

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 15000285

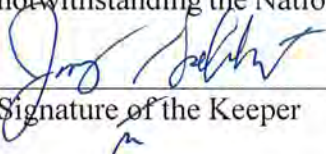
Date Listed: 6/2/2015

Property Name: Wilson Community House

County: Mississippi

State: AR

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

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

6-2-2015  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

The nomination is hereby amended to add Criteria Consideration A.

The property was utilized as a place for religious services, but its primary function and related significance lies in its use as a community building utilized for many purposes, and constructed by the company that created and maintained Wilson as a company town.

\_\_\_\_\_  
The Arkansas State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

### DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Wilson Community House  
Other names/site number: Wilson Cooperative Club Building/Wilson Club House  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 10 Lake Drive  
City or town: Wilson State: AR County: Mississippi  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide   X   local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
  X   A     B   X   C     D

Stacy Hunt 3-19-15  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.  
Signature of commenting official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title : \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

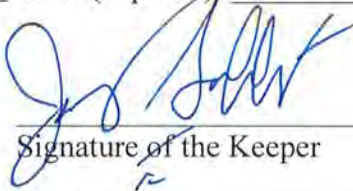
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of the Keeper

6-2-2015  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/School

RELIGION/Church

SOCIAL/Clubhouse, Civic

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/Clubhouse, Civic

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> & EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVAL/Colonial Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD/Weatherboard; BRICK;

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Built in 1906, the Wilson Community House is located at 10 Lake Drive, immediately north of the public square. It was designed in the Colonial Revival style and its façade features a hipped-roof portico with square, paired Doric-motif columns. Of frame construction, the one-story building retains much of its original fabric, including weatherboard siding and four-over-four wood-sash windows. On the interior, the building features its original floor plan along with original doors, wainscoting, and light fixtures. The interior also retains original wall, ceiling and floor finishes. It is furnished with original bookshelves, a desk which was once owned by President Woodrow Wilson, and a Steinway piano purchased for the building in 1923. The Wilson Community House possesses a high degree of integrity, retaining most of its original architectural fabric and remains in use under its historic function.

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## Narrative Description

Built in 1906, the Wilson Community House is located at the corner of Lake Drive and Adams Street in the city of Wilson, Arkansas. It faces Lake Drive to the northeast. The one-story frame building was constructed in the Colonial Revival style and has an exterior of original weatherboarding siding and original four-over-four wood-sash windows. The building has a hip roof of asphalt shingles. Its original brick and stone pier foundation is covered with a metal skirt. The floor plan is rectangular.

On the main (northeast) façade there is a one-bay portico with a hipped roof supported by paired square, wood Doric-motif columns. The entrance was originally designed with wood steps and railing but these were replaced ca. 1980 with brick steps in an elliptical design and with a wrought iron railing. At that same time, metal storm/security doors were installed over the original, five-panel, wood double doors. Above the entrance doors is a gable pediment with brackets. The portico has side walls which contain original four-over-four wood sash windows. Flanking the portico on either side are paired, original four-over-four wood-sash windows. These windows have original wooden shutters that feature a quarter moon cut-out design.

Extending from the southeast elevation of the building is an enclosed side porch, which was originally designed as an open side porch. It was enclosed with siding materials and sliding-track windows ca. 1950. On the main (northeast) façade the porch section has two pairs of six-light sliding track windows. On the southeast elevation there are four bays, from front to the back of the building: the first bay has a pair of six-light sliding track windows; the second bay is infilled with wood panels; the third bay has a pair of six-light sliding track windows; the fourth bay has a secondary entrance with block steps and an original screen door leading into a rear hallway that accesses both the porch and the kitchen on the interior. This side porch has a shed roof of asphalt shingles and exposed rafter tails.

The rear (southwest) elevation has seven original four-over-four wood-sash windows. The northwest elevation has an exterior, sloped-shoulder chimney of running-bond brick. Approximately five feet from the ground, the chimney has a basket-weave course with a soldier course above and below. The chimney is flanked on each side by a pair of original four-over-four wood-sash windows.

The main entrance opens into an open floor plan with compartmentalization in its southeast corner. The open space consists of a large sitting area centered on the fireplace on the northwest wall and a smaller sitting along the southeast wall. The flooring material of these areas is continuous, original hardwood. The walls have their original plaster finish above original wainscoting. The floor to ceiling height is just over twenty feet and the ceilings have their original beadboard finish. The large sitting area has added ceiling fans. The fireplace on the north wall is exposed brick with an arched hearth opening. Opposite this wall in the sitting area, the interior wall has original wood bookshelves.

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In the serving area there is an original metal light fixture hung from the ceiling. The original windows and doors to the now-enclosed porch are intact and visible. Leading to the porch are fifteen-light, wood double-doors. The porch, enclosed ca. 1950, has an added acoustical tile ceiling and florescent light fixtures. The porch retains its original wood floor. At the rear of the porch is a narrow passage between a rear corner entrance and the kitchen.

