1. Name of Property

historic name: Waterford Park

other names/site number: Waterford Downs
Mountaineer Racetrack and Gaming Resort

2. Location

street & number: Box 358 State Rt. 2 not for publication N/A

city or town: Newell vicinity X

state: West Virginia code: WV county: Hancock code: 029

zip code: 26032

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 X does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally X statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Susan M. Pierce 10/29/02

Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau
Waterford Park, Hancock County, West Virginia

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
___ determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain):

_________________________  ________________________
Signature of Keeper  Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

X  private
___ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

X  building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register  0

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

N/A
Waterford Park, Hancock County, West Virginia

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
  Cat:  CULTURE AND RECREATION  Sub:  SPORTS FACILITY, RACE TRACK

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
  Cat:  CULTURE AND RECREATION  Sub:  SPORTS FACILITY, RACE TRACK

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
  Modern Movement: Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
  foundation: stone, brick, block
  roof: asphalt shingle, flat
  walls: block, wood
  other: none

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

  X  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.
Waterford Park, Hancock County, West Virginia

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 a grave.
___ D a cemetery.
___ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
___ F a commemorative property.
___ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance: (Enter categories from instructions)
Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance:
1946-1952

Significant Dates:
1949

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above):

Cultural Affiliation:
N/A

Architect/Builder:
Boyle, A. J.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
Waterford Park, Hancock County, West Virginia

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets

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 #________

Primary Location of Additional Data
  X__ State Historic Preservation Office
  ___ Other State agency
  X__ Federal agency
  ___ Local government
  X__ University
  X__ Other

Name of repository: Hancock County Public Library, West Virginia and Regional History Collection of West Virginia University Libraries, National Register of Historic Places

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 77 acres

UTM References

Wellsville Quadrangle

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Verbal Boundary Description
(See Continuation Sheet)

Boundary Justification
(See Continuation Sheet)
Waterford Park, Hancock County, West Virginia

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Barbara E. Rasmussen, Ph.D
organization: Historic Preservation and Research
street & number: 224 Wilson Avenue
city or town: Morgantown

date: July 21, 2001
Telephone (304) 292-7652
State: WV
zip code: 26501

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
Photographs:
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items
Photo Log
Historic photographs

Property Owner

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

name: Mountaineer Gaming Group, Inc.
street & number: State Rt.2, Box 358

telephone: (304) 387-8335

state: WV
zip code: 26302
Historic Waterford Park: description of the property

The former Waterford Park, now Mountaineer Racetrack and Gaming Resort is located near Newell, West Virginia, along the Ohio River, about fifty miles, by water, downstream from Pittsburgh, and about fifty miles upstream from Wheeling. It is reached by West Virginia State Route 2, a heavily traveled state highway that serves the four counties of West Virginia's Northern Panhandle along the Ohio River.

The flat terrain of the racetrack site is remarkable for West Virginia – very little of the state is flat, and those tracts that are flat generally have had a major influence on the history of their locales. Originally farmland, the site has also been an orchard and an oil field. By 1946, A. J. Boyle of Shepherdstown, acquired the site and constructed a racetrack, then called Waterford Downs, and later renamed Waterford Park.

The site that Boyle acquired in 1946 for his race track consists of approximately 186 acres between State Route 2 and the Ohio River, above a small stream, Dry Run, that empties into the Ohio River. Since the property was acquired by the Mountaineer Group, it has undergone substantial changes, except that the track, the paddock, and the grandstand are original construction. The old par-three, nine-hole golf course that Waterford Downs constructed in the 1950s has been removed to allow for expansion of Mountaineer’s hotel, theater, gaming sites, and spa. Much of the old course is now parking space. The former Mountaineer Lodge, a refurbished chain motel, is now dwarfed by a multistory hotel executed in the Neo-Art Nouveau style in 2001-02. The historic core of the racetrack—the grandstand, paddock, and track—survives with very few changes.

Modern requirements of the racing industry and changing environmental regulations have led to replacement of many of the original ancillary racetrack structures, though in most cases, they were rebuilt on the original sites. Although they are not historic, their function is essential to an appreciation of how a racing facility operates. The personality of a racetrack is highly influenced by these buildings that are out of the public eye. Fire concerns, waste management, and river water quality have led to the reconstruction of the barns area, a fenced and heavily secured portion of the track that is not available to the public. Federal law requires that not one drop of water from the track may enter the Ohio River before it is treated. There are 28 barn buildings of cinder block in this area, and one shipping barn, constructed of wood, that houses skittish new horses until they calm down. Wood does not injure hooves of kicking and rearing animals.

