

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Planters Building  
other names/site number First Union Bank Building

### 2. Location

street & number 312 N. Chestnut Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Lumberton N/A vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Robeson code 155 zip code 28359

### 3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing: None  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

William S. Rain, Jr. 9-21-87  
Signature of certifying official Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/financial institution

Commerce/business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

work in progress

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Cast Concrete

Sheetmetal

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Classical Revival style Planters Building is a five-story, steel-framed building with concrete floor structure. Approximately 42 by 90 feet, it sits at the southeast corner of Chestnut and Fourth Streets in Lumberton, with its long side facing Fourth.

On the two street elevations, the first and mezzanine floors are faced with painted, rusticated cast concrete. The Chestnut Street elevation has a tall, round-arched opening in the center with a prominent, console keystone. A barrel-arched, coffered vault leads to the recessed entrance, which is surmounted by a thermal window transom. Flanking the arched entrance are rectangular window bays with flat pediments supported by pilasters. Over these flanking bays are crisply-cut paired mezzanine windows.

On the Fourth Street side are three tall, round-arched window bays and one entrance bay, with rectangular bays like those of the Chestnut Street elevation at either end. The round-arched bays are divided vertically by wooden mullions into three segments, and horizontally by panelled architraves between the floors. The entrance has a simple, molded architrave. Attached to the corner of the building on this elevation is an original rectangular iron-cased clock.

A projecting cornice with frieze, dentil course and cyma recta molding divides the lower floors from the three upper ones, which are faced with orange tapestry brick laid in stretcher bond. The corners of the upper floors are accentuated with brick quoins. On the Chestnut Street elevation there are four bays, with the central two being paired, while on the Fourth Street elevation there are ten bays, the central four being paired. All of the windows on the street elevations have one over one wooden sash set in wooden frames.

Capping the street elevations is a large sheetmetal cornice consisting of a broad frieze and a heavy corona supported by large brackets.

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The off-street elevations of the building are of unornamented common brick masonry punctured by rectangular windows with steel frames and two over two double-hung steel sash with wire glass. Two-thirds of the way back on the south side, the wall is set back in an air shaft which leads to a skylight over the mezzanine floor.

An ornate, two-story banking room at the west end of the first floor is the principal interior space. This capacious, rectangular room is divided off at either end by a screen of colossal piers with composite capitals that support panelled beams. The essentially square space at the center of the room has a deeply-coffered ceiling. At the east end of the room, a heavy horizontal beam between the piers supports what was originally a mezzanine/balcony, containing smaller piers with wrought iron railings between them. This area has been walled off behind the railings. At the east end of the room is a barrel-vaulted entrance arch with coffered ceiling. Although the original doors have been replaced with aluminum ones, the entrance arch and pediment survive, surmounted by a large plaster shield.

The banking room has pink marble wainscot and diagonal pattern terrazzo floors. Simple modern tellers' booths replaced the original ones in the 1960s, and a new bank vault was installed under the rear mezzanine.

In the southwest corner of the building an open wrought iron-railed stair leads from the outer lobby to the mezzanine level. There the offices have plaster crown moldings and the side arches are expressed as floor to ceiling thermal windows.

The upper levels of the building consist of double-loaded corridors lined with connected suites of offices. Both the halls and the offices have simple classical window and door surrounds. Beneath the current carpet and vinyl/asbestos tile are terrazzo floors throughout.

In the 1950s a two-story, stuccoed brick building to the south was joined to the Planters Building by cutting openings through the party wall. Constructed between 1914 and 1920, it was remodelled by Southern Bell Telephone Company in 1920 to serve as a headquarters and

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operators' station for the Lumberton Exchange. This building has been remodelled several times, including a 1970s stuccoed concrete block addition to its south elevation. Little original fabric remains on its interior. Because of its subordinate role and unsympathetic alterations, it is considered in this nomination as a noncontributing addition to the Planters Building.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1925-26

Significant Dates

1925-26

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wilson, Berryman and Kennedy

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

The Classical Revival style Planters Building, constructed in 1925-26, is significant as the most prominent surviving expression of the physical and commercial boom that occurred in Lumberton in the first quarter of the twentieth century. One of only a handful of high-rise buildings constructed in eastern North Carolina in the period, the Planters Building was designed by the firm of Wilson, Berryman and Kennedy. The leading principal of this firm was Charles Coker Wilson, South Carolina's pre-eminent architect in the first third of the twentieth century, and the designer of a number of important North Carolina buildings.

