

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Craven	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Coor-Gaston House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
121 Craven Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New Bern (First Congressional District, The Hon. Walter B. Jones)

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Craven	CODE 49
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Bishop Vincent S. Waters

STREET AND NUMBER:
Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh

CITY OR TOWN:
Raleigh

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Craven County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
302 Broad Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New Bern

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1935
 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
East Capitol and Independence Avenue, S. E.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE: D. C.	CODE 11
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The main portion of the Coor-Gaston House is a two-and-one-half-story frame structure covered with beaded weatherboards below a gable roof. It is raised on a foundation of several courses of brick laid in English bond above a coquina (locally called "marl") base. The house is a modified L in plan with a two-tier porch in the angle under the main roof. The east gable end faces the street, but the entrances, located in the two western bays of the south facade, open onto the porch. The most distinctive exterior feature is the Chinese trellis railings that enclose both levels of the porch. A two-story addition two bays wide was constructed on the west side in the late nineteenth century. Later, probably in the twentieth century, the rear gable end was extended one more bay to the west and given a two-tier porch as well. A small wing near the center of the house added at an undetermined time has recently been removed.

The original two-tier porch, supported by Doric pillars at each level, extends across three bays of the south side of the house. At the second level, the rear bay of this porch has been enclosed to provide a bathroom. Both levels of the porch are treated quite formally, being finished with flush horizontal sheathing and trimmed with a molded cornice, chair rail and baseboard. This finish reflects the use of the galleries as additional rooms during the warm season.

The windows of the first two levels contain six-over-six sash and are surrounded by molded architraves. At the attic level a large lunette is centered in each gable end. The roof is pierced on both sides by two gable dormers, those on the south having round-headed openings and those on the north trabeated. A single chimney with a corbeled cap rises through the center of the roof.

The basement openings are covered by vertical grills, in which the bars, square in section, are set diagonally into the lintels and sills. Two entrances appear on portions of the south facade. That in the western bay of the facade has a door of six panels which instead of being raised on normal fillets are elevated on molded surfaces. The door is hung on HL hinges. The entrance in the extreme west bay of the porch, containing a similar door, features sidelights and a transom. A Civil War era photograph indicates the entrances have been changed since that period. Formerly there were two doors opening onto the porch, one in the south projection of the L and one in the east bay of the south side, and windows in the bays containing the present entrances.

The plan consists of the L-shaped hall and two rooms, a parlor located in the east end and another along the north side. Each room including the hall is treated individually and displays a variety of Georgian motifs.

The hall features a flush-paneled dado and a fully molded cornice punctuated with undercut modillions. Single crossettes grace the heads of the molded architraves around the doors leading into the parlors. Dominating the hall, the open-string stair rises toward the east in a single flight and approaches the second floor with winders. Simple panels accent the string under each riser. Beneath the first run, the triangular spandrel is

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is fully paneled. A six-panel door leading to the cellar stairs adjoins the spandrel and is surmounted by a rectangular panel. The turned newel post, which rests on the curtail, is encircled by slender turned balusters that continue up the stair, three to a tread. A molded handrail carries over the posts in ramps and easings, the profile of which is faithfully repeated on the opposite wall by the chair rail of the unbroken flat-paneled wainscot and by engaged posts that correspond to the balustrade posts. Since the run of stairs is unusually steep, the balusters on the step preceding the winders become quite elongated, creating a dramatic profile.

The cornice in the east parlor has smaller modillions and a dentil course. The wainscot, like that in the hall, is flat paneled. Single crossettes break at the top of the window architraves which then curve out in shoulders at the chair rail. Beneath each shoulder the wainscot breaks out to form a pedestal. The six-panel doors in the mantel (west) wall of the parlor, surrounded by three-part architraves, are hung on HL hinges, a feature which recurs throughout most of the house. Between the two doors is a fireplace with a marble surround outlined by a crossetted architrave. Unusually low, this mantel has no frieze. Instead the molded shelf, adorned only by a course of pierced dentils, rests directly on the architrave. The wallpaper directly above the shelf is less discolored than that in the rest of the room, indicating that the frieze has been removed rather recently. A foliated plaster medallion ornaments the center of the ceiling.

