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JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDATION, INC.

The *Journal of the New Bern Historical Society* is a publication of the New Bern Historical Society Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit organization whose mission is to celebrate and promote New Bern and its heritage through events and education.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: LIVING IN THE CANDY STORE FOR HISTORY

George Howard

Let me begin with my thanks to the New Bern Historical Society Journal Committee and the staff of the Historical Society for their help working through the process of selecting topics, soliciting authors, editing drafts and assembling what we hope is a most interesting Journal for 2025. This experience has again helped me more fully appreciate the experience of living in New Bern, where it is like "living in the candy store for history." This year's edition has eight articles, each focusing on a different and fascinating part of our shared past.

The lead-off article by Bernard George chronicles the remarkable achievements of George Henry White who moved to New Bern in the mid-1800's and quickly became a powerful community leader in education, religion and organizations. With this foundation of community activity, he moved on to state and national elected office, with a huge impact ensuring the rights for Black individuals both locally and nationally. He certainly left elective office with a bang, and you will be challenged by reading of his "Phoenix" farewell speech leaving Congress. We are thankful for his contributions and we are all richer because of them.

New Bern is currently flourishing as a city on the foundation of business successes over a century ago. As described by George Evans, one family that has made remarkable contributions to these successes is the Meadows family, a multi-generational industrial dynasty with an impact beginning prior to the start of the Civil War in the early 1800's and spanning until the Depression. Perhaps we should have a New Bern edition of a TV show like Dynasty, Succession or Dallas?

Susan Cook describes the equally powerful multifaceted contributions from women who in the late 1800's began to "step out" from the home to ever-increasing community involvement and leadership. Many of their contributions were from their founding of clubs with highly-focused missions, with a quote from an early leader that "A woman's club means work where a man's club means pleasure." The efforts of these women had a diverse impact that has been carried forward to today, and spans from the development of the local library to the support of women's suffrage.

When I moved to New Bern about 6 years ago, I kept hearing about the "Swiss Bear" organization. But perhaps like many people, I did not really understand who these people were and exactly what their mission included. Susan Moffat-Thomas completely resolves any lingering gaps in the information in her rich description of the forces leading to the creation of this organization, the mission they accepted, and the previous success and future directions of this organization that has had such a major impact on our community. Clearly, they have contributed mightily to making New Bern the kind of town attracting so many new residents, visitors, and businesses.

Dan Parsons has contributed a powerful article introducing us to part of the "hard history" of New Bern in his description of early lynchings of African Americans in the areas near New Bern. While he describes other lynchings, the article has a focus on the last of these in 1932, and provides a powerful poem lamenting the incident. Understanding that people were killed for truly trivial actions helps challenge us all to reflect on appropriate responses to all of today's actions.

Everyone talks about the weather, but no one can do anything about it. Well … Mark Sandvigen's description of the winter of 1917-1918 will make you eternally thankful for the mild winters of recent years. Perhaps the greatest understatement you could make is to say this was one very bad winter in New Bern.

I am proud that New Bern is thought of as being a very hospitable town. Claudia Houston describes the evolution of the (sometimes grand) hotels that welcomed visitors to the city between the 1790's to the 1960's. The large number and diversity of these hotels helps

us understand and appreciate the heritage of our welcoming community persona.

Although you always see them around, the nearly overwhelming number of historical signs was driven home to me during the period that I watched Margo Fesperman develop her article "History on a Stick." With the rich history of New Bern, you can hardly find a block without a historical sign! Like many people, I had not really considered who has the authority to create these signs, what is the process for their development and review, and what are the regulations governing this type of signage. Margo's article offers this background and shows a fun assortment of examples.

I close this note where I began by expressing my appreciation to the New Bern Historical Society Journal Committee and the staff of the Historical Society in the partnership to develop an edition that we all hope enriches your understanding of the history of our town. Isn't it wonderful to live in a candy store?

CELEBRATING GEORGE HENRY WHITE DAY: A TRIBUTE TO A REMARKABLE STATESMAN

Bernard George

Each year on January 29, communities in North Carolina commemorate the extraordinary legacy of Congressman George Henry White (1852–1918). An African American attorney, educator, and politician, White's remarkable journey from humble beginnings of slavery to becoming the nation's sole Black congressman at the dawn of the twentieth century stands as a testament to his exceptional intelligence, drive, and unwavering determination. His professional life, political career, and enduring legacy were profoundly shaped by the City of New Bern, North Carolina, a hub of Black education, enterprise, and civic engagement in the post–Civil War South. White's education and meteoric rise to prominence in New Bern paved the way for his lifelong struggle for civil rights in Congress. His iconic "Phoenix" farewell epitomized his unwavering spirit and commitment to progress. Today, his legacy is formally celebrated annually on George Henry White Day, ensuring that his contributions to our nation's advancement are never forgotten.

Early Life and Education

White was born on December 18, 1852, in Rosindale, Bladen County, North Carolina. His father, Wiley Franklin White, was a free person of mixed African and Scotch-Irish ancestry, while his mother was likely an enslaved woman. A teenager during the final years of slavery and the Civil War, White benefited from new educational opportunities that emerged during Reconstruction. He attended a local subscription school where he was mentored by David P. Allen, a Black teacher who later founded the Whitin Normal School in Lumberton.

White pursued his studies there for several years, even learning Latin, while boarding with Allen's family. Demonstrating a strong academic

aptitude, in 1874 he went on to attend Howard University in Washington, D.C., an institution founded after the Civil War to educate African Americans. White completed a teacher's certification at Howard, graduating in 1877. Perhaps the highlight of his college experience was the opportunity to work for five months at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and meet visitors from around the world. In addition, young George White gained valuable experience and social connections while living and working professionally in Philadelphia's thriving Black community.

Flourishing Life in New Bern

Armed with a college education, White relocated to New Bern in 1877. This decision would shape the trajectory of his life and career. New Bern was unlike most Southern communities in the post–Civil War era. As a former Union occupied city, it had North Carolina's largest populations of free Blacks before emancipation. Thus, the city emerged from Reconstruction as a thriving center of African American education, politics, and enterprise. The city's institutions including churches, fraternal orders, schools, and mutual-aid societies provided a network of stability and opportunity that would shape White's career. His initial position as a public school principal placed him at the heart of New Bern's African American leadership class.

Concurrently, he began studying law under the valuable mentorship of local attorney, William J. Clarke, a former superior court judge and confederate officer. In 1879 after rigorous examination by members of the North Carolina Supreme Court, White was admitted to the North Carolina Bar.

Soon afterwards, he married Fannie B. Randolph, a young school teacher from a well respected New Bern family. Fannie died in September 1880, shortly after the birth of their daughter, Della Mae White. Both Fannie and their infant daughter are buried in Greenwood Cemetery in New Bern. He later married Nancy J. Scott in 1882, who died shortly thereafter. In 1887, White wed Cora Lena Cherry of Tarboro, daughter of prominent Black political leader Henry C. Cherry. With Cora, he raised three children: Mary Adelyne (Mamie), Beatrice Odessa (who died young), and George Henry White, Jr.

In addition to his professional and family life, White became a pillar of New Bern's religious and civic life. He was a founding elder of Ebenezer United Presbyterian Church and held leadership roles in Black fraternal organizations, including serving as grand master of King Solomon Lodge No. 1 in New Bern and of the Colored Masons of North Carolina. These roles gave him visibility and influence, expanding his network among Black professionals, educators, and community organizers. White's success in New Bern was anchored in his deep engagement with the city's Black middle class, who supported his ambitions and shared his vision of racial uplift. His advocacy for public education, economic development, and civil rights found fertile ground in New Bern, and the city's vibrant African American community gave him both the platform and the confidence to step into the political arena.

Political Emergence

White's entry into politics began in New Bern in 1880, when he won election to the North Carolina House of Representatives. The young legislator quickly made his mark by advocating for African American education and was instrumental in passing a law to establish four state-funded normal schools for Black teacher training. Fittingly, in 1881 he was appointed principal of the newly created normal school in New Bern. White briefly stepped back from elected office to focus on his educational work, but he remained active in Republican Party circles.

By 1884, White was ready to re-enter politics and successfully campaigned for a seat representing Craven County in the North Carolina Senate. When the General Assembly convened in 1885, White was one of only two Black state senators in North Carolina, serving alongside Senator R.S. Taylor of Edgecombe County. White used his time in the state senate to continue championing Black education and civil rights, building a reputation as a persistent advocate for his community. He was appointed as the solicitor (prosecuting attorney) for North Carolina's second judicial district in 1886. While serving as solicitor, he continued to gain valuable political experience and visibility.

Fusion Politics

In 1894, a coalition of Republicans and the Populist Party won control of the North Carolina state legislature and with it, the ability to elect two US Senators. Also, they were successful in electing several US Representatives.

The fusion coalition made impressive gains in the 1896 election when their legislative majority expanded. Republican Daniel Lindsay Russell won the gubernatorial race in 1897, the first Republican governor of the state since the end of Reconstruction in 1877. The election also resulted in more than 1,000 elected or appointed Black officials, including the election in 1897 of White to Congress, as a member of the House of Representatives.

Congressional Career and the Fight for Civil Rights

In 1896, the landmark court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson held that "separate but equal" facilities were constitutional. That same year White won election to the U.S. House of Representatives from the 2nd Congressional District (encompassing the predominantly Black counties of eastern North Carolina), defeating Democratic incumbent Frederick A. Woodard of Wilson. White took his seat in Congress in March 1897, becoming the only African American member of Congress at that time. At the 1898 election, the Democrats ran on white supremacy and disfranchisement in a bitter race-baiting campaign led by Furnifold McLendel Simmons and Josephus Daniels, editor

and publisher of *The Raleigh News & Observer*. The republican/populist coalition disintegrated, and the Democrats won the North Carolina 1898 election and the following 1900 election. However, Congressman White was re-elected in 1898 in a three-way race. In a period of increasing disenfranchisement of blacks in the South, he was the last of five African Americans who were elected and served in Congress during the Jim Crow era of the later nineteenth century.

A year marked by violent white supremacist backlash, 1898, culminated in North Carolina with the Wilmington Race Riot and coup d'état. During his four years in Congress (1897–1901), White used his platform to vigorously defend the civil rights and dignity of African Americans by reminding other lawmakers of injustices being committed against Black citizens in the South. Congressman White and two dozen other representatives from the National Afro-American Council, met with President McKinley and unsuccessfully pressed him to speak out against lynching. Subsequently, Congressman White introduced a landmark anti-lynching bill, the first ever proposed in Congress to make lynching a federal crime. Needless to say, the bill was opposed by Southern white Democrats and never made it out of committee.

In 1900, following the enactment of laws further suppressing Black voting rights in his home state, White made the painful decision to not seek a third term in Congress. He told the *Chicago Tribune*, "I cannot live in North Carolina and be a man and be treated as a man." Indeed, White recognized that remaining in North Carolina would be futile and even dangerous for a Black politician amid the triumphant white supremacy movement of the Jim Crow regime. On March 4, 1901, at the moment that White's term formally ended, white legislators in Raleigh celebrated. North Carolina Democrat A. D. Watts announced: "George H. White, the insolent Negro... has retired from office forever. And from this hour on no Negro will again disgrace the Old North State in the council of chambers of the nation. For these mercies, thank God." Congressman White's departure from Congress would symbolize the beginning of a long absence of African American political representation in the South, silencing Black voices in government for generations.

The Phoenix Farewell

On January 29, 1901, as his term in Congress ended, White delivered a powerful farewell address to the House of Representatives. Aware that he might be the last Black lawmaker in Congress for the foreseeable future, White spoke "on behalf of an outraged, heart-broken, bruised and bleeding" people being thrust out of political life. In this now-famous speech he proclaimed what he called the "Negro's temporary farewell to the American Congress," but confidently predicted that "Phoenix-like he will rise up some day and come again." His words proved both poignant and prophetic; with that solemn final address White left Capitol Hill, closing a remarkable chapter of Black political representation in the wake of the Civil War. It would indeed be decades before another African American served in Congress from any former Confederate state.

Post-Congressional Years and Continued Advocacy

After leaving office, he moved first to Washington, D.C., where he opened a law practice in 1901. Recognizing the need for Black economic empowerment, White moved his family to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1906, where he founded a commercial bank aimed at African American customers. He later became a co-founder of Whitesboro, New Jersey. Working alongside figures like educator Booker T. Washington and poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, White helped develop Whitesboro as a self-sufficient Black town, part of the early twentieth-century movement to create safe havens from Southern racism. White remained involved in civil rights organizations and Republican politics. He served as an officer in the National Afro-American Council (a nationwide civil rights coalition founded in 1898), using that platform to continue advocating for Black equality.

