

West Street

NEW BERN AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL



Charlotte S. Rhone



The West Street Colored Library is now the Charlotte S. Rhone Cultural Center

For more than 200 years, West Street has served as the de facto western boundary of the Dryborough community. Since 1807, the thoroughfare has witnessed the development, decline, and rebirth of the surrounding African American neighborhood.

West Street Colored Library

Prior to 1935, no public library existed for African Americans in New Bern. Recognizing the role the institution played in the community, Robert I. Johnson, rector at St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church, led the effort to establish the first at the West Street Graded School. When more space was needed, sisters Charlotte Rhone and Carrie Rhone Smith, along with Carrie's daughter-in-law, Annie Day Shepherd Smith, helped raise \$8,000 to construct a separate building one block east of the school. The new West Street Colored Library opened in 1947. Twenty-five years later, the facility was incorporated into the New Bern-Craven County Public Library system. The building was repurposed as a cultural center (608 West Street) for the community and renamed in honor of Charlotte Rhone.

Good Shepherd Hospital

The Great Fire of 1922 exposed the urgent need for a hospital in New Bern's segregated African American community. At the time, the closest "colored" hospital was eighty miles away. Supported by the efforts of Rev. Robert I. Johnson, Good Shepherd Hospital (603 West Street) opened in 1938. The \$70,000 project was funded in part by the Episcopal dioceses and the Duke Endowment. Johnson was the first superintendent and served as chaplain. The hospital gained accreditation under Ozie T. Faison, superintendent in the 1950s. The building would later become a retirement and assisted living facility, the Good Shepherd Home for the Aged.



The Good Shepherd Hospital as it appeared in the early 1950s. The two-story brick building to the upper left is the Nurse's House.

Isaiah Prophet Hatch

The apartment building at 514 West Street was built by New Bern native Isaiah Prophet Hatch in 1945. For a short time, he operated a tombstone supply business on the ground floor. Born in 1871, Hatch was the son of an enslaved couple who arrived in New Bern as refugees during the Civil War. The family moved to Worcester, Massachusetts, when he was a teenager, and there, at the age of eighteen, Hatch started his first business – washing windows and shining shoes. Inspired by the new "stereoptical" technology, he began traveling the northeast operating slideshows

before returning to New Bern in 1895. During his lifetime, Hatch owned a real estate company and grocery, taught school, worked as a traveling salesman, and by 1920 had opened a funeral home at 40 Elm Street. He also operated a service station across the street. The funeral home, along with his adjacent residence, was razed in 1941 to make way for the Craven Terrace public housing project where Hatch became a resident.



I. P. Hatch



TRAIL SIGNS

- 1 West Street Colored Library (Charlotte S. Rhone Cultural Center)
- 2 Good Shepherd Hospital
- 3 Isaiah Prophet Hatch Funeral Home (built after the first was razed)

Images: Euseio Interpretive Design, New Bern Historical Society, State Archives of North Carolina, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources