

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Virginia	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. XXI	4. APPROX. ACREAGE
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Woodrow Wilson Birthplace		
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Staunton, Virginia		
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Foundation, Mrs. H. McKelden Smith, President		
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)		

Thomas Woodrow Wilson, twenty-eighth President of the United States, was born in Staunton, Virginia. An academic career of distinction brought Wilson national attention when he became president of Princeton University. At Princeton, he championed educational reforms that made the university an influential leader. Eventually this reform leadership, particularly as to the role of the graduate school on the campus, resulted in destructive controversy. At this juncture, Wilson entered active public life with his successful campaign for the governorship of New Jersey.

Wilson was not one of the pioneers of reform; he had moved gradually from an early conservatism to emerge now as a dramatically effective political reform leader. Within a brief ten months energetic executive leadership produced reforms that made the State a practical example of the possibilities of reform. This success was all the more spectacular because New Jersey was widely regarded as one of the last strongholds of the boss-corporation system. Wilson's accomplishments also provided a powerful impetus to the movement that had already gotten under way to make him the Democratic presidential nominee in 1912.

Largely through the influence of William Jennings Bryan, a more or less clear-cut alignment of conservative and progressive groups appeared at the Baltimore Democratic Convention of 1912. Lengthy balloting seemed to be leading the convention into deadlock when the threat was broken in favor of Wilson's nomination. With the split in the Republican party favoring him, Wilson was elected by an overwhelming electoral majority, though with a minority of the popular vote.

Wilson entered the White House in 1912 as the heir of the populist-Bryan tradition, which, in turn, could be traced to a deep-rooted tradition of faith in democracy and humanitarian reform. He promptly embarked on the course of the "New Freedom."

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

Arthur S. Link, Wilson, The Road to the White House and Wilson, The New Freedom (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1947 & 1956); Charles Seymour, "Woodrow Wilson," Dictionary of American Biography, XX (New York, 1946); William E. Dodd, Woodrow Wilson and His Work (New York, 1920); William Allen White, Woodrow Wilson and Man, His Times and His Task (New York, 1924).

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

10. PHOTOGRAPHS * ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Excellent	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Museum	13. DATE OF VISIT 4/20/63
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Horace J. Sheely, Jr.</i> Horace J. Sheely, Jr.		15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE 1/15/64

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE	NAME(S) OF SITE
Virginia	Woodrow Wilson Birthplace

Item 7. Importance and Description (cont'd)...

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Extraordinary legislative triumphs soon resulted; the most important of these were the Underwood Tariff and the Federal Reserve Act. In the early autumn of 1914 the third aspect of his domestic program, creation of the Federal Trade Commission and passage of the Clayton Anti-Trust Act was realized.

The impact that Wilson had on the office of the President in achieving this legislative program is of great significance. A leading Wilson biographer, Arthur S. Link, has given an evaluation of this result.

Few men have come to the presidency with bolder schemes of leadership or made greater contributions to the development of effective national government in the United States than Woodrow Wilson. Unusual circumstances for a time enabled him to demonstrate conclusively that the President has it within his power not only to be the chief spokesman for the American people, but also to destroy the wall between the executive and legislative branches in the formulation and adoption of legislative programs. He accomplished this feat, not accidentally, but because he willed to be a strong leader and used his opportunities wisely; and historians a century hence will probably rate his expansion and perfection of the powers of the presidency as his most lasting contribution. . . . Wilson made his most significant contribution to the development of the presidency, not through exploitation of national leadership--for in this regard he merely perfected a method already highly developed by Theodore Roosevelt--but rather in the way in which he asserted and established leadership in Congress, achieved an absolute mastery of the Democratic party, and in the end fused the powers of the executive and legislative branches in his own person.

In the closing days of the first administration and from the outset of Wilson's second term, international affairs gradually demanded the major attention. Though he was determined to follow a course of neutrality and not be forced into war by any material interest or emotional wave, events gradually deepened American involvement. Finally, on March 27, following the sinking of four American ships, he made the decision. On April 2, 1917, Wilson appeared before Congress to ask a declaration that a state of war existed with Germany. On April 6, the resolution was voted by overwhelming majorities. Once in the war, Wilson was determined that the full strength of the Nation should be concentrated on victory. As a war leader he created "a national consciousness of common effort," and having selected men for the vital military and administrative posts, he never interfered with them and supported them unreservedly. These two aspects of Wilson's leadership made it

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Item 7. Importance and Description (cont'd)...

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possible for the Nation to accept emergency measures, very distasteful to American instincts but essential to victory.

Wilson's greatest contribution to victory lay in his eloquent voicing of Allied war aims. With the armistice came the height of his influence. He began then his long fight for a lasting and liberal peace. The difficulties of capitalizing on victory proved to be far greater than those involved in winning it. Wilson was not able to transform his dream of international security into fact. Still, Wilson remains "historically the eminent prophet of that better world."

The Woodrow Wilson Birthplace is a fine, two story Greek Revival mansion which was built in 1846 as the manse of the First Presbyterian Church in Staunton. The house, brick painted white, sits on a hill that permits a ground-level first floor with two stories above. There are four rooms at each level. The house is in excellent condition and is well maintained. A lovely garden and well-kept grounds are to the rear of the house facing Mary Baldwin College; this, however, was originally the front. The garden was landscaped to conform to the old pattern and was restored by the Garden Club of Virginia.

The Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Foundation acquired the home in 1933 at the successful conclusion of a campaign dating back to 1922. The Foundation has furnished the house in the period of its occupancy by the Wilsons; some of the furniture belonged to the family. A room to the rear is furnished with desks and memorabilia from Wilson's later adult years. The Birthplace is kept open to the public for a fee of \$1.00 and hostesses are on hand to offer guided tours.