White attempted a political comeback in his later years. In 1912 he sought, but did not win, the Republican nomination for a US congressional seat in Pennsylvania's 1st District. However, he remained influential in Republican circles, and in 1916 became the first African American in Pennsylvania selected as an at-large alternate delegate to the Republican National Convention. The following

year, in 1917, he was appointed assistant city solicitor for Philadelphia.

White died on December 28, 1918, at the age of 66, in Philadelphia. At that time, the United States was still in the throes of the Jim Crow era and White's trailblazing career was not widely commemorated. Nevertheless, the ideals he stood for, and the prophecy of his Phoenix farewell speech lived on. White had foreseen that African Americans would one day reclaim their voice in the halls of Congress, a vision that sustained Black hope even in the darkest years of disenfranchisement. In time, White's prediction proved true: African American leadership in Congress did rise again, confirming his faith in the eventual rebirth of justice.

Legacy and Commemoration

White's departure from Congress in 1901 marked the end of an era. Not until 1972, 71 years later, was an African American (Barbara Jordan of Texas) elected to Congress from the South. Eva Clayton of North Carolina was elected to Congress in 1992, ending a gap of 91 years since White's service. This long hiatus in representation tragically affirmed White's point that his farewell was only "temporary" imposed by unjust laws rather than by Black citizens' lack of ability or will. The eventual return of Black political representation, beginning in the late twentieth century after the civil rights movement dismantled Jim Crow barriers, stands as a testament to the resilience of African Americans in the struggle for equality championed by White. In this sense, White's legacy lives on in Black leaders who have finally taken their places in Congress and elsewhere, vindicating his hope that the Phoenix would rise again.

In recent years, there has been a growing effort to rediscover and honor the life of George H. White, transforming him from a forgotten figure into a celebrated pioneer of civil rights. An historical marker commemorating White's life was erected by the N.C. Division of Archives and History in 1976 at the intersection of Broad and Metcalf Streets in New Bern, and his former home at 519 Johnson Street (built circa 1790) in New Bern has been designated as an historical landmark. In 2002, the town of Tarboro, North Carolina

where White lived during his congressional tenure passed a resolution declaring January 29 (the anniversary of White's 1901 farewell address) as "George Henry White Day." Edgecombe County followed in 2003 with a similar resolution. In 2010, a North Carolina highway historical marker was erected in downtown Tarboro to mark White's former home and highlight his achievements. A documentary film, George Henry White: American Phoenix (2012), was produced to educate wider audiences about White's story. Scholars have shown renewed interest in White as well, exemplified by the work of historian Benjamin R. Justesen, who wrote a comprehensive biography entitled George Henry White: An Even Chance in the Race of Life (2001) and published an edited collection of White's writings. In 2014, the George Henry White Pioneer Award was established to honor individuals upholding White's spirit of leadership. And in a fitting postscript to his life, White's resting place in Philadelphia, once unmarked, received a proper gravestone in 2015, finally engraving his name and story in stone.

Through these acts of commemoration, White's legacy has been brought back into the public consciousness. No longer forgotten, he is now honored as a trailblazing African American statesman who fought for civil rights long before the modern Civil Rights Movement. White's life exemplifies the struggle for justice during the low-water mark of race relations in America, and his eloquent defiance in the face of rising racism continues to inspire. Each year on George White Day, historians, community leaders, and citizens gather to celebrate not only the man himself but also the values he stood for: equality, education, justice, and hope for a better future. In scholarly retrospection and public ceremonies alike, White is honored as a symbol of perseverance, a man who kept the flame of freedom alive during a dark era, and whose Phoenix continues to rise in the ongoing pursuit of civil rights.

Available at the time of writing at:

https://www.georgehenrywhite.com/.

PBS North Carolina has produced a similar documentary file, available at the time of writing at:

https://www.pbs.org/video/george-h-white – searching-for-freedom-ukfdy8/

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About the Authors: Bernard and Brenda Carter George are Eastern NC historians who retired after more than 24 years of city planning and 26 years as staff attorney with the NC Legislature, respectively. Bernard, a native New Bernian, earned a Political Science degree from North Carolina Central University and is a lifelong member of Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church, in addition to serving on several boards and commissions. Brenda, a Raleigh native, is a graduate of Shaw University, and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law. She serves on the Archives and History

Committee of Centenary United Methodist Church and is a member of the New Bern Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, an organization of college educated women committed to leadership development and public service. The couple has four adult children and five grandchildren.

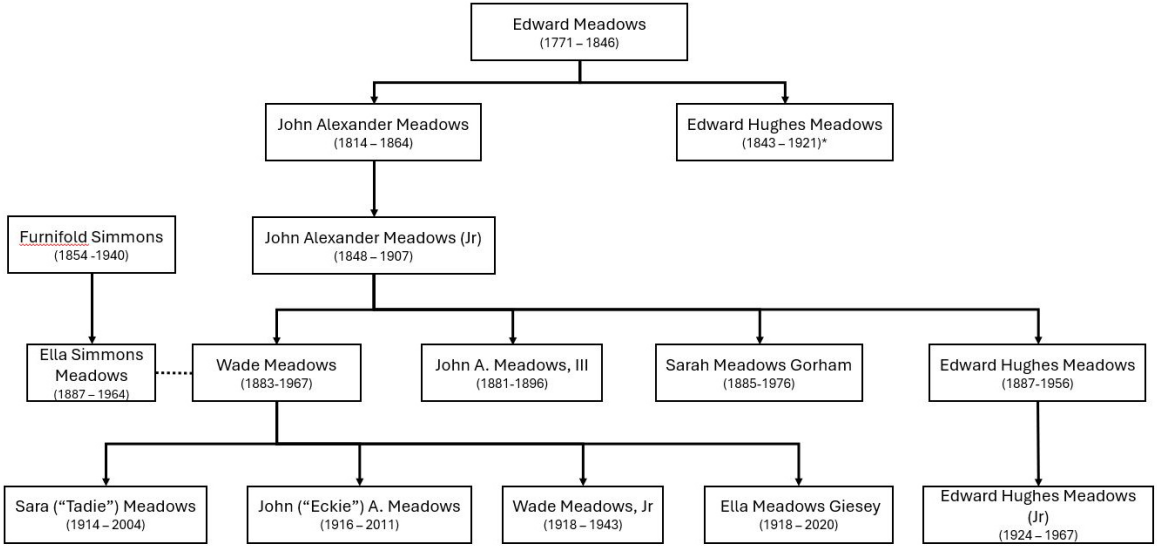
INDUSTRIAL SUPERSTARS
FIVE GENERATIONS OF THE MEADOWS FAMILY

George Evans

Union Point Park, at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers, is a quiet oasis in downtown New Bern. But in the late nineteenth century, it was the epicenter of a very different New Bern, filled with local industries employing hundreds, and connected by water with the East Coast and beyond. In 1900, New Bern's population was only 9090; however, it was the seventh largest town in North Carolina, and the second largest east of Raleigh. Three of the most successful businesses were owned by several generations of the Meadows family: E.H. & J.A. Meadows Company, J. Meadows Steam Marine Railway and Shipyard, and the Meadows gristmill.

The story begins with Edward Meadows, who lived in New Bern from 1771 to 1846 and married twice. He and his first wife Mary had a son named John Alexander Meadows. Edward and his second wife Mary Bell had a son Edward Hughes Meadows, born in 1843 just two years before his father's death at age 75. Interestingly, Edward's two sons were born thirty years apart; leading to an uncle and nephew who were but five years apart and would eventually become business partners. John Jr. and his uncle Edward were sometimes mistaken as brothers because of their close ages.

It is unclear how they got started, but by 1889, Edward and his nephew John Jr. had begun a fertilizer manufacturing company. In 1890, they and their wives incorporated the E.H. & J.A. Meadows Company, which soon became the leading fertilizer producer in eastern North Carolina, with a plant at Union Point. The incorporation papers said the company would manufacture fertilizer and become a "factor" (financier) for produce and cotton farmers.



* To simplify, this is a partial family tree. For example, the descendants of the first Edward Hughes Meadows here have not been included.

John Jr.'s family lived in a large Victorian house on South Front Street, purchased from turpentine distiller Amos Wade in 1879 (very recently renovated as Magnolia Manor, an event and wedding venue). Nearby on the Trent River, John operated the gristmill and shipyard. Amos Wade had once operated a shipyard and may have helped the two get started in business.

Meadows fertilizer

The fertilizer business thrived. As discussed in a 2016 Historical Society Journal article by John Fuller Leys, New Bern was a center of the "guano industry." Guano, or bird droppings, is rich in nitrogen, phosphorus and other valuable components, and in the nineteenth century was often the prime component of fertilizer. Guano was usually brought from islands near Peru, and later from the Caribbean. While other New Bern companies also made fertilizer from guano, the Meadows Company was the top producer. It imported vast amounts of guano and mixed it with fish and other substances to manufacture a fertilizer marketed as Meadows Gold.

Market conditions for fertilizer were ideal because North Carolina agriculture increased rapidly after the Civil War. Cotton production grew fivefold from 1869 to 1909, and tobacco production increased likewise from 1879 to 1909. Newspaper ads touted separate Meadows products for cotton and different types of tobacco, and other crops like cabbage and potatoes. The ads encouraged farmers to "feed your land and it will feed you." They proclaimed that "genuine German kainit" was mixed in their products, referring to a type of mineral fertilizer from Germany.

The company was a very large operation. For example, in 1901, the Meadows warehouse received a shipment of 750 tons of phosphate by barge, reported to be the largest cargo of this type in New Bern. In 1905, the company obtained legislative approval to increase its capital stock to $100,000 (approximately $3.5 million today).

Company officers decided in 1911 to build an enormous new plant in Graysville, on the south side of the Neuse River, near what is now the north end of Old Cherry Point Road. The estimated cost was

Early 20th Century view of Meadows Guano Plant.

From "City of New Bern: Pen and Sunlight Sketches"; date unknown. New Bern Historical Society Photographic Collection.

$150,000 (about $5 million today). The location was chosen to allow access to the Norfolk Southern Railway, which was not possible at Union Point. Completed in 1912, the building was three stories tall, 300 feet long and 150 feet wide. It was connected to a pier, 300 feet long and 38 feet high, extending into the Neuse River.

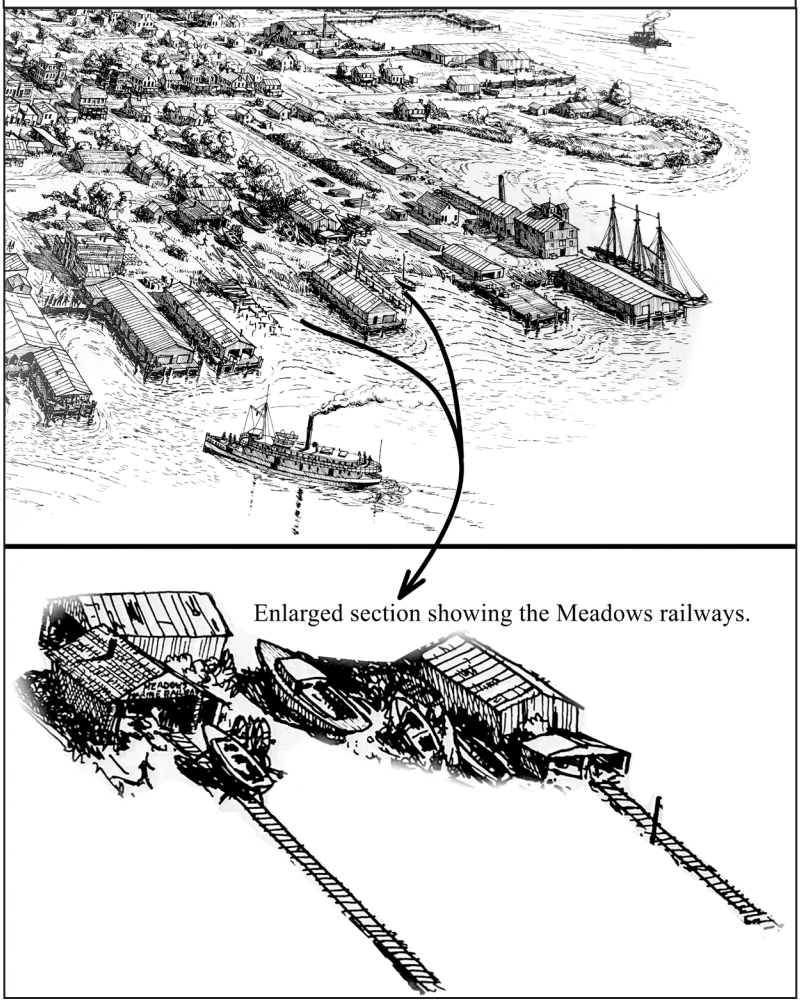
Every aspect of the facility was mechanized! An electrical system installed by General Electric was powered by an oil burning generator. Barges filled with guano were unloaded to the pier with large scoopers, and the contents were placed into rail cars which held up to two tons. Trolley lines powered these cars along the pier to the third floor of the factory, where other electric trolleys moved the materials as needed before mixing into fertilizer. The lower floors were used to store fish scraps and guano. Once operational in 1912, it was able to produce forty million pounds of fertilizer a year, and had about 100 employees. Its products were sold throughout eastern North Carolina, and it was understood to be the largest fertilizer producer in the region.

