

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions on 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 Commercial Historic District
Other names/site number N/A
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: Roughly bounded by S. Jefferson and Madison Streets to the west, Adams Street to the north, Latitude 35.569314 and Union Avenue to the east, and 2nd Street to the south
City or town: Wilson State: AR County: 093
Not For Publication: Vicinity: Zip: 72395

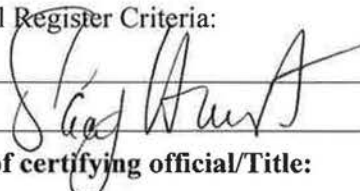
3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

 6-15-16
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 of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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 Arkansas

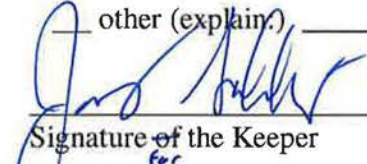
 County and State

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
for

9-23-2016

 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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
13	1	buildings
1	0	sites
1	2	structures
0	0	objects
15	3	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)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business/Restaurant/

Financial Institution/Department Store

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Processing and Storage

TRANSPORTATION: Rail-related

TRANSPORTATION: Road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE: Business/Restaurant/

Financial Institution/Department Store

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

VACANT/NOT IN USE

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Processing and Storage

TRANSPORTATION: Rail-related

TRANSPORTATION: Road-related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Tudor Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Concrete; brick; wood; stucco, asphalt, wood shingle; metal

Narrative Description

The Wilson Commercial Historic District is located within the town square and industrial area of Wilson, Arkansas (2016 est. pop 903). Wilson is located in the northeastern quadrant of the state approximately eleven miles south of Osceola, the seat of Mississippi County, and forty-four miles north from West Memphis. Wilson was founded as a company town in the early 1900s by agricultural entrepreneur Robert Edward Lee Wilson (1865-1933). The town of Wilson was owned and administered as a company town by the Wilson family until it was officially incorporated in the 1950s. In 2010, the Wilson family sold the town and surrounding agricultural operations to Nashville entrepreneur, Gaylon Lawrence, Jr., whose business, the Lawrence Group, is currently rehabilitating many of the buildings in the community.

The Wilson Commercial Historic District comprises three blocks centrally located in the town of Wilson on the northwest and southeast side of U.S. Highway 61, an important highway in eastern Arkansas. In Wilson, this highway runs parallel to the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad (now Burlington, Northern and Santa Fe). There are thirteen lots within the proposed boundary containing thirteen contributing buildings, one contributing site, two contributing

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structures, one non-contributing building, and one non-contributing structure. The district is bounded by Adams Street to the north, S. Jefferson and Madison Streets to the west, Union Avenue to the east, and 2nd Street to the south.

The community of Wilson was founded as a company town and by 1914 the commercial area along Main Street contained a hotel, a bank, a post office and company offices and store. The company also operated a cotton gin opposite the commercial buildings as well as a nearby saw mill. By the early 1920s, the Wilson Company had amassed tens of thousands of acres of productive agricultural lands and the company's prosperity resulted in the construction of a five-story, reinforced concrete grist mill and soybean oil mill in 1922. This building was designed with large steel windows and a concrete canopy and loading dock facing a rail spur line.

Also in 1922, Robert E. Lee Wilson hired Memphis architects Charles Pfiel (1871-1952) and George Awsumb (1880-1959) to design his town center. The firm designed a central landscaped park and plans for a series of buildings around the town square. The main building was the Wilson Company Office and Store which was a two-story concrete and frame building completed in 1925. This building was designed with the influence of the Craftsman style and displayed numerous storefronts and a metal awning on the first floor, paired sash windows on the second floor and a hipped roof of clay tile. The building contained the company store on the first floor including hardware, shoe, and drug departments, a meat market with a refrigeration plant, a soda fountain, grocery, ladies' ready-to-wear department, and candy and tobacco counters. The building's design incorporated a rear warehouse and loading platforms. On the second floor were company offices as well as a hotel for guests and visitors (*see Photos 2 and 11*).

The town's Tudor Revival style was introduced after Robert E. Lee Wilson's son, Robert ("Roy") E. Lee Wilson, Jr., returned from his honeymoon in England in 1923 where he developed an appreciation for this style of architecture and constructed a large Tudor Revival-style dwelling northeast of the town center. After the home's completion, the Tudor Revival style would be utilized for the Wilson Company commercial buildings over the next several decades. Industrial and agricultural buildings would continue to be built in utilitarian forms of the period including the new three-story, reinforced concrete cotton gin completed in 1930. Similar in design to the earlier grist mill, this building also had large steel windows, a flat roof and open floor space for ginning machinery.

Despite the Depression of the 1930s and the death of Robert E. Lee Wilson in 1933, the Wilson Company erected additional commercial buildings during this decade. The Wilson Café and Wilson Service Station were both completed ca. 1935 in the Tudor Revival style. The Wilson Café became the social center of the community and was designed with a large soda fountain and white tile walls on the interior. The brick exterior was highlighted by stucco and half-timbering in the gable field and a large porch with wood posts and brackets. The service station was designed with a high-pitched gable roof, stucco exterior and arched service bays. This building served as the town's service station until it burned in the mid-1950s and was replaced with the current Tudor Revival style station. Additional agricultural buildings were constructed ca. 1940 adjacent to the grist mill and cotton mill. A three-story concrete-block flour production building was completed next to the grist mill and a large grain storage facility was also built opposite the mill.

In 1948, the Wilson Company constructed a movie theater and retail stores on the west side of the town square. In contrast to the Tudor Revival style, the company built the Wilson Theatre with its "modern plate glass front." The company promoted the building as "Northeast Arkansas' Most Beautiful Theatre" and representing the finest in planning, design and equipment. The façade reflected the International style with an enframed concrete bay containing tinted Carrara glass. The attached one- and two-story store buildings were built with restrained brick exteriors and recessed storefronts. The theater and the adjacent commercial building were designed by the Memphis architectural firm of Eason, Anthony, McKinnie and Cox.

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The Tudor Revival style continued to be utilized in the 1950s when four new buildings were constructed around the town square. The Bank of Wilson constructed a new bank building in 1952 which featured an arched entrance with label molding, casement windows and a segmental dormer at the roofline. In 1957, a new post office was constructed adjacent to the bank and a new service station was built to replace the original building which was destroyed by fire. A small brick building was also completed ca. 1957 next to the service station to serve as a liquor store. The Tudor Revival style was utilized when a snow storm damaged the awnings and facades of the Wilson Company Administration Building (*see Photos 6 and 7*) and Wilson Theatre (*see Photos 16 and 17*) in 1968, and new Tudor Revival-style facades were added to the fronts of the buildings.

Today, the commercial buildings in the Wilson Commercial Historic District are characterized by their Tudor Revival style and details. The district includes a mix of one- and two-story commercial and agricultural buildings and structures along either side of U.S. Highway 61 (Cortez Kennedy Avenue) constructed between 1922 and 1957. The agricultural buildings housed the Wilson Company's Cotton Gin (*see Photos 8 and 9*), Flour Production Building (*see Photos 12 and 13*), Milling Building (*see Photos 4 and 5*), and Grain Elevator and Storage (*see Photos 14 and 15*). The use of the Tudor Revival style is a defining feature of the Wilson Commercial Historic District. Six of the buildings were constructed in the Tudor Revival style between ca. 1935 and 1960: the Wilson Café (*see Photo 10*), the Wilson Post Office (*see Photo 20*), the Bank of Wilson (*see Photos 18 and 19*), the Wilson Filling Station (*see Photos 21 and 22*), and liquor store on U.S. Highway 61 (*see Photos 23 and 24*). The Wilson Company Administration Building and Wilson Theatre were remodeled with the Tudor Revival style in 1968. The consistent use of this style in the Commercial District provides a homogenous look and style in the four block area.

To the east of the commercial buildings are the agricultural buildings constructed by the Wilson Company from 1922 to ca. 1950. These buildings are of reinforced concrete, concrete block, or corrugated metal and retain much of their original design. The buildings reflect the height of the Wilson Company's success when it was one of the nation's leading producers of cotton and other agricultural products. Several of the buildings are currently vacant and undergoing rehabilitation by the owner.