**Historical Background**

The first quarter of the twentieth century was one of rapid growth for Lumberton, in part spurred by its strategic position in the region. The original railroad into town, the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherfordton, merged with the Seaboard Air Line Railway in 1901. In that same year a second line, the Raleigh and Charleston, was completed between Lumberton and Lake View, and by 1903 Lumberton was connected to Hope Mills by the Virginia and Carolina Southern Railroad.(1) By 1915 Robeson County had more railroad mileage than any other county in the state. (2)

Lumberton enjoyed the status of a market town for a multi-county area which had substantial acreage in the two major cash crops of the state, cotton and tobacco. In 1898 the first tobacco auction was

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conducted in Lumberton, and within the year 50,000 pounds of tobacco were sold in two Lumberton warehouses, establishing the town as a flue-cured tobacco sales market.(3) Not only was cotton ginned and shipped from Lumberton, but beginning with 1897, local mills manufactured it into textiles. In 1906 Dresden Cotton Mills were built in East Lumberton and in 1909 Jennings Cotton Mill in North Lumberton.(4) The cotton industry experienced considerable new growth in the 1920s, leading to the consolidation of the Lumberton and Dresden mills in 1922 as the Mansfield Mills, Inc.(5) Perhaps the culmination of the town's rise to prominence was the election of Lumberton native Angus W. McLean to the governorship in 1924.

The growth of banking in Lumberton and Robeson County paralleled and aided the commercial development of the area. Robeson County received its first bank in 1897 with the incorporation of the Bank of Lumberton.(6) It was followed in Lumberton by the First National Bank, and in 1910 by the Farmers' and Merchants Bank.(7) The Farmers and Merchants Bank was undercapitalized and struggled until being taken over by a new and larger bank, the Planters Bank & Trust Company, which opened in April of 1916. This new bank enjoyed considerable success, so much so that by the end of 1923 its resources were more than six times what they had been in 1916, growing to \$669,500.(8) Planters Bank had a special department for farm loans and had as a stated purpose giving special aid and encouragement to the county's agricultural development.(9)

At its annual meeting in January of 1924, Planters Bank announced that its business had increased by 25 percent over the previous year. It instructed its executive committee to investigate the purchasing of a lot across the street from its current home at the northeast corner of Chestnut and Fourth Streets on which to erect a bank and office building.(10)

Instead of purchasing the property itself, the bank formed a separate entity, the Planters Building Corporation, of which it was the majority stockholder.(11) Planters Building Corporation purchased the 108 by 43 and 2/10 foot lot from K. M. Barnes and George L. Thompson on March 10, 1924 for \$13,500. (12) On the same day, the Robesonian announced that plans were being drawn by the Wilson firm of Wilson,

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Berryman & Kennedy and that as soon as they were completed work would begin.(13)

In fact, Wilson, Berryman & Kennedy was not a true Wilson firm, but a branch office of Charles Coker Wilson's Columbia, South Carolina operation. During the period 1923-1926 Wilson was associated with J. Robie Kennedy of Columbia and George R. Berryman of Wilson and later Raleigh. Wilson, Berryman and Kennedy designed a number of buildings in eastern North Carolina in this period, principally schools, including high schools in Sanford, Rocky Mount, Wilson and Rich Square, elementary schools in Rocky Mount, Siler City and eight Wilson County towns, and the main and other buildings at Meredith College in Raleigh.(14)

