

# Five Points

## NEW BERN AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL



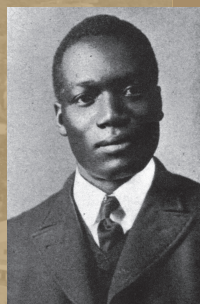
The intersection of Neuse, Broad, Roundtree, and Queen streets—known locally as Five Points—is recognized as New Bern's historic western gateway. From the 1860s through the 1950s, the crossroads south of the Dryborough and Craven Terrace neighborhoods witnessed tremendous change. What began in the late nineteenth century as an avenue of racially and economically diverse shops, tenement houses, and individual dwellings evolved into a vibrant African American commercial district after World War II.

## The Rise of Five Points

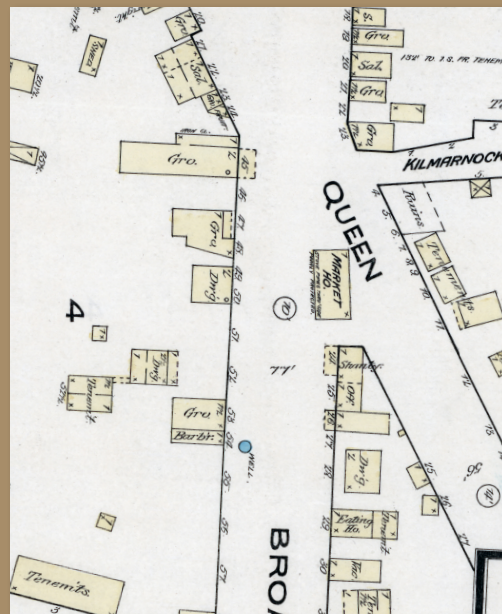
Lumber was an important industry that supplied jobs to New Bern's growing Dryborough and nearby Long Wharf communities in the half century after the Civil War. Located between these neighborhoods was Five Points. In the early 1870s, the "New Market House" dominated the crossroads. Situated in the middle of the intersection, the proprietor leased stalls from late February through September, mostly to meat vendors. Nearly half of the butchers in town rented space in the market house, making the establishment a destination in New Bern.

Both Broad and Queen streets were lined with a combination of grocery stores, blacksmith shops, eateries, and clapboard tenement dwellings. Increasingly, African American artisans and small business owners found the location ideal because of the proximity to New Bern's expanding Black neighborhoods north of Broad Street. One of Five Points' longest active businesses was Hussey's, a boarding house. The proprietor, John Hussey, was born enslaved. He opened his small hotel in the late 1870s across from the New Market House and rented rooms into the early 1920s.

The late-nineteenth-century transformation of Five Points continued with the construction of the Wilmington and Newbern Railroad. To accommodate the tracks down the center of Queen Street, the New Market House was razed in 1893. The investment in the rail line reflected New Bern's prominence as an inland coastal port, a distinction the former colonial capital had held since the early eighteenth century.



Images: Library of Congress, National Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources



Into the 1880s, the Market House dominated the Five Points intersection. The surrounding blocks consisted of small grocery stores and tenement houses.

## Mutual Aid Banking Company

The Mutual Aid Banking Company was the first African American-owned bank to operate in North Carolina. Organized in 1896, the bank opened the following year two blocks east of Five Points at 117 Broad Street. Catering to the Black community, the company also offered quasi-insurance policies to Black businesses because African Americans were excluded from White insurance organizations. By 1910, both West Street School principal J. T. Barber and First Baptist Church minister and Newbern Collegiate Industrial Institute superintendent A. L. E. Weeks served on the board of directors.

A. L. E. Weeks