The town 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. The Wilson Company sold the town and the surrounding agricultural property in 2010 to The Lawrence Group, which is in the process of rehabilitating and repurposing many of the buildings in Wilson. The company recognizes the unique history of Wilson and has embarked on a number of preservation projects.

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS

Properties in the inventory are organized by date of construction. Entries list the address of the property, approximate date of construction, and associated secondary resources. Dates of construction are derived from Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and city maps.

Key:

- C = Contributing resource
- NC = Non-contributing resource
- ca. = Circa

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1. St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad (now Burlington, Northern and Santa Fe), ca. 1900, (NC)

The St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad constructed its railroad line south from Blytheville through this section of eastern Arkansas in the early 1900s. The railroad runs parallel to Highway 61 between the commercial buildings to the northwest and the industrial buildings to the southeast. The railroad was a key feature in the Wilson Company's industrial complex and the company town for import and export of goods.

2. Wilson Co. Milling Building (Grist Mill), U.S. Highway 61, 1922, (C)

This is a five-story industrial building of poured-concrete construction with a flat concrete roof, cast-concrete foundation, and poured-concrete walls. The north elevation has an original concrete loading dock over which is an original concrete canopy. The loading dock rests on concrete piers and the canopy is supported by concrete brackets. There are two entrances on the north elevation that are enclosed by wood panels. There are eight bays on the north elevation, the windows are original, twenty-light steel design with central four-light hinged panels and poured-concrete sills. Most windows have lost their original glass panes. The windows on the east and west elevations are of the same design with two bays of windows on each side. The south elevation has windows of the same design, two entrances with no doors, and a similar concrete canopy with a steel fire escape above. A concrete cornice runs along each elevation.

3. Wilson Co. Administrative Building, Cross Street, 1925, remodeled 1968, (C)

This is a two-story building of poured concrete construction with a poured concrete foundation, a flat roof, and an added 1968 Tudor Revival-style façade. A one-story wing of similar construction extends to the north with five bays of windows that are currently enclosed with wood panels. An original pedestrian entrance with a single-light glass and wood door is located on the west elevation. At the second story of the rear (north) elevation are original paired four-over-four wood sash windows with cornices above and exposed rafters at the roofline.

The main (south) elevation has two corner towers with open arches on the first floor, a pair of diamond-light wood windows on the second, and stucco and half-timbering in the gable fields. The central bay has an arched entrance on the first floor and a pair of diamond-light windows at the second. A recessed entrance is set within this central bay that leads to the hotel rooms on the second level. This entrance has an original two-panel wood door with a single-light transom above. The Wilson Store, located on the main (south) elevation of the first floor of the Administrative Building, has three storefronts with original bulkheads. The western storefront retains its original door surround and transom but has replacement display windows. The central storefront is recessed with an original door surround, transom, and ca. 1950 display windows. The east storefront doors have a ca. 1968 surround with an original single-light transom. Wooden post and beam supports are set beyond the storefronts supporting the 1968 addition of the Tudor Revival-style incised porch. Beyond the western storefront are two window bays; both have a central, fixed light flanked by one-over-one wood sash windows. Eight shed roof dormers run along the south elevation of the Administrative Building with paired twelve-over-twelve wood sash windows. The interior of the second floor, originally hotel and office space, retains its original plaster walls, plaster ceilings, and concrete floors with variations of added carpeting. The upstairs hotel spaces have original two-panel wood doors and original fixtures in the shared bathrooms and rented rooms.

Three office entrances are located on the first floor of the east elevation of the Administrative Building with a row of enclosed windows above at the second level. The southernmost offices on the east elevation have replacement doors and windows with original bulkheads. The central office, which houses The Lawrence Group, has a ca. 2012 projecting entrance. The office at the north end houses the Wilson Library and has a ca. 1968 door flanked by original display windows and bulkheads.

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4. Wilson Memorial Park, 1925, (C)

The Wilson Memorial Park is located in the center of the Wilson Commercial Historic District. It is bounded by N. Jefferson Street to the west, Park Street to the east, Cross Street to the north, and Highway 61 to the south. The park, named for founder Robert E. Lee Wilson, contains a memorial flagpole resting on a granite pedestal with an acanthus leaf motif on the plinth. The granite memorial is inscribed "R. E. Lee Wilson, Pioneer, Builder, Leader." This memorial was erected ca. 1935 following the death of Wilson in 1933. The park also contains the burial site of Robert E. Lee Wilson and his wife Elizabeth Beall Wilson, which is marked by a large rounded granite stone and memorial plaques.

5. Wilson Co. Cotton Gin, U.S. Highway 61, 1930, (C)

Constructed in 1930, the Wilson Co. Cotton Gin is located within the main industrial complex of the Wilson Company on the east side of the railroad. The three-story agricultural building faces Highway 61 to the northwest and is rectangular in plan with a one-story wing projecting from the north elevation. The building has a concrete foundation, poured concrete exterior, and slightly pitched gable roof. There are six bays on the three-story sections divided by poured concrete pilasters. The windows are original twenty-five-light steel design with central hinged awning panels.

The west elevation has one entrance located at the first floor which has a set of ca. 2012 double doors over which is an original shed roof canopy supported by steel posts to service a loading area. Two main entrances are located on the south elevation; both entrances have ca. 1970 hinged doors of corrugated metal and there are similar entrances on the eastern section of the south elevation which have been enclosed with concrete. A steel staircase leads to the second floor entrance on the south elevation and has a ca. 1980 glass and wood door. The east elevation has an original sliding-track door. The original scale platform is located to the east of the building. The interior of the cotton gin has a concrete floor, concrete ceiling, and concrete post supports.

6. Wilson Café, 2 N. Jefferson Street, ca. 1935 (C)

The Wilson Café (also called the Wilson Tavern) was constructed ca. 1935 at 2 North Jefferson Street just west of the Wilson Memorial Park. The one-and-one-half-story, Tudor Revival-style commercial building has a concrete foundation, a five-course common bond brick exterior, and a gable roof of composition shingles. An incised porch is located on the main (south) elevation that is supported by square, notched wood posts and wood brackets. The main entrance has a pair of ca. 2012 single-light glass and wood double doors. Windows on the main (south) elevation are original paired eight-light, wood casement designs with eight-light, wood transoms above. The gable field is accented with stucco and half-timbering with exposed purlins, a king post, vergeboard, and a central attic vent. A single, shed roof dormer is located on the main elevation with a four-light casement window.

The west elevation has similar fenestration including the same paired windows and a single-light shed roof dormer with louvered vents. Two entrances are located on the east elevation, both with replacement single-light glass and wood double doors; each set has an entry porch with similar notched columns. Similar to the south elevation, the east elevation has stucco and half-timbering in the gable fields with exposed purlins and kingposts as well as vergeboard. There are three shed roof dormers on the east elevation each with four-light casement windows. Copper gutters and downspouts are located on each elevation. The interior of the Wilson Café retains its original plaster walls and ceiling and concrete floor. The original marble soda fountain counter is intact which faces a white tile wall.

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7. Wilson Café Storage Building, 2 N. Jefferson Street, ca. 1935, (C)

Located behind the Wilson Café is a one-story storage building constructed ca. 1935. This is a one-story rectangular building built of rock-faced concrete block, with a concrete foundation, and a flat concrete roof. The main entrance is located on the east elevation and has a solid steel door flanked by two window openings covered with wood panels. The north elevation has one window opening enclosed with wood panels and a secondary opening enclosed with concrete blocks. The west elevation has a single steel door, and the south elevation has a single window opening enclosed with concrete blocks.

