physical sources at the Dunlap Mercantile document an extensive record of partnerships and business deals across the southeast. These include receipts and bookkeeping records from local partners like the Dunlap Mill Company, later called the New Dunlap Mill Company, and H.A. Worley Coal Company in Whitwell. Chattanooga-based firms like the Chattanooga Feed Company, both Brooke and Trigg Candy Companies, James Supply & Hardware Company, Tom Fritts Hardware, Rogers-Bailey Hardware, Archer Paper Company, Sterchi Brothers Furniture Company, and Voight Brothers Druggist are all represented in the extant sources, as well. The Dunlap Mercantile was even involved in regional trade, brokering deals with the

²⁵ "Passed Away at Ripe Old Age, Mr. D.J. Rogers, Well-Known to Merchants Here, Summoned by Grim Reaper," *Nashville Banner*, March 13, 1906.

²⁶ The Standifer Family, one of the founding families of Sequatchie County, reportedly owned the building but lost it to bankruptcy. It is unclear if the Standifer Family bought the property from the Rogers Brothers, or if the 1906 bankruptcy purchase came directly from them.

²⁷ "Dunlap Doings, Sequatchie County's Capital City Is on Another Boom – Mines Are Running and Will Soon Be in Full Blast – Other New Items, *Sequatchie Valley News*, March 8, 1906; "Prosperous Country Merchants in the City Buying Goods," *The Chattanooga News*, December 6, 1906.

²⁸ "Whitwell Department Notices," *Sequatchie Valley News*, July 25, 1907.

²⁹ National Register of Historic Places, Douglas Coal and Coke Company Dunlap Mines, Dunlap, Sequatchie County, Tennessee, National Register #85001489.

³⁰ "Many Railroad Fares Refunded Visiting Buyers," *The Tennessean*, November 17, 1912.

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Cumberland Seed Company, Rothschild Manufacturing Company (furniture), White Trunk & Bag Company, and Volunteer Manufacturing Company in Nashville; Gwin Williams Grocery Company in Jasper, Alabama; Gulf Refining Company of Louisiana in New Orleans; Price & Lucas Cider & Vinegar Company and Carter Dry Goods in Louisville, Kentucky; and the Hamilton Brown Shoe Company based in St. Louis, Missouri. The records suggest the Mercantile was able to consistently offer a wide array of products, despite its rural location. These affiliations also demonstrate the substantial economic impact of the Dunlap Mercantile Company for the entire Sequatchie Valley and beyond. Rural residents enjoyed diverse products like motor oil and gasoline, Franco-American coffee, furniture, canning supplies, the newest trends in clothing and hats, and silver (see Figures 4 & 5). A 1957 *Dunlap Tribune* article also reported, “Unlike Dunlap Mercantile of today which deals strictly in dry goods the store of the early 1900s sold straight pins, cross ties, wagons, handbars, saddles and all the trimmings ... and “notions, dry good, books and shoes, and lady wear”.³¹

