

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Watson-Sanders House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 2810 Brogden Road (south side SR 1007 .4 mile west of junction with SR 2508)

N/A not for publication

city or town Smithfield

vicinity X

state North Carolina code NC county Johnston code 21 zip code 27577

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

USDI/NPS Registration Form

Name of Property/District

County, State

\_\_\_\_\_ 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): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
of Action

=====  
5. Classification  
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  3  </u>	buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  3  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   -0-  

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic: single dwelling

Agriculture/Subsistence: storage, animal facility

USDI/NPS Registration Form

Name of Property/District

County, State

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic: single dwelling

A

griculture/Subsistence: storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: vernacular

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
roof metal  
walls weatherboard  
other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.



USDI/NPS Registration Form

Name of Property/District

County, State

\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title M. Ruth Little

organization Longleaf Historic Resources date August 16, 2000

street & number 2709 Bedford Ave. telephone 919-836-9731

city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27607

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section 7 Page 1**  
**Watson-Sanders House**  
**Johnston County, N. C.**

**Section 7: Description**

The Watson-Sanders House, built around 1820, is located in Johnston County, three miles southeast of Smithfield, along the old River Road to Goldsboro, now Brogden Road. The house stands very close to the road on 32.19 acres of land that has a narrow frontage and extends deep to the rear towards the Neuse River. Only the approximately 12 acres near the road, containing the house and outbuildings, a portion of a large field, and woodland, is being nominated. The wedge-shaped tract includes fields and woods, as well as the remnants of a pecan grove. A lane of crepe myrtles leads up to the front of the house. Three historic outbuildings stand at the southwest corner of the house: a former store/garage, a fertilizer house, and a chicken coop.

The Watson-Sanders House is a two-story I-House, three bays wide, with a double engaged front piazza, an original rear shed piazza with a bedchamber, a side wing, and a shed addition. Construction details of pit-sawn lumber, T-head nails, and Georgian-style raised-panel doors and surrounds indicate a construction date of ca. 1820. The house was moved about 1854 and remodeled in the Greek Revival style on the interior. At this time the exterior end chimneys of random common bond with shallow double shoulders were probably built to replace the original chimneys. On the new site, the house was placed on brick piers; these now have brick infill. The house retains original nine-over-six sash windows on the first story and six-over-six on the second story. The molded door and window surrounds are original. One section of original beaded siding remains on the wall of the rear shed, now sheltered by an added porch. The exposed walls were resided with plain siding with square nails, probably in the early twentieth century. Front and rear cornices are boxed and molded: gable ends have flush cornice boards. The house has a sheet metal roof.

Construction details inside the attic indicate that the present front piazzas were a later addition, probably added after the house was moved. The Greek Revival style door onto the upper piazza, with three vertical raised panels, indicate that the piazza was added during the Greek Revival remodeling. It is likely that the original house had a one-story porch, but its configuration is unknown. The only original porch fabric appears to be sections of the upper railing, which has slender balusters and a rounded rail. Craftsman style brick piers support the first story, likely a circa 1930s replacement, and box posts, also a replacement, support the second story.

At an unknown date, probably in the late nineteenth century, the original rear shed/piazza was altered by infilling the west section with a second bedchamber, leaving only the center bay open. A shed addition covered with German siding was built onto the original shed in 1942 by Hooper Sanders.

The wing on the eastern side of the house was built in the 1850s or 1860s as a bedroom with breezeway access for Aunt Mary Lyndall, but was remodelled as a kitchen when the old log kitchen was demolished. In 1942 Hooper Sanders gave the kitchen another remodelling. The wing has boxed cornices, a raking cornice, and aluminum siding. The kitchen is illuminated by a two-over-two sash window, a four-over-

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four sash window by the chimney, and a six-over-six sash where the breezeway was infilled.

**Interior**

The house originally had a hall-and-parlor floor plan. Interior detailing presents two distinct phases of craftsmanship: the transitional Georgian-Federal work of the 1820s, and the ca. 1854 Greek Revival remodeling. The first floor changed to a center hall plan when a second partition wall (west hall wall) was added in the parlor, probably in the mid-nineteenth century. Both hall partitions have vertical sheathing, but the east partition wall has wide, hand-planed, beaded boards, while the newer western wall has planed, unbeaded boards. Both partitions have a high beaded baseboard. There is a Federal molded chair rail on the east wall, which may be original; the rest of the house has a Greek Revival chair rail. In each partition is a four-raised-panel door with butt hinges. The hall and parlor both have vertical sheathing. When the shed piazza behind the parlor was enclosed, the original window was moved from the parlor wall to the outside wall of the new room, and a door was cut where the window had been. The back door, the door to the shed chamber, and the door to the kitchen are all six-raised-panel doors with HL hinges. The closet door under the steps is also a six-panel door. The west shed chamber has a board and batten door. All four mantels in the house are of simple Greek Revival design with pilasters, a plain cornice, and a shelf.

The second floor may have been unfinished originally, as indicated by the flooring, which is narrower than that on the first floor, the horizontal sheathing, and by the Greek Revival detailing. This floor contains two bedrooms, a center hall, and a small room at the rear of the hall (now a bathroom). The hall partition walls have vertical boards, and like downstairs, the east wall is beaded and the west is not. The second-floor doors have two vertical raised panels. The square newel post at the top of the stair is probably a replacement, but the rounded rail with slender pickets is similar to the outside porch rail.

**Outbuildings**

NC Former store/garage. early 20<sup>th</sup> century. D. Hooper Sanders built the store, a front gable building on fieldstone piers with plain siding, a six-over-six front sash window, and a replacement front door. The building is on fieldstone piers, and the single front window has a six-over-six sash. The store was later used as a smokehouse. A garage addition extends to the rear.

NC Fertilizer House. early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fertilizer house is a two-story front gable building on fieldstone piers with an enclosed shed on the south side and an open shed on the north. D. Hooper Sanders built it about the same time as the store. This has plain weatherboard and circular sawn framework. The stair to the upper floor was built later to allow tobacco to be graded upstairs. The first story has a board and batten door, and the upper door is a vertical board door. The south shed, a later addition, has a brick pier foundation, German siding, and a door with five horizontal panels.

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NC Brooder House. 1930s. The brooder house, built by D. Hooper Sanders, is a small shed roof building with German siding and a continuous fieldstone foundation. The window sash is four-over-four and the roof joists are exposed.

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**Watson-Sanders House**  
**Johnston County, N.C.**

**Section 8: Statement of Significance**

The Watson-Sanders House, homeplace for five generations of the Watson and Sanders families, stands at 2810 Brogden Road three miles southeast of Smithfield, Johnston County. The frame I-house with its rear shed piazza and chamber originally stood near the Neuse River on Jordan's Plantation, owned by the wealthy Dr. Josiah O. Watson, who willed it to his nephew Henry Bulls Watson in 1852. Captain Watson was a professional Marine Corps officer who kept detailed journals on the American conquest of California while he served as Marine commander aboard a ship along the Pacific coast from 1845 to 1848. In 1854 Captain Watson's family moved from Portsmouth, Virginia to his inherited plantation, where they moved the old house a short distance up to the road and remodeled it as the family dwelling. The Watsons updated the interior with some Greek Revival finish, created a center hall room arrangement out of the old hall-parlor plan, and added the double front piazza and a bedroom wing for Mrs. Watson's widowed aunt. The house had been constructed in the early nineteenth century, probably for the original plantation owners themselves, and displays transitional Georgian-Federal style doors and hardware, as well as a Tidewater floor plan with rear piazza and bedroom wing. Although it devolved to an overseers' house during the ownership of Josiah Watson, when it stood on one of his many working plantations, it was restored to its status as a plantation house under Captain Henry B. Watson from the mid-1850s to his death in 1869.

Captain Watson's youngest daughter Agnes inherited the house and farm, along with her husband Hezekiah Peterson. Their daughter Mary made her home at the farm with her husband D. Hooper Sanders from 1911 to her death in 1966. Mary's daughter Betsy Sanders inherited the homeplace and kept it intact throughout her lifetime, to early 2000. Her sister Susan Sanders Barbour now owns and occupies the homeplace. As one of a small number of antebellum plantation houses that survive in Johnston County, and an even smaller number of houses with an engaged double piazza, the Watson-Sanders House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its local architectural significance. It also meets Criteria Consideration B because the house was moved a short distance, in 1854, within the bounds of its plantation to a site very similar to that of the original location.

**Historical Background**

The Watson-Sanders House stood on a plantation bought by Dr. Josiah Ogden Watson in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century from the Farmer family, whose members included Miss Lucy Farmer. The plantation was known as "Jordan" after a slave who ran the plantation. According to tradition, the house was dilapidated when Dr. Watson purchased it, and he repaired two or three rooms for the use of his overseer. Dr. Watson, who lived at Pineville Plantation near Clayton, was a very wealthy and prominent man in Johnston County. He practiced medicine in Smithfield and Raleigh and owned several plantations in Johnston

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County, land in Smithfield, and a house in Raleigh.<sup>1</sup>

Josiah Watson, who had no children, died in 1852, and specified in his will that the plantation known as "Jordan's Plantation," as well as the forty-to-fifty slaves there, on the south side of Polecat Creek, be divided between his nephews Henry Bulls Watson and William H. Watson.<sup>2</sup> The land was then surveyed and divided in 1853. Henry Bulls Watson received a tract of 827 acres and William H. Watson received a tract of 691 acres. The tracts were valued at \$2,764 apiece.<sup>3</sup>

Henry Bulls Watson was born on October 16, 1812, to Willis and Elizabeth Watson of Johnston County. On October 5, 1836, he was made a lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. He served aboard the *Ohio* in the Mediterranean Sea from 1838-1841. In 1845, he was made commanding officer of the Marines aboard the war ship *Portsmouth* that sailed to the Pacific coast. The United States had just annexed Texas and appeared to be about to go to war with Mexico; the *Portsmouth* was one of the ships sent to guard California. He was in charge of a force that occupied San Francisco for several months in 1846, participated in the occupation of Los Angeles, and participated in a number of other important battles in the conquest of California, including a blockade of Mexico. In 1847, he was made a captain. After returning to Virginia in 1848, he served both there and in the Mediterranean until January 1, 1855, when he resigned and returned to Johnston County to live on the farm left by his uncle Josiah. He remained here until the Civil War began. In 1862, he was sent to Weldon, to help defend the Roanoke River, and then to Raleigh, where he trained new recruits. Captain Watson kept detailed journals during his California cruises that are considered a valuable historical document in the American conquest of California. These were published in 1990.<sup>4</sup> His son, Henry Lyndall Watson, also joined the Confederate army; he was wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg, and later captured in Virginia and confined at Fort Delaware until the war ended.<sup>5</sup>

In Washington, D. C., during his first year of training, Henry Bulls Watson met Mary Ann Higdon, and married her on April 18, 1837. Mary Ann was the daughter of Elizabeth Ann Rodgers and Gustave Higdon, a fairly wealthy importer in Washington, D. C.<sup>6</sup> The Higdons were Catholic, and Mary Ann Watson raised her children as Catholics as well. Henry and Mary Ann Watson had five children: Josiah Ogden, Henry Lyndall, Mary Aline, Elizabeth Bynum, and Agnes Aylwin. Josiah Ogden died very young. Agnes Aylwin, the youngest, was the only child born in North Carolina.

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews with Sarah Sanders Birdsong (February 1, 2000) and Elizabeth Sanders (February 15, 2000); "This Old House," ca. 1950 paper by Mary Peterson Sanders presented to the Johnston County Historical Society (copy in file).

