

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individuals properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and sub categories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets(form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wilson Building
other names West Jersey Trust Building ONJH Inv. #0408341

2. Location

street & number Southeast Corner Cooper St. & Broadway not for publication
city,town Camden vicinity
state New Jersey Code NJ 034 County Camden Code 007 zip code 08101

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Bank Insurance, and Legal buildings In Camden, NJ 1873-1938
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

7/11/90
Date

Acting Commissioner, DEP/DSHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. Patrick Anders
- 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:)

8/24/90
Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCIAL/TRADE/Office Building

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCIAL/TRADE/Office Building

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Neo-Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation, OTHER:Cast Stone

walls, BRICK

roof, Asphalt

other, Granite Cornice

Metal window frames

Describe present and historic physical appearance

SUMMARY

The twelve story Wilson Building, built in 1926, at the southeast corner of Cooper Street and Broadway, is a prominent landmark in busy central Camden. It is the city's first skyscraper, and is a Neo-Classical Revival design of Philadelphia architect, Leroy B. Rothschild. The long sixteen-bay side of its rectangular shape stretches along Broadway and the four bay end of the building faces Cooper Street. For two decades after its construction the building's spacious offices housed primarily attorneys and insurance agents. The building fits within property type #4, Multi-Office Buildings that are strongly associated with the insurance business and/or legal profession. The building is not fully occupied at present, but it is in good physical condition and retains most of its original fabric.

The Wilson Building is a contributing building in the National Register Nomination for the Cooper Street Historic District. As Camden's first skyscraper it rises twelve stories at the southeast corner of Cooper Street and Broadway. The building fills the entire lot on which it stands and there is no street landscaping around it.

Light colored brick and limestone cover the steel frame of this Neo-Classical Revival commercial building. Two-story stone pilasters frame storefronts that rise to the mezzanine level from the street. This makes the Broadway side of the building eight bays wide and the Cooper Street side two bays wide at street level. Each storefront window contains one large pane at the street level; above it is a tri-partite metal sash above decorated pressed metal spandrels on the second floor. A stone cornice projects slightly above the storefront level. The building has a flat roof with a low parapet; medallions and swags trim the stone cornice.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture _____

Commerce _____

Period of Significance

1926-1938

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect Builder

Rothschild, Leroy B., architect

Roberts and Roller

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY

The Wilson Building is significant as Camden's first skyscraper. Built in 1926, it was the city's largest and most luxurious office building at the time. This Neo-Classical Revival multi-office building is a design of the Philadelphia architect, Leroy B. Rothschild. The twelve story building with three high speed elevators and 150 offices had an original cost of \$1,000,000. The president of the firm that constructed the building, John O. Wilson, was one of many Camden attorneys who had offices in the new building. Although not fully occupied, the building is in nearly original condition and still dominates central Camden. The building fits within property type #4, Multi-Office buildings that are strongly associated with the insurance business and legal profession.

The mid-1920s were a prosperous time in America. In Camden, the construction of the new bridge to Philadelphia added extra optimism to the "Greater Camden" movement which envisioned an ever-expanding, ever-prosperous city. The twelve story Wilson Building, Camden's first skyscraper, was borne of this optimism. John O. Wilson, Camden attorney, was President of the Wilson Corporation which invested one million dollars in the venture. Leroy B. Rothschild, a Philadelphia architect best known for commercial buildings, created the design and the firm of Roberts and Roller did the actual construction.

Wilson, like others, saw that there would be a need for large, luxurious

See continuation sheet

9. Major Biographical References

see main bibliography

See continuation sheet

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 Specific repository _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

USGS quad Camden

UTM References

A 18 14 8 9 8 5 0 4 4 2 1 5 8 0
 Zone Easting Northing
 C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing
 D _____

see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Wilson Building stands at the southeast corner of the intersection of Broadway and Cooper Street in the City of Camden, Camden County and occupies the property legally described as Block 125, Lot 6.

see continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The Wilson Building occupies all of Lot 6 in Block 74 which is the property that has historically been associated with the building

see continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Priscilla M. Thompson, Franklyn M. Thompson

organization The History Store

street & number 827 Tatnall Street

city or town Wilmington

date June 1, 1988

telephone (302) 654-1727

state DE zip code 19801

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wilson Building

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The entrance to the office floors is in the southernmost bay of the Broadway Street facade. A decorative stone surround encloses modern glass doors and transom. The frieze contains the words "Wilson Building" and panels decorated with classical urns. Above the first floor the windows on the Broadway side are one over one double hung wood sash with brackets stone sills. The two center bays of the Cooper Street side contain paired windows of the same type, while the other two bays on this side contain similar single windows.

