

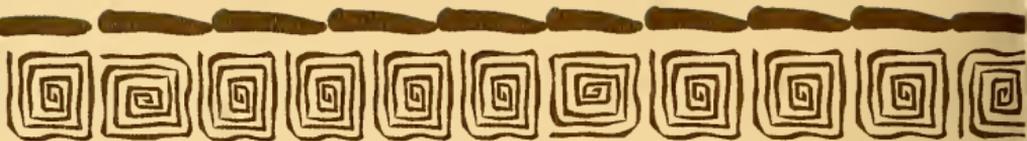
95-80



Wilmington, North Carolina's

AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL

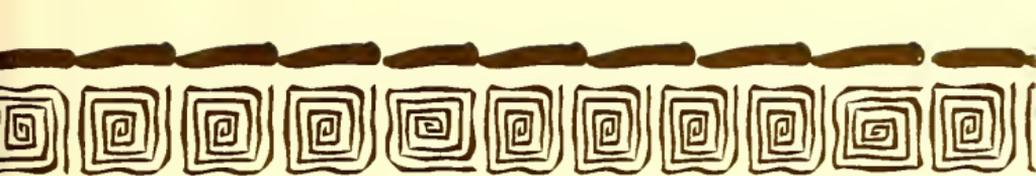




*The Wilmington Market House (1879)
Courtesy Cape Fear Museum (Image: 976.55.56)*

© Margaret M. Mulrooney and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 1997. This publication may be reproduced for free distribution so long as it is reproduced in its entirety and without alteration or incorporation into any other publication. All other unauthorized uses are prohibited.

Cover photo courtesy of the Cape Fear Museum (Image: IA889) and the National Baha'i Archives.



AN INTRODUCTION TO WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

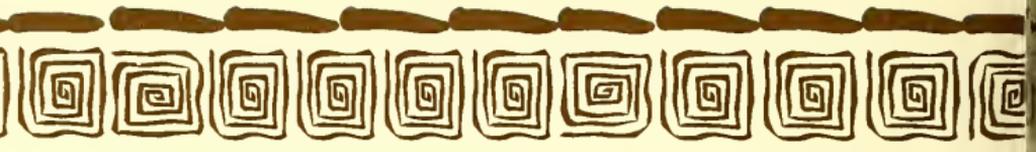
Welcome to one of the most historically-significant African-American cities in the United States. Africans and their descendants have been central to Wilmington's development since its incorporation in 1739/1740. Strategically located where the two branches of the Cape Fear River meet, the colonial settlement quickly became a chief port for the region. Southeastern North Carolina had an abundance of pitch pine forests, and Wilmington was the leading producer and exporter of naval stores (turpentine, rosin, tar, and pitch) for the English empire. The coastal region also boasted a small, tightly-knit gentry class, whose wealth derived from vast rice plantations. The success of area merchants and planters, however, rested on slave labor.

Brought into the port city by the hundreds, African slaves soon outnumbered whites in New Hanover County. North Carolina's colonial assembly passed legal codes prohibiting slaves from reading, writing, testifying in court, congregating in groups, bearing arms, and moving about the countryside. Shrewd and resourceful, Wilmington's slaves devised interesting ways to get around the law. The annual Kuner (or Kooner) festival, for example, which supposedly celebrated the Christmas season, originated as an opportunity for slaves to socialize, exchange information, affirm their African heritage, and even rebuke their masters. Marked by parades, music, costumes, and almsgiving, Wilmington's Kuner festival has been linked to New Orleans' Mardi Gras celebration, the Philadelphia Mummers' parade, and Caribbean carnivals. Additional information concerning African Americans in the colonial period can be found at the Cape Fear Museum (**site 1**).

The institution of slavery expanded and changed as time progressed. Before the Civil War, most slaves were bought and sold at the Market House, which stood at the intersection of Front and Market Streets. Slaves had no legal right to control their own labor, but owners frequently permitted them to gather at the market during slack times and hire themselves out. Unskilled slaves might work the Wilmington docks, unloading cargo for a few months during the winter, but a skilled artisan could be "let" for as much as a full year. Although slaves were required to return the proceeds of this labor to their masters, some owners granted them a share and many slaves managed to buy freedom for themselves and family members. As a result, Wilmington was also home to a large and growing population of free blacks.

Like many cities throughout the antebellum South, Wilmington had no exclusively white or black neighborhoods. Urban slaves generally lived in close proximity to their masters; sometimes they shared the same building, and sometimes they occupied a specially-built "quarter" nearby (**site 2**). Free blacks lived in working-class neighborhoods, interspersed amid unskilled white laborers and newly-arrived immigrants. As the city's economy expanded, people of all races, creeds, and cultures came here looking for work. By the 1850s, persons of African descent had secured a particular niche in the building trades, which they occupied for many decades (**sites 2, 3**).

During the Civil War, Wilmington became a chief port of the Confederacy. Protected by Fort Fisher, blockade runners slipped into the Cape Fear River, bringing much-needed supplies, arms, and ammunition. They also supported a level of prosperity that was unusual



in wartime. The surrender of Fort Fisher on January 15, 1865, signaled the end of an era. A few weeks later, Union forces occupied the city. Two brigades of U.S. Colored Troops (3,149 men) participated in the campaign and suffered heavy casualties. African-American soldiers were later interred in the northwest corner of the Federal cemetery on Market Street (**site 4**).