A world unto itself, the barns are home to the trainers who rent them. Their barn areas are decorated and painted in their corporate colors. There are mechanics’ sheds, garages, and offices. Anomalous hanging flower baskets soften the institutional look of the complex, which is not unlike a military base in its utilitarian architecture and over all “feel.” All of these buildings are constructed of fireproof block, with metal roofs.

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¹Newell is an unincorporated community served by the Chester, WV post office.
Historic Resources of Mountaineer Racetrack and Gaming Resort:

The Club House  Circa 1949/65  One non-contributing building
The original clubhouse was nearly destroyed by fire in 1963. It was three stories tall in the back, and two stories in the front. The second level contained a dining hall decorated in marble, and the third floor housed a penthouse where track owner James Edwards lived. The design, now lost, was in a similar Moderne theme as the grandstand. The blaze caused a half a million dollars in damages. The renovations that followed were completed in 1965, and altered the historic design. The new clubhouse connects to the grandstand and houses racing officials, corporate offices, and a multi-tiered restaurant overlooking the track. Not considered eligible due to modern alterations.

The Grandstand  Circa 1949/65  One contributing building
Constructed of block, brick, glass, and stucco in the Moderne Style. The grandstand was weatherized in the mid-1960s. It adjoins the paddock via a gangway. Red brick trim cleanly adorns the edges of the stuccoed block structure giving it a very strong line and sturdy “feel” that is reminiscent of 1940s commercial architecture. Capacity is approximately 8,000 seats, with additional standing room only areas. Concession areas are enclosed behind the grandstands. A covered gangway to the paddock allows race fans to watch from a glassed-in observation deck the race preparations, below.

The Paddock  Circa 1949  One contributing building
Constructed of wood, metal, and glass, the paddock is an octagonal array of stalls, narrow at the center, and wider at the bottom, with a pyramidal roof. It is floored in sand. In this place, horses are saddled for their races. Circa 1949. Observers above can watch through plate glass windows from the observation deck. From the paddock, the horses are led to an outdoor arena, where they are mounted by their riders and then led to the starting gate.

The Racetrack  Circa 1949  One contributing structure
Constructed of graded sand and grass. The sand track is one mile long and the grass track is six furlongs. Both feature banked turns and straight stretches. The grass track is the only one in the state of West Virginia.

The Tote Board  Circa 1995  One non-contributing structure
The tote board, where racing odds are computed, is located in the center of the track, which is a large grassy field. This brick structure with modest turrets at each end is low and narrow. West Virginia Racing Commission regulations forbid photographing the building. Not considered eligible due to recent construction.
Waterford Park, statement of significance

Two buildings and one structure associated with the former Waterford Park are historically significant under National Register Criteria A for their association with Entertainment and Recreation. Because the enterprise has been a significant employer, it is also an important part of the economic history of small Hancock County. The grandstand, the paddock, and the race track comprise the surviving original components of Waterford Park.

In the early 1940s, Chester, West Virginia's proximity to Pittsburgh, Wheeling, and large Ohio cities proved attractive to a group of investors, led by A. J. Boyle of Charles Town, West Virginia, who acquired a large tract of land along the Ohio River for the purpose of developing a thoroughbred race track. Construction of Boyle's project was stalled by World War II, but in 1949 work began in earnest. Boyle, who was a principal owner of the Charles Town Jockey Club in Jefferson County, knew that the tract of land along the Ohio River in Hancock County was the perfect location for the "Sport of Kings." Both locales were close to the state borders, and provided access to major metropolitan areas, which would supply fans and bettors for the races. Race fan spending fattened state and local tax coffers.

Legal betting and horse racing first came to West Virginia hand in hand during the Great Depression. The Charles Town Racetrack opened its doors in December, 1933. At the time, it claimed to be the only operating track in America. Parimutuel betting is a system that curbs illegal betting and provides for cooperative wagering. It was devised by Frenchman Pierre Oller in 1870. According to the system, those who hold winning tickets divide the total amount of money bet on a race (the pool), after deductions for tax and racetrack expenses. In this way, both the state and the track profit from the betting. In parimutuel betting, the gambling public itself determines the payoff odds. If many people have bet on the actual winner of a contest then the payoff will be low, simply because many winners will divide the pool. If few bettors chose an actual winner, the payoff will be higher.