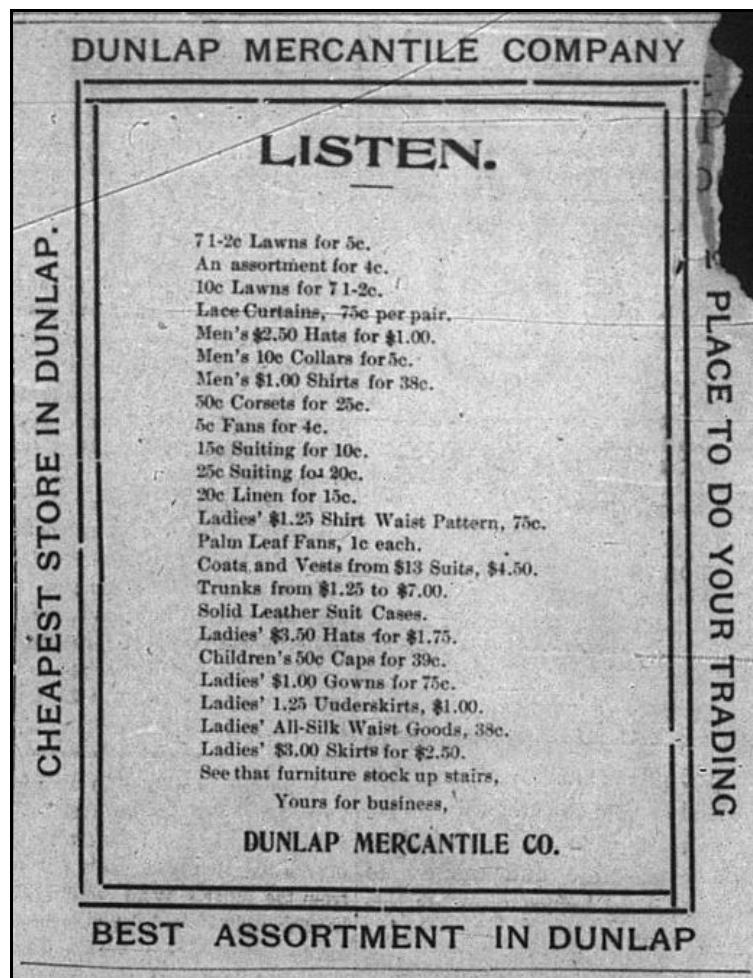


Figure 4: Dunlap Mercantile Printed Advertisement in the *Dunlap Tribune*, July 21, 1906.

³¹ “Mercantile Oldest Business from Location Standpoint,” *Dunlap Tribune*, July 4, 1957

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Figure 5: Dunlap Mercantile Printed Advertisement in the *Dunlap Tribune*, June 21, 1928.

The building not only housed diverse goods but also a variety of businesses. The rear addition of the Dunlap Mercantile was added around 1906 and was initially used as horse stables for the Dunlap Mercantile Company. Dunlap Automotive used the space for mechanic services and building kit cars. Local oral history holds that the mercantile staff also offered the surrounding rural communities with delivery service until they became too busy to do so. The same four men who pulled the Dunlap Mercantile Company out of bankruptcy also incorporated the Dunlap Automobile Company in 1921, expanding their mechanical services.³² While the Dunlap Mercantile Company flourished in the front, the building also housed Dunlap Products Company in the rear addition and upstairs, known for their service of canning “Better Brand” tomatoes in the Sequatchie Valley. A group of influential men, including W.H. Farmer, W.L Smith, C.E. Burrow, R.E. Standefer, and J.H. Hear, incorporated in 1924 with a capital of \$15,000 to charter the new enterprise.³³ S.H. Blackburn served as President, W.L. Smith as Vice President, W.H. Farmer as Secretary

³² Privilege License, State of Tennessee, Sequatchie County, Office of the County Clerk, dated March 1921 (Dunlap Mercantile Papers - Property Owner Private Collection).

³³ C.E. Burrow sold out his interest in the Dunlap Mercantile Company in 1923, opening his own store next door called “Burrow Dry Goods.” “Charters Issued by Secretary of State,” *Nashville Banner*, March 13, 1924; “Burrows is Leading Dry Goods Merchant for Thirty-Four Years,” *Dunlap Tribune*, August 22, 1957.

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and Treasurer.³⁴ Together they canned and shipped 500 acres of local tomato crop in their first season, increasing to 800 acres just one year later while also laying a sewer line improvement through the town of Dunlap.³⁵

As trade and industry flourished, the Dunlap Mercantile building continued to play a direct role in the town's growth with its tenant businesses helping fund critical infrastructure improvements that supported the community's development. In 1929, S.H. Blackburn was still serving as President of Dunlap Products, but B.R. Farmer was Vice President and Howard Payne held dual roles of Secretary and Treasurer.³⁶ Business was busy enough that Dunlap Products Company, together with Mount Airy Canning Company, was able to employ about 150 people during the 1935 season, a significant feat in the post-Depression years. The business added electricity in the late 1930s or early 1940s, according to local oral history. Extant receipts at the building reveal a network of grocery store recipients of Dunlap Products tomatoes traveling from Chattanooga to several cities and towns in Alabama and Georgia. The tin plate used for canning came from the Continental Can Company, as detailed by those same receipts.³⁷

Such success attracted economic and community development to the area but also tempted thieves. On April 19, 1917, The *Dunlap Tribune* reported that someone broke into the building, stealing some fifty dollars in the act. Law enforcement officials brought bloodhound dogs all the way from Chattanooga to find the perpetrator, although that proved unnecessary when the assailant confessed.³⁸ Then again on May 6, 1925, the *Nashville Banner* briefly mentioned the robbery, including the "goods valued at from \$3,500 to \$4,000, consisting of men's suits, silk socks, caps, shoes, tobacco, cigarettes and candy."³⁹ Dunlap Products Company eventually sold off its "new boiler, good engine, tables, cookers, trucks, buckets, crates, building, lot etc." by November 1940, with W.A. Hixson, H.P. Payne, and C.E. Burrow sitting on the sales committee. This closeout offer was in preparation for the dissolution of Dunlap Products that same year. Interestingly, a fire destroyed eighteen head of livestock and feed at a barn owned by H.P. Payne and C.E. Burrow just days later, with damages exceeding the insurance payout.⁴⁰ H.P. Payne assumed control of the Dunlap Mercantile business and building, employing family and friends while working on his own political ambitions.