Charles Coker Wilson FAIA (1864-1933) was South Carolina's most prominent architect of the period. Born in Hartsville, South Carolina, he was educated at South Carolina College, receiving a bachelor's degree in engineering in 1886 and a masters in civil engineering in 1888. After working for several South Carolina railroads 1886-1890, he commenced architectural practice in Roanoke, Virginia with Henry W. Huggins in 1890, and with Walter P. Tinsley in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1895. Wilson opened an architectural and engineering practice in Columbia, South Carolina in 1895 as Wilson and Edwards, a practice that he kept until his death in 1933. He studied in Atelier Duray at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1899-1900. Wilson subsequently had a series of associates, with whom he operated branch offices in North Carolina in Gastonia (1919-1925); Wilson (1919-1925); Raleigh (1925-1926); and in Charlotte (1926).(15)

Wilson was instrumental in defining and establishing standards of professional architectural practice in South Carolina. He was a founding member and charter president of the South Carolina Association of Architects in 1901. This became the South Carolina Chapter of the A.I.A. in 1913 and Wilson served as charter president. In 1914 he was named a Fellow of the A.I.A. Wilson was appointed architect of the State House in 1903 and architect of the University of South Carolina in 1907. When the South Carolina Board of Architectural Examiners was created in 1917, Wilson was appointed a member and elected chairman. He helped write the South Carolina School Building

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Code in 1923 and was a member of the committee to draft the statewide building code in 1932.(16)

In addition to an extensive schools practice in North Carolina, Wilson designed a number of hospitals, including the Thompson Memorial Hospital in Lumberton in 1926 (K. M. Barnes, president of Planters Building Corporation was also president of the hospital).(17) Wilson's commercial projects in North Carolina are a relatively small part of his work in the state. The only equivalent project which has been attributed to him is the First National Bank Building in Gastonia, built in 1916-1917, and designed in collaboration with Edwin D. Stompyrac. This seven-story, classically-detailed office building is larger and more richly-finished than the Lumberton building, but its first floor main entrance has been substantially altered.(18)

A construction contract for the Planters Building was let in May, 1924 to J. F. Beaman Construction Company of Raleigh.(19) By December the steel frame of the building was in place, and by August, 1925, the entire building was complete, in spite of problems with installing the large bank vault.(20) The new building had five stories and a basement, with steam heat and one of two electric elevators in town. Above the ground and mezzanine floors devoted to bank use were three floors of offices for lease, forty-four in all. The total cost was approximately \$115,000.(21)

Only the addition to the Hotel Lorraine (demolished in the 1970s), constructed at virtually the same time diagonally across the street, rivalled the Planters Building in height and modernity. As a contemporary newspaper article noted, "At this particular corner Lumberton will have a good appearance of a city when the new building is completed. The 5-story annex to the Lorraine Hotel directly across from the new building's site is practically completed and has taken on a decidedly city-like appearance."(22) With the erection of the Carolina Theater (listed in the National Register) at the southwest corner of the intersection in 1927-28, Lumberton reached a high point in its urban pretensions.

Following the failure of the Planters Bank & Trust and the Planters Building Corporation in the early 1930s, the building passed through

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several hands, the upper floors continuing as rental offices, while the banking section was either empty or used as office space.(23) In 1939 the Scottish Bank of Lumberton purchased the building, moving its operations into the space formerly occupied by the Planters Bank.(24) In turn, the Scottish Bank was acquired in 1963 by First Union National Bank, which continued operations in the building until 1983. Since shortly after that time the building has been vacant.

In 1955 the adjacent building to the south was purchased by the Scottish Bank and openings were cut through the party wall to join it to the Planters Building. (25) This building, erected between 1914 and 1920, had been the headquarters and operator's room for the Southern Bell Telephone Company from 1920 to 1950.(26) It became the installment loan department of the bank, and following a concrete block addition in the 1970s, housed the drive-in banking facility.