<sup>2</sup> Josiah O. Watson Will, Johnston County Estate Records pg. 282.

<sup>3</sup> Century Farm Family History, February 1988 (copy in file).

<sup>4</sup> Powell. "Henry Bulls Watson." *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*. 131-132; Charles R. Smith, ed. *Journals of Marine Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson, 1845-1848* (1990).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865*, 157.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Sarah Birdsong, February 1, 2000.

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The old overseer's dwelling stood on Captain Watson's half of the plantation, at the edge of the low grounds near the Neuse River. About 1854 he arranged to have it moved three-quarters of a mile north, away from the river, to its present site along the River Road to Goldsboro, now Brogden Road. He intended to use the house as a temporary dwelling for his family until he could build a suitable house across the road. Yet the Watson family remained in the old house, perhaps because they found it adequate and comfortable, or perhaps because the Civil War intervened before they could begin a new house. The family made a number of changes to the old house after moving it, including the addition of a two-story front piazza and an east bedroom wing. Inside, they probably converted the plan to a center hall arrangement by adding the west hall partition. They may have also finished off the upstairs into two bedrooms and a hall room. Through memorable landscaping, including a hedge of wild roses in front, an avenue of crepe myrtles leading from the road to the door, and a row of black walnut trees to the rear, the Watsons turned the field around the house into a picturesque yard.

An entry in Mary Ann's journal states: "Aunt Mary, the children and myself came to Carolina to live Nov. 7, 1854."<sup>7</sup> Captain Watson joined them after his retirement on Jan. 1, 1855. Aunt Mary was Mary Ann's widowed aunt, Mary Ann Lyndall. Her husband had left her a sizeable amount of property and she used her wealth to help the Watson family when they moved from Portsmouth to Johnston County.<sup>8</sup> Mary Anne Watson's younger sister Fanny Higdon had also joined the family by 1860. In that year the census shows Henry and Mary, their four children, fifty-year-old Mary Lyndall and twenty-four-year-old Frances Higdon living in the house. Henry's occupation was farmer, Frances, music teacher.<sup>9</sup> Aunt Fanny, a talented lady, taught music lessons to local children and operated a private school at the house.<sup>10</sup>

On March 9, 1865, word spread that part of General Sherman's army was on the way from Goldsboro to Raleigh. The Watsons rushed to prepare, sending the horses and mules away with a young slave named Dave and driving the cattle into the woods. They threw the silver down the well, and pushed clothing and blankets into the attic. The army arrived in the afternoon and camped in the field across from the house. Later the family served the soldiers dinner on the piazza. During the following two months, soldiers either killed or confiscated the horses, cattle, and chickens, and took food from the storehouse. They burned the slaves' mattresses and destroyed most of the walnut trees. Several times the soldiers started fires under the house, but these fortunately were put out in time; however, they did burn down the outbuildings. The troops left the area on May 11. When the war ended, the slaves remained for a time,

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in a letter from Elizabeth Sanders to Catherine Bishir, Jan. 8, 1985 (copy in file).

<sup>8</sup> Sanders, "This Old House."

<sup>9</sup> U. S. Census, Population Schedule, Johnston County, Boon Hill Township, 1860.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; Newspaper clipping, typescript recollections of Mrs. James Alvin Woodall in Watson-Sanders family papers; Interviews with Sarah Birdsong, February 1, 2000, and Elizabeth Sanders, February 15, 2000.

