

**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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: James Ormond Wilson Normal School  
 Other names/site number: Washington Normal School; Wilson Teachers College; D.C. Teachers College; Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School  
 Name of related multiple property listing: Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 1100 Harvard Street, NW  
 City or town: Washington, D.C. State: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      X local  
 Applicable National Register Criteria:  
X A      \_\_\_ B      X C      \_\_\_ D

_____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title :</b>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/School

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/School

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Elizabethan Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

The James Ormond Wilson Teachers' College, originally known as the Washington Normal School is an extensive three-part red brick school building executed in an exuberant Elizabethan Revival style designed by Municipal Architect Snowden Ashford. Planning for the school began in 1910 and construction was completed in late 1912. The school building consists of five principal parts, including a central three-story main block and two, three-story side wings connected to the main block by deeply recessed, 2-1/2-story, cross-gabled hyphens. The long and sizeable structure measures 299'-long, east to west, and 81' 8"-wide, north to south, and was designed and built in a single building campaign.

The school is located in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C. at the southwest corner of Harvard and 11<sup>th</sup> streets. The school faces Harvard Street and is surrounded by a generous lawn. Parking space is largely to the west and rear of the building; outdoor play space is limited to a small courtyard area at the southeast corner of the building lot. The school is surrounded by residential row houses.

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

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## Narrative Description

### Site

The Wilson School is an Elizabethan Revival-style brick building was designed and erected 1910-1913. The school sits on a 95,138 square-foot site and fills a large percentage of its lot. The school was constructed on fill land that was built up over a tributary—a condition that has contributed to foundation issues with the building over time. Steel beams and turnbuckle rods were installed after construction to hold the brick structure together.

### Exterior

The school has a five-part building form with a three-story central block and side wings connected by deeply recessed and lower, cross-gable hyphens. The building's entrances are located in the recessed hyphens with courtyards in front. The east entrance historically led to the normal school, or teachers' college, while the west entrance led to the demonstration, or practice school. The building is characterized by its Elizabethan details such as Flemish end gables, numerous and heavily-mullioned windows organized in groups and historically filled with 9, 15 and 20-pane, and diamond-paned leaded casements, but now having replacement sash throughout. The red brick walls are trimmed with limestone which is used for quoining, lintels, window tracery, balustrades, and belt coursing.

The building is a load-bearing brick structure and is covered by wood frame rafter roofs, sheathed in slate. The central portion of the school terminates in a flat roof, whereas the east and west wings have hipped roofs, with flat tops, and the hyphens are capped with intersecting gable roofs. An assembly hall/gymnasium projects from the rear of the east entry hyphen.

### Central block

The central block of the school is a cube-like, three-story structure set upon a raised basement and is covered with a flat roof with a slight parapet. Historically, the school's drawing rooms or studios occupied the top floor, while classrooms filled the first and second floors. The block is divided into three bays, with each bay at each level defined by a large and heavily mullioned limestone frame window opening. The second and third-story windows have three-bays of four windows, each with 15-light replacement sash surmounted by nine-light replacement transoms. Within the frames, each of the four windows is recessed from the brick wall and separated by solid limestone rails and stiles. The windows on the first story are single-light replacements with single-light transoms above. The openings on all levels are framed with limestone surrounds with quoining along the sides and plain sills and transoms at the bottom and top.

The basement level of the main block is partially above grade, separated from the upper floors by a solid limestone water table. The basement windows are single-light replacements. Limestone quoining defines the edges of this main block, while a narrow limestone cornice caps the height of the building's façade. A slight parapet wall continues above the actual roofline slightly, obscuring the flat roof behind it. A narrow limestone cornice caps this parapet with arched roof acroterion-like projections rising from the cornice between the bays of windows.

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

The east and west side walls of the main block extend one-bay deep before being intersected by the connecting hyphens. As on the façade, this bay of windows on the side walls is defined by a large window opening at each floor level, filled with four multi-sash windows with multi-sash transoms above. As on the façade, these replacement windows are surrounded by limestone trim, with quoining on the sides.

### Entrance Hyphens

To either side of the main block, two hyphens connect the building to the east and west side wings. These hyphens, well recessed from the main block and 2-1/2-stories in height, also provide the principal entries to the school. Paved open courts on-grade with the sidewalk lead to two sets of stairs which in turn lead to a raised court and then to two sets of single entry doors at each hyphen. Both hyphens have three-bay-wide facades, including projecting bays on-center, and feature a tall Flemish gable parapet that hides the gable roof behind.

The west entry hyphen has a double-height polygonal projecting bay on-center flanked by Tudor-arch entrance doors to either side. The projecting bay has six floors of window openings set within a heavily mullioned window frame, and is capped by a crenelated brick parapet wall. The window sashes within the projecting bay are all single-pane replacements with simulated diamond-paned divisions that replicate the historic diamond-paned leaded casements in configuration, only. Pairs of all-glass replacement doors with single-light transoms above are set within the original Tudor entry arches trimmed with limestone. The extrados of the arches are decorated with raised stone quatrefoil *bas reliefs*. Large and heavily mullioned limestone window openings, with nine sash having simulated diamond-shaped panes intended to match the historic leaded sash, surmount the entry doors. A Flemish gable with a central limestone spire culminates the façade, with a pair of windows on-center of the gable opening onto the roof of the central projecting bay. Historically, the west entry hyphen led through the entry across a transverse corridor and into the school's library on the first floor. A museum occupied the second floor of this west entry hyphen. A corbelled brick chimney stack projects from the roof of this entry hyphen.