8. Wilson Co. Flour Production Building, U.S. Highway 61, ca. 1940, (C)

This is a three-story industrial building constructed ca. 1940. The building has a cast-concrete foundation, a concrete-block exterior, and a concrete roof designed in a stepped fashion. The building has one- and two-story wings on the west elevation with bays divided by Doric pilasters. The north elevation of the one-story wing has two loading bays enclosed by wood panels. The windows in the one-story wing are original four-light paired steel awning design with brick sills. There is a two-light, single-panel, steel door located in the westernmost bay. The east elevation has no fenestration, but one door opening on the third floor leads to a metal catwalk connecting to the adjacent Grist Mill. The windows on the second and third floor are original, paired six-light, steel design with four-light awning panels and concrete sills. The south elevation has four bays including the original steel loading dock and original two-panel double doors that lead to the loading dock bay.

9. Wilson Co. Grain Elevator and Storage, U.S. Highway 61, ca. 1940, (C)

The Wilson Co. Grain Elevator and Storage Building is composed of two attached rectangular, multi-story agricultural buildings with a central concrete elevator. The two attached grain storage buildings have poured concrete foundations, corrugated-metal roofs, and metal panel exteriors. Both buildings have gable monitor roofs and original twelve-light steel clerestory windows. The six-story, rectangular-plan, concrete grain elevator with a flat roof is located centrally between the east and west storage buildings. The concrete grain elevator has original ten-light, steel windows with four hinged panels.

The west elevation has two original loading bays with sliding-track, corrugated-metal doors and a one-story shed-roof wing with original six-light, steel windows. The interior of the grain storage buildings has brick skirt walls and steel frames. The north elevation of the west grain storage building has a garage bay opening with a ca. 1990 overhead-track, metal door. The north elevation of the connecting wing also has an original sliding-track, corrugated-metal door. The east elevation has a shed-roof wing, sliding-track, metal door, and six-light, steel windows.

10. Oil Tank Platforms, U.S. Highway 61, ca. 1940, (C)

Two soy oil tank platforms are located directly north of the Wilson Co. Flour Production Building and Milling Building. These platforms are circular, poured concrete foundations with steel bands.

11. Wilson Theatre and Commercial Building, 5-12 N. Jefferson Street, 1948, remodeled 1968 (C)

This is a two-story commercial building with a concrete foundation, flat concrete roof, exterior of stretcher bond brick, and a Tudor Revival-style façade added in 1968. This building originally housed the Wilson Theatre which was designed with influences of the International style and a façade with Carrara glass panels. In 1968 the current Tudor Revival façade was added in front of the original façade wall of the building. A three-arch loggia is located centrally along the theatre and commercial section with a gable roof of wood shingles and five shed roof dormers with fixed

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vinyl windows as well as copper gutters and downspouts. The main entrance is located on the principal (east) elevation of the building. This entrance has a set of solid wood double doors flanked by decorative, rectangular, brick panels and a terrazzo tile floor.

The commercial section of this building has aluminum and glass display windows and doors added in 1968. Set beyond the display windows are a row of wood post and beam supports on which the wood shingled façade rests. There are three storefronts in the commercial section and a central hallway that leads to additional office space, restrooms, and a stair hall to the second floor interior. Each of the storefronts has single-light, aluminum and glass doors and display windows. The central hallway is accessed through a brick arch and displays features from its 1948 construction such as a terrazzo tile floor and single-light glass and wood doors with original hardware. This hallway leads to a restroom with an original tile floor, tile skirt walls with plaster above, and original fixtures. The second floor interior consists of open floor space with concrete floors, ceilings, and supports. The original 1948 two-over-two, steel, horizontal-sash windows are intact beneath the added Tudor Revival façade.

The adjacent one-story commercial section on the main façade has an arched, single-light, four-panel set of double doors and concrete surround with label molding, quoins, and corner inset floral designs. The entrance is flanked by two six-light, fixed windows with concrete label molding.

12. Bank of Wilson, 55 Park Street, 1952, (now Bancorp South) (C)

The Bank of Wilson was constructed in 1952 and designed by Memphis architect George A. Mahan for the Wilson Company. This is a one-and-one-half-story Tudor Revival-style commercial building with a concrete foundation, stretcher bond brick exterior, and a gable roof of composition shingles. The main (west) elevation has a recessed entrance with an original set of arched double doors of single-light, four panel design. A concrete arch surrounds the door with concrete label molding, corner inset panels with rosette designs, and quoins running along each side. The main (west) elevation has two bays of windows; in the north bay the windows are nine-light, wood casement design with six-light, fixed transoms and copper pent hoods above. In the south bay, there are three sets of eight-light, wood casement windows with six-light transoms above. Flanking the entrance to the south is a one-over-one diamond-light window with concrete label molding. An elliptical wall dormer is located above the entrance in the half story with paired arched, one-over-one, diamond-light windows. There are large paired brackets at the eaves and original copper gutters and downspouts. A hexagonal, copper clock tower and finial is located at the roofline.

There are two windows on the first story of the north elevation both with twelve-light casement windows with six-light transoms and copper pent roofs above. The south elevation has a bay window with a central twelve-light casement window above which is a nine-light transom that is flanked by four-light casement windows. Two original five-light, fixed windows with concrete sills are located on this elevation. A ca. 1970 drive-through bay with square brick piers is located on the rear (east) elevation. The rear entrance has an original single-light, two-panel, wood door and three-light, windows.

13. Wilson Co. Change House, U.S. Highway 61, ca. 1950, (C)

This is a one-story, concrete block building with a gable roof of corrugated metal, corrugated metal in the gable fields, and exposed rafter eaves. The north and south elevations have ca. 2012 hinged double doors. The east elevation has two original, two-panel steel doors, and clerestory windows are covered by wood panels. The building has a central, brick flue.

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14. Wilson Post Office, 3 Park Street, 1957 (C)

The Wilson Post Office is a one-story, Tudor Revival-style building constructed in 1957. The building has a concrete foundation, a stretcher bond brick exterior, and a gable roof of composition shingles. The main entrance on the west elevation is recessed in a Tudor arch with concrete label molding and inset panels with trefoil designs. The main entrance has a set of single-light glass and wood double doors with an original twenty-four-light leaded glass transom above. The main (west) elevation of the Wilson Post Office has a bank of original eight-light, steel awning windows and wide brackets along the eaves. The north elevation has two-light, fixed steel windows with brick sills. The original pedestrian entrance on the rear (east) elevation has paired two-panel doors and nine-light windows with brick sills. There is a secondary entrance on this elevation with a ca. 1980 aluminum and glass door. In the gable fields of the north and south elevations the brick is indented to include fourteen cross-shaped vents. The interior of the post office has concrete block walls, added linoleum floors, added dropped acoustical tile ceilings, and some added partition walls. The original post office boxes run along the east wall.

15. Wilson Service Station, 21 Cortez Kennedy Avenue (U.S. Highway 61), ca. 1957 (C)

The first Wilson Service Station was built at this location ca. 1935 in the Tudor Revival style. This building burned ca. 1957 and was replaced with the existing service station. This is a one-and-one-half-story, Tudor Revival-style building with a concrete foundation, an exterior of stretcher bond brick, and a gable roof of composition shingles. The main entrance on the principal (north) elevation has an original arched, four-panel door with a cast-concrete surround of label molding and quoins. The storefront has original brick bulkheads and ca. 1970 aluminum and glass display windows with original diamond-light transoms. There are three garage bays with ca. 1970 glass and wood overhead-track doors. Corbel brackets accent the eaves on either side of the garage bays, and original light fixtures flank the main pedestrian entrance. On the west elevation is a second ca. 1970 display window with an original diamond-light transom above. Three side pedestrian entrances are located on the west elevation, two with solid steel doors, and one enclosed with vertical wood boards. An original paired three-light casement window with two-light transom is located in the half-story of the west elevation.

A ca. 2000 steel door with a single-light wood transom above is located on the south elevation. On the east elevation there are original paired three-light casement windows with two-light transoms at the half-story and two, thirty-six-light fixed and hopper style windows that consist of two nine-light, fixed windows framing a central six-light hopper panel behind a nineteen-light grill.

16. Wilson Liquor Store, 19 Cortez Kennedy Avenue (U.S. Highway 61), ca. 1957 (C)

Constructed ca. 1957, this small building served as Wilson's liquor store for many years. This is a one-story, brick Tudor Revival-influenced commercial building with a concrete foundation, exterior of stretcher bond brick, and a gable roof of wood shingles. The main entrance is located on the principal (north) elevation and has a ca. 1990 six-panel, steel door, as well as a thirty-six-light fixed and hopper style window that consists of two nine-light, fixed windows framing a central six-light hopper panel behind a nineteen-light grill. There is no fenestration on the south, east, or west, elevations.

