

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Palmer-Marsh House

AND/OR COMMON

Palmer-Marsh House

**2 LOCATION**STREET & NUMBER east side of Main Street, just south of junction with Carteret  
Street (Route 92)

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bath

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Beaufort

CODE

013

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITÉ	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of North Carolina (Division of Archives and History, Historic Sites Section)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

109 East Jones Street

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Beaufort County Courthouse, Registry of Deeds

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1962

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington 20540

STATE

District of Columbia

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Palmer-Marsh House, built c. 1744, stands on the eastern side of Main Street near its intersection with Carteret Street (State Route 92) in Bath, North Carolina. The house is located one block above Bath Creek, a tributary of the Pamlico River, which was the source of Bath's prosperity as a commercial port during the first half of the 18th century. It is sited with its western end toward the street, front elevation facing south, and surrounded on the remaining three sides by lawns defined by white picket fences.

The Palmer-Marsh House is a two-story frame and clapboard building set on a brick-faced foundation above a full stone basement. Its attic story is covered by a gabled roof, marked at the eaves by a box cornice with returns. Windows are 9/9 double-hung sash with paneled blinds. The entrances, one in each of the four elevations, consist of paneled doors, slightly recessed, with simple molded surrounds. The major exterior feature of the house is the double chimney which rises at its eastern end. Laid in English bond, this massive structure is seventeen feet wide and four feet thick at its base; its two-story pent contains a small, tiled-floored closet at each level, each of them lighted by a 6/3 sash window. A second massive chimney with sloping weathering is located at the rear of the northwest corner of the house. The low shed room which abuts this chimney contains the entrance to the basement kitchen and root cellar, whose stone walls were constructed from ships' ballast.

Exposed structural framing outlines the plastered interior walls of the Palmer-Marsh House (the summer beam measures more than 50 feet in length). The main entrance, located at the center of the seven-bay southern facade, opens into a wide, floor-through center hall which also served as a dining room. A second entrance, at the center of the three-bay western facade (street side) gives access to the single wide room which occupies all of the first floor to the left of the hall. This room was used as a store by the first owner of the house, Michael Coutanch, and later as a parlor; according to local tradition, it also served as a council room on those occasions when North Carolina's colonial assembly convened in Bath. To the right of the hall are two equal-sized rooms, a sitting room, also known as the "ladies parlor," and Col. Palmer's study, which has a separate entrance on the eastern end of the house.

A quarter-turn stairway rises from the rear of the center hall; its handrail and balusters are constructed from four native woods--cedar, cypress, pine, and poplar. On the second floor of the house are five bedrooms: two on the eastern side which duplicate the plan of the sitting room and study below; two smaller rooms on the front side of the house; and a spacious master bedroom which occupies the western end of the floor above the store/parlor. The stairway continues to the attic story, which contains three small chambers, probably used as servants' quarters.

The Palmer-Marsh House was "modernized" somewhat during the 19th century; however, elements dating from that period were removed in the restoration of the house carried out in 1960-62. The major portion of the fabric of the house, including the wide-board heart-of-pine floors, is original. Only a few of the current items of furniture, most of them small pieces, are historically associated with the Palmer-Marsh House but all are appropriate to a building of its period and pretension.

A map of Bath drawn by Claude Joseph Sauthier in 1769 indicates that Col. Palmer's

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1744

BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Palmer-Marsh House, built in Bath c. 1744, is one of North Carolina's oldest extant houses and an excellent and well-preserved example of a substantial colonial town house designed for both residential and commercial purposes. Significant features of the two-story frame and clapboard building are the large first floor room which spans its western end (used as a store, a parlor, and possibly as a council room) and the massive brick double chimney which rises at its eastern end. Though "modernized" somewhat during the 19th century, the house was completely restored in 1960-62; the major portion of its fabric is original. Now owned by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Historic Sites Section, the Palmer-Marsh House is open to the public throughout the year.

