Form 10-300  
UNIVERS STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NA TIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

1. NAME
   COMMON:
   Gibbs House
   AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   903 Front Street
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Beaufort (Third Congressional District, The Hon. David N. Henderson)
   STATE:
   North Carolina

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
   OWNER'S NAME:
   Miss Lessie Arrington
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   903 Front Street
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Beaufort
   STATE:
   North Carolina
   CODE:
   37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
   COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
   Carteret County Courthouse, Register of Deeds
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   Broad Street
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Beaufort
   STATE:
   North Carolina
   CODE:
   37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
   TITLE OF SURVEY:
   DATE OF SURVEY:  
   DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   CITY OR TOWN:
   STATE:
   CODE:
   ENTRY NUMBER
   DATE
The Gibbs House is a handsome Greek Revival dwelling overlooking the wide Taylor's Creek waterfront. Like so many Beaufort buildings, it is a frame house dominated by a two-tier porch, but it is distinguished from its neighbors by its more sophisticated proportions and detail.

The house, five bays wide and four deep, is roughly square in configuration, with its boxlike appearance emphasized by the very shallow hip roof and unusually wide eaves. The eaves are boxed below a molded cornice, and the roof is pierced by two interior chimneys with molded caps. The house rests on a low foundation of stuccoed brick. Protecting the three central bays of the five-bay main (south) facade is a two-tier porch with four paneled posts, square in section and terminating in molded caps, at each level. Between the posts on each floor runs a balustrade with bulbous turned balusters beneath a heavy rail. The balusters flanking the steps and those at the second level, however, are cut in half vertically: their outer faces appear turned, but their backs are flat. The second-story porch roof--and presumably the posts that support it--are said by the present owner, who is now in her eighties, to have been added by her grandmother. A sketch of the waterfront area published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 31, 1861, shows only a gallery at the second level of the porch.

The central entrance contains a wide single door flanked by sidelights beneath a five-light transom; the whole is enframed by a molded architrave. The door has three long vertical flat panels above three shorter ones, all outlined by very heavy molding. The second-level and rear doors are similar but have no sidelights or transoms. The windows, which are quite large, are set in molded frames above plain sills. Those at the first level contain nine-over-nine sash; those at the second, nine-over-six--a pattern that continues around the house. The first-floor front door and the windows are fitted with louvered shutters. The windows on the sides occur in two pairs. A one-story hip roof porch extends across the rear facade, and there is a circa 1900 one-story kitchen wing at the northeast corner.

The interior of the house is precisely what is suggested by the exterior. It follows a center-hall plan, two rooms deep, and the spaciousness of the rooms is enhanced by the size of the windows, which are nearly floor-length. The walls are plastered above rather wide two-part baseboards. The doors have four flat panels with broad moldings. The architraves are unusual but resemble others of the period found in Beaufort; they have plain corner blocks, but the frames are three-part molded ones rather than being symmetrically molded as is typical of the style. The mantel in the southeast parlor is the most ornate in the house. It is of cast iron, with a round-arched opening beneath a scrolled console keystone with foliated ornament, below a slightly molded shelf. The opening is filled with an elaborate grate cover with scroll and leaf design. The mantels in the other rooms in the house are simple wooden ones of typical Greek Revival form, with pilasters supporting a plain frieze beneath a molded shelf.

The hall is divided by a transverse arch that springs from flat-paneled pilasters. The soffit is also flat-paneled, and the keystone is fully molded. The stair in the rear hall ascends in one long flight and one short
one with an intervening transverse landing. Slender balusters, square in section, and a heavy chamfered newel with rounded cap support the heavy rounded handrail. Each tread is adorned with a simple scroll bracket, one of which occurs on the short fascia of the landing. Along the fascia of the small landing at the top of the second flight of stairs is a band with incised wave-pattern ornament.