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then gradually drifted away, many to Mississippi.<sup>11</sup>

Mary Ann Higdon Watson died August 17, 1864, and Henry Bulls Watson died January 25, 1869. After his death, the plantation was left to his four children and divided into eight lots; four upland lots near the road, and four lowland lots near the river. Agnes, the youngest, drew lot one, containing the house and 163 acres, and lot eight on the Neuse River.<sup>12</sup>

Agnes married Hezekiah Peterson, and had two children, Henry Lyndall and Mary Bynum. Henry left home when he was young, and moved to Greensboro.<sup>13</sup> Mary lived with an aunt in Raleigh and attended Saint Mary's School.<sup>14</sup> She married Debernier Hooper Sanders, who grew up on a farm adjacent to the Watson property, in 1911. Agnes Watson Peterson left her property to both Henry and Mary, but Mary and Hooper Sanders later bought Henry's share.<sup>15</sup>

D. Hooper and Mary Sanders had seven children, including one who died in infancy. D. Hooper operated a thriving farm at the old Watson homeplace, raising tobacco, cotton, corn, soybeans, hay, vegetables and livestock. Mary is said to have lamented the two large barns that her husband built behind the house, wishing that they had spent the money on a new house instead. The barns are now gone, one destroyed by Hurricane Hazel. D. Hooper also built a small store on the road just west of the house, which he operated until the 1920s. Mary honored her Catholic heritage by allowing a traveling priest to hold mass for local Catholics in the house until the 1930s, when a Catholic chapel was erected in nearby Smithfield. After D. Hooper's death in 1945, Mary stayed on the farm. Her daughter Betsy (Elizabeth Bynum Sanders, 1913-2000), who never married, lived with her. In 1949 Mary divided the farm among her six children.<sup>16</sup> Betsy and her sister Martha received lots 1 and 2, containing sixty-two acres and the homeplace. They divided their share, with Betsy receiving the eastern half, containing the house and thirty-three acres.<sup>17</sup>

Betsy stayed in the house with her mother Mary until Mary's death in 1966, and made her home at her beloved old homeplace for the rest of her life, renting the fields around the house to local farmers, and repairing the old house. Since 1985 Betsy had worked to secure the house's listing in the National Register of Historic Places. When she died in March, 2000, she knew that the nomination was in the process of completion. Elizabeth's sister, Susan Sanders Barbour, now owns the house. She and her

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<sup>11</sup> Sanders, "This Old House"; Partition of Land of Henry B. Watson among his heirs, 1870, Land Book 3, Johnston County.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews with Sarah Birdsong, February 1, 2000, and Elizabeth Sanders, February 15, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Century Farm Family History, February 1988; Survey of partition of Mrs. Mary P. Sanders Farm among her 6 children, 1949 (copy in file).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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daughter, Sarah Birdsong, live at the homeplace and are restoring the house. The house is surrounded by over 600 contiguous acres of farmland still in the ownership of various members of the Sanders family.

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**Architecture Context**

The Watson-Sanders House has local architectural significance as one of the Coastal Plain's westernmost examples of a two-story, one-room-deep house (or I-house) with an engaged double piazza, a form associated with North Carolina's coastal areas.<sup>18</sup> Along with the one- or one-and-one-half-story coastal cottage, the I-house with engaged double piazza is among a group of coastal forms characterized by plans that include engaged piazzas, piazza chambers, and exterior staircases that blur the distinction between interior and exterior space. This general form, increasingly rare in North Carolina, is far more common and well-documented in the Deep South, where its most popular variation is known as the Creole cottage. The Creole cottage was the house of choice for families of French, Spanish, and Cajun origin in the 1700s and early 1800s in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a covered open porch or veranda was called, throughout the South, a piazza. The term persists among rural people in eastern North Carolina to this day, who pronounce it "PI-zah" with a long *i*. The coastal cottage, a distinctive house type of one or one-and-one-half stories containing two rooms on the main floor, a shed with chambers and a recessed piazza, and a front piazza engaged under the main roof, proliferated in Tidewater North Carolina in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The use of a shed chamber, instead of a gabled rear ell, to gain extra space is one of the distinguishing features of the coastal form. Early examples of the house form rest on a high foundation. In Tidewater North Carolina the coastal cottage and the larger two-story form with engaged piazza were the house types of choice for most middling and wealthy homeowners until the mid-nineteenth century. The popularity of the I-house form with its broad two-story facade, as well as the arrival of such sophisticated styles as the Federal and the Greek Revival to this area, resulted in the decline of both the coastal cottage and the larger form with the engaged double piazza. The vernacular roof sweep was antithetical to the classical facades of these styles. The coastal cottage remained a house type of social standing in the 1830s, but it was gradually relegated to use as lower-status, smaller housing for laborers and tenants in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the engaged double piazza eventually fell out of favor for the larger form in the mid nineteenth century.