17. Prefabricated Office Building, US Highway 61, ca. 2000 (NC)

A ca. 2000 rectangular-plan, prefabricated office building is located directly north of the main industrial complex, between the Wilson Co. Flour Production Building and the site of the former St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad. This building has no foundation, a corrugated metal exterior, and a low-pitched gable roof.

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18. Oil Tanks, U.S. Highway 61, ca. 2000 (NC)

Two steel, cylindrical oil tanks are located directly north of the Wilson Co. Flour Production Building. These tanks vary in height and rest on a cast-concrete foundation.

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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.)

Property is:

- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

Ca. 1900-1968

Significant Dates

1922, 1925, 1948

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: Pfiel, Charles and Awsumb, George/
Mahan, Jr., George/Eason, Anthony, McKinnie
and Cox

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Wilson Commercial Historic District is located in the town of Wilson, Arkansas, which was founded by agricultural entrepreneur Robert Edward Lee (known as Lee) Wilson in 1886. The Commercial Historic District developed beginning in 1922 when Lee Wilson hired Memphis architects Charles Pfiel and George Awsumb to design his town center. The lots in the district had been owned by the Wilson Company since 1886 and the architectural firm designed a large Administration Building facing a central landscaped town square. The Administration Building contained the offices of the Wilson Company, a hotel and a general department store. The town's Tudor Revival style theme was later used for company buildings around the square when Lee Wilson's son, Robert ("Roy") E. Lee Wilson, Jr., returned from his honeymoon in England. While abroad Roy Wilson developed an appreciation for this style of architecture and constructed a large Tudor Revival-style home north of the commercial district in 1925. After the home's completion, several of the public buildings in Wilson were constructed in the Tudor Revival style over the next several decades. This tradition continued when an ice storm damaged the awnings and facades of the Wilson Company Administration Building and Wilson Theatre in 1968, and new Tudor Revival-style facades were added to the fronts of the buildings. Directly across from this central square are the agricultural buildings constructed by the Wilson Company from 1922 to ca. 1950. These buildings reflect the height of the Wilson Company's success when it was one of the nation's leading producers of cotton and other agricultural products.

The Wilson Commercial Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. The district is significant under Criterion A as a representation of a progressive company town operating under the "New South" model. The Wilson Company expanded and diversified from its formation in the late 19th century through the Great Depression, and New Deal policies. The buildings extant in the district are a testament to this progressive-era model and illustrate a number of the aesthetics and community services provided to employees and visitors. Under Criterion C, the district is architecturally significant as a notable commercial and industrial development of the early to mid-twentieth century and for its Tudor Revival design. Its period of significance extends from when the town developed around the railroad ca. 1900 to 1968, the year the final Tudor Revival style remodeling took place. While the 1968 remodeling is less than fifty years of age, this development is an important part of the architectural theme of the community and will reach the fifty-year benchmark in less than two years.

The district contains fourteen primary buildings, of which thirteen (95%) would be considered contributing to the character of the district. The district also contains two contributing and one non-contributing structures and one contributing site, the Wilson Memorial Park. The district's commercial and industrial buildings represent the impact of the Wilson Company's agricultural holdings, the progressive nature of the company, and the success of the company in Arkansas agriculture. The majority of the buildings in the proposed district retain their original design, site, and feeling.

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

The Wilson Commercial Historic District is located in the city of Wilson, Arkansas. Wilson was founded as a company town by agricultural entrepreneur Robert Edward Lee ("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 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 history of Lee Wilson and his company was profiled in the highly-praised book, *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the*

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Transformation of Agriculture in the New South by Jeannie Whayne. Published in 2011, this provides extensive context for the importance of the Wilson Company in the agricultural history of Arkansas.

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 people (900 white residents and 510 slaves) living in its borders.¹ 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.² Residents living in the swampy delta contended with mosquito-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 other dangers, 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.³

With the Civil War, Mississippi County's agriculture declined, as did the wealth of its farmers. During the 1860s, Josiah Wilson moved to Memphis with his second wife Martha, placing his son-in-law Napoleon Lafont in charge of operations at his Arkansas plantation. Josiah and Martha Wilson had a son in 1865 they named Robert Edward Lee Wilson in honor of the famed Confederate general. Josiah Wilson died in 1870 without a will in place, leaving his heirs to divide his assets. Martha Wilson died in Memphis' Yellow Fever epidemic in 1878 and at age thirteen Lee was sent to live with his father's brother William in Covington, Tennessee. At age fifteen Lee Wilson left school and moved back to Arkansas to work on the 400 acres of timberland he inherited from his father.

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 withered from poor management, he succeeded in resolving legal and business problems on their behalf. Wilson apparently also enjoyed 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 and went into business with her father as Wilson and Beall Lumber Company.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.

¹ "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>.

² Eldon Fairley, "The Wilson Family," In *The Delta Historical Review* (Blytheville, AR: Mississippi County Historical and Genealogical Society, 1998), 3.

³ Jeannie Whayne, *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Agriculture in the New South*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 21, 25-7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-47.

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

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Wilson was equally adept in 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.⁶ 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.⁷

As Wilson bought and cleared timber lands 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.⁸ 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 one hundred workers in his cotton fields and thirty men in his lumber mill.⁹ He built tenant houses, advancing costs to workers through his company store. Unlike many company towns of the period, the town of Wilson enjoyed an above-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.¹⁰

In 1905, Lee Wilson incorporated his timber and agricultural enterprise as Lee Wilson and Company. During the early twentieth 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 spatial organization of the town of Wilson also demonstrated efficient planning: workers' houses surrounded the company's administrative buildings in the commercial district on the west side of the rail line and Main Street (later US Highway 61); industrial and agricultural buildings were located on the east side of the railroad and highway. Life in Wilson was known for its strong civic and educational benefits, as well as the support the community benefactor, Lee Wilson. Between 1920 and 1925, he donated the land and paid for much of the cost of construction (\$150,000) of the Wilson School. The prosperity of the Wilson Company in the early 1920s also led to the construction of a new five-story concrete grist mill in 1922 and plans for a new town center in 1925.

Designed by the Memphis architectural firm of Pfiel and Awsumb, the plan for Wilson included a central landscaped town square with the company's Administration Building occupying an entire block at the west end of the park. The Administration Building was designed with the influences of the Craftsman style and contained the offices of the company, a hotel and company store selling clothing, groceries, hardware and many other items. The Wilson Company also constructed a new concrete cotton gin building in 1930 and planned other improvements on the town square.

By the early 1930s Lee Wilson was in declining health and he made plans for the company to continue after his death. Lee Wilson's son, Roy Wilson suffered from the effects of malaria and alcoholism that resulted in recurrent absences

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Whayne, 48.

⁸ 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>

⁹ Goodspeed, 509.

¹⁰ 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>

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from business matters. Lee Wilson grew concerned that his son was inadequate to maintain his company, causing him to rely on the other managers, primarily James H. (“Jim”) Crain.¹¹

Jim Crain was born in Brandon, Mississippi, in 1888. Crain was employed by the Brandon Mercantile Company when he accepted a position at the Idaho Grocery Company in Bassett, Arkansas, about five miles southwest of Wilson. Crain accepted the position and relocated with his wife, Ruby and their young son John in 1911. Upon his arrival, Crain began working in the general offices of the Wilson Company. Within five years, he came to learn the inner-management of the company and worked his way through every job in the clerical department. Crain also took a lead role in the refinancing of the county’s drainage districts and constructing additional levees to drain lands for crop production. Lee Wilson recognized Crain’s impressive managerial skills and in 1917 promoted him to farm superintendent, managing over twelve-thousand employees. Crain continued in this capacity following Lee Wilson’s death in 1933. Lee Wilson had shrewdly diversified the company’s holdings, relying not only on cotton, corn, wheat, and alfalfa, but also cattle, 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 and Company. Upon his death, management of the vast company passed to his son, Roy, and Jim Crain.

In 1935, Crain further demonstrated self-initiative, organizing the Delta Products Company, the first cooperative industry in Arkansas. This collective was a success, drawing thirty of the leading planters and processors in the region as active members.¹² Under Crain’s management, the Wilson Company continued as a profitable operation into the mid-twentieth century. The construction of industrial and agricultural buildings in Wilson applied the progressive principles of the public area of town. From the early 1930s into the 1950s the Wilson Company built several major agricultural buildings including the cotton gin, flour production building, and grain elevator and storage building east of U.S. Highway 61 across from the town square. In a ca. 1935 edition of the “Wilson Mirror,” a Lee Wilson and Company monthly news magazine, the Cotton Gin was described as “one of the most modern outfits of its kind in the South.” The interior equipment was made by the Murray Company of Dallas and the equipment was powered by forty-eight electric motors.¹³ The agricultural buildings built during these decades were of concrete and steel construction utilizing fire-proof materials.

The transformation of the commercial district into its Tudor Revival appearance also began in the 1930s with the completion of the Wilson Café ca. 1935. After a trip to England, Roy Wilson and his wife hired Memphis architect George Mahan, Jr. to design an ornate Tudor Revival style home in 1925 on the north side of the town. Wilson’s preference for this style resulted in its use in the design of the Wilson Café and Service Station in the mid-1930s on the town square and its continuation for new company buildings into the mid-twentieth century.

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,

¹¹ Whayne, 93.

¹² Bonnie Nichols, editor. “James Henry Crain” *The Delta Historical Review* Published by the Mississippi Historic and Genealogical Society in Spring 1998.

¹³ “The Wilson Mirror,” in *The Delta Historical Review*, Spring 1998, 26.

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vocational subjects and athletics. The town streets were graced with company-planted oak and cottonwood trees, rare sights in the treeless plains of cotton fields.¹⁴

Under Crain's management, the Wilson Company continued as a profitable operation into the mid-twentieth century. 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.¹⁵ On the town square the company's prosperity was marked by the construction of a modern movie theater and additional retail and office space. Completed in 1948, the Wilson Theatre and adjoining commercial building occupied a large part of the block on the west side of the square. This block of buildings was designed by the Memphis architectural firm of Eason, Anthony, McKinnie and Cox.

The Wilson family had come to rely on Crain in business matters, giving him a great deal of power in the company. The widowed Elizabeth Wilson gave power of attorney to Crain rather than her own son, Roy, who often excused himself from responsibilities, such as board of trustee meetings. Roy was content to defer to the ambitious Crain, who used the opportunity to place his own son, John E. Crain, in the role of assistant manager. Crain also appointed his brother-in-law, John R. Enochs, to another lead position in the company.¹⁶ Some Wilson family members became disillusioned with the powerful Crains. In 1950, after some dispute, Jim Crain was replaced as general manager of the Wilson Company by Robert ("Bob") E. Lee Wilson III, grandson of Lee Wilson. Bob Wilson's business skills encouraged the diversification of crops and continued operating the company in a civic-minded nature. These ideals were illustrated through a variety of employee benefits and programs. By the mid-1950s, the company had established a 40-hour work week for "white collar" workers with annual vacations and insurance benefits.¹⁷ The Wilson Company produced various promotion materials touting the benefits of life in Wilson, such as hourly bus and train services, educational institutions of the highest standard, housing and readily available materials for their upgrade.¹⁸

During the 1950s the town square gained additional Tudor Revival style buildings including the construction of a new bank building in 1952 and post office in 1957. The bank building was designed by Memphis architect George Mahan, Jr. and was distinguished by its ornate concrete entrance surround and clock tower at the roofline. The original service station burned in 1957 and was replaced by the current Tudor Revival style building. A small brick building containing the town's liquor store was also built at this time just to the northeast of the station.

In 1959, the town of Wilson was incorporated, and workers were given the opportunity to purchase their homes outright.¹⁹ Despite the business success of the Wilson Company, the town of Wilson had been operating at a

¹⁴ "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.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Whayne, 194-95, 223.

¹⁷ University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections staff, "Life in Wilson, Lee Wilson & Company Archives.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ "The Wilson Family," 4.

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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. While selling the residential area of the town, the Wilson Company maintained control of its commercial and agricultural buildings.

Bob Wilson continued the diversification principle of the company expanding it 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 major commodities - cotton, rice, and soybeans. Bob Wilson planted a diversity of crops that could maintain a large year-round labor force. 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 the Wilson Company one of the most successful agri-businesses in the South.²⁰

Wilson's population steadily declined after 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. The 1960s also witnessed a major transformation on the town square. In March of 1968 a snow storm collapsed the awnings on the fronts of the Administration Building and Wilson Theatre. Rather than repair or add new awnings the Wilson Company decided to remodel the facades in the Tudor Revival style. As Hudson Wren, general manager of the Wilson Company explained in the *Osceola Times* "Some years ago, when we adopted the Old English style for the bank, the post office, and the tavern, Mr. Wilson said someday we'd figure out what to do with the big main building. When that heavy snow collapsed the building canopy back in March, Mr. Wilson figured how we could do and now it is done."²¹

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 estimated \$110 million. Lawrence and the Lawrence Company is revitalizing the community as a Delta mecca of arts, culture, and education.²²

The Wilson Commercial Historic District continues to be a cohesive district connected through history, scale, and architectural design. As part of the programs implemented by The Lawrence Group, several of the agricultural buildings including the Wilson Company Cotton Gin are being restored to accommodate experimental agriculture and agri-tourism programs. The buildings in the Wilson Commercial Historic District remain largely intact and illustrate the magnitude of Lee Wilson's agriculture enterprise and impact on the region. The district retains a high degree of integrity and role as an example of a New South company town.

²⁰ "Lee Wilson and Company: Yesterday and Today," webpage.

²¹ "Lee Wilson & Co.'s Stores Are Celebrating 'New Look' Sale," *Osceola Times*, August 29, 1968.

²² 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

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	X	State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously listed in the National Register		Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	designated a National Historic Landmark		Local government
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #		University
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property	Approximately 19.17 acres	USGS Quadrangle	Wilson, Arkansas
----------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------	------------------

(Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates. Delete the other.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84:

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

USGS Quad Map - Wilson, Arkansas, 1983

(see Figure 1 Map)

- A. 15 S 768028 3940243
- B. 15 S 767930 3940116
- C. 15 S 768084 3939948
- D. 15 S 768266 3939971
- E. 15 S 768298 3940048

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

The boundary for the Wilson Commercial Historic District is illustrated on the accompanying map (Figure 2) as a dashed line. The district is bounded by Adams Street to the north, S. Jefferson and Madison Streets to the west, Latitude 35.593314 and Union Avenue to the east, and 2nd Street to the south.

This boundary includes the following parcels:

Mississippi County Parcel # 857-00049-000
Mississippi County Parcel # 857-00050-000
Mississippi County Parcel # 857-00062-000
Mississippi County Parcel # 857-00063-000
Mississippi County Parcel # 857-00152-000

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for the Wilson Commercial Historic District includes the town square with administrative and commercial buildings of the Town of Wilson, as well as key industrial buildings related to the processing of raw products from the Lee Wilson and Company's vast agricultural tracts. These buildings and structures compose the central hub of activity for the company town founded by Robert E. Lee Wilson. To the east of the boundary are post-1966 agricultural buildings. To the north, west and south are residential buildings and there are no additional contiguous commercial buildings associated with the town square.

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11. Form Prepared By

Name Philip Thomason, Andra Martens, Brittany McKee

Organization Thomason and Associates

Street & Number P.O. Box 121225 Date September 16, 2016

City or Town Nashville Telephone 615.385.4960

E-mail thomason@bellsouth.net State TN Zip Code 37212

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 map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

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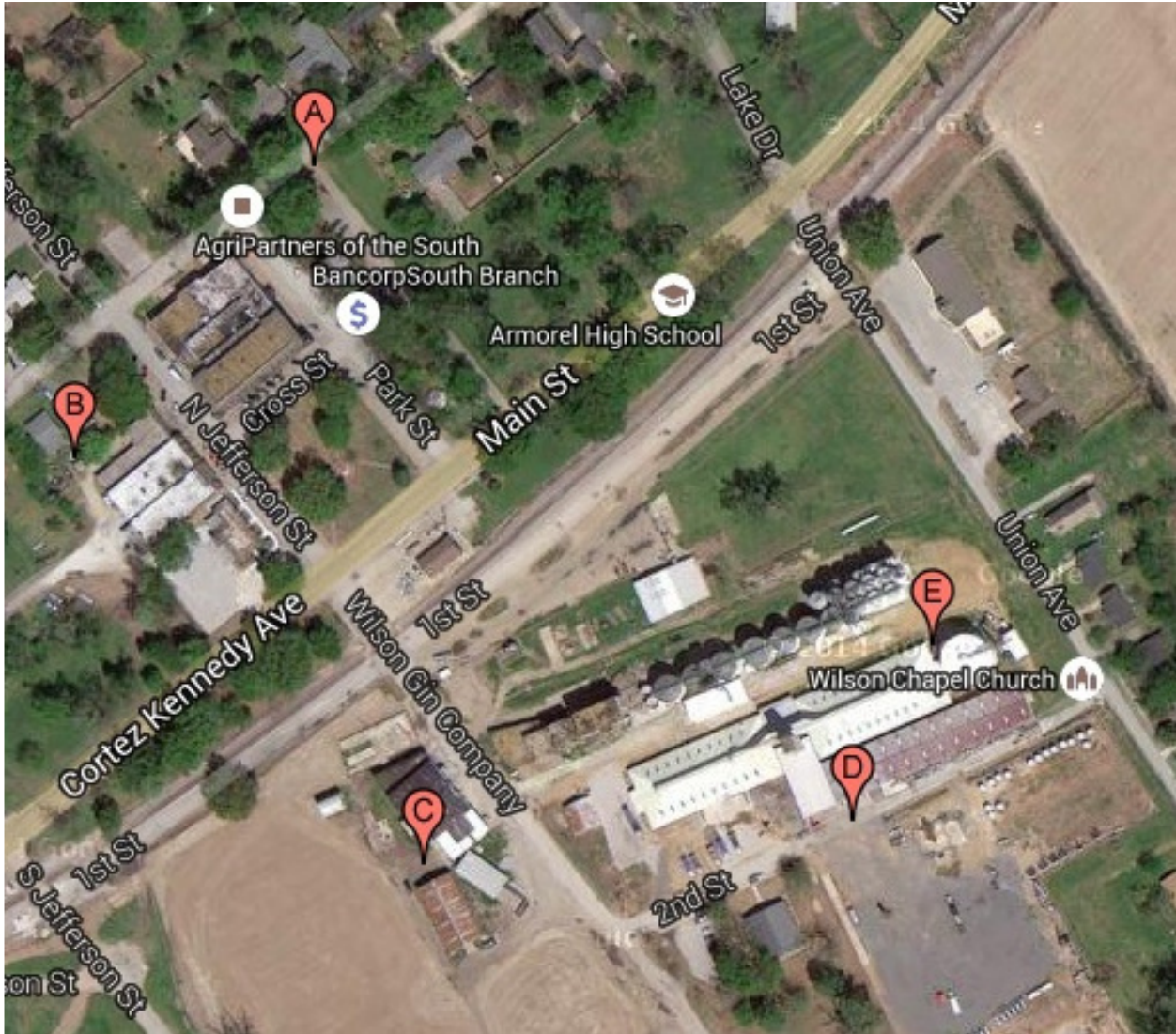


Figure 1: Map depicting UTM points for the Wilson Commercial Historic District.

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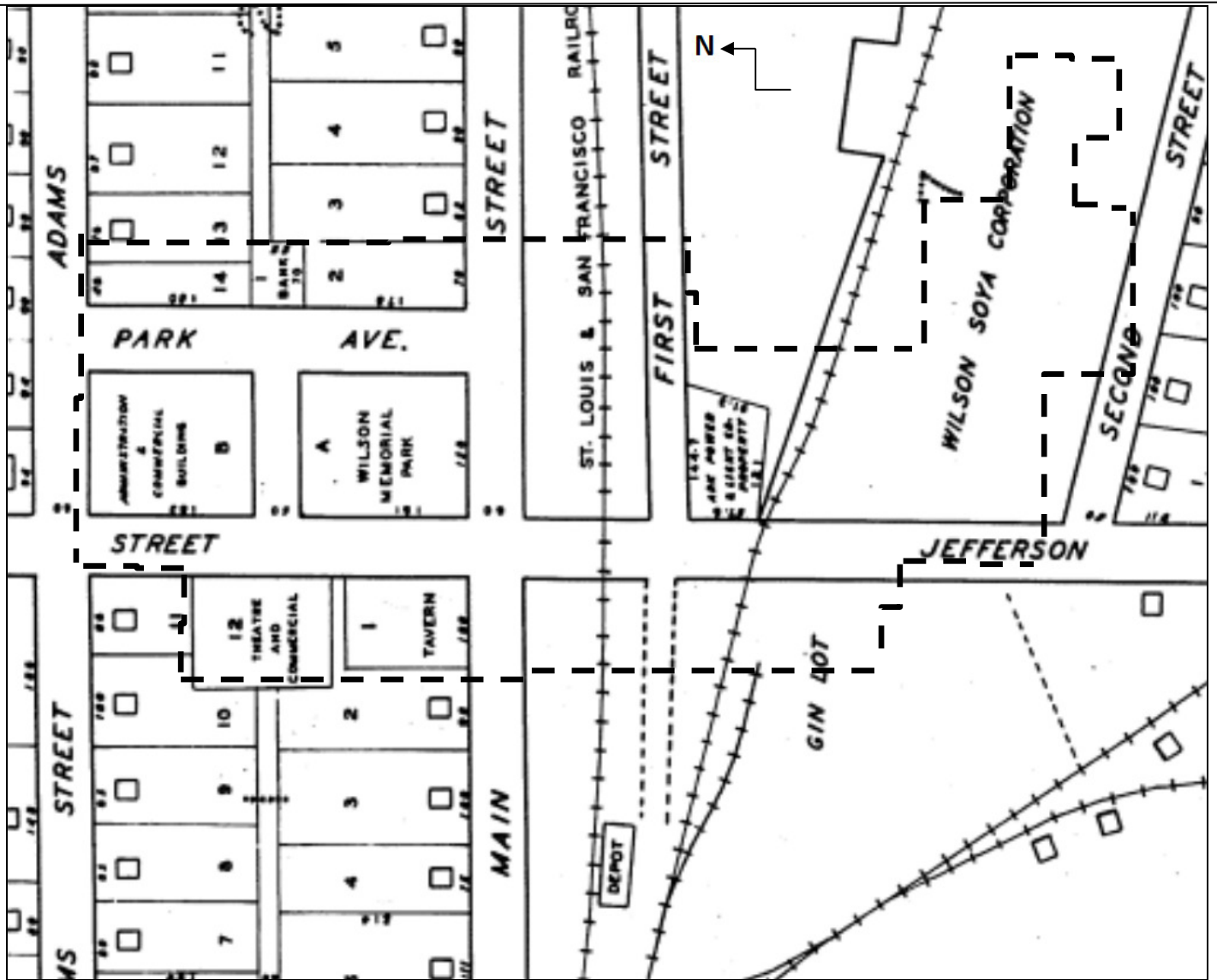


Figure 2: Boundary of the Wilson Commercial Historic District within dashed line on 1954 City of Wilson map.

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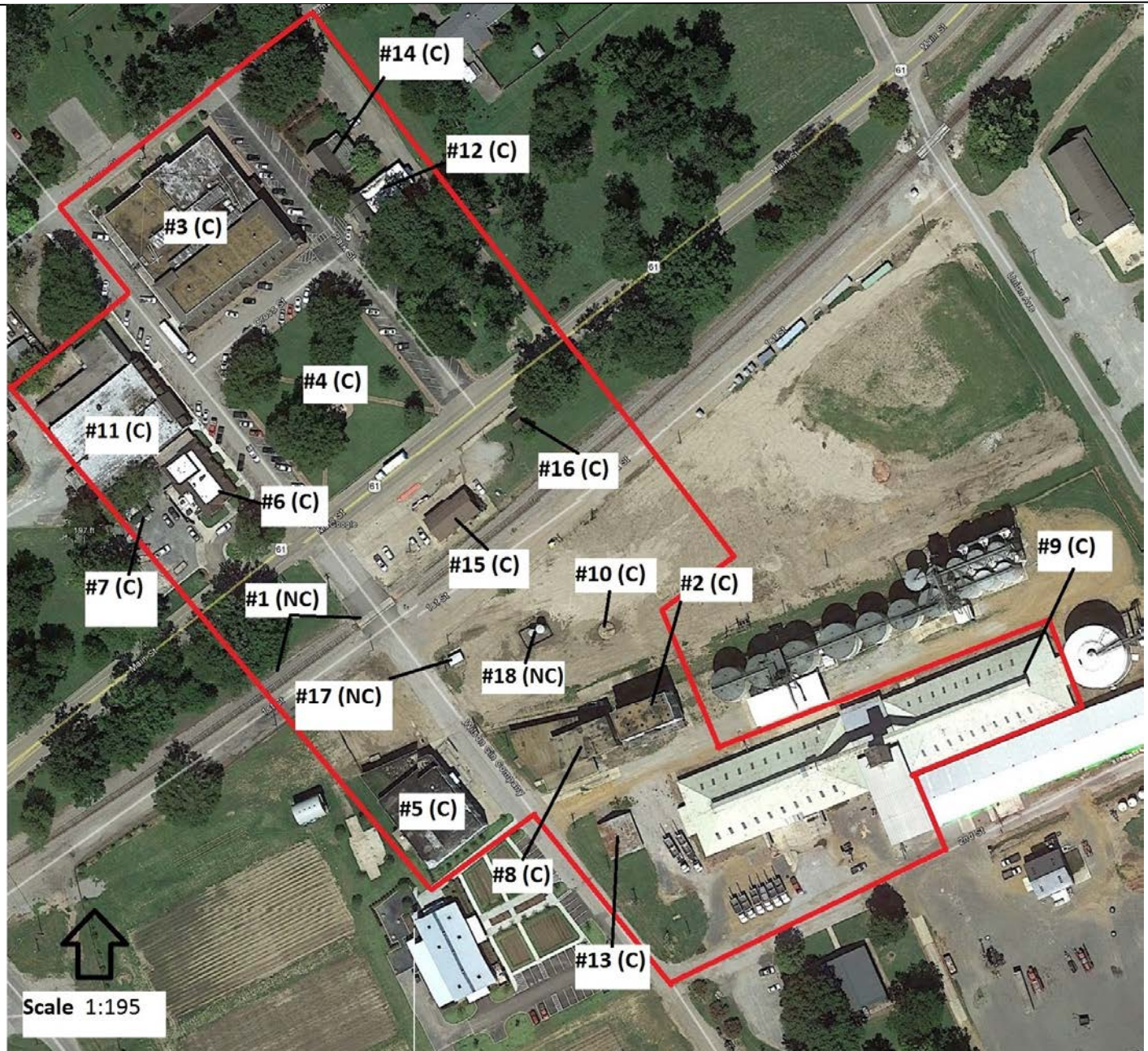


Figure 3: Boundary of the Wilson Commercial Historic District, keyed to contributing and noncontributing resource count, red line denotes district boundary.

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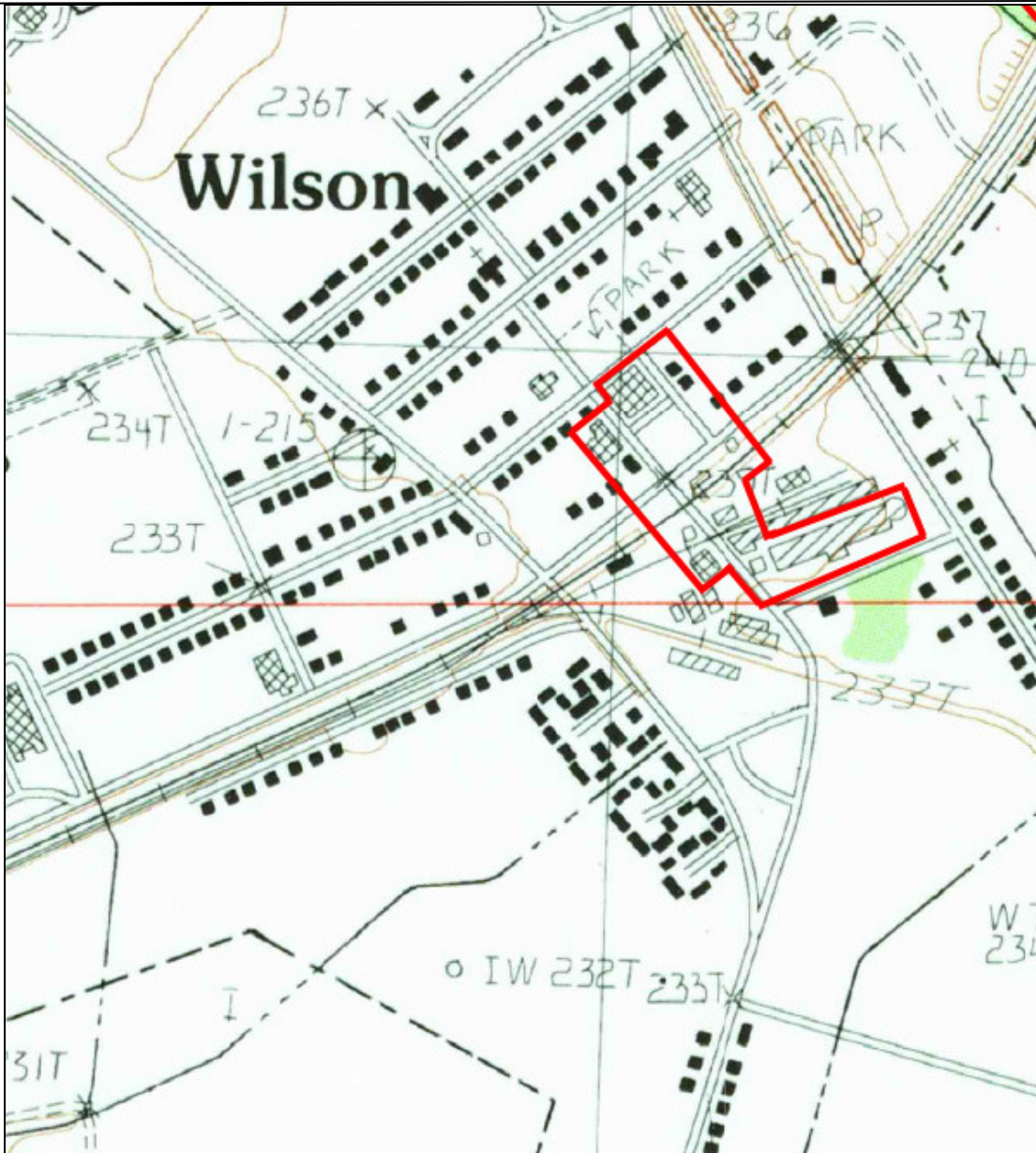


Figure 4: 1983 USGS Quad map of Wilson, Arkansas, showing location of the Wilson Commercial Historic District Boundary with solid line.