Meadows Marine Railway and Shipyard

A recent print by artist Robert Mesrop portrays the New Bern waterfront as it existed in approximately 1906, based on Sandborn Fire Insurance maps. It shows businesses along the Trent River, and ships very different from the large yachts and recreational boats we see today. Commercial traffic connected New Bern's economy to places far and wide. The John Meadows family owned the shipyard. Near what is now the Riverfront Convention Center, there were two

railroad tracks extending into the Trent River, upon which ships could be loaded. One was for smaller boats, and the other would accommodate ships up to 180 feet in length. There was also a woodshop and machine shop.

Section of Robert Mesrop's view of New Bern waterfront in 1906



Enlarged section showing the Meadows railways.

"Marine news" articles in New Bern newspapers periodically reported on ships being built, modified or repaired at the shipyard, and gave a fascinating picture of activity on the city's waterfront. The shipyard employed 20 to 40 well-paid skilled workers, and some of the work was quite complex. The shipyard regularly repaired all sorts of vessels including tugboats, yachts, barges, schooners and smaller sail boats, dredges, even a naval training vessel and a revenue cutter. For example, in 1893, the steamer John Floyd was rebuilt to lengthen the middle by 20 feet, greatly increasing its capacity.

Following the death of the superintendent in 1909, an experienced manager from Norfolk was hired, with plans to expand the yard's capacity. Newspaper stories told of his oversight of the rebuilding of a steamer, requiring twenty-five workers. The shipyard had a contract to maintain dredges and barges used by the Inland Waterway Commission. In 1923, "the Arrow," reportedly the fastest boat in the world, was repaired at Meadows Marine. It was 130 feet long and had two 2500 hp engines, with the maximum speed of fifty-four knots. Ship owners sometimes expressed surprise at the skill level available for repairs, and some ships were taken to New Bern from other locations for repairs because of lower costs for quality work. The two tracks can be seen in the Mesrop drawing, immediately below the John Meadows home on South Front Street.

Gristmill

The John Meadows Jr. family owned a large gristmill, that shows up on an 1885 Sandborn Fire Insurance map next to the shipyard. It produced "Meadows meal," cornmeal for cooking, and various feeds for horses, hogs and cattle. Frequent newspaper ads boasted of its quality. The company also advertised that it sold alfalfa, hay and tobacco seeds.

Other business interests

The Meadows companies engaged in other commercial activities. They financed "marine mortgages" with boats as collateral, upon which they sometimes had to foreclose. They were involved extensively in real estate transactions and apparently financed purchases as shown by occasional foreclosure notices for property in Craven

and Jones counties. The John Meadows Jr. company purchased real estate in James City in 1895, subdividing the property and naming the neighborhood Meadowsville.

Beyond business commitments …

Edward Hughes Meadows and his nephew John were quite visible in the civic life of New Bern. Their family activities were often described in the city's newspapers. Edward was vice president and a director of Citizens Bank. He was on the board of the New Bern Academy as well as a "trustee" of the city schools, advocating for increasing their capacity. Also, he served as chair of a local "camp" of the United Sons of the Confederacy.

John Jr. served on the boards of the North State Fire Insurance Company, a New Bern bank, a local cotton mill and the Chamber of Commerce. He strongly supported Centenary Methodist Church, especially during the building campaign in the early 1900s and as a tribute to him an envelope from him was placed in the new sanctuary cornerstone. Sadly, while on a trip to Baltimore in 1907, he died of a stroke. At the time, he was serving on the New Bern Board of Aldermen. The newspaper account of his death described him as being "in every way a good man." His widow Jane became the owner of his businesses, with management led by her sons Wade and Edward Hughes (named for John's uncle). Jane was the organist at Centenary for many years and as an important donor herself she contributed funds for the new organ.

Edward Hughes Meadows who died in 1921 was survived by daughters but no sons. Management of the fertilizer business went to his nephews Wade and Edward. Wade became the primary family business leader. His extensive activities provide a picture of New Bern civic life in the early 1900s. Wade was on the board of directors of the Neuse Banking and Trust Company. He served on a committee of the Chamber of Commerce to organize local truck crop growers, to improve the grading and packing of produce. (Vegetable crops were then an important source of local farm income.) Other civic activism ranged from supporting an effort to build a tobacco warehouse, comparable to those in other eastern North Carolina towns, to working to combat tuberculosis and treat tubercular patients.

In 1917, the shipyard began construction of a 400 ton, 130 foot seagoing tugboat, with 1100 hp engines. Wade traveled to Philadelphia to meet with a naval architect about building a large seagoing barge for the same buyer, which would have required enlarging the boat yard. The fate of the barge contract is unknown. In a 1993 interview, Wade's son John Alexander Meadows lll (nicknamed "Eckie") recalled that his father traveled to New York to study chemical formulas for fertilizer, and that he also designed boats, including a large yacht built for lumber merchant Vernon Blades. He said that the shipyard built two 100 foot fishing vessels. In a 1992 interview, his daughter Sara (nicknamed "Tadie") Meadows remembered her father building her a 25-foot sharpie when she was nine, which she sailed when living on South Front.

The final chapter

Sadly the depression brought an end to the Meadows family enterprises. They had been leaders in New Bern's economy for almost fifty years. Wade could not save the businesses and their property was placed into a receivership. In her interview, Sara described the sudden change in their lives. She had to withdraw from Duke University and go to work. The family moved from their home on South Front Street to a home off of Trent Road, known as Green Acres, in what is now the Bellefern section of Trent Woods. Wade Meadow's wife Ella was a daughter of Furnifold Simmons, a North Carolina senator for almost thirty years, who owned real estate in present-day Trent Woods. Through that relationship, Wade and his family ultimately became owners of real estate there. They sold lots for new homes. Acreage was sold to the New Bern Country Club in the early 1950s, at a very modest price, and it became the second nine holes of the golf course. They gave some of the land to the new town of Trent Woods, which is now the site of Meadows Family Park.

When the shipyard closed, employee Herbert W. Barbour put his work experience to good use, and founded Barbour Boatworks in 1933 at the intersection of South Front and Metcalf Streets. It was a highly successful business for almost 50 years, employing more than 1200 workers during World War II.

During the hard years of the depression, what once was the heart of New Bern's commerce, Union Point, became a garbage dump. It was rescued by the New Bern Women's Club in approximately 1932. A clubhouse was built on what was once the site of the Meadows Company's offices and original fertilizer plant. It is now a park, with the Riverfront Convention Center next door, illustrative of New Bern's evolution from a once thriving manufacturing city to an appealing tourist location.

The huge fertilizer plant built in 1912 became Dixie Chemical Company, but that building has disappeared as well. The only trace left is a small abandoned brick building, likely an outbuilding at the plant, and the remains of a spur track across Old Cherry Point Road. Five generations of this family are now buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery.

About the Author: George Evans is a retired attorney who moved to New Bern after practicing in Charlotte and Winston-Salem. He was a history major at the University of the South (Sewanee) and attended law school at the University of Virginia. He and his wife live in a house built in 1906 for William Smith, who was cashier and a bookkeeper for the Meadows companies.

WOMEN STEPPING OUT

Susan McEnally Jackson Cook

North Carolina's progressive era (roughly 1881-1921) was an energizing time for New Bern and for New Bern women. The developing railroad system and a changing economic structure helped spur the growth of towns across the state. Locally, the flourishing timber industry attracted entrepreneurs and fostered the rise of a middle class including managers, small business owners, and traditional professionals, resulting in families with incomes that afforded a certain level of comfort and some disposable income. Reliance on traditional economic sectors also likely allowed some established families to maintain or rebuild their wealth. This economic growth led to the development of Riverside, the first planned suburban community in New Bern that was platted in 1894 and expanded in 1912. Local wealth was also evident in the construction of large new homes in the older downtown area. Growth continued through this period with the population increasing from 6,443 in 1880 to 12,198 by 1920.

With more women living in close proximity and the advent of the telephone, women became more interconnected; many had more leisure time. Some of them were soon stepping out to express their opinions as individuals and forming societies and interest groups for fun, education, and promotion of civic causes important to them. An 1881 article in the *New Bern Daily Journal*, reprinted from the *Chicago Herald*, described it this way: "All over our land women are finding in their social and intellectual clubs a vitality, stimulus, strength and inspiration which their grandmothers hungered for and never found."

Some of these new clubs and efforts raised alarm among the men. Women had long been involved in charity work through their church groups and through the Female Benevolent Society established decades earlier in 1812. The United Daughters of the American

Seventeen Women Posing in a Garden, New Bern, 1890's

Courtesy of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History

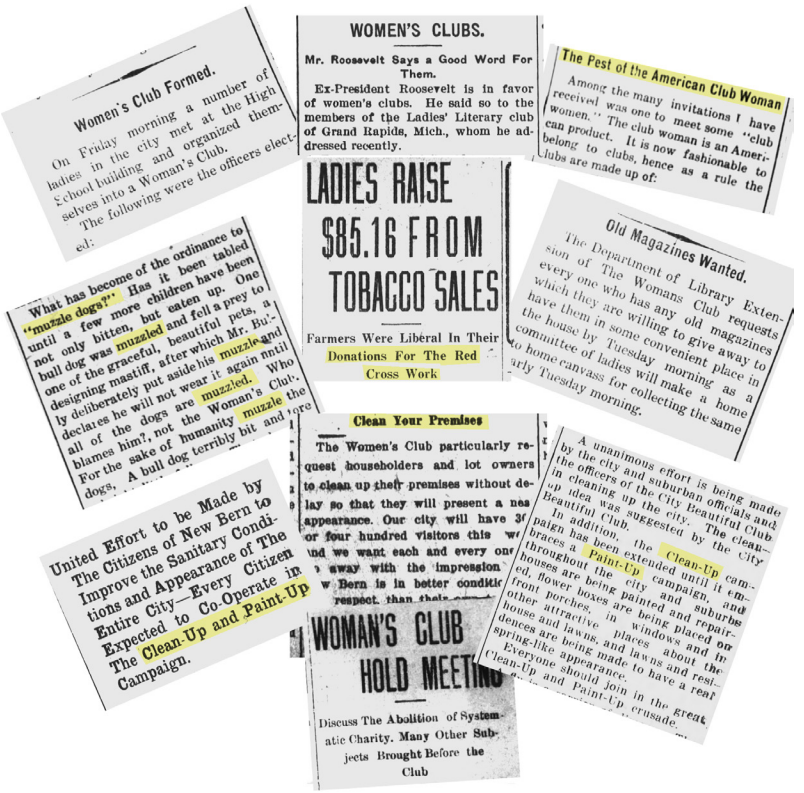
Revolution (DAR) and The Ladies Memorial Society that later became the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), apparently were deemed appropriate also with their emphasis on family heritage and the valor of the men. Yet according to the local press, these new women's clubs, did make many men uneasy. In 1897, a future women's club leader addressed this issue firmly when she compared women's and men's clubs. "A woman's club means work where a man's club means pleasure." This led to negative responses that women's clubs were a poor idea and even to a 1906 article by a "Chinese gentleman" entitled the *Pest of the American Club Woman*. As late as 1912, the New Bern Women's Club president was reacting to "sarcastic references to the dangers of neglect of home and family by club women." She observed that the same objections could be raised against church sponsored projects. Her bottom line: "In our youth we were told to be good. Now we urge women to be good for something."

Clubs and Activism

As early as 1890, the newly founded Whatsoever Club (a local chapter of The King's Daughters) focused on the establishment of a circulating library. Carolyn Durand Mayhew and Lucy A. Rishton followed the motto of the national association, "Look up and not down. Look forward and not back. Look out and not in, lend a hand." From a single book shelf in Ms. Mayhew's home, the library moved to the old New Bern Yacht Club building at the foot of Broad Street along the Neuse River. After a brief hiatus from 1899-1902, it opened as a subscription library on Middle Street. This library is recognized as the beginning of the library we have today.

A major force for local women was the formation in 1905 of the New Bern Woman's Club with twelve women in attendance and Mrs. Julia Duffy as the first president. The club quickly affiliated with the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs. The purpose was stated as "mutual improvement" and "the development of a spirit of unity and strong citizenship." This club, which would provide an avenue for both personal growth and community activism, is still thriving today. Organized into interest groups, the first "departments" were: Library Extension in support of the public library; the Public School Department; and City Improvement which some historians have referred to as "municipal" housekeeping."

