

1816

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Coombs, Viola, House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Bowdoinham

N/A vicinity

state Maine

code ME

county Sagadahoc

code 023

zip code 04008

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

11/4/71

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Entered in the
National Register

Hugh M. Rapsley

12/13/91

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granitewalls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Asphaltother Wraparound Porch

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Viola V. Coombs House is a two-story building showing the influence of both Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styling. The dwelling is dominated by a broad wraparound porch, which extends along the full two-bay width of the house's front and curves around to the eastern side. Located on a principal village street, the house sits atop a slight rise and rests on a granite block foundation. It is situated a quarter-mile uphill from the Cathance River, and is surrounded by a mix of residential and municipal buildings.

The house consists of two blocks, a large square-plan one in front containing the principal rooms, and a smaller two-story ell behind housing the kitchen and servant's quarters. The plan of the front half is square with a diagonally-cut corner on the southeast, and is roughly divided into four quadrants of spaces. In the rear block, the spaces are full width and are oriented transverse to the front living areas. The two blocks are topped with hipped, asphalt shingle roofs, with a hipped dormer projecting on the southern, primary elevation. Walls are sheathed with wooden weatherboards.

The house and front porch are trimmed with a full entablature and a plain projecting cornice, and the corners are accented with paneled pilasters, topped by spindlework brackets supporting the cornice. All windows are accented with decorative cornice heads.

The southern, primary elevation features the front of the one-story porch which wraps around to the east side of the house. The porch roof is supported by Tuscan columns, with two pairs on the left flanking the porch entrance at the top of the approaching steps. Between the columns runs a balustraded railing, featuring turned spindles.

Behind the entrance stands a later addition to the house, a projecting entry alcove, with a paneled door containing a twelve-light glass pane. The door is surrounded by two eight-light sidelights and a balustraded transom, and is flanked by two thin Tuscan columns. To the right of the entry are a pair of double-hung one-over-one windows and, occupying the wall on the diagonal cut, a single-pane picture window. This configuration is repeated on the second floor, with an identical coupled window over the entry bay. The hipped dormer on the attic level contains a pair of double-hung, single-light windows.

 See continuation sheet

X

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The east facade features the other side of the wraparound porch, which ends at bi-level bay windows identical in location and appearance to those on the west elevation. The rear block has a large picture window with sidelights on the lower level, and two diamond-shaped windows mark the top landing of two secondary stairwells inside.

On the west facade, two sets of bay windows, one atop the other, rise on the north end of the main house block. Each features three one-over-one sash windows with decorative panels below. Two square stained-glass windows are also featured on this block, following the rise of the main stairwell inside. The rear block contains single one-over-one windows, with a door protected by a small overhang leading to the kitchen and a sliding door leading to a workroom in the rear. The doors open out to a small, simply-balustraded porch.

Inside the main block of the house, rooms are oriented off a central hallway, which contains a three-flight staircase, that widens and curves open as it spills down into the entrance foyer area. The staircase features polished wood elements, including over-size paneled newel posts and turned balusters. The polished wood decoration is continued throughout the house in the form of moldings, baseboards, window and door casings, and bold Tuscan columns which frame the openings to the living room and "support" thick wooden lintels over the entrances. The living room also features a brick fireplace with a simple stone mantel. Leading off this area is the dining room, with three-quarter paneled walls and a small crystal and brass chandelier. A paneled sliding door and glass-paned swinging door highlight the entrances to the study, situated at the end of the hall adjacent to the dining room. On the second floor, two private bedrooms feature more decorative wood detailing and five-panel solid wood doors with original latch hardware. The bathroom features wainscotting, a bay window, and original fixtures, including a pedestal sink and free-standing tub.

In the rear block, the kitchen lies behind the dining room and study, but a 1950s renovation completely altered the interior. Behind the cellar stairs lies a small workshop. Above the kitchen are two servant's quarters, with one room featuring wainscotting on the walls and ceiling. These rooms are accessed by a stair leading up from the kitchen's porch entry, and by a hallway in the main block.

