

State of North Carolina
Division of Archives and History

Wilkes COUNTY

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Wilkesboro QUAD

Historic Resources of Wilkesboro (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)

X MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Federal Building

AND/OR COMMON

Wilkes County Board of Education Building or Old Federal Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

201 W. Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Wilkesboro

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

N. C.

Wilkes

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

X PUBLIC

X OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

X BUILDING(S)

__PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

X EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

X YES UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

N/A

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Wilkes County Board of Education

STREET & NUMBER

201 W. Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

VICINITY OF

STATE

N. C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Wilkes County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

STATE

N. C.

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Laura A. W. Phillips, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

for Wilkesboro Historic Properties Commission

DATE

May 1980

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Wilkesboro

STATE

N. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The old Federal Building, built in 1915 under supervising architect James A. Wetmore, is an outstanding example of Federal Revival style architecture. Reflecting Roman influence, the building abounds with rich classical details on both exterior and interior.

The exterior of the building is strongly reminiscent of the work of Palladio in its five-part composition. Most prominent is the three-bay-wide central section which rises to almost a full two-story height. With its pilastered facade, full classical entablature, and low pedimented roofline it gives much the appearance of a small Roman temple. This central section displays the most precise of terra cotta details. Tall round-arched windows at first story level provide the feeling of an arcade. Slender classical pilasters separate the windows and rise another half-story height above the main level of the building. The upper level of this central section is punctuated by small round windows which encircle the building. The crowning glory of this portion of the building is the full, pedimented entablature, richly detailed with medallions, dentils, egg-and-dart moulding and other classical motifs. Accenting the center of the building is a narrow piazza across the front which is bordered by a decorative ironwork balustrade of diamond-patterned design. Elaborate ironwork lamp posts help to define the ends of the balustrade beside each entrance to the building.

The two main entrances to the old Federal Building are located in the one-story "hyphen" sections which flank the taller central section and connect it with the projecting one-story wings which complete the five-part composition. The matching doorways are beautiful reflections of classically-influenced Federal design. Double-leaf doors are flanked by fluted engaged columns and headed by a well-detailed full entablature. The whole is surmounted by a semi-circular fanlight of delicate design.

One-story side wings complete the five-part composition of Palladian influence. The wings are of relatively simple but well-ordered design. The smooth brick wall surfaces are punctuated by eight-over-eight sash windows headed by a four-light transom and with a paneled dado below. Window placement is accented by a plain rectangular block which surmounts each.

All but the central section of the building is capped by a simple, moulded terra cotta cornice with parapet above. As the roofline of the building is well-defined, so is the base. A water table separates the primary wall surface from that of the windowed basement.

Like the exterior, the interior of the old Federal Building is an essay in refined classical elegance. Most, if not all, of the original detailing remains, and although plywood paneling and wallpaper have been added to the central room, these recent alterations do not hide the original features of note and could be removed at some future time.

Basically, the plan of the building consists of a large central room (originally a courtroom) flanked on either side by hallways and with offices lining the outer edge of the building on three sides. The post office was located in the west wing of the building and physical evidence of this -- such as banks of post office boxes -- remains intact. The offices in the side wings are simple in design with few details of interest, although doors leading to these offices have crossetted surrounds with heavily pedimented cornices. The hallways themselves provide an impressive introduction to the interior of the building. Classicism is displayed in the marbled wainscot, pedimented doorways, and barrel vaulted ceiling with an oculus marking each point at which cross vaults intersect the main vaulting.

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

The centerpiece of the interior is the huge central room, once a courtroom, with its story-and-a-half height capped by a slightly vaulted ceiling. The upper half story is encircled by small round windows which provide extra sunlight for the lighting of this large interior space. Approximately two-thirds of the way up the wall an elaborate entablature with triglyphs, metopes, modified dentil moulding, egg-and-dart moulding and a moulded cornice encircles the room, while a paneled wainscot surrounds the room at a lower level. The large round-arched windows across the front of the room are encased by a simple Federal style moulding with keystone at the apex of the arch and foliate blocks at the spring line of the arch. Running across the base of the arch is a band with delicate Federal detailing -- drilled swags alternating with fluted blocks. The side and rear walls of the former courtroom repeat the moulding associated with the front windows, even though there are no windows on these walls. At the present time a plywood paneled partition rising to slightly less than half the height of the large central room divides it into two smaller rooms.

The old Federal Building is situated on a corner lot one block from the Wilkes County Courthouse in the center of Wilkesboro. It is bordered on north and east by sidewalks and the street, on the west by a narrow lawn, and on the south (rear) by a small parking area.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

____ NATIONAL

____ STATE

 LOCAL

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1915

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising
Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1915 under the supervision of architect James A. Wetmore, the old Federal Building in Wilkesboro is an outstanding and rare example of Federal Revival style architecture in this area of North Carolina. The exterior and interior together provide an essay in refined classical elegance and in the quality of detail possible through the skilled use of terra cotta, brick, wood, marble and plaster.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

C. The old Federal Building in Wilkesboro, built in 1915 under the supervision of architect James A. Wetmore, embodies the distinctive characteristics of Federal Revival style architecture. Its symmetrical design, reminiscent of Palladio, and rich and delicate detailing, which reflects a Neoclassical Federal influence within the larger Colonial Revival movement, make it an architectural statement of rare quality in this area of North Carolina.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The old Federal Building in Wilkesboro is located on what was once the front yard of the Dr. William Columbus Green House. (The house still remains, though now somewhat cramped by the Federal Building.) Prior to the erection of the Federal Building, Dr. Green sold his front lot for that purpose.¹ In 1915, while William C. McAdoo was Secretary of the Treasury, the classically inspired Federal Building was erected under the direction of Acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore.² The building served as the U.S. Courthouse and Post Office for over half a century until the Johnson J. Hayes Federal Building was constructed in 1969.³ Now the old Federal Building serves as the offices of the Wilkes County Board of Education.