The east entry hyphen differs from the west entry primarily in that it has a second-story oriel bay on-center, above two windows, rather than a projecting bay extending the full two stories. Like on the west hyphen, this east hyphen has entry doors on either side of the oriel bay. However, although these limestone Tudor arched entry doors are still intact, they are now encased in a glass enclosure that extends across the full width of the hyphen, providing an all-weather entry narthex to the school. Historically, the east entry led past the reception room and office to a large assembly room and study hall. At the basement level, this space provided for the gymnasium.

### Side Wings

To the east and west of the entry hyphens are the school's two wings, both of which are two stories tall and set upon raised basement levels, and both of which followed an eight-room school

Wilson Normal School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

plan, based on the city's elementary school plan model. According to historic floor plans, the west wing included four classrooms accessed by a central corridor and separated by women's toilets and girls' restroom and locker rooms. The east wing, historically the demonstration school, contained four classrooms, including a kindergarten, reached by a central corridor and separated by a group classroom, and recitation room on the south side, and a closet on the north side. Here, the student teachers received their first experience with classroom teaching.

Although the east wing is wider than the west wing, both wings are rectangular in plan, are similarly articulated with Flemish gable parapets above the principal bays of the walls, and are covered with hipped roofs with flat tops. Both are three-bays wide by five-bays deep, though the east wing has wider bays on its Harvard Street façade. The three principal bays on all of the elevations are capped by Flemish gables with stone trim and feature sets of three windows on the first and second stories. These windows, all simulated, multi-light replacements with multi-light transoms, are set within heavily mullioned limestone frames. The Flemish gables with limestone cornices and central spires offer single 9-light replacement windows on the center of the gables. The gable roofs of these Flemish gables intersect taller hipped roofs behind.

The west elevation of the west wing opens onto the school parking lot, while the east elevation of the east wing fronts on 11<sup>th</sup> Street. This 11<sup>th</sup> Street elevation actually serves as the east wing's primary entrance. Here, a projecting entry pavilion of brick and trimmed with limestone, offers a wide Tudor arch opening to the pair of glass replacement entry doors. The extrados of the arch has limestone shield *bas-reliefs* carved with the lettering JOW for James Ormand Wilson. The entry pavilion is capped by a crenellated roof and features limestone quoining. A Tudor-arch transom with its original leaded, diamond-paned transom lights survives, along with its quatrefoil wood tracery.

The south (rear) elevation of the school is not clearly delineated by the five parts of central block, hyphens and wings. Instead, the south rear elevation consists of one long elevation that extends across the rear of the west wing, the west entry hyphen and the central block of the building, while the south elevation of the east wing includes only the rear elevation of the east wing. The school's auditorium extends off of the rear of the east entry hyphen, projecting beyond the rear wall of the building. Although this elevation opens onto an alley, the elevation is as highly articulated as the front and side elevations, with Flemish, heavily mullioned window frames with limestone trim and quoining. Of particular note is the projecting bay of windows at the rear of the west entry narthex. This bay of windows historically provided abundant light into the school's first-floor library.

### **Interior:**

The five-part plan of the Wilson School is connected on the interior by a single corridor that runs the full length of the building from the east to the west end. The corridor provides interior access to the classrooms that occupy the north and south sides of the central block and east and west wings. The corridor similarly crosses through the entry hyphens, dividing the front entryways from the assembly room and study hall (east wing) and the library (west wing). In addition to the two primary entrances to the building from the east and west hyphens on Harvard Street,

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

there is a third principal entrance at the east end of the building. This entrance, which is on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, opens on-axis with the central corridor that runs the length of the building. The interior was recently renovated leaving little of the interior features or detailing intact. The original metal stair in the two-story west entry bay survives and features exposed brick walls on the inside of the projecting bay.

## **INTEGRITY**

The Wilson Normal School was recently renovated and as a result lost almost all of its historic windows and interior detailing. Despite this holistic replacement of windows throughout the building and the addition of a glass enclosure across the east entry hyphen, it can be argued that the Wilson School retains integrity. The school is located at the site where it was constructed in 1910-1912 and serves the same row house neighborhood where it was built at that time. The school is an excellent example of the Elizabethan style in the District of Columbia, in particular for a public school building, with ornate detailing and craftsmanship. As such, it retains integrity of design and materials. Other than the windows and glass enclosure, the building has no significant additions or alterations.

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1910-1965

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1910; 1912-1913

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Snowden, Ashford

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The James Ormond Wilson Normal School was designed and constructed from 1910-1913 as a public teaching college in Washington, D.C. The school was designed by the city's Office of Municipal Architect under Snowden Ashford and is significant for its contribution to the public education movement in Washington, D.C. in the advancement of teacher training. The first normal schools in the United States were established in New England in the 1820s and 1830s to educate and supply quality teachers to the common schools. The District of Columbia soon found the same need for instructors suited to a growing city and an industrializing and bureaucratizing nation. The District's first private normal school was established in 1851 by educator and abolitionist Myrtila Miner for the education of African American women.