The Civil War and its aftermath had two significant repercussions for the city's residents: it devastated their economy and forever altered relations between the two races. Having gained not only their freedom but the vote and access to education, African Americans in Reconstruction-era Wilmington pursued a wide array of advancements in the political, economic, and social spheres. Beginning as soon as the late 1860s, they built new schools, churches, businesses, and benevolent organizations (**sites 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10**). These advances were linked to the city's renewed prosperity. In the first two decades after the Civil War, Wilmington expanded its role as a regional railroad center, and began to attract new businesses. Buoyed by their economic success, members of the city's African-American community also acquired a foothold in city, county, and state politics. Because most of the city's freedmen favored the Republican party, leading Democrats grew alarmed. They, like many other Southerners, perceived the growing political power of African Americans as not only an obstacle to economic development, but a challenge to their traditional way of life. Beginning in the 1890s, white Wilmingtonians, like white Americans elsewhere, took aggressive measures to halt this dual threat (**sites 3, 11, 12, 13**). The result was Wilmington's infamous "race riot" and coup of 1898, which marked the onset of the Jim Crow era in North Carolina.

The 20th century brought many changes to Wilmington. By 1910, blacks had lost their numerical majority and were once again subject to segregation by statutes. Despite a brief reprieve during World War I, Wilmington's economy was declining rapidly. Many African Americans left during the 1920s and '30s to seek better paying jobs in Northern cities and the industrial Piedmont.

Those who stayed turned inward, and focused their attention on personal, family, and community interests (**site 11, 14, 15, 16**). As a result of World War II, Wilmington and the rest of the South experienced a boost of economic activity that lasted through the 1950s and 1960s. African Americans prospered along with the rest of their neighbors, but not equally. Their frustration helped pave the way for the Civil Rights movement. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Wilmington's black citizens were once again enfranchised, but discrimination and racism persisted. In the early 1970s, racial tensions erupted in school desegregation riots and the trial of the "Wilmington Ten" (**sites 6, 17**). Both the riots and the trial received national coverage from the media. These events left an important legacy, which Wilmington still endeavors to overcome.

As you travel this city's streets and visit its historic sites, you will encounter many interesting and memorable scenes from the past. Some serve as a vivid reminder of slavery and racial oppression, but others recall triumphant examples of human courage, perseverance, and cooperation. Today, Wilmington is experiencing yet another period of economic expansion, and it is clear that African Americans continue to have a crucial role in its development. By exploring their experiences and contributions in the past, it is hoped that you may come to appreciate their significance to the city's present and future.





This business was founded by Alfred Hargrave in 1859. A slave, Hargrave hired himself out as a blacksmith, and began his own business on Market Street after the Civil War. His son, John, and grandson, Garnet, opened a newer, larger shop on N. 11th Street, shown above, in 1914. It closed in 1938. Courtesy of the Cape Fear Museum (Image: 992.140.1).

THE SITES

1. Cape Fear Museum

814 Market Street

Access to the public: Tues-Sat, 9-5; Sun, 2-5. 341-7413. Fee. HA.

The largest museum in eastern North Carolina, it interprets the history and natural history of the Cape Fear region from pre-history to the present. The long-term exhibit, "Waves and Currents: The Lower Cape Fear Story," contains a wide array of information about African Americans in the Wilmington area, and serves as a useful point of orientation for the sites in this brochure. Of special note is a display case containing personal memorabilia of former Wilmingtonian and professional basketball player, Michael Jordan.

2. Bellamy Mansion Museum of History and Design Arts

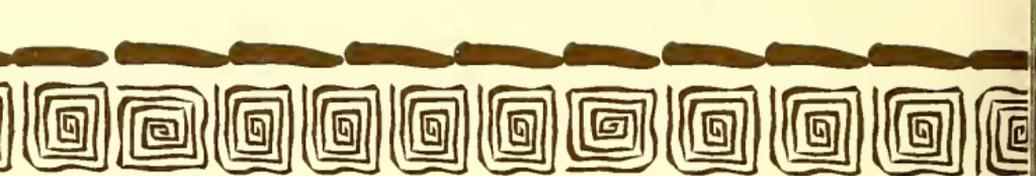
503 Market Street

Access to the public: Wed.-Sat., 10-5; Sun., 1-5. 251-3700.

Grounds free; fee for mansion tour.

This building stands as a testament to African-American craftsmanship. In the two decades immediately preceding the Civil War, Wilmington enjoyed the prestige of being North Carolina's largest city and port. A strong economy and local pride resulted in a major building boom during the 1850s. Impressive houses went up on every block. Dr. John D. Bellamy began construction of this residence in 1859. The historic mansion combines architectural features of the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Classical Revival Styles. The 14 Corinthian columns, measuring 25 feet in height, and the mansion's ornate cupola are unmatched anywhere in Wilmington.

Contractor/architect James F. Post and draftsman Rufus Bunnell are credited with designing the structure, but black artisans performed the actual labor. Many of the craftsmen who worked on the mansion were skilled slaves, some of whose owners allowed them to "hire their own time;" that is, they made their own arrangements with employers, lived on their own, and kept a portion of their earnings. The other



mechanics who worked here were free. By 1860, blacks comprised about 25% of the building trades in Wilmington, but that figure rose even higher after the Civil War. In 1865 the mansion served as the district Union military headquarters. During the last days of the War, these headquarters operated as a predecessor for the Freedman's Bureau. The mansion is now open to the public offering tours focusing on history, architecture, and the restoration process.

Bellamy Mansion Slave Quarters

*Access to the public: Wed.-Sat., 10-5; Sun., 1-5. 251-3700.
Grounds free; fee for mansion tour.*

Behind the Bellamy Mansion stands one of the best-preserved examples of an urban slave quarter in the United States. Built in 1859, this two-story, brick structure likely housed the following people: Sarah the housekeeper and cook; Mary Ann, Joan and Rosalla, the domestics and nursemaids; and three unidentified children. Guy, the butler/coachman, and Tony, a general laborer/handyman, probably lived in a hayloft of the now destroyed carriage house. As 'house slaves,' they interacted with their owner more closely and more frequently than did 'fieldhands' at Grovely or Grist's, the Bellamys' country plantations.

