

Wilson Architectural Survey Update Report

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Project Background, Coordination, and Administration

The Historic Architecture Staff of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in-house Environmental Analysis Unit sought assistance from MdM Historical Consultants (MdM) to conduct an architectural survey and update and expand the comprehensive architectural history inventory of Wilson, Wilson County, North Carolina. The project resulted from mitigation measures implemented because of construction and launch of the CCX intermodal terminal in Rocky Mount. The study area for this project is generally the City of Wilson.

This survey builds upon work completed by Kate Ohno in the late 1970s and published in 1980 as *Wilson, North Carolina, Historic Buildings Inventory*, coauthored by Robert C. Bainbridge and Kate Ohno. The North Carolina Division of Archives and History's Grants-in-Aid program funded Ohno's survey work, which was jointly sponsored by the City of Wilson and the Wilson Historic Preservation Commission. The goals of that project were twofold: to identify and document the then-existing historic architecture of Wilson and to increase public understanding of and support for historic preservation. The 1980 book explored the history of Wilson's development and presented survey results. The work focused on the period extending from the mid-nineteenth century through about 1940, which corresponded with the age range of the buildings documented in the survey.

This report picks up from there. It describes the intensive-level survey in and around Wilson in 2024 and 2025 that constitutes the historic architectural inventory. Main topics explored through the built environment include industrial expansion; new highway infrastructure; suburban residential and retail growth; institutional and industrial development; urban renewal; and, at the tail end of the period, the beginning of a local historic preservation movement.

This work has been supervised by NCDOT Historic Architecture staff and completed according to survey standards established by the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office (HPO) and described in the HPO survey manual, *North Carolina Historic Preservation Office Architectural Survey Manual: Practical Advice for Recording Historic Structures* (2022 edition). MdM meets 36 CFR 61 qualifications for architectural historians. Staff from the HPO reviewed and commented on the deliverables generated by this project, including this report.

In 2024, HPO staff provided MdM with a working list of resources to be documented during the intensive survey. The list included previously recorded buildings and structures as well as newly identified properties that generally post-dated the period covered by the 1979 comprehensive survey. Andrew Edmonds, GIS Technical Support Analyst, supplied MdM with an Access database populated with previously surveyed Wilson properties and to which newly surveyed resources could be added. Chandrea Burch, HPO Technical Assistant, provided survey site numbers (SSNs) for the newly surveyed properties.

The authors are grateful to Dana Corson, the Wilson Preservation Planner; Dale Edmonds, Wilson Parks Assistant Director; local historian Robert Boykin III; staff at the Main Library of the

Wilson County Public Library; and especially to the Wilson residents and property owners who provided a wealth of information and generous access to properties.

Methodology

The project required updating the survey information on 271 individual properties; windshield survey of five previously listed National Register of Historic Places historic districts; and survey of 221 previously unidentified properties, which included both individual properties as well as neighborhoods or cohesive areas. The intensive survey was guided by the HPO survey manual, previous intensive survey results, and the working list of properties now eligible for survey. The surveyed properties reflect development and architectural trends in the late nineteenth century to about 1975, expanding the scope of historical and architectural trends documented in survey around Wilson.

MdM Principal Investigators and Architectural Historians Jennifer F. Martin and Cynthia de Miranda intensively surveyed the properties throughout late 2024 and 2025. They documented properties in the field with DSLR photography and survey notes. MdM undertook research for each property from their offices in Durham, examining digitized records from the Wilson County GIS department; the Wilson County Register of Deeds; and the NC HPO GIS mapping service. MdM also searched digitized issues of the *Wilson Daily Times* and digitized copies of city directories. They searched digitized census records, vital records, and cemetery inventories from online research repositories Ancestry.com and Findagrave.com. MdM also completed research on some individual properties as well as neighborhoods in the Local History Room of the Main Branch of the Wilson Public Library.

This report presents architectural history and context from 1940 through 1975 and highlights physical changes in the inventory of historic properties in Wilson since about 1980. The survey also updates information on previously documented properties that have been removed from their original sites or significantly altered. Additionally, the project expanded documentation in Wilson to include neighborhoods and properties developed after 1940.

Wilson's Development from 1940 through 1975

Historian Charles Wesley McKinney Jr. has noted that Wilson was little changed during World War II. A central business district catering mostly to white residents centered on Nash and Goldsboro streets, an intersection dominated by Neoclassical Revival-style commercial and government buildings. Brick buildings of two- to three-stories in the standard commercial style line surrounding blocks, with newer Art Deco buildings infusing modernity in the 1930s. Across the Atlantic Coast Line railroad tracks, a couple of blocks of Nash Street housed the Black business district, with commercial properties for residents of East Wilson. A tobacco warehouse district spread out over several blocks southeast of the commercial district, centered on Kenan and Goldsboro streets. The buildings filled several city blocks with long elevations, multiple gabled roofs dotted with skylights, and, particularly on the older buildings, decorative brickwork. South of that were more industrial properties that processed tobacco bought and sold at the auction warehouses every August. The residential streets of East Wilson were filled

with one- and two-story, mostly frame and generally speculative dwellings built between about 1890 and 1940 for Black residents. Although many are vernacular buildings, including blocks and blocks of shotgun dwellings, known locally as endway houses, a number of dwellings have Queen Anne- or Craftsman-style architectural details. Spreading north and west of the commercial district were residential quarters for white residents, including both frame and brick dwellings in a proliferation of architectural styles.¹ Wilson's surrounding landscape, too, was unchanged from the pre-war years. "The hillsides surrounding the city were dominated by an expansive constellation of tobacco farms. The farms—along with the sharecroppers and tenants who tended them—represented a central element of Wilson life."² In the wave of expansion that came to the city in the decades following the war, the surrounding agricultural landscape played a significant part in the changes occurring in the city.

Post-war development trends began taking off around 1949 and touched agricultural-industrial and institutional quarters south and east of downtown; augmented the early-twentieth-century suburban residential development, particularly for white residents in northwest Wilson; and redeveloped older residential areas where landlords persisted in renting substandard housing with little to no upkeep or improvement to Black residents. Highway development drove growth in the residential suburbs, and retail and commercial development accelerated along the roadways, adversely affecting commerce in the central business district. As Wilson grew, changed, and modernized, a historic preservation movement emerged to document and preserve the historic architecture of the city.

Agricultural-Industrial Development

In their history of Wilson's architectural development, Bainbridge and Ohno described growth at the turn of the twentieth century driven by the increasing fortunes of large Wilson County landowners. These were white men who had raised cash with tobacco farms worked in part by tenant farmers. The city offered tax breaks to encourage them to build tobacco storage warehouses in town, thus transforming Wilson into a significant tobacco market. Wilson's industrial area at end of the nineteenth century populated the intersection of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad with the Norfolk and Southern line south of downtown.³

Wilson tobacco warehousemen Cozart, Eagles and Co. were still building giant storage buildings and auction houses in Wilson at the midpoint of the twentieth century. The former Centre Brick Tobacco Warehouse No. 3 (WL2350) was built in 1947 at the corner of Goldsboro Street and Ward Boulevard. The façade at Goldsboro Street reveals that the huge building is made up of six parallel sections of gable-roofed structures with a flat-roofed addition at the back. The building is clad in metal and retains characteristic skylights across the roof to daylight the

¹ Wilson County Aerial Photographs, 1940, Folder, USDA Photograph Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/sets/72157708434503645/>, viewed February 10, 2026.

² Charles Wesley McKinney Jr. "'Our People Began to Press for Greater Freedom:' The Black Freedom Struggle in Wilson, North Carolina" (doctoral dissertation, Duke University, 2003), 2.

³ Robert C. Bainbridge and Kate Ohno, *Wilson, North Carolina, Historic Buildings Inventory* (Wilson: City of Wilson, 1980), 12-13; McKinney, 1-6; "City Experiences its Green Years," *Wilson Daily Times*, August 11, 1950.

auctions held inside. It was the third warehouse in Wilson for the company, which also owned and operated Centre Brick Warehouse No. 1 and No. 2 (WL0615) at 220 Goldsboro Street S in today's Wilson Central Business-Tobacco Warehouse District (WL0442). Centre Brick No. 3 made its debut at the 1947 market, along with three other new auction warehouses that year; these warehouses brought the city's total to seventeen buildings. The structures could collectively store ten million pounds of tobacco waiting for auction. After the market, county recreational basketball teams played their 1948 season on an "improvised court" in the Centre Brick No. 3. All three auction warehouses operated in Wilson for a period in the late 1940s and early 1950s, until Centre Brick Warehouse No. 1 burned to the ground in 1951. The Cozarts sold Warehouse No. 3 in 1986, and it became known as Liberty Warehouse. Ownership changed repeatedly and the warehouse was later known as Big M Tobacco before the 2019 sale to Horizon Ltd. An addition to Warehouse No. 3 burned in 2010. Remnants from the burned section on the parcel immediately south include concrete steps that led to an entrance at Goldsboro Street SW and a concrete loading dock and ramp that provided access to the east elevation.

Other new complexes housed tobacco processing concerns. In 1961, the American division of the Imperial Tobacco Company of Great Britain and Ireland built a processing plant in Wilson. Within five years, the division relocated its headquarters from Richmond and its research division from Durham. The company erected a headquarters building (WL2239) at 2201 Miller Road S in the New Formalist mode of Modernist design in 1966 at the southeast corner of Wilco Boulevard and Contentnea Road in one of Wilson's industrial zones.

Tobacco Processors (WL2260) opened in Wilson in July 1965 along the track of the former Norfolk Southern Railway and specialized in tipping and threshing tobacco. Threshing involved separating the stem from the lamina and then drying the leaf by extracting moisture. Inside the plant, workers placed tobacco on pallets, and the pallets were moved by forklift. Customers could get their tobacco in a variety of forms from the company including strips, leaves, bundles, green prized, and wholly threshed. During peak season, the plant employed 700 people.⁴

The city diversified its agricultural-industrial development with two substantial feed and grain storage facilities in the 1950s. They located in Wilson due to the county's mid-twentieth-century development of livestock, poultry, and grain production in Wilson County. The Purina Mill (WL2266) and the Cargill plant (WL2259) both opened south of US 301. The Purina Mill includes a massive 1954 grain structure of nearly twenty 125-foot-tall concrete storage bins topped by a water tower. The bins hold 403,100 bushels of grain. A mid-century office building and warehouse, as well as later storage structures, also populate the facility. The original concrete bins and the 161-foot-tall mill head were painted with the company's trademark red and white checkerboard. Cargill features a towering 1951 grain elevator at the center of a five-acre complex. Under an unusual arrangement, Wilson County built the elevator and associated structures and leased them to Cargill to pay off the debt for the buildings. The state law enabling the deal was later ruled unconstitutional. In the 1960s, Cargill bought some of the

⁴ "Tobacco Processors Keeps Pace with Modern Industry," *Wilson Daily Times*, August 27, 1971.

property from the county and expanded its plant.⁵ The structure marked the start of Cargill's Nutrena Feeds Division, established at this facility and housing feeds for meat, dairy, and egg producers.⁶ The Central Soya plant (WL2256) followed in 1968 with grain elevators and processing structures on the twelve-acre site at the corner of Wilco Boulevard and Contentnea Road. All three companies were founded in the Midwest, dating from the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, and were well-established companies by the time of their mid-twentieth century appearance in Wilson.

The city continued to diversify its industrial base and pursued other corporate agricultural processors. In 1958, following heavy campaigning by the local Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest beef and pork processor built a new plant in town. The Swift and Company plant (WL2255) opened for production on Wilco Boulevard in south Wilson in January 1959.⁷ Governor Luther Hodges attended the plant's opening in April 1958, giving a long speech extolling the positive effect it would have on the local economy. Hodges exclaimed, "I know that I speak not only for the people of this community and this county, but for all the people of our state when I say that we are glad you are here, that we are proud of this new industry, and that we will do everything within our power to insure [sic] its success."⁸ The one-story, red-brick Modernist building has fixed-light windows alternating with panels of square tiles extending along most of the façade and the north (side) elevation and with an open-sided porch with flat roof at the south end. An Ohio-based meat processor purchased the plant from Swift and Company in 1977; twenty years later, current occupant Smithfield Packing Company took over.⁹

In this period, the Wilson Chamber of Commerce worked to promote the city as a hub of commerce for eastern North Carolina in order to drum up business for its merchants. In 1962, the Central District Campaign, a group of community boosters, resurrected the slogan "Wide-Awake Wilson" from a 1919 effort to raise money to fund several city projects. In addition to re-using the slogan, the group mounted an eight-foot-tall mechanical plywood crowing rooster on the downtown water tower as its eye-catching logo.¹⁰ Faculty of Atlantic Christian College designed the wooden bird, and George Westphall, a city employee, built it. In 1998, the rooster, known as Foghorn Buckhorn or just "Buck," was moved to the city water tower at the intersection of I-95 and US 264. In 2008, the City of Wilson took the rooster down and placed a fiberglass replica of the fowl at the American Legion Fairgrounds (WL2214) on US 301.¹¹

⁵ "Origins of Cargill-County Lease Lost in Time," *Wilson Daily Times*, November 19, 1985.

⁶ "Cargill Has Served Farmers for More Than a Century," *Wilson Daily Times*, March 16, 1979.

⁷ "Governor Hodges Welcomes Swift to State's Growing Industrial Family, Cites Tar Heel Growth" and "Jarvis Tells Visitors That New Plant to Aid in Progress of State," *Wilson Daily Times*, April 18, 1959.

⁸ "Dinner Bell Foods Welcomed to Area," *Wilson Daily Times*, September 23, 1977.

⁹ "Dinner Bell Closes Doors in 1990," *Wilson Daily Times*, February 28, 1991.

¹⁰ "Anatomy of a Logo," Black Wide-Awake blog, <https://afamwilsonnc.com/2019/10/17/anatomy-of-a-logo/>, October 17, 2019.

¹¹ *Wilson Times*, July 4, 2008.