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.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Wilson Commercial Historic District
City or Vicinity: Wilson
County: Mississippi County State: Arkansas
Photographer: Philip Thomason
Date Photographed: March, 2016

- Photo 1 of 25: Streetscape, Park Street, view northeast.
- Photo 2 of 25: Streetscape, Wilson Memorial Park, view southwest.
- Photo 3 of 25: Streetscape, Industrial Row, U.S. Highway 61, view southwest.
- Photo 4 of 25: Wilson and Co. Milling Building, U.S. Highway 61, view north.
- Photo 5 of 25: Wilson and Co. Milling Building, U.S. Highway 61, view south.
- Photo 6 of 25: Wilson Administrative Building, Cross Street, view northeast.
- Photo 7 of 25: Wilson Administrative Building, view southeast.
- Photo 8 of 25: Wilson and Co. Cotton Gin Building, U.S. Highway 61, view southeast.
- Photo 9 of 25: Wilson and Co. Cotton Gin Building, U.S. Highway 61. view southwest.
- Photo 10 of 25: Wilson Café, 2 N. Jefferson Street, view northwest.
- Photo 11 of 25: Wilson Memorial Park, view northeast.
- Photo 12 of 25: Wilson and Co. Flour Production Building, U.S. Highway 61, view northeast.
- Photo 13 of 25: Wilson and Co. Flour Production Building, U.S. Highway 61, view northwest.
- Photo 14 of 25: Wilson and Co. Grain Elevator, U.S. Highway 61, view southeast.
- Photo 15 of 25: Wilson and Co. Grain Elevator, U.S. Highway 61, view northeast.
- Photo 16 of 25: Wilson Theater, 5-12 N. Jefferson Street, view northwest.
- Photo 17 of 25: Wilson Theater, 5-12 N. Jefferson Street, view west.
- Photo 18 of 25: Bank of Wilson, 55 Park Street, view northeast.
- Photo 19 of 25: Bank of Wilson, 55 Park Street, view north.
- Photo 20 of 25: Wilson Post Office, 3 Park Street, view northeast.
- Photo 21 of 25: Wilson Filling Station, 21 Cortez Kennedy Avenue, view southeast.
- Photo 22 of 25: Wilson Filling Station, 21 Cortez Kennedy Avenue, view southwest.
- Photo 23 of 25: Commercial Building, 19 Cortez Kennedy Avenue, view southwest.
- Photo 24 of 25: Commercial Building, 19 Cortez Kennedy Avenue, view northwest.
- Photo 25 of 25: Oil Tank, U.S. Highway 61, view southwest.

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property

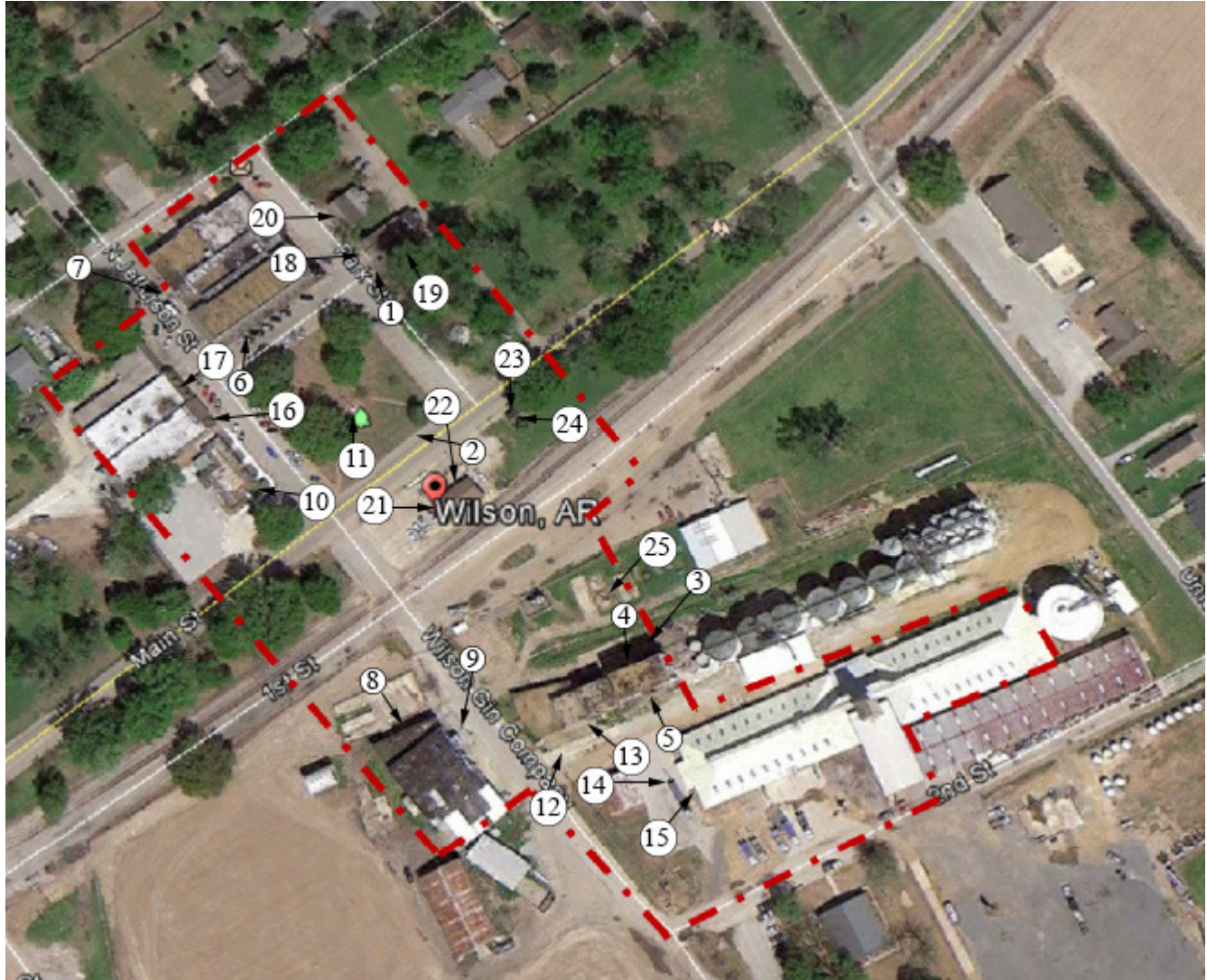


Figure 5: Photo key map

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property



Figure 6: Wilson Cotton Gin in 1931, (Photo courtesy of the Memphis Public Library).

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property



Figure 7: Administration Building, R.E.L. Wilson Monument and town square, 1939 (Photo courtesy of Arkansas History Commission).

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property



Figure 8: Administration Building, Wilson Company Store, 1939 (Photo courtesy of Arkansas History Commission).

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property



Figure 9: Administration Building, Wilson Company Offices, 1939 (Photo courtesy of Arkansas History Commission).

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas

Name of Property

County and State



Figure 10: Wilson Grist Mill and agricultural buildings, 1939 (Photo courtesy of Arkansas History Commission).

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property



Figure 11: Wilson Cotton Gin interior, 1939 (Photo courtesy of Arkansas History Commission).

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property



Figure 12: Wilson Tavern, (Wilson Café), 1939 (Photo courtesy of Arkansas History Commission).

Wilson Commercial Historic District

Mississippi County,
Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property



Figure 13: Wilson Theatre and Commercial Building, ca. 1955 (Photo courtesy of the Lawrence Group).

Property Owner

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

name The Lawrence Group, Wilson City LLC

street & number 1 Park Avenue telephone

city or town Wilson state AR zip code 72395







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Garland



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Wilson Commercial Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Mississippi

DATE RECEIVED: 8/12/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/02/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/19/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/27/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000651

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 9-23-2016 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Interesting use of Design unity for this Company town

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A+C

REVIEWER J. Habbert 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 NPS.



THE DEPARTMENT OF ARKANSAS
HERITAGE

Asa Hutchinson
Governor

Stacy Hurst
Director

RECEIVED 2280

AUG 12 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

August 3, 2016

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

Arkansas Arts Council

Arkansas Natural
Heritage Commission

Delta Cultural Center

Historic Arkansas Museum

Mosaic Templars
Cultural Center

Old State House Museum

RE: Wilson Commercial Historic District – Wilson, Mississippi
County, Arkansas

Dear Mr. Loether:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Wilson Commercial Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. 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 HISTORIC
PRESERVATION PROGRAM



National Historic
Preservation Act 1966-2016



323 Center Street, Suite 1500
Little Rock, AR 72201

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tdd: 711

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