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The *Journal of the New Bern Historical Society* is a semiannual publication of the New Bern Historical Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the rich heritage of New Bern. Articles, letters, photographs, and memorabilia relevant to the history of New Bern and Craven County may be submitted to the editor for review. (Post Office Box 119, New Bern, North Carolina 28563 or nbhistoricalsoc@yahoo.com.)

A LIFE WELL LIVED: GEORGE HENRY WHITE

Judy Hardin Harkin

He lived in New Bern for almost two decades. During that time he was a teacher, principal, prosecutor, politician, a civic and religious leader. He lived, loved, and lost here, and yet the only tangible evidence of George Henry White's years in New Bern are a state historical highway marker on the corner of Broad and Metcalf streets and a historical sign on the house he built for his young family at 519 Johnson Street.

He was born in a log cabin in Bladen County on December 18, 1852. His father was a free mulatto. It is probable that his birth mother was a slave; nothing is known about her, not even her name, but her son would grow up to become one of the most important African American political leaders during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Very little is known about his earliest years. His father Wiley Franklin White was a Pitt County native who went to Columbus County to work in the turpentine trade. Children born to slave women during this time were also considered slaves and thus the property of their owners, which would have forced White to purchase George and his other son from the white owner. He apparently raised the boys on his own until marrying Mary Anna Spaulding, the 17-year-old daughter of a prosperous free black family, on April 16, 1857. George would always refer to Mary Anna as his mother and she and her large, extended family was the backbone of his formative years. The Spaulding family owned farmland and sawmills and was successful at cask making. Young George worked as a manual laborer on the farm and in the forests gathering naval stores,

and he never forgot the hard work or the long hours. He knew that education was the way to a better life for himself, and ultimately for his race, but his early education consisted of attending school a mere three months a year at the most. In later years, George would look back on those early times and reflect that it was only by the good fortune of "having parents able to educate" him that he had been able to succeed. His parents' input and support were certainly important, but it was young George himself who most contributed to his finishing the equivalent of a modern middle-school education in just three years--1869 to 1872--with a strong background in reading and basic subjects. This commitment to learning would be an integral ingredient of the rest of his life.

George attended the Whitin school in Lumberton and upon graduation was qualified to teach. But George had aspirations to study medicine and enrolled in the winter quarter classes in 1874 at Howard University, the first public, biracial, co-educational institution of higher learning in the nation. The 21-year-old entered two programs, one for teaching and one focusing on a classical liberal arts education. He soon learned that medicine was not his calling and began the study of law. After receiving his normal (teaching) certificate at the end of the spring quarter, he came to New Bern in 1877 as the principal of the black public school.

New Bern was a good location for George to pursue his dreams. The town had long enjoyed a tradition of racial harmony, dating back almost to its founding in the early 1700s, and it was close to his childhood home, making it easy to visit relatives still living in Bladen and Columbus counties.

George's leadership qualities as principal of the public school soon prompted the local Presbyterian Church to ask him to be the principal of the black parochial school they were starting. He served as principal of both schools for the next five years.

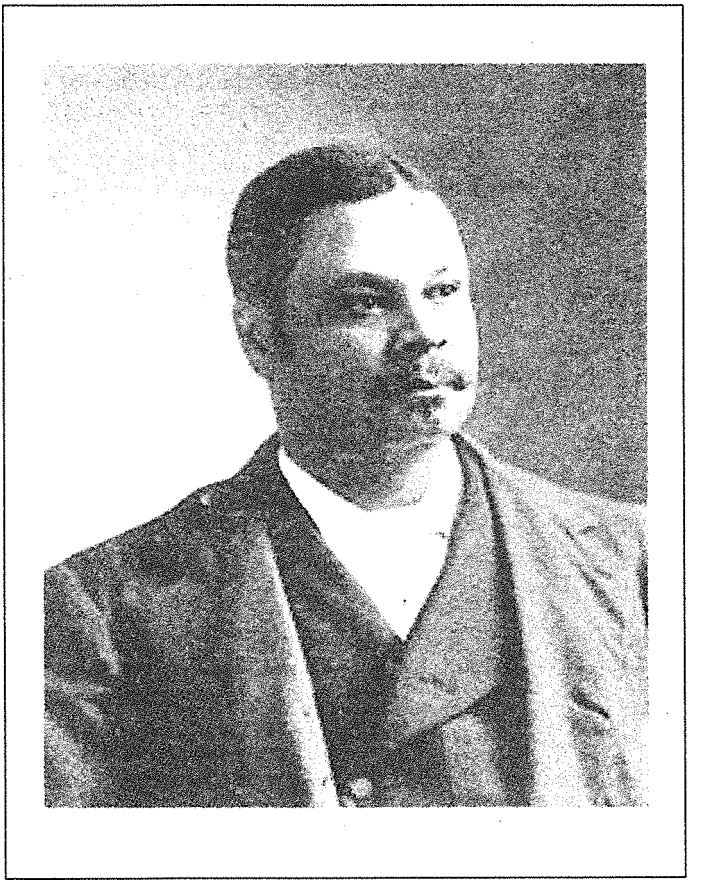
Knowing the importance of land, George invested in

real estate, and between the late 1870s and the early 1880s, he became one of the largest Negro landowners in New Bern. It says much about the man that there was never any hint of greed or shady dealings against him.

Throughout his life, George showed a tremendous ability to do many different things at one time and to do them well. While acting as the principal of two schools, and often teaching classes, he renewed his study of law under the tutelage of retired Judge William John Clarke. George was admitted to the North Carolina State Bar in 1879, the only black applicant to sit for the exam, which was required for all attorneys wishing to be licensed. Six weeks later he married 21-year-old Fannie B. Randolph. Fannie's family had been instrumental in founding Ebenezer Presbyterian Church in 1878, and it was during this time that George, a charter member and on the Board of Trustees, met and courted the young teacher.