Highways through Wilson

Transportation options—or the lack of good ones—aided and hampered growth in Wilson in its early history. Early modalities included stagecoach routes, plank roads, waterways, and rail lines. In the twentieth century, the advent of the automobile and the road system it necessitated exerted tremendous impact on the built environment.¹² The twentieth-century industrial and other development in Wilson would not have been possible without expanded roadway networks; the highway improvements began before World War II.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, state and federal highways began criss-crossing Wilson, boosting the tobacco markets that dominated the town's economy. The most significant of these roads is present-day US 301, the thousand-mile highway from Delaware to Florida. US 301 in North Carolina was designated in June 1932 mostly along the route of US 217 (or NC 22 and NC 40) from the South Carolina border to Wilson. The US 301 designation also replaced US 17-1 from Wilson to the Virginia state line. The federal government constructed US 301 on existing roads and on new locations during the Depression, when road building and maintenance transferred to the federal level. The highway ran in sight of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad from Virginia to South Carolina.¹³

To facilitate the movement of railcars into Wilson, two Art Deco-style underpasses (WL2232 and WL2238) were built in south Wilson over US 301 in 1941 to accommodate the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The bridges display spans of reinforced concrete, arcaded portal piers with the middle support separating eastbound and westbound traffic, and smooth-faced, reinforced-concrete abutments. Art Deco elements include beveled supports and spandrels, round pipe railing ends, and rounded and stepped details on the vertical piers. The route opened to traffic in time for the 1941 Tobacco Festival.¹⁴

US 301 became a major north-south route, well known to travelers in the eastern United States. Early on, US 301 was nicknamed “the tobacco trail” because of its route through bright leaf growing areas along the Eastern Seaboard. The Washington-Florida Short Route Association, wisely renamed the Tobacco Trail Association, formed in 1934 mainly to encourage tourism along the road.¹⁵ Several businessmen from Wilson served as officers of the organization, including its first secretary, Lester Rose.¹⁶ In the mid 1940s, the group became more active as the highway was extended farther north and the post-war economy boomed.¹⁷

¹² Robert C. Bainbridge and Kate Ohno, *Wilson, North Carolina: Historic Buildings Inventory* (Wilson, N.C.: City of Wilson, 1980), 4, 12.

¹³ “Measures Involving State Highways Passed by Board,” *News and Record* (Greensboro), June 22, 1932, 4; “Motorcade to Travel Florida Short Route,” *News and Observer*, October 26, 1928, 11.

¹⁴ “View of Underpass on US Alternate 301 South of Wilson,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 22, 1941.

¹⁵ “Stackhouse Calls Meeting of Florida Short Route Group,” *Florence Morning News*, October 7, 1934, 6; “Tobacco Trail Motorcade Set,” *Wilson Daily Times*, September 5, 1941, 4.

¹⁶ “Shortest Route to New York,” advertisement, *Palm Beach Post*, Palm Beach Florida, March 18, 1936, 3.

¹⁷ “Tobacco Trail Group to Meet,” *Wilson Daily Times*, May 27, 1946, 3.

The improved US 301 was ready to meet the built-up demand for tourism after World War II. American families had automobiles and more disposable income, leading to a marked increase in longer-distance car travel. Motor courts, motels, restaurants, and service stations opened along US 301 in Wilson to cater to the motoring public. Roadside motor lodges emerged in the 1920s with the widespread adoption of the automobile. They flourished in the late 1940s and 1950s with the affordability of cars and the development of the national highway system. The tourist courts and motor courts of the pre-war years evolved into the “motel,” the new word a portmanteau of “motor” and “hotel.” The new lodging type implied more space and greater conveniences to travelers than available in the basic shelters of the earlier court arrangements. All these property types co-existed into the 1950s and early 1960s, after which the tourist court model was mostly abandoned by motel owners and the motoring public.¹⁸

A number of iterations of early motor tourist lodging survive from this period in Wilson. Adean H. and Clifton Matthews, the first operators of Matthews Motor Court (WL2249) at 2421 US 301 S, also lived on the property—perhaps in the tidy, side-gabled brick house that stands at the center of the motor court. The cottage is typical of dwellings built after World War II. Behind it, a side-gabled, brick-veneered building in a modified U-shape contains the individual guest rooms. A semi-circular drive with a central common area extends in front of the rooms. An undated AAA postcard provides a description of the complex: “A modern brick court of 20 comfortable, steam heated rooms, 100% air conditioned, tiled showers or combination baths, free TV in every room, swimming pool, restaurants nearby. Playground for children. Room Phones.” The building is typical of motor courts in the post-war period, when cost restraints meant guest rooms shared a single foundation along with plumbing and electrical systems. A continuous shed-roof porch with decorative iron posts shelters the building’s façade and the doors and windows of the individual rooms. Random areas of pink brick veneer have been added to the façade.

Other motels have evocative names and similarly homey buildings to appeal to motoring tourists. Elizabeth W. and John W. McArthur, originally from Indiana, owned, operated, and lived at the Tobacco Trail Motel (WL2247) at 2650 US 301 S, which opened in 1949. Here, the small side-gabled, brick-veneered cottage serves as the motel office. A brick-veneered linear motel room wing is at the west side of the center parking lot. An identical motel room wing is opposite the parking lot and faces west. For both motel room buildings, wood posts support a full-width porch that shelters the motel room doors. Originally, individual metal awnings sheltered the motel room doors. A swimming pool once occupied the space just south of the east building. Village Motor Lodge (WL2245) at 2929 US 301 S is made up of two mid-twentieth-century motels: Motel Cardinal, opened around 1950, and Village Motor Lodge, opened in 1957. Original amenities included a swimming pool, playground, and electric cars for children.

¹⁸ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 15-47.

Walter Clee Daniels was the first owner of both, but the hotels were separate businesses as late as 1984, at which time they were remodeled.¹⁹

The Huntington House Motel and Coral Room Restaurant (WL2267) at 2617 US 301 S was a family affair established by two couples from New York. Kathleen Bordan Banasiak (1927-1994) and Edwin J. Banasiak Sr. (1926-1996), a World War II veteran born in New York, built the thirty-four-room motel, which opened in January 1957. It is a U-plan, one-story building with three wings set at right angles. The swimming pool formerly located on the lawn inside the “U” of the motel room wings has been covered over, and only some of the playground equipment remains. E. J. Banasiak’s sister, Frederica Banasiak Cline (1924-1987), also a native of New York, and her husband, Rufus E. Cline (1922-1983), opened the Coral Room Restaurant on August 2, 1958. The flat-roofed, single-story restaurant building features Roman brick laid in patterns of horizontal and vertical stripes. The roof sign, windows, and Roman-brick planter are all original.²⁰

Another restaurant along the highway is Parker’s Barbecue (WL2298), which remains in its original building at 2514 US 301 S. It is locally owned and a well-known restaurant in eastern North Carolina. Brothers Graham Parker (1921-1998) and Ralph H. Parker (1923-2013) and cousin Henry Parker Brewer (1916-1987) opened Parker’s in 1946. Originally, the property held the barbeque restaurant, an oyster house, and a motel, called Rouse’s Motor Court, that the Parkers and Brewer purchased in 1949. The founders and their wives lived in a house together on the edge of the property. They closed the oyster bar, leaving the restaurant to serve primarily barbeque and fried chicken. As was typical for the South in the 1950s and 1960s, Black patrons went to the back of the building to get their meals. Graham and Ralph Parker and Henry Parker Brewer retired in 1986 and sold the business to one of their long-time workers who now operates it with partners.²¹ The restaurant occupies four acres and includes the 1946 side-gabled, elongated building covered in aluminum siding standing on the north side of a large asphalt parking lot. The restaurant initially seated 100 but now accommodates 400 diners. A 1946 steel frame and concrete block building with a metal roof behind the restaurant is used to cook hogs.²²

Like motels and restaurants, service stations populated the roadside on this important tourist route. Only a few historic service stations survive along US 301. Service station style veered toward the Modern Movement in the 1930s with the box type, seemingly influenced by both Streamline design as well as by materials of the burgeoning automotive industry. The shift, however, was really a result of the Depression-era trends. Gas consumption fell and oil companies, following the lead from the super service station trend, started selling tires, car batteries, and other motoring accessories to boost overall sales at even small stations. They also began offering automobile maintenance and repair, keeping the service area to a

¹⁹ “Feature Account of the Week,” *Wilson Daily Times*, June 11, 1986, 5D.

²⁰ Advertisement, *Wilson Daily Times*, August 1, 1958, 3.

²¹ “Parker’s Barbecue in Wilson,” *Our State Magazine*, ourstate.com, July 2, 2013.

²² “Parker’s: 20 Years Later, \$2 Million Yearly Business,” *Wilson Daily Times*, July 2, 1976, 24.

restrained two or three bays. Station buildings simplified in detail and expanded in size in response to these trends. Flat-roof, prefabricated steel structures and simple rectangular boxes began to predominate. The buildings were covered with terra cotta and later with structural glass or porcelain-enameled steel panels. After World War II, box stations were more likely built with concrete block rather than structural steel.²³

Dawson's Gulf (WL2258) occupied the building at 1902 US 301 S in the early 1960s. It was later Barnes Gulf. The station is a box-type station widely constructed in the middle decades of the twentieth century. The flat-roofed, concrete block building retains its wide overhanging eaves and porcelain-enameled steel-panel exterior. The tall, aluminum-framed plate glass display windows located on a portion of the façade and west elevation are original. Garage bay doors are replacements. The building retains a fully-glazed front door and original doors and windows on the rear. The raised oval concrete fuel pump island remains.

The completion of US 301 also boosted industrial development in south Wilson after World War II, when steel and other building materials became available. Tobacco warehouses like Big Dixie, Wainwright (WL2230), and Watson No. 2, Forbes Transfer and Forbes Livestock, and Columbia Baking Company built large warehouses and plants in south Wilson in the late 1940s.²⁴

In 1956, the US 301 dual-lane bypass was completed around Wilson. In broadcasting the road's completion, E. P. Koonce, division engineer for the state highway department, also announced the construction of "a dual lane interstate super highway to stretch from Florida to Maine," which would bypass Wilson. He assured locals that the "new super highway through this area will have little or no effect on the amount of traffic now flowing through and over the present U.S. highway 301."²⁵

Building of Interstate 95 began in 1957. The highway, which runs almost parallel to US 301, caused tourist traffic to decline on the older highway in Wilson. Businesses on US 301, particularly the motel operators, had difficulty in maintaining their customer base. Several rebuilt near the interstate, while others operated at a much slower pace or closed altogether.

Suburban Development

Shopping Centers, office complexes, and car-dependent residential developments all emerged in Wilson in this post-World War II era. Shopping centers remain commercially relevant as disperse mini-districts convenient to different parts of town. They are constantly updated, however, as tenants come and go. Physical upgrades intended to keep customers engaged often cover or replace original construction materials or configurations. The Parkwood Shopping center, established in 1964 with 19 tenants, was converted to the fully enclosed

²³ John A. Jackle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 144-152.

²⁴ "Parker's: 20 Years Later, \$2 Million Yearly Business," *Wilson Daily Times*, July 2, 1976, 24; "Wilson Building Tops \$1,000 in 1946," *Wilson Daily Times*, January 2, 1947, 1.

²⁵ "Workers Near Completion of 301 Dual-Lane Bypass Around Wilson," *Wilson Daily Times*, August 20, 1956, 1; "Plans for Super Highway Started; Thoroughfare to Run West of the City," *Wilson Daily Times*, August 20, 1956, 1.

Parkwood Mall (WL2377) fifteen years later, in 1979. It was eventually renamed Wilson Mall. Its active life extended into the twenty-first century, but the mall closed in 2015. The property has been purchased by the city; the mall is currently being razed, and the land is to be redeveloped in the near future.

Small office complexes eventually followed the suburban trend, locating on parcels adjacent to major thoroughfares that provided plenty of parking. One example, under renovation during the 2025 survey, is the 1973 Oak Terrace Office Mall (WL2376). Two Modernist, concrete-block, pent-roofed buildings with floor-to-ceiling fixed sash and white Roman brick veneer stand side by side, surrounded by parking. The open space between them forms an entry courtyard, sheltered by a flat-roofed canopy on brick-clad columns. In this period, office complexes appeared to take care to match the scale of the surrounding residential buildings, although the paved parking lots were in contrast to the suburban lawns and landscaping of the neighboring houses.

Residential subdivisions intended for white families—often headed by World War II vets using their G.I. Bill benefits—spread out north of the early, pre-war suburbs. Largely because of Federal Housing Administration (FHA) programs that led to the development of subdivisions and housing developments, Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch houses in Wilson line the grid and curvilinear streets of mid-twentieth-century neighborhoods. The simple and economical house designs were also promoted in magazines, architectural journals, newspapers, and by building companies.

Gold Park Heights (WL2283), a post-World War II subdivision in northwest Wilson, was the property of attorney H. G. Connor III and developer and builder Walton W. Smith. Smith's company built between 400 to 500 houses from the time his company was founded in 1940 to 1968. He also developed the Westwood, Brentwood West, and Brookside subdivisions. Platted in 1947, Gold Park Heights contains about fifty lots with most shaded by large pine trees. Walton W. Smith described the houses as low income in a *Rocky Mount Telegram* article on May 26, 1965. The neighborhood contains typical small, post-World War II Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch houses with brick veneer or synthetic siding. Most are one-story with side-gable roofs, some with off-center front-gables. Houses with three-part multi-light picture windows abound. Gold Park is the quintessential FHA neighborhood of small houses of simple composition and massing.

Avalon Park (WL2282) also contains typical small, post-World War II Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch houses with brick or synthetic siding. A few hipped-roof dwellings stand on Fleming Street NE, but most minimal houses have side-gable roofs. The subdivision plat dates to February 1948 and includes eight residential blocks immediately south of Montclair subdivision in northeast Wilson. According to the plat, the property owners were brothers W. N. Hackney and W. D. Hackney, whose grandfather founded Hackney Wagon Company in 1854. On July 18, 1948, realtor George A. Barefoot advertised the subdivision in the *Wilson Daily Times* as "Wilson's newest development [in the] northwest section." The neighborhood was to include "all city conveniences, including water, sewerage and lights. Lots are wide and deep with high

elevation. Beautiful trees will be set out on all streets.” The city eventually laid sewer lines in Avalon Park in 1956.²⁶

Modest-sized, side-gabled, brick-veneered Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch houses dominate the Boswell subdivision (WL2289). Scythia Deans Boswell, widowed in 1942, purchased property in the summer of 1948 from K. C. Winstead Jr.²⁷ Engineer T. C. Felton platted the Boswell Subdivision in January 1949. As she sold lots in the subdivision, deeds refer to Boswell as “owner and developer.” Like many subdivisions of the period, Mrs. Boswell instituted covenants to guide its development. Along with specifying what types of dwellings could be built, she also included a clause stating “no person of any race other than the Caucasian race shall use or occupy any building or any lot, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant.”²⁸ A neat row of one-story, brick-veneered houses on the east side of the 100 block of Boswell Street embodies the types of Minimal Traditional residences in the subdivision.