Homer Payne was a member of the 56th Tennessee General Assembly in 1909 and was active in state political conventions for years.⁴¹ He also cofounded the Sequatchie County Bank and was president of that

³⁴ Ledger from The Dunlap Products Company, dated December 31, 1924 (Dunlap Mercantile Papers - Property Owner Private Collection), and "Tennessee Charters – Dunlap Products Company," *The Commercial Appeal*, March 13, 1924.

³⁵ "Many Improvements Planned for Dunlap," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, April 17, 1925; "Set Tax Rate for Sequatchie County," *Nashville Banner*, July 8, 1925.

³⁶ "Dunlap Cannery Will Be Operated This Year," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, March 8, 1929.

³⁷ Dunlap Mercantile Papers - Property Owner Private Collection.

³⁸ "Dunlap Tribune Article Reprinted," *Sequachee Valley News*, April 19, 1917.

³⁹ "Dunlap Store Robbed," *Nashville Banner*, May 6, 1925.

⁴⁰ Public Notice, *Chattanooga Daily Times*, December 1, 1940; "Cattle, Horses, Mules Die in Fire at Dunlap," *Chattanooga Daily News*, December 10, 1940.

⁴¹ The 56th General Assembly of Tennessee passed the General Education Bill of 1909, establishing state funding for one normal school for each of the three grand divisions. They also enacted a statewide ban on the production of alcohol, a full decade prior to the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. "TN Senate Bill No. 11," 1909 January 19, RG 60, General Assembly Original Bills, 36618_05, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Tennessee Virtual Archive, <https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll18/id/55>

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establishment for 20 years.⁴² Additionally, Payne used the Mercantile to serve as a county election commissioner, school commissioner, and county school board commissioner while leading the passage of the act establishing the first high school in Sequatchie County. He owned and worked out of the building until his death in April 1946, when he suffered a heart attack while on business in Nashville on behalf of the Dunlap Mercantile Company.⁴³ The Payne family went on to own the building for over eighty years, staying in business largely since retail limitations still existed until the state completed Highway 111 from 1988 to 1994.⁴⁴

Beyond its commercial use, the building also played a political role as the Sequatchie County Democratic Headquarters, hosting a Democratic Primary in 1910 with thirty-three voters participating.⁴⁵ The second floor even once supported local culture by housing an Olan Mills Photography studio during the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁶ It is further believed that the building was one of the earliest properties in the Sequatchie Valley with telephone service, a service coming from Sparta, Tennessee at the time.⁴⁷ It was such a cornerstone of the community, that J.T. Walker officiated at least one wedding there, as reported by the *Sequachee Valley News* in May 1909.⁴⁸ These multiple uses reflect the building's function as a multi-faceted space at the heart of civic life.

Jim Wyatt ultimately bought the building from Emily Payne in 1988. Vacated in that same year, the building remained unused for over three decades until Jim and Alice Wyatt partially renovated the property in 2008. They installed a new roof and renovated the rear addition facing Walnut Avenue to serve as a law office. In 2010, the Wyatts allowed Lee Construction Company to renovate 1700 square feet of the second level. They took great care to utilize and restore all original materials by rewiring old light fixtures and leaving certain unusable elements like the gas light piping. In 2016, another 1200 square feet of the ground level was renovated to expand the existing law office in the addition. The Wyatts elected to leave the freight elevator in the space intact, as it is purported to be the oldest such elevator in Southeast Tennessee.⁴⁹ The current owners, Lewie and Becky Card, bought the property in 2017 and completely renovated the building from 2017-2020. Their careful rehabilitation preserved the building's historic character while giving it new life as a retail store and event venue, ensuring the building remains a living part of Dunlap's heritage.

⁴² "Payne Re-Elected Dunlap Bank Head," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, July 24, 1943.

⁴³ "H.P. Payne Dies of Heart Attack," *The Tennessean*, April 12, 1946.

⁴⁴ "Highway Links Cookeville to Chattanooga," *The Tennessean*, December 15, 1994.

⁴⁵ Voter Roll dated May 21, 1910 (Dunlap Mercantile Papers - Property Owner Private Collection).

⁴⁶ Receipts (Dunlap Mercantile Property Owner private collection).

⁴⁷ Itemized receipt from The Gainesboro Telephone Company, dated October 1908 (Dunlap Mercantile Papers - Property Owner Private Collection); and Oral History from Community Members.