Close proximity to their masters enabled these men and women to receive benefits like better food and higher status, but they also endured greater supervision, less privacy, and longer hours. Although it was impossible to escape fully from white control, African Americans asserted their dignity and self-worth by forging a distinct culture of their own. The cradle of slave culture was the plantation quarters, but urban quarters served the same function.

Because they lived in the city, the Bellamy slaves developed contacts among Wilmington's free black population and participated in its culture as well. Through this kind of interaction, many urban slaves acquired skills, such as reading, writing, carpentry, midwifery, or blacksmithing. Although Sarah, and perhaps Tony, continued to work for the Bellamys after the Civil War, the others pursued employment elsewhere in the city.

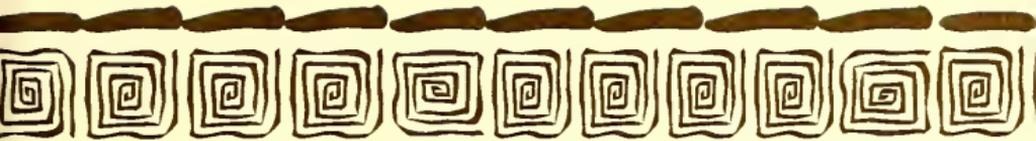
3. City Hall-Thalian Hall

102 N. Third Street, 310 Chestnut Street

Access to the public: Lobby and gallery open Mon.-Fri., Noon-6pm; Sat. & Sun. 2-6. Free. Guided tours of theater and complex, Mon.-Fri., 11am & 3pm; Sat., 2pm. 343-3660. Fee.

Construction of this building began in 1855 and ended in 1858. Much of the work was done by free or enslaved black craftsmen, who dominated the city's building trades in the 19th century. Designed in the Italianate style, like many other antebellum buildings in Wilmington's historic district, the structure served two functions: the primary, pedimented block housed a new city hall, and the attached hall accommodated the largest theater between Richmond and Atlanta.

African Americans' access to Thalian Hall varied. During the antebellum era, only "house slaves" were permitted to attend performances. The admission price charged them was half that of white adults, and they usually sat with their owners. After the Civil War, all blacks were admitted, but their seats were segregated. Usually, African Americans sat in the balcony, but if the event on stage was intended primarily for black audiences, then the seating was reversed. In certain cases, whites and blacks shared the main level, but sat on opposite sides of the main aisle. A photograph gallery on the mezzanine level honors some of the nationally prominent African Americans who spoke or performed here, including Frederick Douglas, Booker T. Washington,



and Wilmington's own Caterina Jarboro, an opera singer.

Life in Wilmington changed dramatically after the Civil War, and with it, so did the access of African Americans to City Hall. During the 1870s and 1880s, freedmen in the Cape Fear region became a powerful voting bloc. By 1897, there were three black Republicans on the city's ten-member Board of Aldermen, which met on the third floor. African Americans held many other municipal positions. These included Coroner, Justice of the Peace, Deputy Clerk of the Superior Court, and Superintendent of Streets. There were also two all-black fire departments, as well as black policemen, mail carriers, and city inspectors. All black public officials—and some white ones—were either Republicans or Fusionists, as Populist supporters of the party were called. Despite their abilities and willingness to serve, they were rejected by white Democrats. As the state Democratic party pursued its “white supremacy” campaign of 1898, residents of Wilmington met repeatedly at City Hall-Thalian Hall to discuss the upcoming November elections and the issue of “Negro domination.” It was on this site, then, that prominent Democrats publicly denounced the city's Republican-Fusionist government and initiated plans to establish a new one, and it was here, in the city council room, where the Mayor of Wilmington and the Republican members of the Board of Aldermen were forced to resign on November 10, 1898. This event, perhaps the only coup d'état in the United States, brought the state-wide “white supremacy” election campaign to an end, and marked the onset of the Jim Crow era in North Carolina.

4. Wilmington National Cemetery

2011 Market Street

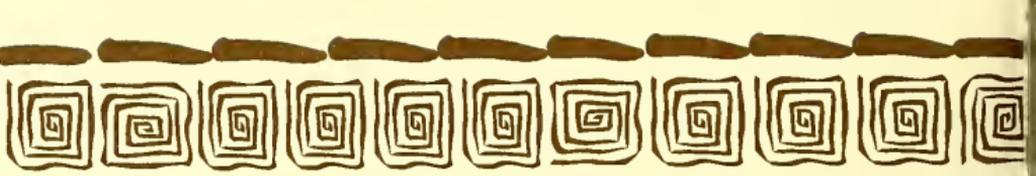
Access to the public: Mon.-Sun., sunrise-sunset. Free.

This cemetery was established by the federal government in 1867 as a burial ground for military veterans. Included among the nearly 5,000 graves are the remains of 557 black Union soldiers, who died trying to capture Fort Fisher and the port city of Wilmington. Although these assaults did not end the Civil War, they hastened Lee's surrender by cutting off a major source of supplies and reinforcements.

After the fall of Fort Fisher in January 1865, Union forces advanced along both sides of the Cape Fear River toward Wilmington. At the head of the east-side column were two brigades of U.S. Colored Troops led by Brigadier General Charles J. Paine. These 3,149 men were well-prepared to lead the Wilmington Campaign. Many of their regiments were formed during the early years of the war, and consequently, they were seasoned veterans. Nine of them wore the medal of honor, which was awarded for gallantry. According to one eyewitness, they were “well-disciplined... and went forward with alacrity in capital form, showing that they were good soldiers.” Another called them “cool, accurate, and soldierly.”