## Historical Background

The Palmer-Marsh House was erected c. 1744, during the prosperous era when the town of Bath was the Center of government and chief port for North Carolina. Its first owner was Michael Coutanch, a French merchant who had moved to Bath from Boston. Coutanch served as a commissioner for Bath and was elected the town's representative to North Carolina's colonial assembly.

Some twenty years after it was constructed, the house was acquired by Robert Palmer, Esq., who was Bath's leading citizen until he moved to New Bern in 1771. A native of Scotland, Palmer had come to North Carolina and Bath in 1753 with a commission naming him Collector in the Port of Bath. In 1764 Palmer was appointed a member of the colony's Royal Council. He took part in the Cherokee survey of 1767 and served as adjutant-general on the staff of Governor William Tryon (with the rank of lieutenant general during the Regulator's War). A Loyalist, Palmer returned to England with the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, leaving his American holdings to his son William, who retained the Bath house until 1796.

In 1802 the house was purchased by brothers Jonathan and Daniel Gould Marsh, ship-owners and merchants from Providence, Rhode Island. The Marsh family retained the house until 1915, "modernizing" it somewhat during the 19th century. During 1960-62, the house was restored by the Historic Bath Commission in cooperation with the Beaufort Historic Society and the Historic Sites Section of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. Since 1963 the Palmer-Marsh House has been owned by the State of North Carolina; it is open to the public throughout the year, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. A visitor's center, located east of the Palmer-Marsh House on Carteret Street, serves this and other historic properties in Bath.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alcott, John V. Colonial Homes of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1963).  
 Marsh, Kenneth F, and Blanche. Colonial Bath (Asheville, 1966).  
 Robinson, Blackwell P., ed. The North Carolina Guide (American Guide Series, Chapel Hill, 1955).  
 Waterman, Thomas T. and F. B. Johnston. The Early Architecture of North Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1941).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.6 (approximate)

UTM REFERENCES Lat. 35° 28' 36" Long. 76° 48' 51"

A	_____	_____	_____	B	_____	_____	_____
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____	_____

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Palmer-Marsh House (shown in red on the accompanying Bath survey map) are defined as follows: beginning at the intersection of the eastern curblin of Main Street and the southern curblin of Carteret Street (State Route 92); thence, easterly along said southern curblin, 275 feet more or less, to a point (the western edge of the property occupied by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History Visitor's Center); thence, (cont'd)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles W. Snell, Historian, 1/5/70

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service DATE 3/12/75

STREET & NUMBER 1100 L Street NW TELEPHONE 202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN Washington STATE District of Columbia

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL      STATE      LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE N/A National Historic Landmark

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

TITLE

DATE

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 2/11/77

ATTEST

DATE 12/8/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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Palmer-Marsh  
CONTINUATION SHEET House ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

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house (the only residence identified on it by name) originally had several buildings, including a barn, dairy, well house and smokehouse. The latter two were reconstructed during the restoration of the house. The well house, located near the rear door and kitchen entrance, is a square, open-sided structure of wood set on a low brick platform; its pyramid-shaped, shingled roof is surmounted by a slender spike finial. Further north of the house stands the smokehouse, a square structure covered with flush siding; its steep roof, also pyramid-shaped, is covered with clapboards and capped by a low finial.

On the broad lawn to the east of the Palmer-Marsh House (and included in the National Historic Landmark designation for it) is a small private burial ground. The practice of providing a family plot "on the place" was long a custom in North Carolina, particularly in rural areas. Though the oldest headstone in the Palmer-Marsh plot dates from 1758, the majority of the stones mark the graves of Marsh family members. Michael Coutanch is also interred there.

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southerly along a direct line to the northeast corner of a residential property fronting on Main Street (next south of the Palmer-Marsh House); thence, westerly along the northern line of said residential property to the eastern curblineline of Main Street; thence, northerly along said eastern curblineline to the point of beginning.

Note: the small frame and clapboard structure located at the southeast corner of Main and Carteret Streets is included in these boundaries for convenience in definition but does not contribute to the national significance of the Palmer-Marsh House; built during the late 19th century as a blacksmith shop, that structure now serves as combined exhibit/storage space for the nearby Visitor's Center.