The year 1880 brought two highs and a low point in George's life: His daughter Della was born in January, but the young father was shattered when his wife Fannie, just 22 years old, died in September of an unspecified illness. She is buried in New Bern's Greenwood Cemetery. Later that year, Eighth District voters sent him to the North Carolina House of Representatives where he served on the Education Committee. George was instrumental in securing passage of legislation authorizing the establishment of four normal schools (colleges) for the training of black teachers. In the summer of 1881, he became the first principal of the normal school located in New Bern and served in that capacity for two years. It was during his tenure as principal that he met the young lady who would become his second wife, Nancy J. Scott of Columbia, South Carolina. This marriage was short-lived, however, as Nancy died 10 months later in December 1882, and is also buried in New Bern's Greenwood Cemetery.

In addition to his interest in education, George was devoted to his church and believed in civic pride and service. He was active in as many as five social fraternities in



George Henry White, 1852-1918
U. S. Congressman 1897-1901
NYPL Digital Gallery photo.

New Bern and a fraternal order located in Raleigh. In 1880, in addition to his other responsibilities and interests, George became the co-editor of *The Good Samaritan*, a fraternal newspaper. Unfortunately, no copies of this newspaper seem to have survived. He also served six consecutive terms as North Carolina's Grand Master of the black Masons, only leaving this position after his first election to the United States Congress in 1896.

George White was an impressive figure of a man, more than six feet tall and weighing over 200 pounds. Referring to himself as a mulatto, his complexion was reddish-tan, the result of his Negro, American Indian, and white (probably Irish) heritage. He had a broad nose and chestnut brown eyes, and his hair was curly to semi-straight and always worn close-cropped. With his impressive stature, booming voice, sound education and a flair for the dramatic, he was a popular speaker and a natural for politics. He served in the North Carolina House of Representatives 1880-1882, but lost his bid for re-election in the fall of 1882. In November of 1884, he would take his seat in the North Carolina Senate, one of the two Negroes to serve in that body, representing the Eighth Senatorial District, which included Craven County.

In 1885, George sought his (Republican) party's nomination for district solicitor for the Second Judicial District, which included Bertie, Craven, Edgecombe, Halifax, Northampton, and Warren counties. He won and began his first term as the only black solicitor and prosecuting attorney in America. He had an utter disdain for lawbreakers regardless of their race, and the measure of the man was once more evident as he gained the admiration, although often grudgingly given, of both the white judges and white lawyers with whom he performed his official duties.

George's solicitor duties caused him to spend a great deal of time in Edgecombe County, where he met Cora Lena Cherry, a 22-year-old school teacher and daughter of a black politician, in Tarboro. They married on March 16,

1887. The couple's first daughter Mary Adelaide (nicknamed Mamie) was born in late 1887. In 1890, the young couple moved with Mamie and George's elder daughter Della into the newly built house on Johnson Street. Tragedy struck when Beatrice Odessa, born in 1891, lived for just five months. The infant was buried in Greenwood Cemetery. A son, George, Jr., was born in July 1893.

George's political aspirations now turned to the national scene, but his home base of Craven County was no longer included in the Second District. To establish residency in what had become known as "the Black Second," he moved his family to Tarboro, where Cora Lena had been born and raised, in February of 1894 in order to seek the Republican nomination for Congress. He lost the nomination to his brother-in-law Henry Cheatham. George was successful, however, in his next bid for public office, taking his seat in Congress on March 15, 1897. He was the nation's only black congressman, and only the fourth black man to represent North Carolina's Second District in the House of Representatives.

George was aware of his unique position and used his station to give voice to two heartfelt issues: employment and voting rights for black Americans. "It is rather hard to be accused of shiftlessness and idleness when the accuser closes the avenue of labor and industrial pursuits to us," he stated. By the late 1890s a concerted effort was under way to deprive the black population of the right to vote. The levy of poll taxes, literacy tests, and out-and-out intimidation were the weapons used. The literacy test was particularly unfair because the slave culture had not allowed education. "It is hardly fair to accuse us of ignorance when it was made a crime under the former order of things to learn enough about letters to even read the word of God," George reminded the Congress. If blacks were still "uppity" enough to want to vote, there was always the ultimate weapon--lynching.

Over 2500 incidences of Southern lynching were reported in the years leading up to 1900, 187 in 1899 alone.

To stem this tide of terror, George White introduced a bill in Congress making lynching a federal crime. "To cheapen Negro life is to cheapen all life. The first murder paves the way for the second until the crime ceases to be abhorrent" (People). The bill expired in the Judiciary Committee, but it marked the first step in the long struggle in Congress to enact federal anti-lynching legislation.

In North Carolina, white supremacy was gaining momentum. One of the most virulent believers was Josephus Daniels, owner and editor of the *News and Observer* newspaper in Raleigh. Daniels didn't particularly care if what he printed was the truth as long as it made the blacks look bad, and his favorite target was George White. Attacking the man was not enough for Daniels; he also printed undocumented aspersions against George's daughter Della.

By Election Day, November 8, 1898, feelings were running high all over North Carolina, but they came to a boil in Wilmington where the nation's only known coup d'etat occurred one day after the election. Over 450 white males gathered in downtown Wilmington and solemnly affixed their signatures to a document prepared by the "Secret Nine." This November 9th declaration led to the burning of the offices of the *Daily Record*, a black newspaper, the dissolution at gunpoint of a duly elected City Council, the shooting of innocent victims, and the exiling of scores of prominent citizens (1898 Report). It would become known as the Wilmington Race Riots of 1898. A little-known fact about these tragic events is George White's personal involvement in helping the *Daily Record's* editor Alexander Manly, the son of a white governor of North Carolina, and one of his slaves, and his family to escape.

The White family had maintained their home in Tarboro during George's first Congressional term but now moved to Washington, D. C. North Carolina no longer felt like home.

George had barely been re-elected in the November 1898 elections. Between the scurrilous and hate-filled

campaign and the Wilmington riots, he knew there was little chance of serving a third term and so focused on his anti-lynching bill. He was now the only man of his race in Congress--the only federal representative of 10 million blacks.

His January 29, 1901, speech, "Defense of the Negro Race--Charges Answered" ended with a

> brief recipe for the solution of the so-called American Negro problem.
>
> Obliterate race hatred, party prejudice, and help us to achieve nobler ends, greater results, and become more satisfactory citizens to our brother in white.