The Woman's Club quickly adopted the library as a major project and by 1906 the library was even called the Library Extension of the Woman's Club. That same year the group sponsored a children's play version of A Midsummer's Night Dream as a library fundraiser. The audience was asked to be gentle with any criticism. Along with the library, public education was a major early and continuing concern. By 1910, a child study department had appeared. Other civic contributions ranged from mutual meetings between mothers and teachers, to providing scholarships for girls of limited means to attend the State Normal School in Greensboro. The club also participated at the state level by establishing a loan fund for the lofty goal of helping a high ranking English Education Graduate to complete her education in Oxford, England. As early as 1916, the club was conducting a free voluntary night school supported by the



Clippings from Local Newpapers about Women's Activities

superintendent of the city graded schools who asked that the group work out a regular educational plan, charge tuition, and employ regular teachers.

A second major and continuing focus was on town cleanup and beautification occasionally expressed in fervent letters to the local paper. An unidentified woman was writing to the *Daily Journal* complaining about the condition of the streets. "They need to get on with it when they can find all this money for the railroads, why not our streets that are harming our commerce as well as daily life? We continue to dump a few bricks here and there and a load of shells

somewhere. What's wrong with the men – we need to get this done. The women of the town will do their part but what about the men." Another female citizen was dramatically complaining about lack of enforcement of the muzzle ordinance. "What has become of the muzzle ordinance? Muzzle, muzzle, muzzle. For the sake of humanity muzzle the dogs."

The City Beautiful Club frequently promoted various Clean-up, Paint-up campaigns, often collaborating with city officials. Residents were urged to paint their houses, place flower boxes on porches, collect trash and garbage which could be loaded on city wagons and hauled away. All citizens are expected to cooperate. Focal points for beautification were: a vacant lot at the corner of Broad and Hancock Streets; donating drinking fountains for both man and beast; and upgrading the passenger area of Union Train Station by providing better walkways, plantings and flower containers.

Any major civic event such as a local fair or state Shriners' convention always brought forward a call for residents to do "their part" in ensuring New Bern was looking its best. And often parades were part of the welcoming events. Even after the beginning of WW I, the Women's Club, along with Red Cross women, was calling for the loan of vehicles to decorate for a welcoming parade in celebration of Chautauqua. Through the years this strong interest in civic beautification continued, culminating in the grand project of cleaning up the garbage dump at Union Point. That project, started in 1931, led to the beautiful park of today.

Self-education and intellectual development

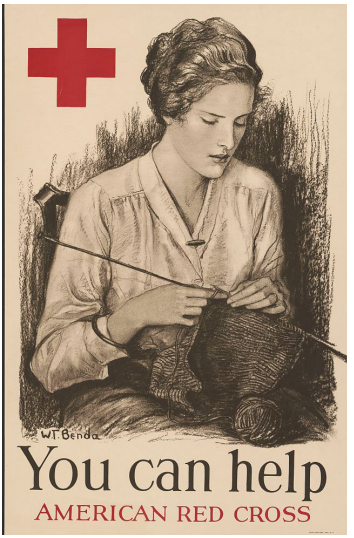
Along with municipal housekeeping, self-education and intellectual development were always dominant interests as illustrated by these few examples from the Canterbury and Shakespeare Clubs. Brief conversations likely yielded to topics such as a discussion of King Lear, poems by Percy Shelley and Robert Browning, and Charles Dickens and his novel Great Expectations. Art and architecture, especially Italian, were reviewed by club members also. The meetings always ended with refreshments such as refreshing fruit cocktails with nuts and Veronique cakes, iced dishes, and sunshine wafers tied

with bright ribbons. Looking back, these reports are both touching and meaningful. Today, women continue to participate in similar book clubs. We owe a debt to these earlier women as they explored broader horizons and delighted in their mutual sharing of ideas and thoughts.

WW I (entered April 6, 1917 – ended November 1918)

"Women of New Bern, wake up!" The United States entered WW I in April 1917. This newspaper plea, signed "A Woman", was addressed "not to the Women's Club, not to the Red Cross, or the church women but all New Bern women." The Women's Club joined with other groups to make the first nationally assigned Draft Registration Day of June fifth a momentous time with impressive results including, a parade through town and refreshments for all. New Bern, as the county seat, had automatically become the home for a local chapter of the Red Cross, and on that momentous day, all women were asked to do the wonderful thing of signing up for weekly scheduled hours of war work. With an initial disappointing response, in December under the newspaper headline "Shame on Such as This," citizens were asked again to come to Red Cross headquarters at the Elks building to sign up. New Bern never did reach the Red Cross goal of 1,000 members that was expected of them, but 800-850 citizens did finally join.

These Red Cross women along with male members worked vigorously. The women's work included a copious amount of knitting, sewing and rolling bandages. The social services department of the Women's Club quickly suspended all meetings to allow members more time for this service. Two of the club's three literary departments suspended programs and began to use their meeting times for knitting. A nighttime section was added in order that working women could participate. The group kept an open workroom in the library for volunteers to drop in and help knit scarves, socks, hand warmers, head warmers, and sewing quilts. Several Red Cross women visited the local tobacco warehouses and sought donations of tobacco that could be auctioned to raise money for supplies. They were delighted with the cordial treatment accorded them and raised



$85.16 at their first tobacco auction and were motivated to continue this activity. At Christmastime young women sold bunches of holly in order to assemble Christmas goody boxes for the troops.

Changes for Women

Wartime service and club work gave women opportunities to find their voice and speak out on civic issues, somewhat legitimizing a public role for women outside the home. This, however, did not follow through to the ballot box. Even before the war, in 1914 a New Bern group of the North Carolina Equal Suffrage Association had been formed. The NC Federation of Women's Clubs endorsed women's suffrage in 1918. Yet, when Congress passed the national women's suffrage bill in 1919, ratification was not even brought to a vote in the state legislature. Nevertheless, the range of possibilities for women's lives continued to expand. Club experience opened new doors, more options were available, and many varieties of women were visible in the new southern culture which had once only allowed domestic talents to blossom. As expressed by historians Emily Herring Wilson and Margaret Supplee Smith in *North Carolina Women: Making History*, "Women were ready to assume power for the good of the people." And they have been stepping out ever since!

About the Author: Susan McEnally Jackson Cook is a proud graduate of New Bern public schools and attended the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, completed with a Ph.D. in Library and Information Science. She happily returned to live in New Bern after a career in teaching and public librarianship.

NEW LIFE FOR A WEARY CITY: THE EVOLUTION OF SWISS BEAR INC.

Susan Moffat-Thomas

In the 1970s, downtown New Bern and the city were at a critical juncture. The tax base continued to shrink as residents and businesses moved to the suburbs. The crisis point came when the downtown anchor stores, JC Penney and Belk department stores moved to the recently developed New Bern Mall. The downtown area was still essentially intact even though there were gaps in the streetscape where buildings had burned or were demolished and not replaced. In an attempt to compete with the new mall, the facades of buildings had been slipcovered with aluminum, tile and other materials. The symptoms were pervasive and disheartening… empty storefronts, peeling paint, eyesore structures, littered streets and parking areas.

Middle Street in the 1970s

The Neuse and Trent waterfronts were also in a state of decline including an abandoned fuel tank farm and the deteriorating Union Point Park on the Neuse River was waning as a desirable destination. Under a federal program, twenty-two acres of the deteriorated commercial Trent River waterfront were demolished in the early 1970s with no strategy for rebuilding.

Trent River waterfront in the 1970s

Despite the declining tax base and on-going exodus to the suburbs, in 1976, Doug Davis, chamber past president noted positive opportunities including the construction of the Highway 70 bypass; the prospect of developing two waterfronts; a twenty-two acre urban renewal site on the Trent River that was open for investment; the close proximity to the airport; and the major tourist attraction, Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens. With the development of clear objectives, strong leadership, and a practical action plan, those assets could serve as a foundation for revitalizing downtown and its waterfront. In June of 1977, with the support of elected city and county officials and community leaders, Davis organized the Downtown Revitalization Committee (DRC), a committee that gained

broad-based community support and ultimately led to the creation of the nonprofit, Swiss Bear Inc.

Members of the committee, chaired by Doug Davis were Frank Hargett, county commissioner; Bailey Dixon, president, Merchants Association; W.J. Edwards, executive director Chamber of Commerce and on the Redevelopment Commission.

Ex-officio members: Harry Vatz, Renewal Authority; Charles Taylor, Housing Authority; Nicholas Scholz, Chamber of Commerce, Renewal Authority; John G. Dunn, Chairman Redevelopment Commission; Sam P. Branch; William Bryan; Walter Jones, Jr.

City Officials; Mayor Charles Kimbrell, Board of Aldermen: Ben Hurst, Pete Chagaris, Tom Davis, Ed Armstrong, Ella Bengal and City Manager J.C. Outlaw.

In November 1976, the DRC contracted with Stephens Associates, Raleigh, NC, to prepare development plans and a revitalization program for downtown. The consultants spent a month collecting and interpreting market information followed by an intensive two-week workshop with the DRC members who met every other morning to review their report with the following final recommendations.

The New Bern Central Business District Revitalization Plan recognized the key role the historic assets and waterfront could play in the economic redevelopment of the downtown area and the expansion of the tourism industry for the city. By bringing a new market into the downtown area to support remaining businesses and to strengthen the declining tax base, the combination of resources would justify the efforts necessary to attract a market composed primarily of recreation, tourism, and retirement-oriented housing to the area—and return it to the thriving community it once was. The plan also recommended creating a locally funded nonprofit to spearhead and coordinate the effort.

In addition to bringing a new market of recreation, tourism and retirees, there was the creation and adoption of a general physical development plan consisting of the following elements and based on the historic pattern:

- An open space pedestrian spine along Middle Street connecting the historic residential area with the urban renewal site.
- A pedestrian park system along the Trent and Neuse River shorelines.
- A water edge pedestrian park system along the Trent and Neuse River shorelines.
- Straight streets extending through the urban renewal area to the water.
- Buildings abutting the street right of way, extending the entire property width and two or three stories.
- Restoration of the original building facades.
- New parking, trash collection and a delivery area constructed in the middle of each block.
- Pedestrian walkways established to allow convenient access from mid-block parking to the streets.
- Develop and enforce sign ordinance.

This work was to be completed in two phases. Phase one of redevelopment would include the construction of: mid-block areas for parking; trash and service areas; walkways from the mid-block parking to streets; the renovation of building facades; the expansion of sidewalks with plantings; a pedestrian crossing on Middle Street and encouraging housing in vacant upper floors.

Redevelopment projects for the future, i.e. phase two, would include: narrowing Broad Street and adding plantings; moving utilities underground; developing a mall on Middle Street (was never developed) and open space acquisition and construction of a riverwalk pathway system.

At their July 12, 1977, meeting, Davis told interested citizens, merchants and landowners,

> "this committee was given the mandate to see that a Central Business District Revitalization Plan, to include an architectural study, if necessary, was accomplished. With

> help from the city officials, board of aldermen, county commissioners and county officials, merchants and landowners, this step has been completed, and we are now ready to turn our responsibilities over to another entity that will work with local government and proceed to implementing the plan, if this is the wish of those present."

Moving forward was enthusiastically endorsed by all attendees and a week later the plan was approved and adopted by the New Bern Board of Aldermen on July 19, 1977.

At a public meeting held in the Tryon Palace auditorium on April 5, 1979, the DRC officially transferred its responsibilities to the newly created organization that was yet to be named and formally structured. Its mission: "*to stimulate and coordinate the revitalization of the downtown and redevelopment of its waterfront in partnership with local government*" was adopted.

In May, Doug Davis, chairman; John Green, vice chairman; Virginia McSorley, secretary; B.J. Wright, treasurer were elected by acclamation to lead the organization. Following the election, David Henderson made a motion the organization needed to file for incorporation. When the chairman stated a name for the group was necessary for incorporation, John Green suggested the name Swiss Bear, and it was adopted thus, honoring the founding of the city by a native of Bern, Switzerland.

In late August, Swiss Bear Inc. received the incorporation charter as a 501(c) (3) nonprofit providing the right prescribed by law to solicit and receive contributions and gifts, exclusively for charitable or social welfare in furtherance of the purposes of the corporation and federal tax-exempt status. To ensure the organization's sustainability, the city and county committed to support Swiss Bear by providing annual appropriations for two-thirds of the budget, and the organization would raise the remaining third.

Charter members of the first board were George Slade, Harry Vats, Martha Smith, Gordon Parrott, Jim Ross, Bill Edwards, Dell Ipock, Frank Hargett, Nick Scholz, J.C. Outlaw, David Henderson, Johnny

West, John Hill, L.J. Eubanks, Jr., Roland Grubbs, George Scott and Ralph Mann.

