GREAT FIRE OF 1922
WALKING TOUR

Two sparks, one great fire. The Great Fire of 1922 started in the early morning hours on December 1, 1922. One fire at the Rowland Lumber Company, coupled with a fire in the Five Points District wreaked havoc on the city of New Bern. Stops 1-9 on the tour detail sites directly impacted by the fire. Whereas, stops 10-14 were additional sites related to the fire.

Following the path of the fire, this tour covers a total distance of approximately 4 miles and takes an estimated 32 minutes to walk through the directly impacted landmarks 1-9. *Driving times may vary.

Path of the Great Fire of 1922

1. UNION STATION: 416 Queen Street
Union Station on Queen Street was completed in 1910 and survived the Great Fire.

2. EBENEZER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: 720 Bern Street
This church, originally built in 1880 on Pasteur Street, was destroyed by the Great Fire and rebuilt in 1924 at the corner of Bern and Cedar Streets.

3. CEDAR GROVE CEMETERY: 808 George Street
Dating from its creation by Christ Episcopal Church in 1799, the cemetery, owned by the city since 1853, was an important place of refuge both during and in the aftermath of the fire.

4. ST. CYPRIAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH: 604 Johnson Street
This church on Johnson Street was built in 1910 to serve a congregation with roots back to the 1830's, but permanently established in 1866. The building did not burn in the Great Fire and served as an important medical facility and place of refuge. Its rector played a vital leadership role in the establishment of Good Shepherd Hospital by the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina.

5. ST. PETER'S AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH: 615 Queen Street
"Mother Zion of the South" is the first AMEZ church in the south. Founded in 1864 by Rev. James W. Hood, the building was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1922 and rebuilt in the years following.

6. RESIDENCES OF GEORGE STREET: 603 George Street
Over 100 buildings on George and Metcalf streets were dynamited to create a fire break in order to contain the spread of the fire. Today, this site is Kafer Park, the New Bern Police Department, and the Craven County Senior Center.

7. GREENWOOD CEMETERY: 810 Cypress Street
Greenwood Cemetery was established in 1882 as New Bern's first cemetery for African Americans. This site is located on Cypress Street, between West and Bern Streets.

8. FIRST MISSIONARY BAPTIST: 819 Cypress Street
First Missionary Baptist Church is believed to be the second oldest African American Baptist congregation in New Bern. During the Great Fire of 1922, the fire burned up to the church, but the building itself was not harmed. In fact, fire victims were sheltered in the basement.

9. RUE CHAPEL: 709 Oak Street
Founded by Rev. George Alexander Rue in 1865 as Bethel A.M.E, the church served as a black schoolhouse until it burned down during the Fire of 1922. The congregation rebuilt in 1924, but 12 years later, the city condemned the property to build what is now Craven Terrace. The church was rebuilt on an adjacent lot where it stands today.

Additional Sites Related to the Fire:

10. FIREMEN'S MUSEUM: 420 Broad Street
The New Bern Firemen's Museum features a "Fire of '22" exhibit which includes images, newspaper articles, recreations of the tent city, as well as a display showing the area the fire affected most. The guided tour explains how the fire started and what was done in the aftermath.

11. THE CHARLOTTE RHONE CENTER: 608 West Street

The Charlotte Rhone Center was originally the Colored Library. It is named for Charlotte Rhone who was instrumental in the establishment of the Colored Library in addition to having been instrumental in the building of Good Shepherd Hospital for African Americans, being the first Registered Nurse in North Carolina, building/owner (along with sisters) of the first hotel for African Americans in New Bern, being the first African American social worker for Craven County and a charter member of The Climbers Club, an affiliate of the National Association of Colored Women.

12. GOOD SHEPHERD HOSPITAL: 603 West Street

This site opened in 1938. The Great Fire revealed the urgent need for a hospital for African Americans in New Bern. Under the leadership of R. I. Johnson, the Rector of St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Diocese, the Duke Endowment, and others, Good Shepherd Hospital for African Americans was built. It operated for 26 years on West Street.

13. RHONE HOTEL: 512 Queen Street

In the aftermath, homeless African American families had nowhere to stay because there were no hotels for blacks. Charlotte Rhone and her sisters, Henrietta and Amy, filled this hole by building the Rhone Hotel for African Americans. The sisters lived on the second floor and rented rooms on the first floor to traveling blacks or teachers until 1955.

14. AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL GREAT FIRE MARKER: 601 Roundtree Street

This informational panel on the Great Fire was part of the Signs of History project.

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