

A New Beginning

NEW BERN AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL



Craven Terrace, 2017

Casualties of Progress

To make way for the new housing development, numerous homes, a few small businesses, and several churches were razed. Not all of the structures were dilapidated. On Carner Street, the original Grand Army of the Republic Post rehabilitated as the Beecher Colored Recreation Center during the Depression, was demolished. I. P. Hatch's funeral business and auto repair shop on Elm Street were also lost. Hatch became a resident of the housing project after his home on Elm Street was a casualty of Craven Terrace.



Rue Chapel A.M.E. Church

Rue Chapel, destroyed during the Great Fire in 1922, was rebuilt three years later at the corner of Oak and Elm streets. When the housing development was proposed in 1939, the congregation rallied, and the church was deconstructed brick-by-brick by members Joseph Lewis, a brickmason, and Willie Becton, a carpenter. The chapel was rebuilt at the current location at 707 Oak Street. Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist and Trinity Chapel A.M.E. Zion churches were both demolished. The Little Rock Baptist Church, located at what was then 33 Carner Street, was razed in 1942. The congregation moved to a building at 712 Ash Street, but that structure was torn down for the 1953 additions.



Inside the red border is the 1941 Craven Terrace construction. The housing project was expanded in 1953 to include the area within the blue border.

Expanding Craven Terrace

In 1953, the Craven Terrace Public Housing Project was expanded. Over seven acres bounded by Miller, Cedar, Oak, and Terrace streets were condemned by the NBHA for the expansion of the complex. The demolition included numerous one- and two-story homes and commercial buildings. Again, only Rue Chapel—moved during the initial phase of construction of Craven Terrace in 1941 from the corner of Oak and Elm streets to its current location—was spared.

The new complex of eighteen two-story buildings was designed by John J. Rowland, the assistant of A. Mitchell Wooten, the architect for the 1942 project. The 1953 apartments were two-story townhomes with two-bedroom, three-bedroom, and four-bedroom units. A pantry or separate dining area was added adjacent to the kitchen. When completed, the entire complex consisted of 361 apartments for African American families.

The Apartment

Craven Terrace opened in 1942 as New Bern's only African American public housing project. The 14.4-acre apartment complex consisted of twenty-two two-story and six one-story red brick buildings, with a total of 253 apartments configured in a series of quadrangles with interior grass courtyards. The one-story buildings contained one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units. The two-story buildings offered three-bedroom, four-bedroom, and five-bedroom units. There was also a one-story community building.

The utilitarian interiors had plaster walls and ceilings in the living room, kitchen, bedrooms, and single bathroom. The Colonial Revival-style design was accented with decorative bas-relief, Art Moderne-style concrete panels that featured a drummer boy, a tuba player, a boy on a hobby horse, a boy throwing a ball, a boy with a hoop, and a boy on a rocking horse. The panels remain intact today.



Art Moderne Bas-Relief



Image: Various Interpretive Design, Library of Congress, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