The only alterations to the house are the 1950s updating of the kitchen and the addition of a bathroom in the rear workshop area, which is said to have been a summer kitchen. The projecting entry alcove on the porch also appears to be a later addition.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

c1910

Significant Dates

c.1910

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Coombs, Harry S. Architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Viola V. Coombs House is significant as a well-preserved example of the transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style in a domestic context. Drawn plans for the house date its construction to about 1910. The house, with its grand sweeping front porch and fine exterior and interior details, was designed by Harry S. Coombs of Lewiston, one of Maine's premier architects of the day. It is eligible for nomination to the National Register under criterion C for its architectural distinction.

The Town of Bowdoinham grew on the banks of the Cathance River, a tributary of the Kennebec, and developed around the mill and shipbuilding industries. The Coombs House was one of a few grand houses built in the village during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which included the highly ornate Cornish House of 1885 (N.R. 1/15/80) up the street, and the resplendent Robert P. Carr House of 1870 (N.R. 12/18/90) next door. With the striking Second Baptist Church situated immediately to the east, the Coombs House is part of a very elegant collection of buildings following the edge of Main Street.

During the late nineteenth century, the Queen Anne style had evolved away from its delicate ornamentation and spindlework and looked more towards a "free classic adaptation" of the style. In this trend, classical details such as columns, Palladian windows, and dentils were commonly used on houses. The early twentieth century witnessed the appearance of the Colonial Revival style, and the predecessors of the common Adamesque and Georgian houses were asymmetric, hipped-roof forms with Colonial details. The Queen Anne was strongly influenced by this new trend, and the Coombs House is an excellent example of the merging of the two styles.

The influence of the Queen Anne, especially in its "free classic" mode, is clearly visible on the front elevation, in its asymmetrical arrangement of porch and entry, classical columns on the porch, and spindlework on the balustrade. Other Queen Anne elements are the stained-glass and diamond-shaped windows, decorative brackets, and single-light window sashes. The

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Adams, Silas. History of the Town of Bowdoinham. Fairfield Publishing Co. Fairfield, 1912.
- Ames, John Wallace. Bowdoinham Was My Hometown. Starpress Kennebunk, 1975.
- Coombs, William Carey. Anthony Coombs and His Descendants. Amilia, OH, 1913.
- Withey, Henry F. & Elsie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects. Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc. , Los Angeles, 1970.
- Harry S. Coombs Obituary. Lewiston Evening Journal. Wednesday, May 17, 1939.
- Viola V. Coombs Obituary. Portland Press Herald. Monday April 23, 1934.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than 1 _____

UTM References

A 1, 9 | 4 2, 8 | 0, 3, 5 | 4, 8 | 7, 3 | 1, 6, 0
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____ | _____ | _____

B _____ | _____ | _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____ | _____ | _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Coombs house occupies the Town of Bowdoinham tax map U-1, Lot 56.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary embraces the entire village parcel historically associated with the house.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jeffrey Harris, Intern/Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date 10/1991

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hipped roof and centered dormer, the box-like form of the main block with its four-square plan, and its Colonial entrance portico all show the strong presence of the Colonial Revival as well.

The architect, Harry S. Coombs, was the son of another distinguished designer, George M. Coombs, and had taken over his father's office after his death, one year prior to the design of the Coombs House. Working out of Lewiston, Coombs designed many state and county buildings in addition to private homes. He also designed many school buildings throughout the state, the Stearns School in Millinocket being a fine example. Coombs oversaw his office until his death in 1939.

Viola V. Coombs was born in Bowdoinham in 1844, part of "an old Baptist family" that descended from a Mayflower colonist. She became a life-long resident of the town, and built her home on the site of a smaller, more modest house. In the following year, 1911, she contributed \$2,500 toward the construction of a new high school in town. It was subsequently named in honor of her brother, John C. Coombs, who had died in 1905. Later in life, Miss Coombs spent the winters in Portland but continued to use her Bowdoinham home during the summer months. She died in Portland in 1934 at the age of 91.