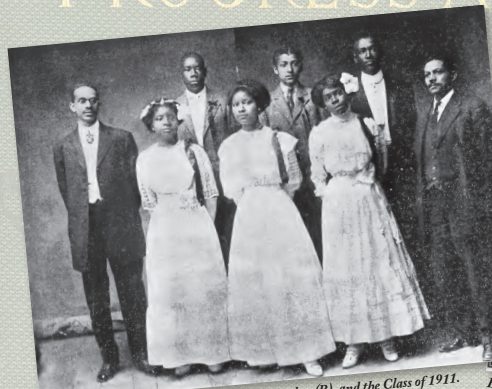


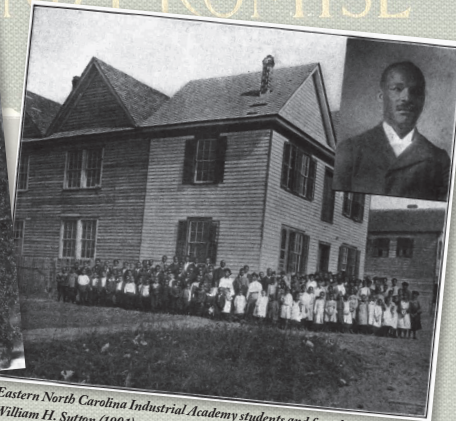
Education for the Future

NEW BERN AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL

PROGRESS AND PROMISE



West Street Graded School Principal, J. T. Barber (R), and the Class of 1911.



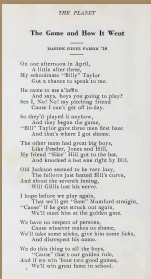
Eastern North Carolina Industrial Academy students and founder William H. Sutton (1901).

Grounded in an antebellum past that forbade teaching Blacks to read or write, African American leaders in New Bern moved quickly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century to address the need for public education and schools. Following emancipation, the Freedmen's Bureau, White charities, and Northern missionary societies were the first to tackle the problem of widespread Black illiteracy. Their efforts fell short. Immediately after the war, North Carolina's education policies added new obstacles by mandating a dual school system based on color. Forced to fund their own schools, Black New Bernians responded by creating new institutions led by Black administrators and Black educators. These schools reflected the common experience and shared values of the African American community.



West Street Graded School

New Bern's first African American public school, a small wood-framed building known originally as the "Red Schoolhouse," opened on West Street in the early 1870s. Within the decade, the name was changed to the West Street Graded School. Fire destroyed the wood structure in 1905. However, the school's new principal, John Thomas Barber, successfully pushed to build the state's first African American brick schoolhouse two years later. More classrooms were added to the campus over the next decade to accommodate New Bern's expanding Black population. Barber, a legendary educator, retired in 1944, succeeded by Frederick R. Danyus, also an accomplished teacher and administrator who served until 1963. Unfortunately, the historic 1907 brick schoolhouse burned in 1969. Newly constructed classrooms, an office, and a library complex opened in 1971. West Street was renamed three years later in honor of Danyus.



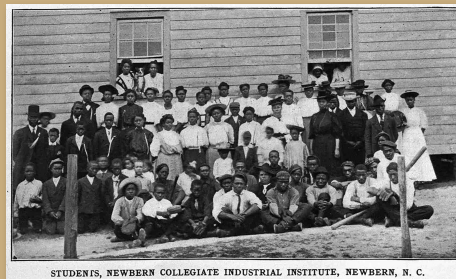
Student Poem from 1915

J. T. Barber



The West Street Graded School continued to expand into the first two decades of the twentieth century with J. T. Barber as principal. Barber, a graduate of Shaw University, North Carolina's first historically Black college, guided the school for 39 years.

Images: State Archives of North Carolina



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Industrial Education

After 1900, two new Black schools emerged in New Bern with curriculum that followed Civil Rights leader Booker T. Washington's concept of industrial education—learning self-reliance and developing trade skills. Eastern North Carolina Industrial Academy, founded in 1901 by A.M.E. Zion Church Pastor William H. Sutton, encompassed five blocks of Bartlett Avenue (present-day K Street) and offered classes in commercial broom making and woodworking for boys and sewing for girls. They also trained ministers. Students were taught Latin and Greek. More than 250 children attended the academy in 1908. The school continually struggled financially to survive, especially after the Great Fire, and closed in 1932.

The New Bern Collegiate Industrial Institute, opened in 1902 by Cedar Grove Baptist Church minister Alfred L. E. Weeks, stood at the corner of West and Cypress streets. The school's curriculum included music, agriculture, and brick masonry. The building burned in 1905 and was rebuilt with local support. By 1908, 153 students were enrolled in the institute. Two years later, Booker T. Washington visited New Bern for a school fundraising event. Fiscally strapped, the school closed in 1912. The abandoned building burned the day after the Great Fire in December 1922.