Footnotes --

¹Gray Green, interview by Laura A. W. Phillips, Wilkesboro, December 1979.

²Cornerstone, Federal Building.

³J. Jay Anderson, Wilkes County Sketches (Wilkes County Bicentennial ed.; Wilkesboro: Wilkes Community College, 1976), p. 163.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Anderson, J. Jay. Wilkes County Sketches. Wilkes County Bicentennial ed. Wilkesboro: Wilkes Community College, 1976.

Federal Building (cornerstone).

Green, Gray. Interview by Laura A. W. Phillips. Wilkesboro, December 1979.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----------|--------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 1,7 | 48,61,5,0 | 4,010,01,2,0 | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | | | | D | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property, located at 201 W. Main St. (southwest corner of Main and West Sts.), consists of Parcel 3 of Block 11, Tax Map 103, Town of Wilkesboro, measuring 130 x 130 feet. The property includes the old Federal Building and the less-than-one-acre lot on which it stands.

NORTH WILKESBORO

Wilkesboro MRN
Wilkesboro, N. C. Quadrangle
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000

Thomas B. Finley Law Office
17 486400/4000280

Wilkesboro-Smithey Hotel
17 486405/4000240

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
17 486050/4000310

Brown-Cowles House and Cowles Law Office
17 486470/4000300

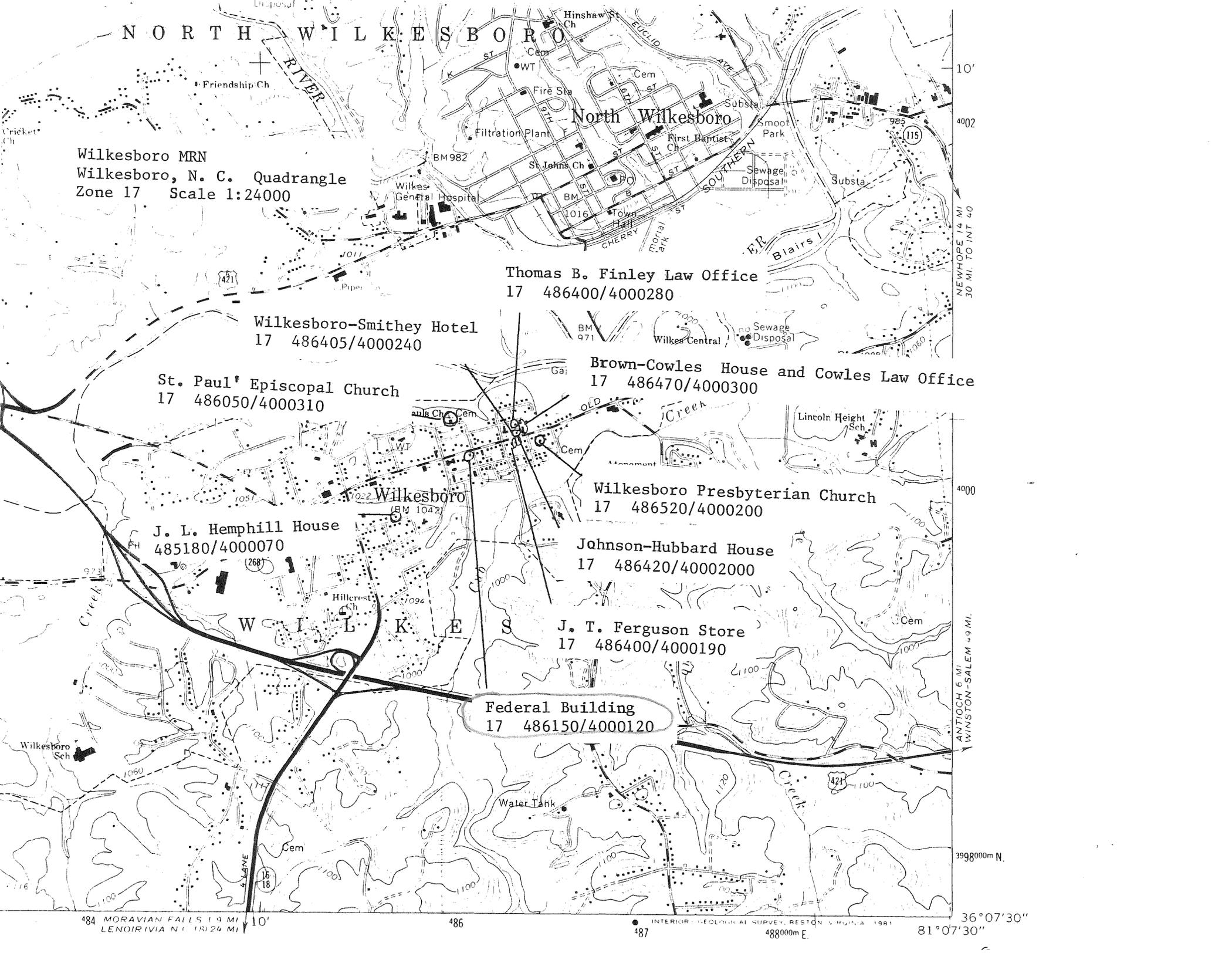
Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church
17 486520/4000200

J. L. Hemphill House
485180/4000070

Johnson-Hubbard House
17 486420/40002000

J. T. Ferguson Store
17 486400/4000190

Federal Building
17 486150/4000120





WEEKS
BOARD OF
EDUCATION