Bylaws were adopted and the composition of the board of directors consisted of not less than 18 or more than 25. Nine were included by virtue of their office: New Bern Preservation Foundation, New Bern Historical Society, New Bern City Government, New Bern City Administration, Craven County Government, Craven County Administration, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Merchants Association and New Bern Planning Board. Nine additional members who demonstrated an interest in the objectives and work of the corporation were elected from the community-at-large. Charter members of the first board were George Slade, Harry Vatz, Martha Smith, Gordon Parrott, Jim Ross, Bill Edwards, Dell Ipock, Frank Hargett, Nick Scholz, J.C. Outlaw, David Henderson, Johnny West, John Hill, L.J. Eubanks, Jr., Roland Grubbs, George Scott and Ralph Mann.

Martha Smith designed the first official logo and a budget of $45,000 was adopted. Swiss Bear committed to raising $15,000 from the community with commitments from the City and County of $15,000 each in matching funds. The board would meet on the third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 a.m. to achieve the established goals and priorities.

As 1979 drew to a close, a memo to all downtown businesses from John Phillips, owner of Bryant McLeod Men's Store, summed up an event-filled year led by the Downtown Revitalization Committee and Swiss Bear Inc. with a review of their accomplishments.

- Raised $8,000 to fund the Central Business District Revitalization Plan.
- Purchased the Coplon-Smith vacant lot to develop a mini-park (Bear Plaza) to provide access to Middle Street from the inner block parking area.
- Supported the city's establishment of a special tax district to fund major downtown public improvements.
- Acquired grant funds and commissioned renderings of down-

town storefronts by the East Carolina Regional Development Institute to encourage façade rehabilitation.

- Worked with the City Planning Board, New Bern Preservation Foundation, New Bern Historical Society in support of the city establishing an historic preservation commission.
- Lobbied with other businesses for retention of the courthouse downtown.
- Assisted the New Bern Civic Theatre in the acquisition of the Tryon Theatre on Pollock Street.
- Assisted the newly formed Craven Arts Council & Gallery with the acquisition of the old First Citizens Bank and establishment of the Bank of the Arts.

Over the past forty years, the city-county partnership with Swiss Bear produced an award-winning downtown revitalization effort recognized throughout the state and nation. The revitalization effort has been the catalyst for the economic vitality of the city and the preservation of a rich legacy that links the present to the past. By emphasizing downtown's historic assets, creating new waterfront development, and expanding tourism opportunities, the broad-based renewal that began in 1979 has had a positive economic impact on New Bern and Craven County.

About the author: Susan Moffat-Thomas provided executive public management and leadership of downtown initiatives in New Bern, NC, holding the position of Executive Director of Swiss Bear Downtown Corporation (1985–2014). She has been recognized by receiving the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the most prestigious award presented by the Governor of North Carolina to individuals who have a proven record of extraordinary service to the State. She

is an active member in the community, serving on numerous local and state organizations including the Tryon Palace Foundation Board, and NC Aquarium Society. She is a lifetime member of the New Bern Historical Society.

A POEM FOR PERCY BERRY

Dan Parsons

Percy Berry, who drowned in 1932 in Craven County's last documented lynching, was not a lone victim of racist violence in eastern North Carolina.

Plaque at Chaooque Creek in Havelock, NC

To honor and recognize Percy Berry, a resident of Havelock who was killed in an act of racial terror on April 14, 1932

On April 14, 1932, Percy Berry waded into Hancock Creek on the southern bank of the Neuse River as it turns eastward toward the Pamlico Sound in southern Craven County.

Berry, an unmarried laborer, and friend Benny Fisher were perhaps looking to cast their lines after a Thursday of work in New Bern's buzzing lumber mills, bustling magnets for Black labor at the time. The spot they chose would later become Croatan National Forest, but ninety-three years ago, five local white men took exception to Berry and Fisher's angling. Impersonating police officers, the white men demanded a fee to use the creek after dark. Fisher paid the fee and escaped with his life.

Unable or unwilling to fork over the twenty dollars the men demanded, Berry was set upon by the mob and beaten, then fired upon as he fled into the dark water of Hancock Creek. According to contemporary news accounts, Berry drowned and also suffered lacerations to his face and head. His death, perhaps New Bern's last murder of an African American by a white mob (a "lynching") was officially recorded as an accident. He was twenty-one years old.

Berry's short life echoed through the cypress knees poking above Hancock Creek on April 14, 2024, the ninety-second anniversary of his death. The creek cuts a blue-brown ribbon through brushy marshland rising softly to high pine forest at what is now Cahooque Creek Landing, just east of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. About fifty people, some of them Berry's distant relatives, and some from "Forward Together" (a coalition of nonprofits, community members and residents), turned out to mark his passing. Another ceremony was held at the same spot in April 2025 on the ninety-third anniversary of the lynching, where a plaque from the Equal Justice Initiative marking the tragic event was unveiled.

Bernard George, a community activist and local historian in New Bern, said remembering the horrors visited upon Black North Carolinians and others in the Jim Crow South is critical for understanding their place in history as heroes rather than victims.

"Our purpose is to acknowledge the African American experience of racial injustice, to empower the African American community

members who have directly borne this trauma and invite the entire community to use truth to give voice to those experiences and expose their legacies as true American heroes," George said at the remembrance ceremony for Berry in April 2024.

Race relations have changed dramatically since the antebellum period, when in 1829 the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that a slave master could beat, rape, mutilate and kill slaves with no legal repercussions.

"In other words, no human rights were extended to the African Slaves," George said. "During Reconstruction, North Carolina towns like Wilmington and New Bern had thriving Black working and middle classes with successful business districts. The Jim Crow era, following the Supreme Court's establishment of Separate but Equal, ushered in a new era of legitimized racial violence. May we never forget all those who suffered and died." he continued.

For the 100 years preceding the Civil War, enslaved people were the critical fuel for New Bern and Craven County's economy.

Black people could claim to have built many of New Bern's civic buildings, churches and other structures.

Free and enslaved Blacks also built and worked the wharves, mills and ships that brought prosperity to the city through trade in lumber.

There were Black ministers, teachers, doctors and dentists, funeral directors and shopkeepers, though most still worked as domestic servants and laborers.

The lumber industry was booming in Craven County, but centered in New Bern, and the saw blades blanketed the Black community with sawdust and modest wealth that allowed new houses and stores in the segregated communities surrounding white neighborhoods.

Berry likely hailed from one such neighborhood and had successful people of color to look up to in his immediate vicinity, if not in New Bern then in Wilmington, 100 miles south.

Because Berry's death was ruled an accident, the events surrounding his murder were not widely reported at the time, according to The University of North Carolina's *A Red Record* that documents lynchings in the American South. The database counts 173 lynchings in North Carolina.

The story of Berry's death has been brought forward by the work of Nick Courmon, a relative of Berry. Growing up in Greensboro, Courmon knew his mother's people had roots further east in Craven County that stretched back to before the 1930s. But it wasn't until a visit to The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, (informally known as the National Lynching Memorial) that he followed those roots to Berry and his untimely death in 1932.

As he wrote in a poem titled "*I hope that you don't have to see yourself in your history the way I've had to see myself in mine*," Courmon would learn he has "trauma, drama and lynching all up in my bloodline."

Scanning the 805 coffin-shaped hanging steel tablets – one for each US county in which a documented lynching occurred – and the more than 4,000 names etched into them, Courmon found Craven County and Berry's name.

"To have thousands of your loved ones hung from trees or set ablaze because some white folks say, falsely, that they were guilty of a crime," the poem continues. "Five white men killed a member of my family over the sum of 200 dimes."

"Black people who were murdered by domestic terrorists who felt no shame; Terrorists who dismembered Black bodies for sport since killing us has always been this country's favorite game. The past informs our understanding of the present and we have to reckon with it to heal, so it's time to be real and I hope that you finally get to the root of the strange fruit that America loves to keep on its vines."

If Berry's quiet drowning in Hancock Creek does not fit with some stereotypical visions of lynching in American history, the deaths of

other Black North Carolinians through swift violence meted out by whites in the early twentieth century may seem more familiar.

"Lynching is not always someone hanging from a tree," said Bernard George. "It can be as simple as what occurred here in 1932.

More typical of what many Americans envision as lynching was the 1905 murder of John Moore, accused of assaulting the wife of white Craven County Postmaster George Eubanks. Described by the *North Carolinian* at the time as a "very black negro, aged about twenty, of vicious and sullen aspect," Moore was arrested for the assault and held in jail when a mob of Eubanks' neighbors and friends – some of them New Bern residents – came for him around midnight on August twenty-seventh.

"He was a stranger in this part of the country and believed to be a tramp, although he was well dressed and had a little money," the *North Carolinian* reported. The article continued "He had been employed at the Blades sawmill, but had left that and at the time of his crime was not working."

About fifty men surrounded the jail. One produced a revolver and threatened to shoot the sheriff unless they were allowed to leave with Moore. Once he was in their power, the mob "roughly" dragged Moore up Craven Street to where the Neuse River Bridge stood then. There, the mob hanged Moore from an iron crosspiece of the bridge near the New Bern end and unleashed a hail of gunfire at his still living body as it dangled from the span. It was the fifteen or so bullets that killed Moore. A coroner's inquest found that his neck was not broken. The *North Carolinian* reported that the mob then dispersed, having "made no noise during the whole affair," a dubious observation given the gunfire. "The generalship was perfect," the paper reported. "Having no friends to take charge of the remains, they were buried at the county's expense."

Three years prior, seventeen-year-old James Walker was accused of poisoning a white family in nearby Beaufort County with arsenic-laced coffee. Although the poisoning was not fatal, Walker was arrested and taken by authorities to Williamston. Foreshadowing

Moore's later extrajudicial murder, a mob battered down the jailhouse door, overpowered Walker's jailers and took him up the road, now US Highway 17. Before reaching Washington, in the early morning hours, the mob strung Walker from a gum tree alongside the road. That tree may still be standing along the modern paved highway between Washington and Williamston, seat of Martin County.

Following the memorial service for Berry, two large jars were filled with reddish earth from the landing, a few measured paces from the water where Berry lost his life. One will be sent to the National Lynching Memorial in Alabama. The other will travel North Carolina, bearing Berry's legacy until it comes to rest at the African American History and Culture Center in New Bern.

Sharon Bryant, African American History Coordinator for Tryon Palace and Craven Arts Council board president, said the Berry memorial service along Hancock Creek was the first project undertaken by the Equal Justice Initiative.

There, the event's organizers hope, Berry's memory and the soil he once may have trodden on the way to what should have been an evening of fishing will shed light on unpleasant events in local history that remain as murky as the waters that slice through eastern North Carolina.

Courmon said the lesson Berry's death can teach today is not only a warning against overt racism, but a stark reminder of what could be lost if history does not survive its victims. The same tendrils of racism and ignorance that dragged Berry to the bottom of Hancock Creek and recorded a murder as an accident can be fought with knowledge and continuing to teach the less appetizing truths in North Carolina and US history, if not black bars of redaction.

"As we can see, the state of our world, the state of country right now, the state of our schools – what is being taught, what is not being taught, and what is intentionally being left out of the record or rewritten in the record – it is necessary for moments like these, occasions like these," he said. "As painful as they are, as tough as it is, we have to be able to stand in it."

“When we’re able to stand in it and we’re able to learn from it, I think we are eventually able to become better because of it,” Courmon continued. “We can’t heal what we don’t address. It does no good to try to punish the people who are bringing attention to the issue. You don’t fight the doctor when he brings you the diagnosis. … Every one of us can consider this a doctor’s visit in a sense.”

About the Author: Dan Parsons grew up in Raleigh and began his career as a journalist at the Washington Daily News in Beaufort County. Newspaper work later took him to Tidewater Virginia and then to Washington, D.C., where he spent more than a decade covering the Pentagon and military technology. Since returning to North Carolina in 2022 and settling in New Bern, he has reported on politics, local government, hurricanes and military issues for various publications.