On February 20 and 21, these “crack regiments” engaged the Confederates at the Battle of Forks Road or Jumpin' Run. The Union troops suffered heavy casualties. Because they occupied the front lines, black soldiers made up more than half of all Union dead. The survivors quickly buried their fallen comrades and pushed on to take Wilmington. When the U.S. Colored Troops entered the city “with burnished barrels and bayonets gleaming,” free blacks and former slaves cheered wildly. This time, however, they marched behind their white counterparts.

U.S. Colored Troops were also segregated in death. When the war ended, thousands of Union dead were relocated from temporary graves to new federal cemeteries. In all, nearly 2,000 Civil War soldiers were laid to rest in the Wilmington National Cemetery. Most were never identified, but all received a full military burial. The 557 African Americans were interred in the northwest corner.



5. Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church (USA)

712 Chestnut Street

Access to the public: Wed., Noonday Prayer Service, Noon-1pm; Tues., Thurs., Sat., & Sun., 10am-1pm. Free.

Located within Wilmington's original historic district, this building is an imaginative blend of Carpenter Gothic and Italianate architecture. It was built by the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in 1858 and served as a mission chapel. Soon after its construction, a large number of parishioners, including 14 blacks, withdrew to form the Second Presbyterian Church of Wilmington. This congregation received title to the chapel, and held services there for several years. By 1865, however, Second Presbyterian's membership had outgrown the little wooden church, and blacks and whites wanted to worship separately. On October 6, 1866, a committee consisting of several prominent white businessmen, including Alexander Sprunt and John A. Taylor, gave the Chestnut Street property to the newly-formed First African Presbyterian Church of Wilmington. The trustees of the new, all-black church included many prominent members of the African-American community, including David Sadgwar, a former slave and carpenter, Alfred Hargrave, a blacksmith, and Henry Taylor, a builder. In April 1867, they reorganized as the Chestnut Street United Presbyterian Church, making this one of the oldest black churches in Wilmington. Over the years, its members have included state legislators, teachers, school principals, a missionary to Africa, and the city's first practicing African-American doctor, James F. Shober. Today, the 100-member church continues to serve the community with three outreach ministries, a daycare, computer awareness classes, and a SHARE program.

6. Williston Academy, Gregory Normal Institute, and Gregory Congregational United Church of Christ

609 Nun Street

Access to the public: Prayer services Wed., 7 pm; Sun., 10 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.

This complex site has long been a spiritual and educational center for Wilmington's African-American community. In 1865, eight members of the American Missionary Association (AMA) came to this city and began teaching Wilmington's freedmen to read and write. The Society's members believed that God could best be served by reading and understanding the scriptures, but they also hoped that education would promote racial equality. Instruction was available to anyone who was willing to learn, not just children, and classes were held in four local churches. By 1866, the students and their teachers had collected enough money to build a school of their own. Called the Williston Academy in recognition of a major New England benefactor, it occupied a lot around the corner on S. Seventh Street, where Jordan's Funeral Home stands today.

As Williston's enrollment expanded in the 1870s, so did the New Hanover County Board of Education's involvement. In 1873, the Board purchased the small, two-story, wooden school from the AMA, and added a one-story annex to the rear. Renamed the Williston Grammar School, it was the first publicly funded school for blacks in Wilmington and offered primary education only.

The AMA, meanwhile, continued to operate its own privately-funded Williston Academy and Normal School, which offered both secondary education and instruction for future teachers. A large, two-story, frame structure, it stood on the corner of Seventh and Nun. In 1880, James



Teachers and students of the Gregory Normal Institute gather before the school in 1890. The Institute building, which used to stand on the northwest corner of S. Seventh and Nun, was demolished soon after classes ended. Its state historical marker stands at the corner of S. Third and Nun. Courtesy Cape Fear Museum (Image: IA880).

Gregory of Massachusetts donated funds not only to remodel the AMA school but to build a brick-veneered teacher's residence and an impressive Gothic Revival church. In appreciation for this gift, the AMA teachers voted to rename the school and their congregation in Gregory's honor. There were also several additional public schools for African Americans at this time, but the Nun Street complex remained the leading institution for several decades. In 1921, the AMA closed the Gregory Normal Institute and its 281 students were transferred to the new Williston on S. 10th Street (**site 15**). The former teachers' residence continued to welcome Sunday school classes and other community-based groups until its demolition in the 1960s.

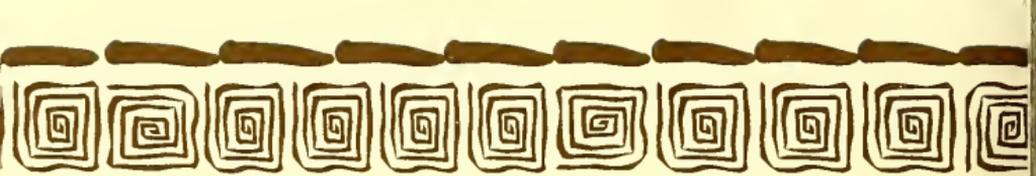
The Gregory Congregational Church expanded after 1921. Many smaller congregations were welcomed into the Gregory fold, and during the interwar period, the church became a symbol of unity and strength in the African-American community. Because of this reputation, the black student leaders of the 1971 New Hanover High School boycott came to Gregory and asked its pastor, Rev. Eugene Templeton, to provide them with a meeting place (**see site 6**). Though white, Templeton not only offered them support, but he helped them contact Ben Chavis, who had organized similar desegregation protests in Charlotte, Greensboro, and many other North Carolina cities. Based at Gregory, Chavis and his student-followers staged numerous marches and demonstrations in the neighborhood, and held a televised news conference to air their views. When the peaceful student boycott turned to violence, the Gregory community remained a bulwark of order and stability. Its healing influence remains a powerful force in Wilmington today.

7. Pine Forest Cemetery

North end of N. 16th Street

Access to the public: Mon.-Sun., 8 am-5 pm Free.