The Wilson Community House's kitchen is located to the center-rear of the building. It is accessed from the front serving area. The kitchen has an original wood and metal flue and original beadboard walls and ceiling. The kitchen has a floor surface of added resilient sheet flooring and replacement cabinets, added in 1960. A narrow stairwell runs up the interior wall between the kitchen and the serving area. These stairs access a small landing that overlooks the kitchen and has two small rooms that were fitted into the high ceilings. These rooms have original six-panel wood doors. They are currently used for storage. The building has a bathroom in its central portion, next to the kitchen. This half-bath retains original hardwood flooring and beadboard walls and ceiling. The bathroom fixtures are ca. 2000 replacements.

The building is sited on a rectangular lot and has landscaping consisting of several hardwood trees, crepe myrtles and boxwood hedges along the front of the building. There are no outbuildings associated with the building.

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## 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1906-1965

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1906

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Wilson Community House is significant on the local level under Criteria A and C. It is a key building in the community development of the town of Wilson, serving first as a schoolhouse and church, then for most of its life as the primary place of social gatherings, civic events, and even business meetings of the Wilson Company. Its Colonial Revival style is expressed in its exterior design with its entrance portico and efficient interior plan. The period of significance for the Wilson Community House is from 1906, the year of its construction, through 1965, the latest date of use that falls within the fifty-year rule for National Register nomination. The Wilson Community House retains a high degree of integrity in location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling. It has long been used as a gathering place in the community and continues to meet that need. A majority of its original fabric remains intact, and its design continues to express the Colonial Revival style. Its location a short distance from the public square remains a quiet setting within walking distance from the historically busy commercial/public center. The building's association with the town of Wilson remains strong as a gathering place of a closely-knit community active in civic events.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Wilson was founded as a company town by agricultural entrepreneur Robert Edward Lee Wilson (1865-1933). As a teenaged orphan, Wilson inherited 400 acres in Mississippi County, Arkansas, and expanded his holdings into a 40,000+-acre working landscape that included his eponymous company town. Harvesting timber, buying up tracts of seemingly barren wasteland, and installing drainage ditches and levees, Wilson transformed swampland into productive cotton fields. Forging his own New South business model, Wilson capitalized on innovative methods and practices in farming and finances and established a family dynasty that spanned over a century. The town of Wilson was praised as a model of Progressivism, with above average amenities for a rural community and numerous civic-minded social clubs. The Wilson Community House was at the center of social and business meetings that defined life at Wilson, the town and company.

Wilson is located in northeastern Arkansas, in Mississippi County which was established in 1833. The first population census for the county occurred in 1840, when there were 1,410 (900 white residents and 510 slaves) living in its borders.<sup>1</sup> Among the pioneers arriving in this decade was Josiah Wilson, accompanied by his wife and two daughters. In 1846, Wilson laid claim to 160 acres of cypress forest.<sup>2</sup> Residents living in the swampy delta contended with mosquito-

<sup>1</sup> "Mississippi County," at Arkansas Encyclopedia of History and Culture web page accessed January 8, 2015 <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=791>.

<sup>2</sup> "The Wilson Family," in *The Delta Historical Review*, Spring 1998, 3.

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transmitted disease, which claimed the life of Josiah Wilson's wife. Yet for many westward settlers, the prospects of fertile land outweighed the threat of disease, and Mississippi County's population increased to 2,368 by 1850. Over the next decade, cotton prices soared, and the delta lands west of the Mississippi River continued to draw new settlers. Wilson expanded his land holdings by 1850 to 900 acres, on which he raised food crops, but no cotton. Over the next decade, Wilson grew his farming operation to 2,300 acres and began growing cotton. During the same period, Wilson also increased his number of slaves from twenty-one to forty. By 1860, the county's population was 3,898, and there were 17,584 acres of land in cultivation.<sup>3</sup>

With the Civil War, Mississippi County's agriculture declined, as did the wealth of its farmers. During the 1860s, Josiah Wilson moved to Memphis, placing his son-in-law Napoleon Lafont in charge of operations at his Arkansas plantation. Wilson died in 1870 without a will in place, leaving his heirs to divide his assets. His youngest son, Robert Edward Lee Wilson, ultimately inherited 400 acres of timberland.

Known as "Lee" throughout his life, Wilson proved a natural competence for business and assisted his siblings, half-siblings, their spouses and children in business and legal matters. As Wilson's relatives succumbed to poor health and their finances to poor management, he succeeded in resolving legal and business problems on their behalf. Wilson apparently was equally endowed with superior health; as his relatives died from various ailments, he purchased the parcels that ultimately re-consolidated his father's 2,300-acre estate. Additionally, Wilson bought thousands of acres adjacent to his familial tracts. During this period, Wilson married Elizabeth Beall, for whom he built a 3,000-square foot home, and went into business with her father as Wilson and Beall Lumber Company.<sup>4</sup> Beall operated Wilson's sawmill, while Wilson himself built six miles of roads from the river to logging camps, establishing a successful and profitable partnership.<sup>5</sup> Wilson also assumed a patriarchal role among his surviving family members, bringing them and their future spouses into his business and household, in some instances. Workers and family settled a small village, named Wilson, in 1886.