Parimutuel wagering is now the accepted betting procedure at major horse-racing tracks throughout the world. Greyhound tracks and jai alai games also use the system. Considered a major deterrent to illegal bookmaking, the modern parimutuel system depends on high-speed electronic calculators, known as totalizators or tote boards, to record and display up-to-the-minute betting patterns.

While Waterford Park was a project in West Virginia's Northern Panhandle, Charles Town is located in the state's Eastern Panhandle, culturally a very southern locale with strong rural traditions of horse racing. The town arose during the mid eighteenth century at the intersection of two roads. That fact was all that was necessary to lead to the rise of racing there. Town founder Charles Washington in 1786 donated a square to public use, and the town that bears his name became the county seat of Jefferson County. Although there are many differences between the Shenandoah Valley town of Charles Washington and the upcountry mountains of Hancock County, substantial cultural markers are common to both. The early apple orchards of Hancock County were much the same as those of Jefferson County. Industrial-development supplanted Hancock's orchards, but Jefferson's thrive in the 21st century...
Modern professional horse racing caters to a devoted cadre of racing fans who follow the sport at their favorite track, where they can watch a live race and keep tabs with several others being simultaneously broadcast. In West Virginia, the races are closely regulated by racing commissions and heavily taxed by the state. Parimutuel betting has provided about two percent of West Virginia's annual tax revenue, in addition to the income taxes paid by the four racetracks' employees. This twentieth century entertainment industry was a far cry from the local races that once graced southern county fairs and festivals. Those unregulated events ran the gamut from friendly rivalries between friends to vicious, high stakes competition.

Its early history as part of Virginia gave Hancock County many southern ways. County-based local government, court days, horse races, and prodigious cups of ardent spirits with friends is a substantial rural southern tradition. Nearly every planter and yeoman attended court day races in Virginia's early history. Those who did not were probably elsewhere betting on a cock fight instead.

The earliest Virginia races were "quarter races." They arose in county seats on court days. These events required a starter and a quarter-mile straight stretch of highway (the town's main street would do in a pinch). Victory gave bragging rights to the winning horse, the winning rider, and the winning owner. "The role of the steed as an adjunct to virile self-presentation is revealed in the endless conversations the gentry had about their horses, in which they expressed the closest identification with the animals." Philip Fithian, a contemporary observer, wrote that sometimes he felt like he heard nothing but "Loud disputes concerning the Excellence of each others Colts . . . Their Fathers, Mothers (for so they called the dams), Brothers, Sisters, Uncles, Aunts, Nephews, Nieces and Cousins to the fourth degree."

Heavy - and unregulated - betting accompanied the races then, and intensified the spectators' involvement with the contestants. Owing to a chronic shortage of currency in the colonial era, many would bet livestock, slaves, indentured servants, plantations, or crops. "Gaming, swearing, and immoderate drinking" went hand in hand with Court Day, sometimes alarming the governor. He exhorted the gentry to moderate the sport and the associated activities.

Mountaineer Racetrack and Gaming Resort, Charles Town Races and Slots, Wheeling Downs (greyhound racing), and Cross Lanes (greyhound racing.)


Isaac, Transformation of Virginia, 99.

Isaac, Transformation of Virginia, 100.
betting and drinking, explaining that they served as an example to the lower classes. By the mid 1700s, racing took on a more genteel tenor in Virginia, as the gentry began to mimic the English style. Tidewater planters slowly turned away from the violent quarter race to a longer, more regulated contest, but racing in Virginia had come to stay. All these traditions were rich and well entrenched in Virginia long before a single white settler set foot near the site of Waterford Park. Hancock County's early settlers themselves were often Virginian, or influenced by Virginians. Thus, this northern tip of the state is well imbued with essential southern cultural roots. The first establishment on Baker's Bottom was a tavern/lodge/fort that catered to the needs of the traveling public on the Ohio River in 1773.6

According to Mountaineer President and CEO Ted Ameault, the Hancock County track construction was based on high hopes in the 1950s post-war economic boom. "The postwar boom boded well for the local and national economy; thoroughbred horse racing was in its heyday; and the new Waterford was unlike anything residents of the region had ever seen before," he said. Construction jobs boosted the local economy, and the presence of the track was work opportunity for young high school graduates. The enterprise suggested that prosperity might soon come to an area that was nearly bereft of work opportunities.