Recognizing that the Jim Crow laws were gaining a tighter hold on the country and particularly in the South, he continued,

> This, Mr. Chairman, is perhaps the Negroes' temporary farewell to the American Congress; but let me say, Phoenix-like he will rise up some day and come again. These parting words are in behalf of an outraged, heart-broken, bruised, and bleeding, but God-fearing people, faithful, industrious, loyal people--rising people, full of potential force.
>
> Mr. Chairman, in the trial of Lord Bacon, when the court disturbed the counsel for the defendant, Sir Walter Raleigh raised himself up to his full height and, addressing the court, said: "Sir, I am pleading for the life of a human being."
>
> The only apology that I have to make for the earnestness with which I have spoken is that I am pleading for the life, the liberty, the future happiness, and manhood suffrage for one eighth of the entire population of the United States.

His words were greeted with loud applause.

When the Fifty-sixth Congress adjourned on March 4, 1901, White was recorded in history as the last ex-slave, nineteenth-century Negro congressman. It would be 28 years before another black, Oscar DePriest of Chicago, served in Congress. It would not be until 1992, with the election of Eva Clayton, that Craven County would once again be represented in Congress by a person of the Negro race.

Ending with the North Carolina years might seem appropriate for this article, but it would not do justice to the man. George Henry White continued to serve his people, his church, and his community. The years 1901-1918 were perhaps his most influential years. After moving to Washington, he opened a law practice downtown and became licensed to practice before the United States Supreme Court, a rarity for a man of his race. He also continued with his real estate business.

In 1899, George bought the first piece of land in Cape May County, New Jersey, which would eventually become the town of Whitesboro. He and his partners bought an additional 17,000 acres later that year. A century and a half earlier that land had belonged to the largest slave holders in the county.

The acreage was divided equally into house lots and small farms. By the end of 1902, Whitesboro had 300 inhabitants. The town would eventually hold a school, two churches, a railway station, two railroad lines, a hotel, post office, and telephone service. Most of the development was handled through the George H. White Land and Improvement Company, and any profit realized was plowed back into the development itself. George sold the 50x150 foot deep lot the First Baptist Church stands on to the congregation for $1.00. He also gave land for the school and sold land for Grace Methodist Episcopal Church for a "reasonable rate." In 1906, approximately 95% of the inhabitants of Whitesboro owned their houses. In 1918, when George died, Whitesboro was a thriving town of ap-

proximately 900 black persons. By 1974, when the Cape May Planning Board began raising funds to help restore the schools, churches, and homes, more than 1300 people called the town home.

Cora Lena White's health had been undermined by the nasty politics leading up to the 1898 election, continued to deteriorate, and she lived out her last years as an invalid. She died at her Washington home on January 19, 1905. She had turned 40 a month earlier and had been married to George for slightly less than 18 years. At age 52, George was a widower for a third time.

In 1905, George left Washington and established a home in Philadelphia. Once again he opened a law practice, and, as of 1908, he was one of only 14 Negro lawyers in the city. He also had a real estate office. On September 26, 1907, the People's Savings Bank, designed to help black home buyers and entrepreneurs, was incorporated. It was the only black bank in Philadelphia between the years of 1907 and 1913. Within four years it had reached the remarkable milestone of having transacted its first million dollars in business. Failing health forced George to close his bank in April of 1918.

Committed to the improvement of his community and its peoples, George remained active in various organizations and institutions. He served as honorary trustee for Howard University; a board member of Berean Manual Training Institute, and as a trustee of North Carolina's Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University). He also dedicated time to the Frederick Douglass Hospital as a member of its board of directors, was a director of the Home for the Protection of Colored Women, and of the black "Who's Who in Philadelphia." He also was an early leader in the NAACP.

George always subscribed to the belief in Christian responsibility, which drew him to the Young Men's Christian Association, and the YMCA became one of his favorite charitable causes.

On November 11, 1915, George took as his fourth wife

Mrs. Ellen Avant Macdonald, presumably a widow. A resident of Greensboro, North Carolina, at the time, she also had ties to New Bern: She was the younger sister of the Reverend William George Avant, pastor of St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church on the corner of Johnson and Queen streets. Ellen was about 38 years old at her marriage, nearly a quarter century younger than her husband.

Tragedy struck George once again when his eldest daughter, Della, who had just turned 36, died of heart failure in Washington on February 4, 1916, after a brief bout with scarlet fever.

George's last public position came in July of 1917 when, at the age of 64, he was named as Assistant City Solicitor for Philadelphia. It was his first public position since leaving Congress in 1901 and the one in which he ended his long and distinguished career as a public servant.

Just ten days after his sixty-sixth birthday, George died in his sleep in the early morning hours of December 28, 1918. The farmer's son from Bladen County had risen from a manual laborer on his grandfather's farm to teach and inspire young blacks. He had been a prosecutor, realtor, banker, civic and religious leader. He had shone upon the national stage at a time when his people most needed a champion. And he had loved and lost. George Henry White had truly led a life well-lived.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: My husband Duncan and I consider ourselves very fortunate to live in the house that George White built for his family in 1890. But as sweet as the house is, we have always considered the story of the man who built it the true treasure. His picture graces our front hall and because he is such a part of our lives, I have taken the liberty of referring to him by his first name throughout this article. I don't think he would mind.

In preparing this report, I have referred to notes I made when we first started researching information about

George White after we purchased our home. My greatest source of information was Benjamin R. Justesen's book.

I am pleased to report that the life of George Henry White is beginning to emerge from the shadows. In addition to Justesen's book, a historical society has formed in Tarboro honoring his memory and his work. Named the Phoenix Historical Society after White's stirring words in his farewell speech, the Society has been instrumental in gathering signatures on a petition for a commemorative stamp in his honor. The stamp has not been approved to date, but the Post Office in Tarboro is now officially known as the George H. White Post Office Building. Tarboro also has established a "George Henry White Day" on January 29.

In light of all he accomplished, and how much he contributed to New Bern and Craven County during the years he lived here, it is sad that his story is not better known. To only have a highway historical marker and a plaque on a private residence seems small acknowledgement of a life so well-lived.