These coastal forms featuring engaged piazzas largely disappear along the western edge of the Coastal Plain. Lenoir County has numerous examples, Wayne County has a smaller number, and Johnston County even fewer surviving examples. Most of the surviving plantation seats in Johnston County are stylish Federal or Greek Revival houses rather than vernacular dwellings. The River Road (now Brogden Road) where the Watson-Sanders House stands was the site of some of the largest plantations in Johnston County, due to the fertility of the Neuse River lowlands. Four grand Atkinson family plantation houses once stood along the road; only two remain. The Atkinson-Smith House, still

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<sup>18</sup> *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina*, 388.

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, *Louisiana's Remarkable French Vernacular Architecture*.

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**Johnston County, N.C.**

standing, built about 1850, is an ornate Greek Revival-Italianate house. Just across the Wayne County line, the William Francis Atkinson House of the same period is a splendid Greek Revival seat with an ornate two-story porch.

The original form of the Watson-Sanders House, two-stories with a one-story front piazza and rear shed-piazza, likely resembled the John Ivey House, a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century house in adjacent Wayne County. The Ivey House's rear shed originally contained bedchambers flanking a central piazza. The Watson-Sanders shed originally contained one chamber and a piazza.<sup>20</sup> After the house's move up to the road about 1854, the Watsons rebuilt the front piazza as a two-story engaged piazza. The use of the engaged double piazza is notable not only for its appearance at the western edge of the Coastal Plain, but even more for the late use of the feature. Later, probably in the late 1800s, the family enclosed the west corner of the rear piazza to create a second rear bedchamber, an alteration squarely in the tradition of the house type.

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<sup>20</sup> Pezzoni, *Glimpses of Wayne County, North Carolina*, 7,42.

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**Section 9: Bibliography**

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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**Section 10: Boundaries**

**Boundary Description:**

The nominated property is a portion of the acreage remaining with the house. It is indicated by a black line on the accompanying Johnston County Tax Map, Book 742, page 98, parcel number 15L12007. The boundary of the nominated acreage starts at the northwest corner of the parcel and follows the west line south 775 feet to a point; from there it runs east-southeast 661 feet to a point in the far east line of the parcel; and then it follows the east line to the northeast corner and then the north line west to the point of beginning. The nominated acreage contains approximately 12 acres of the parcel's 32.19 acres.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated acreage consists of the homeplace, three outbuildings, and a portion of the fields and woodland around the house. The remaining acreage in the legal parcel associated with the house extends in a narrow strip to the rear and does not contribute to the historical significance or setting of the homeplace.

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**Section Photos Page 13  
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Johnston County, N.C.**

**Photographs:**

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Photographer: Ruth Little

Date: February 2000

Location of negatives: North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh

- A. Overall view of Watson-Sanders House and outbuildings from northeast.
- B. Overall view of Watson-Sanders House from northeast.
- C. Central facade of Watson-Sanders House from north.
- D. Rear view of Watson-Sanders House from southwest.
- E. Interior: view of first floor east room.
- F. Interior: view of first floor east room.
- G. Interior: second floor hall.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Watson-Sanders House, Johnston Co., NC  
Four Oaks NE Quad

① 17/742560/3928280

② 17/742790/3928240

③ 17/742740/3927990

④ 17/742440/3927960

STATE OF  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AND COMMISSIONER OF  
RAILROADS

ZEBULON (VIA N. C. 96) 23 MI.  
5 MI. TO JUNC. U. S. 301 & N. C. 96

ROANOKE RAPIDS 79 MI.  
WILSON 28 MI.



