

At Home in Craven Terrace

NEW BERN AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL



A party at the Craven Terrace Community Center, c. 1950

Life in Craven Terrace reflected the economic hardships of other African American communities in New Bern. Most residents of the complex lived below the poverty line and struggled to make ends meet. Rent ranged between twenty and forty percent of their income, and leasing costs rose steadily. New Bern's housing director imposed his own moral code on residents through "rent penalties" and actions such as evicting women who bore children out of wedlock.



A mother and her children look through a photo album in one of the Craven Terrace apartments.

Demonstration Clubs

By the 1930s, home demonstration clubs existed across the state. In response to the Great Depression, program agents concentrated on developing relief gardens, promoted curb-side markets, and advocated for food conservation and clothes manufacturing. During the 1950s, Craven Terrace established clubs to address health concerns and support community improvement, such as vaccination and nutritional programs. Agents also helped with financial planning and the preparation of wills.

Alex Haley

While stationed near New Bern as a mess attendant and steward's mate on the USCGC *Pamlico*, twenty-year-old Alex Haley met and soon married Nannie Virginia Branch from nearby Beaufort. The wedding took place in Apartment C-22 at Craven Terrace on August 21, 1942, just after the bride celebrated her eighteenth birthday. The Reverend Claude Simmons, a Christian minister, officiated. Haley would go on to become a renowned author, known worldwide for *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *Roots: The Saga of An American Family*.



Alex Haley, c. 1940



This aerial photograph from the early 1950s shows the close proximity of Craven Terrace to Five Points (lower right corner), at the time a prosperous Black business district. The 1953 additions to the housing development have not begun in the upper section of the frame. Rue Chapel A.M.E. Church can be seen in the upper right corner of the Craven Terrace development boundary.

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. To the right is the two-bedroom floor plan at Craven Terrace.



Frederick R. and Mary Danyus



F. R. Danyus

West Street Graded School teacher and eventual principal F. R. Danyus moved from a boarding house at 68 West Street into Craven Terrace with his wife, Mary, also a teacher at the school, in 1942. The housing project was another stepping stone for the couple, and they finally purchased a home at 905 Bern Street in the 1950s. In 1974, the West Street school was renamed for Danyus, who died in 1962. Mary died twelve years later.

James E. C. Perry



Justice James Perry

James Edward Clark Perry was born in 1944 on the second floor of apartment D-2250. His father was a foreman at a riverside veneer plant and his mother a maid at the Queen Anne Hotel. The family struggled, but that did not deter Perry from success as an athlete and a student. In the early 1960s, he participated in local sit-ins at Clark's drugstore and Kress department store in downtown New Bern. Inspired by the experience, he went on to earn a law degree from Columbia University in New York. Perry had a long and storied career as an attorney and judge in Florida and became a Florida Supreme Court Justice.

Images: Florida Supreme Court, Library of Congress, National Archives, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, United States Court Grand