

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 26 1976

DATE ENTERED OCT 8 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

*WKS*  
Wilkeson School

AND/OR COMMON

Wilkeson Elementary School

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

*off WA*  
~~State Route 165~~

CITY, TOWN

Wilkeson

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3 - Donald L. Bonker

STATE

Washington

CODE

53

COUNTY

Pierce

CODE

053

**CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_\_ DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_\_ SITE

\_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC

\_\_\_ PRIVATE

\_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_ IN PROCESS

\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

\_\_\_ OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_\_ MUSEUM

\_\_\_ PARK

\_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_ OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

White River School District

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box G

CITY, TOWN

Buckley

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98321

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Pierce County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

930 Tacoma Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Tacoma

STATE

Washington

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wilkeson School is a substantial, classically-influenced structure located at the south end of the tiny village of Wilkeson. The spacious, grassy play area which surrounds the building is bounded naturally to the rear by wooded ridges. The school and the town of Wilkeson itself are sheltered by the rising slopes of Mt. Rainier to the southeast.

A two-story structure with a full, daylight basement, the school is a simple rectangle in plan. Although not an example of the style in its purest form, the school clearly shows the influence of the Neo-Classical Revival in its massing and detail. The load-bearing walls of locally-quarried, cut sandstone are laid in broken courses. The joints of the masonry have been repointed in an uncraftsmanlike fashion, apparently using a mortar with a high content of Portland cement. The sandstone itself resembles granite, being light grey in color and non-friable in texture.

The school is noteworthy as well for its bold ornamental details executed in wood. The design of these elements draws upon a combination of the Doric and Tuscan orders. A massive wooden cornice featuring heavy mutules surrounds the entire structure, and is topped by a sandstone parapet wall. The school has a flat roof which slopes gently toward the rear of the building. In a central position above the front elevation is a wood-framed bell tower sheathed with sheet copper.

The street facade of the Wilkeson School is characterized by five major bays. The central bay projects slightly forward from the plane of the wall. Two major entrances to the building are recessed behind arched structural openings in each outer bay. The entrances are further defined by generously-proportioned porticoes of wood. Doric-influenced columns on low stone walls are constructed of vertical wooden planks and have been given a slight entasis. These columns support full projecting entablatures with moulded, dentilled cornices. Above the porticoes of either outermost bay, are windows with multi-light, double sash divided vertically by sturdy wooden mullions. These windows are topped by bracketed entablatures with pediments.

The centermost bay of the street facade contains similar double sash units at each of three stories. Above the heavy cornice is a small ornamental wooden pediment which obscures the stone parapet behind it. The remaining bays of this elevation feature bands of five window units at each story. Individual window units are multi-paned, and are each divided vertically by wooden mullions. Fenestration on the side and rear elevation of the school is similarly designed. All window openings have metal lintels, most faced with stone, as well as stone sills.

The bell-tower consists of a domical vault, copper-covered, which was originally supported by a series of small wooden columns. The drum of this open cupola has since been enclosed with wood sheathing. No other alterations of major import have occurred on the exterior of the school. With the exception of deteriorated portions of the wooden cornice, the building's architectural fabric remains in sound condition.

The interior floor plan of Wilkeson School is essentially intact. Broad central hallways and rear corner staircases provide circulation. Classrooms are spacious, well-lit by generous window openings, and traditionally oriented with cloakrooms to the rear and blackboards at the front. The principal's office is situated on the main floor; cafeterias and restrooms in the basement. Fluorescent lighting has been installed in most locations throughout the school. The interior of the school building is not as well-preserved as the exterior. Some vandalism and interior alterations have occurred in the recent past.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES                      1912-1913                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Frederick Heath & George Gove,  
Architects and C.F.W. Lundberg, Architect.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Wilkeson School, constructed 1912-1913, functioned for many years as the educational center of this small and relatively isolated Mt. Rainier community. The town of Wilkeson, which dates from the 1880's, was founded upon the early development of local coal and sandstone industries. Although greatly reduced in population, present-day Wilkeson is in many ways physically and sociologically intact. The majority of its approximately 275 citizens are second and third generation residents whose grandparents attended Wilkeson School and worked the local stone quarry and coal mines.

The school building itself is an outspoken symbol of Wilkeson's former prosperity. Sturdy and imposing, the school was constructed of locally-quarried Wilkeson sandstone. The building is certainly the most monumental and permanent of the town's structures, and remains a particularly noteworthy architectural achievement within its geographic and socio-economic context.

The village of Wilkeson was named after the area's earliest journalist-entrepreneur. On a reconnaissance mission for the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1869, Samuel Wilkeson inspected and documented the region's vast coal and sandstone deposits. In 1876, the Railroad built a line from Tacoma to the Wilkeson vicinity in order to proceed with development of existing coal deposits. It was here that the Wilkeson and Tacoma Coal and Coke Company constructed the first series of coke ovens in the Pacific Coast region in 1880. By 1888, the coke industry was firmly established through the long-term lease of the coal fields by the Wilkeson Coal and Coke Company. In the meanwhile, limited operations at the sandstone quarry, approximately one mile above the present-day settlement, began in 1886.

