

**THE CEDARS INN AT BEAUFORT, NORTH CAROLINA**  
**The William Borden House, c. 1768**  
**And**  
**The Belcher Fuller House, c. 1852**

The William Borden House, 305 Front Street, has for many years been known as "The Cedars". Purchased in December of 2011 by Alex Sarratt, the property is now a country inn by the sea. The Inn and restaurant had been closed since 2007, so major updates to Code were made along with modernizing three of the bathrooms. The inn was originally opened in May 1985 after an extensive restoration by Peter and Suzin Osburn in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation projects .. The circa 1768 building has undergone at least five major renovations in the past. In some cases, it was necessary to tear out "improvements" over the years to return the structure to the desired period in history.

The primary object of the Osburn's renovation was to upgrade the building's mechanical systems to today's standards while preserving the original character of the building and its many outstanding architectural features and to turn the building into a viable commercial restaurant and lodging entity.

The Borden House was built by William Borden, Jr. His father, William Borden, Sr. was a shipbuilder from Portsmouth, Rhode Island, who arrived in North Carolina in 1732 aboard his schooner with his wife, Alice Hull. The younger Borden was born in 1731 and also became a skilled shipwright. The senior Borden's also had three daughters, Alice, Catherine Hope, and Hannah. William Borden, Sr. is thought to be the son of John Borden, one of two progenitors of the Borden family in America.

William Borden, Sr. was a Quaker who settled his family in Mill Creek where they built a shipyard and sawmill. He was a prominent citizen in Carteret County, eventually becoming the largest land in the county. He became very active in public affairs and bought a great deal of property including land on Bogue Banks, which was known as "Borden's Banks" in the late 1700's. William Borden, Sr. died in 1747, leaving his properties to his son and daughters. His son followed in his father's footsteps and became very prominent in town, county and colony affairs.

In 1765 records show that "a good Quaker" (William Borden, Jr.) near Beaufort distilled turpentine and made other naval stores. He also continued the family shipbuilding business and became a leader in the Carteret shipbuilding industry. Following the Declaration of Independence, the Fifth Provincial Congress met in Halifax, North Carolina on November 12, 1776. William Borden, Jr. was selected as a delegate from Carteret County. During the session, the Bill of Rights was adopted on December 15, 1776.

Records show that William Borden purchased the property at 301 Front Street in 1768, the year The Cedars is thought to have been built. In 1782 during the Revolutionary War when the British captured Beaufort, his plantation at Mill Creek was plundered, his mill and storehouses were burned. Nevertheless, the Cedars survived and remains today for all to enjoy.

The Cedars, built as a summer home, was originally only one room deep, just two stories, and seven feet narrower on the west side. It is thought that a porch ran along the westerly wall. The original interior staircase started at the rear of the house and twisted up under the attic stairs which remain intact today. The door going into the attic predates the house, as does its unique wooden lock. It was probably the front door of an earlier house and is called a "spirit door" because of the cross and open Bible design. The rafters of the roof were held together with pegs of wood, or trunnels (which is derived from the words, tree-nail). The use of the trunnels, which allowed for structural flexing and movement, has made this home and many others in Beaufort able to withstand the winds of hurricanes for over two hundred years.

During the Federal period, perhaps as the results of profits made in the War of 1812, the house was enlarged with two more rooms downstairs and upstairs. Note the difference in the floor and ceiling levels. It was at that time that the house was also made wider on the west side, however, the classic Beaufort mantels and much of the woodwork were termite damaged. During the 1985 restoration, the damaged parts were replaced with hand-carved and hand-planed pieces made from 200 year old heart pine. The craftsmen who worked on the restoration are local carpenters and boat builders.

In the 1880's the building was again enlarged, this time with the addition of the first-floor wing that now houses 'The Cedars' restaurant kitchen. At that time, the two story Greek Revival style porch on the front of the building was added and the weather-boarding was completely replaced. Also during this renovation, the original plaster ceilings, which had deteriorated badly, were replaced with the present wainscoting.

Early in the twentieth century the second story and the upper back porch were added and later still, a four room apartment at the north side of the building was built during World War II before the Cherry Point Marine Base came into being. There was no housing for the men moving into the area, so many houses in Beaufort were turned into apartments, as was the Borden House. At this time the house had two front doors, two narrow hallways and an upstairs room was turned into a kitchen. It remained this way until its renovation in the early 1980's.

As part of the most recent renovation, the grounds and gardens were completely redone, brick paths and walkways, using antique bricks from the old jail house in New Bern were installed. Shrubs and trees indigenous to the North Carolina seacoast were also planted, as well as flowers and herbs. The newly replaced wooden front steps on both the 301 and 305 houses were designed to match existing porches and the newer posts were hand carved.

As you walk around the grounds notice the ballast stone foundation on the main portion of the Borden structure. There is little or no rock in Carteret County and stones used in early

construction were brought from all parts of the world as ballast in the ships trading here at that time. Some of the stones in the foundation and chimney bases of The Cedars have fossils or are coral indicating that they may have come from the West Indies or Africa.

The adjoining house that comprises The Cedars complex, located at 301 Front Street, is known as the Belcher Fuller House. The house belonged to the great-great grandson of William Borden, Sr. and was built in 1852. Both houses have been restored and revitalized to preserve those portions and features of the property that are significant to their historic, architectural, and cultural values. This adaptive use provides them with a new life, and insures that they will continue to be cared for, lived in, and admired.

The Cedars currently contains four suites and one guest bunk room in the Borden House with a quaint cottage attached to the back of the house. All feature the modern comforts of private baths, air conditioning, and cable television. Some have fireplaces and the old-fashioned claw-footed tubs

Alex Sarratt is a native of North Carolina, born in Charlotte and raised in Winston-Salem and a graduate of The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He shares the previous owners' interest in the historic preservation of the Borden House, as well as the ongoing preservation of the Beaufort Historic District.