The compact Southern Realty and Insurance Company Subdivision (WL2301) contains one-story, Minimal Traditional houses with brick-veneered and vinyl-sided exteriors. Most have side-gable roofs, and some include off-center front-facing gables. Southern Realty and Insurance, a building and development company, established the neighborhood in 1949 and likely built all the houses. On May 20, 1949, the company advertised its home construction business in the *Wilson Daily Times*, offering “FHA approved 4 to 6 room houses complete with bath, central heating, hardwood floors, inlaid linoleum in bath and kitchen.” Between August and December 1949, the company was granted permits to build three one-story, five-room, frame and brick-veneered houses on Hanover Avenue, the neighborhood’s main thoroughfare.²⁹

Minimal Traditional houses with side-gabled and hipped roofs abound in Fairview Heights (WL2291). Platted in January 1950, the development was the property of John R. Raines and John A. Dildy. Raines was a prominent businessman involved in several concerns, including Silas Lucas Brick Manufacturing, Lumber and Real Estate Company.³⁰ John A. Dildy was owner and manager of Dixie Supply Company.³¹ The neighborhood contains side-gabled and hipped-roof Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch houses sheathed in brick veneer and synthetic siding. Chicago-style windows are found on many houses. Some houses retain steel casement windows.

Several Wilson neighborhoods that developed at mid-century contain examples of the simplest expression of the Ranch House. Gold Park Heights (WL2283), platted in 1947 and one of several

²⁶ “Wilson Installing New Sewer Line,” *Wilson Daily Times*, September 3, 1956, 9.

²⁷ “Land Transfers,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 24, 1948, 3.

²⁸ Wilson County Deed Book 389, page 253, dated January 1, 1949.

²⁹ “Five Permits Issued for Construction,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 25, 1949, 3; “News Briefs,” *Wilson Daily Times*, October 21, 1949, 8; “Building Permits,” *Wilson Daily Times*, December 15, 1949, 16.

³⁰ “John R. Raines Dies in Hospital,” *Wilson Daily Times*, November 22, 1955, 1.

³¹ “Candidates for Race in City Board,” *Wilson Daily Times*, April 4, 1961, 1.

neighborhoods laid out in northwest Wilson after World War II, contains about fifty lots shaded by large pine trees. Among the Minimal Traditional dwellings with either brick veneer or synthetic siding are a number of minimally appointed Ranch houses. Generally speaking, Minimal Ranches have compact, rectangular floor plans. They lean more toward the Colonial Revival style with side-gable roofs, multipaned windows, and six-panel doors, or more toward Modernism with two-over-two horizontal sash and low-pitched hipped rooflines. The three-light picture window, common at Gold Park as well as at the 1960s Imperial Estates (WL2426) development southeast of downtown, is a signature of speculatively built Ranch houses. Alterations over the years—such as window replacement—has diluted elements of architectural style on such simple houses. Across Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, the Ranch houses of the Bel Air (WL2425) subdivision are larger and lean toward Modernism. Most have more stylistic expression than those in Gold Park or Imperial Estates, including deep eaves at low-pitched hipped roofs, horizontal-sash windows, and broad chimneys.

The original Seven Hills subdivision (WL2322) plat dates to 1950. In 1955, an area including Thurston Drive and Elizabeth Road was added to the neighborhood. Most of the neighborhood developed in the 1950s during an intense building boom. In the February 28, 1955 issue of the *Wilson Daily Times*, editor Vernon Mortin described the burgeoning neighborhood:

On the knoll called Seven Hills overlooking Ward Boulevard where the road stretches out into a straight unobstructed thoroughfare, the once-fertile cropland has sprouted a city of homes. Less than a hundred yards away, huge earth movers are leveling the land for more new homes—about 75 of them, most of which are expected to be completed by the end of next year. Knitting the homes together are paved streets and concrete curbs. And here and there are traffic circles and triangles to beautify the village.

Ed Jordan of Jordan Construction Company and Jordan Development Company established Seven Hills and built most of its houses. By February 1955, 125 houses stood in the neighborhood. At the time, Jordan remarked that the mid-1950s building boom was because the bottom had fallen out of the mortgage market, enabling people to build homes with smaller down payments than previously required. He added that half the 125 houses built by that time were for veterans who took advantage of the G.I. Bill, which required no down payment.³² William J. Taylor Jr. and his wife Elizabeth built a house on Thurston Drive in the 1950s. He was a staff sergeant of the 86th Infantry Black Hawk Division during the war. After the conflict, he worked at Imperial Tobacco until his retirement.³³

Red brick-veneered Ranch houses with gable or hipped roofs dominate Seven Hills. One notable exception is the Lorraine and Lolo Dobson Sr. House at 303 Thurston Drive W. After serving in World War II, Lolo Dobson graduated from NC State College in 1950 with a degree in crop

³² "Seven Hills Housing Section is Fast Growing Development," *Wilson Daily Times*, February 28, 1955, 9.

³³ "William J. Taylor Jr." *News and Observer*, October 29, 2006, 39.

science.³⁴ The Dobsons built a weatherboarded Ranch house with Modernist influence in the early 1950s. It includes an expanse of cementitious faux stone on the front-facing gable. The neighborhood retains its curvilinear street patterns, including a rotary on the south end of Thurston Drive and Lillian Road.

Montclair (WL2281) contains one-story, brick-veneered Ranch houses built mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. Just over 100 houses occupy the neighborhood. The City of Wilson owns about thirty undeveloped lots on the east side. Montclair is made up of four plats, the first dated February 1958 and the final dated October 1960. Dr. M. H. Mathis, one of the owners of Willow Springs Country Club, was the developer.

The Farrior Park subdivision was platted in 1957 by owner James M. Jennings, who intended the neighborhood for Black residents. In 1962, after eight to ten houses had been built, the city planning department rezoned the neighborhood as industrial. In 1965, Tobacco Processors built their massive plant at the south end of the neighborhood, creating an intense impact on the neighborhood.

Urban Renewal

As suburban development reshaped the land at the outer edges of American cities and towns, another trend acted on the older sections in and around commercial business districts. The U.S. Housing Acts of 1937, 1949, and 1954 ushered in the era of federally sponsored redevelopment within American cities and towns. Broadly, the legislation allowed for federally funded, locally run redevelopment projects for municipalities with a housing authority. The 1949 act permitted localities to clear areas that local officials deemed “blighted” and set the stage for what the federal legislation first called “urban redevelopment” and later termed “urban renewal.”³⁵

The federal programs dovetailed with attention to substandard housing throughout the country after the Great Depression and World War II. In Wilson, in 1950, the conversation around improving housing stock appears to have begun with a series of articles focused on the “crime wave” emanating from Pettigrew Street, a two-block-long street just east of the railroad tracks between Green and Barnes streets.³⁶ The 1922 Sanborn map shows a mix of residential, commercial, and light-industrial properties. The houses are uniformly frame and single-story with front porches. Photographs from 1950, published in the *Wilson Daily Times*, show a mix of shotguns, front-gabled bungalows, and side-gabled cottages. Articles about crime segued into an examination of the housing conditions. One article conveyed the shock of the newspapermen at the state of the residential section. The *Daily Times* described the street as populated with too-small, over-crowded houses with high rents, poor sanitation, and little in the way of furnishings. The articles criticize both landlords for providing such poor housing at a

³⁴ *Hill's Wilson City Directory, 1956* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., 1956), 674; “Lolo Allen Dobson Sr.,” *Statesville Record and Landmark*, February 16, 2022, A9.

³⁵ “Urban Renewal-era Resources in the United States,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2025, E1-3; E15-23.

³⁶ “Pettigrew Street Expose, Parts 1-3,” Black Wide-Awake blog, <https://afamwilsonnc.com/tag/pettigrew-street/>, January 26, 2026.

relatively high cost and Black residents for the assumption that “they might not appreciate better if they had it.”³⁷ Subsequent reporting revealed similar conditions in other parts of town, including dwellings housing white families.³⁸ Several days after reporting the story, an editorial stated that the city should do something to require landlords to provide better housing.³⁹ The city commissioners drafted an ordinance and had the paper print it, seeking public comment. By July, there was a housing ordinance that laid out standards for habitable dwellings, methodology for declaring dwellings substandard, and a process for requiring and enforcing repair.⁴⁰

Around the same time, local investors built some modest, front-gabled concrete-block dwellings to “help eliminate insanitary housing,” according to the paper. A group of “about six” unnamed businessmen “has awakened to the fact that better, low-cost housing can be a sound financial investment.” The paper described three-room duplex apartments that cost around \$4,000 to build and would rent for around \$6 weekly. The location of the housing was not listed in the paper but was characterized as in “the colored sections of Wilson.”⁴¹ The effort may have been in response to a perceived investment opportunity, as noted in the paper. Soon, however, opposition to Wilson’s pursuit of federal funding to improve substandard housing would reveal another possible reason. Some in town preferred to avoid federal oversight over homebuilding in Wilson.

The scale of the privately built low-cost housing constructed at the time was not sufficient to address needs completely. A survey conducted by the city showed the problem of substandard housing was widespread. Wilson’s city commissioners began debating whether to establish a local housing authority in order to take advantage of federal housing dollars to improve conditions for low-income Wilsonians. White residents seemed uninterested, according to newspaper reporting, but a tobacco workers union representing Black laborers who were city residents registered their strong support.⁴² A public hearing brought hundreds of citizens, mostly Black, out in support. Dr. B. O. Barnes (1902-1956), a Black physical and local civic leader, was quoted as telling the commissioners, “You have a situation below the railroad which is deplorable and unbelievable.” Attorney Wade A. Gardner registered opposition on behalf of a group of Wilsonians who offered to build one hundred rental units if the commissioners rejected the plan for federal involvement—and more, if the first hundred rented. The board of

³⁷ “Pettigrew Street is Dismal Sight,” and “Living Conditions Shock Publisher,” *Wilson Daily Times*, March 31, 1950; Sanborn Map Company, *Wilson, North Carolina, February 1922*, Library of Congress website, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3904wm.g3904wm_g065191922/?sp=1&st=image&r=0.354,0.045,0.913,0.593,0, January 26, 2026.

³⁸ “Wilson Has Many Areas Now That Could Bear the Name of Skid Row,” *Wilson Daily Times*, April 4, 1950.

³⁹ “Pettigrew Street,” *Wilson Daily Times*, April 5, 1950; “Action is Delayed on Slum Measure by Wilson Board,” *Wilson Daily Times*, April 7, 1950.

⁴⁰ “An ordinance for the Repair or Alteration of Unfit Housing and Dangerous Building Conditions,” *Wilson Daily Times*, July 10, 1950.

⁴¹ “Wilson Businessmen Start Housing Project to Combat Slum Areas,” *Wilson Daily Times*, April 26, 1950.

⁴² “Tobacco Workers in City Support Housing Project,” *Wilson Daily Times*, November 20, 1952; “Wilson’s Housing Project Expected to Bring Great Changes,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 19, 1960.

commissioners voted unanimously in favor of establishing a housing authority and pursuing federal housing.⁴³

In April 1959, the city approved its first low-income public housing developments, segregated into “non-white housing units” in two locations and a single area of “white housing units.”⁴⁴ The firm of B. Atwood Skinner had been named architect for the Wilson Housing Authority; he designed all the units in association with Goldsboro architect and public housing expert Billy Griffin.⁴⁵ The Forrest Greene community (WL2299) on Forrest Road W and Jefferson Street W was the project for white residents, occupying land cleared after displacing the Black residents of New Grabneck south of Hominy Creek and west of downtown.⁴⁶ By August 1960, the Federal Housing Administration had earmarked nearly \$5 million for the Wilson Housing Authority to build four hundred low-income dwelling units. The *Wilson Daily Times*, in a full-page spread that month, championed the coming housing projects with articles explaining the program and the beneficial effects other cities had realized. It published two large sketches of the Forrest Road project for white residents, showing both a bird’s eye view of the project and a detail of a duplex.⁴⁷

The resulting Forrest Road neighborhood comprises duplexes, triplexes, and six-unit buildings on the two parallel streets. The one-story, gable- and hip-roofed brick-veneered dwellings have Modernist details, including paired porch posts angled inward from top to bottom. Complementary sheltered bus stops and picnic shelters provide modest community amenities in a cohesive style. Mature trees shade the streets. More recently, using funds from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 68 units in the community were renovated with a focus on sustainable rehabilitation. The work included geothermal heating and cooling, solar panels for community lighting, underground cisterns to capture and store rainwater for community garden irrigation, and pervious concrete paving.⁴⁸

The Daniel Hill community, another historically Black neighborhood of working-class families, was cleared for the Warren Street Urban Renewal project. Wilson commissioners preliminarily approved the project in the summer of 1962, opting to demolish all the housing and sell the land to a developer. A 1940 aerial view shows rows of shotgun dwellings, locally called endway houses, throughout the several blocks of the small community. Also visible are side-gabled single-family houses and duplexes, all of frame, single-story construction.⁴⁹ Residents were

⁴³ “City Aldermen Approve Federal Housing Plan,” *Wilson Daily Times*, December 5, 1952.

⁴⁴ “Sites of Public Housing Project Approved by City Commissioners,” *Wilson Daily Times*, May 15, 1959.

⁴⁵ “Chalk named Wilson housing head, Architect picked to design units,” *Wilson Daily Times*, April 8, 1959.

⁴⁶ “New Problem Confronts Urban Renewal Project,” *Wilson Daily Times*, March 18, 1966; “New Grabneck,” Black Wide-Awake blog, <https://afamwilsonnc.com/tag/new-grabneck/>, accessed January 28, 2026.

⁴⁷ “Wilson’s Housing Project Expected to Bring Great Changes,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 19, 1960.

⁴⁸ “New Development,” Wilson Housing Authority website, www.wilsonha.org/inside/history/, accessed January 23, 2026.

⁴⁹ Wilson_CSP_6B_12, U.S.D.A. Photograph Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, viewed at “Daniel Hill: An Aerial View, 1940,” at Black Wide-Awake blog, <https://afamwilsonnc.com/2021/01/22/daniel-hill-an-aerial-view-1940/>, February 10, 2026; Wilson Sanborn map.

expected to be accommodated in public housing.⁵⁰ Planning proceeded for the next few years, leaving families living in Daniel Hill in limbo. Landlords had little incentive to keep up the properties. A photo of the houses on Bruton Street ran in a February 1964 issue of the *Wilson Daily Times*, showing unoccupied side-gabled frame dwellings, all missing large sections of weatherboard siding. The caption states that people were taking the siding down to use as firewood.⁵¹

Project planning dragged on, and property owners and residents often objected. Some opposed federal programs on principal. Property owners worried they would not be fairly compensated for the land, including Black owner-residents of Daniel Hill. Attorney Floyd McKissick, national chair of the Congress for Racial Equality and a representative of some of the property owners in Daniel Hill, also questioned in a public hearing why Daniel Hill residents could not move into the recently completed Forrest Road dwellings.⁵² Despite opposition and delays, the city eventually carried out the project. Demolition and storm drain installation occurred in 1968.⁵³ In 1969, the lots were put up for sale. Roughly ten acres were sold to the Wilson Housing Authority for public housing (WL2287) centered on Walnut Street. A group of thirty-six units built in 1970 stands on fourteen acres.⁵⁴ The buildings are one-story, brick-veneered and with side-gable roofs, containing one or two residences. A community center and some small parks were part of the project. In the 1970s, the Wilson Housing Authority also approved bids for local contractors to build nearly a hundred more units in three other sites throughout the city. Forty-four units slated for elderly residents were erected at Jefferson Street near Elizabeth Road. Two other projects were built at Best-Harper-Benton streets near Gold Street and Elvie Street near the railroad tracks.⁵⁵

Public Schools

In the fall of 1945, enrollment in Wilson's segregated city public schools totaled 3,844. Forty-four percent, or 1,696 students, were Black and fifty-six percent, or 2,148 students, were white. A total of seven public elementary schools were in operation: Vick, Sally Barbour, Barnes, and Lane schools for Black students and Margaret Hearne, Winstead, and Frederick Woodard for white. The city's two public high schools were Darden for Black students and Charles L. Coon for white students.⁵⁶

Black enrollment increased over the next few years. In 1949, when it reached 47 percent of total enrollment, the Negro Citizens Committee of Wilson issued a letter to city and county

⁵⁰ "Warren Street Urban Renewal Project," *Wilson Daily Times*, June 29, 1962.