In 1860, the city set aside 15 acres of land for a burying ground for blacks. Nine years later, a local black legislator named George W. Price introduced a bill to the North Carolina House asking for the official incorporation of a new Wilmington cemetery. The bill passed, and in 1870, the new trustees of the Pine Forest Cemetery Company petitioned



the city for the property. The Board of Aldermen granted the deed on September 26, 1870, for the token fee of one dollar.

If you look closely, you will see that some tombstones actually predate the cemetery. After 1855, it was illegal to bury bodies within the Wilmington city limits. At that time, it was believed that decomposing bodies gave off poisonous gases that helped spread diseases like yellow fever and cholera. When Pine Forest opened in 1871, some families transferred the remains of loved ones who had been buried elsewhere. As the city's African-American residents prospered in the 1880s and 1890s, they made improvements to the cemetery's grounds. In some places, you can see traces of brick paving, ornamental ironwork, and decorative plants. The graceful iron arch that marks the cemetery's entrance was erected in 1938.

Most of the African Americans who served or lived in the Wilmington area are buried here, including slaves, wage workers, skilled craftsmen, businessmen, and professionals. About 20 feet inside the main gates lies the grave of Robert R. Taylor (1868-1942). Taylor, the son of a prominent local builder, was probably the first African American to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Trained as an architect, he received his degree in 1892. At the request of Booker T. Washington, he designed most of the major academic buildings at Tuskegee Institute. The Taylor Homes complex on N. Fourth Street is named in his memory. Buried next to him are the families of John H. Shaw (1865-1921), mortician, and Robert S. Jervay (1873-1941), publisher of the *Cape Fear Journal*.

The main road branches off to the right just beyond the Taylor plot. Continue moving east. Count five rows and turn north. Halfway up this row on the right is a large plot with an obelisk dedicated to members of the Howe family. Here lies Anthony Walker, who died in 1837, and his wife, Tenah. Family tradition holds that Walker, whose real name was Mbata, was born in Nigeria and brought to Wilmington as a slave in the 18th century. He had been a builder in Africa, and his second owner, Colonel Howe, allowed him to "hire his own time" on nearby construction projects. Howe eventually freed Walker and his family. One of his sons, Alfred Howe, became a well-known builder as well, and erected the large monument in the center of the plot. Mary Washington Howe (1852-1900) was a prominent local educator, and the only female principal of the Williston school.

Other graves to look for include those of Frederick Sadgwar, a well-known carpenter; James Dudley, former president of the North Carolina A&T College in Greensboro; and James F. Shober, the first licensed African-American physician to practice in Wilmington.

8. St. Mark's Episcopal Church

600 Grace Street

Access to the public: Parish Office, Mon.-Fri., 1-4pm; Sun. Services, 11am. 763-3210. Free.

St. Mark's is perhaps the oldest church in North Carolina to be built by and for an African-American congregation. It was originally organized in 1858 as a mission of St. Paul's Episcopal Church on N. 16th Street. Black and white parishioners worshipped together until 1866, when an all-black mission emerged. After the Civil War, new opportunities arose for African Americans in Wilmington, and many achieved prosperity and influence in the community. In 1868, the black members of the mission church broke away from St. Paul's and received their first black minister, Rev. Charles O. Brady. Their shared faith was a powerful force, and within five years, the collective efforts of the congregation produced not only the funds to purchase land on N. Sixth Street, but



most of the \$6,000 construction costs for a new church. Built in the Gothic Revival Style, it was erected under the supervision of Alfred Howe, a former slave and skilled builder. In 1872, St. Mark's was officially recognized as an Episcopal parish, and in 1875, it became the first African-American church consecrated into the Diocese of North Carolina. Over time, the congregation grew and St. Mark's became one of Wilmington's leading cultural, social, and spiritual institutions. The church's interior was refurbished in 1880, and the structure was enlarged to its present dimensions in 1897. The parish house, called Jackson Hall, was erected in 1953. The state of North Carolina recognized the significance of this site by placing an historical marker at Third and Grace streets. The congregation remains active today with Sunday school and bible study classes, a youth choir, and other outreach programs.

9. Giblem Lodge

720 Princess Street

Access to the public: interior open the third Thursday of every month from 9am-5pm. Free. Please call in advance, 763-4740.

This unpretentious, three-story, stuccoed-brick structure has a long and distinguished history. Built between August 1871 and November 1873, it was commissioned by the members of Giblem Lodge No. 2, Free and Accepted Prince Hall Masons, Wilmington's first black lodge. Established during the heyday of fraternal organizations, the lodge was founded upon the principles of fellowship and mutual aid. In 1875, the Lodge hosted the first black Agricultural and Industrial Fair in both the state and in the nation. The event began with a parade through the city's downtown streets and speeches by prominent individuals. Inside, elaborately decorated booths on all three floors displayed local flowers and plants, new farm equipment, specially-bred livestock, and improved farming methods. Thousands of people attended the fair, and the event was widely publicized. In the 1880s, the Masons opened the upper floors of their hall to local Sunday school groups, and allowed the ground floor to serve as a market for the Third Ward. In the 1920s, the city's first black library was here, too. In recognition of its significance as a community center, the building received a Historic Wilmington Foundation plaque in 1983. Today, it continues to serve as a meeting place for different groups, including five Masonic lodges.

