

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| STATE:<br>North Carolina |      |
| COUNTY:<br>Craven        |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY         |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER             | DATE |

1. NAME

COMMON:  
York-Gordon House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
213 Hancock Street

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

|                         |            |                   |             |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|
| STATE<br>North Carolina | CODE<br>37 | COUNTY:<br>Craven | CODE<br>049 |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. Georgia Tosto *Richard Parsons*

STREET AND NUMBER:  
213 Hancock Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Bern

STATE:  
North Carolina

CODE:  
37

STATE: North Carolina  
COUNTY: Craven

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Craven County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Bern

STATE:  
North Carolina

CODE:  
37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  
 State  
 County  
 Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

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ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

|           |   |  |                                |   |                                |                                    |
|-----------|---|--|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One)                                 |  |                                |   |                                |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent          | <input checked="" 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 York-Gordon House, a frame gambrel roof dwelling, is situated in a narrow lot on Hancock Street with its end toward the street. A late eighteenth century structure, the house once commanded an unobstructed view of the Trent River to the south. Despite several changes, the house maintains much of its original fabric and integrity. It is pictured in Thomas Waterman's Early Architecture of North Carolina as being completely covered by flush siding; that siding still exists today beneath the modern weatherboards. In addition, a strip of the early siding is still exposed in the rear.

The house is one and a half stories in height over a high foundation of brick laid in Flemish bond. The street facade (east side) has three openings at the first level and two on the second. The east chimney, built of brick laid in Flemish bond, has a weathered offset on the face at the first level and single shoulders at the second. The west chimney was blown down during a hurricane and was never rebuilt. A one-story shed-roof porch across the entire length of the south facade (considered the front because of its orientation toward the river) shelters five bays with the entrance in the center bay. The door, with six flat panels, is surmounted by a four-light transom. Because the reverse side of the door is typical of front doors found in so many New Bern buildings (that is, with the upper four panels being flat paneled and the lower two flush paneled), it is likely that the door has been rehung inside-out. On the front and rear facades three shed dormers pierce the roof, which is covered with split shakes. The rear has three windows at the first level, the center one being a larger modern replacement for a rear door. Much of the exterior of the west side is obscured by a small addition. Nine-over-nine sash with unusually large muntins fills all the window openings at the first level, and nine-over-six is used in the second level.

In a renovation in this century, the original center hall plan, one room deep, of the house was altered by removing the eastern hall wall and uniting the hall space with the east parlor. The rear portion of the house has a small unheated room on the east and the stair on the west. The closed-string stair, which exhibits the earliest design features in the house, rises in three runs with two square landings in between. A closet is enclosed beneath the lowest run. A door with four raised panels provides access to the closet, and the rest of the enclosing fabric is also raised-paneled. The balustrade consists of turned balusters which carry a molded handrail which neither ramps nor eases, but instead abuts the newel and posts which are square in section. On the opposite wall, the profile of the handrail is rather crudely imitated by a flush wainscot bounded by a molded chair rail and baseboard. Although the original plaster cornice was removed from the east front parlor, the room still bears much of its original finish. The walls are plastered above and below the molded chair rail and have a molded baseboard. It is uncertain whether the mantel, which is of Federal design, is original to the house. It consists of fluted pilasters which flank a rectangular fire opening and carry a three-part frieze beneath a molded shelf adorned with dentils. Pierced gouge work occurs in the architrave and in the pilaster caps. In the rear room, the plaster walls also have a molded chair rail, but the baseboard is beaded. Nothing of the

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| Craven           |      |
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(Number all entries)

7.

original finish remains in the west parlor. (The Federal mantel in this room was removed to the Smith-Whitford House when the chimney was lost in a hurricane.)

The second-floor plan does not repeat the center hall of the floor below and apparently never did. Access to all three rooms is adequately provided by the space around the stair. Beaded baseboards and molded chair rails are used consistently in the two rooms on the eastern half of the house. The room on the other side has no chair rail but has retained a molded baseboard. The only second-floor mantel, that in the front east room, is reminiscent of Georgian secondary mantels seen elsewhere in New Bern. A molded architrave surrounds the fire opening and supports a ramped frieze below a heavily molded shelf.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  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 type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The lot on which the Gordon House was built before the American Revolution was first granted by the commissioners of the town to Frederick Jones in 1737, but the grant had seemingly lapsed by June of 1740, when this lot and the Trent River waterfront lot in front of it were granted to Jonathan Bangs. By 1768 the lots had passed to Mary York (Jonathan's sister, and the wife of Stephen York). She transferred them to Patrick Gordon; the deed specifically mentioned "the dwelling house or message tenement built upon the said lots. . . ."

