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# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Wilkeson Arch

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number State Highway 165 in Wilkeson at Church St. and Brierhill Blvd. - not for publication

city or town Wilkeson vicinity

state Washington code WA county Pierce code 053 zip code 98590

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Allyson Brooks 7/5/00  
Signature of certifying official Date

Allyson Brooks, PhD, State Historic Preservation Officer  
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

### 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall

8/10/00

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action



USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Property Name Wilkeson Arch

County and State Pierce Co., WA

**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.)

- 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.)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Industry

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1925-1950

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Property Name Wilkeson Arch

County and State Pierce Co., WA

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acres of property less than one acre

UTM References

1	<u>1/0</u>	<u>5/7/2/0/2/0</u>	<u>5/2/1/7/6/6/0</u>	3	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	4	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Cindy Calton, Edited by Lauren McCroskey

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 3-28-00

street & number P.O. Box 313 telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Wilkeson state WA zip code 98396

**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.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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

name Town of Wilkeson, Mayor Paula Perry

street & number 540 Church St., P.O. Box C telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Wilkeson state WA zip code 98396

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County and State Pierce County, WA

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The Wilkeson Arch is a locally recognized landmark at the western entrance to the town of Wilkeson on State Highway 165. Located thirty miles east of Tacoma, the town of Wilkeson is in the western foothills of the Cascade Mountains, situated on a sloping shoulder of Mount Rainier. The rustic arch crosses over the highway and marks the approach to the town of Wilkeson and of the Carbon River entrance to Mount Rainier.

The arch consists of two square columns and a flat wood lintel, and incorporates the regionally famous Wilkeson sandstone. The six-foot square columns, which flank Highway 165, are twenty-five feet high. At the top of the columns are two cedar bunkers. A lintel is created by a thirty-foot cedar log installed on top of the bunkers on the two sandstone columns. This cedar log was replaced in 1987 by a fir log because the cedar in the original was deteriorating. Suspended from the log was a flat cedar board sign that greeted visitors entering and leaving the town of Wilkeson. A new cedar sign was made from the old cedar log.

On the entry side, the sign reads "WILKESON COAL MINES -- WILKESON SANDSTONE" and "GATEWAY TO THE CARBON GLACIER" in the center. The exit side of the sign reads "TACOMA 30 MILES -- SEATTLE 50 MILES" and "REMEMBER WILKESON" in the center.

Bordering the arch is the old historic Northern Pacific Railroad bed, which was built in 1876 to run a branch line from Tacoma to the Wilkeson Coal Mines. Coal was discovered there in 1862 and in 1869 Samuel Wilkeson performed the geological survey for the Northern Pacific Railroad and also discovered the abundant sandstone. Following Mr. Wilkeson's 1869 account of the proposed northern route in "Wilkeson's Notes on Puget Sound," the line was completed in 1876. The town was named after Mr. Wilkeson who had also become the secretary of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1870.

The Wilkeson sandstone has also been used for the capital buildings in Olympia and many other buildings throughout the state of Washington. The Wilkeson Arch was erected in 1925 by the Wilkeson Booster Club for the estimated value of \$2,000. The Booster Club designed and paid for the arch and dedicated it on August 23, 1925, after a three-day celebration. It is estimated that this same arch today would cost \$150,000.00 to build.

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Wilkeson sandstone was first quarried in the 1870s by the Northern Pacific Railroad. It was used as a ballast in construction of the original roadbed for its railroad tracks along the Pacific Coast. The quarry and the coal mines of Wilkeson induced hundreds of immigrants to move west and seek a better life. Today many of Wilkeson's citizens are third, fourth and fifth generation residents whose grandparents and great-grandparents worked in the coal mines and the sandstone quarry.

This distinctive landmark arch has stood for seventy-five years and is historically significant as one of only four similar arches remaining in the state of Washington. The arch provides a formal entrance to the community, but also engages the historic highway access to Mount Rainier, where other rustic features and buildings are prevalent.

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The Wilkeson Arch projects the major role of a local industry, the Walker Cut Stone Company, in the early part of the twentieth century. The arch's design also embodies the rustic ideals of national park service architecture between the 1910s and 1930s, and mimics other entrance markers at nearby Mount Rainier National Park. The arch is an important segment of the historic highway route that continues to link eastern Pierce County with the Mowich entrance to the Park, and is the most visible reminder of the once-prominent stone industry.

Community Development

Although coal was first discovered in the area in 1862, it wasn't until after Samuel Wilkeson's historic survey for the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1869 that the potential deposits of coal and sandstone were realized. Coal mining began in 1873 and in 1876 the Northern Pacific Railroad built a branch line to the area from Tacoma.

Samuel Wilkeson was born in Buffalo, NY in 1817 and became a lawyer after graduating from Union College. He later became an editorial writer of the newspaper, the New York Tribune. The Northern Pacific Railroad wanted to survey the Puget Sound for a proposed route, to see if it was practicable. At the request of Jay Cooke & Co. Wilkeson quit journalism and joined the railroad as a "historian" because of his education. With his background he was able to give an account in topography, soils, climate and resources of the region in the survey of 1869. Because of the survey, known as "Wilkeson's Notes on Puget Sound," Mr. Wilkeson was elected secretary of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1870.

The Northern Pacific completed a railway in 1873 from Kalama in southwestern Washington State to the south end of the Puget Sound at Commencement Bay. Because of the inexhaustible wealth of coal in the Carbon River area, a branch line was built from Tacoma to the Wilkeson coal mines in 1877. A post office and school were established and the town was named Wilkeson, after Samuel Wilkeson. Coal from Wilkeson was a major factor in the development of the Pacific Coast. By 1879 the first mine was officially opened by the Northern Pacific and until that time had been shipped to Tacoma by wagon.