D.C.'s first public normal school, Washington Normal School, opened in 1873, the first incarnation of what came to be named Wilson Normal for James Ormond Wilson, one of its proponents. It met first at Franklin School and instructed only white female students in a one-year course, but white men were later accepted, and the curriculum expanded to two years. With the growth of the program, more space was required. The new Municipal Architect, Snowden Ashford, was given the job of designing a proper facility soon after his appointment in 1909. The 300-foot-long brick and limestone structure was completed in 1913. The curriculum continued to change, and it expanded to a three-year program in 1927 and to a full four-year college in 1929. Following the desegregation of schools, Wilson Normal combined with Miner Normal to become the District of Columbia Teachers College, one of three institutions that were merged to become the University of the District of Columbia (UDC).

As written in the Wilson Normal School catalog, a teachers' college is built upon the belief that the school is the most vital agency to assure the continuance and richer development of the democratic way of life. Its functions were many: to form a sympathetic understanding of youth and from this, an ability to guide them in a positive direction; to introduce them to major fields of knowledge; and to instill loyalty to the democratic ideals of the country in which they live, urging them to strive for the establishment of peace and security in this world. The catalog further argued that to develop children is a cultural interest of the country. Specifically to Wilson, the college sought to introduce the students to international and national relations, race, religion, ethnicity, and labor problems. It provided students with the experiences of responsibility and decision making. It brought to prospective teachers an understanding of children with their many backgrounds, interests, and upbringing.

Wilson Normal School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under the Multiple Property Document: *Public School Buildings of Washington, D. C., 1862-1960*. The Wilson Normal School is a purpose-built public school building; it is more than 50 years old; it is in its original location; it retains integrity; and it retains original fabric and its character-defining features. Further, the building, designed by

Wilson Normal School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Municipal Architect Snowden Ashford is perfectly representative of the school building sub-type, "The Office of the Municipal Architect, Snowden Ashford, 1909-1921." As described in the Multiple Property document, the schools from this period were primarily designed in the Renaissance, Elizabethan, and Gothic style buildings favored by Municipal Architect Snowden Ashford and the private architects with whom he contracted.

Wilson Normal School is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C with Architecture and Education as the Areas of Significance. Like most schools, the primary significance of Wilson Normal School is its educational use, but unlike most D.C. schools that provided neighborhood-based education, Wilson served a broader purpose to educate students to become teachers to then staff schools throughout the District. It was not the first institution for educating teachers in Washington as educator Myrtilla Miner had established her own school for African American women in 1851; however, Wilson Normal, founded in 1873, was the first public normal school in the city. It would continue to instruct generations of teachers in the latest pedagogy through its 1955 merger with Miner.

In addition to its significance in the history of education, Wilson Normal School is a very fine example of Elizabethan Revival architecture as applied to a public school building. It is an imposing building, with its three-part composition connected by recessed entries opening onto courts. Full of light because of its many ganged windows, its most impressive feature is the pattern of repeating Flemish gables. The style was a favorite of D.C.'s first Municipal Architect, Snowden Ashford, because it seemed especially appropriate to schools and proved all the more so as the institution evolved into a college. Colleges constructed at Oxford and Cambridge during the Tudor period had inspired schools and libraries since. Snowden hoped his design would inspire pride and purpose in the student-teachers.

The Period of Significance for the Wilson School extends from 1912-1933, the date of completion of the school building until 1965, a period 50 years from the present.

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

As detailed in the Multiple Property Document, *Public School Buildings of Washington, D. C., 1862-1960*, the establishment of Washington, D.C.'s first public school system dates to 1804, but the system was small, limited and deficient prior to the Civil War, and excluded whole segments of the population, including African Americans. It was not until the 1860s that a city-wide system of proper schools began to be established, but it would remain beset by racial separation and discrimination until 1954.

The first normal schools in the United States were established in New England in the 1820s and 1830s to educate and supply quality teachers to the common schools. The District of Columbia soon found the same need for instructors suited to a growing city and an industrializing and bureaucratizing nation. The District's first private normal school was established in 1851 by educator and abolitionist Myrtilla Miner for the education of African-American women. The

Wilson Normal School

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

city's first public normal school, Washington Normal School, opened in 1873, the first incarnation of what came to be named Wilson Normal for James Ormond Wilson, one of its proponents. One of the school's chief missions—as with “normal schools” all over the country—was to establish standards of teaching or “norms,” thus, the term “Normal.”

As a result of the efforts of James Ormond Wilson and Mr. O.K. Harris, the Wilson Teachers College was authorized by Congress in 1873 as the Washington Normal School, established for training white elementary school teachers. Its first principal was Miss Lucilla Smith, a graduate of the Boston Teacher Training School. Originally, only women were allowed attendance. Its first graduating class of 18 young white women began classes in September, 1873. Initially, the Washington Normal School met in the Franklin School at 13<sup>th</sup> and K Streets on the third floor under the attic roof, but soon the space became too cramped, and other accommodations were sought. In 1910, shortly before the erection of the new building at 11th and Harvard Streets, the school was named after James Ormond Wilson, then superintendent of the D.C. public school system. Born in Royalston, Massachusetts, Mr. Wilson was a leader in public education, founder of the D.C. Normal School and public high school, before becoming superintendent of the D.C. public schools.