In the north parlor a Wall of Troy motif replaces the dentil course on cornice and mantel. The wainscot is flat paneled and recedes slightly beneath each window. The mantel resembles that in the west parlor, but the frieze, interrupted by brackets at either end is still in place. Above is an overmantel consisting of a large panel framed by an architrave with a double crossette at each corner and a parallel border framing the field of the panel. A curious but carefully executed alteration has been made in relation to the doors on either side of the chimney breast. To the north a bathroom was added and to the south, a closet. All of the architectural elements were neatly moved out from the wall and the respective areas enclosed. Here as in the hall, the six-panel doors are surrounded by crossetted architraves.

The second floor follows the same plan as the first, except that the west bay of the gallery has been enclosed for a bathroom and the south arm of the L-shaped hall has been partitioned into another room. The basic treatment of the parlors also recurs in the second floor rooms.

Aside from the cornice, which is adorned only by a dentil course, the finish of the east bedroom follows the pattern of the parlor below. On the mantel in this room a plain frieze separates the architrave from the shelf which is adorned by a Wall of Troy band. Wardrobe closets have been added

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in the corners against the east wall with the cornice transferred to the outside in a moderately successful effort to integrate the closets into the context of the room.

A fully flat-paneled fireplace wall dominates the north room. The mantel treatment is quite simple, consisting of a plain architrave, an unadorned frieze, and a molded shelf below a paneled overmantel. Twin six-panel doors flank the mantel. Finished with a molded cornice and architraves and an unpaneled wainscot, the north second-floor room is a simpler rendering of the treatment of the room below. The other rooms are finished similarly; the stair hall cornice, however, is enriched with a dentil course.

The stair to the attic is treated like the lower flight. The attic, finished with flush siding, is divided into two large rooms separated by passageways on either side of the stair. Small doors in the north and south walls give access to crawl spaces where the wooden shakes can be seen. On the exterior the roof shakes have been covered with standing-seam tin.

The two-bay late-nineteenth century addition contains two rooms with a chimney between. On the first floor the mantel in the north room is the only one that remains. It is of wood with a curvilinear molded shelf above an arched opening. Both mantels on the second floor survive. They are also of wood but extremely plain with arched openings and block shelves.

It is very likely that the last bay was added when the Coor-Gaston House was converted into apartments, for it contains kitchen and bathroom facilities.

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B. SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)			
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>James Coor bought the land on which the Coor-Gaston House is located from Samuel Vinis in 1767 and probably began the construction of the house soon thereafter. Colonel John D. Whitford in his history of New Bern states that Coor designed the Coor-Gaston House as well as the Emery Mansion and the house Colonel Whitford himself occupied. They are all certainly early enough and from the physical remains similar enough to have been designed by the same man. The fact that Coor resided in this house also supports Whitford's account.</p> <p>Certainly James Coor was involved in the trade of house construction. In 1777 he took John, a free Negro aged eight, as apprentice to the house carpenter trade. Coor was still engaged in the same trade in 1784 when Solomon Johnson became his apprentice. Design and construction of the three houses mentioned above would have brought Coor business during an era when a great economic boom was in progress and in a period when John Hawks was the only architect in town. Construction was not his only interest, however. He was well known for his political activities including service in the North Carolina House of Commons or Senate almost continuously from 1777 to 1792.</p> <p>Coor deeded his house to Sarah Groenendyke, a niece, in 1794, three years before his death, and it remained with heirs until 1818 when it was purchased by William Gaston, its most illustrious owner. Gaston was a Roman Catholic, though there was no Catholic Church in New Bern, and had attended Georgetown University and later Princeton, where he graduated with honors. As a lawyer, member of Congress, and judge of the State Supreme Court, he had few peers. Gaston is best known today for his authorship of the North Carolina state song, though his forensic abilities certainly outweighed his talent as a poet. Stephen F. Miller vividly described Gaston's court performances in his <u>Recollections of New Bern Fifty Years Ago</u>, commenting, "I have heard no efforts since equal in ability, logic, and eloquence."</p> <p>When Bishop John England was appointed to the Diocese of Charleston in 1820, Gaston invited him immediately to New Bern. England arrived in New Bern on May 24, 1821, to begin a stay of several days at the Gaston House. That evening, he held Mass at the Gaston House celebrating, in effect, the founding of St. Paul's Catholic Church and congregation in North Carolina. Peter Guilday, Bishop England's biographer, noted also that</p>			