10. Sadgwar Family House (Bahá'í Center)

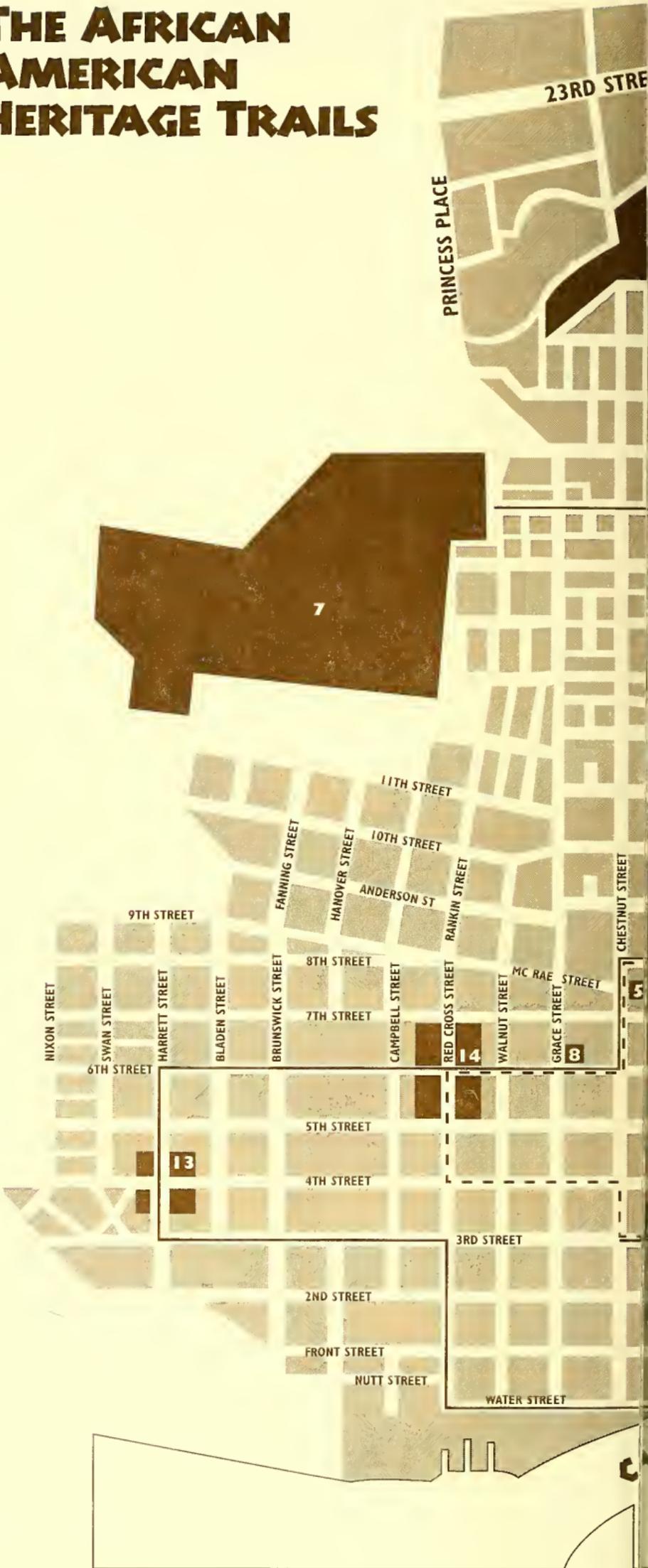
15 N. Eighth Street

Access to the public: Call in advance to arrange tour of interior. 762-7074. Free.

This structure symbolizes the achievements of a well-known Wilmington family. According to local tradition, David Elias Sadgwar was born out of wedlock to a wealthy, young, white woman. Disowned by his mother and her parents, Sadgwar was raised by one of their slaves. During his life in bondage, he learned carpentry, reading, and writing. He married Fanny Merrick, a light-skinned slave, and they had two sons, David Jr. and Frederick. After emancipation, Sadgwar acquired property in the nearby Castle Hayne area and in Wilmington at what is now 15 N. Eighth Street.

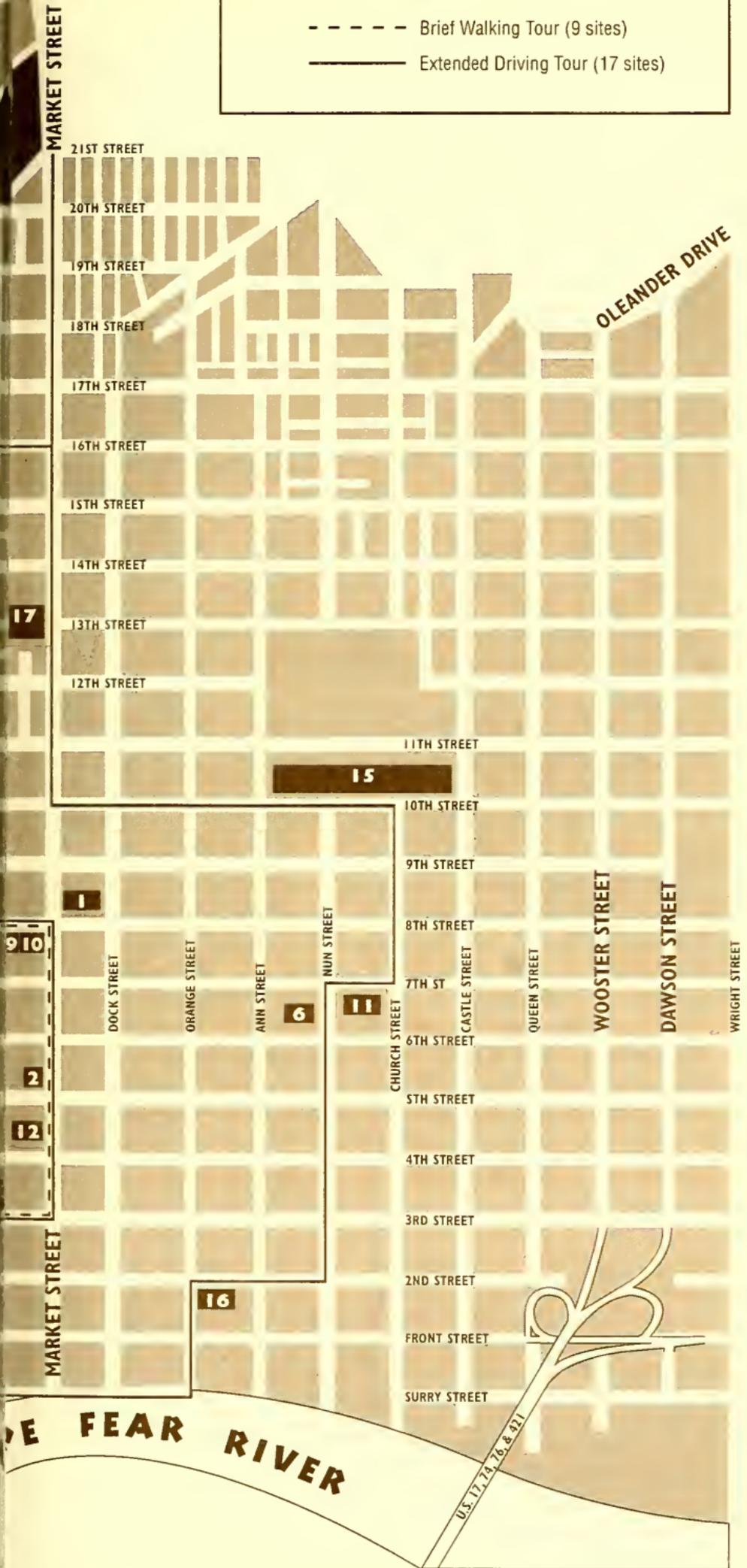
In 1889, Frederick Sadgwar built his permanent residence on the Wilmington lot. A carpenter like his father, Frederick's craftsmanship can not only be seen here but throughout the historic district. Originally a small, frame cottage, the house underwent several additions, and by 1915, it was a two-story, nine-room dwelling. The additions were