⁴⁸ "Weddings at Dunlap," Mr. Joseph Francis and Mrs. Rachel Murphy union, *Sequachee Valley News*, May 13, 1909.

⁴⁹ Oral History from James (Jim) Wyatt in a typed note to Becky Card, page 7 of the Tennessee Historical Commission National Register of Historic Places Information Packet.

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National Register of Historic Places, Douglas Coal and Coke Company Dunlap Mines, Dunlap, Sequatchie County, Tennessee, National Register #85001489.

National Register of Historic Places, Dunlap Community Building, Dunlap, Sequatchie County, Tennessee, National Register #94001337.

Oral History from James (Jim) Wyatt in a typed note to Becky Card, page 7 of the Tennessee Historical Commission National Register of Historic Places Information Packet.

“Passed Away at Ripe Old Age, Mr. D.J. Rogers, Well-Known to Merchants Here, Summoned by Grim Reaper.” *Nashville Banner*, March 13, 1906.

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Sequachee Valley News, July 13, 1899.

Sequachee Valley News, September 14, 1899.

Sequachee Valley News, September 28, 1899.

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<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll18/id/55>

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
☐	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	☒	State Historic Preservation Office
☐	previously listed in the National Register	☐	Other State agency
☐	previously determined eligible by the National Register	☐	Federal agency
☐	designated a National Historic Landmark	☐	Local government
☐	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	☐	University
☐	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	☒	Other
☐	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository: Dunlap Mercantile	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.15 USGS Quadrangle Daus 104-SW

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NAD1983

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.372016 | Longitude: -85.390198 |
| 2. Latitude: 35.371993 | Longitude: -85.390123 |
| 3. Latitude: 35.372006 | Longitude: -85.390117 |
| 4. Latitude: 35.371882 | Longitude: -85.389733 |
| 5. Latitude: 35.371764 | Longitude: -85.389780 |
| 6. Latitude: 35.371910 | Longitude: -85.390244 |

Verbal Boundary Description

The Mercantile building extends forty (40) feet along Rankin Ave (US HWY 127) to the west and by adjacent buildings to the north and south. The rear of the property extends forty-three (43) feet along Walnut Street to the east. The north side of the boundary features a slight jog. The boundary matches the parcel lines for Sequatchie County Parcel ID 048E G 016.00.