⁵¹ "Delay on New Housing Measure May Snag Urban Renewal Plans," *Wilson Daily Times*, February 29, 1964.

⁵² "Urban Renewal Project is Approved," *Wilson Daily Times*, October 15, 1965.

⁵³ "Wilson's Urban Renewal Project Moves Forward, Though Slowly," *Wilson Daily Times*, September 6, 1968.

⁵⁴ "First Sales of Urban Renewal Land Scheduled," *Wilson Daily Times*, October 11, 1969.

⁵⁵ "Wilson Housing Authority Oks \$1,473,141 Bids for 125 Units," *Wilson Daily Times*, June 17, 1970, and "12 Building Permits Issued Here," *Wilson Daily Times*, July 17, 1970.

⁵⁶ Barnes and Lane schools were outside of the city but in Wilson Township and together educated just 76 students. "School Enrollment," Black Wide-Awake blog, <https://afamwilsonnc.com/2025/12/05/school-enrollment-in-1945/>, accessed February 2, 2026.

officials. The committee called attention to the poor conditions of Black schools in the city and the discrepancies between facilities for the two races in the segregated system. Citing statistics issued by the State Board of Public Instruction, the letter noted the property valuation comparison (\$145 per Black student, \$349 per white), the number of accredited schools (one for Black students, five for white), and even the number of auditoriums (one for Black students, five for white) and lunchrooms (two for Black students, five for white). The letter specifically requested “a 23-room colored school with an auditorium and lunchroom” at Elvie and Stantonsburg streets, as well as “an auditorium at Darden High school; and a lunch room and four class rooms at Sam Vick school.” The letter also addressed similar needs for schools in Wilson County and demonstrated, clearly and simply, that schools in the system were separate but not equal.⁵⁷

Plans were already underway for the new school urged in the letter. It was intended to replace the Sally Barbour School, also called the Stantonsburg Street School, a frame building in use since the late nineteenth century. The building was in very poor repair as early as the 1930s, long before the interior was viciously vandalized in 1943.⁵⁸ In the spring of 1949, the *Wilson Daily Times* reported that, “The attractive, modern elementary school is scheduled to hold 32 class rooms, a lunch room and a combination auditorium and gymnasium eventually.”⁵⁹ The school was built in three stages in 1951, 1952, and 1953 and named the Elvie Street Elementary School (WL2358). The red-brick building is two stories with a flat roof and large banks of metal sash windows. The main, five-bay section of the façade features a spare portico with brick-clad columns at the entrance. A smaller, Modernist one-story block at the sound end holds the gymnasium and auditorium; it features double-leaf doors in three bays separated by engaged brick fins that support a flat canopy. At the opposite end of the façade is the single-story lunchroom wing.

Several other new school buildings were erected in Wilson over the next decade. The new buildings generally replaced frame structures with brick-clad concrete-block buildings, often with banks of metal-sash windows and flat roofs that indicate Modernist influence. The look signaled that schools were up-to-date. More significantly, they radically improved conditions for Black students. Most of the buildings were erected while *Brown v. Board of Education* was being argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1952 and 1953. The landmark case challenged the “separate but equal” principle of the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. School boards across the country waited to find out the outcome, and schools in the segregated South, including in Wilson, continued to build and update their separate school buildings. The 1954 decision overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* and declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. North Carolina’s 1955 Pupil Assignment Act granted total local control of student assignment, and the 1956 Pearsall Plan created more tools for local districts to thwart desegregation. It

⁵⁷ “Colored Group Calls For Help On Schools Here,” *Wilson Daily Times*, December, 12, 1949.

⁵⁸ “Vandals Damage School Building,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 26, 1943.

⁵⁹ “School Sketches Given Approval,” *Wilson Daily Times*, April 2, 1949; “Aldermen Study Taxicab Limit Here; Also Grant Land to School Board for New Building,” *Wilson Daily Times*, September 9, 1949.

would be many years before North Carolina public schools, including Wilson City Schools, ceased serving only a single race.⁶⁰

Throughout the 1950s, then, school construction continued producing buildings for a segregated system. Winstead Elementary School, formerly known as Five Points School, got a new, two-story brick building (WL2366) in 1953, replacing an earlier building at the site. Classrooms line the double-loaded corridors at the two-story main block, and single-story wings house school offices, a lunchroom, and gym. A large addition was made to the south end of the building in 1988. The school remained in service until 2022. Another elementary school for white students was Wells Elementary (WL2375), originally Davis Avenue Elementary, which opened in 1954 for the children of the new suburbanites in the post-war developments north of downtown. The school was renamed in 1958 after the principal, Edwina L. Wells. The continued growth of the suburbs in this study period is reflected by the added classrooms from 1963.

Four building projects were put out to bid in the fall of 1956, including a new senior high school for white students; a new elementary school for Black students; and additions to Darden High School and Elvie Street Elementary School. In 1958, the two all-new schools opened: Adams Elementary (WL2363) on Walnut Street and Ralph L. Fike Senior High School (WL2354) on Harrison Avenue.⁶¹ B. Atwood Skinner designed two Modernist elementary schools in the 1960s in contrasting styles, one for Black students and one for white. A single-story, brick-clad building went up for B. O. Barnes Elementary School (WL2242) at 1913 Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway in 1961. The original building has a low-pitched gable roof with exposed concrete rafters, and the long side elevations show that each classroom has a bank of aluminum-frame windows. Skinner's Modernist complex at the 1967 Vinson-Bynum Elementary School (WL2368) at 1601 Tarboro Street SW, in contrast, comprises flat-roofed, brick-clad classroom buildings organized around a courtyard and connected by glass-walled hyphens. A ten-sided pavilion sheltered space for gathering and playing.

The Pearsall Plan was overturned by a federal court decision in 1966. A series of subsequent court orders addressed related policies that were connected to desegregation, including busing to achieve racially balanced school populations.⁶² Frank Emory, the first Black member of the school board, recalled that board members "were not doing flips to make any voluntary concessions. They were being forced every step of the way."⁶³

Finally, a federal court order resulted in the Wilson City Board of Education adopting a school "pairing plan" for elementary schools and assignment of high school grade levels across the three city high schools at the start of the 1970-1971 school year. All eleventh- and twelfth-grade students that year attended Fike Senior High School, formerly the whites-only senior

⁶⁰ "Pearsall Plan," NCPedia blog, <https://www.ncpedia.org/pearsall-plan>, February 2, 2026.

⁶¹ "Bids on Four School Projects Total \$2,074,010," *Wilson Daily Times*, September 7, 1956.

⁶² "Pearsall Plan," NCPedia blog, <https://www.ncpedia.org/pearsall-plan>, February 2, 2026.

⁶³ "Lawsuits, Legislation Finally Integrated Wilson Schools," *Wilson Daily Times*, May 19, 2004.

high.⁶⁴ Cleveland Flowe, a faculty member and the band director at Darden and then Fike, wrote a letter to prospective band students ahead of the 1970 school year. “The ‘prophets of doom’ will have us believe that every imaginable bad thing will happen. That will be true only if we allow it. It becomes the responsibility of us all to see that the program of integration can and will work.”⁶⁵ At the close of the academic year, the school’s yearbook staff dedicated the annual to the student body for following the advice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and having “learned to live together as brothers.”⁶⁶

The city system merged with the county in 1976, and the entire system remained under the court order until 1997, when it successfully petitioned to be released.⁶⁷

Institutional Development

Wilson has been home to the former Atlantic Christian College, now Barton College, since 1902. The Disciples of Christ denomination acquired Kinsey Collegiate Seminary, which had opened in Wilson in 1897 and closed in 1901.⁶⁸ Today, Barton College occupies what is now a thirty-four-acre site north-northwest of downtown Wilson in a residential neighborhood. Bounded by Atlantic Christian College Drive NE, Vance Street NE, Whitehead Avenue NE, and College Street NE, the campus is just east of and contiguous with the Old Wilson Historic District (WL0007, NRHP 1984). The twenty-seven-acre historic core includes buildings from the 1920s through 2012, but the majority predate 1975. Kinsey Hall, the 1897 building that housed the former college, was demolished in 1955.

Barton College’s campus plan is organized around a central green space dotted with a few trees. Sidewalks of brick and concrete crisscross the campus green and link the buildings. A two-lane boulevard leading from the intersection of Atlantic Christian College Drive NE and Vance Street NE provides a formal entry and terminates at a roundabout containing the Barton College Centennial Alumni Bell Tower, a four-story replica of the clock tower from Caldwell Hall (not extant). Modern buildings and structures associated with the college stand outside the twenty-seven-acre historic central campus and include a football stadium built in 2024.

In 1949, the college initiated a building program called “Blueprints of Progress” that provided for the construction of eight new buildings.⁶⁹ Initially, the school engaged Edward Waugh, professor of architecture at North Carolina State College School of Design, to provide design consultation.⁷⁰ In the early 1950s, new campus buildings were built in the Colonial Revival style. A women’s dorm, Harper Hall (WL2430), a massive Colonial Revival-style brick building, was

⁶⁴ “School Pairing Plan Will Be Implemented,” *Wilson Daily Times*, September 4, 1970.

⁶⁵ “Lawsuits, Legislation Finally Integrated Wilson Schools,” *Wilson Daily Times*, May 19, 2004.

⁶⁶ “Fike Student Body Honored By Annual,” *Wilson Daily Times*, May 28, 1971.

⁶⁷ “Lawsuits, Legislation Finally Integrated Wilson Schools,” *Wilson Daily Times*, May 19, 2004.

⁶⁸ Wilson Chamber of Commerce, *Wilson North Carolina: A Pictorial History* (Wilson: Wilson Chamber of Commerce, 1993), 50.

⁶⁹ “Atlantic Christian College Alumni Directory, 1989” (White Plains, New York: Harris Publishing Company, 1989), v-vii.

⁷⁰ *The Pine Knot*: Atlantic Christian College, 1954, 4-5.

completed in 1950 with Wilsonian Charles C. Benton as architect. The brick C. L. Hardy Library (WL2429) perpetuated the Colonial Revival idiom when it was completed in 1951. It was likely designed by Benton, but this has not been confirmed.⁷¹

With the two initial buildings of the “Blueprints of Progress” completed, the college trustees took a profound turn when they appointed G. Milton Small Jr. and Professor Horatio Caminos to head the campus building program in 1954. Small was a leading Modernist architect in North Carolina who studied under Mies van der Rohe and applied much of what he learned to numerous projects across the state. Horatio Caminos arrived at the North Carolina State College School of Design as a visiting professor in 1952 after fleeing Argentina during the Juan Peron regime. With the announcement of Small and Caminos, the trustees and building committee “decided that a new type of architecture would be desirable in the future construction of buildings on the campus.” Signaling the school’s embrace of Modernism, the building committee “felt that contemporary structures which reflected the spirit of our time would serve as [the] best background against which to educate young people.”⁷²

Southern Architect described Small’s first two buildings—the classroom building (WL2191, now Hines Hall) and the administration building (WL2188, now Belk Hall)—as “the beginning of a long-range program to change a small school of dilapidated buildings to a large modern college plant.”⁷³ With Small as architect and Horatio Caminos as design consultant, the two-story steel, masonry, and glass classroom building finished in 1956 contained twenty-four classrooms and eighteen offices on two levels. The 1956 administration building composed of exposed concrete slabs with steel columns, curtain walls with porcelain panels in the lower section, brick cavity walls, and brick interior partitions was attached to the north end of the Colonial Revival-style Hardy Library built just five years earlier.⁷⁴ Both the classroom and administration buildings received NCAIA awards of merit in 1961.⁷⁵

The campus continued to grow in the mid-1950s. Wilson architect Charles C. Benton designed the steel, brick, and glass Moye Science Building (WL2432), which was finished in 1956.

Under the next president, Dr. Arthur Wenger, who took over in 1956, the school continued the building program with Hackney Hall (WL2203), a Modernist men’s dormitory, completed in 1961. Small again served as architect along with Joseph Boaz, who joined Small’s architecture office in 1955 and taught in the School of Design from 1960 to 1967.⁷⁶ The dormitory for men

⁷¹ “ACC Begins its Greatest Building Program,” *News and Observer*, April 10, 1949, 2-IV; “ACC Still Building with 1,300 Students,” *News and Observer*, May 16, 1965, G-5.

⁷² “Small and Caminos Appointed to Plan ACC’s ‘New Look,’” *The Collegiate*, November 19, 1954, 1.

⁷³ “NCAIA Award of Merit, 1961,” *Southern Architect*, April 1961, 11-13.

⁷⁴ “ACC Erecting New Buildings,” *News and Observer*, September 21, 1955, 6.

⁷⁵ “NCAIA Award of Merit, 1961,” *Southern Architect*, April 1961, 11-13.

⁷⁶ “Atlantic Christian College is Boon to City,” *News and Observer*, April 2, 1961, V-5; Obituary for Joseph Nowlin Boaz, 1917-2017, Robinson Funeral Home, robinsonfuneralhomes.com, 2017.

included eight-person suites and extensive built-in furniture. Elizabeth and Edward Waugh described the design in their book, *The South Builds: New Architecture in the Old South*:

This graceful men's dormitory at Atlantic Christian College in Wilson, North Carolina, is successful architecture because the designer carefully allowed for all the requirements and limitations inherent in the design of such a facility. The most important functions of a dormitory are assuring conditions for good sleep and study, along with east dressing and toilet arrangements.⁷⁷

The Waughs detailed the study-bedrooms organized around a center bathroom. These suites enjoyed direct access to the corridor balconies, which were integrated into the building structure and provided not only circulation but also served as overhangs for solar shading. Stairways connected to peripheral balconies to allow for vertical circulation.