Throughout the years, the school's curriculum saw a number of changes. In 1896, the Board of Education extended the normal school's one-year course to a two-year course. The school at the time had two main departments of study: a general department for grade teaching, and a kindergarten department. Students studied psychology, principles of education, principles of teaching, history of education, child study, English, history, geography, arithmetic, reading, zoology, physiology, botany, gardening, music, drawing, penmanship, practice teaching, mother play, kindergarten theory, literature, and storytelling. In 1915, night classes in parliamentary law, cooking, and singing were started. In the same year, admission of post-graduates from other jurisdictions to Wilson Normal School was requested, but deemed unwise by the Board of Education.<sup>1</sup> According the Board of Education's meeting minutes from June 4, 1915:

In 1927, the school became a three-year curriculum institution, and in 1929, it became a four-year college, offering a degree of Bachelor in Science, and changing its name to the Wilson Teachers College. In 1931, Dr. Edgar C. Higbie (the president of the college), expanded the school to include preparation for teachers in junior high school as well as elementary schools. In 1932, the Board of Education authorized Superintendent Frank Ballou to apply for membership of Wilson in the American Association of Teachers Colleges, as well as the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Accreditation as a university was accepted. In 1941, wartime services were offered. This entailed lessons in such topics as the principles of radio, physical chemistry, and climatology. A year later, in 1942, the Orientation Center for

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Board of Education's meeting minutes from June 4, 1915, “The Committee is of opinion that it would be unwise to provide post-graduate courses of study to graduates of the normal schools in other jurisdictions. The purpose of the local normal school is to provide professional training for the graduates of our own high schools and of other high schools. To admit a student who would simply be repeating in the local normal school the instruction received elsewhere would be unwise for two reasons: First, it would tend to unequalize the gradation in the classes. Second, it would give such post-graduate students an unfair advantage in their rating.” (From Board of Education, meeting minutes, June 4, 1915, Sumner School Library and Archives.)

Wilson Normal School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Foreign Students and trainees was housed on the third floor of the building. It offered aid to foreigners who received fellowships for graduate studies in the university, or training in industries and government, yet was not under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education since its employees were not hired by the board. (Over 1000 students from China, Syria, Egypt, Turkey, Spain, Norway, France, Italy, Poland, and the Soviet Union were involved.) In 1943, the college began to share in the education of nurses through affiliations with nearby hospitals, including Garfield, Sibley, and Emergency hospitals. In 1954, the Board of Education authorized a graduate level. In 1955, Miner and Wilson merged to form the District of Columbia Teachers College—the precursor to the University of the District of Columbia—combining races and faculty. Over time, the school was becoming obsolete as more faculty and better facilities were needed. Eventually, low exam pass rates of its graduates resulted in a temporary loss of accreditation. For a time, plans were being made to merge with the Federal City College, phasing out the teachers college, but this did not go through. In 1987, the school building was abandoned by the teachers college. After sitting vacant for a period, the property was leased to the Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School in 2001. At that time, the building was an abandoned shell with broken windows. So the school embarked on an \$18 million renovation. Upon completions, the school moved into the building in 2004.<sup>2</sup>

### Architecture of the School

Architecturally, Wilson Normal School was among the earliest buildings designed by Snowden Ashford after his appointment to the post of Municipal Architect for the District of Columbia in 1909. Ashford began designing the school in 1910 and, according to contemporary report, his design was considered to be one of the most “elaborate structures for educational purposes ever erected in the United States.” Ashford himself stated that he was incorporating the best features in the normal school building found in similar schools elsewhere in the country. In particular, the city of Cleveland, Ohio, loaned Ashford the plans for their new normal school with the view of assisting Ashford in his efforts.<sup>3</sup>

Ashford preferred the Tudor, Gothic, and Elizabethan Revival styles when designing his school buildings. This was true with the Wilson Normal School in which he chose the Elizabethan Revival style. The newly formed Commission of Fine Arts took great issue with this style and deemed it to be an unusual, inharmonious, and incongruous style of architecture for Washington, D.C. Furthermore, the Commission believed that the Elizabethan style was wholly unworthy and alien to the District of Columbia. The Commission specifically addressed the design for the Wilson Normal School. They found its design in the Elizabethan style to be ill-adapted to fulfill the problems of school architecture. The Commission noted that their review was too late in the process for new plans to be drawn. However, it noted:

In the opinion of the Commission the general aspect of the District of Columbia would be improved if some uniform style of school architecture could be adopted and adhered to; and the same may be said in respect to engine houses and other public buildings.

<sup>2</sup> Fernandez, Manny. “A Place for 'Becoming an American'; Long a Haven for Immigrants, Rosario Career Center Finds Its Own Safe Shelter.” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 7, 2004, p. DE10.

<sup>3</sup> “Normal School Plan.” *The Washington Post*, October 30, 1910, p. R3.

