

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
FEB 5 1979  
RECEIVED  
APR 20 1979  
DATE ENTERED

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

~~Delaware River Passenger Steamboat~~ <sup>e</sup> State of Pennsylvania (Steamboat)

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

Partially submerged in the Christina River at the foot of,

STREET & NUMBER

Madison Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

01

STATE

Delaware

VICINITY OF

CODE

10

COUNTY

New Castle

CODE

3  
002

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_DISTRICT

\_\_PUBLIC

\_\_OCCUPIED

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_BUILDING(S)

X PRIVATE

X UNOCCUPIED

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_PARK

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_BOTH

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_RELIGIOUS

X OBJECT

\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

X NO

\_\_MILITARY

X OTHER: Shipwreck

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Albert Heller, President, Wilmington Industrial Realty Corporation

STREET & NUMBER

Foot of Madison Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

VICINITY OF

STATE

Delaware

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

N/A

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Delaware Cultural Resource Survey; No 4041

DATE

October 1978

\_\_FEDERAL X STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	Slightly, in 1944	

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The former Wilson Line passenger excursion-steamboat State of Pennsylvania foundered at the foot of Madison Street in Wilmington when she became stuck in the muddy bottom of the Christina River in January, 1970; she remains there today.

To date, no known efforts have been made to refloat the deteriorating vessel, the hull of which leaked at the time of foundering. Although two of her four passenger decks are under water, and her wooden upper decks and housing have rotted, the heavy-grade steel hull and the steel superstructure which supports the decks should be sound.

When built in 1923, State of Pennsylvania and her identical sister ship, State of Delaware, were considered the first "new" type passenger steamboats built in the United States in many decades. Technically, both were steamships rather than steamboats because their hull-frame extended through the main deck. In the interests of fireproofing, these steamers were constructed of approximately 80% steel. Their original dimensions were 219 feet (226 overall), and 48.9 feet of beam (59.5 foot over guards), and they had drafts of 10½ feet. The "State" boats were first generation streamlined steamers that were given the highest "A-1" rating of the American Bureau of Shipping, the official U. S. rating agency.

Both before and after minor alterations in 1944, State of Pennsylvania's overall arrangement remained much the same. An engine room with a triple expansion, steam-reciprocating engine boiler, fuel oil tanks, crew's mess, and some crew quarters occupied the hull. The first or Main deck featured men's and ladies' lounges and rest rooms, purser's office, bos'ns lockers, and a soda fountain/refreshment stand. The second or Saloon deck comprised the ballroom, bandstand, a second refreshment stand and an open observation space forward. Decorated by John Wanamaker of Philadelphia in a 1920's Art-Deco style, the ballroom also served as a banquet area. The raised bandstand was formed by four "columns" which were really stack uptakes and vents. A handsome staircase featuring beautiful brass handrails, and overhead lighting fixtures in the form of ship's wheels (the Wilson Line logo), led from the main deck to the ballroom deck. The mahogany-stained, wooden-topped deck railings on the upper three decks were similar to the bar-type used on ocean ships, not the rope or wire-mesh type usually found on older steamboats. The third (Lower Observation) and fourth (Top or Hurricane) decks served as passenger observation decks; sliding-glass and frame windows are located outboard amidships. Both decks were doubly "terraced" or raised in successive steps towards the middle of the steamer, thereby helping crowds of passengers to have clear views over those seated nearest the outer railings. The top deck also featured the pilot house with officer's quarters aft, a huge stack and main mast, and a covered rear stairwell. Flag poles were located on either side outboard on this deck; also located here were life rafts and six life boats, three on each side. In the early 1930's, motion picture screens and projectors were fitted on the top deck, the first such use on steamboats.

In 1944, the State of Pennsylvania was modernized by the addition of a raked bow increasing her length by ten feet, to her current length of 236 feet. Her very tall stack was shortened and surrounded by an ocean-liner-like dummy and she was given the first coordinated whistle-light assembly ever installed on a riverboat. This device caused two lights on either side of her ship's brass whistle to blink synchronously

# 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 type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1923, 1944

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Architect: George G. Sharp, N.Y.  
 Builder: Pusey & Jones Corp., Wil,  
 Del.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The State of Pennsylvania is historically significant from many perspectives; naval architecture and technology, her special associations with Wilmington and Delaware River steamboat history, and her social significance locally, nationally, and internationally. In the area of naval architecture and technology, State of Pennsylvania's design, when new, represented an early example of steamboat "streamlining," and she remains an outstanding and rare example of the streamlined river steamboat. When built in 1923, International, Marine, Engineering, and Shipping Age, a notable marine journal, said that she (and her identical sistership, State of Delaware, marked a "distinct advance in the economics of operation and design...." and like other Wilson boats was "invariably....in advance of her time."