In 1961, the North Carolina Society of Architects selected the four buildings—Moye Science Building, the administration building (Belk Hall), the classroom building (Hines Hall), and Hackney Hall—as the most outstanding examples of architecture on a North Carolina college campus.⁷⁸ Hackney Hall received an award of merit from the North Carolina AIA in 1962.⁷⁹

More Modernist buildings, most designed by B. Atwood Skinner of Wilson, would follow, including the music building (1963, WL2193), Case Art Building (1966, WL2192) Wilson Gymnasium (1966, WL2199) Hamlin Student Center (1968, WL2205), Waters Hall (1968, WL2201) and Wenger Hall (1970, WL2208). The firm of Skinner and Lamm, formed after George Barry Lamm joined Skinner in 1961, designed the nursing building (1975, WL2196) and Hackney Library (1977, WL2435).⁸⁰

Enrollment expanded in the 1960s and early 1970s as new undergraduate programs were introduced. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, under President Harold Doster, the school grew its physical education and sports programs and continuing education curriculum. In 1984, the Graves family donated the Georgian Revival-style William W. Graves House (WL0386; Local Landmark 1986) to the college to serve as the president's house. In 1990, trustees voted to change the name to Barton College, to honor Barton W. Stone, a founder of the Disciples of Christ, and to distance the institution from evangelicalism. The football program, which was discontinued in 1950, was revived in 2021 and a new stadium built in 2024 just east of the historic campus.⁸¹

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, Wilson also gained two significant state-run facilities for tuberculosis patients and for deaf school children in eastern North Carolina. Both

⁷⁷ Elizabeth and Edward Waugh, *The South Builds: New Architecture in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1960), 44-45.

⁷⁸ "Atlantic Christian College is Boon to City," *News and Observer*, April 2, 1961, V-5.

⁷⁹ "NCAIA Award of Merit, 1962," *Southern Architect*, July 1962, 13.

⁸⁰ *The Pine Knot*: Atlantic Christian College, 1954, 4-5.

⁸¹ "Barton College's Bulldog Believers," *Our State*, August 26, 2024.

are located on the east side of town, on a large tract on the north side of US Highway 301 N. The two-story, red-brick, Colonial Revival-style building built to house the Eastern North Carolina Tuberculosis Sanitarium (WL2262) was erected between 1941 and 1943. The hospital was built to help combat a significant epidemic in this part of the state. At the time, treatment consisted of isolating the highly contagious patients from the general population and providing them with rest, fresh air, and a healthy diet.⁸² The Work Projects Administration assisted with construction, completing a building with two 100-bed units. Despite significant advances in the 1940s in the successful pharmacological treatment of tuberculosis, the hospital continued specializing in tuberculosis treatment for decades. The state expanded the facility in the 1950s, when it had 360 beds allocated to Black patients and 260 for white patients.⁸³ In the early 1970s, it diversified and began treating other pulmonary diseases. The change was reflected in its renaming to the Specialty Hospitals. Today, it is the Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center.⁸⁴

Sharing the large site is the campus of the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf (WL2261). The school was established by the state in the early 1960s, at the urging of Joseph Eagles, a state senator and Wilsonian. Eagles also served on an exploratory committee looking into expanding the existing school in Morganton with a location to serve eastern North Carolina. Wilson's local politicians lobbied for the school, offering a donation of land. Administrators at Atlantic Christian College embraced a cooperative program for educating teachers of deaf students. Two buildings originally erected in 1940 for the Tuberculosis Sanitarium were remodeled for the school, and several more were erected. The campus was ready for students in early 1965, including Eagles Hall, a single-story precast concrete building designed by B. Atwood Skinner. The design centers on a grassy courtyard that served as a playground when windy weather prevented students from going outside the building's walls. Around the courtyard are the dining room, kitchen, pantries, fourteen classrooms, an all-purpose room with a stage, offices, a first aid room, and a small public lounge near the entrance. The north wing was the boys' dorm, and the south end housed female students. In 1965, Skinner described the thoughtful design he had for the building: "Every corridor has light in it, light from above, either natural light through the skylights or artificial light. The children spend all their time in this building except when playing outdoors or in the infirmary in the administration building across the way. Consequently, I wanted a lot of light to keep them from feeling closed in."⁸⁵

⁸² Timothy Osment, "Sanitariums," NCpedia, State Library of NC, 2009, <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/sanitariums>.

⁸³ "Tubercular Hospital to be Dedicated Easter Monday," *Wilson Daily Times*, April 12, 1941; "Co. TB Hospital is a Big Help to the Health of the County," *Wilson Daily Times*, August 21, 1942; "Hospital Addition Dedicated," April 7, 1954.

⁸⁴ Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center, "A Brief History of the Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center, Wilson, North Carolina," <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/history-longleaf/open>.

⁸⁵ "None So Deaf They Cannot Learn," *News and Observer*, November 28, 1965.

Preservation movement in the 1970s

By the 1970s, the forward-looking city was looking back in anticipation of the country's upcoming bicentennial. Around the same time, Wilson was beginning see loss of buildings in the commercial and industrial centers of town, those areas that defined the economy and, to a significant degree, the identity of the city. The 1893 Centre Brick Tobacco Warehouse No. 2 burned down in 1951; the Liggett-Meyers Tobacco Company's redrying plan was demolished in the 1960s. Dwellings, churches, and commercial buildings also fell to demolition after the middle of the twentieth century. The losses left empty parcels or redevelopment of a markedly different character. To help manage the changing character of the city, on May 27, 1976, the City Council voted unanimously to establish a Historic Properties Commission. The ordinance laid out procedures for designating local historic landmarks and a framework for preserving the historic integrity of properties so designated. A council member noted that the new group, comprising six appointed members, would produce "positive results in years to come."⁸⁶

The commission conducted a quick survey of potential historic properties and designated six buildings as local landmarks in the summer of 1977, including houses, London's Church (WL1958, not extant), and the Branch Banking and Trust Company building (WL0001) on Nash Street.⁸⁷ In 1979, the City hired architectural historian Kate Ohno to survey the city and produce an inventory of historic architecture. Ohno's survey would begin with the tobacco warehouses that were so important to the city's history and expand from there, culminating in the publication of the 1980 book *Wilson Historic Buildings Survey*. The City shared costs for the survey with the State Division of Archives and History, which provided a grant-in-aid.⁸⁸

Also in 1979, NCSU School of Design students studied possible adaptive reuse ideas for the tobacco warehouses, presenting findings to a joint meeting of the Historic Properties Commission and the Wilson Appearance Commission. While the students found broad community support for reusing tobacco warehouses, it would be decades before such work was undertaken.⁸⁹ A number of warehouses were demolished in the meantime. Elsewhere in the city, a number of large dwellings in Wilson's oldest neighborhoods were adaptively reused as offices. Eventually, some parcels in historic residential neighborhoods were redeveloped into small office buildings.

By 1985, three large historic districts were listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including the Wilson Central Business-Tobacco Warehouse District (WL0442), the Old Wilson Historic District (WL0007), and the West Nash Street Historic District (WL0348) north of downtown. By 1988, the East Wilson Historic District (WL0930) and the Broad/Kenan Streets

⁸⁶ "City Permit Fee Schedule Enacted," *Wilson Daily Times*, May 28, 1976; "Historic Properties Commission is Proposed," *Wilson Daily Times*, May 8, 1976; Butchko, "Wilson Central Business-Tobacco Warehouse Historic District" NR Nomination.

⁸⁷ "Action is Taken to Preserve the City's Historical Properties," *Wilson Daily Times*, June 17, 1977.

⁸⁸ "City Architecture Inventory Set," *Wilson Daily Times*, January 20, 1979; "Historic Inventory Published," *Wilson Daily Times*, October 31, 1980.

⁸⁹ "Final Suggestions Made for Revamp of Warehouse Area," *Wilson Daily Times*, June 7, 1979.

Historic District (WL1143) were listed in the National Register as well. The Old Wilson Historic District, the West Nash Street Historic District, and the Broad/Kenan Streets Historic District were also designated local historic districts. Scores of buildings have been designated as local landmarks since the program was established in 1976.

Architecture of Wilson, 1940-1975

Colonial Revival, 1940-1970

The dominant residential architectural style in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century was the Colonial Revival style; the same was true across North Carolina and in Wilson.⁹⁰ Bainbridge and Ohno reported in 1980 that “the Colonial Revival style was in full flower in Wilson in the first decade of the [twentieth] century” “reflect[ing] an early twentieth century interpretation of early American architectural styles.”

The style’s popularity in Wilson was enduring, extending well past mid-century, when examples ranged from modest to grand. Many of the simplest examples fall into the Minimal Traditional and Ranch house types, discussed in greater detail below. Local mid-twentieth-century Colonial Revival examples include double-pile, side-gabled dwellings of one and two stories. Many populate neighborhoods northwest of downtown like Hilldale Estates (WL2306), developed roughly from 1950 through 1970 with two-story, generally brick-clad examples. The two-story, double-pile Susan and Lemuel Gibbons House (WL2421) at 1006 Salem Street is typical of the more modest two-story versions that often cropped up in the vicinity of larger or more high-style houses. The brick-clad Gibbons House has a symmetrical two-story section with recessed, six-panel, single-leaf entry set into an architrave with flat pilasters under a broken pediment. Windows are eight-over-eight sash at the first floor and six-over-six above, and all are flanked with louvered shutters and have flat arches. The second story projects slightly beyond the first. A single-story, one-bay wing extends from the north gable end.

A significant Wilson trend from the early through the mid-twentieth century was the Classical Revival-style house with two-story portico.⁹¹ Several occur in the Beverly Hills subdivision, and many of those were designed by Wilson architect Thomas B. Herman. One example is the brick-veneered 1934 Mattie and Everett Blake House (WL2341) at 617 Raleigh Road, which features a Chippendale balustrade at the porch roof and a Palladian window over the front entry. This trend continued into the middle of the twentieth century, reflecting the prosperity and domestic stability that characterized success in the upper-middle-class white segment of Wilson. One of the grandest examples in Wilson is the Virginia Lamm and Jack Hayes House (WL2315) at 4957 Raleigh Road Parkway, designed by Charles L. Phillips and completed in 1959. The house, impressively intact at the time of the 2025 survey, is a two-story, side-gabled, brick-clad dwelling with a flat-roofed two-story portico. Square posts support the roof, and fluted pilasters and a broken pediment with urn motif frame the recessed front entry. Three one-story gabled wings extend the living space and include a mother-in-law suite, family room, and

⁹⁰ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 414.

⁹¹ Bainbridge and Ohno, 15.

garage. The interior décor includes original wallpaper depicting Orton Plantation house in Brunswick County. Virginia Hayes's father, Grover T. Lamm, was a Wilson County farmer, and Virginia moved his frame, weatherboarded country store building to the rear yard of the house in the 1970s, where it remains. The house started its life in a rural setting at mid-century, but suburban development trends have heavily altered its setting. It is now surrounded by chain stores, gas stations, and four-lane highways.

Georgian Revival, 1930-1960

Georgian Revival-style buildings recall the oldest classically rooted architectural style to appear in North Carolina. The Georgian Revival style was in use nationally and statewide in the first half of the twentieth century for both dwellings as well as institutional buildings. The National Register of Historic Places nomination for the West Nash Street Historic District (WL0348) calls out the ca. 1922 Barton-Graves House, listed in the nomination as the William W. Graves House (WL0386), as one of the finest examples of the style in the state as well as one of the most impressive dwellings in town. The two-story brick dwelling has a façade seven bays wide with three dormers holding arched windows at the front slope of the side-gabled roof. Tuscan columns, Chippendale-style balustrades, decorative brickwork, and leaded glass enrich the exterior and telegraph the style. The impressive stature and quality of the house likely inspired the use of the Georgian Revival throughout the city for decades to come. Additionally, Graves was a well-known realtor and residential developer in Wilson in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁹²

Beyond such grand examples, Georgian Revival-style houses typically feature two stories, double-pile massing, side-gabled roof configuration, and a red-brick exterior. Details include dentils or modillions at a boxed eave, gable end returns, richly molded architraves, and, particularly in earlier examples, Chippendale railings at flat-roofed wings. Broken pediments are common at the main entry; another variation is a recessed entry framed with paneled walls in the recess. In Wilson, architect-designed examples from the 1930s populate the then-remote suburbs west of downtown, including Ripley Road and Raleigh Road Parkway. These early examples, like the Matilda and Thomas Woodard House (WL2344) at 611 Raleigh Road Parkway in the Beverly Hills subdivision, commonly had flanking wings with a porte-cochere on one side and a sunroom or porch on the other. Here, a flat-roofed porte-cochere with squared columns and Chippendale roof railing is at the west gable end, and a single-story, side-gabled, two-bay wing at the east side has a flat-roofed front porch that mirrors the porte-cochere. The main body of the house features a symmetrical, five-bay façade with a single-leaf, six-panel, recessed front door in a heavily molded architrave with a broken pediment. Use of the style continued through the 1950s in the Wilson suburbs developed for upper-middle-class white families. Later examples had less detailing but bolder iterations of it. Houses often featured gabled garage wings with dormer windows.

⁹² Tom Butchko, "West Nash Street Historic District," National Register of Historic Places District Nomination, 1984, <https://files.nc.gov/historic-preservation/nr/WL0348.pdf>, 7.6-7.7, 8.4

A remarkable—and remarkably large—late version stands on an expansive parcel on Canal Drive NW (WL2424). In 1950, Wyatt M. Jones Jr. owned a residential construction company, and he and Mary Virginia Jones lived on Westend Avenue. Mary Virginia Jones assembled a nearly two-and-a-half-acre parcel on Canal Drive NW with two purchases in the 1950s. She admired the architecture at Colonial Williamsburg, and in 1958, the Joneses built a house inspired by the ca. 1750 Carter's Grove plantation house (altered and expanded in the 1920s) near Williamsburg. Floor plans of Carter's Grove show a similar floor plan at the first floor of the Jones House. The house was built using nineteenth-century bricks fired by master brickmaker Silas Lucas salvaged from a church being demolished in Wilson at the time.

At nearly 5,000 square feet, this one-and-a-half-story, brick-clad, Georgian Revival-style house is one of the largest dwellings in Wilson. The exterior features Flemish-bond brick veneer, molded boxed eaves, flush gable ends, and eight-over-eight sash windows at the first floor with six-over-six sash in the gabled dormers at the half-story. The broad, west-facing façade of the side-gabled house is broken up into a symmetrical, five-bay main section flanked by smaller story-and-a-half wings of one- and two-bay widths that step back from the central section. Front and back main entrances are in the center section and contain double-leaf, six-panel doors under transoms. Windows at the first floor are topped with flat arches. The side walls of the dormers feature flush-board diagonal sheathing. A two-car garage with gable-end entry, added in the early 1980s, is in the north-most wing at the end of an asphalt-paved drive from Woodland Drive NW. A broad, double-shouldered exterior chimney is at the south gable end. The deep front yard at the west side of the parcel is landscaped simply with a naturalistic lawn dotted with mature shade trees.

