

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 72-001

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Wilson's Station Railroad Tower

other

2. Location

street and number Amtrak Railroad Tracks at Landover Road (MD 202) _____ not for publication

[illegible]

county Prince George's

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name	National Passenger Railroad Corporation
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street and number 400 North Capitol Street, NW telephone

city, town	Washington	state	DC	zip code	20001-1511
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4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 5258 folio 62

city, town	Upper Marlboro	tax map	059C-1	tax parcel	n/a	tax ID number	0159608
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5. Primary Location of Additional Data

_____ Contributing Resource in National Register District

Contributing Resource in Local Historic District

 Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

_____ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

Recorded by HABS/HAER

Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT

X	Other: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Prince George's County Planning Department
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6. Classification

[illegible]

7. Description

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Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one-paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Wilson's Station Railroad Tower is located near where Landover Road (MD 202) crosses over the Amtrak line in unincorporated Landover, Maryland. The two-story, one-bay building is adjacent to the railroad tracks to the west. Set on a lot that slopes steeply towards the railroad tracks, the property is accessed by a gravel driveway off Landover Road. Mature trees mark the north end of the property along the steep slope. There are several secondary resources associated with Wilson's Station Railroad Tower. These include the two lines of railroad track and a control shed. A small waiting shelter, located to the northeast of the tower on the same side of the tracks, was noted at the time of the 1985 on-site survey.¹ This building is no longer extant.

TOWER

Wilson's Station Railroad Tower is a two-story, one-bay T-shaped building that, based on its form, materials, and other similar towers in the area, appears to have been constructed in the early twentieth century. The wood-frame tower is set on a solid stretcher-bond brick foundation and is clad in asbestos siding. An interior concrete chimney pierces the roof of the northwest wing. The main block of the building is capped by a pyramidal roof, while the wing is capped by a hip roof. Wide overhanging eaves with a soffit consisting of narrow wood planks dominate the roofline. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and features faux terra-cotta tiles along the ridges. As late as 1985, the windows were intact; they are now covered with plywood.

The façade (southeast elevation) is fenestrated by four window openings, each featuring a square-edge wood surround. The openings are located at the second story of the building.

The northeast (side) elevation is fenestrated by a tripartite window opening at the second story of the main block. The window opening features a square-edge wood surround and a metal-clad sill. An exterior flight of metal stairs rises along the elevation to a second-story single-leaf door opening on the wing. The entry opening is now covered with plywood. A second single-leaf door opening, covered with plywood, is located on the first story of the wing.

The northwest (rear) elevation is unfenestrated.

¹ Susan G. Pearl, "Wilson's Station Railroad Tower," (PG: 72A-001) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1985), 7:1.

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The southwest (side) elevation provides access to a basement level. Located along the main block are concrete steps leading to a plywood-covered door opening. Fenestration on the main block consists of a tripartite window opening featuring a square-edge wood surround and a metal-clad sill. Fenestration on the wing consists of a window opening at the first story as well as a window opening at the second story. Both of these windows feature square-edge wood surrounds.

At the time of the 2007 on-site survey, the interior of Wilson's Station Railroad Tower was not accessible.

CONTROL SHED

A control shed is located southwest of Wilson's Station Railroad Tower, adjacent to the railroad tracks. Based on its form and materials, the shed appears to have been constructed c. 1990. Set on a solid foundation, the metal-frame building is clad in metal and capped by a front-gable roof covered with standing-seam metal. The shed has two single-leaf doors, one located on the façade (southwest elevation) and the other on the northeast (rear) elevation.

The interior of the control shed was accessible at the time of the 2007 on-site survey. The interior has a metal floor, walls, and ceiling. The long, rectangular space was divided into two parallel walkways by a non-load-bearing metal partition wall. Modern electronics and solenoids are housed inside the structure.

INTEGRITY

Wilson's Station Railroad Tower retains a moderate level of integrity. The building, a rare extant example of the railroad towers built along the Pennsylvania Railroad lines, was vacant and in poor condition at the time of the 2007 on-site survey. Although the building is no longer in use, its integrity of design, association, location and setting are retained. Trains, albeit much faster than anything operable during the serviceable time of the tower, still operate along the tracks. Wilson's Station Railroad Tower, similar in design and association to the nearby Bowie Railroad Station, remain visual landmarks along the railroad line. The building's integrity of feeling is compromised due to the fact that it is no longer functional. Further, the tower's integrity of workmanship and materials are low due to the replacement of key architectural elements such as the roof cladding and windows with non-historic materials.

The control shed is considered a non-contributing resource due to its recent construction date.

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Overall, Wilson's Station Railroad Tower and associated resource retain a moderate level of integrity. The tower, similar to the Bowie Railroad Station Tower, could be moved to another site and reassembled.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Local History</u>	

Specific dates	c. 1915	Architect/Builder	Unknown
Construction dates	c. 1915		

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☐ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Wilson's Station Railroad Tower, located near the crossing of Landover Road (MD 202) over the Amtrak line in unincorporated Landover, Maryland, is a rare extant example of railroad tower architecture at the beginning of the twentieth century in Prince George's County. The small two-story, one-bay tower served the expanding railway system that was the impetus for the economic growth experienced throughout Prince George's County. Constructed on the site of an earlier station stop on the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad, Wilson's Station Railroad Tower remained in service until the late 1980s. Although the tower is a prominent landmark in the area and along the rail line, it does not retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a railroad tower constructed during the growth of the railroad in Prince George's County.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Wilson's Station Railroad Tower is located in the unincorporated town of Landover, Maryland. Landover is located in the western portion of Prince George's County, east of Bladensburg, Maryland. Landover developed much later and more slowly from Bladensburg, which is a small developed community by the time of *Martenet's 1861 Map of Prince George's County*. The *1861 Martenet Map* shows the area that would later come to be Landover having only Wilson's Station, a post office, and a few scattered residences.² The laying of roads, like those constructed in Bladensburg immediately west of Landover, had not occurred by this time.³ The *Hopkins Map of 1878* indicates development in Landover had not yet taken place. The buildings noted on the map include Wilson's Station, a post office, and a few residences to include the home of Lawrence Wilson.⁴

² Simon J. Martenet, "Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1861," Adapted from *Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland* (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861).