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

When plans Elizabethan Revival style plans for the Minor Normal School went before the Commission of Fine Arts on November 11, 1911, the Commission responded on January 31, 1912 thusly:

When the designs of the normal school to be erected at the southwest corner of Eleventh and Harvard Streets NW were submitted to us last year we were given to understand that the necessity for the prompt erection of the school building and other circumstances made it out of the question to redesign the building completely, and our criticisms and other suggestions ... were therefore directed primarily to the amendment of certain features. But ... from the present attempt to follow the Elizabethan style in the colored normal school there appears to be a deliberate effort to secure a certain consonance among the school buildings by adopting that style for use in all of them. [The Commission is] unanimously of the opinion that the Elizabethan style ... is ill adapted and inappropriate for a public building of the present day in Washington.<sup>4</sup>

The Commission strongly preferred the Colonial Revival style, describing it as adhering to the classical traditions established by the early architecture of the Capital. In the design of Miner Normal School, the Commission's view prevailed and the school was redesigned in the Colonial Revival style. However, Ashford would continue to design schools in his preferred Tudor/Gothic Revival style until he retired in 1921. It was not until Albert L. Harris became municipal architect following Ashford's retirement that public buildings in Washington, D.C. were routinely designed in the Colonial Revival style.

### **Architect of the School Building: Snowden Ashford**

At the time the Wilson Normal School building was designed and constructed, Snowden Ashford was Municipal Architect for the District of Columbia. Ashford held the position from 1909 to 1921. Earlier, from 1895 to 1909, he had served as Assistant Inspector and Inspector of Buildings, where he had overseen municipal architecture. Ashford favored Elizabethan and Collegiate Gothic styles for the school buildings he designed.

Ashford was born in Washington, D.C., January 1, 1866. He was the eldest son of Mahlon Ashford, the president of the first title insurance company in the District. Ashford was educated at Rittenhouse Academy and at the Christian Brothers Roman Catholic School. He prepared for college at Lehigh Preparatory School in Bethlehem, Pa., and passed examinations for a course in civil engineering at Lehigh University. He was afterward graduated from LaFayette College, having prepared for the profession of architect.

After leaving LaFayette, Ashford entered the office of A. B. Mullett, who formerly had been supervising architect of the United States Treasury. Later, Ashford was associated with John L. Smith meyer, architect of the Library of Congress, and for two years he worked on plans for the library. He entered the District service in 1895, when he was appointed assistant inspector of

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<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Commission of Fine Arts: Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1916.* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917. Pp. 28-31.

Wilson Normal School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

buildings. Ashford revised the building regulations of the city in 1900, and introduced a card system and other methods to increase the efficiency of the inspector's office. He prepared the plans and specifications for all school houses, engine houses and other District buildings, until such work was entrusted to architects of the city and the buildings were erected under his supervision.

In 1901, Ashford was promoted to the position of inspector of buildings. In the quarter of a century that he served in the District government, he drew the plans for 75 school buildings in the city. He possessed definite ideas as to appropriate styles for municipal public buildings and placed a strong Elizabethan and Gothic stamp on the public school buildings he designed. His design philosophy meshed perfectly with that of William B. Ittner of Saint Louis, who was commissioned to design Central High School. Ittner's adaptation of the Collegiate Gothic style to Central High School likely inspired Ashford's own designs for Dunbar Senior High School (now demolished) and Park View School, both completed in 1916, and for Eastern High School, completed in 1923. Ashford persisted in the use of the Collegiate Gothic in Eastern High School despite the growing public popularity of the Colonial Revival style and the urging of the Eastern Alumni Association to abandon the "Anheuser-Busch Gothic" style.<sup>5</sup>

Snowden Ashford is associated with the following buildings designated as D.C. Historic Landmarks:

- Chemical Engine No. 5 (Engine Co. No. 25; Congress Heights Firehouse), 3203 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., SE (1902), architect.
- Eastern Market (and Interiors), North and South Halls (1908), architect.
- Engine Company No. 20 (Tenleytown Firehouse), addition (1913), architect.
- Engine Company No. 23 (Foggy Bottom Firehouse), 1910, collaboration with Hornblower & Marshall
- Jesse Reno School, 4820 Howard Street, NW (1903), architect.
- Military Road School, 1375 Missouri Avenue, NW (1911-12), architect.
- Miner Building, Howard University, 2565 Georgia Avenue, NW, supervising architect.
- Old Engine Company No. 12 (Eckington Firehouse) (1896-97), architect.
- Park View School, 3570 Warder Street, NW (1916), architect.
- Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School, First & N Streets, NW (1916, razed 1977), architect.

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<sup>5</sup> "Snowden Ashford, Long Civic Leader, Dead in Hospital." *The Washington Post*, Jan. 27, 1927, p. 9.

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Fernandez, Manny. "A Place for 'Becoming an American'; Long a Haven for Immigrants, Rosario Career Center Finds Its Own Safe Shelter." *The Washington Post*, Oct. 7, 2004, p. DE10.

"Normal School Plan." *The Washington Post*, October 30, 1910, p. R3.

Beauchamp, Tanya Edwards, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1960*, D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2003.

*Report of the Commission of Fine Arts: Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1916*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917. Pp. 28-31.

Snowden Ashford, Long Civic Leader, Dead in Hospital." *The Washington Post*, Jan. 27, 1927, p. 9.

Snowden Ashford, Biographical Entry, "D.C. Architects Directory," (D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2010).