Interior features include raised-panel doors and extensive paneling at the walls. A broad center hall features a half-turn stair and is flanked with formal living room and dining room. The former has raised-panel wainscot and a Georgian-style mantel with reeded pilasters and elaborate molding finished with dentil trim. The dining room walls are fully paneled and finished with a modillion cornice. The kitchen retains most of its original features, reflecting a modern arrangement mixed with Colonial-style materials and finishes. Upper and lower cabinets are wood with H-L ironwork hinges and iron knobs, and a brick fireplace is complemented by a faux brick oven and hearth to house the electric oven and stovetop. Countertops are laminate with faux wood grain, and a sink is situated under a window in classic mid-twentieth-century suburban style. Hand-hewn timbers act as beams and columns throughout the space. An attached eat-in kitchen-dining area has plaster walls and a six-panel wood door with flush-mount H hinges and iron rim-lock leading to the center hall. In a corridor near a subsidiary rear entry, there is beaded flush-board sheathing. Stephenson Millwork, a local company established just after World War II, produced all the interior trim in the house.

The style was also applied to other building types. The 1949 Georgian Revival-style First Presbyterian Church (WL2390) at 414 Sunset Road stands in a complex of related buildings on a parcel just under four acres, located a block northwest of the Broad-Kenan Streets Historic District (WL1143). The church features a gable front with parapet; pedimented portico with Corinthian columns; and a steeple with tower, base, loggia, and elongated spire capped by a

cross. Side elevations and the steeple base hold round-arched windows, and secondary entrances have broken pediments and molded architraves. Fluted Corinthian pilasters frame the main entrance, also surmounted by a broken pediment. A rose window is in the north gable end, just beyond the gabled wings that create a cruciform floor plan.

Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranches, 1935-1960

Common house forms in Wilson beginning primarily in the 1940s were the Minimal Traditional and the Minimal Ranch. Often called FHA houses, their compact size, simple form, and limited range of materials met the standards for residential construction set by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) beginning in 1936, when it published bulletins including *Principles of Planning Small Houses*.

Built primarily in Wilson in the years after World War II, these houses display low to intermediate side-gable roofs and reserved to no architectural adornment. Aluminum, vinyl siding, or brick veneer sheathe their exteriors. Front-facing, off-center wings sometimes break the monotony of the strict rectangular footprint. Modest Tudor or Colonial Revival elements embellish a handful of the otherwise austere houses. The 1949 side-gabled, brick-veneered James Woodard Jr. House (WL2275) on Wilco Boulevard incorporates a high-pitched gable and a brick chimney on the façade, lending Tudor Revival elements to the Minimal Traditional house.

Beginning in 1935, FHA programs expanded to include mortgages and loans for large scale housing projects. To address the housing shortage following World War II, builder-developers created subdivisions of houses based largely on pre-war designs generated by the FHA in the 1930s. Marketing of many of these post WWII houses went toward returning soldiers who could get G.I. Bill housing loans at a low interest rate and with little or no money down.

Ranch Houses, 1950-1975

The Ranch house is the textbook mid-twentieth-century dwelling, replacing the bungalow of the 1920s as the house form that swept the nation. A broad, single-story, double-pile, and often low-slung dwelling, the Ranch is a house form rather than a style. Floor plans placed bedrooms at one end and the kitchen, living room, and dining room spaces at the other. The main entry provided access to both zones. Larger Ranches have eat-in kitchens, dens, children's playrooms, offices, large closets, and more bathrooms. Daylight basements, side-elevation extensions, or L-plans allowed the extra space. Floor plans were more open than in the past, letting the kitchen flow into the dining room or the dining room into the living room. The Ranch evolved in California in the 1930s and always evoked a more casual lifestyle that often embraced outdoor living with patios and inset porches. A carport under the same roof or a nested roof at the side elevation was a common upgrade.

Wilson is typical of American cities in the popularity and distribution of Ranch houses. They appear in all types of mid-twentieth-century developments. Examples include modest spec houses for first-time or low-income buyers (as discussed above) as well as large and highly stylized custom builds in new or established neighborhoods. The Ranch form is stylistically adaptable. It can rather easily be "dressed" in character-defining details of architectural styles

popular in the first half of the twentieth century. In Wilson, the more modest Ranches typically display either Colonial Revival-style or Modernist detailing. A few Ranches feature rather elaborate Colonial Revival-style treatment. In contrast, a number of custom-designed Ranches take a more fully Modernist form, with structural systems like post-and-beam framing or modular components arranged in a Ranch-like form.

The single-story, brick-clad Betty and Fred Eagles House (WL2348) at 612 Raleigh Road Parkway NW shares the Colonial Revival architectural style of its earlier neighbors in the Beverly Hills subdivision. Details defining the style include multi-pane windows flanked with shutters, a six-panel front door, molded cornice with gable end returns, and an oval, multilight window in a front-facing gable. At the same time, the 1957 house incorporates the broad and low-slung massing of a Ranch. Appended at an angle to the east end of the house is a two-bay-wide wing with lower roof ridge and exterior end chimney. A large picture window, likely lighting the living room, is multipaned with similar sidelights. A two-car, flat-roofed garage set at a right angle to the two-bay side wing is attached with an enclosed breezeway at the northeast (rear) corner of the dwelling.

The 1961 Stanley “Pat” Patelos House (WL2400) at 1700 Wilshire Boulevard is a Modernist Ranch with small, horizontal awning windows at one end of the façade and large, fixed-sash windows over awning sash at the other end. In between is the front entry, suggesting the typical Ranch interior arrangement of bedrooms at one end and communal living spaces at the other. The house is clad in brick, and an open brick patio is at the front entry, with a brick stoop rising several steps from grade to meet the door. An iron balustrade lines the patio and the steps at the stoop. A gabled wing extends to the rear, creating an L-plan house. B. Atwood Skinner was the architect.

The 1965 Esther and Bill Jessup House (WL2387) at 511 Pinewood Drive was designed by Wilson native Barry Lamm, an employee and later partner of Atwood Skinner. This Modernist house has the broad and low-slung massing characteristic of Ranches and the Modernist attention to volume rather than mass. The dwelling comprises two roughly square blocks, each with shallow, side-gabled roofs. A hyphen with roof continuous with one of the blocks holds the double-leaf front entrance. Fenestration includes fixed-sash and casement windows set in vertical ribbons in some areas and horizontal ribbons in others. Exposed beams support the roof. The exterior brick and redwood siding was originally unpainted. An addition was made in 2003.

Standing outside the Colonial Revival and Modernist traditions is a 1960 Ranch house (WL2295) at 1814 Farrior Avenue that is likely the late work of stonemason Oliver Nestus Freeman. The one-story, hipped-roof dwelling has the characteristic uncoursed rock-faced stone that was Freeman’s mode. Decorative metal posts with scrollwork designs support a hipped-roof porch sheltering a single-leaf door framed by wood pilasters. Original windows with two horizontal sash over two horizontal sash remain intact. An ashlar stone chimney rises from the interior. A carport is incorporated into the northwest end.

Modern Movement, 1940-1975

The Modern Movement at the middle of the twentieth century in Wilson brought a design sensibility that favored form over ornament. Building technology offered alternatives to earlier load-bearing construction, and the results offered glass walls and soaring rooflines. In addition to this emphasis on enclosed space, Modernism's multiple strains focused on pattern over symmetry and decoration derived from structure, function, and materials. Modernist approaches to building appear in all building types in Wilson in the mid- to late-twentieth-century period.

Modernism was evident early on in commercial buildings, particularly those connected with automobiles. Branch banks, fast food restaurants, motels, and suburban retail and office buildings all embraced Modernist design. These commercial buildings often employed flat or flamboyant roof forms over walls of metal or glass. Designs could be restrained or bold, eschewing or reinterpreting classically derived styles. The commercial style was influenced by the spare, reductive International Style that emerged in the 1920s as well as the technology-forward space-age designs of in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Banks wanting to instill a sense of authority and modernity generally embraced a restrained mode of the Modernist movement, sometimes recalling architectural antecedents. A 1951 Branch Banking & Trust drive-in branch bank (WL2378) at 1001 Goldsboro Street S in Five Points is simple in its Modernist presentation, opting for banks of metal awning windows framed in cast stone. Its real draw was not architecture but the drive-in window and the large parking lot, convenient to customers arriving by car. The 1956 National Bank of Wilson (WL2373) at 1701 Goldsboro Street S bucked the trend with a small suburban branch office featuring dramatic canted walls at side elevations framing a glass-curtain wall at the façade. A separate drive-in window across the parking lot is in a nondescript shed-roofed hut. The 1967 New Formalist Wilson Savings and Loan Association (WL2428) at 200 Nash Street NE refers to Classical temples with cast-concrete pilasters that frame full-height windows on a building otherwise clad in tan brick. Like many branch banks of the mid-twentieth-century, the building features a drive-up banking window on one elevation. In 1971, a more direct reinterpretation of a Doric temple was erected next door at 204 Nash Street NE for a branch office of the Southern National Bank. "We chose this design because we felt it best reflects the classic character of the City of Wilson," commented a vice president of the bank, Bill West.⁹³ The façade and rear elevation both feature fluted Doric columns, and a Doric frieze and modillion cornice wrap around the entire building. However, the building also used Modern construction materials: side elevations feature Roman brick laid in running bond and narrow, full-height fixed windows evoke the rhythm of columns at a Doric temple. At the façade, behind the Doric columns, the wall is a glass curtain wall with metal screen.

The most eye-catching Modernist buildings of the period tended to be restaurants, particularly those on highways needing to catch the eye of the motorist. The best example is the 1969 Burger Boy Drive-In (WL2364) at 201 Ward Boulevard, which carries Highway 301 through

⁹³ "Southern National Bank Plans Ground Breaking," *Wilson Daily Times*, March 3, 1971.

town. Burger Boy is a small building on a large parcel. It features glass curtain walls over brick skirting, a cornice of alternating red and blue panels, and four drive-up windows for ordering and pickup. The building originally housed only the kitchen, while weatherproof tables and chairs under sun shades in the parking lot provided a dining area. Trash cans in the parking lot feature long chutes so that motorists wouldn't have to get out of the cars; in-vehicle dining was definitely expected. Still, a 1972 remodel added a small indoor dining room. Dick's Hot Dog Stand (WL2382), a Wilson institution, at 1500 Nash Street N has been remodeled a few times in its long life, including a 1940s remodel that included plate-glass and glass-block windows. A back-lit sign spelling out "Dick's" in script on the brick wall of the neighboring building adds mid-century character as well.

The Heart of Wilson Motel (WL2381) has a similar back-lit sign on a blind brick wall at the large motel complex at 501 Nash Street N, on the edge of the commercial district. Originally called the Urbanna Inn, the motel is an example of the "motor inn" evolution of the roadside motel.⁹⁴ It featured a kidney-shaped pool overlooked by motel rooms with large glass bypass doors in two separate buildings. A single-story, side-gabled structure with exposed beams and old brick housed the lobby and the Rib Room, a popular local fine dining spot. The complex has been expanded and altered and has been in nearly continuous use since it opened in 1963.

White's Tire Service (WL2374) at 701 Hines Street S is today a large complex with striking canopy featuring square columns clad in limestone that support a trapezoidal wall holding a tire and a backlit sign spelling out "White's." The eye-catching signboard is a copy of the original 1950 version that first graced Pender Street. The property also hosts a fiberglass statue of a bearded, black-haired man in white pants, red shirt, and red cap. He holds a tire and waves to motorists from the southeast corner of the parcel. At least two other "tire guy" statues advertised White's tire locations; those are currently in storage, according to employees of the store.

The automobile changed retail as well as office space in the middle of the twentieth century, and the city has numerous shopping centers in suburban locations. They have all been remodeled repeatedly as tenants and styles change. One, the 1964 Parkwood Shopping Center (WL2377) on Ward Boulevard at Tarboro Street, was expanded and enclosed in 1979 into a fully indoor mall. Downtown Wilson's Belk-Tyler department store relocated to the new indoor mall, likely bringing most retail customers with it. The new store was Modernist in design with very minimalistic detail, using white brick and curved corners to frame recessed, plate-glass entrance bays. Later changes brought in Postmodern design, including beefy, cylindrical columns and square windows. After a decline in popularity, thanks in large part to new regional malls as far away as Raleigh and Durham, Parkwood was redeveloped in and renamed Wilson Mall in 2005. Still unable to compete with larger regional malls, Wilson Mall closed in 2015. The City of Wilson purchased the property in 2023 and plans to redevelop the property into a park.

⁹⁴ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 49-52.

Offices ranging from corporate headquarters to rental office space also embraced Modernism in the middle of the twentieth century. The Imperial Tobacco Company constructed a New Formalist headquarters building (WL2239) at 2201 Miller Road in southwest Wilson in 1966. Concrete pilasters with aggregate surface texture appear regularly along the elevations, appearing to support a flat roof with exaggerated overhang. Behind the pilasters is a glass curtain wall with expansive aluminum-frame windows. The building, with its stark black and white color scheme, contrasts sharply with similarly boxy but otherwise plain red-brick tobacco warehouses to the northeast. West of the commercial district, along Tarboro Road toward the shopping mall, stands the 1973 Oak Terrace Office Mall (WL2376). Here, two rectangular, flat-roofed, concrete-block buildings stand parallel to frame a courtyard in between. The buildings have white Roman brick exteriors, pent-roofs clad in metal, and full-height window openings, later infilled with concrete block. Two lateral walkways provide sheltered access to entrances, which occur at the courtyard. The buildings are surrounded by parking.

Churches exhibited the Modernist style as well, typically featuring gabled rooflines and brick-veneered walls. The 1956 Tabernacle Baptist Church (WL2371) at 910 Tarboro Street W has a gabled roof with overhang, a large section of curtain wall at the center of the gabled façade, and brick-clad walls of both red brick and cream brick. A small, glass-walled hyphen holds the entry and links the sanctuary building to a bell tower to the left that features the same combination of red and white brick. A large, three-story classroom and auditorium wing was appended at the rear around 1960. A much later gymnasium stands on the east side of the church campus. A number of churches feature A-frame construction, where the gabled roof dominates the mass of the structure. An example is the 1963 Wilson Pentecostal Holiness Church (WL2367) at 2000 Ruann Drive SW. The double-leaf glazed entry doors are in extruded aluminum frames, as seen in commercial buildings of the period. Cylindrical sconces with milky glass and brass frames flank the doors. Brick cladding directly above the front entry doors is white and extends in a “column” up to the peak of the gable, accenting its height. Elsewhere, the building features red Roman brick laid in running bond. A side-gabled wing extending to the left is original but was enlarged with an addition to its gable end at some later point. At two other churches, local architect and notable Modernist B. Atwood Skinner tweaked the A-frame type by adding a raking roof ridge. This resulted in one gabled elevation being much taller than the other. The two Skinner-designed churches exhibiting this feature are the 1960 Faith Presbyterian Chapel (WL2264) at 2630 Tilghman Road and the Westview Christian Church (WL2286) at 1502 Raleigh Road Parkway W. Modernist churches in Wilson can also be rather small and nondescript, like the ca. 1970 St. Matthew Church of Christ sanctuary (WL2218) at 3415 Airport Boulevard NW, which has a steeple set behind the peak of the ship’s prow roofline, brick veneer, and two-over-two horizontal wood sash windows.