For a number of years the town of Wilkeson consisted of a small camp located near the coal mines. The first plat was filed in the early 1890's by A. J. Hill. The village's earliest extensive building contract involved construction of ten miners' cottages. A commercial "fireproof" block was built in Wilkeson in 1908, beginning the transition from temporary frame structures to a more permanent structural fabric. Wilkeson incorporated in 1909, after which the pace of community "improvements" accelerated.

According to a special issue of the Wilkeson Record, published c. 1917, Wilkeson was a bustling community which boasted cement sidewalks, paved streets, three churches, two theatres, three public halls, a newspaper, a cigar factory, bottling works, and two bakeries. The town's population reached its peak between 1915 and 1920, having an estimated 1200 citizens in 1916-17. By 1920, the population had dropped once again to 803.

As the economic stability of the coal and coke industry has eroded, the population of Wilkeson has continued a slow decline. Clearly, Wilkeson School was constructed as the town approached the height of its economic vigor, a fact which explains its seemingly extraordinary size in relationship to the present-day population.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Minutes of Meetings of Board of Directors of School District #15. In the possession of Mrs. Betty Williams, 127 Pearl Street, Wilkeson.  
 The Northwest. May-June, 1968. "Quarrying Wilkeson's Sandstone", pp. 13-15.  
 The Seattle Times. January 9, 1972. Sunday Pictorial. "Wilkeson: Hard Rock and Hearty Men." pp. 8-13.

(continued on attached page)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 0	5 7, 2 7, 2 0	5 2 1 6	5 1 2 6	7 0 0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Florence K. Lentz - Historic Preservation Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

DATE

4/27/76

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 1128

TELEPHONE

(206) 753-4116

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Arthur M. Skolnik*

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

5/18/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

10/8/96

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

10/7/76

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The planning stages for construction of the Wilkeson School are recorded in the minutes of the Board of Directors meetings of School District #15. On March 25, 1912, the topic of a new school was first discussed. At that meeting, "Chairman Hunt was instructed to get necessary information relative to site, etc. also to see some reliable architect." The question of an appropriate site for the new school was to be taken up with Wilkeson Coal and Coke Company and with the Northern Pacific Railroad. Property for the school site was ultimately purchased from the Northwest Improvement Company for \$300.00 on October 17, 1912.

On July 1 of the same year, the Board voted to hire the architects Federick Heath, George Gove, and C. F. W. Lundberg of Tacoma to prepare plans and specifications according to their previously submitted sketches. The District determined to issue bonds for a total of \$25,000 in order to finance the construction. The issue was submitted to the voters of Wilkeson on July 8, 1912. During the summer of 1912, the school board voted to rehire H. G. Davis, principal of the previous year, at a yearly salary of \$1,260.00. The following teachers were also chosen for the 1912-1913 school term, to comprise the faculty of the new school: Anna O'Dea, Josephine Chaffee, Mary Hively, Frances Conrad, Anna H. Dadmum, and Nelle Pugh.

On August 16, 1912, the Board received bids covering the alternative construction costs for building in both stone and brick. The \$26,985 bid of contractor Dolph Jones of Tacoma, for a sandstone school house, was accepted on September 5. Four days later at a meeting of the Board it was decided to deposit \$300.00 with the Northern Pacific Railroad for the laying of a spur track to handle the shipment of construction materials. Bids were opened on December 7 for installation of heating, ventilation, and plumbing. Minutes for meetings of the Board during 1913, while actual construction was in progress, are missing from the record. The building was apparently completed during the 1913-14 school year, as no further mention of construction matters is made when the recording of Board meeting minutes resumes in April of 1914. A Wilkeson Record article of 1917 states that the building, "modern in every particular", was occupied at the time by the first eight grades, and was staffed by "a very efficient corps of teachers".

The Wilkeson School offers a well-preserved example of local, cut sandstone construction. The local sandstone deposit is the oldest and largest in the Pacific Northwest. The material was widely used throughout the region in such notable structures as the Pierce County Courthouse in Tacoma, the Washington State Capitol Buildings in Olympia, and the Vista House in Portland, Oregon. In the early decades of the century, the Wilkeson Quarry was noted for its prodigious output and for its advanced mechanical processes. Today the quarry operates much of its early machinery and is still capable of producing the elaborate architectural stonework which it manufactured in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

The Wilkeson School was closed by the White River School District in the fall of 1971, following a severe levy defeat and the opening of new middle and elementary schools. Because a Citizens' Advisory Committee has recommended that the school not be razed, the building still stands although it suffers from lack of adequate maintenance. Wilkeson School has been judged by the school district as physically unadaptable to modern school programs. The building is now leased by the Grace Church Assembly of Tacoma and is

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occupied only during the summer months as a church retreat.

In summary, Wilkeson School effectively represents the local industry which, in the early 20th Century, elevated the town to a position of considerable commercial significance within the state. The school remains as a testimony to the durability and aesthetic appeal of the local sandstone. Built in 1912-1913 at the threshold of Wilkeson's most prosperous period, the school is a tangible reminder of the town's early social, economic and industrial development.

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Stone: Ten Thousand Years Ago and Now. Muriel Cambern. Walker Cut Stone Company  
(Tacoma, 1925).

The Wilkeson Record: Industrial Number. (Wilkeson, c. 1917). pp. 23-34.