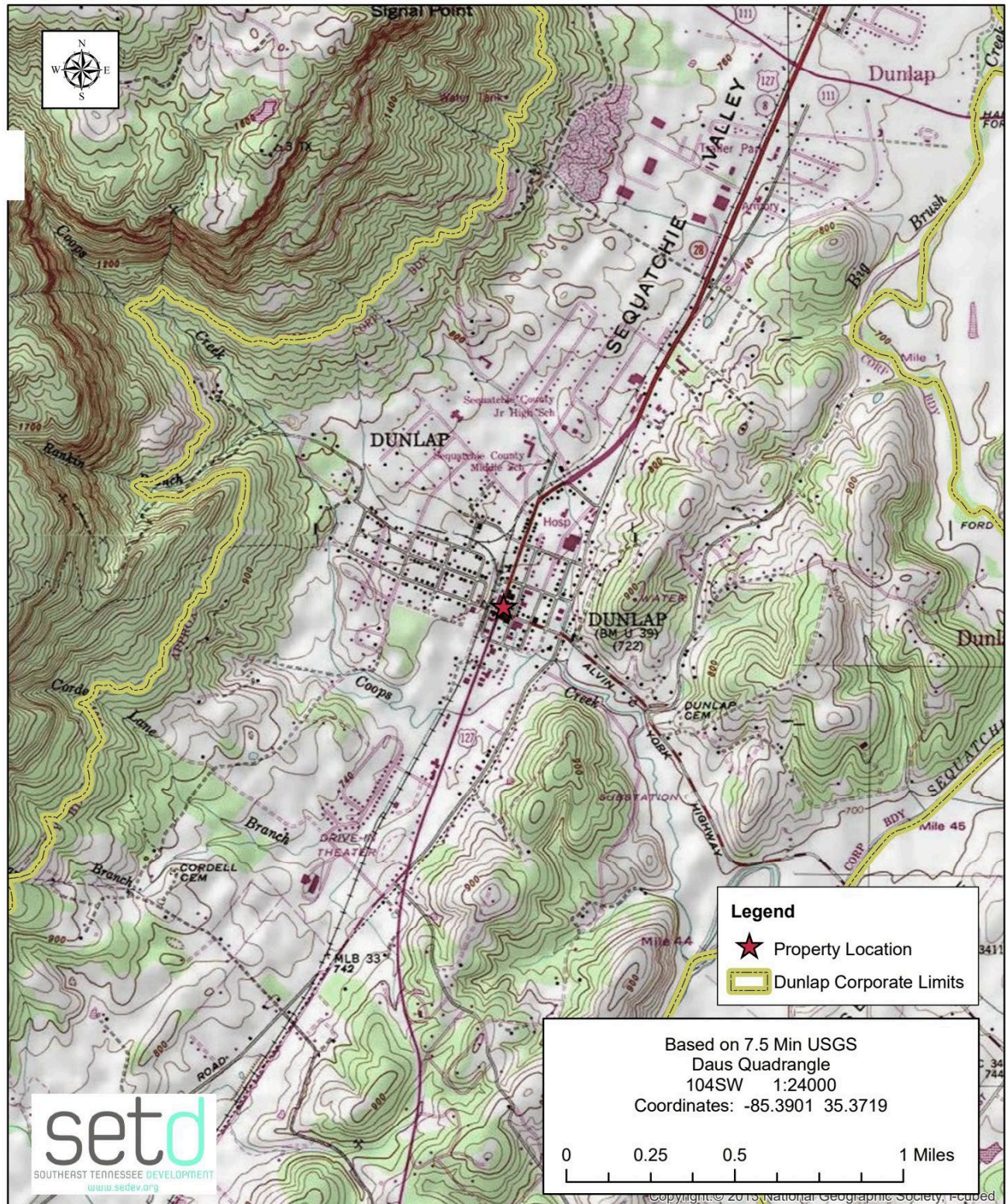
Boundary Justification

The boundary lines were chosen to follow the current and original plat boundaries, unchanged from the period of significance.

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Topographic Map



Dunlap Mercantile
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Boundary Map



Dunlap Mercantile
Name of Property

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11. Form Prepared By

Name	Stefanie Haire		
Organization	Southeast Tennessee Development District		
Street & Number	1000 Riverfront Pkwy	Date	
City or Town	Chattanooga	Telephone	423-413-4046
E-mail	shaire@sedev.org	State	TN Zip Code 37402

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 map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

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.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Dunlap Mercantile

City or Vicinity: Dunlap

County: Sequatchie

State: Tennessee

Photographer: Stefanie Haire

Date Photographed: 08/12/2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 18. Façade/west elevation. Photographer facing southeast.
- 2 of 18. Façade/west elevation, oblique view of north elevation. Photographer facing southeast.
- 3 of 18. Rear/east elevation. Photographer facing northwest.
- 4 of 18. Rear/east elevation, view of secondary entrance. Photographer facing northwest.
- 5 of 18. Dunlap Mercantile storefront on façade/west elevation. Photographer facing southeast.
- 6 of 18. Interior view of ground level main room. Photographer facing southeast.
- 7 of 18. Interior view of ground level main room. Photographer facing northeast.
- 8 of 18. Interior view of elevator equipment in the ground level main room. Photographer facing east.
- 9 of 18. Interior view of ground level main room. Photographer facing northwest.
- 10 of 18. Interior view of staircase on ground level. Photographer facing southwest.
- 11 of 18. Interior view of converted office spaces in the rear addition on ground level. Photographer facing northeast.
- 12 of 18. Second level sitting area at the top of the staircase. Photographer facing northwest.
- 13 of 18. Second level hallway running parallel with the façade/west elevation. Photographer facing southwest.
- 14 of 18. Interior view of second level kitchen. Photographer facing east.

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- 15 of 18. Interior view of freight elevator equipment on second level. Photographer facing southeast.
- 16 of 18. Interior view of second level hallway running parallel with the façade/west elevation.
Photographer facing north.
- 17 of 18. H.P. Payne's Office on second floor. Photographer facing northwest.
- 18 of 18. Storage closet in second floor hallway. Photographer facing north.