Judy Hardin Harkin

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HAVE A SEAT
at First Presbyterian Church

Nancy Chiles

Had you come to worship in the brand new sanctuary of New Bern's First Presbyterian Church at 418 New Street on a Sunday morning in 1822, an usher would perhaps have welcomed you at the front doors and led you, facing the congregation, to a designated seat. Today, the usher would ask you where you wanted to sit or find a seat for you – but not in 1822!

On December 29, 1821, the *Carolina Centinel* reported, "The new Presbyterian Church in this place will be dedicated, with divine permission, on Sunday, the sixth of January. The public are respectfully invited to attend" (Vass 124).

It is likely that the church was completed in the latter part of 1821. In its January 19, 1822, edition, the *Centinel* stated that the public was invited to worship and that

> No appropriation of the pews having been made, the whole will continue open for public use. The four largest next the door are intended to be hereafter reserved expressly for the accommodation of strangers and visitors from sister congregations and are designated for the purpose on each [pew] door.

The next week this notice appeared:

> The pews in the Presbyterian Church will be publicly offered for sale or rent on Monday, the 28th instant, at 4 o'clock P. M. on the premises. Notes with approved security, payable in installments at six, twelve, and

eighteen months, will be required in payment for the fee simple—and similar at twelve months for the rent.

By order of the Board,

S. M. Chester, Sec'y

The church is in possession of a sketch showing the pews and the names of the original purchasers (or renters). Apparently the pews in the center section were favored because the price for most of them was $350 for half a pew. Pews on the sides ranged from $300 to $200 depending on how near the front they were. Side pews at the back of the sanctuary were $150.

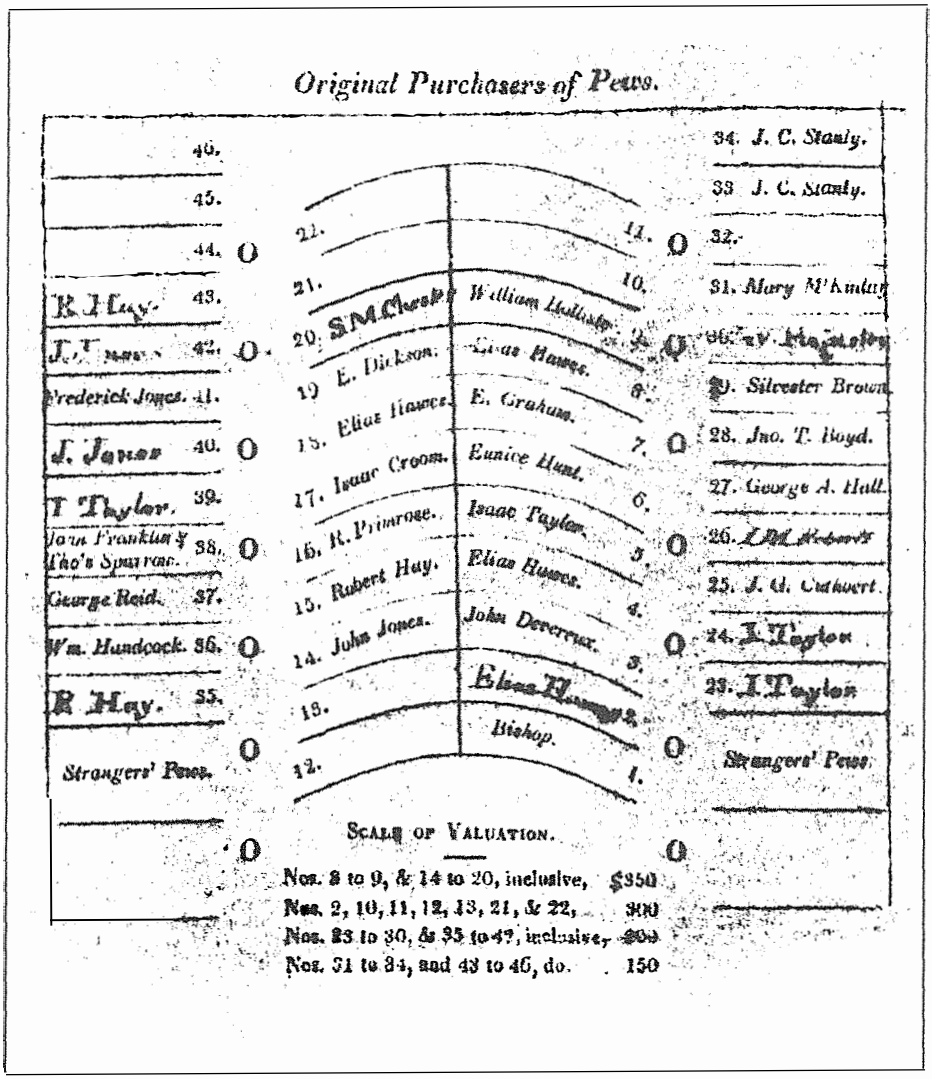
According to Dr. Vass, the owners were given printed deeds in which it was stated that each pew was "subject to a tax (by the mutual agreement of the Proprietors of the PEWS of the said Church, according to its valuation, for the support of the ministry." Further, the deed stated that the pews were sold to the purchaser, his heirs, and executors. Of the purchasers, two were women, Mary M'Kinlay and Eunice Hunt (who was one of the 13 original members). Some folks bought two pews--J. C. Stanly; and some pews were sold to two people--Thos. Sparrow and John Franklin. There is no record of when this ownership of pews ended.

The *Carolina Centinel* reported on June 12, 1819, that

> The Trustees of the Presbyterian congregation in this place have commenced the erection of a House of Worship to be 70 feet in length and 52 in breadth, and capable, by computation, of accommodating 800 persons.

If the church could, in fact, accommodate 800, many of them would be seated in the balcony. The 1819 pews are still there today and are in use at all services.