The Planters Building is architecturally significant not only because of its high-rise height, but also because of its well-preserved Classical Revival design. The rusticated cast-concrete street elevations with their tall arched windows, the barrel-vaulted entrance and the cast-iron wall clock give a decidedly urban sophistication to this prominent Lumberton commercial intersection. Furthermore, the two-story banking room is a luxuriously finished Classical Revival space which equals the exterior in 1920s elegance. The Planters Building is therefore a landmark of major importance to the small eastern North Carolina town of Lumberton.

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Notes

1

Diane E. Lea and Claudia P. Roberts, An Architectural and Historical Survey, Central Lumberton, North Carolina, (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1980), p. 6.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

4

Ibid.

5

Ibid.

6

Maud Thomas, Away Down Home, A History of Robeson County, North Carolina, (Lumberton: Maud Thomas, 1982), p. 216.

7

Ibid.

8

"Some Local Banking History," Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian, 17 January, 1924, p. 7.

9

Thomas, Away Down Home, p. 217.

10

"Past Year Most Prosperous in History of Lumberton Banks," Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian, 10 January 1924, p. 1.

11

Incorporation Records, Robeson County, N. C., Volume 3, p. 263.

12

Deeds, Robeson County, N. C., Book 7-N, p. 5.

13

"Skyscraper To Be Built In Lumberton By New Firm," Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian, 10 March 1924, p. 1.

14

John E. Wells, Unpublished biographical entry for Charles Coker Wilson from Architects and Builders in North Carolina to be published in 1987.

15

Ibid.

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16

Ibid.

17

Ibid.

18

Kim Withers Brengle, The Architectural Heritage of Gaston County, N. C. (Gastonia: Gaston County, 1982), p. 166.

19

"Contract Let For Five Story Bank and Office Building," Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian, 23 May 1924, p. 1.

20

"Items of Local Interest," 8 December 1924, p. 1 and "Planters Bank in New Home," 10 August 1925, p. 1, both in Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian.

21

"Contract Let," Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian.

22

"Items of Local News," Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian, 31 July 1924, p. 1.

23

Lumberton, N. C., 1938 City Directory (Charleston: Baldwin Directory Company and the Robesonian, 1938) volume 1.

24

Deeds, Robeson County, N. C., Book 9-C, p. 5.

25

Deeds, Robeson County, N. C., Book 11-F, p. 280.

26

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Lumberton, N. C., 1914 and 1924, and "Clubs and Recreation Influenced the City," Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian, 23 May, 1971, p. 12D.

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## Bibliography

Deeds, Robeson County, North Carolina.

Lea, Diane E. and Roberts, Claudia P.. An Architectural and Historical Survey, Central Lumberton, North Carolina. Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1980.

Lumberton, N. C., City Directories.

Lumberton (N. C.) Robesonian, 1924-1926.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Lumberton, N. C., 1914, 1924.

Thomas, Maud. Away Down Home, A History of Robeson County, North Carolina. Lumberton: Maud Thomas, 1982.

Wells, John E.. Unpublished biographical entry for Charles Coker Wilson from Architects and Builders in North Carolina, scheduled for publication in 1987.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than 1 acre

UTM References

A 

17	6	82	6	40	38	3	24	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing				

B 

Zone	Easting				Northing				

C 

Zone	Easting				Northing				

D 

Zone	Easting				Northing				

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination includes part of lot 22, block 81 as indicated by the dashed line on the accompanying Robeson County Tax Map, City of Lumberton No. 33, drawn at a scale of 1"=100'.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nomination includes the area which originally composed the building lot on which the Planters Building was constructed, plus that portion of the telephone company building's lot covered by the footprint of the building.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title David R. Black/Architectural Historian  
 organization Black & Black Preservation Consultants date 4/15/87  
 street & number 620 Wills Forest Street telephone (919) 828-4616  
 city or town Raleigh state North Carolina zip code 27605

7  
1.5 AC. (CAL.)