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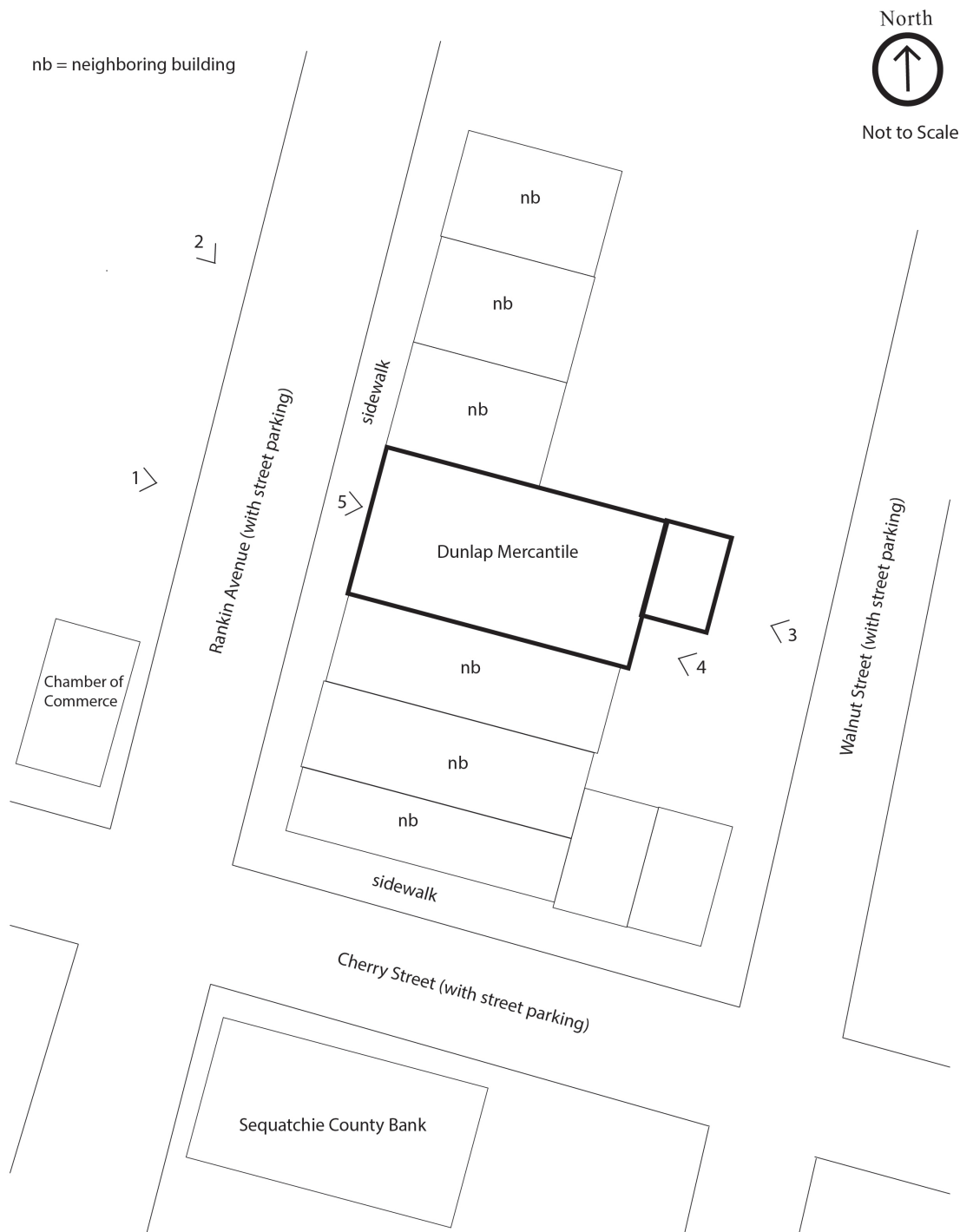
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Site Plan