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### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property** 2.2 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.926511 | Longitude: -77.027761 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

#### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The Wilson School at 1100 Harvard Street NW in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C. occupies lot 812 in Square 2856.

#### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The school building has stood on this site and has occupied this lot and square since its completion in 1912-1913.

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kent C. Boese  
organization: Historic Washington Architecture  
street & number: 608 Rock Creek Church Road, NW  
city or town: Washington, D.C. state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip code: \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail kboese@hotmail.com  
telephone: 202 904-8111  
date: August 2013; revised January 2015

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Wilson Normal School  
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.  
County: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Photographer: Kim Williams  
Date Photographed: January 2015

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:**

View looking easterly from Harvard Street showing north elevation of Wilson Normal School, including central block and end wings

1 of 6

View looking easterly showing north elevation of east wing and east entry hyphens

2 of 16

View looking westerly showing north elevation of west entry hyphen and west wing

3 of 16

View looking south showing north elevation of west entry hyphen

4 of 16

View looking westerly showing north elevation of east entry hyphen and central block

5 of 16

View looking south showing north elevation of east entry hyphen

6 of 16

View looking skyward at Flemish parapet gable on west entry hyphen

7 of 16

View looking northwest showing east and south elevations of east wing

8 of 16

View looking east from rear parking area showing south elevation of school with western wing in foreground

9 of 16

View looking east from rear parking area showing south elevation of school with auditorium wing in background

10 of 16

View looking northwest showing south and west elevations of west wing

11 of 16

View looking east showing west elevation of west wing

12 of 16

Interior view looking northeast showing stair in east entry hyphen

13 of 16

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

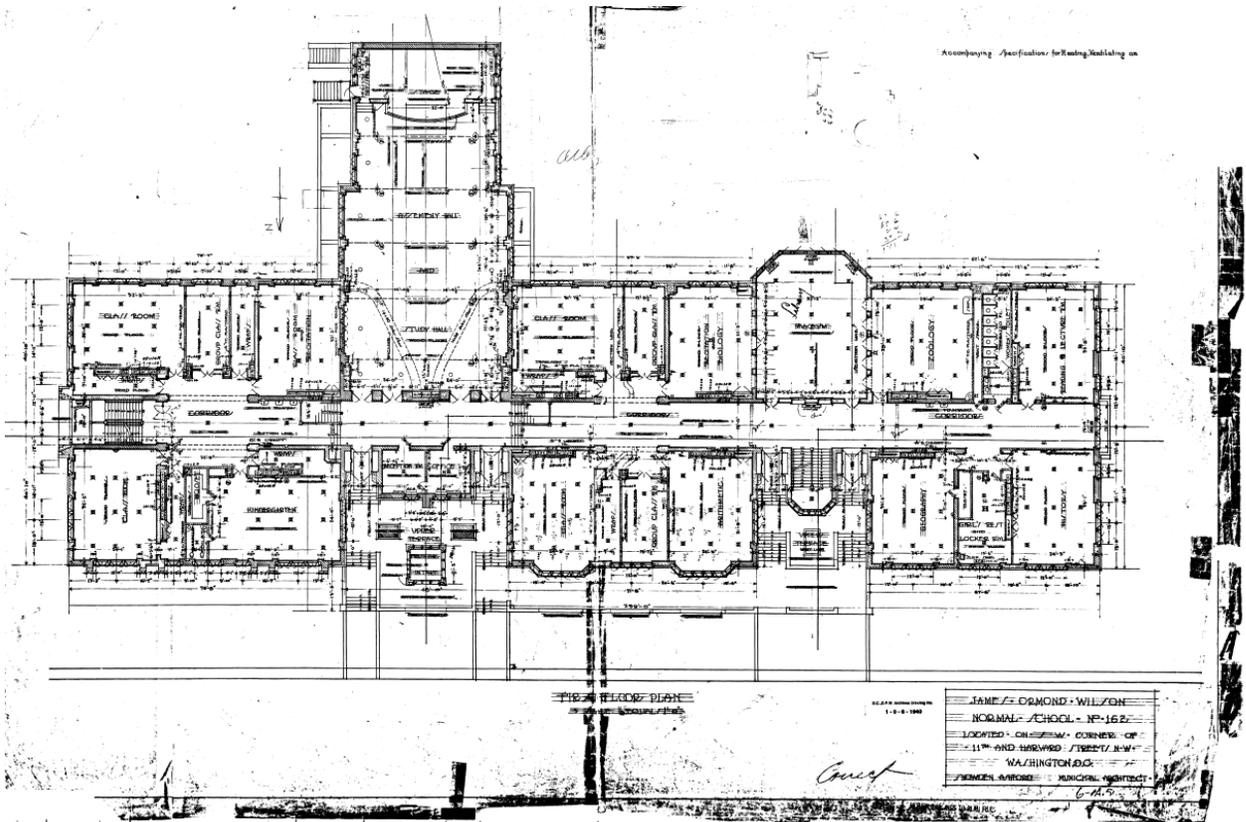
Interior view looking northwest showing stair in east entry hyphen  
14 of 16

Detail of door in west entry hyphen to the west of central projecting bay  
15 of 16

Detail of transom light in east entry door on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
16 of 16