Government-related buildings turned particularly to Modernism in the middle of the twentieth century. The Parkwood Station United States Post Office (WL2370), built on an outparcel of the Parkwood Shopping Center in 1966, has a red brick exterior with cast concrete support columns exposed at the exterior and supporting a front porch at the façade. The building follows a 1959 plan published by the United States Postal Service, a Thousand Series Modernist post office

design that stressed modernity and convenience over regional identity.⁹⁵ The 1963 Fire Station No. 4 (WL2391) at 109 Forest Hills Road NW has an exposed concrete frame, brick cladding, and—at the two-bay garage—a notable roof of intersecting gables with glazing in the gabled ends. Flat-roofed sections flank the garage. Another series of intersecting gables top the 1997 addition. The building was designed by B. Atwood Skinner.

In 1958, Ralph L. Fike High School (WL2354) opened at 500 Harrison Drive N in a Modernist glass-and-steel building with steel-sash windows, colorful spandrel panels, and a flat roof. Additions and expansions followed and visually swallowed the building; a portion of it remains visible at the heart of the campus. New public schools built at mid-century, as discussed above, generally feature flat roofs and steel-sash banks of windows. Beginning in the 1960s, the larger complexes required for schools exhibited better realized iterations of Modernist style, often featuring glass curtain walls, geometric forms, and steel and concrete construction. In 1961, a single-story, brick-clad building went up for B. O. Barnes Elementary School (WL2242) at 1913 Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway. Wilson's B. Atwood Skinner designed the original classroom building, which features a low-pitched gable roof and long side elevations with poured concrete rafters exposed at the wide overhanging eaves. Banks of aluminum frame windows light the classrooms. An addition in 1979 included a flat-roofed gymnasium with red brick exterior accented with lighter-colored brick laid to create a grid design at the walls. Skinner employed an entirely different look for the complex of Modernist buildings at Vinson-Bynum Elementary School (WL2368), built in 1967 at 1601 Tarboro Street SW. Four rectangular-plan, flat-roofed classroom buildings are clustered to form a courtyard, and the rectilinear plan is offset by a ten-sided pavilion that housed a space for gathering and playing. The school is clad in brick and features exposed cast-concrete columns. A glass-walled hyphen allows entry into the courtyard from the parking area in front of the school. The geometric theme introduced by the pavilion is reinforced with polygonal poured concrete sidewalk pavers across the front of the school.

Two early houses ushered Modernism into Wilson in the 1940s. The first was the Neil Bass House (WL2023) at 927 Raleigh Road Parkway, an International Style dwelling with textbook features at the exterior: staggered massing, stuccoed walls, steel-sash windows, flat roofs, and a rooftop patio with iron pipe rails. A late 1950s addition brought in some mid-century Modernist style in the humanist mode, featuring a huge stone hearth in an added great room and wood-paneled walls. The owner reports that the interior trim, all sourced from Stephenson Millwork in Wilson, does not match what is seen in the plans and surmises that Bass balked at the price of the more elaborate molding, opting instead for off-the-shelf millwork.

The second is the prefabricated, all-metal 1949 Lustron Corporation house (WL2213) at 400 N. North Carolina Avenue NW in the Cavalier Terrace neighborhood. The one-story, front-gabled house is a "Westchester Deluxe" model, manufactured in parts in a factory in Columbus, Ohio, and shipped by truck to Wilson for erection on the site. Underneath the plywood siding that was added to the house at some point, the walls are formed of porcelain-enameled steel panels

⁹⁵ URS Group, "USPS Nationwide Historic Context Study: Postal Facilities Constructed or Occupied Between 1940-1971," 2-86.

hung on steel framing members at both the exterior and interior. The roof is similarly constructed, and built-in cabinetry is likewise constructed of porcelain-enameled steel. This model was put up as speculative housing to promote the Lustron product locally by Jones-Whitehead Homes, Inc., which was a regional distributor.⁹⁶

Taking their lead from the construction of the Bass House, some well-heeled Wilsonians who could commission an architect-designed house diverged from historicist-based styles and opted for a Modernist design. These houses differ widely in appearance but all reflect attention to spatial planning for the various activities that take place in homes. This design focus created new and varied footprints for the dwellings built in multiple modes of the Modern style—L-plan, U-plan, center courtyard, and even separate pavilions connected by hyphens. Some dwellings expose their structure and, in doing so, highlight materials in a fresh way. The Modernist architect pipeline coming out of North Carolina State University's School of Design contributed heavily to the collection of Modernist dwellings in Wilson. At the same time, other architects were active in town as well.

Chapel Hill-based architect James Murry (Jim) Webb designed a 1956 post-and-beam dwelling for Bettie and Paul Bissette (WL2397) at 1000 Salem Street NW. The Bissettes were owners of a local namesake drug store. The exposed post-and-beam construction allows for large expanses of glass. Inside, pine ceilings rest on the pine beams, exposed at the interior as well. Webb's houses commonly feature open-plan living spaces with areas defined by pony walls or organized around a hearth. Bedrooms are generally sequestered in another part of the house and are smaller, sometimes flexibly arranged with accordion walls. The similar post-and-beam Doris and William Malpass House (WL2401) at 305 Wilshire Boulevard N was also built in 1956 in the developing suburb of Brentwood. Malpass installed an underground fallout shelter in the yard and held an open house for anyone wanting to see the protected bunker. Malpass, a general contractor and founder of Wilson-based Troy S. Malpass and Son, ran an installation service for similar shelters.⁹⁷

The U-shaped Anne and John Hackney House (WL2389) at 1120 Wilson Drive NW was built in the same year. The flat roofs and brick exterior diverge from the sloped roofline and glass-and-wood exterior of the Bissette House. The footprint creates a courtyard that shapes an outdoor room—protected from street view by a brick wall that alternates between solid and pierced panels. This device would be used in other houses in town. Kinston-based architect John (Jack) Judson Rowland designed the house. Educated at the University of Illinois and Yale before the creation of NCSU's School of Design, he was nevertheless recommended to the Hackneys by the school's influential dean Henry Kamphoefner.

Some Modernist houses were clustered together in developing suburban neighborhoods, like the group of three near the intersection of Brookside and Windermere Drives. The 1967 Hardy-

⁹⁶ "Lustron Built in Wilson," *News & Observer*, March 20, 1949.

⁹⁷ The *Wilson Daily Times* ran an article about the shelter on October 28, 1961. It could house six people but was essentially a large tube fabricated of 3/16" steel buried three feet underground.

van den Berg House (WL2393) at 1109 Brookside Drive NW was built first. It presents brick-clad walls with sliding glass doors at the Brookside elevation, opening bedrooms to a small, sunny lawn surrounded by mature trees. A plywood-sided and shed-roofed projection at the flat roof creates clerestory windows to light the interior, which features an open plan in public areas. The L-plan house also features huge windows overlooking private yard areas and a swimming pool shielded from view by a brick wall. The design was by the Richmond, Virginia, architectural firm of Glave and Newman. Two years later, across Windermere Drive, the Melba and Robert Youngblood House (WL2394) went up at 1201 Brookside Drive. Thomas Thurman Hayes Jr., a School of Design grad, designed a house featuring three separate pyramidal-roof blocks, each housing a different function and connected by enclosed passages. The board-and-batten walls, vertical casement windows, and pyramidal roof forms create a very different look than at the earlier Modernist house across the street. Several years later, the Contemporary-styled Theresa and Donald Vincent House (WL2395) was built at 1202 Brookside Drive according to a design by Wilson native Joseph Lee Nassif Sr. (1922-2023). The one-story dwelling is an L-plan house with vertical wood siding, vertically oriented casement windows, and broad brick interior and exterior chimneys. The house is basically side-gabled with some shed-roofed forms that extend above the roof peak and provide overhead light through clerestory windows.

Nassif also designed a house (WL2404) for his cousin, Wilson lawyer Allen Thomas, in 1973 at 2305 Quail Road NW in the Thorpshire Farm subdivision. The house is a single story on a raised brick-clad basement. It features two parallel side-gabled blocks connected to a shed-roofed, two-car garage. All these forms feature wood siding laid vertically or diagonally. The latter often highlights the gabled or shed-roofed forms. A broad brick interior chimney rises from the center of the side-gabled block that parallels the roadway to the north. At the main story, the street-facing façade elevation is recessed deeply under the eave, and the resulting outdoor space flows out to a front deck finished with a solid balustrade wall of vertically-laid wood siding. Windows are fixed sash or casements.

Artisans and Architects working in Wilson, 1945-1975

Oliver Nestus Freeman, 1882-1955

Nestus Freeman designed and constructed numerous stone and brick buildings and structures in Wilson from around 1910 until his death in 1955. His mother and father, Eliza Daniels Freeman and Julius Freeman, raised Nestus and his eighteen siblings in rural Wilson County. Julius worked as a carpenter and most of the couple's sons, including Nestus, worked as carpenters or builders. One exception was Nestus's oldest brother, Oliver Lovett Freeman (b. 1873), who, because of a fear of heights and climbing buildings, became a well-known blacksmith in Rocky Mount.⁹⁸

Freeman benefitted from construction and masonry classes he took while majoring in industrial arts at Tuskegee Normal School. He met his wife, Willie May Hendley of Nashville, Tennessee, while they were students at Tuskegee. Through the school, he formed lifelong connections with

⁹⁸ "This Man Achieved his Ambition," *News and Observer*, May 13, 1951, 53.

Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. After finishing his own schooling, Freeman taught masonry classes at Tuskegee.⁹⁹

Willie May and Nestus Freeman moved to Wilson around 1910 where he built the couple a small brick house at 1300 Nash Street E (WL0934). Over the next five decades, Freeman became known for an extraordinary collection of rough stonework architectural features and buildings scattered across the city. He constructed stone foundations, plinths, chimneys, porch columns, culverts, mailbox stands, monuments, sculptures, houses, and at least two churches. He often embellished his work, which included household items like vases and lamps, with seashells and other found pieces. So distinctive is his rough-cut stonework, these works are readily identifiable as the creations of Nestus Freeman.

Among Freeman's most important buildings are the bungalow he built for his family around 1911 that he transformed from a brick house to a stone house in the 1920s. To the yard he added whimsical stone and concrete yard art such as a seven-foot dinosaur, birdbaths, benches, and arches. In 1946, he built a mostly stone round house as rental property to shelter soldiers returning from World War II amidst a housing shortage. The interior of the circular building topped by a conical roof contains pie-shaped rooms.

Among his other buildings in Wilson are the well-preserved Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and parsonage (WL0201) on Vance Street NE, the Mittie and Gervaa Parker House (WL1732) at 603 Herring Avenue NE, and a one-and-a-half-story stone house with a stone turret and a stone fence at 204 Vick Street E (in the East Wilson Historic District) that Freeman built as rental property.¹⁰⁰

Because of its location alongside US 301 in front of the American Legion Fairgrounds (WL2214), the American War Mothers WWI Monument (WL2228) is Freeman's most prominent public work. The truncated pyramid marker of random course granite rests on a rectangular base and displays a flat rectangular top. Wide mortar joints are filled mostly with flush concrete. Freeman built a low rectangular-shaped granite wall to enclose the monument's immediate surroundings. A bronze plaque on the sloped north side fastened with floral-head rivets reads, "In Honor of the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Nurses Who Served in the World War from Wilson County, N. C., Erected by the Wilson Chapter American War Mothers, May 30th, 1935." The monument's dedication on July 4, 1935, attracted a crowd of local dignitaries and veteran services staff from across the state. Alice Moore French (1863–1934) of Indiana founded American War Mothers following World War I and served as its first president.¹⁰¹ Mrs. J. E.

⁹⁹ "History in the Round: Freeman House Turned Museum Tribute to African-Americans," *Wilson Daily Times*, October 6, 2001, C1.

¹⁰⁰ "Oliver Nestus Freeman Left His Mark in Stone," *Wilson Daily Times*, September 21, 1991, D1; Agreement, Wilson County Deed Book 1079, page 494, dated November 28, 1972.

¹⁰¹ "Biographical Sketch," Alice Moore French Papers, ca. 1865-1941, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Barrett was president of the Wilson chapter of American War Mothers when the monument was unveiled.¹⁰²

Besides his stonework, Freeman dabbled in a variety of activities such as crocheting, rugmaking, taxidermy, business, community aid, and real estate investing. He became well known for his collection of exotic animals. In August 1930, the *News and Observer* described him: “Nestus is somewhat of a character, owns his own home, drives an expensive car and keeps around his home a collection of pets, canaries, parrots, pheasants and a tamed bear and a troupe of monkeys.” On Saturdays, people traveled from all over the region to feed the animals peanuts sold at Brown’s Service Station, a business Freeman owned located across the street from the family house.¹⁰³

In 2001, the Oliver Nestus Freeman Round House Museum opened. In 2018, the museum was expanded to include the Freeman’s own house and yard, reopening as the Oliver Nestus Freeman Round House and African American Museum.¹⁰⁴

Stephenson Millwork, 1946 to present

In 1946, Russell Lee Stephenson (1915-2005) left his father’s lumber business to establish Stephenson Millwork (WL2263), which began as a small cabinet shop. Stephenson’s first plant was at the corner of Nash and Person Streets. He later bought property that had been partially occupied by Hackney Wagon Company and Hackney Body Company. Stephenson started the millwork business in a 3,200 square foot building with seven employees, according to the company website. In addition to the business, Russell Stephenson was involved in local politics and civic affairs. The millwork remains in the Stephenson family and is one of the oldest industries in Wilson.

Located at 210 Harper Street NE, Stephenson Millwork occupies about six-and-a-half acres at the southwest junction of Ward Boulevard and Goldsboro Street NE. The earliest resource appears to be a one-story, Art Deco-style, red-brick building with a symmetrical façade and a flat roof with a flat concrete parapet. A curved, flat-roof, steel canopy shelters the double-leaf solid door. Stretcher-bond brick laid in diagonal patterns and accented with concrete keystones contrasts with traditional horizontal bond. A pair of corner windows is filled with original glass block. Attached to the stylish industrial building is a large, plain, flat-roofed, one-story-on-basement brick warehouse that stretches to the northeast. It features steel-frame windows, warehouse bays with replacement doors, and an east-end tall, flat parapet with coping. The building occupied the property when Stephenson bought the property. The resources occupying the rest of the property are more recent and include corrugated metal-sided buildings and a Williamsburg-style brick office.