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAILS



SUGGESTED SITES

- Brief Walking Tour (9 sites)
- Extended Driving Tour (17 sites)





Frederick Sadgwar's family gathers on the front steps of their home following his 1925 funeral. Caroline Sadgwar is seated in the center. Courtesy of the Cape Fear Museum (Image: IA889) and the National Baha'i Archives.

needed to house Frederick's growing family. In all, Frederick and his wife, Caroline, raised 12 children here.

Frederick and Caroline always stressed the importance of education, and all of their children attended the Gregory Normal Institute (**site 6**). After graduation, sons David C. and Frederick Jr. followed in their father's and grandfather's footsteps by becoming carpenters. Carrie Sadgwar achieved fame as a featured soloist for the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and later married Alex Manly, publisher of the *Wilmington Daily Record* (**site 11**). Felice and Mabel became teachers at the Williston Public School, where they helped educate an entire generation of African Americans. Other siblings became beauticians, morticians, and bankers.

Sometime before March 1923, Frederick and Felice were introduced to the Bahá'í Faith by Louis G. Gregory, a Fisk University graduate and Howard University-trained lawyer. Frederick and Felice embraced the faith then; Mabel became a Bahá'í in 1975, when she returned to Wilmington from Philadelphia, where she and her husband, Tom, one of Alex Manly's brothers, had lived for many years. Felice and Mabel occupied the family home until their deaths. Mabel died in 1986 and Felice died in 1988. They were 98 and 95 respectively. The house was willed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States for use as a Bahá'í Center.



Photographs from a Nov. 26, 1898, *Collier's Weekly* article about the Wilmington coup and violence. The original caption reads: 1. Ex-Congressman Alfred M. Waddell, Revolutionary Mayor of Wilmington, 2. "Manhattan Park," where shooting affray took place, 3. Fourth and Harnett, where first Negroes fell, 4. E. G. Parmele, new Chief of Police, 5. The wrecked "Record" building and a group of vigilantes. Courtesy Cape Fear Museum (Image: 967.13.3, p4).

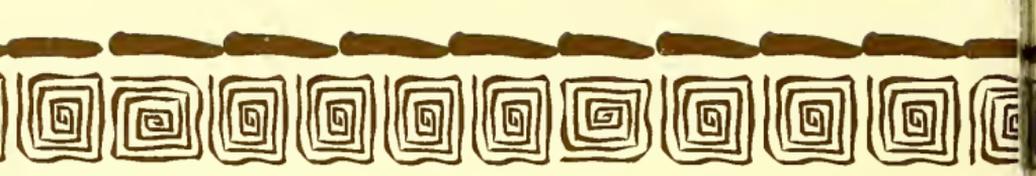
11. The Wilmington Daily Record and the Wilmington Journal

S. Seventh Street, between Nun and Church

Access to the public: exterior viewing only.

By the 1890s, Wilmington's African American residents had their own newspaper, *The Daily Record*. It was the only daily black newspaper printed in the United States at that time, and its original office was located downtown. Like many black businesses, the paper was a family venture: Alexander Manly, a graduate of the Hampton Institute, served as its editor, and his brothers Frank, Henry, and Lewin were the manager, compositor and foreman, respectively. The traveling agent for the *Record* was John T. Howe, one of New Hanover County's representatives to the 1897 General Assembly. Since Howe was a Republican, and Alex Manly ran for Deputy Recorder of Deeds under the Republican banner, the paper had a partisan tone. Despite its political leanings, the city's leading Democratic newspaper, *The Messenger*, called it a "very creditable colored paper," and *The Messenger's* editor, Thomas Clawson, sold the Manlys their printing press. The paper was also patronized by many of the city's white merchants and businessmen, who used its pages to advertise their wares and services.