A Poem "*I hope that you don't have to see yourself in your history the way I've had to see myself in mine*"

By Nick Courmon

"I visited the National Lynching Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, and found the name of a family member

So, *I pray you never see yourself in your history the way I've had to see myself in mine*

Got trauma, drama and lynching all up in my bloodline

When we express anger about the damage that's been done you just refuse to see why

I can't talk about my relative that were killed by white supremacists because you'll call it CRT or DEI

I pray you'll never see yourself in your history the way I've had to see myself in mine

To have thousands of your loved ones hung from trees or set ablaze because some white folks say, falsely that they were guilty of a crime

Five white men killed a member of my family over the sum of 200 dimes

The memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, carries the names of over 4,400 of racial terror lynchings between 1877 and 1950

Many lynched in front of white crowds where no one was held accountable or found guilty

Many tortured by sadistic white mobs who watched with delight as they ate popcorn and drank lemonade or whisky

This memorial is comprised of over 800 steel monuments bearing these victims names

Black people who were murdered by domestic terrorists who felt no shame

Terrorists who dismembered Black bodies for sport since killing us has always been this country's favorite game

The past informs our understanding of the present and we have to reckon with it to heal

So it's time to be real and I hope that you finally get to the root of the strange fruit that America loves to keep on its vines

And *I pray that you'll never see yourself in your history the way I've had to see myself in mine*

CONVERGING FRONTS: COLD, COAL, AND CRISIS IN NEW BERN

Mark Sandvigen

The fall of 1917 had seen a harsh cold snap, but the old-timers had seen and felt worse. Most remembered the cold of 1893 when it got down to six degrees by January. But, then again, the 1890's had been particularly cold and the first decade of the twentieth century had been cold… period!

Neuse River Swing Bridge*

However, the frigid winter of 1917-1918 would be different; there was a war on. In April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war on Germany catapulting the US economy from consumerism to wartime production instantaneously.

The United States had, up to this point (1915-1916), been dabbling around the edges by sending munitions, food, and fuel to our future allies. Now it was our war and the demands for a fully outfitted Army, Navy, Marine, and Coastal Defense (future US Coast Guard) were ours as well. America was totally unprepared for a global war. This is where our story begins.

Since the Selective Service Registration on June 5, 1917, millions of men were drafted or volunteered for military service, creating a severe shortage of workers in key industries. Mirroring this predicament, the immediate loss of young men from New Bern and Craven County would be compounded by the continued exodus of Black Americans leaving the wretchedness of Jim Crow laws and sharecropping for the higher paying industries of the North.

Besides manpower, World War I had a rapacious appetite for everything from toilet paper to artillery shells. What could not be foreseen by our government was the effort needed to shift factories from consumer goods to war materials and to redirect industries like steel, coal, and chemical to serve military needs. Along with skilled labor and industry, the war depended on the national rail system being able to handle this huge increase in traffic—yet in the early twentieth century American railroads were generally in poor shape financially and operationally unprepared for the increased demand, a rail transport crisis seemed imminent.

The loss of skilled railroad labor and high rail car demand translated into severe shortages and massive congestion. The result was mass confusion: traffic jams and shortages of rail cars in the interior of the country—while thousands of box cars sat at East Coast docks, waiting to be unloaded with nothing profitable to carry back home. America's war making industries and distribution systems ground to a halt.

Trains weren't merely stalled at coastal ports—they were immobilized across the Midwest and the Eastern seaboard. In the Midwest cars loaded with coal lay stranded on frozen sidings with no hope of movement. As blizzards swept across the interior, entire coal shipments vanished beneath drifts, trapped for days. Compounding the

paralysis, competing railroad companies denied each other trackage rights, choking the very arteries of wartime logistics. Coal not already claimed by factories or the military never reached the towns and cities it was meant for leaving them shivering beneath an Arctic air mass.

By December 13, 1917, the distribution of coal throughout the country had descended into chaos. The US Senate responding to children dying of exposure, and no domestic coal distribution, blamed the railroads. The lack of a functioning railroad system resulted in President Wilson "nationalizing" the nation's railroads two days after Christmas 1917. Federal control would be absolute! "All cars, locomotives, Terminals, Docks, Tracks, and Telegraph Lines will be under the direct government supervision…". Due to a threatened coal miners' strike, the next step to alleviate the crisis was proposed on December twenty-ninth—nationalize the coal industry.

New Bern and Craven County would not be immune from the nation's struggles; the consequences of a failed transportation infrastructure were now felt here—no coal and as a consequence, no heat. The problem of coal would reach into every corner of New Bern society and be referred to locally by *The Morning New Bernian* as the "fuel famine."

In late 1917, Arctic high-pressure cells continued to descend on the eastern, and southern United States. By mid-December another four inches of snow fell on New Bern, and temperatures continued to plummet. By the end of December, the first part of January, New Bern was again blanketed with snow and temperatures fell to two degrees; the frozen Neuse and Trent Rivers would add inches of new ice, and New Bern would find itself firmly in the grip of the cold hand of war and weather alike.

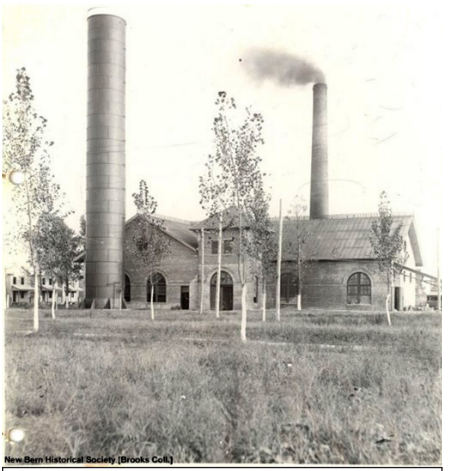
City leaders were not unaware of the problems being reported throughout the country and the mid-Atlantic. On December twenty-second, the city council and local business leaders met to discuss how to solve the fuel problem. Delivering a dire message to the council, Mr. Hollister and a Mr. McCarthy, local fuel dealers, stated that "there was practically no coal or wood in the city at present,

Pollock Street looking towards the Neuse River*

what little there was here was sold ahead (contracted for) and that there was no immediate relief in sight." While over 500 tons of coal had been contracted for, the railroad situation and coal shortages elsewhere put delivery in jeopardy, in fact it would never arrive.

As coal would not be coming, just prior to New Year's Day, 1918, Mr. Aberly of the Pine Lumber Company began distribution to the needy of forty cords of wood. (typically, 600-800 pieces of firewood per cord). Acting as a de facto city coordinator of wood distribution, members of the community with forested land would contact Aberly and let him know that those in need could have all the wood they could cut and haul. To augment commercial and volunteer wood cutting distribution and address the shortage of labor, twenty-three county convicts were released to cut and split wood a few miles up the Trent River. The convicts cut and split fifty cords of wood for the city and county residents. The convicts would continue to fell trees, cut and split wood until the immediate crisis was over.

The county and city council members along with the New Bern Chamber of Commerce continued to plan how to keep the community safe and extend its coal reserves. Schools were closed due to



New Berne Electric Light & Power Company

intense cold and lack of fuel for heating systems.

New Berne Electric Light & Power Company's massive coal fired boilers providing the town's electricity would be taken offline thereby reducing the amount of available electricity. Streetlights would be turned off at 9:00 pm throwing the city into stygian blackness. Businesses would close early; church and community meetings would be relocated to only a couple of buildings in the city. In addition, the New Bern-Ghent Street Railway Company would curtail the use of their all-electric street cars until reliable electric power was available.

Those who believed themselves spared the lack of electricity—relying on gas instead of coal to light and heat their homes—soon faced a harsh truth: their homes went dark and cold all the same. The New Bern Gas Company's "Town Gas," produced through coal-gasification, required steam and oxygen to generate fuel. But the process depended on the very resource no one could get—coal. With no fuel to heat the boilers, the gasworks fell silent. Warmth, in every form, was vanishing into the freeze.

North Carolina's Senator Simmons, acting on pleas from his constituents, along with US Fuel Administrator Garfield arranged to have two carloads (about 200 tons) of coal delivered to New Bern on January third. *The Morning New Bernian* reported, "Like a prairie fire, the news spread over the city that coal could be purchased at the freight yards and from the time a representative of the local concern was on hand to dispose of the coveted goods, a steady stream

of people were there with wheelbarrows, drays, automobile trucks, baby carriages, sacks and anything else that would hold coal until it was carried to the home of the purchaser."

For many in New Bern, even a single sack of coal was out of reach. Desperation turned some into scavengers, combing the rail yards and tracks for stray lumps shaken loose from locomotive tenders. As hardship deepened and reports of price gouging, falsified inventories, and outright profiteering surfaced, city officials stepped in. Mirroring federal emergency measures, the City assumed control over all fuel distribution—fixing prices, tracking deliveries, and rationing supplies to ensure that what little coal remained was shared with fairness, if not abundance. In a city frozen by both weather and want, the city fathers ensured justice came by the shovelful.

In an oral history, conducted by Dr. Patterson with Mary Elizabeth Taylor (Elizabeth Taylor Hodges), Lib, as she was known, gave an account of the Great Freeze of 1918. She was born, January 5, 1918, during that brutally frigid winter. She recollected that during the big freeze … it was either your daddy, Dr. Patterson, or Dr. Jones who delivered me. Born in her family home, she recounted that during

Cedar Grove Cemetery*

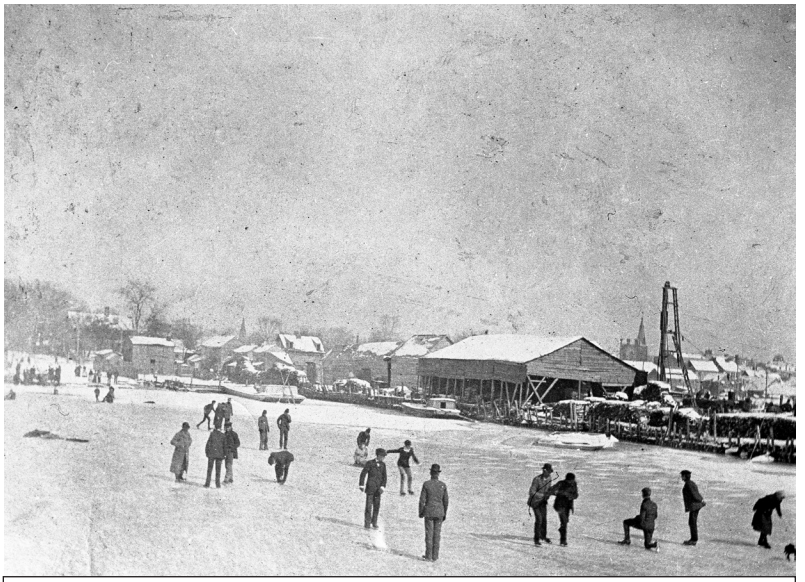
her birth, her father was sent downstairs to boil water. Getting to their kitchen, he could not get the door open as the pipes had burst covering their kitchen floor thickly with ice. Luckily the ice was contained within the kitchen sparing the rest of the home.

For those not as fortunate as the Taylors, the winter could not have been worse. For families in the middle of the crisis, it seemed the misery would never end. The cold had not just arrived, it had moved in. With no fuel, coal stoves radiated their own brand of wretchedness, forcing mothers to wrap their children in every available scrap of wool. On New Year's Day, *The Morning New Bernian* reported "… the greatest suffering has resulted from lack of clothing and fuel."

Not only was there bone chilling cold, but Craven County had also been observing food rationing since August 10, 1917, leaving city leaders looking for solutions to the food shortage. Not waiting for the machinery of government to lurch into action, the citizens of New Bern organized themselves. *The Morning New Bernian* established an emergency fund and exhorted those "who are blessed with plenty…" to contribute to the fund. There was also a call for food, fuel, and clothing to help those in need. The Emergency Fund would raise almost $147 dollars (about $4,000 dollars today).

As a tip of the cap to those donating, *The Morning New Bernian* would highlight the donors to the fund and daily acts of charity in the paper. As examples, on January first, the paper cited, "One good and true woman, sent eleven baskets of groceries to hungry firesides yesterday." In another citation, "Miss Cora Munger… and Mrs. E.H. Meadows … hauled wood to many homes and built fires for them."

Kafer Bakery, recognizing a rare opportunity by baking bread for the well-to-do since, due to snow, their domestic staff and cooks could not get to work. Kafer advertised that you could pick up your freshly baked bread between 4 to 6 o'clock any afternoon. With everyone locked inside their homes, *The Morning New Bernian* launched a campaign recruiting those with grit to brave the cold and write new



Ice Skating on the Trent River*

newspaper subscriptions. The prize for the most new subscriptions – a sixty-five dollar diamond ring. And, for those who could take advantage of the winter spectacle, ice skating parties on the Neuse and Trent Rivers were the rage, with some of these parties having more than 100 skaters.

The charitable efforts, the parties, and the misery would continue until the crisis abated on January ninth when an unseasonable warming trend made its way across the Carolinas. With the thaw came a collective breath of relief. City and county leaders could finally turn from crisis management to recovery. *The Morning New Bernian* published a full accounting of its Emergency Fund, honoring the generosity that had carried the town through the cold. Tradesmen and plumbers moved swiftly to address the backlog of frozen pipes and fractured infrastructure. Yet even as life resumed, newspaper ads reminded citizens that the war raged on—and that shortages of fuel, food, and essentials would remain part of daily life. The freeze had broken, but the struggle was far from over.