Throughout the interior of the upper floors, the only substantial alterations appear to be the dropped ceilings in the few offices which still remain occupied. Brass hardware still decorates many of the heavy wooden doors which hang in entrances to what were once large law firms and businesses providing a variety of financial services. Corner offices, traditionally the most sought-after and most prestigious, are more ornate in their display of architectural ornamentation. For example, the office on the northwest corner of the building on the twelfth floor is decorated with walnut or oak veneer, wainscoting, and marble floors. This office which measures approximately 20' x 20' looks directly over downtown Camden and the Philadelphia skyline less than two miles away. It would be difficult to imagine that views from any other building in the Philadelphia metropolitan area could surpass this one.

A hallway runs parallel to the Broadway side of the building, with offices on the west side enjoying an unparalleled view of the Philadelphia skyline. Offices on the east side of the building a view of the surrounding counties of South Jersey. The elevator wells, containing two out of three working units, are located in the southwest corner of the building. Each elevator appears to be in original condition with brass handrails surrounding the interior of each car. The original Otis logo is still on the floor of each car as well. At the base of the elevator shaft is a marble enclosed lobby, accessible through large glass double doors, still decorated with the original brass hardware. The stairwell is located on the south end of the building and contains a simple dog-leg staircase running from the basement to the top floors. The offices on the second and third floors have large windows looking over downtown Camden.

The Wilson Building is in good physical condition, retains a large proportion of its original fabric, and meets all the registration requirements for Property Type #4 in the multiple property nomination.

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offices for attorneys and others whose business centered around the courts and businesses of Camden, which was the financial center of south Jersey as well as a bustling industrial city. When the Wilson Building opened, a local publication boasted that it "stands out as a landmark in the progress of Greater Camden." It is still the tallest and most prominent office building in central Camden today. The first floor has shops to serve pedestrian traffic. The upper floors have 150 offices. John O. Wilson originally had his own office on the top floor which has the best view in Camden.

Prior to the mid-1920s most attorneys in Camden had their offices in small office buildings; many were converted dwellings. Although the Law and Woodruff Buildings on Market had been built specifically for use by lawyers, their amenities could not compare with those of the Wilson Building. Its Neo-Classical brick and limestone exterior was in the mode of modern office buildings in the nation's large cities. Elevators, spacious offices, and fine interior workmanship added to the prestige of a Wilson Building address. Attorneys, insurance agencies, the Camden Bar Association Library, investment firms, and real estate agents all had offices in the building, but attorneys and insurance agents were by far the most numerous tenants.

The Wilson Building is conveniently close to the Camden County Court House, Camden City Hall, banks, and other businesses. This made it an ideal location for lawyers. The city directory of 1929 indicates that the building was fully occupied at the time the Wilson Corporation sold it to the West Jersey Trust Company. West Jersey Trust formed out of a merger of two other banks and through additional mergers eventually became a part of the Camden Trust Company. City Directories and other sources often refer to this as the West Jersey Trust Building.

Attorneys and insurance agents continued to be the primary occupants of the building's offices through the period of significance for this nomination. Later the building fell on hard times and was eventually sold at sheriff's sale to its mortgage holder. Despite a low occupancy rate the building is in good condition and retains most of its original architectural features. It is Camden's best example of a large early twentieth century multi-office building and the city's first skyscraper.