The Wells High School graduating class of 1951 visited the track. Alice Mitchell, who was among that group, recalled, "The once dirt road had been blacktopped, which made the drive seem shorter and shorter. No one had any money to wager on a race, but we stood around the fence cheering for our favorite color, number, name or size of horse competing in each race. We tried to figure out the meaning of "Purse, odds, daily double," and all the unfamiliar words on the tote board. We thought we were sure of the words "win" "place" and "show," she said. "Each owner had specific colors for their jockeys to wear and the jockeys had to weigh a certain weight. They seemed extremely small." Of Mrs. Mitchell's high school class of 29 members, eight of them found work at the track. All eight are now deceased.

The track struggled financially for fifty years. It was best known as the seat of the West Virginia Derby. Initially, that contest was held at Wheeling Downs, (now a dog racing track), but it was moved to the "tri-state" Waterford Park after three years, and Wheeling Downs refocused on dog racing. The derby purse eventually reached $50,000, and brought status to the enterprise, but hard times were at hand. Thoroughbred racing in general, as well as Waterford Park, were beginning to suffer. The derby was discontinued in 1982. The track closed a year later, and jobless former employees left for work elsewhere. A series of owners between 1984 and 1988 briefly revived the track, and again reinstated the Derby with a $100,000 purse, but that also was discontinued by 1991. Famous jockeys who have ridden in the high stakes race include hall of famers Pat Day, Mickey Solomone, Angel Cordero Jr., Chris McCarron, and Steve Cauthen.

For nearly fifty years, the institution of racing was the only focus of the owners of the race track property,

6Isaac, Transformation of America, 100.
but there was much history associated with the parcel of land they owned. Modern requirements of the racing industry and changing environmental regulations have led to replacement of many of the historic racetrack structures. The grandstand has been winterized. Portions of the original grandstand, and the architecturally distinct paddock area survive in original condition, as does the track, itself. The one-mile sand track is complemented also by a six furlong grass track, the first and only such track in West Virginia.

By offering both sand and grass tracks, the facility could post races for horses trained to a specific racing surface. Many race horses are trained on only one surface or another. Some horses can run on both. In wet weather or extremely dry weather, turf is a desirable alternative to the sand track. It is not unusual for a racing evening to utilize both tracks. To those who wager on a race’s outcome, information about the condition of the turf and the sand are considerations that are weighed against other known information about a specific horse, and figured into the posted odds.

A few West Virginia county fairs once hosted racing, but that practice has largely died out -- a consequence of the state’s more industrial character in the twentieth century. The West Virginia State Fair in Greenbrier County sponsors sulky races each year at fair time, but the events are not supervised by the state, nor is betting (officially) sanctioned.

Historic uses of the land

The Rise of Agriculture in Hancock County

After the American Revolution, as part of the white advance, vast amounts of land along the Ohio River were conveyed to Jacob Nessly by the Virginia Land Office in 1784, including Baker’s Bottom, where the track is located. These lands ultimately became part of the racetrack property. Nessly came west from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and established himself as a farmer on his lands. There were very few families for many years. Nessly was the only settler for five and a half miles north of Tomlinson’s Run. He built blockhouses and planted orchards. Other settlers followed Nessly, and a rural agricultural society slowly developed along these waters of the upper Ohio River. The entire panhandle was in Ohio County at this time, although population growth soon brought new county divisions.

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8 Virginia Land Office Deed Book 48, Page 352 “and sundry other conveyances.”
9 Newton, History of the Panhandle, 414.
10 The settlers who were present above Tomlinson’s Run by 1785 were Joseph Ralston and sons Samuel and Joseph, who settled on Kings Creek in 1783-4; “Mr. Holliday” at Holliday’s Cove, 1776; George Chapman, 1782; William Chapman, near New Cumberland,
The settlers and their descendants created an economy that rested on agriculture. Wool production, diversified crops, and apple orchards were the major pursuits of farmers.