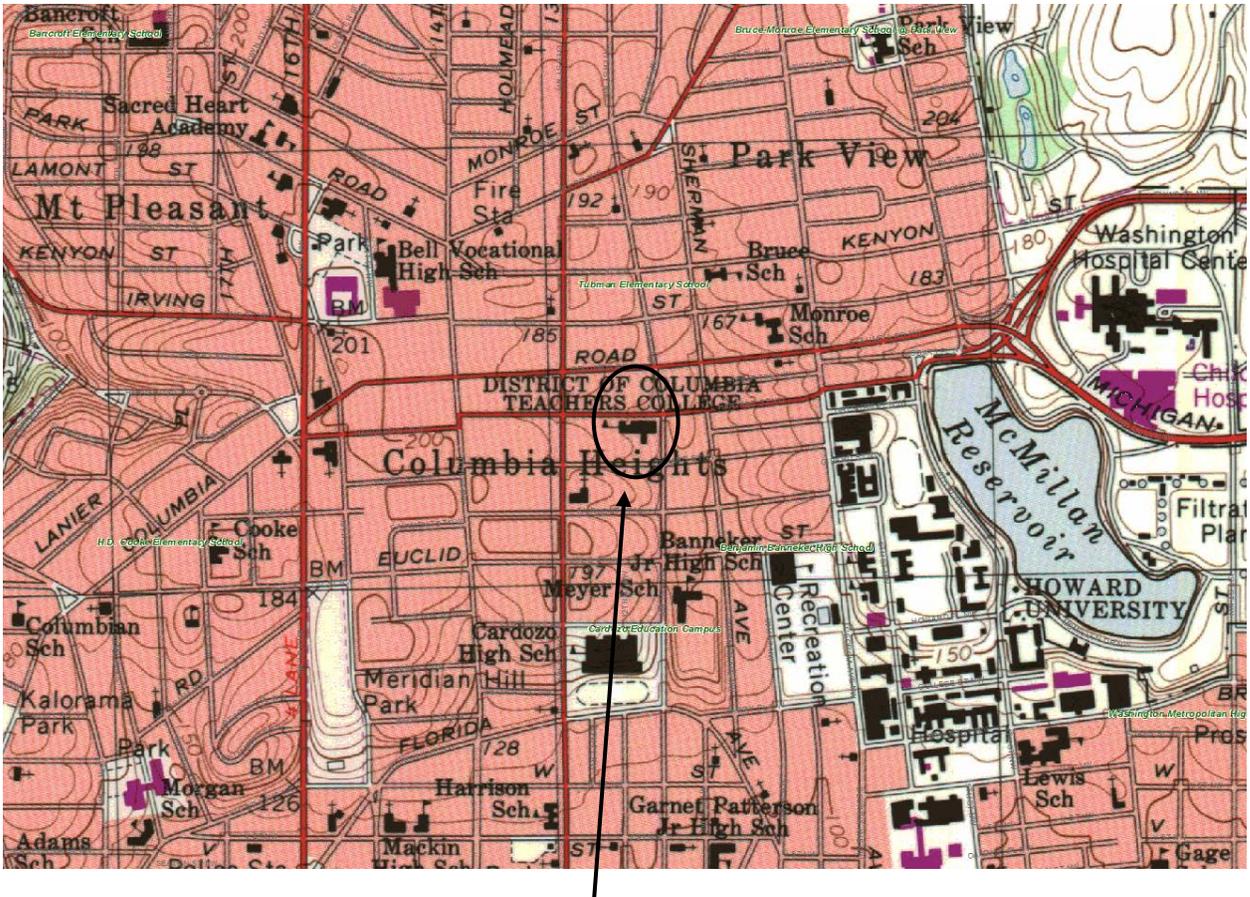
Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

