Theme XXI: Political and Military Affairs After 1865

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Woodrow Wilson House

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
2340 S Street, NW.

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
District of Columbia

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

—DISTRICT
—STRUCTURE
—SITE
—OBJECT

—PUBLIC
—PRIVATE
—BOTH

—IN PROCESS
—BEING CONSIDERED

—X OCCUPIED
—UNOCCUPIED

—MUSEUM

—Agriculture
—Commercial
—Educational
—Entertainment
—Government
—Industrial
—Military
—Other:

—WORK IN PROGRESS

—YES: RESTRICTED

—NO

—YES: UNRESTRICTED

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
National Trust for Historic Preservation

STREET & NUMBER
740-748 Jackson Place, NW.

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
District of Columbia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC
Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER
6th and D Streets, NW.

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
District of Columbia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE
1976

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
District of Columbia
### DESCRIPTION

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<th>CONDITION</th>
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<td>X. EXCELLENT</td>
<td>_X. UNALTERED</td>
<td>_X. ORIGINAL SITE</td>
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**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The Woodrow Wilson House is a three-story red brick building originally built for Henry Parker Fairbanks by architect Waddy B. Wood in 1915. Located in the Embassy Row section of Northwest Washington, the house was designed in a Georgian Revival style popular in that neighborhood. The most notable features of the rather flat, square, front (north) facade, are three Palladian-style windows, incorporation Ionic columns and fluted semi-circular arches executed in light stone, which span the front, second story level. The small columned central entrance portico on the ground level is surmounted by a small parapet with decorative metal railing.

The first two stories are divided by two string courses, narrow bands of light stone. The third story windows are rectangular, flat-arched and unadorned, with double hung sash of six-over-six lights each. Three oval modallions are located between these six windows, directly above the center of each Palladian window. The slightly projecting cornice is outlined with bands of lighter stone and small dentils underneath a projecting brick section just below the roof edge.

On the rear (south), the house is two-stories, on an elevated terrace. The central bay has a Palladian-style opening (loggia used as balcony), on the second story, protected by a decorative metal railing, above a semicircular wooden bay surrounded by windows. The two flanking bays on each story are rectangular, horizontal, flat-arched windows divided into three panels of lights. The yard to the rear is terraced and the far south section runs down a steep grade to Decatur Place.

The Wilsons built a brick garage on the west, with a porch above it, and put iron gates at the entrance to the drive (west of the house). They installed an elevator and a billiard room, rearranged some interior partitions and built stacks for Mr. Wilson's library of 8,000 volumes (later given to the Library of Congress). Mrs. Wilson, who survived her husband and continued to live in this house for nearly 40 years, donated the property to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the house is relatively unchanged since Woodrow Wilson resided there. It has original furnishings and items personally owned by the Wilsons.
Woodrow Wilson, Presbyterian minister's son, who became educator, leader for international peace and 28th President of the United States, retired to this red brick house at 2340 S Street, NW., Washington, D. C. in 1921, at the end of his second term. He died here three years later on February 3, 1924.

Edith Bolling Wilson, his widow, provided that the house be presented to the American people under the guardianship of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in order to "preserve and maintain the said premises in perpetuity, as a memorial in honor of the Grantor's late husband, the Honorable Woodrow Wilson, a past President of the United States."

Woodrow Wilson was born in Staunton, Virginia in 1856 (see also Woodrow Wilson Birthplace, National Historic Landmark). He attended Davidson College, University of Virginia Law School and received his doctorate from Johns Hopkins University. In 1890 he returned to Princeton as a professor, and in June 1902 he was elected its president. The principles of his drastic and unpopular reorganization of Princeton are embodied in the Preceptorial System, which provided opportunity for individual instruction, and the Quad Plan, which coordinated social and intellectual college life.

On November 8, 1910, Wilson was elected governor of New Jersey; and on November 5, 1912, he was elected President of the United States on a "New Freedom" platform. Although he was determined to follow a neutral course and not be forced into the European War by any material interest or emotional wave, events gradually deepened American involvement. Following the sinking of four American ships, Wilson made his decision. On April 2, 1917, he asked Congress for a declaration that a state of war existed with Germany.

President Wilson's greatest contribution to victory lay in his eloquent voicing of Allied war aims. The height of his influence came with the armistice when he began his long and unsuccessful fight for a lasting and liberal peace under a strong League of Nations. Nevertheless, Wilson remains "historically the eminent prophet of that better World."

(Continued)
The Woodrow Wilson House is situated on an L-shaped property. It is bounded on the north by the south curb of S Street; on the south by the north curb of Decatur Place, on the east by the adjoining wall and lot line to 2330 S Street (the Textile Museum); on the west the property abuts that of the Austrian Embassy (2346 S Street) and a lot adjoining the north frontage was purchased sometime after the original 1921 purchase by the Wilsons.
Late in 1920, as Wilson's second term neared an end, his wife, Edith Bolling Wilson, began searching for a permanent residence in Washington. One day she happened to visit the house at 2340 S Street, NW., which was for sale though it had been built only 5 years earlier. Delighted with it, she informed her husband that it would make an ideal retirement home. Not long thereafter, on December 14, he surprised her by presenting her with the deed, though he did not personally see the structure until the next day. He and his wife occupied the house on inauguration day, March 4, 1921, following President Harding's swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol. On that occasion, as well as on many later ones, particularly Armistice Days and Wilson's birthdays, throngs of people gathered outside the home to greet the ex-President.

Wilson, partially paralyzed from a stroke he had suffered in 1919, spent his few remaining years in partial seclusion under the continuous care of his wife and servants. Except for a daily automobile ride and a weekly visit to the movies, he rarely left home or received guests, who did include Lloyd George of Britain and Georges Clemenceau of France. In the evenings, Mrs. Wilson played cards with or read aloud to him until he fell asleep. On two occasions, he attended state functions: the 1921 Armistice Day ceremony preceding the burial of the Unknown Soldier at Atlington National Cemetery, and President Harding's funeral in 1923. In the latter year, on the eve of Armistice Day, he broadcast a radio message to the public from his library. The following day, he spoke to a crowd that had gathered outside, his last public appearance. On February 3, 1924, he died in his upstairs bedroom and was laid to rest in Washington's National Cathedral.

Mrs. Wilson continued to live in the residence until her death in 1961. Prior to that time, she had donated it and many of the furnishings to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which in 1963 opened it to the public.