

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

TH: Architecture

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Cupola House

AND/OR COMMON

Cupola House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER 408 South Broad Street

CITY, TOWN

Edenton

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Chowan

CODE

041

**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"/> SITE                   | <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

City of Edenton

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Office of the Mayor, Municipal Building

CITY, TOWN

Edenton

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Chowan County Registry of Deeds

STREET &amp; NUMBER

County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Edenton

STATE

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

North Carolina Inventory of Historic Properties

DATE

survey in progress

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Archives and History, Survey and Planning Section

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

# 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    |   |   |

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Cupola House stands on the west side of South Broad Street, the primary business street of Edenton, North Carolina, just north of its intersection with West Water Street. The house is set with its end toward South Broad Street; its front facade faces south across a modest lawn toward the Edenton Municipal Building (south side of West Water Street) and the nearby shore of Edenton Bay. Immediately west of the house on West Water Street is the Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library, whose collections were located in the Cupola House itself until 1964 when a separate building was constructed for them.

The Cupola House is a two-story rectangular building with clapboarded walls; it measures approximately 42 feet (five bays) wide and 29 feet (three bays) deep. The 12-inch framed overhang at the second story of the front facade, with its four scrolled brackets, the beaded clapboards, and the steep pitch of the gabled roof all suggest a 17th-century New England ancestry for the house. On the other hand, the great buttressed end chimneys, of brick with sloping weathering, and the oval window in the cross gable at the center of the front facade appear to stem from the architecture of 17th-century Virginia. The fenestration of the Cupola House--9/9 double-hung sash windows on the first floor; 6/9 on the second--is symmetrical; original paneled shutters with large-headed bolts and slotted sticks secure the first floor windows while louvered blinds flank those above. The shingled roof is crowned by an octagonal wooden cupola with carved brackets and a tall terminal finial.

Some authorities suggest that when built, c. 1725, the Cupola House may have been only one-and-a-half stories high. In that case, the remodeling carried out by Francis Corbin in 1756-58 would have included not only the installation of fine and vigorous Georgian paneling on the interior of the house, but the addition of the second story, overhang, and cupola as well. It is generally believed that the small entry portico with vaulted, plastered ceiling (center of the front facade) was also added during Corbin's work on the house.

The Cupola House has a "Quaker floor Plan" of the type recommended by William Penn in a broadside for prospective settlers published in 1684: a center hall extending through the house from front to rear; a single large room occupying one entire side of the house (east in this case); and two unequal-sized rooms on the opposite side. The center hall still retains the paneling and staircase installed by Corbin. The newel posts of the stair are turned and support a richly molded and ramped handrail. The balusters, turned to match the posts, rest on carved brackets. This stairway rises to the attic story, where a circular staircase continues to the cupola.

(Continued)

# 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. 1725; 1756-58

BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built c. 1725 and remodeled in 1756-1758, the Cupola House at Edenton, North Carolina, is an outstanding example of a timber-framed residence illustrating the transition from 17th-century Jacobean to 18th-century Georgian architectural styles. It is the oldest surviving house in the city and, more significantly, the only extant house in all the southern colonies that carries a Jacobean "jetty" or overhang at the second story.

The major portion of the fabric of the Cupola House is original (as of 1758). The house was restored in 1964-1966, at which time paneling previously removed from two first floor rooms was reconstructed. Owned by the City of Edenton and administered by the Cupola House Association, the building is open to the public throughout the year.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Cupola House was built for Richard Sanderson c. 1725. The building derives its name from the octagonal cupola set at the center of its gabled roof. In 1756, it was acquired by Francis Corbin, land agent for the Earl of Granville, last of the Lords Proprietors of the colony of North Carolina. During the next two years, Corbin remodeled the house, giving it its Georgian features: the fine and vigorous interior paneling, the stairway, the sliding sash windows, and probably the front (south) portico. He also had carved on the front gable finial his initials and the date 1758.

Corbin's heirs sold the Cupola House in 1777 to Dr. Samuel Dickinson, whose family retained it until 1918. The last of Kinkinson's descendants to live in the house sold the paneling from two of the first floor rooms to the Brooklyn Museum of Fine Art (where it is now exhibited) and the building itself to the Cupola House Association. Saved from demolition, it was used to house a small museum and the Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library until 1964, when the latter moved to the adjacent building constructed for it.

(Continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Edenton Woman's Club. Guide Book: Colonial Edenton and Chowan County (Edenton, 1975).
- Parramore, Thomas C. Cradle of the Colony: The History of Chowan County and Edenton, North Carolina (Edenton, 1967).
- Waterman, Thomas T. and F. B. Johnson. The Early Architecture of North Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1941).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one  
 UTM REFERENCES Lat. 36°03'28" Long. 76°36'38"

|   |      |         |          |   |      |         |          |
|---|------|---------|----------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | B | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | D | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuance Sheet)

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, 1/7/70

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| ORGANIZATION  | DATE                |
| <u>Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service</u> | <u>3/6/75</u>       |
| STREET & NUMBER                                     | TELEPHONE           |
| <u>1100 L Street NW.</u>                            | <u>202-523-5464</u> |
| CITY OR TOWN  | STATE               |
| <u>Washington</u>                                   | <u>D.C. 20240</u>   |

# 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

TITLE

DATE Boundary Certified

Landmark Designated: 5/10/70  
date

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

Chief, Dist. & date

Arch. Surveys

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE Boundary Affirmed:

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting Director, OAHPS

date

*W. S. Snell* 11/24/78

*Charles W. Snell* 4-30-76  
MAY 2 1976

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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The rooms on the eastern end and at the southwest corner of the house were originally (1758) paneled and their chimney breasts and doorways treated with fine trim below huge crowning pediments. Removed in 1918 to the Brooklyn Museum of Fine Art, where they are still exhibited, those elements were reconstructed when the Cupola House was restored in 1964-1966. On the second floor are two bedrooms on either side of the center hall. The chambers at the southeast and southwest corners still have the original paneling on all four walls; both feature large overmantel panels flanked by vertical consoles carved in a leaf pattern.

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During 1964-1966 the Cupola House was restored with funds provided by the State of North Carolina, the Richardson Foundation, and private donors; with the cooperation of the Brooklyn Museum, the missing paneling of the first floor rooms was reconstructed. Now in excellent condition, the building is owned by the City of Edenton but still administered by the Cupola House Association. It is open to the public throughout the year, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday (closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Easter). An admission fee is charged.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 1

Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Cupola House are defined as follows: beginning at the intersection of the western curblineline of South Broad Street and the northern curblineline of West Water Street; thence, westerly along said northern curblineline to the eastern line of the parcel occupied by the Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library; thence, northerly along said eastern line to the southern line of commercial property fronting on South Broad Street; thence, easterly along said southern line to the western curblineline of South Broad Street; thence, southerly along said western curblineline to the point of beginning.