The Hollister Records (Smith 8) found in the 1970s show monies paid to a Mr. A. Harding for "carting,



Plan of pews in First Presbyterian Church of New Bern, showing original purchasers and scale of valuation. Church document.

planks." It is believed that he constructed the pews in his own workshop and brought them to the church. J. Murphy Smith, pastor of the church from 1951 to 1979, says in his *History* that

> The original pews were boxed—that is, they had doors at each end. They were probably built that way to hold some heat in the pew area. In the early days of the church, the parishioners probably brought hot bricks wrapped in cloth and placed them at their feet during the worship service because there was no heat in the church. (Smith 19-20)

During the modernizing of the sanctuary in 1895, the original pews were given to the new Pollocksville Presbyterian Church and replacement pews installed. In the early 1950s the dark 1895 pews were revarnished and, in hot weather, stuck worshippers to the pews or left stains on their clothes.

Dr. William H. Bell chaired the committee which dealt with this sticky problem. Some members of the congregation wanted to retrieve the original pews from the Pollocksville church and reinstall them. After much debate, new pews were purchased and are still in use. Some of the 1895 pews are stored in the bell tower. Ten years later the Pollocksville church built a new sanctuary and offered to return the original pews. The pews were retrieved and stored in Willie Rowe's barn north of Bridgeton. In the late 1990s it became necessary to move the pews to some other location. They remain in a rented storage facility.

In 1956 the Deacons decided to have a clean-up day and removed accumulated items from the basement of the sanctuary. Dr. Joseph Patterson, then Chairman of the Board of Deacons, records the account of that day:

> There was only one thing to do, and that was to clean it all out! . . . We were amazed at all the stuff we found. Included in this "stuff" were some old pew

doors. It was obvious that they would not fit our present pews, and that they had no practical value, and that they were taking up a lot of room, so we threw them out! . . . all of the debris was placed along side the street, quickly picked up by a trash truck. . . . That evening my wife and I were out at Muggins and Al Ward's house with our friends Mary [current Second Vice-President of The New Bern Historical Society] and George Bullock and Helen Ruth and Leon Scott. Muggins and Al are good members of our church, and the Bullocks and Scotts are exemplary Methodists. By that time I had begun to have nagging doubts concerning the wisdom of throwing away those pew doors, and when telephone calls of outrage and indignation at this act started coming in from respected and historically oriented older members of our congregation, it was perfectly obvious that a mistake had been made. . . . By then it was midnight and raining mightily. But the menfolk thought that the time for action had arrived, so we took off for the city dump. . . . The mud was ankle deep, and monstrous rats stalked us as if they were the proprietors of the establishment, as indeed they were. But after a while, with the aid of flashlights and car lights, we found those pew doors, loaded them into the trunks of our cars, and headed home, wet, muddy, bedraggled but triumphant! The next day the doors were washed and dried and restored to their home in the church basement, a move which also restored peace in the church.

Dr. Patterson is a poet of some repute, and the last stanza of his poem about this event reads

> And now the doors sleep on through time,
> Contented with their lot,
> Deep in the bowels of the church,
> Awaiting who knows what? (Smith 128-129.)

In 2002 it was decided to place six of the original pews in the sanctuary near the front to provide additional seating. These pews were retrieved from storage and placed perpendicular to the other pews. They are known as The Strangers' Pews. Installation was difficult because the pews had been built for a floor that slants forward, and it was impossible to replace the doors at the ends (Minutes).

Today if you come to worship at First Presbyterian Church, you would be welcomed by an usher at either the front doors or the back—added in 1895—and ushered to a seat of your choice or even to a Stranger's Pew.

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UNION POINT THROUGH THE AGES

Critton Joe Childers

A favorite destination for residents of the New Bern area is Union Point Park. It is fun to walk along the Promenade and look out upon the wide expanse of the Neuse River Bridge or watch the swing bridge stop traffic to allow a sailboat entry to the Trent River. Many children of all ages enjoy feeding the seagulls and ducks. On the Fourth of July, Union Point is a prime spot for watching the fireworks display. In December crowds gather to pick their favorites from the parade of boats decorated for the holidays. The gazebo serves as a shady spot for ceremonies and a backdrop for photographers.

Tourists also enjoy visiting the Point. If they stop at the entrance, the sign welcomes them to Union Point Complex. An arrow to the left refers to Minnette Duffy Park; to the right is Cedric Boyd Park and ahead is Talton Overlook. If you take the road to the right toward the Trent River, another sign indicates you are in Union Point Park. New Bernians are proud of their park and just as proud of past citizens who contributed in their own ways to the development of the park.

On the Promenade are informative signs about the birds, ducks, and fish of the area. One's attention is also drawn downward to read the names etched in the paving bricks, a result of the fundraising campaign called "Put Your Mark on the Park" to help renovate Union Point. Over $330,000 was raised by organizations, businesses, and individuals sponsoring bricks, pavers, and benches at $50 to $2500 each. The state contributed $251,000, and New Bern appropriated $392,000. It was dedicated in June 1998.

The gazebo was dedicated Saturday, September 11, 2004. It was opened during the July fourth celebrations. A plaque placed by the New Bern High School class of 1961 gives a glimpse into the park's past:

> New Bern Woman's Club Close to this Site. The original NBWC building (GFWC) was dedicated and retired without debt in April 1933. Club women steered the project utilizing the WPA to redeem what had become the city dumping grounds. In 1934 the *Woman's Home Companion* featured the project as "The House the Depression Built."
>
> During WWII, soldiers met and were entertained here. The community enjoyed many festive occasions as the house continued to serve as a meeting place for the NBWC. Hurricanes Connie and Hazel severely damaged the building which was demolished as part of the park's renovation.

At the north end of the Promenade is a marker placed by North Carolina Civil War Trails. It tells the story of the "Battle of New Bern--Smoke & Flames." On March 14, 1862, the Union Army attacked New Bern, drove the "Rebels" from the town, and occupied it throughout the rest of the war.

Standing at Talton Overlook, between the gazebo and the water's edge where the two rivers meet, it is difficult to imagine a great Civil War battle taking place at this tranquil and beautiful site. A dumping ground for the city is just as far-fetched. Union Point has undergone many makeovers from the time European settlers met the native Indians on this point of land referred to as "The Fork of the Neus" on an early map. The possibility of finding other gems buried by time is sufficient justification to delve into historical sources. Following are a few tidbits of Union Point history discovered in history books, newspapers, and maps at the local library and on the Internet.