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Floor Plans

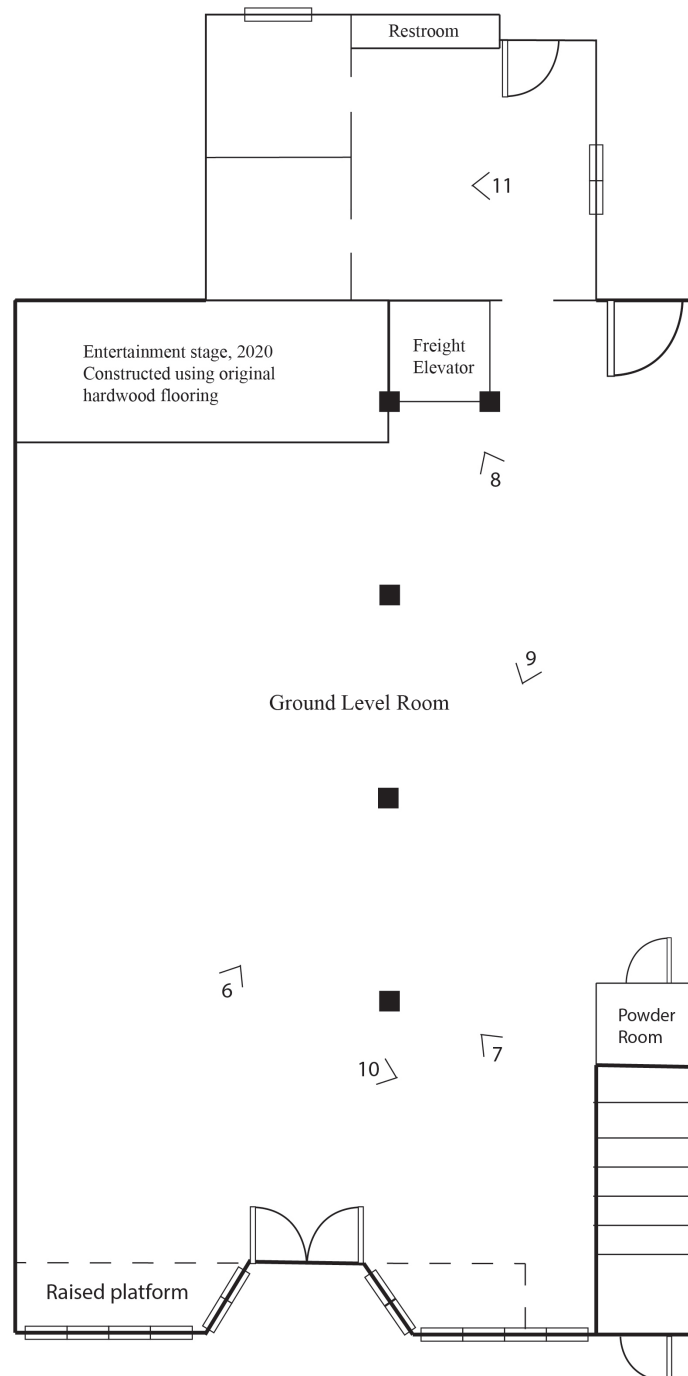
■ = support columns

North



Ground Floor
Keyed to Photos

Not to Scale



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N/A

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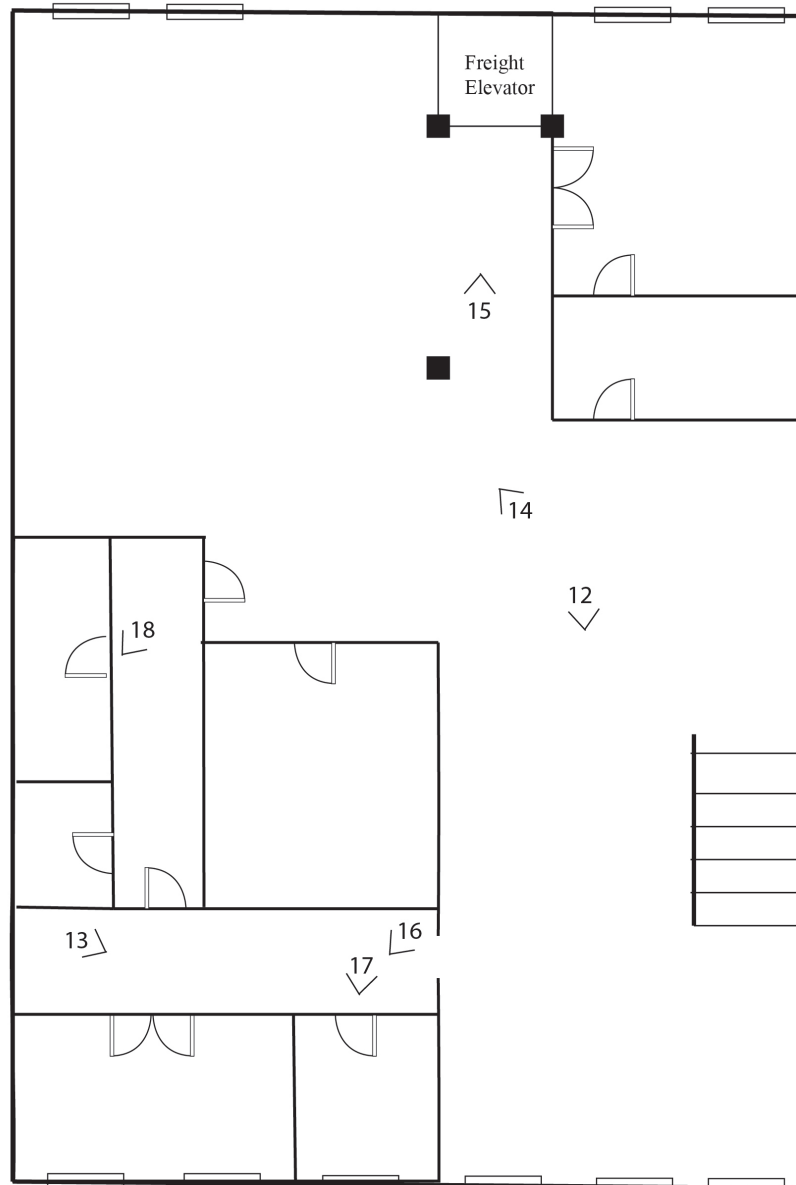
Page 30

North



Second Floor
Keyed to Photos

Not to Scale



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Figure 6: Dunlap Mercantile with woman in foreground, circa 1900. Provided by Becky Card.