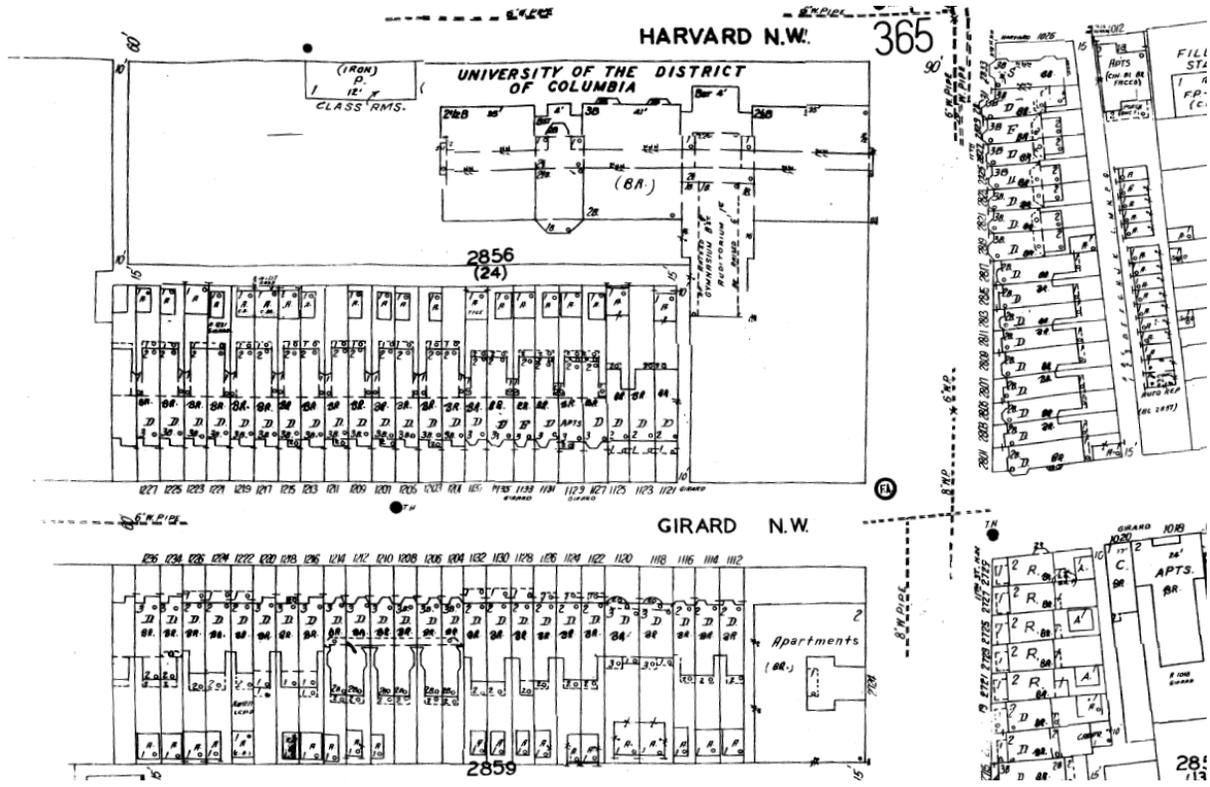
Washington, D.C.  
County and State



Site Plan of Wilson Normal School  
1100 Harvard Street, NW  
Washington, D.C.  
USGS Quad Washington West

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



James Ormond Wilson Normal School (noted on map as University of the District of Columbia)  
1100 Harvard Street, NW, Washington, D.C.  
(From Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1998)

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

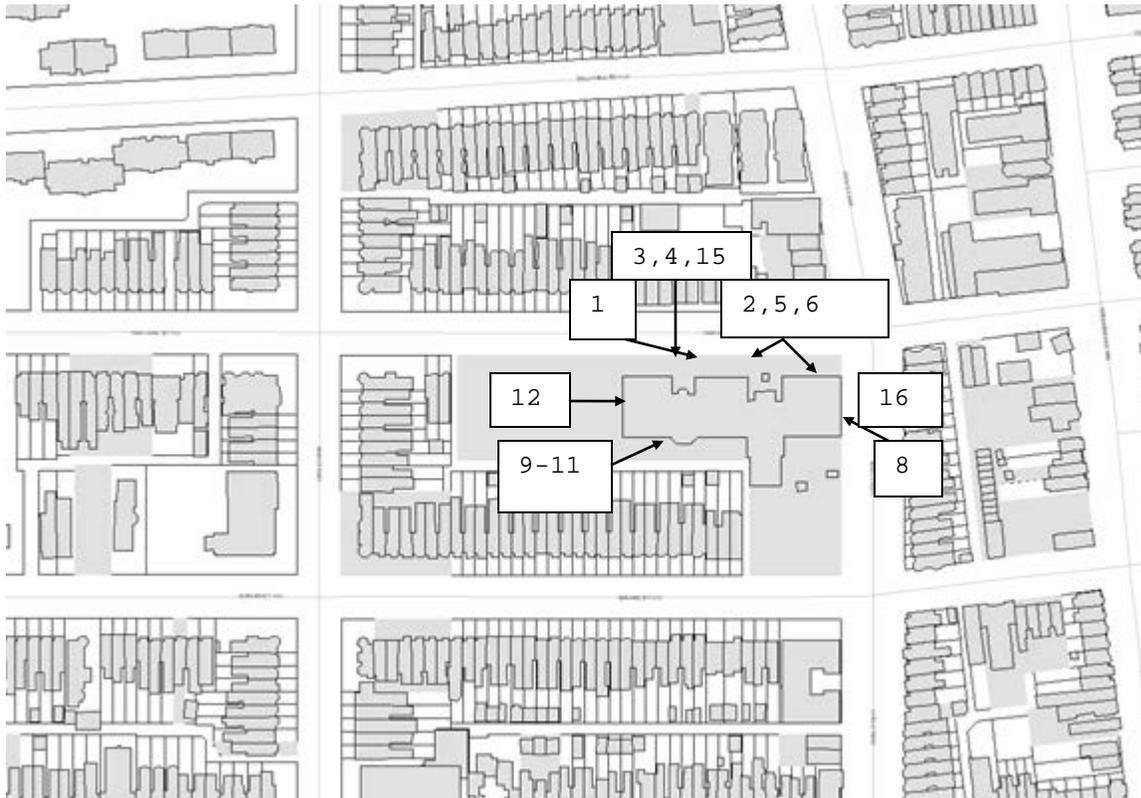
Washington, D.C.  
County and State



Site Plan of Wilson School Showing National Register Boundaries  
(From DC GIS Maps, 2014)

Wilson Normal School  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



Key to National Register Photographs

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.