³ Simon J. Martenet, "Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1861, Adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland" (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861).

⁴ G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland* (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

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Wilson's Station Railroad Tower is built on the site of an earlier building, which came to be known as Wilson's Station. From the earliest years of operation of the Washington line there was a station located at the crossing of the railroad tracks and the old Bladensburg-Marlboro Road (MD 202).⁵ By the turn of the nineteenth century, Wilson's Station had come to be known as Landover, after the old land tract. The Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company built their first station in 1872, up the line, at the junction of rail lines in Washington, D.C. and Southern Maryland.

The first trains ran on the Washington Branch on July 2, 1872. This branch eventually became the main rail line into Washington, D.C., spurring the development of small railroad communities throughout Prince George's County.⁶ At a point just inside Prince George's County, the Washington line was constructed by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to connect Huntington City, known today as Bowie, with Washington, D.C. The Baltimore and Potomac Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad Company merged in July of 1902.⁷ The Pennsylvania Railroad Company did this in order to gain access to Washington, D.C. by rail. In doing this the company effectively controlled a monopoly on railroad transportation between New York City and Washington, D.C.⁸

It is during this time that Wilson's Station Railroad Tower was constructed.⁹ This is based on the construction of the similar Bowie Railroad Tower at the beginning of the twentieth century along the same line.¹⁰ Towers were used by railroads to control areas of track, to prevent trains from crashing. They also housed the mechanism for switching trains from one track to another. A tower operator would operate this mechanism by throwing levers that were connected to the tracks, thus changing the direction of the track.¹¹ This tower controlled the section of rail line around Landover.

⁵ Susan G. Pearl, "Wilson's Station Railroad Tower," (PG: 72A-001) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1985), 8:1.

⁶ Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County* (1991), 43.

⁷ "Railroad Merger Action," *The New York Times* (July 23, 1902), [on-line resource], available from <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A0DE4D8113BE733A25750C2A9619C946397D6CF> (accessed November 8, 2007).

⁸ Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County* (1991), 44.

⁹ Susan G. Pearl, "Wilson's Station Railroad Tower," (PG: 72A-001) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1985), 8:1.

¹⁰ City of Bowie, "Bowie Railroad Station and Huntington Museum," <http://www.cityofbowie.org/museum> (accessed November 8, 2007).

¹¹ Western Connecticut Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, "SONO Switch Tower History," <http://www.westctnrhs.org/towerhistory.htm>.

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The railroad and associated properties were conveyed to the current owner, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), in 1976.¹² This conveyance came as a result of the Regional Rail Reorganization Act of 1973. At the time of the 2007 on-site survey Amtrak, was not utilizing Wilson's Station Railroad Tower. Instead, Amtrak moved local track operations to the Control Shed. This facility acts as a fail-safe for Amtrak's central operations, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Washington line is still heavily traveled, carrying high speed Amtrak trains along the Northeast corridor.

¹² Consolidated Rail Corporation to National Railroad Passenger Corporation, Prince George's County Land Records, NLP 5258:62.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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City of Bowie. "Bowie Railroad Station and Huntington Museum." <http://www.cityofbowie.org/museum>.

Hopkins, G.M. *Prince George's County, from Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington*. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878.

Martenet, Simon J. *Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland*. Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet, 1861.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County*, 1991.

Pearl, Susan G. "Wilson's Station Railroad Tower" (PG: 72A-1) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 1985.

Prince George's County Land Records.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 3.932

Acreage of historical setting 3.932

Quadrangle name Washington East, Section F

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

Wilson's Station Railroad Tower is located adjacent to a major railway line in Landover, Maryland. The property is bounded by Landover Road (MD 202) to the west and to the north by the off-ramp from the John Hanson Highway (US 50) to the north Landover Road (MD 202). The southern boundary consists of a gravel berm between the Amtrak rails and the Metro rails. The eastern boundary of the parcel consists of Amtrak railroad tracks. Wilson's Station Railroad Tower is notated on Tax Map 059C-1.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul Weishar, Architectural Historian		
organization	EHT Traceries, Incorporated	date	February 2008
street & number	1121 5th Street NW	telephone	202.393.1199
city or town	Washington	state	DC

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

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CHAIN OF TITLE
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY LAND RECORDS

Consolidated Rail Corporation owned many parcels of land in Prince George's County. Earlier deeds could not be located for Wilson's Station Railroad Tower.

Deed NLP 5258:62
April 1, 1976

Consolidated Rail Corporation to National Railroad Passenger Corporation
(AMTRAK).

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Photo: Wilson's Station Railroad Tower, view of the west (side) elevation, looking east. (November 2007)

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Photo: Wilson's Station Railroad Tower, view of the east (side) elevation second-story, looking west.
(November 2007)

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Photo: Control Shed, view of the façade (west elevation), looking east.

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Photo: Bowie Railroad Station.¹³

¹³ City of Bowie, "Community Services," <http://www.cityofbowie.org/museum> (accessed November 1, 2007)