Wilson was equally adept in both farming and in social/business settings. As his sawmill produced 14,000 board feet per day by 1889, he conducted business with lumber dealers and manufacturers in the metropolises for Chicago and St. Louis.<sup>6</sup> In local business, Wilson regularly attended levee board meetings, advocating flood control systems to combat the constant challenges of his flood-prone landscape. Wilson carefully cleared his timber lands for cultivation in cotton. Also, in this period of Northern business influx in the South, Wilson remained dedicated to building his empire, maintaining ownership and management of his business operations while courting, but not selling out to Northern capital.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jeannie Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 21, 25-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-47.

<sup>5</sup> Goodspeed Publishing Company, *Biological and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas*, (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889), 509.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Whayne, 48.

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As Wilson bought timber lands and cleared them for farming, he planted three crops: half his tillable land was put into cultivation for cotton, his cash crop. The remaining fields were equally divided for the growing of alfalfa and corn, to feed his work mules.<sup>8</sup> After 1880, the productive landscape of eastern Arkansas attracted labor from the Deep South. Wilson hired black and white workers in his sawmill, camps, and fields. During this period Wilson employed 100 workers in his cotton fields and 30 men in his lumber mill.<sup>9</sup> He built tenant houses, advancing costs to workers through his company store. Unlike many company towns of the period, Wilson enjoyed a higher-than-average standard of living. With the exception of railroad employees and the postmaster, all residents enjoyed access to company doctors for just \$1.25 per year.<sup>10</sup>

In 1905, Wilson incorporated his timber and agricultural enterprise as Lee Wilson and Company. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wilson adopted progressive-era strategies, including the division of his vast land holdings into smaller plantations efficiently overseen by individual managers who reported to a general manager. The company town of Wilson was neatly arranged with workers' houses surrounding the company's administrative buildings; industrial and agricultural buildings were located across the rail line running parallel to Main Street (US Highway 61). One block to the northwest of the Town's public/commercial district, the Wilson Community Club House was constructed to serve the growing community as a school and church.<sup>11</sup>

Located at Lake Drive (formerly Union Avenue) and Adams Street, the Wilson Community House was constructed in 1906 in the Colonial Revival style, with a portico with Doric-motif columns and a pediment over the entrance. The building's simple, open floor plan, white plaster walls above wainscoting, and white beadboard ceilings expressed the important principles of simplicity and efficiency of the Colonial Revival style. This style was popular during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for both residential and public buildings, such as schools and meeting houses. The style was embraced during this period as a shift away from ostentatious Victorian designs having highly compartmentalized interiors with specialized rooms of use that separated people by gender or age. The open plan of the Wilson Community House allowed for efficient use of the space for large numbers of people, gathered together as a group.

Life in Wilson was known for its strong civic and educational benefits, as well as the support the community benefactor, Lee Wilson. In 1920, he donated the land and paid for much of the cost of construction (\$150,000) of the Wilson K-12 located school south of the town square. The new school created a vacancy in the Wilson Community House building, and the Ladies Cooperative Club, established in 1914, moved into the building. Previously, the Cooperative Club had met in

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<sup>8</sup> R.E.L. Wilson III, Oral Histories, "Founding of Wilson, Arkansas," and "Wilson's Three Crop Formula," accessed October 23, 2014, at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/ardiglib/leewilson/av.html>

<sup>9</sup> Goodspeed, 509.

<sup>10</sup> University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections staff, "Life in Wilson, Lee Wilson & Company Archives," accessed October 23, 2014, at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/ardiglib/leewilson/default.asp>

<sup>11</sup> Katherine Cullom, "A History of the Wilson Club House and Cooperative Club," in *The Delta Historical Review*, (Blytheville, AR: Mississippi County Historical and Genealogical Society, Summer 1993), 1.

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members' homes and later in the Wilson Consolidated School. The founding member of the Ladies Cooperative Club was Mrs. Dora (nee Davies) Merrell ("Aunt Dodie"), a niece of Lee Wilson. Merrell and five other Wilson ladies established the club.<sup>12</sup>

The Ladies Cooperative Club began keeping records in 1916 and established club bylaws. These state that the object of the club "shall be education, social, and benevolent." The club's motto was, "We need you, you need us," referring to the symbiotic relationship between the club and the residents of Wilson. The purchase of the building by the Cooperative Club was partially financed through lunch sales of hamburgers out of the Club House kitchen. The debt of \$1,000 was paid off in one year.<sup>13</sup>

Among the furnishings of the Wilson Community House is a massive walnut desk that was once the property of President Woodrow Wilson. An inventory of the Club House states that the desk was used on a ship that transported U.S. soldiers in World War I. Following the war, the desk was given to Senator Hattie Caraway of Arkansas, who sent it as a gift to Lee Wilson. Too large for the Wilson home, the desk was placed in the Community House, where it remains today.<sup>14</sup> The Cooperative Club realized a goal of purchasing a piano, fitting the Community House with a Steinway baby grand in 1923 that also remains in the building.