¹⁰² “Impressive Exercises Mark Dedication of War Workers Memorial,” *Wilson Daily Times*, July 5, 1935, 1.

¹⁰³ “Wealthy Negro is Put Under Arrest,” *News and Observer*, August 9, 1930, 1.

¹⁰⁴ “A Story of Unrelenting Effort,” *Wilson Times*, October 15, 2018, 1.

Linstone Building Blocks, ca. 1951

On October 12, 1951, the *Wilson Daily Times* reported that local contractor M. I. Boykin Jr. was using “a new type of building block” for the construction of a home in Fairview Heights. Linville’s Incorporated, started by J. B. Linville in 1946, made the concrete block the company called Linstone. The blocks were 16 inches long, eight inches thick, and four inches high, which was half the height of standard block but longer than typical brick. The house at 1115 Mercer Street SW was featured in an advertisement for the block in the *Wilson Daily Times* on November 30, 1951. The house at 306 Belmont Avenue SW was also built with Linstone block. In addition to concrete blocks, Linville’s Inc. sold ready mix concrete, aluminum and steel windows, and house plan books.¹⁰⁵

B. Atwood Skinner, 1923-1996

Prolific Wilson architect B. Atwood Skinner tackled residential design as well. Examples of his residential designs appear in the expansive neighborhoods in the northwest suburban expansion of Wilson. The 1961 Patelos House (WL2400) at 1700 Wilshire Boulevard N, built for a business owner in the building trades, featured an L-plan, one-story-on-basement plan with gabled roofs, brick veneer, and awning and fixed-sash windows. Like many houses in this mode, space planning is of primary design importance rather than exterior decoration. The L-plan separates private spaces like bedrooms from more public areas, like the living room and dining room. Skinner’s 1962 dwelling for Joseph Collins Eagles Jr., also a business owner and later Vice-Chancellor of the University of North Carolina, features a U-shaped plan with courtyard. At the interior, public rooms feature vaulted ceilings. In contrast, bedroom spaces are smaller and made cozy with lower ceilings. The exterior features brick veneer and large fixed-sash windows with glazed awning panels at the base for ventilation. Exposed beams support the boxed, overhanging roof eaves. The Eagles House (WL2398) is at 1110 Salem Street NW, largely surrounded by stately examples of twentieth-century Colonial Revival-style houses.

Barry Lamm, b. 1935

Barry Lamm grew up in Wilson and attended Atlantic Christian College before studying architecture at North Carolina State University, graduating with a B.A. in 1961. Lamm joined Skinner’s firm upon graduation and eventually became a partner. His work in Wilson shows a thoughtful approach to arranging space in a residence, a design goal made evident by the actual separation of parts of the dwelling. In 1965, he designed the broad, low-slung Esther and Bill Jessup House (WL2387) at 511 Pinewood Drive NW. The dwelling comprises two roughly square blocks, each with shallow, side gabled roofs. A hyphen connects the two parts of the house and holds the main entrance. As at the Eagles House, exposed beams support the roof and large fixed-sash windows light the interiors. Elsewhere, the exterior walls are clad with brick and redwood siding. The 1979 Anne and Thomas Griffin House (WL2406) at 1141 Woodland Drive NW comprises three rectangular blocks, all featuring pyramidal roofs, horizontal wood siding over a brick skirt wall, vertically oriented fixed and casement windows, and boxed eaves.

¹⁰⁵ “Linville’s Shows Continued Gain,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 17, 1956, 8.

Joseph “Joe” Lee Nassif Sr., 1933-2023

Joe Nassif was born in Laurinburg but grew up in in Wilson among the close-knit Lebanese-American community. He enlisted in the Army and worked with the Corps of Engineers before earning a civil engineering degree from Notre Dame University in 1955. Nassif later attended the NCSU School of Design, completing his architecture degree in 1964. He worked for Arthur Cogswell in Chapel Hill until 1971 and then established his own practice there. He was active in local politics and was a member of the Orange County Board of Commissioners, the Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen, and, from 1978-1984, was the mayor of Chapel Hill.

His cousin, Allen Thomas, recalls that working with Nassif on a house was a collaborative process with gentle but knowledgeable guidance from the architect. Thomas favored a very modern house, having grown up in the Tudor Revival-style, two-story house at 513 Vance Street W and wanting something different. He favored functionality, simplicity, and large expanses of glass to provide views of the outdoors. His first wife, Marie Page Barnes Thomas (1938-1976), on the other hand, had a taste in architecture that favored the Williamsburg style. Allen Thomas credits their differences in taste to their backgrounds: “My father came from Lebanon as an orphan in 1920, my mother was the product of two Lebanese immigrants. Marie’s background goes back to Plymouth Rock.” Joe Nassif was responsive to the couple’s preferences and needs, stated and unstated, and made suggestions regarding materials and design. Marie Thomas was six feet tall, and Nassif recommended making the kitchen countertops and bathroom vanity higher to accommodate her. Allen Thomas advocated for a very modern interior finish, including stainless steel and Formica, but Nassif encouraged him to consider wood instead. “I was trying to walk a thin line with my wife. I have less glass in my house than I would have wanted.” Marie preferred a little more privacy and softer finishes.

Project Results

A summary of properties updated and newly identified in this survey is included in the table and lists below. The Study List candidates then follow.

Total SSNs in Wilson Database produced for this survey	497
Total new SSNs assigned	221
Total forms updated for demolished/moved properties	110
Total Properties recommended for the Study List	19

Windshield Re-Survey of Five National Register of Historic Places Districts

- WL0007 Old Wilson Historic District
Several resources have been lost since the listing in 1984 due to the expansion of Barton College into the surrounding neighborhood. Between Atlantic Christian College Drive NE and Rountree Street NE, ten houses have been lost to make way for a large parking lot,

greenspace, and a new formal entrance to the school. Immediately west of the campus, two additional houses on the one hundred block of Rountree Street NE were removed, presumably by Saint Therese Catholic Parish, which owns the entire block bounded by Rountree Street NE, Nash Street W, Atlantic Christian College Drive NE, and Vance Street NE. On the south side of the campus, five houses were removed along the west side of Lee Street, that block of Lee Street was closed, and the land became part of the campus. Two additional houses near the junction of Lee and Whitehead Avenue were removed as the campus further expanded.

The demolition of Hackney Wagon Company (WL0134) on the east side of the district sometime before 1993 created a large area of open space and noncontributing resources between the twenty-three acres encompassing the oldest part of the contributing Maplewood Cemetery (WL0181) and the remainder of the district. The nearly-eight-acre parcel where the wagon company stood now contains a large parking lot, a county-owned building constructed in 2015, and smaller buildings. If the former Hackney Wagon parcel was removed from the district, Maplewood Cemetery appears eligible on its own and could be nominated with an expanded boundary to take in additional acreage containing gravestones dating from the mid-twentieth century into the post-World War II period.

Typical of districts listed in the mid-1980s, scattered buildings have been removed or lost. Five houses at the south end no longer stand. It is not recommended to amend the south boundary line, however, since the railroad right of way forms a logical and distinct edge for a district whose history is closely associated with the railroad.

- **WL0348 West Nash Historic District**
An early-twentieth-century residential district with a “remarkably cohesive collection of handsome residences” that were home to wealthy white Wilsonians. This district retains integrity with very few losses of contributing buildings. No change is recommended to its boundary.
- **WL0442 Wilson Central Business-Tobacco Warehouse Historic District**
The district encompasses the highest concentration of historic commercial buildings in Wilson. Along Nash Street E and its cross streets, blocks of mainly brick commercial buildings remain intact. A significant loss of historic resources has occurred in two concentrated areas. At least fifteen buildings, many of them large tobacco-related structures, southwest of Kenan Street SW and both sides of South Street S have been removed. The Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park stands on two acres once occupied by Woodard-Watson Tobacco Warehouse (WL0655) and Planter’s Warehouse (WL0568). The 1901 Farmer’s Warehouse (WL0502) was torn down in late 2024 or early 2025. Much of the development in this area is associated with the construction of a new baseball stadium for the Wilson Warbirds baseball team scheduled to open in 2026 at 419 Goldsboro Street S. The area southeast of Mercer Street SW, southwest of Kenan

Street SW, and where the whirligig park now stands could be removed since further development associated with the new stadium is likely to occur.

East of the railroad right-of-way, numerous large-scale historic industrial resources are gone, including Farmer Cotton Oil Company Complex (WL0501), which developed in the first quarter of the twentieth century on a block bounded by the railroad, Stemmerly Street S, Pender Street S, and Barnes Street S. On the south side of Stemmerly Street S, Richmond Maury Tobacco Company (WL0576) and Southern Cotton Oil Mill (WL0592) were removed. The National Register boundary could be redrawn to remove acreage southeast of Imperial Tobacco Company (WL0528) and south of Barnes Street.

Along Nash Street E southeast of Pettigrew St S, several commercial buildings no longer stand. However, Jones Chapel First Missionary Baptist Church (WL0530), a local historic landmark, anchors that end of the district.

- WL0930 East Wilson Historic District

North of and including Nash Street, the East Wilson Historic District retains integrity as “a distinctive early twentieth-century Southern Afro-American cultural landscape,” as described in the NRHP nomination. The majority of structures survive in this section of this large district, few have been significantly altered since listing, and there is very little infill. The greatest change to this section of the district is demolition, particularly along the west end of Green Street.

Between Nash and Hines Streets, several blocks have lost integrity due largely to demolition and subsequent construction of new houses. South of Hines Street, both alteration and demolition have reduced integrity. Some duplexes at the west side of Manchester Street, for example, have vinyl siding over original weatherboards and have lost original chimneys, windows, and exposed rafter tails. The rhythm of the block face remains, however. Most of the remaining dwellings in this southmost section have replacement windows at a minimum; some also have vinyl or aluminum siding. A few blocks have small groups of shotgun houses that show fragments of original streetscapes, such as at the west end of Cemetery Street S. Also in this section, one of the two “shanty” house types, identified in the nomination as the earliest worker house type in the district, remains at 805 Cemetery Street S. It is heavily altered from its original construction period but the form remains recognizable. These areas are now completely disconnected from the more intact part of the district and generally adjacent to areas of newly vacant lots. It is worth considering that, despite losses of integrity, a reduction in the boundary would result in a loss of understanding of the geographic extent of the community that historically composed the East Wilson Historic District.

- WL1143 Broad-Kenan Streets Historic District

Impressively intact. Despite a number of large vacant lots within the boundary at the time of listing, there has been little or no infill. Similarly, the district has not suffered from additions or remodels that adversely affect integrity. A very small number of buildings post-date the period of significance, and most of those date to the ca. 1939-

1975 period and could be contributing properties if the period of significance was updated. The few late 1970s or later Ranch houses throughout the district appear to be out of character, whereas the Period Cottages, Minimal Traditional houses, and early Ranches from the earlier post-war period appear more congruent with the older twentieth-century housing stock that surrounds them. No change is recommended to its boundary.

Update of Previously Surveyed Properties Still Extant

- 158 files updated (most are single properties, a handful are blockfaces, and one was the campus of Atlantic Christian College/Barton College)
- 62 were substantially changed by alteration
- 8 were substantially changed by deterioration

Update of Records for “GONE” properties outside of NRHP districts

- 110 previously documented properties outside of NRHP districts are no longer extant
- Most, if not all, likely to have been demolished rather than relocated.
- MdM updated these records by entering information from the paper survey file into the database record.

Survey of Newly Identified Properties

- 224 newly identified properties predominantly dating from 1945-1975, including
 - 182 individual properties, including schools, churches, a hospital, commercial/office/retail, dwellings, industrial, recreational, and transportation- and infrastructure-related properties
 - 40 multiple-building properties documented using District/Neighborhood/Area forms, such as post-war G.I.-bill housing developments, public housing, mobile home parks, post-war speculative housing and custom-home developments, apartment complexes, and Atlantic Christian College/Barton College campus

Properties Recommended for the SL for possible inclusion in the NR

SSN	Property Name	911 Address	Potential Criteria & Criteria Considerations	Potential Areas of Significance	Potential Period of Significance
WL2228	American War Mothers WWI Monument	In the ROW of 2331 US 301	Criterion A	Art, Social History	1935
WL1714	Atlantic Christian College	200 ACC Drive NE	Criteria A and C	Education, Architecture	1922-1977

WL2293	Yeaman's Motor Court	2850 Forest Hills Loop SW	Criteria A and C	Social History, Commerce, Architecture	1945-1978
WL2299	Forrest Greene Public Housing	403 Forrest Rd W and 434 and 429 Jefferson St W	Criteria A and C	Social History, Architecture	1966-1970
WL2261	Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf	4761 Ward Blvd.	Criteria A and C	Education, Architecture	1940-1984
WL2271	Woodard Motel	1733-1737 MLK Jr. Parkway SE	Criterion A	Social History, Commerce, Black Ethnic Heritage	ca. 1925-1970
WL2023	Neil Bass House	927 Raleigh Rd Parkway W	Criterion C	Architecture	ca. 1947, ca. 1959, ca. 1965
WL2028	W. T. Lamm House	410 Raleigh Rd Parkway W	Criterion C	Architecture	ca. 1925, ca. 1950
WL2184	Reid Street Community Center	901 Reid Street E	Criterion A	Recreation, Black Ethnic Heritage	1938, ca. 1957
WL2341	Mattie and Everett Blake House	617 Raleigh Rd Parkway NW	Criterion C	Architecture	1934
WL2349	Beverly Hills Subdivision	Raleigh Rd Parkway and Trinity Dr	Criterion C	Architecture	ca. 1930-1965
WL2350	Centre Brick Tobacco Warehouse	1721 Goldsboro St S	Criterion A	Commerce	1947

WL2362	Henry Ellis American Legion Post 17	700 New Bern St SE	Criterion A	Social History, Black Ethnic Heritage	1978
WL2364	Burger Boy Drive-In Restaurant	201 Ward Blvd	Criteria A and C	Commerce, Architecture	1969-1976
WL2380	Miniature Train	500 Sunset Rd NW	Criterion A	Entertainment/Recreation	1954-1976
WL2383	Dick's Hot Dog Stand	515 Mt. Vernon Dr	Criterion A	Commerce	1927-1976
WL2393	Hardy-Van den Berg House	1109 Brookside Dr NW	Criterion C	Architecture	1967
WL2395	Vincent House	1202 Brookside Dr NW	Criterion C	Architecture	1976
WL2424	Mary V. and W. M. Jones House	1600 Canal Dr NW	Criterion C	Architecture	1958, 1983

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