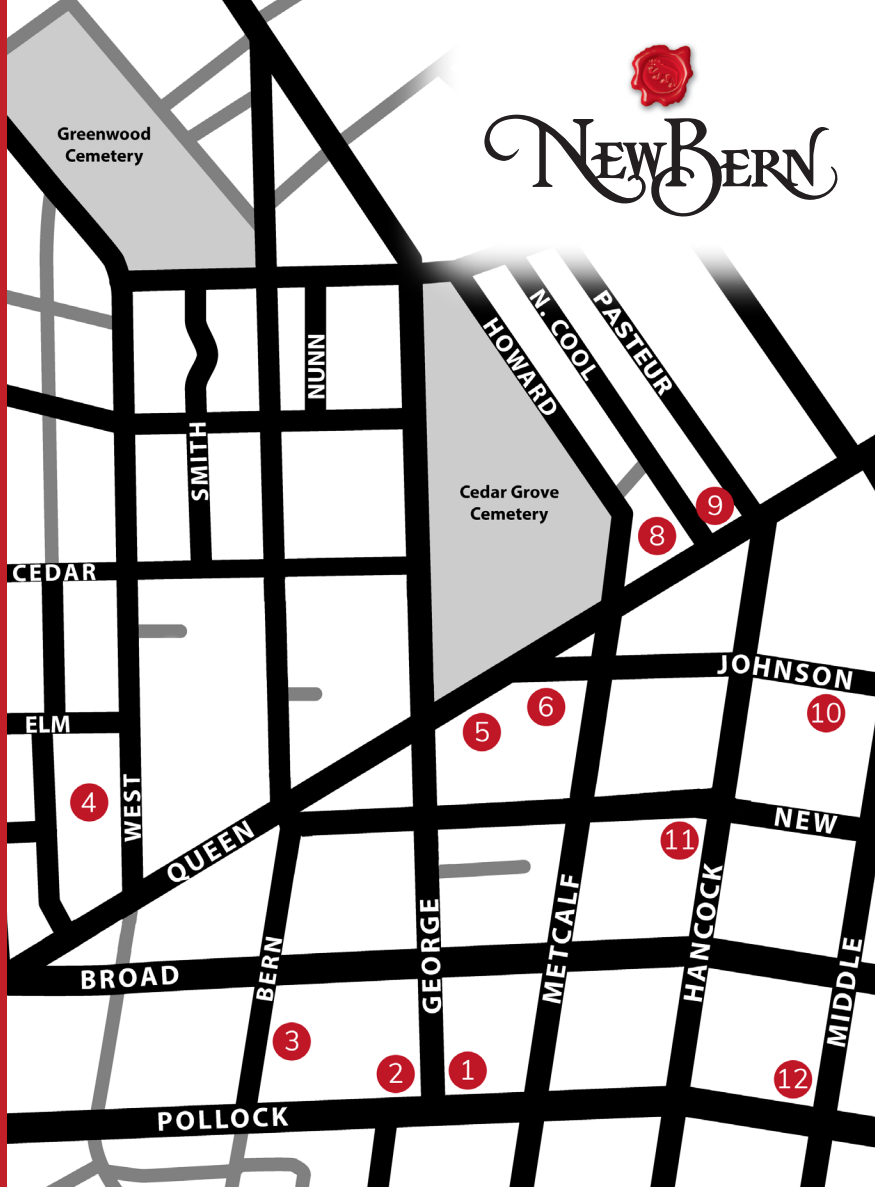
AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TOUR

This walking tour covers a distance of approximately 1.6 miles and takes an estimated 32 minutes to complete on foot.

New Bern's strong African-American Heritage is rich in culture as well as historical fact. It chronicles the rise of a proud race from slavery to independence and prominence. In the 1700s, New Bern became known as a popular town for both slaves and freed blacks in Colonial America. Over the course of many years, the large black population created institutions and had a political, economic, and cultural influence in the area.

As far back as 1800, New Bern's slaves outnumbered the whites. Slaves were cooks, domestics, laborers, blacksmiths, builders, and craftsmen. Blacks were especially noted for their skill as sailors. The bustling port of New Bern offered many opportunities for free blacks as seamen, stevedores, and peddlers.