(78)

ROBESON COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE

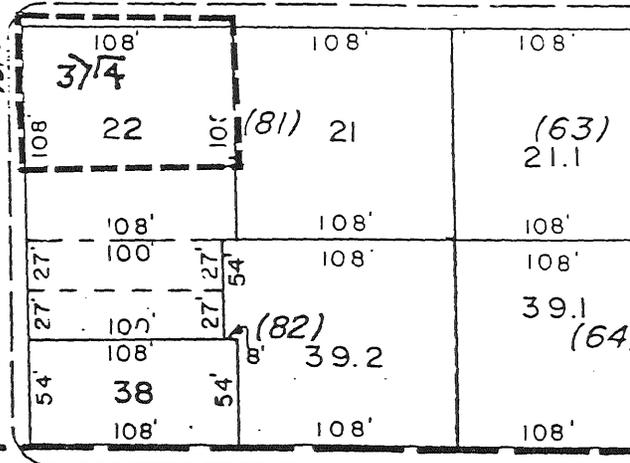
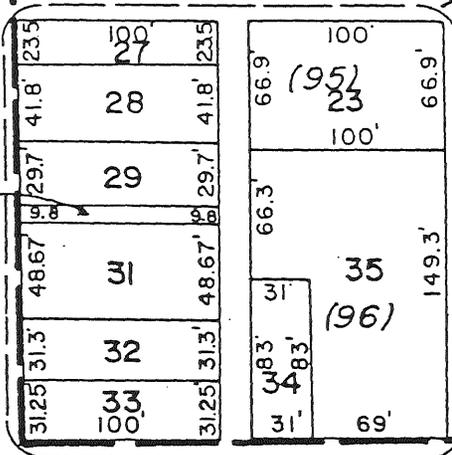
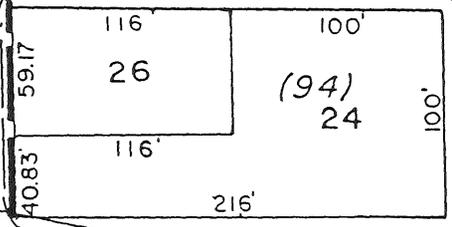
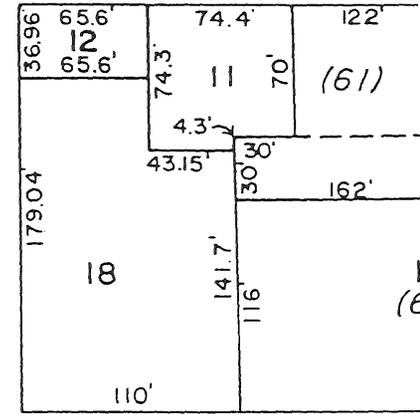
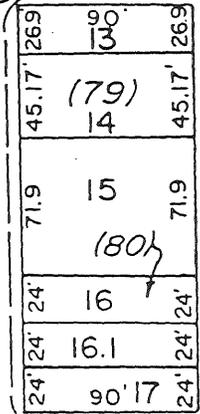
25  
1.11 AC.

2

5 TH. ST. (54')

PLANTERS BUILDING  
LUMBERTON, ROBESON CO.  
NORTH CAROLINA

CHESTNUT ST.



30

72

75'

3 RD. ST. (54')

ROBESON COUNTY  
TAX MAP NO. 33 1"=100'

PLANTERS BUILDING - LUMBERTON, N. C.  
ZONE 17 SCALE 1: 24,000  
EASTING 682640 NORTHING 3832400

SOUTHWEST LUMBERTON QUADRANGLE  
NORTH CAROLINA-ROBESON CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5253 III  
(BLADENBORO 1:62,500)

5153 II NE  
WEST LUMBERTON)

FAIRFELLSVILLE 25 MI

2'30"

680

1 990 000 FEET

681

682

ELIZABETHTOWN 24 MI

79°00' 34°37'30"