Designed by the famous naval architect, George G. Sharp, who specialized in the early use of streamlined architecture, State of Pennsylvania and State of Delaware were among the earliest steamboats of "uni-body" construction and they represented the ultimate in terrace-deck design. They ranked as the most powerful (2900 horsepower), the widest and tallest, single screw propellor riverboats on the East Coast. They were licensed to carry 3500 people (4000 with special permit) and designed exclusively for summer river service with an operating speed of eighteen miles per hours. State of Pennsylvania pioneered the novel use of synchronized "whistle-lights" as a navigational safety device, especially for night steaming. The two boats were the first steamboats to show motion pictures and broadcast live radio shows.

Socially, State of Pennsylvania proved to be one of the most popular riverboats ever built, having "entertained and transported" an estimated 20 to 25 million Americans during her 37 years of service from 1923 to 1960. She was a genuine "personality" on the Delaware River and at Wilmington, Philadelphia, Chester, and Riverview Park in Pennsville, New Jersey. Her ballroom saw virtually all popular American dance forms for nearly four decades, and she carried numerous noted entertainers, dance bands, and vocalists. Over the years she meant good times to millions of people who did the "Pennsylvania Polka" (her de facto theme music) in her ballroom or simply relaxed on one of her thousands of deck chairs taking in the sights on a Delaware River or Bay trip. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Crown Prince Gustof Adolf and Princess Louise, later King and Queen of Sweden, witnessed her special arrival at Wilmington on June 27, 1938, with guests for the observation of the Swedish Tercentenary, which celebrated the 300th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Swedes and Finns in America. She also carried Baltimore shipyard workers during World War II, and reopened Wilson Line's New York services in 1948. In the 1950's she became a "Little Red Floating School House" sailing out of Philadelphia on educational trips for youths.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Elliott, Richard V., Last of the Steamboats-The Saga of the Wilson Line, Cambridge, Md. 1970.  
 Gillispie, John and Robert, Frank, The Boats We Rode, New York, 1974.  
 Groh, Lynn, "Pleasure is Their Business," Ships and the Sea, summer, 1956.  
 Hardy, A. C., American Ship Types, New York, 1927.  
 "Swedes Celebrate 300 Years in America," Life, July 11, 1938.  
 Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania newspapers, various years, especially May, June, and July, 1923.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY N/A

QUADRANGLE NAME Wilmington South

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 451940 4397880  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The "State of Pennsylvania" nomination includes only the ship itself. It is tied to a dock on the site of the Wilmington Industrial Realty Corporation, at the foot of Madison Street. It is submerged in the Christina River at a point where the river is about 300 feet wide.

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 Mr. Richard Elliott, Maritime Historian, and Jean Athan, Historical Preservation Intern

ORGANIZATION City of Wilmington, Department of Planning DATE October 1978

STREET & NUMBER City/County Building, 800 French Street TELEPHONE (302) 571-4147

CITY OR TOWN Wilmington STATE Delaware 19801

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL    STATE    LOCAL X

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 [Signature]  
 TITLE Acting Director, Div. of Historical & Cultural Affairs DATE 1/29/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER DATE 4-20-79  
 ATTEST: CHIEF OF REGISTRATION DATE 4-20-79

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Delaware River Passenger Steamboat State of Pennsylvania

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with the signaling of her triple-chambered, mellow whistle. The device enhanced understanding the ship's signals when steaming at night. Other details were also changed, generally updating, and, in the opinion of many, improving her appearance. She was thought to be one of the finest, most streamlined riverboats in America after her 1944 modernization. It should be noted that her alterations did not constitute a reconstruction as was the case of other older Wilson Liners at that time.

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State of Pennsylvania was closely associated with her parent company, the Wilson Line of Wilmington, which, since it's founding in 1876, operated over one hundred river and bay steamers. (Actually, the Wilson's revived an earlier Wilmington Steamboat Company that had begun operations as early as 1814). The Wilson Line became America's largest river and bay transportation company. State of Pennsylvania was a "Wilmington boat" and featured "Wilmington, Delaware" on her stern as "home port" throughout her career.

Captain Horace Wilson and his son, Joseph S. Wilson who commissioned her, were long-time civic and commercial leaders in Wilmington. These men, in fact, were the only father and son ever to serve as mayors of Wilmington. Like them, State of Pennsylvania is part and parcel of the once-great maritime traditions of the Port of Wilmington, its shipbuilding, and steamboating industries.

Of all the noted American steamboats built in Wilmington, Delaware, once a leading ship and a steamboat building center, only four passenger steamboats remain in existence: 1) State of Pennsylvania, 2) the former Hudson River Day Line Steamer Peter Stuyvesant, built by Pusey and Jones in 1927 (sunk in Boston in early 1978 but expected to be refloated and repaired), 3) Charles E. Zimmerman, formerly Wilson Line's City of Camden, built by Harlan & Hollingsworth in 1916 and rebuilt in 1940 as Mount Vernon (now a very altered school ship at Piney Point, Maryland), and, 4) The Duchess, the ex-Wilson Liner City of Wilmington, built in 1910 and totally rebuilt as the Bay Belle in 1941 for Chesapeake Bay service (now laid up at Brooklyn Navy Yard in New York City). Of these, State of Pennsylvania has the most consistent associations with the Delaware River as the last steamboat to regularly sail the Delaware River. The career of State of Pennsylvania terminated in September of 1960 when City Investing Corporation (which had acquired Wilson Line in the 1950's) decided to end excursion operations due to falling revenues. State of Pennsylvania thus ended a tradition which began in 1809, when Col. John Stevens began operating the steamboat Phoenix between Wilmington and Philadelphia some 151 years earlier. Truly, State of Pennsylvania is the last of the Delaware River steamboats.