The eight-to-ten-inch ice sheets that covered the Neuse and Trent Rivers would slowly break up. This would curtail the ice skating parties on the rivers and would end commuting across the river from Bridgeton to New Bern by C.A Ryan and County Commissioner Frank Holton in their Ford Model T. Luckily, there were no deaths reported but *The Morning New Bernian* did report that, "Brown Peterson, colored, was reported frozen yesterday morning but later survived. John York, a one-armed negro was also found almost frozen. He was [sic] survived and sent to the county home by Mayor Edward Clark."

Life crept back toward normalcy as schools reopened, businesses stirred from their forced hibernation, and livestock were once again turned out to pasture. Though winter still lingered, the worst had passed—those harrowing three weeks straddling Christmas and New Year's would not be forgotten. The once-abstract slogans from the US Fuel Administration now carried the gravity of lived experience: "Save Coal—Use Less Heat," and most haunting of all, "Coal is Ammunition—Don't Waste It." For the people of New Bern, the Great War was no longer a distant affair—it had arrived on a bitter wind and settled in their very homes.

** Special Note: No known photographs exist of New Bern during the winter of 1917–1918. All images included are representative and used for illustrative purposes only.*

About the Author: Mark Sandvigen graduated from Southern Oregon University, served in the United States Navy on surface combatants, and earned three Masters degrees. Upon retirement from the Navy, he held executive engineering and management positions. Now fully retired, he is an active participant in veterans organizations in New Bern. Due to his family's service in WWI, he researches, writes, and visits the cemeteries, port cities, and battlefields of the Great War.

HOTELS OF NEW BERN

Claudia Houston

Hotels have long been a necessary service for travelers, tourists, and all in need of temporary lodging away from home. As early as the 1700s in America, boarding houses and inns were the predominant forms of accommodation. Still, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with the rise of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of leisure travel, people sought not only shelter but also comfort and style in their lodging. Grand hotels began popping up in cities across the country, and New Bern was no exception. With its busy waterfront, growing economy, and increasing number of visitors, the city witnessed the rise of fine hotels, such as the Hotel Albert, offering elegance, modern conveniences, and warm hospitality. As steamboats, trains, and later automobiles brought more people to town, New Bern's hotels became not just places to stay, but symbols of the city's hospitality and progress.

There are a surprising number of hotels in New Bern that came into existence, flourished for some time, and then faded away.

This table provides an overview of some of the major hotels in New Bern from the late eighteenth through mid-twentieth century. Some precise dates are unknown and have been approximated for clarity.

Eighteenth Century

While the location of the Frilick Hotel has been lost over time, its great significance begs inclusion. According to an article published in the North Carolina Gazette on February 27, 1796, "On Monday last, the anniversary of the President's Birth, we celebrated at Frilick Hotel by a large and respectable company." This celebration included toasts to commemorate the birthday of George Washington. New Bern was believed to be the first town to celebrate Washington's birthday publicly.

Hotel Name(s)	Approx. Dates of Operation	Notes
Frilick Hotel	c. 1790s	Mentioned in NC Gazette (1796); site unknown.
Farmers Hotel	1818–?	Operated by Martin Stevenson, corner of Middle & Pollock.
Washington Hotel	pre-1815–1862	Owned by Joseph Bell, later Cutler, Street, Smith, Moore; destroyed by Confederate fire after Battle of New Bern.
Mitchell Hotel	mid-1800s–?	Across from Episcopal Church; mentioned in Miller's Recollections.
Moore Hotel	mid-1800s–?	At head of Broad Street; popular with farmers.
Central Hotel	before 1877–1885	On Middle Street; destroyed by fire, March 1885.
Hotel Albert / Mackie / Hazelton / James / New James / New Bernian	1885–1960	Built after Central Hotel fire; multiple owners/new names; cupola still visible today.
Gaston Hotel / Union Hotel / Chattawka Hotel / Gaston Hall / Governor Tryon Hotel	1840–1965	Premier hotel of city; burned in 1965 fire.
Rhone Hotel	1923–present	First Black-owned hotel; listed in The Green Book; now an Airbnb.
Gem Hotel	1911–1950s	101 Pollock Street; demolished for office building.
Terminal Hotel / Tryon Hotel	1921–1970s?	115 Hancock Street near depot; café noted for Thanksgiving dinners.
Hotel Queen Anne	1939–1960s	Converted Blades mansion on Broad Street; later became First Citizens Bank.

Nineteenth Century

Reverend Lachlan Vass, a local Presbyterian minister, wrote a lengthy book, published in 1886, that offered a comprehensive look at not only ecclesiastical matters but also the history of New Bern and its people. He noted that there were two hotels in New Bern in 1818, though unnamed. However, the North Carolina Centinel's August 1818 newspaper edition features two advertisements for hotels; one by Martin Stevenson, touting the Farmers Hotel at the corner of Middle and Pollock, across from the Christ Episcopal Church, and the other by Joseph Bell, informing readers of accommodations at the Washington Hotel.

Washington Hotel

While several inns and boarding houses were available to travelers, the hotel established by Joseph Bell before 1815 was particularly popular among them. It was a large building located on the northeast corner of Broad and Hancock Street. The requisite rooms and food were provided, but the hotel also featured a stagecoach office and stop, as well as large rooms suitable for gatherings. In 1834, Henry G. Cutler purchased the hotel and operated it for three years before

New Bern-Craven County Public Library

selling it to William Street in 1838. Street then sold it back to Cutler in 1852. The hotel was sold again in 1856, this time to W.J. Smith. Although Smith owned it briefly, during that period, he had a trading card produced featuring an image of the hotel, the only one known to exist. The hotel was sold to its last owner, William P. Moore who was the owner when the Washington Hotel was destroyed by fire on March 14, 1862. Confederate Troops escaping from the Battle of New Bern set the fire.

Gaston Hotel

The building that would become the hotel was initially built in the early nineteenth century and was the largest Federal-style building constructed in the city. Prior to the use as a hotel it served as a business site for the merchants Devereaux, Chester, and Orme. The offices for the merchants included ten rooms and covered half the block.

The building, on the 300 block of South Front Street, was converted into a hotel in 1840, and two additional rooms were added to extend the structure to the east. The lower level of the building contained the hotel and other retail establishments.

The Gaston Hotel was considered the place to stay throughout the Civil War and well into the next century. In 1884, William Garrison Reed returned to New Bern where he had served with the 44th Massachusetts Regiment in the Civil War and visited the places he remembered from that time. He was a skilled photographer whose numerous photos were later donated to the library. In his recollection of the Gaston Hotel, he stated, "Dim memories of the reputation of the Gaston Hotel rose in our mind, – those old fairy tales of realms of bliss to which enlisted men were not admitted; of beds with sheets; of tables with white cloths and napkins. We decided to go there, regardless of the exhortations and praises from another stage driver of a rival hotel."

In August 1887, a notice in the paper announced that the Hotel Gaston was for sale. It was subsequently purchased by Dr. Frank Hughes, who refurbished it and renamed it the Chattawka Hotel.

Gaston Hotel

Photo by William Garrison Reed

Per the *Daily Journal*, New Bern, September 4, 1894, pg. 1. It was announced that: "The owners and managers of the Hotel Chattawka are pleased to state that on Wednesday evening, September 6, the house will be thrown open to the public from 8 to 11 pm for inspection and herewith extend a cordial invitation to all. The opening banquet will be served from 8 to 10 pm to all who wish to partake at 75 cents per plate." The review following the opening event was complimentary.

The hotel had been updated with additions, making it "airy, commodious and comfortable." Additions included speaking tubes that connected the office with each floor, electric bells in every room, public areas lit by electricity, and all areas decorated with luxurious carpeting and furniture.

Twelve years later July 1906, Dr. Hughes sold the hotel, along with adjacent buildings and other property, to J. B. Blades, the lumber magnate. The hotel was once again renovated and reopened in 1907, this time under the name Gaston Hall. It had many amenities, and

Hotel Governor Tryon

during the 1910 Bicentennial in New Bern, it was touted as the best hotel in the state. A 1910 directory noted that the hotel offered modern conveniences, including electrical lights, telephones, and hot and cold running water in all its rooms.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the hotel struggled financially and was often referred to as the "ghastly hotel" due to its rundown appearance. It was refurbished in the 1950s and renamed the Hotel Governor Tryon and was billed as "Historic New Bern's Showplace of the South." The hotel remained a favorite among the traveling public due to its central location; however, it was destroyed in a fire on November 2, 1965, erasing a 125 years of operation.

In Stephen Miller's *Recollections of Newbern 50 Years Ago*, written in 1872, he mentioned three hotels: the Washington Hotel, Mitchell Hotel, and Moore Hotel. Mitchell was described as being on the corner opposite the old Episcopal Church. Wallace Moore operated

Central Hotel

Photo from the Gerock Collection

Moore Hotel at the "head of Broad Street," and it was a popular choice for farmers who preferred quiet accommodations at a lower price. Of interest were the rates quoted by hotels. Twelve and a half dollars per month for board and lodging. Ten dollars for board alone. For transient persons, the charges were one and a half dollars for man and horse-feeding, one dollar for a man alone, 30 cents for a single meal, and 10 cents for lodging. Horse fed, 75 cents per day or 30 cents for a single feed.

Central Hotel

On Middle Street stood the Central Hotel, that was owned and operated by Moses Patterson and Sons. An advertisement placed in the New Bernian newspaper on August 18, 1877, boasted that the Central Hotel on Middle Street was a first-class hotel, newly refurbished and renovated. Passengers and baggage are conveyed to and from the hotel free of charge. Board is two dollars per day.

The Central Hotel was a wooden structure that burned in March 1885, along with most of the east side of Middle Street. The Patterson family quickly decided to rebuild.

Hotel Albert

The Patterson family built the Hotel Albert in the very spot where the Central Hotel once stood. The hotel's opening was, by all accounts, a stunning success.

Patterson wrote a thirty-page booklet about the hotel, which also included the history of New Bern and all its virtues, entitled *A Long Felt Want Supplied, The New Hotel Albert*. Patterson described the hotel as being located in the heart of the city's business district, constructed of brick, with a 60-foot front, and measuring 165 feet in depth. He continued, it is three stories high and features an observatory at its top. The hotel has water closets and bathrooms, electric bells, and radiators in every room. A barber shop is located in the basement, and there is a billiard room and a baggage room. The

Albert Hotel

From the Library of Congress

average size of a room was 15 feet by 18 feet, and the rooms had large windows; each door also had transom glass over it. There was Brussels carpeting throughout as well as moldings, etc. What might this cost you, may I ask? According to Patterson, the terms of the board were "Two dollars, two and a half, and three dollars per day according to location."

Not only did Patterson entertain residents and future guests with the hotel's wonders, but he also garnered special attention in a booklet entitled *Norfolk, the Marine Metropolis of Virginia, and the Sound and River Cities of North Carolina*, published by George Nowitsky in 1888.

In 1897, a succession of name changes and ownership changes began at the hotel. The Hotel Albert became the Hotel Mackie, Hotel Hazelton, James Hotel, New James Hotel, and the Hotel New Bernian.

The July 17, 1897, *Daily Journal* announced that "it is no longer the Hotel Albert, but is now the Hotel Mackie. Mr. Mackie plans to make improvements at the hotel shortly."

According to the *Daily Journal* of August 12, 1897, the number of guests at the Hotel Mackie indicates that the new management is appreciated. The cuisine is unparalleled, and people of the city who wish to board for a shorter or longer period will be invited to do so. The city's artesian water is used exclusively in the hotel.

Unfortunately, on March 12, 1898, the *Daily Journal* reported that "Despite all the effort displayed by Mr. Mackie, the venture proved a failure and with the sale of the property, Mr. Mackie gave up the hotel."

On November 9, 1900, it was announced, "Last night Hotel Hazelton opened to the Public, Marc Jacobs, proprietor. The interior will be rearranged." The hotel owners changed over the years, and so did the names of the hotel. JW Stewart, a very wealthy man, owned the hotel but leased the property to many experienced individuals. None, however, seemed to last very long.

Hotel New Bernian

By 1913, the hotel was known as the James Hotel, and a new proprietor had taken over. Eventually the dining room closed, and by 1914, the James Hotel itself was closed. Following the completion of a remodeling and redecoration project, the New James Hotel reopened in 1917. Under the name New Bernian the hotel reopened in 1943 and continued to operate until 1960. Ultimately, retail stores replaced the old hotels, but one can still see the cupola at the top of the current Surf, Wind and Fire, storefronts.