In *The DeGraffenried Family Scrap Book*, 1191-1956, Seven Hundred and Sixty-five Years, written by Thomas P. DeGraffenried, is a photograph of a marker that says (p. 194):

UNION POINT

King Taylor, Chief of the Chattawka Indians, lived here with his tribe. The site was purchased by Baron de Graffenried, founder of New Bern.

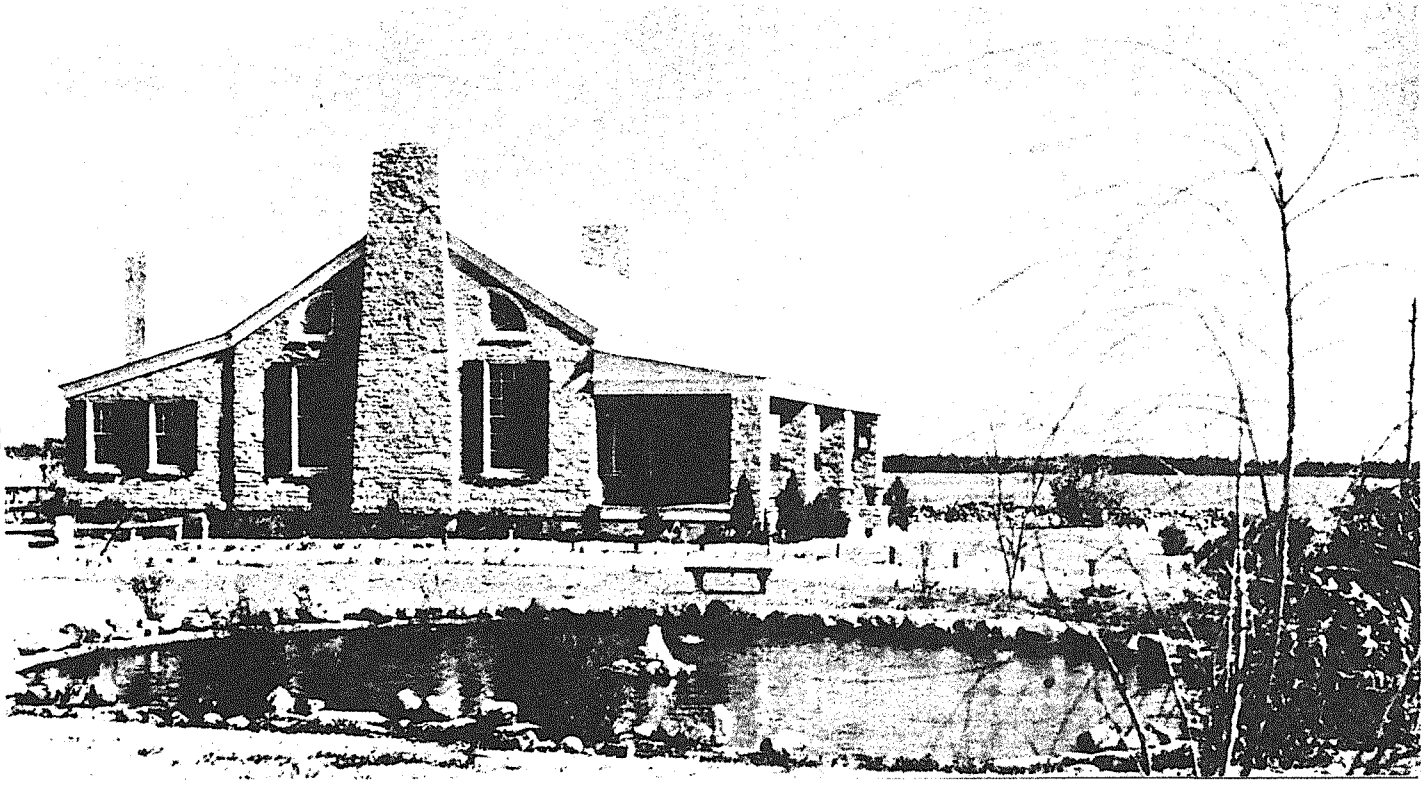
HE BUILT THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE HERE IN 1710.

New Bern Historical Society.

Before DeGraffenried arrived here with his company of settlers, English surveyor John Lawson had worked and lived in Carolina. He was among the first to settle in Bath, the oldest town in North Carolina; New Bern is second oldest. On March 8, 1705, the town of Bath was incorporated by an act of the General Assembly. Lawson built a house there and was one of the first commissioners. He also built a house on Lawson Creek a short distance from the "Neus" Indian village at the "fork of the Neus." It was a small village with only 15 fighting men. Lawson was also a naturalist and wrote *A New Voyage to Carolina*. He returned to England to publish it in 1709. While he was there, he met DeGraffenried and agreed to help him settle an English colony on the Neuse River.

The following year, New Bern was settled. Only about 20 families lived in the town with the other families scattered about the peninsula formed by the Neuse and Trent. According to DeGraffenried's own account of the founding of New Bern (p. 377):

Since in America they do not like to live crowded, in



New Bern Woman's Clubhouse and fishpond in newly landscaped park at Union Point about 1933. Photo from Green.

buildings on Union Point, and the site is referred to as "Municipal Dumping Ground." On the Trent River waterfront adjacent to the point are wharves for J. A. Meadows Grist Mill, Ellis Coal & Wood Yard, the U. S. Revenue Cutter, and the J. A. Meadows wood mill.

Union Point continued to be the "Municipal Dumping Ground" until Mrs. Ben E. Moore was elected president of the Woman's Club of New Bern, N. C., in the fall of 1931. An article entitled "The House the Depression Built" in the September 1934 issue of *Woman's Home Companion* tells the story. At the first meeting of her cabinet, Mrs. Moore decided to undertake a project to "redeem" Union Point, which had been "a festering sore on the face of New Bern." It had "degenerated into the city dumping grounds . . . an expanse of automobile bodies, bed springs, boilers, street sweepings, gas stoves. . . ."

> It was in the Great Depression and New Bern had its full share of idle men applying for relief . . . the mayor and board of aldermen authorized the Woman's Club to clean up Union Point and to beautify it as a municipal park, provided this could be done without any cost to the city except wages of the regular street force when it could be spared. In February, 1931, the first detail of street laborers was assigned to work on Union Point.

President Roosevelt announced that municipalities could borrow Public Works Administration funds by matching them with local appropriations. With this infusion of cash, the Woman's Club went into high gear. By spring the tract was clear and level and many new plants were in bloom. The club built its clubhouse on the property and occupied it in April 1933. For many years the pleasing Colonial Revival structure was used for club and community programs. In April 1998, after years of neglect by the city, the New Bern aldermen voted to tear the building down, because it was deemed a threat to the public. A

picture of the clubhouse appears on the Gazebo plaque.

The most interesting reference to Union Point I found is in a letter to the editor of *The Sun Journal*, printed during the renovation of Union Point, Sunday, September 29, 1996. The writers told of a time in the late 1920s when young male teenagers, living mostly in the Union Point area, would gather in Albert ("Crabby") Crabtree's machine shop located in the old grist mill yard at Union Point. The mill was no longer active and was about to fall down. Crabby was the caretaker of the abandoned buildings that belonged to the Meadows Company. He cleaned out a warehouse, built a pier, and added a low diving board, a covered cabana, a float and ladders. Inside the building he placed a pool table, ping pong table, dressing rooms, and a lounge with a Victrola and a card table. This facility became known to its members as the Union Point Club. Surviving members helped raise funds to build the new promenade at Union Point.

Union Point has undergone many makeovers during the past three centuries. From small Indian village, to small English village, to colonial battery signaling the arrival of new governors, to steam driven saw mills and grist mills, to Civil War cannon protected by cotton bales, to a city dump, to a landscaped municipal park including the Woman's Clubhouse later damaged by hurricanes, and finally to a beautiful waterfront promenade and gazebo. New Bernians can be proud of its "fork of the Neus."

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PROGRESS OR PRESERVATION?

Julie Hipps
(Preservation Legal Action Team)

Some people say that economic and social change is progress, but progress is all too frequently preceded by the bulldozer and the rampant disregard for our past and its landmarks. The result is that the tangible past, which is imbedded in buildings, cityscapes, artifacts, the written word, and oral tradition, is eroded, if not erased. Cavalier and indiscriminant disposal of the fruits of our past threaten to spoil the very personality of our locale and separate us from the actuality of our heritage, culture, and tradition. All that is left is a void, an empty place. In this barren landscape, we have no place to belong, we sacrifice our identification, we lose our distinctiveness and are left vulnerable, threatened by the onus of joining the indistinguishable. We risk becoming superficial icons of mass production.

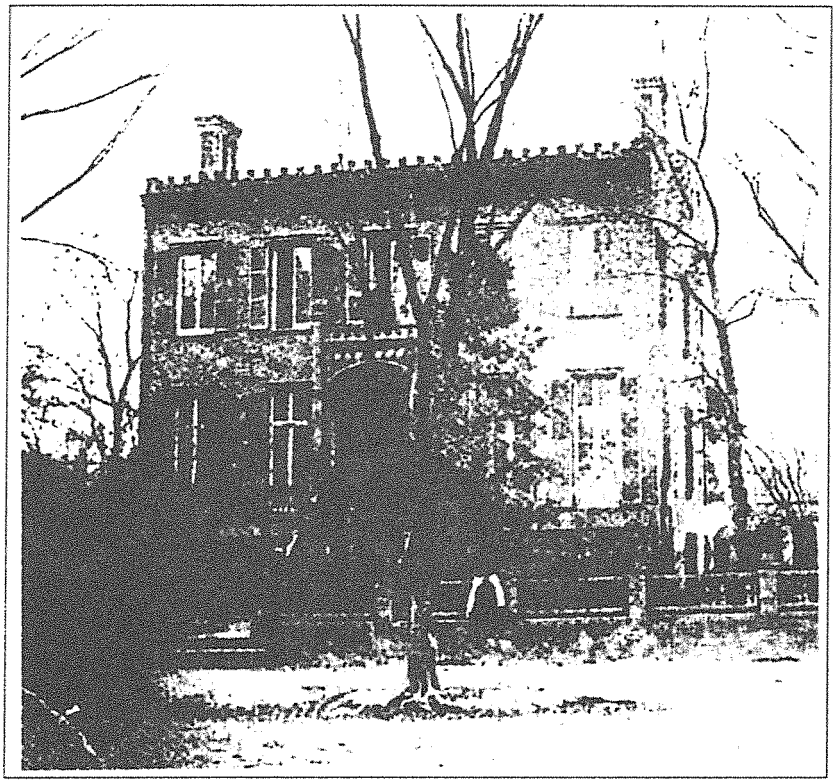
Memories are part and parcel of America's historic architecture. This was first realized in 1824 by Marquis de Lafayette, when he visited Independence Hall in Philadelphia, which at that time was targeted for demolition. The building itself reminded him of the Revolutionary War, and he resolved that the building and the sentiments attached to it should be saved and cared for. This resolution gave birth to America's preservation movement.

Interestingly, historic preservation, as a conscious effort, is unique to modern America. Since Lafayette's resolution, Americans have made a concerted push to safeguard the continuum between the past, present, and future; they now realize that a balance between communities from bygone days and contemporary construction must be

maintained. Historic preservation is typically American. Other cultures either count preservation as a way of life, or don't consider it at all. Americans are an invented people who seem to be continually redefining themselves. This aggressive introspection pushes Americans to look to the future, often without reference to the past. Europeans habitually consider their past as the foundation for their present and future. European culture is entrenched in its heritage. As each generation adds to European civilization, it builds upon the achievements of its ancestors, dovetailing the old and the new, adding to, but not wiping out, the past. Other cultures, Native Americans, perhaps, carry their history with them. When tradition is integrated into daily living, preservation is a nonentity.

Why is it that preservation is unique to contemporary America? All people have a past, and all rely on their pasts, to a certain degree, although some people are more cognizant of their heritage than others. Without a respect for our past, we are lost, drifting, with no sense of belonging or sense of self. But in order to consider the past, we first must have a definable heritage to consider. Then we must have time to reflect, and leisure time is a luxury for those who are struggling to meet their basic needs. Perhaps this is why, initially, as a new nation, our forefathers saw no need for preservation. It was only after 100 years that people had the wherewithal to consider their past and had an indigenous past to consider.

Preservation does not need to be about saving something that is centuries old. When African Americans look for their past, what do they see? Their forefathers, as slaves, were severed from their heritage. Black Americans are disenfranchised from America's past. Their history is nebulous, based on sometimes vague recollections, tradition, folklore, and conjecture. Concern for the recent history of black America has just recently come into the fore. Our generation of Americans is learning to connect past, present, and future. In so doing, they will discover that preservation must be applied to memories, creations, and



Hughes-Jones House was New Bern's finest residential example of the Gothic Revival style. Documentary photo from Sandbeck.

communities that are not 100 years old. Preservation must be all inclusive and extend from our founding fathers and mothers to all Americans who embellish the fabric of our culture and our country.

The musings of Marquis de Lafayette in 1824 have grown into a very real and inclusive preservation impetus. Preservation lends life to fading memories, sparks new and creative ideas. It promotes tourism and economic development, all the while battling some heated debate and controversy.

What does all this mean to New Bern? Before the passing of the Historic Preservation Act in 1966 and the founding of the New Bern Preservation Foundation in 1972, some significant dwellings were destroyed. For instance, one of our few, and likely the finest, examples of the Gothic style in a residence was demolished in the early 1960s. The Hughes-Jones House was especially significant because, in New Bern, the Gothic Revival style was typically reserved for churches like our First Baptist Church. The Hughes-Jones house, in fact, was likely the work of Hardy B. Lane, the craftsman responsible for First Baptist Church and the Moses Griffin Free School (another example of the Gothic Revival style, now destroyed). The Hughes-Jones House, located on the north side of the 500 block of Broad Street, was probably finished by 1853. The house featured picturesque tracery, pinnacles, crenellation, and a Tudor arch above the steps.

The Historic Preservation Act and our Preservation Foundation have significantly slowed the pace of demolition. The Preservation Foundation has effectively advocated preservation in our community and directly rescued nearly 60 buildings. Thanks to their crusade, countless numbers of local homeowners have been persuaded to preserve or restore rather than demolish. Thanks to the preservation movement, New Bern can boast over 500 intact historic buildings dating as far back as the 1700s.

The whole town is involved in preservation. Private property owners have invested millions into the care and

preservation of historic structures. The city has passed ordinances designed to protect our historic architecture and neighborhoods. In addition, the town has provided underground utilities in the downtown area and overseen the improvements along our waterfront.

Investment in preservation reaps manifold returns. By solidifying and maintaining the personality and character of our town, it grants residents confidence that New Bern will always be home. Preservation guards and guarantees that local people will always find in New Bern that peculiar sense of "place," the feeling of belonging, and the satisfaction of being in familiar and comforting surroundings. In addition, preservation enhances our quality of life, increases property tax revenue, creates jobs, ensures responsible growth, and fuels the tourism industry.

Preservation increases property value. A study conducted on the economic impact of preservation found that the tax valuations of 57 rehabilitated homes in our town increased by almost 800% between 1970 and 1987 (Barnett). By 2005, the rate had grown to over 2000%. Not only do our historic properties contribute to municipal finances, historic preservation is the ultimate recycling. Because restoration is privately funded, preservation brings underperforming tax assets to their optimum value. Another plus for preservation is that, unlike new developments, infrastructure is already in place. This saves the city from having to fund roads, sewers, electricity, and the like.

In addition to increasing tax value, preservation creates jobs. New construction is 50% labor and 50% materials, whereas rehabilitation is 60-75% labor (Rykema). When we restore, rather than destroy, we reap greater returns on our investment. Rather than installing a heating system from China, sheet rock from Mexico, and timber from Oregon, when we rehabilitate, we can use neighborhood carpenters, plumbers, painters, and electricians. This, in turn, will boost our economy, because local technicians and craftsmen will spend their paychecks in our

town. For every $100,000 spent on refurbishing, local sales increase by $235,000.

So preservation can increase tax value, foster our economy, and it will promote tourism. In 2002 the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) reported that 81% of American tourists traveled to visit historical/cultural areas. Furthermore, TIA found that people who travel to historical/cultural destinations spend more per trip ($623 vs. $457) and stay longer (5.7 nights vs. 5.1 nights). As a historical town, New Bern is competing in a lucrative market. Tourism is New Bern's leading industry. In 2005 this business alone generated $80,040,000 in revenue. Each year, tens of thousands of guests flock to New Bern to visit our historic sites and neighborhoods. Authenticity gives our town an edge in the competition for tourist dollars. TIA reports that most travelers (61%) want to "see the real thing," preferring to visit destinations with natural, historic, and cultural integrity (TIA). Demolishing historic structures, the very lifeblood of our major industry, is self-defeating. It undermines decades of tourism development.

Preservation brightens memories that have grown dull, stimulates the imagination, protects our sense of place, guarantees our heritage and tradition, and fuels our economy. Preservation will not impede "progress"; it enhances it.

NOTE. Demolition of historic structures continues to this day. In the past two years, applications to demolish four historic buildings in the Downtown Historic District have been approved. In order to preserve the historic character and fabric of the historic districts of New Bern, the Preservation Legal Action Team (PLAT) is pro-active in securing laws and policies that protect contributing historic structures from demolition. For additional information about PLAT, call 252-636-6280.

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CORRIGENDA

After the May 2006 issue of the *Journal* was printed, errors were discovered in Gordon Ruckart's splendid article "Between the Palaces: The Burned Out and the Rebuilt."

In the last paragraph on page 28, the first sentence should read:

Maude Moore Latham also worked hard to encourage residents to take the offers to move.

In the last paragraph on page 30, the first sentence should read:

Well before the grand opening, Mr. and Mrs. Kellenberger and the sisters Virginia and Elizabeth Horne went to England to study the decorative arts.

There was no relation between the Horne sisters and Mrs. Kellenberger.

On page 31 the last sentence in the first paragraph should give the date for the reopening of Tryon Palace as April 15, 1959.

The Editor and Staff of the *Journal* are embarrassed at the poor quality of printing of this article and hope future issues will be satisfactory.