The Wilson Community House was a central hub representative of residents' occupations and vocations, from farming to home economics to beautification of the town. Reflecting Wilson's reputations as a model of Progressivism, the Cooperative Club sponsored an exhibit at the Tri-State Fair in Memphis in the early 1930s. The exhibit, the first from Arkansas, was entitled, "A Model Home without Very Much Expenditure" and featured the workmanship of several of the club's husbands, including a solid oak table and chairs, as well as canned goods and hams. During this same period, the Club sponsored a civic beautification project to landscape the grounds of the old Community Gin, later used as the Veterinary Barn. The project won an award of \$100 from *Holland's Magazine* and, matched by Lee Wilson, helped pay for butane gas heating in the Wilson Community House.<sup>15</sup>

The Lee Wilson & Company was a profitable operation through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His fortune relied not only on cotton, corn, wheat, and alfalfa, but also mercantile establishments, banking, railroads, manufacturing, education, and even the production of electricity. By the time of his death on September 27, 1933, Lee Wilson's estate included over 60,000 acres of farmland, five towns, all their residences, and most of their businesses - all real estate of Lee Wilson & Company. Upon his death, management of the vast company passed to his son, Robert E. Lee Wilson, Jr., and long-time employee James H. Crain.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cullom, 1-5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Cullom., 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

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By the end of World War II, the Wilson Company's holdings had burgeoned into a multi-faceted plantation comprising 63,000 acres among five towns. Its 57,000 acres of farmland was known as "the largest single tract of intensively cultivated land in the world," according to a promotional government document about Arkansas. Company fields at that time produced as much as three cotton bales per acre, possible only in the rich alluvial soil of the Delta. Additionally, the Wilson Company produced 600,000 bushels of corn and 30,000 bushels of wheat, as well as 40,000 tons of alfalfa, annually. There were 3,000 acres in soybeans and 500 acres in non-commercial truck crops in 1945. The company soon expanded its truck crop operation to reach distant metropolitan markets.<sup>17</sup>

The vast Wilson holdings was home to 10,000 people in the 1940s and included other industries such as lumber mills, a box and crate factory, a meat packing plant, an ice plant, a bank, a flour mill, the largest cotton oil mill in the South, and numerous and varied retail stores. The town of Wilson, the largest of the company's five towns, was home to 4,000 residents. Town children were enrolled in progressive schools offering a standard educational curriculum, vocational subjects and athletics. The town streets were graced with family-planted oak and cottonwood trees, rare sights in the tree-less plains of cotton fields.<sup>18</sup>

In 1959, the town was incorporated, and workers were given the opportunity to purchase their homes outright.<sup>19</sup> Despite the business success of the Wilson Company, the town of Wilson had been operating at a substantial loss. The Wilson family determined that incorporating the town and selling homes to individual owners would generate tax revenue that the town could access to remain vital. Wilson employees were able to purchase their homes at an average of four thousand dollars. Incorporation of the town immediately resulted in a reversal of annual operational losses.

Lee Wilson's grandson, Robert E.L. Wilson III, continued the diversification principle of the company. He expanded the company into a number of different agri-businesses, including seed and chemicals. Further diversification extended to vegetable crops, which relied on migrant labor due to a lack of farm workers in eastern Arkansas. The company built a strawberry processing plant to supply Breyer Ice Cream in Philadelphia; Wilson sweet potatoes went to Gerber for baby food. When the United States government abruptly ended the labor program the Wilson Company could not maintain its vegetable crop efforts and re-focused on the production of commodities: cotton, rice, and soybeans. Still, the company remained diversified in seed oil production, ranching, and other industries, to off-set cyclical periods of boom and bust in agriculture. Overall, four of six annual crops were profitable, making Lee Wilson & Company one of the most successful agri-businesses in the South.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "The Wilson Plantation: Wilson, Arkansas," in *Special Arkansas Bulletin*, July 20, 1945, pages 3-4, available at Lee Wilson and Company Documents, <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/ardiglib/leewilson/doc/documents.html> accessed October 23, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Eldon Fairley, "The Wilson Family," In *The Delta Historical Review*, (Blytheville, AR: Mississippi County Historical and Genealogical Society, Spring, 1998), 4.

<sup>20</sup> "Lee Wilson and Company: Yesterday and Today," webpage.

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Wilson's population has steadily declined since 1960, when 1,191 people lived in the community. Mechanization of agriculture, especially the cotton industry, reduced the need for laborers, and former Wilson employees moved elsewhere. By 2010, Wilson had 903 residents. At that time, the Wilson family, heirs to Lee Wilson's dynastic holdings, sold the entirety of their real estate properties, as well as the Town itself. Entrepreneur Gaylon Lawrence, Jr., of Nashville, Tennessee, purchased Wilson for an estimate \$110 million. Lawrence plans to re-invent the town and its surrounds as Delta mecca of arts, culture, and education.<sup>21</sup>

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the community of Wilson was praised as a model of Progressivism, with a modern school building, above average amenities for a rural community, and numerous civic-minded social clubs. In addition to social and civic gatherings, the Wilson Community House also hosted Wilson Company meetings. Lee Wilson remained a domineering force in all company matters, including the manager meetings held within the Community House.<sup>22</sup> Over the years, the Wilson Community House has hosted hundreds of events, such as anniversary and wedding receptions, graduation celebrations and class reunions, dances and parties, lunches and dinners, and regular meetings of the Ladies Cooperative Club. The Club has been involved in the beautification of the Wilson grounds (planting roses along US Highway 61 and supplying Christmas wreaths for the town square), sponsoring the Girl Scouts, awarding scholarships to graduating Wilson High School students, assisting needy families during Christmas, visiting nursing homes, and opening its doors as host to parties, dances, wedding receptions, and other local clubs. The Cooperative Club has regularly held bake sales, lunches, calendar sales, and other fund-raisers that give back to the community. In the early 1990s, the club funded the expansion of the Town Library. The Cooperative Club is the oldest continuous club meeting in Mississippi County, Arkansas.<sup>23</sup> The Club has become synonymous with the Wilson Community House, which embodies the mutually supportive character of the town of Wilson and its residents.

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<sup>21</sup> Kim Severson, "Arkansas Town's New Owner Has Visions of Its Renaissance," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2014, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/us/arkansas-towns-new-owner-has-visions-of-its-renaissance.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit\\_th\\_20140120&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/us/arkansas-towns-new-owner-has-visions-of-its-renaissance.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20140120&r=0)

<sup>22</sup> Wayne, 169

<sup>23</sup> Cullom, 7-8.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

City Map of Wilson, Arkansas. From the Town Administrative Archives, Wilson, Arkansas, 1954.

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"Mississippi County." At Arkansas Encyclopedia of History and Culture web page accessed January 8, 2015 <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=791>.

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"The Wilson Family." In *The Delta Historical Review*, Spring 1998.

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Wilson, Robert E. Lee, III. Oral Histories, "Founding of Wilson, Arkansas," and "Wilson's Three Crop Formula." Accessed October 23, 2014, at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/ardiglib/leewilson/av.html>



Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

Mississippi County, AR  
County and State

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: University of Arkansas Archives; Town of Wilson Public Library;  
Town of Wilson, Company Archives.

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.46

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

Mississippi County, AR  
County and State

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.570432 N | Longitude: -90.041211 W |
| 2. Latitude:             | Longitude:              |
| 3. Latitude:             | Longitude:              |
| 4. Latitude:             | Longitude:              |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the Wilson Community House is the entire 0.46-acre tax parcel on which the building is located, at 10 Lake Drive at the corner of Adams Street. The parcel's ID number is 857-00070-000.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Historically, this parcel was designated as Lot 8 in Block 2 when the Town of Wilson was platted. The parcel retains that designation in current tax records. The boundary contains the entire parcel historically associated with the Wilson Community House.

Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

Mississippi County, AR  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Andra Kowalczyk Martens, edited by Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator  
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
street & number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500  
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201  
e-mail: ralph@arkansasheritage.org  
telephone: (501) 324-9787  
date: February 3, 2015