Rhone Hotel

The largest fire in North Carolina history took place in New Bern on December 1, 1922, resulting in countless homeless people, particularly from the Black community. In 1923, a two-story brick building was constructed, owned, and operated by Henrietta Rhone on Queen Street. The home was also that of her sister, Charlotte Rhone. This building was the first hotel built and operated by Blacks. The hotel was advertised in the Green Book, a book for Black tourists and travelers who were not allowed in white establishments. It is one of only a few establishments from that time that still exists. The building still stands today, and while it was recently an apartment building, it is now operated as an Airbnb.

The Gem Hotel

The Gem Hotel, built in 1911, was located at 101 Pollock Street. The 1914 Illustrated City of New Bern Directory made this claim:

> "GEM HOTEL.—This is one of the most delightful hotels of New Bern and is located in the high-class residence district, although it is most conveniently situated as regards the business section of the city. It presents a beautiful and inviting appearance. The Gem Hotel is handsomely furnished throughout with the finest of furniture and has all modern conveniences. It is a delightful place in which to make your headquarters when in the city. The patronage comes from the best of the traveling public. Rates are very reasonable, considering the high class of service and accommodations. Mrs. J. W. Moore is the proprietress."

Many different owners operated it during the early twentieth century. James Moore, father of Maude Latham Moore, who helped finance the rebuilding of Tryon Palace, was probably the most notable. In the 1950s, this house /hotel was demolished to make way for an office building.

Tryon Hotel

The Tryon Hotel was located at the corner of Hancock and Queen Street, across from Ernest Richardson's grocery store. Because of its proximity to the depot, it was initially known as the Terminal Hotel, but subsequently was renamed the Tryon Hotel. The headline in the *New Bern Journal*, dated November 2, 1921, announced the opening in large letters, indicating that there were thirty rooms and fifteen baths. The hotel would also feature a café open to both guests and the public. It was advertised to be ideally located for the traveling man. It was possible to rent rooms with or without bathrooms.

The café got off to a great start, serving Thanksgiving Dinner on November 23, 1921. The meal consisted of "Roast Princess Anne Turkey, oyster dressing, cranberry sauce, stewed corn, green peas, spaghetti ala Milanese with tomato sauce, snowflake potatoes, candied yam potatoes, celery, stewed prunes, hot rolls, muffins, Irish moss pudding with English sauce, and coffee, tea, or milk. The cost is ONE DOLLAR."

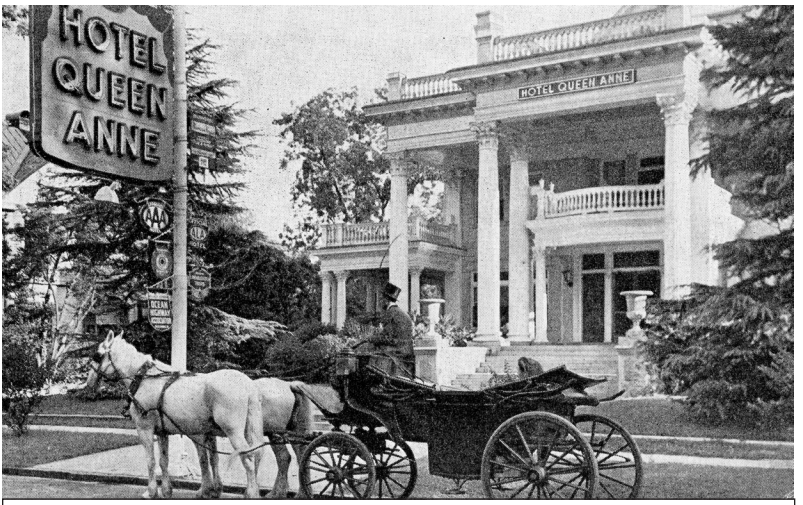
Tryon Hotel

On the left in the photograph

It is unknown when the hotel became the Tryon Hotel, and it is equally unclear when it ceased to exist, though it appears it was sometime in the 1970s.

Hotel Queen Anne

While the house of William Blades still stands at the corner of Johnson and Middle Streets, his brother James Bishop Blades built an equally imposing one on Broad Street. The construction of this house was overseen by James, who also amassed a substantial fortune in the lumber industry. The house was designed by Herbert Woodley Simpson in the Colonial Revival style and featured elaborate, carved mahogany interior woodwork. The house was completed in 1913. After James Blades died in 1918, his son, James Vernon Blades, moved into his father's house with his wife and three children. The family owned the New Bern Banking and Trust, and during the depression, there was a run on the bank. The beautiful home on Broad Street, which was later to become the Hotel Queen Anne, was foreclosed upon. James and his family moved to the Gaston Hotel on South Front Street, and James became the manager.



Hotel Queen Anne

James was able to buy back his house from the bank, but his family never lived there again. In 1939, the home was leased, converted into the Hotel Queen Anne , and later enlarged. The Hotel Queen Anne was a popular destination for travelers who were heading south on the Ocean Highway to Florida. It was a favorite among locals, and it hosted many social gatherings and occasions at the hotel restaurant. Hotel Queen Anne offering the finest accommodations had eighty-five rooms and baths, spacious parlors, and a delightful dining room. It was very popular, but during the 1960s, several modern hotels were built, and the Hotel Queen Anne could no longer compete. It was closed, and First Citizens Bank purchased the property for use as a bank building.

Although there are few remnants left of some of these grand hotels, we catch glimpses of them in photographs, menus, advertisements, and postcards. Their memories will live on, reminding us that New Bern has always been a place of welcome for travelers.

About the Author: Claudia Houston loves history, genealogy, writing and research. She utilizes all those skills as a Board Member and Historian for the New Bern Historical Society, writing monthly stories for the New Bern Magazine, articles for the NBHS Journal and co-managing the NBHS Facebook Page. She holds a degree in History from the State University College of New Paltz, NY, and a Master of Public Administration degree from PACE University.

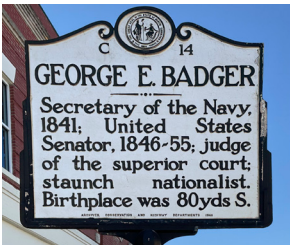
HISTORY ON A STICK…

Margo Fesperman

Or on a Brick, a Bear or a Wall. As you stroll the streets, shall you read them all? Or perhaps that will be more than you can bear!

"Exhibit Labels on the Landscape"

Also officially known as historical highway markers, they began to appear as early as 1936. Today 1,661 (including those on order) grace highways, byways and city streets across NC. Although several state departments contribute to the program, it is primarily a collaboration of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) and the Department of Transportation.



How does a marker come into being? All markers are a result of citizen nominations. The historical research office is not the source of topics. History is run by citizens, said Leslie Leonard, Administrator Highway Historical Marker Program. Nominations must reach two basic criteria, be of statewide interest and if describing a person, they must have been dead for at least twenty-five years.

And why not put the marker in exact locations? Because, they must be in the right-of-way of a state road, hence "highway marker." Thus, the location of a house or first printing press may not be on a state highway and the marker says for example, 80 yds S.

Some look rather in need of attention. Manufactured in Ohio, a marker may require a year from start to finish and is then transported to the awaiting community. Highway crews erect all road signs and the markers may not be at the top of the list. Maintenance includes

Note 150 years between event (1863) and installation (2013).

taking the marker off the post for painting and cleaning.

Local residents are encouraged not to attempt maintenance tasks.

The intent of the markers is to spark interest in a topic, not clarify or justify history. Note markers are not monuments to elevate an individual. Thus, protests are unusual. Texts on each marker are well researched at the state and local level. Subjects can include, people, places and historically significant events. Be aware the installation dates at the bottom of the markers do not coincide with the actual date of the topic. Letters and numbers on either side of the state seal are for identification for each marker in a database.

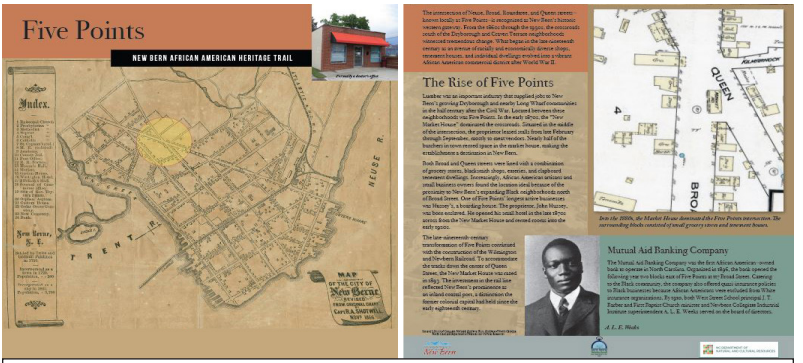
Trail Signs

Civil Rights Trail

The NC Civil Rights Trail was developed by the Civil Rights History and Black Heritage office of the DNCR. Recently installed, two markers were placed in New Bern. Significantly different from the highway markers and not restricted to state road routes, the markers can be installed onsite. Nor are restrictions of highway markers applied to these trail signs. In fact, the topics are of events likely unknown to some residents and/or visitors and may include both positive and negative text.

African American Heritage Trail

Three-sided kiosks adorn several prominent locations in the greater Craven Terrace/Dryborough neighborhood. Images of sites within view of each kiosk feature existing structures and information about those that have been removed. The intent of these signs is to explain and interpret significant historic events, people and places

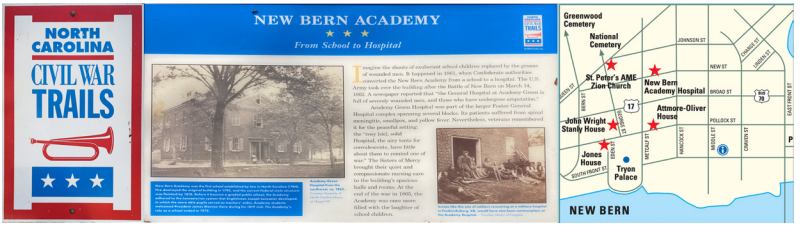


African American Heritage Trail Sign

Upper and lower sections of one side of the Five Points trail sign.

that pertain to the African American heritage. A very different mission compared to the "facts only" highway markers. Installation was June 19, 2021. June 19 is Juneteenth and relates to Black history after the Civil War.

NC Civil War Trails



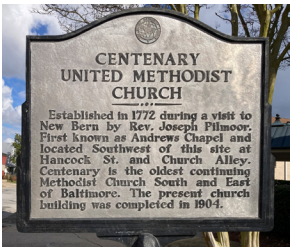
Part of a larger network of trails across six states, five sites have been identified within city limits. The New Bern Battlefield beyond city limits recounts the turning point when the Union occupied the city. Unlike some signage, these markers show no attribution or tell a story. Visitors following the signs are a significant part of New Bern's tourism. CivilWarTrails.org is a source of more details including a map to the New Bern sites.

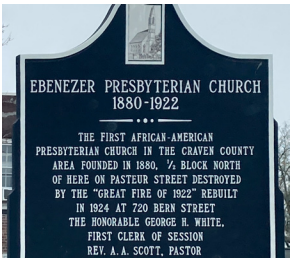
Churches

Although the size and shape may resemble the highway markers, they do not fall under the purview of the DNCR. Local government

or historical organizations manage these signs. Often the seal of the institution is at the top rather than the state seal.

Usually these markers are on the private property of the institution. However, installation in a city right-of-way requires an encroachment agreement must be approved.





Bear Town Bears

Relatively newcomers to the array of signs and information sprinkled around the city, they have become a major destination for tourists and oh! the opportunities for selfies. Now numbering ninety, installations began in 2010 as part of the three hundredth anniversary of New Bern's founding in 1710. Originally fifty bears were installed but now number 90. Bear Town Bears is operated as a joint project between the New Bern Tourism and Development Authority and Craven Arts Council & Gallery that handles applications to sponsor a bear.

An Array of formats and information

Plaques, walls, fences, murals and a brick — let these speak for themselves.


THE BICYCLE GALLERY
TOAD HALL BREWING
DANGER
Alligators Present
Avoid alligator attack.
GLENBURNIE PARK
NEW BERN
PARKS & RECREATION
Camp Battle
Glenburnie Park History
Enjoy Miller BEER
Reading Machine & Marine Railway
PRESERVING NEW BERN'S MARITIME HISTORY
DAVID L. BEVERIDGE
7-9-15 - 9-17-77
CBM-USGC-WWII 40-45
WIFE GERRY MAYO 1945
CAPT., NC FERRY
SERVICE BEAUFORT NC
United Hebrews of New Bern Cemetery
Established Dec. 27, 1877
Temple B'nai Sholem
NEW BERN
CITY OF NEW BERN
Sudan Shriners
1849
EDWARD R. STANLY HOUSE
Tryon Palace
Mary Histler Stoney Flower Garden
COMING SOON
BROAD STREET FISHING PIER
NEW BERN
PARKS & RECREATION
KRESS

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Sherri K. Baldree, Administrative Assistant City of New Bern Public Works Department

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