Patrick Gordon was an attorney, who apparently found scant practice in New Bern. On June 28, 1771, he wrote to a Mr. Hooper that he was "getting no money from my practice and at the same time busy in building a house." The house referred to is the house now standing and may well have been simply the finishing of the house begun by Stephen York. Gordon died in 1773, leaving the property to his wife, Mary, who died in 1784. The first-floor Federal elements of the present structure may have been added by Mrs. Gordon in her attempts to finish a structure on which two men had already labored. Mary willed the property to their son, James (then about 11 years old), who was sent first to Saint Augustine, Florida, to live with an uncle, and later to Bellohall, in Elgin, Scotland, to live with another uncle. Young James, after some years of schooling there, made plans to go to India. He noted in his will, written in February, 1791, that he was "about to set out for India from whence God only knows whether I shall return." James's will left all his property, British and American, and all other interests to the Scottish uncle, Archibald Duff. Mr. Duff secured a position for James aboard the East India Company ship Dutton immediately thereafter, and on the outward voyage James was lost overboard.

Court battles over the property which began at that time lasted until well into the nineteenth century and provide much of what we know about the house and the Gordon family, whose affairs were characterized by a degree of mystery. Patrick Duff (later Gordon) was seemingly a member of a prominent British family of education and position. After the death of his first wife there, he sailed to America with Mary, a former domestic in their household whom he married. Upon arrival in America, they assumed the name of Gordon. Their son, James, was given the middle name Duff or Duffy, and after returning to Scotland, he assumed again the name of Duff. The court papers, especially depositions of several relatives in Saint Augustine, and others who knew the family both in Britain and in New Bern, infer that James's death aboard ship was deliberate, and possibly engineered by the uncle to

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whom he willed his estate immediately before he sailed. Mary's will had specifically left the Gordon estate to the Saint Augustine heirs, if James should die before he was twenty-one, and much of the legal battle hinged around this and whether James had indeed reached his majority by the time of his death.

Whatever the circumstances of the tangled affairs of the Duff-Gordon family, relatively good accounts exist of the disposition of Mary Gordon's property, especially of the rental of the house. The inventory of her estate clearly indicates the "lot of ground with house and improvements," and the house was certainly rented by 1784 when the estate accounts indicate a return for the "house rented to P. B. Oram. . . ." By 1806 Jeremiah Brown had leased part of the property, and by 1815 had full ownership of both the house and water lots. Brown seems to have amassed considerable debts, and by 1834 the ownership of the property was threatened by these debts. In another court battle, the property was secured for his wife, Mary Singleton Brown, from her own funds, and through a master in equity separated from the estate, and presumably the debts, of Jeremiah Brown.

During the era of the 1850s when a railroad was being built from inland North Carolina to the coast at Morehead City, the track was laid down Hancock Street in New Bern, by the York-Gordon House; the railroad bridge over the Trent River was in front of the house. With the capture of New Bern by Union troops in April of 1862, that bridge became a vital link between Union forces in New Bern and those at Fort Macon, Beaufort, and Morehead City on the coast. The York-Gordon House may have been occupied by Union troops, as was the Smith House across the street, to serve as both a billet and a guard station for the railroad and bridge.

The house remained with the Brown family until 1868 when it was sold to John Brookfield, who sold it in 1872 to Mary Jane Bailey. In the same year the property passed to Zaccheus Slade, who willed it to his daughter Susan Dudley in 1876. In the third court case involving the property, the heirs of Bailey sued the heirs of Slade in 1893, and the property was ordered sold at public auction. The Baileys and the Slades were either related or had business connections. The property was sold at public auction in 1894, but after the first sale the court ordered a resale because of incorrect advertising. At the resale Thomas Daniels was the purchaser. Daniels had come to New Bern in 1862 as a Union soldier, who either remained at the end of the War or returned at a later date. The house was held by his heirs until the present owner, Mrs. Georgia Tosto, purchased it.