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Figure 7: "Main Street in Dunlap" (1950s), Dunlap Mercantile is visible to the right. Provided by Tennessee State Library and Archives, ID 11636.

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Figure 8: 1909 Composite of the House of Representatives in the 56th General Assembly of the State of Tennessee. Homer P. Payne can be seen in the second photo from the left, five rows down.

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Figure 2: "Photograph of Jeremiah Tilman Walker and Martha Margaret Mariah Beene Walker" (undated). Provided by Tennessee State Library and Archives, ID GWmary064.

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Figure 3: Dunlap Products Company, Incorporated. From the Dunlap Mercantile Papers – Private Property Owner Collection.

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Figure 4: Dunlap Mercantile Printed Advertisement in the *Dunlap Tribune*, December 6, 1956.



Figure 5: Dunlap Mercantile Printed Advertisement, circa 1988.

Property Owner:

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

Name	Lewie and Rebecca Card		
Street & Number	317 Hatfield Lane	Telephone	423-718-3792
City or Town	Dunlap	State/Zip	<u>Tennessee, 37327</u>

DUNLAP MERCANTILE
DUNLAP, SEQUATCHIE COUNTY, TENNESSEE



1 OF 18



2 OF 18

DUNLAP MERCANTILE
DUNLAP, SEQUATCHIE COUNTY, TENNESSEE



3 OF 18



4 OF 18

DUNLAP MERCANTILE
DUNLAP, SEQUATCHIE COUNTY, TENNESSEE



5 OF 18



6 OF 18

DUNLAP MERCANTILE
DUNLAP, SEQUATCHIE COUNTY, TENNESSEE



7 OF 18



8 OF 18

DUNLAP MERCANTILE
DUNLAP, SEQUATCHIE COUNTY, TENNESSEE



9 OF 18



10 OF 18



11 OF 18



12 OF 18

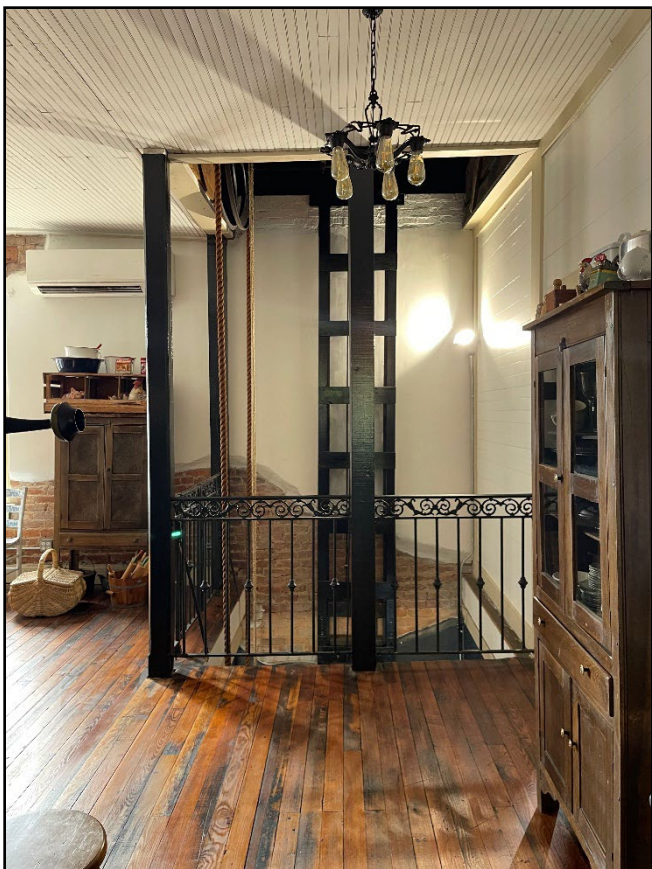


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DUNLAP MERCANTILE
DUNLAP, SEQUATCHIE COUNTY, TENNESSEE



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17 OF 18



18 OF 18