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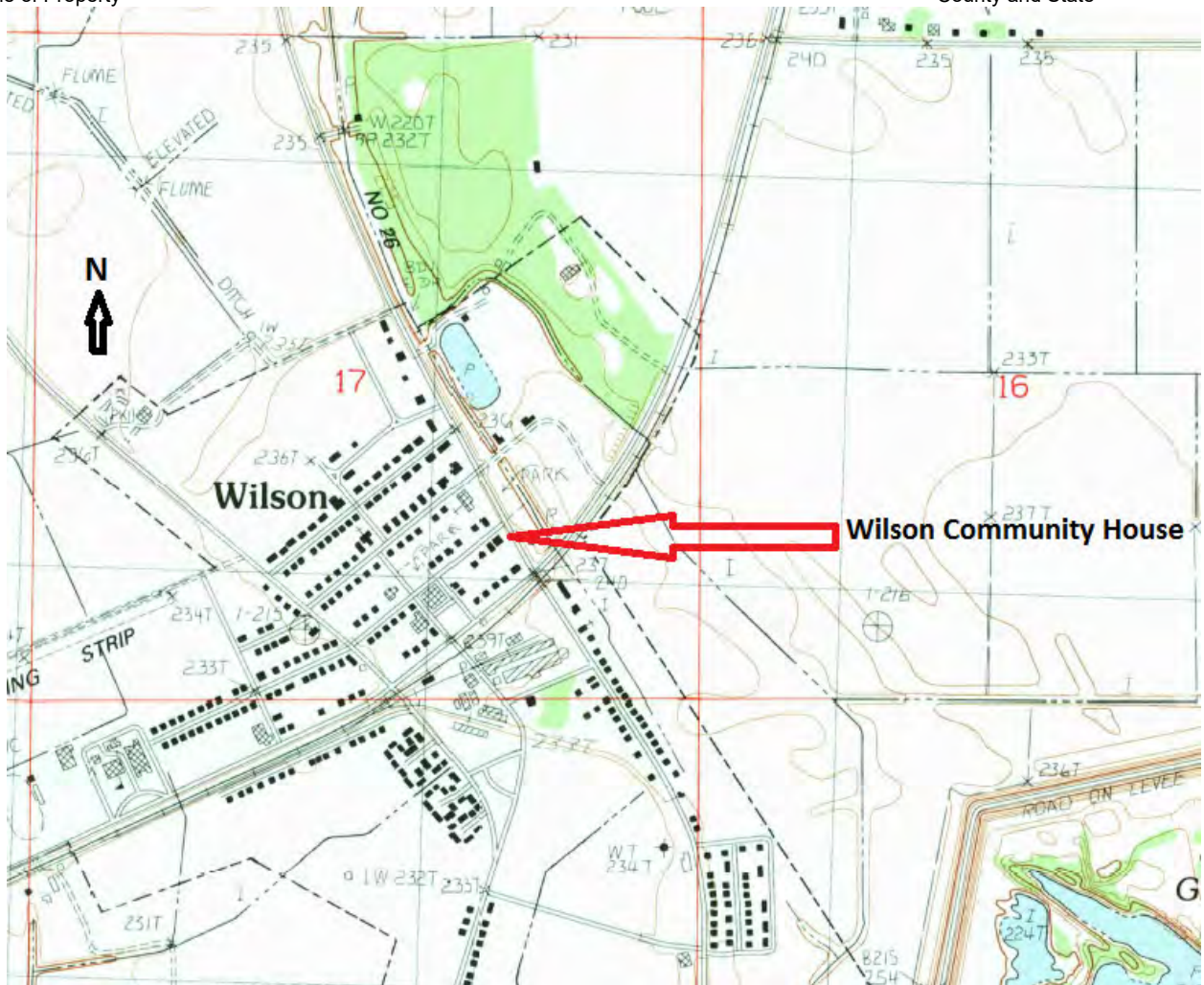
### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

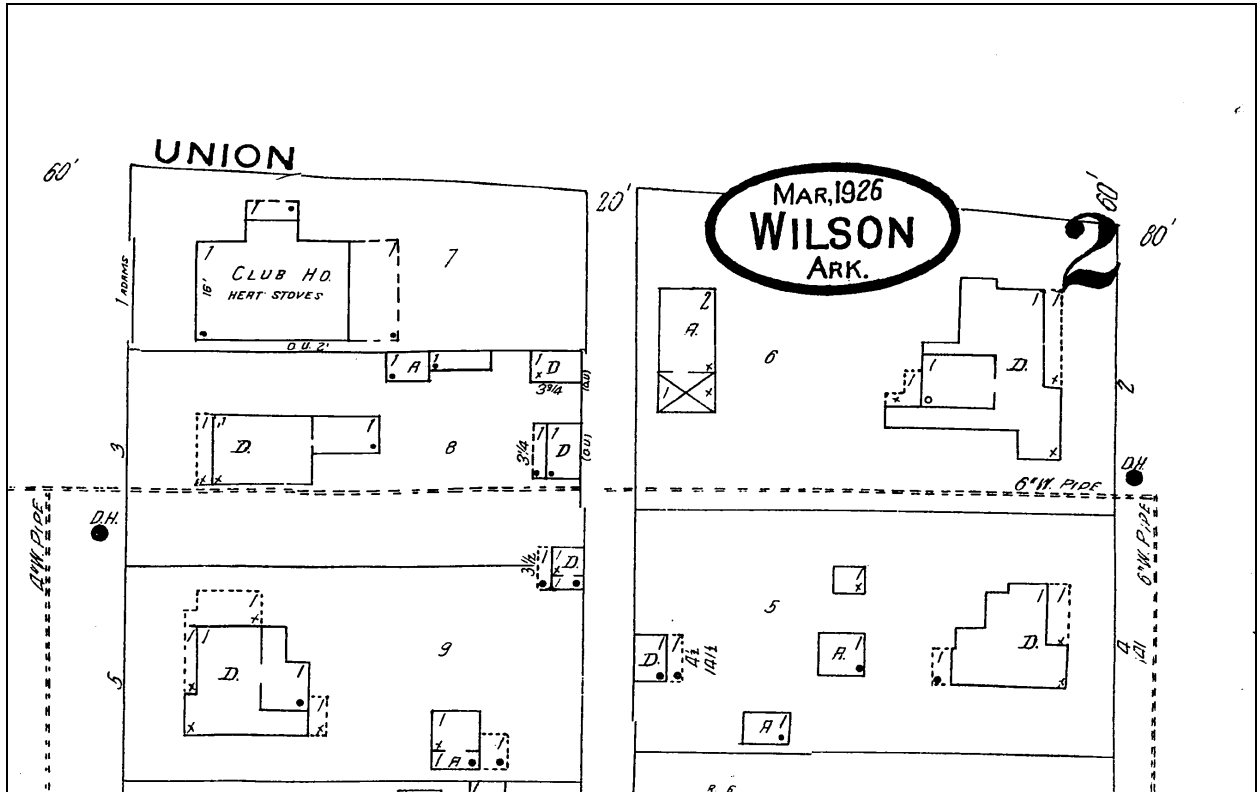
Mississippi County, AR  
County and State



Location of Wilson Community House on 1983 Wilson USGS Quad Map.

Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

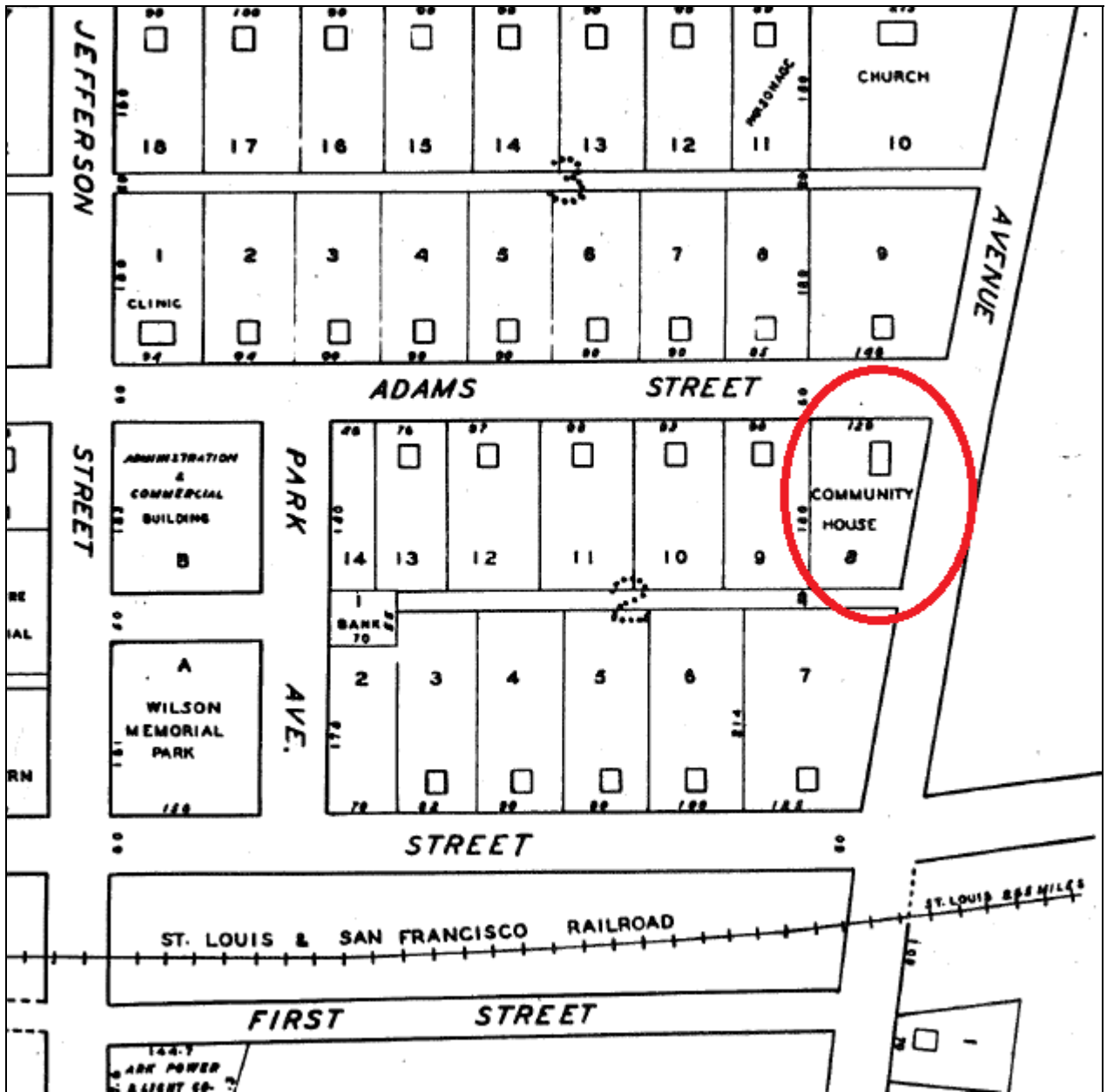
Mississippi County, AR  
County and State



The 1926 Sanborn Insurance Map shows the building listed as “Club House” with an open porch on the east elevation.

Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

Mississippi County, AR  
County and State



Map of Wilson from 1954 showing the location of the Community House.

Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

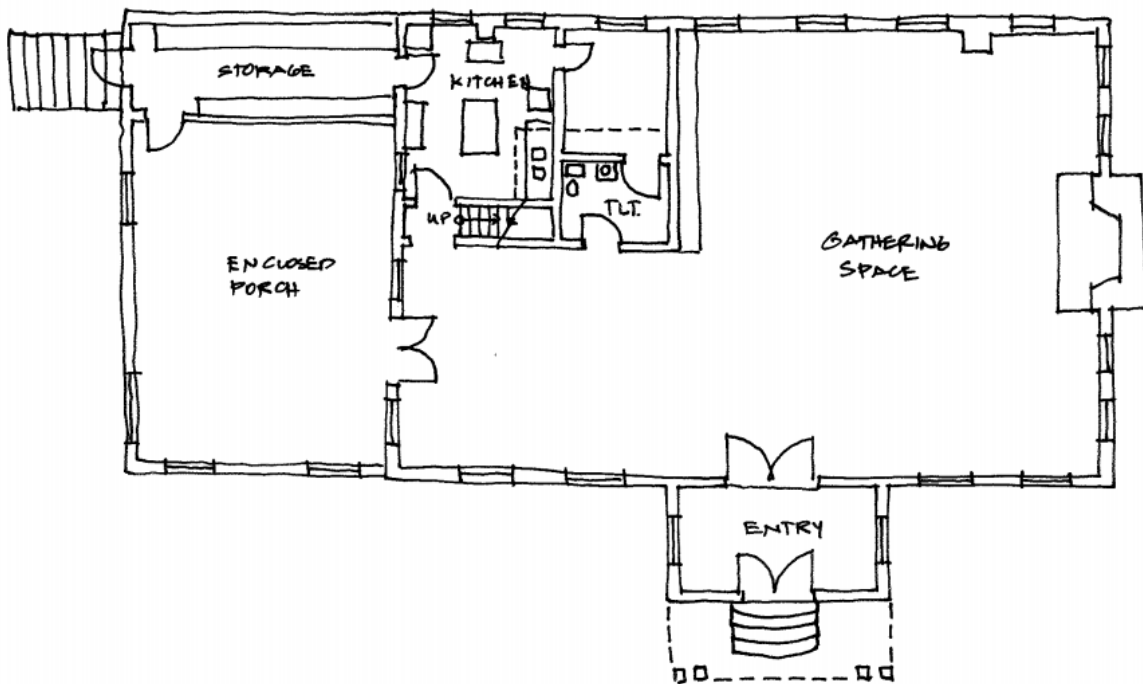
Mississippi County, AR  
County and State



**Wilson Community House Site Plan**

Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

Mississippi County, AR  
County and State



**Wilson Community House Floor Plan**



Wilson Community House  
Name of Property

Mississippi County, AR  
County and State

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property: Wilson Community House

City or Vicinity: Wilson

County: Mississippi

State: Arkansas

Photographer: Phil Thomason

Date Photographed: October 18, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 11. Northeast elevation.
- 2 of 11. Portico and main entrance on northeast elevation.
- 3 of 11. Side porch of southeast elevation.
- 4 of 11. Southwest and northwest elevations.
- 5 of 11. Northwest elevation.
- 6 of 11. Open plan interior, view of meeting rooms.
- 7 of 11. Main meeting room, view to southwest.
- 8 of 11. Main meeting room, view to northwest.
- 9 of 11. Foyer and serving area, view to east.
- 10 of 11. Enclosed side porch, view to north.
- 11 of 11. Kitchen.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.





3

WILSON  
CO-OP-ERATIVE  
CLUB  
EST. 1914





















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: Nomination

PROPERTY NAME: Wilson Community House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Mississippi County

DATE RECEIVED: 4/17/2015 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/08/2015  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/26/2015 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/02/2015  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000285

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 6-2-2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Important cog in a Company town, built to add  
A Public Amenity for use of the citizen-employees*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Atc

REVIEWER J. Gubbert DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



THE DEPARTMENT OF ARKANSAS  
**HERITAGE**

April 1, 2015



Asa Hutchinson  
*Governor*

Stacy Hurst  
*Director*

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005

RE: Wilson Community Club House – Wilson, Mississippi  
County, Arkansas

Dear Mr. Loether:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you need further information, please call Ralph S. Wilcox of my staff at (501) 324-9787. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Stacy Hurst  
State Historic Preservation Officer

SH:rsw

Enclosure

- 
- Arkansas Arts Council
  - \*
  - Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
  - \*
  - Delta Cultural Center
  - \*
  - Historic Arkansas Museum
  - \*
  - Mosaic Templars Cultural Center
  - \*
  - Old State House Museum
- 



Arkansas Historic  
Preservation Program



323 Center Street, Suite 1500  
Little Rock, AR 72201

(501) 324-9880  
fax: (501) 324-9184  
tdd: 711

e-mail:  
[info@arkansaspreservation.org](mailto:info@arkansaspreservation.org)  
website:  
[www.arkansaspreservation.com](http://www.arkansaspreservation.com)

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