In 1860, free blacks composed nearly 13 percent of New Bern's population - by far the greatest number of free blacks of any town in North Carolina. Thousands of slaves who freed themselves early in the Civil War poured into New Bern, drawn by the town's distinguished free black community.



1 310 GEORGE STREET

John Carruthers Stanly, the illegitimate son of John Wright Stanly, was a prominent man in New Bern, although his mother was an Ebo slave. He worked as a barber, opened his own business, and earned enough eventually to own a plantation and more than 160 slaves. He was North Carolina's wealthiest free black person in the first half of the 1700s. The Amelia Green House also known as the Green-Hollister House, was purchased in 1800 by John Carruthers Stanly for his wife's grandmother, Amelia Green, to save it from the tax collector. As a result, she was able to live there until her death around 1823.

2 307 GEORGE STREET

The John Wright Stanly House was built between 1779 and 1783. It stands as a tribute to the industrious days of slavery and freedom. Stanly was a prominent ship owner, merchant, and molasses distiller.

3 BERN STREET

St. Joseph's Catholic Church & School was established in 1887 by a Northern priest, Father Thomas Price. It served African-American congregations until the 1890s. The church established a parochial school for African-Americans in the 1880s which operated until the 1960s.

4 WEST STREET

Good Shepherd Hospital opened in 1938. This 58-bed facility was built with funds provided by the Episcopal Church and the Duke Endowment in the heart of the black neighborhood. Closed in 1967, the original hospital building is now used as a nursing home.

5 617 QUEEN STREET

In 1864, St. Peter's AME Zion Church was established as the first AME Zion congregation in the South. It began in 1865 for the Rue Chapel African-American Methodist Episcopal congregation, one of the two oldest congregations in North Carolina. Rue Chapel was relocated brick by brick to its current location in 1941. The new congregation was established in 1869. This brick sanctuary near Greenwood Cemetery is the oldest African-American church still standing.

6 607 JOHNSON STREET

The Isaac H. Smith House was the home of one of New Bern's wealthiest African-Americans. Realtor and finance broker Isaac Smith was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1898. His largest property development, "Smithtown," was bounded by Bern, Cypress, West, and Main Streets. It was burned in the 1920s; however, Smith Street still marks the site today.

7 519 JOHNSON STREET

The George H. White House was built in the late 18th century and was originally used as housing for slaves. It was named for George White, a free black man who was educated at Howard University in the 1870s. He practiced law in New Bern and also served as superintendent of North Carolina African American schools. White was elected to the State House and Senate and served in the U.S. Congress. He was also a co-founder of the New Bern African-American newspaper The Good Samaritan in 1880.

8 710 HOWARD STREET

King Solomon's Lodge Number One, the first black Masonic Lodge established after emancipation in North Carolina, was originally located on the corner of Johnson and Hancock Street. It served as the mother lodge for other black Masonic organizations across the state. The building was constructed in 1870.

9 512 QUEEN STREET

Not very far away, the Rhone Hotel was the first African-American-owned and operated hotel in New Bern. Built in 1923 for Henrietta Rhone, it operated from the 1920s to the 1950s. It was also the home of Charlotte Rhone, the first black registered nurse in the state and the first social worker in Craven County. The Rhone family was influential in the black community.

10 411 JOHNSON STREET

John R. Green bought his freedom and ran his own tailor shop from 1814 to 1850. His home, the John R. Green House was built in the 1820s when the African American population outnumbered the whites in New Bern. The John R. Green House stayed in the family until 1842. The Green family owned a family pew in Christ Episcopal Church, the same church the Stanly family attended.

11 501 AND 503 NEW STREET

The John Carruthers Stanly House & Dependency, also known as the Stanly-Bishop House was originally built between 1800 and 1810. This house was purchased by John Carruthers Stanly in 1815 as his primary residence.

12 CORNER OF MIDDLE AND POLLOCK STREET

On March 17, 1960, twenty-nine black youths from J.T. Barber High School were arrested for refusing to leave the S.H. Kress and Co. Store and the Clark's Drug Store. This was a local sit-in in conjunction with the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in.

NEW BERN

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