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Sandstone Industry

The nominated arch is constructed of rose-tinted Wilkeson sandstone that originates from the oldest sandstone quarry in the Pacific Northwest. Laid in a random ashlar pattern that reflects the handwork of local stonemasons, the stone material is highly durable, and will not absorb water. It is one of the region's famed construction materials and has been incorporated into many of the state's most esteemed buildings.

Sandstone was a major element in the railroad bed that was needed to operate the line to the shipping port in Tacoma. By 1888 the Northern Pacific leased land to the Wilkeson Coal and Coke Co., a subsidiary of the St. Paul & Tacoma Lumber Co. for a ninety-nine-year lease. With the importance of the coal and sandstone the company recruited people to work the mines. Immigrants by the hundreds started arriving after being offered jobs and decent housing for their families. By the 1920 census the population had grown to the extent that 82% of Wilkeson's residents were European immigrants. The ethnic groups consisted of Welsh, English, Scots, Germans, Austrians, Swiss, Swedes, Norwegians, French, Belgians, Slovaks, Italians, Poles, Croats, Finns and Russians.

John Jones opened the first store in 1877, behind the post office, and the first coke ovens in Pierce County were built in Wilkeson. Although sandstone was first quarried in the 1870s it wasn't until 1883 that Charles Wright, the ex-president of the Northern Pacific began building St. Luke's Church in Tacoma of Wilkeson sandstone. Built in 1884, this was the first substantial building constructed of Wilkeson sandstone. The Walker Cut Stone Company officially opened in 1886.

The quarry's establishment is the watershed for much subsequent community growth. On March 29, 1889 the town was platted by Joseph and Lydia Johns. Above the railroad tracks where the mines were known as "Uptown," the land was owned entirely by the Northern Pacific. Below the tracks the land was privately owned and known as "Downtown." In Uptown the company owned the hotel, a store, mine buildings, depot, post office, school and rows of miners cottages. Downtown had two saloons, a store, barbershop, hotel and many houses. By 1891, fifty new coke ovens were put in by the Wilkeson Coal & Coke Co. At this time, the population of Wilkeson was 450, enabling the establishment of social clubs such as the Valley League for baseball. Wilkeson played its first game against Buckley on July 4, 1891.



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Other developments followed. In 1894 Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church was constructed on property donated by Peter Chromoga and John Pete. By 1900 Wilkeson had thirteen saloons and a population of 1000. The Wilkeson Cemetery was established on property given by the Knights of Pythias lodge in 1904. In 1907, east of town in Section 26, Pacific Coast & Oil Wells Company opened a mine and erected bunkers and a tram to the railroad. West of town, Brierhill Coal & Coke Company moved in and opened a mine. The United Mines Workers of America organized Local #2634 and Wilkeson became part of Sub-District #3, which covered all of Pierce County.

In 1908 the Brierhill addition to town was platted and the Bank of Wilkeson opened. The town was incorporated in 1909 and T. M. Edwards was elected as mayor. The first five councilmen were Ellis Roberts, Abe Nelson, John Abraham Sr., Alfonso Angeline and John Gall. A Catholic Cemetery was established in 1910. A new school was constructed in 1913 of Wilkeson sandstone. In 1917 Wilkeson had two freight trains daily pulling 80 to 100 cars each and by 1918 the population was 5,250.

The Legislative Building, the first of the capital building in Olympia, was constructed of Wilkeson sandstone in 1922. The Wilkeson Community House was erected in 1923 and originally served as a community church. It now houses the Wilkeson Town Hall, Wilkeson Library and the Wilkeson Court. It is built with Wilkeson sandstone and the fence surrounding the front consists of used saw-blades that cut the stone.

Constructed in 1925 by the Wilkeson Booster Club, the Wilkeson Arch is emblematic of the community's industrial origins and of its close economic and recreational link to adjacent Mount Rainier National Park.

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- HALL, NANCY IRENE, **CARBON RIVER COAL COUNTRY,  
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- JACOBIN, LOUIS, **A GLIMPSE OF A CHARMED LAND 1925,  
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- WINN, BERNARD C. **ARCH RIVALS: 90 YEARS OF WELCOME  
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**PHOTOS:**

- #1 - WILKESON ARCH**  
WILKESON, WASHINGTON  
ELI HOLM  
JANUARY 2000  
WEST ENTRANCE TO THE TOWN OF WILKESON LOOKING SOUTHEAST
- #2 - WILKESON ARCH**  
WILKESON, WASHINGTON  
ELI HOLM  
JANUARY 2000  
WEST ENTRANCE TO THE TOWN OF WILKESON LOOKING SOUTHEAST
- #3 - WILKESON ARCH**  
WILKESON, WASHINGTON  
ELI HOLM  
JANUARY 2000  
WEST ENTRANCE TO THE TOWN OF WILKESON LOOKING SOUTHEAST
- #4 - WILKESON ARCH**  
WILKESON, WASHINGTON  
ELI HOLM  
JANUARY 2000  
WEST EXIT TO THE TOWN OF WILKESON LOOKING NORTHWEST
- #5 - WILKESON ARCH**  
WILKESON, WASHINGTON  
ELI HOLM  
JANUARY 2000  
WEST EXIT TO THE TOWN OF WILKESON LOOKING NORTHWEST
- #6 - WILKESON ARCH**  
WILKESON, WASHINGTON  
ELI HOLM  
JANUARY 2000  
WEST EXIT TO THE TOWN OF WILKESON LOOKING NORTHWEST