The York-Gordon House is an unusual example of a New Bern structure apparently begun before the Revolution and finished shortly after, possessing excellent Georgian and Federal elements. It is one of only two pre-Revolutionary gambrel roof houses which survive in the New Bern area and has distinct differences in form and execution from the other, the Hawks House. Because of this, it is particularly important in tracing the eighteenth architectural evolution of the gambrel roof house in North Carolina.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Craven County Records, Craven County Courthouse, New Bern, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Craven County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Waterman, Thomas T., and Johnston, Frances B. The Early Architecture of North Carolina. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947.  
 Moore, Elizabeth. Notes on the Duff-Gordon Family. Unpublished manuscript.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | OR | 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' 13"   | 77° 02' 37"             |  |
| NE  | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |    |   |                         |  |
| SE  | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |    |   |                         |  |
| SW  | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |    |   |                         |  |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/4 acre

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: 24 May 1972

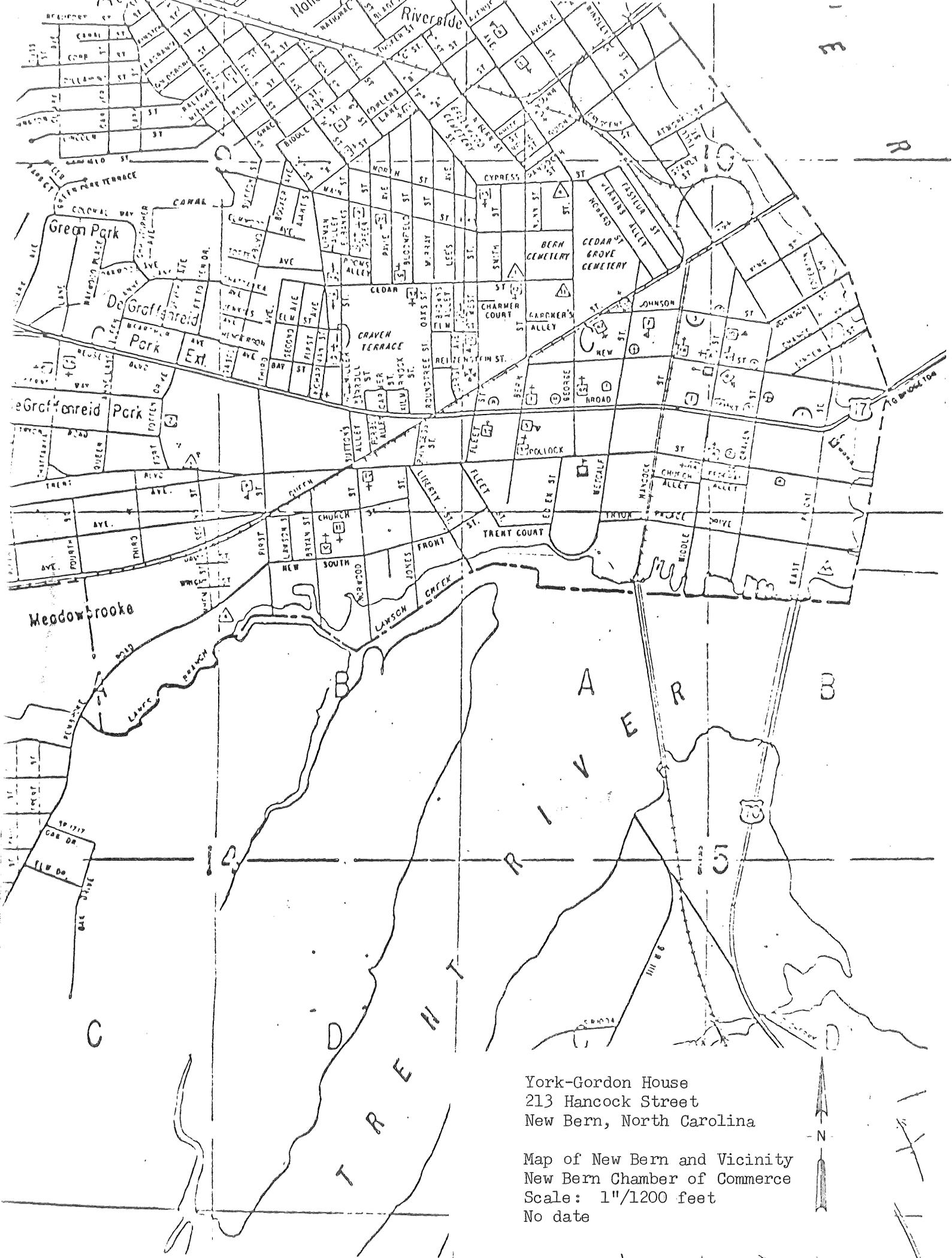
STREET AND NUMBER:  
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>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:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>H. G. Jones</u></p> <p>Title <u>Director, State Department of Archives and History</u></p> <p>Date <u>24 May 1972</u></p> | <p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</u></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____<br/>                 Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date _____</p> |
|---|---|

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



York-Gordon House  
 213 Hancock Street  
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of New Bern and Vicinity  
 New Bern Chamber of Commerce  
 Scale: 1"/1200 feet  
 No date