The plan and finish of the second floor are like the first, except that the architraves are two-part rather than three-part.
6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 16th Century
- 17th Century
- 18th Century
- 19th Century
- 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Aboriginal
- Prehistoric
- Historic
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Conservation
- Education
- Engineering
- Industry
- Invention
- Landscape Architecture
- Literature
- Military
- Music
- Political
- Religion/Philosophy
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Humanitarian
- Theater
- Transportation
- Urban Planning
- Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Because of Beaufort's isolation, national architectural fashions had little effect on most of the coastal town's buildings; the basic style used for dwellings was arrived at rather early in its history and was used for generations. The Gibbs House, an important element of the waterfront, is a notable exception because of its emphatic Greek Revival proportions and detail. Its significance is enhanced by its direct orientation to the water and its nearly unaltered condition. In addition, the use of the house in the late nineteenth century by the Johns Hopkins marine scientists (one room used as a small laboratory-dark room survives) makes it quite significant in the development of the town as a marine biology center. Much of the history of marine biology in the United States can be traced directly to the work accomplished in Beaufort from the 1860s—and in this house during the 1880s.

The house was built by Seth Gibbs about 1851 on part of lots 13 and 14, New Town. Gibbs later moved to Middleton, Hyde County, North Carolina, and a sales notice in the July 1, 1857, Beaufort Journal, listed a dwelling house and other buildings on the lot. It noted further that "Its position renders it very desirable especially in the summer season and it commands a beautiful view of the ocean immediately in front." At that time and until well into the twentieth century the house was located directly overlooking the water, and the street in front of the house was not constructed until the 1930s. The line of the original waterfront can be clearly seen in the front yard.

The structure was owned or occupied by various tenants until 1880 when it was rented for use by the Johns Hopkins Seaside Laboratory. The Johns Hopkins work had begun two years before in the Chesapeake Bay near Baltimore. Beaufort was at the time already famous as a resort for persons interested in marine biology. Zoologists Gill and Stimson had visited there in 1860, and Coues and Yarrow had visited in 1871-1872. In an article in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper for November 20, 1880, it was reported that the Johns Hopkins scientists proposed to resume the work at Beaufort next Summer, and it is not impossible that a permanent laboratory may be there erected if the location is found, upon thorough trial, to be well adapted for that purpose. At present a large dwelling-house, situated at the water's edge, is made use of for a laboratory. This mansion enjoys no little celebrity from neighbors, and from the fact, often reiterated by inhabitants of
Beaufort--that it is built of cypress wood and copper nails.

The American Naturalist, Vol. XXXIV, No. 401, noted in 1900 that "A large house near the extreme eastern end of the town was rented continuously, and an excellent equipment, including a 47-foot sloop and a steam launch was provided."

The Johns Hopkins Seaside Laboratory operated here for some ten years, probably the first school of marine biology in the United States. Its existence in the Gibbs House and the work done there was instrumental in the establishment by the United States Government of the Bureau of Fisheries. Professor Baird and others connected with the bureau "investigated the fishes of the region within the first decade of the Bureau's existence, but it was not until June 1, 1899, that a fisheries laboratory was established."

That laboratory, at Beaufort, and the one at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, were established in the same year. Both owe their existence to the pioneer work accomplished by the Johns Hopkins Seaside Laboratory in the Gibbs House.
Research by Tony P. Wrenn, consultant; architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey specialist.

Beaufort Journal, July 1, 1857.
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, November 20, 1880.
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 31, 1884.

The Bureau of Fisheries and its Biological Station at Beaufort N.C.,

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than an acre

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

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FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Survey and Planning Unit Staff
ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History
STREET AND NUMBER: 109 East Jones Street
CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh
STATE: North Carolina

STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 [x] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name: H. V. Jones
Title: Director, State Department of Archives and History
Date: 31 August 1972

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date: ____________________________
Hildebrand, Dr. Samuel F., Director, "The Bureau of Fisheries and its Biological Station at Beaufort, N.C.," United States Department of Commerce Bureau of Fisheries, Economic Circular, Number 72, July, 1930.

Coker, R. E. "Laboratory Work and Marine Biology at the University of North Carolina," Elisha Mitchell Society, 84(2).

Carteret County Records, Carteret County Courthouse, Beaufort, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Carteret County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
Gibbs House
903 Front Street
Beaufort, North Carolina

Gray's New Map of Beaufort
1" : 300 feet
no date

GRAY'S NEW MAP
OF
BEAUFORT
CAROLINA COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA
Scale 300 Feet : One Inch