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Confessions were heard each day of Dr. England's stay at the Gaston's, instruction were given, some converts were received, invalid marriages reconciled with the laws of the church, and every evening a sermon was preached by the indefatigable bishop.

Most of these activities took place in the Gaston House, though Bishop England is also known to have preached in the courthouse. England's visit was recently commemorated when Bishop Waters of the Raleigh Diocese celebrated a sesquicentennial mass May 24, 1971, in the Gaston House.

After Gaston's death in 1844, the house was a residence for various owners. During the Civil War era it served as a part of the Foster General Hospital complex, which covered the entire city block where the house is located. Tents and hospital buildings were constructed around a fountain and garden in the center of the square, and houses on the periphery served either as wards or as quarters for the hospital staff. Except for the war period, however, the deeds and insurance maps indicate no use other than residential. Recently, as the property of the Raleigh Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, the wing of the house has been converted for apartment use, but the main body of the house is being restored as a combined residence-museum.

The Coor-Gaston House is important as the work of James Coor, who was, along with John Hawks, a forerunner of the relatively large group of carpenters, joiners, architects and craftsmen who worked in New Bern around the turn of the nineteenth century. This fine Georgian house, with interiors of exceptional style and finish is, in fact, one of the few relatively untouched pre-Revolutionary structures in the state.

In addition, the association of William Gaston, one of the most notable North Carolinians of his era, and of the Roman Catholic Church with this structure are significant. It is particularly fitting that the preservation and restoration of the house are being done under the auspices of the church that, to a considerable degree, had its local origins in the house.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Craven County Records, Craven County Courthouse, New Bern, North Carolina
Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Wills, Deeds).

Craven County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh,
North Carolina. (Subgroups: Wills, Deeds).

Guilday, Peter. The Life and Times of John England. New York: The American
Press, 1927.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		35° 06' 37"	77° 02' 16"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: $\frac{1}{4}$ Acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Survey and Planning Unit Staff, John B. Wells, III

ORGANIZATION

State Department of Archives and History

DATE

20 September 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:

109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

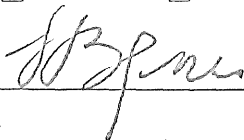
12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name



Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 20 September 1971

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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Miller, Stephen F. 'Recollection of New Bern Fifty Years Ago', originally published in Our Living and Our Dear, New Bern, 1874-75. Typed copy collection of Tony Wrenn, Alexandria, Virginia.

Schuainger, J. Herman. William Gaston, Carolinian. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1949.

Sun Journal, New Bern, June 4, 1960.

Waterman, Thomas Tileston, and Johnston, Frances Benjamin. The Early Architecture of North Carolina. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941.

Wheeler, John H. Historical Sketches of North Carolina. Philadelphia: Tappincott, Gambo, and Company, 1851.

Whitford, Colonel John D. "The Home of the Walking Stick, Early History of the Biblical Recorder and the Baptist Church in New Bern." Unpublished manuscript in the possession of Mrs. G. Tull Richardson, Bellair, New Bern, North Carolina.



Coor-Gaston House
 421 Craven Street
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of New Bern and Vicinity, New Bern Chamber of Commerce
 drawn by Gilfredo Gonzales
 Scale: 1"/1200 feet
 no date

Latitude			Longitude		
degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
35°	06'	37"	77°	02'	16"