**The Discovery of Clay, and the Advent of Brick Making**

The purely agricultural tone of the region began to change with the discovery of clay banks in the northern portion of Brooke County. John Gamble opened the first clay vein along the Ohio River. Brick works soon opened rapidly all along the Ohio River in the area that ultimately became Hancock County.

Throughout the 1830s, the brick industry grew rapidly, with river transportation of bricks a major component of the industry's success. At that time, keel boats could carry a load of 20,000 bricks on a two-day voyage to Wheeling or Pittsburgh. By the end of the American Civil War, there were fourteen brick yards within a five-mile radius of New Cumberland, not including the ironstone or terra cotta factories. Their output was 6,800,000 bricks per year.

There are many coal and petroleum deposits in Hancock County, but only oil and gas have been developed to any great degree, and that was for the firing of the brick furnaces. Some one hundred Hancock wells produced 220,000 barrels of oil that were used to fire the brick works. In the late nineteenth century an oil field was developed between Newell and New Cumberland. The Turkey Foot oil pool was discovered by Bridgewater Gas Co., on King Creek, on Oct. 12, 1888. At least six of these early oil wells were located on the Racetrack property. They were developed in 1906 to provide fuel for the brick works. With the waning of the orchards, the brickyards, and the oil industry, the large parcel of land known as Baker's Bottom became available for redevelopment as Waterford Park in 1946.

1785; James Allison, 1780; William Ledlie, 1784, and Jacob Nessly, 1784. In the Wheeling area were George Lefler, John Doddridge, Benjamin Biggs, Daniel Greathouse, Joshua Baker, Andrew Sweringen, and Benjamin Tomlinson. Newton, *History of the Panhandle*, 61, 413, 414.

11Brant and Fuller, eds., *History of the Upper Ohio River Valley*, (Madison, 1890), 524.


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 1
Waterford Park
Hancock County, West Virginia

Bibliography

Primary Sources
Nessly Family Genealogy
Hancock County Deed Book K
Brooke County Deed Book 17
Virginia State Land Office Deed Book 48
Archives of Pennsylvania
Archives of the Daughters of the American Revolution
F.W. Beers. Map of the Panhandle of West Virginia, encompassing the Counties of Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, and Marshall. 1871.
Hancock County Tax Office Aerial Photographs

Interviews:

Secondary Sources


Brandt and Fuller. History of the Upper Ohio Valley. Madison: Brandt and Fuller. 1890.

1913.


Walkup, O.O. *Complete Report of the Nessly Centennial at Brooklyn, W.Va., held Thursday, September 17, 1885, Together with Interesting Historical Gleanings in Connection with the Nessly Family*. Wellsville, Ohio: A.P. Howard, 1885.


Verbal Boundary Description

The property includes three of the original elements of the old Waterford Park Racetrack. Consisting of approximately 77 acres, the area includes the racetracks, the grandstand, and the paddock area. The points of a polygon encompassing property in the Wellsville Quadrangle are:

A. Northeast corner: 17 529046E/4492356N
B. Southeast corner: 17 528964E/4491675N
C. Southwest corner: 17 528528E/ 4491716N
D. Northwest corner: 17 528775E/ 4492067N

Boundary Justification

We chose this boundary because it encompasses the remaining original historic structures associated with Waterford Park Racetrack.
Name of Property: Waterford Park
Address: Box 358, State Route 2
Town: Newell
County: Hancock

Photographer: Chuck Saus
Date: July 2000
Negatives: WV SHPO, Charleston, WV

Photo 1 of 5: View of grandstand, as seen across racetrack, camera facing west.

Photo 2 of 5: Panorama of racetrack, with grandstand in distance, camera facing south.

Photo 3 of 5: Horse barns, not included within resource count, but located nearby, camera direction unknown.

Photo 4 of 5: View of contributing, polygonal paddock building, (L), and modern, non-contributing clubhouse building, (R), camera facing east.

Photo 5 of 5: Interior view of paddock building, camera direction unknown.
Sketh Map Waterford Park
(Mountaineer Racetrack & Gaming Resort)

OHIO

Ohio River

Mountaineer Racetrack

Tote board

Yellow Creek

Grandstand, Club House & Paddock

WV St Rd 2