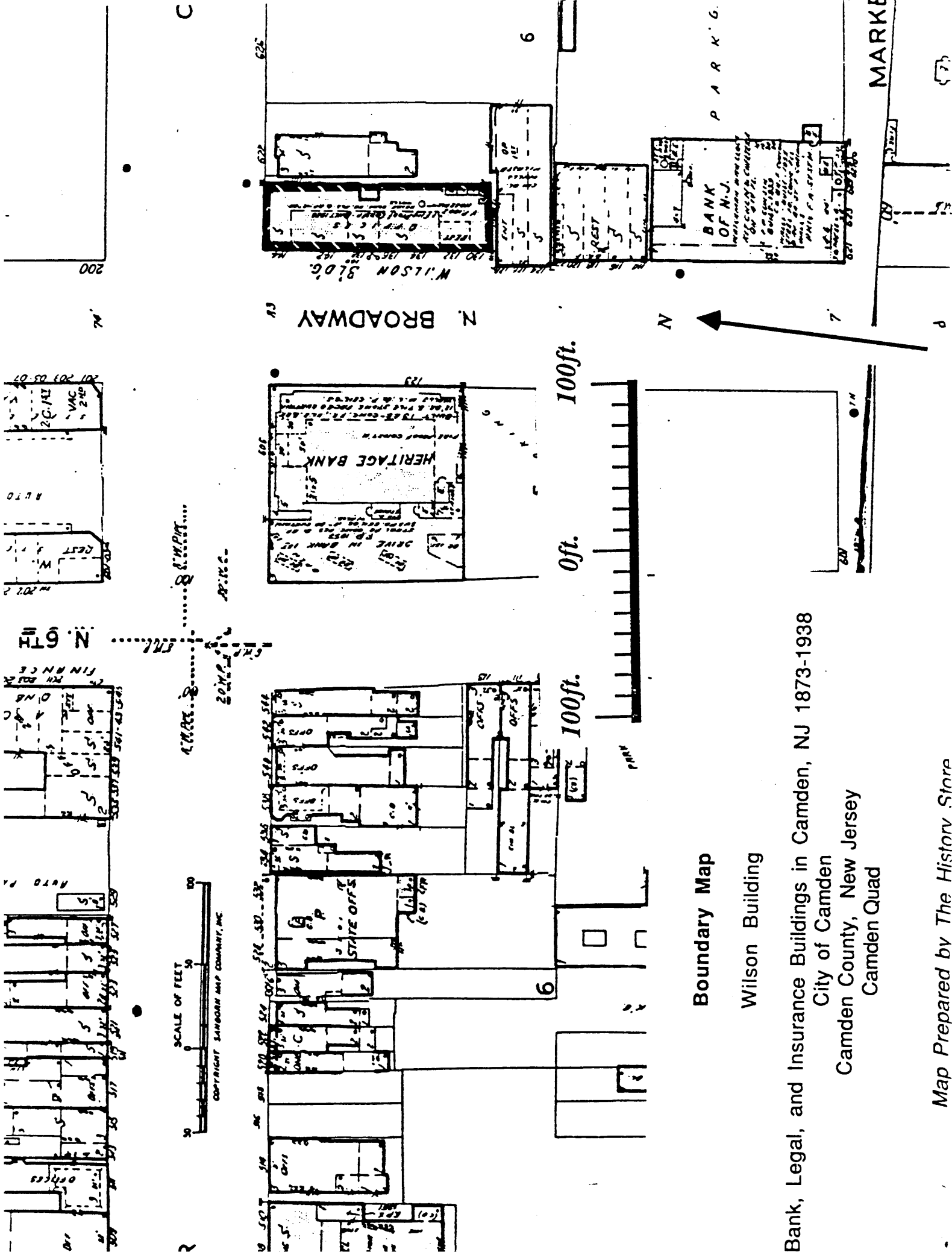
The Wilson Building was recorded in a 1980 architectural survey of Camden and is a contributing building in the National Register.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wilson Building

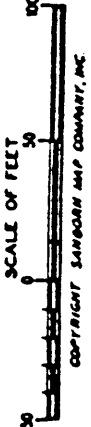
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Nomination for the Cooper Street Historic District. A 1987 survey of banks, insurance, and legal buildings in Camden further identified the building. The survey followed federal guidelines and the results are on file at the Office of New Jersey Heritage. The Preservation Planner for the City of Camden and the Office of New Jersey Heritage have evaluated the building and determined that the Wilson Building is eligible for inclusion in this multiple property nomination on the basis of its history, architecture, and integrity.



C

2



Boundary Map

Wilson Building

Bank, Legal, and Insurance Buildings in Camden, NJ 1873-1938

City of Camden

Camden County, New Jersey

Camden Quad

Map Prepared by The History Store

N. BROADWAY

WILSON BLDG.

HERITAGE BANK

STATE OFFS.

BANK OF N.J.

PARKING

MARKET

100ft.

100ft.

N

(7)