Today, except for deterioration of uppermost wooden decks, and likely replacement of hull plates, the vessel remains virtually intact in hull, engines, entire steel superstructure, most of decks, pilot house, smoke stacks, railings and lifeboat davits.

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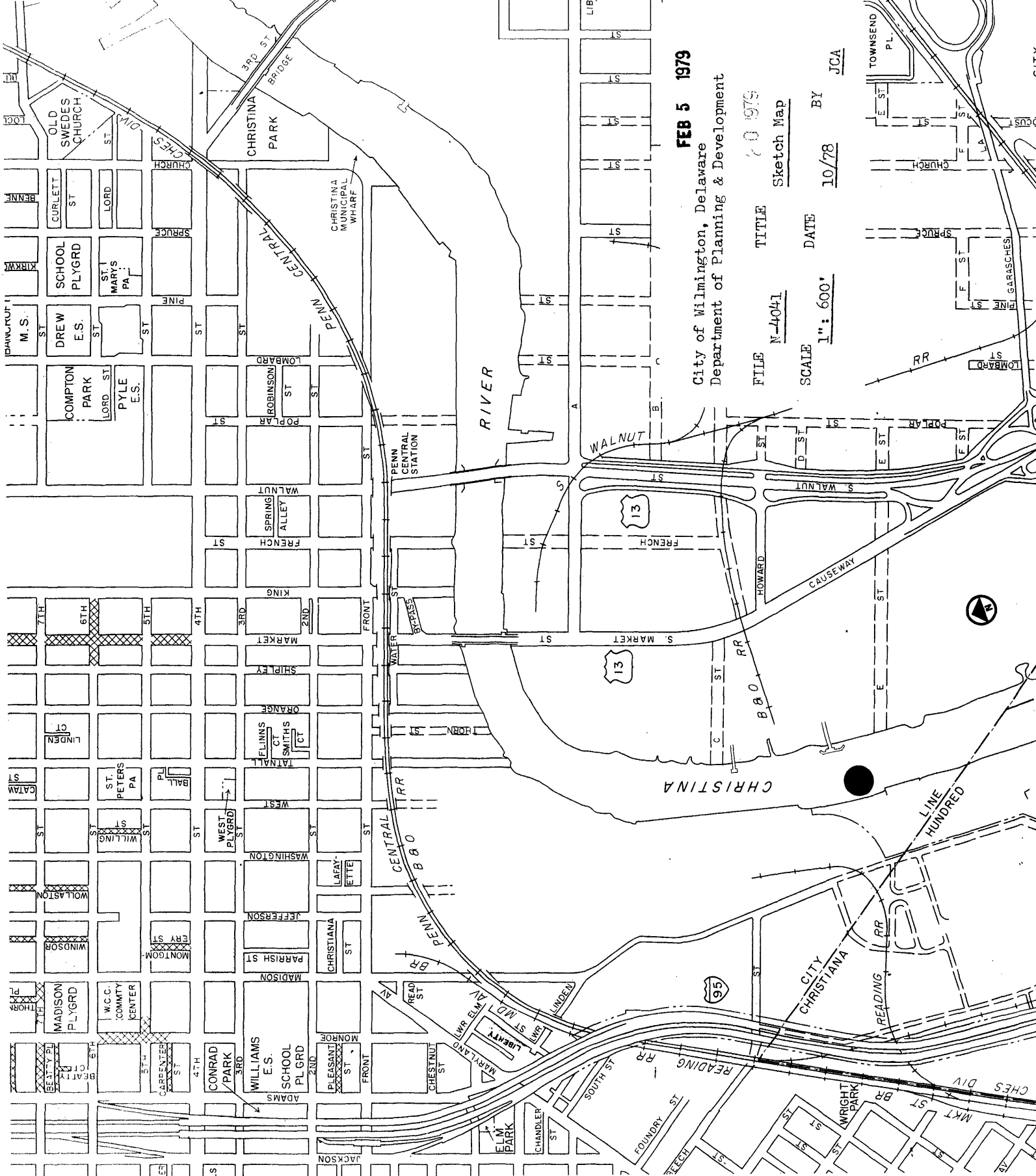
"State of Pennsylvania"

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Bibliographical References - Continued

List of Merchant Vessels of the United States, 1924 (called Merchant Vessels of the United States, 1924-to date), United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.



FEB 5 1979

City of Wilmington, Delaware  
 Department of Planning & Development

TITLE  
 Sketch Map

FILE  
 N-4041

DATE  
 10/78

BY  
 JCA

SCALE  
 1" = 600'

701979