White Wilmington withdrew its support following the appearance of an August 1898 editorial in which Manly condemned the practice of lynching alleged black rapists and argued that some white women willingly pursued relationships with black men. Published at the height of the Democratic Party's "white supremacy" campaign, Manly's words were pure dynamite. White Democratic and black Republican leaders both denounced him, but Wilmington's black working-class citizens remained supportive, and Manly kept the paper open by selling new subscriptions. By the end of August, the Manlys had been evicted from their building, and they moved to a commercial structure on S. Seventh



Street called Free Love Hall. Owned by the Daughters of Charity, a benevolent and social organization, the new office stood next to St. Luke AME Zion Church. The newspaper lasted less than three months. Throughout the “white supremacy” campaign that fall, the Democratic *Messenger* continued to print excerpts from Alex Manly’s editorial. As racial tensions rose, Manly received death threats. On November 10, an armed mob gathered at the Wilmington Light Infantry Armory, marched down S. Seventh Street, destroyed the printing press, and burned Free Love Hall beyond repair (**see site 12**). Forewarned of the assault, Alex Manly fled the city and eventually settled in Philadelphia. His descendants live there still.

Wilmington did not have another black newspaper until 1927, when Robert S. Jervay began publishing *The Cape Fear Journal*. Jervay was not a native of Wilmington, but his wife, Mary Alice, had once lived here, and he soon developed a deep love for the city, too. The family occupied a modest, two-story structure on S. Seventh Street, almost directly opposite the site of *The Daily Record*. The front part of the building served as the print shop. Originally published as a four-page tabloid, the newspaper provided a voice for the African-American community at a time when blacks in the South had few public outlets for their views. In the 1940s, the youngest member of the family, Thomas C. Jervay, assumed control of the paper, renamed it the *Wilmington Journal*, and dedicated it to the cause of black advancement. Like his father, Tom believed that Wilmington offered more and better opportunities for advancement than most cities, and in his editorials, he urged his readers to reject second-class citizenship. During the 1950s and 1960s, Jervay became one of the city’s most vocal advocates for Civil Rights. His widow, Willie E. Jervay, is the present owner and publisher. She is aided by daughter Mary Alice Thatch, who recently replaced another daughter, Katherine Tate, as editor-in-chief. As a member of the National Newspaper Publishing Association, an all-black organization, it continues to print “All the News Without Fear of Favor,” and boasts an average circulation of 8,600 copies per week.

12. John Taylor House/Wilmington Light Infantry Armory **409 Market Street**

Access to the public: exterior viewing only.

This austere and sturdy structure has many layers of meaning for the city of Wilmington. It was originally built in 1847 as the residence of businessman John A. Taylor. In 1892, the Wilmington Light Infantry purchased the house and refurbished it to serve as an armory. Part of the building was later used by the United Daughters of the Confederacy to house a collection of relics that later grew into the Cape Fear Museum. More recently, it has served as a public library and a city office building. It is presently owned by the First Baptist Church.

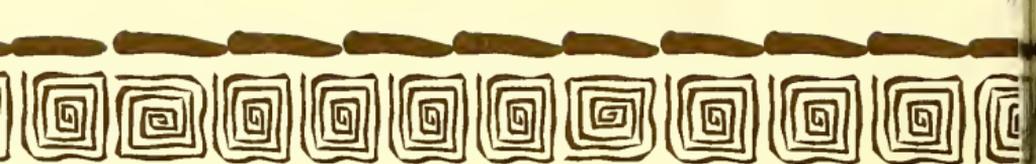
The site’s significance to African-American history has long been hidden. On the morning of November 10, 1898, a group of more than 500 armed white men gathered in front of the armory to await the response of their black neighbors to the “White Man’s Declaration of Independence.” Read aloud by Alfred Moore Waddell, a lawyer, former state legislator, and Confederate colonel, the declaration had been adopted on November 9 at the court house, along with a series of resolutions demanding an end to the city’s Republican-Fusionist government, black domination of certain occupations, and *The Daily Record*. The 32-member delegation selected the previous night to represent the city’s black citizens included John G. Norwood, principal of Williston Public School, lawyers W. E. Henderson and Armond W.



This drawing appeared on the cover of Collier's Weekly, November 26, 1898. Entitled "A Scene in the Race Disturbance at Wilmington, N.C.," it incorrectly portrays Wilmington's black citizens as the instigators of the violence. Courtesy Cape Fear Museum (Image: 67.13.3).

Scott, and barber Carter Peamon. Faced with a 7:30 am deadline, the delegates quickly drafted a reply, which affirmed their wish for peace in spite of their inability to meet white demands. Their messenger placed the letter in the mail instead of delivering it to Waddell by hand. When the deadline passed unanswered, the mob selected Waddell as their leader, organized into military ranks, and prepared to march. Their target was *The Daily Record* office on S. Seventh Street (**site 11**). Alexander Manly, the newspaper's editor, had recently written an editorial considered offensive to the honor of white women. To imagine the scene, picture a group of men marching in close formation and stretching for two blocks. As they moved east on Market Street and down S. Seventh Street, hundreds more joined the procession. By the time they reached their destination, the mob had about 1,000 people, including both wealthy and poor Wilmingtonians as well as long-time residents and newcomers.

Following the destruction of the newspaper's press and office, Waddell led the mob back to the Armory, mounted the steps, and offered immunity from prosecution to any man who captured and killed Manly. Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry's Home Guard, a volunteer military company, were passive onlookers. Waddell then ordered the mob to disperse, but their excitement from the morning's events made for an explosive atmosphere. Many of these men lived in Brooklyn, and the worst violence of the day occurred when they confronted their African-American neighbors at N. Fourth and Harnett



streets (**site 13**). As hysteria gripped the city, the Home Guard was called out to maintain the peace. The Infantry pulled its rapid-fire Gatling gun through the city's black neighborhoods and by the following evening, the city's new mayor, Alfred Moore Waddell, had established martial law. The troops were finally demobilized on November 14.

13. Brooklyn

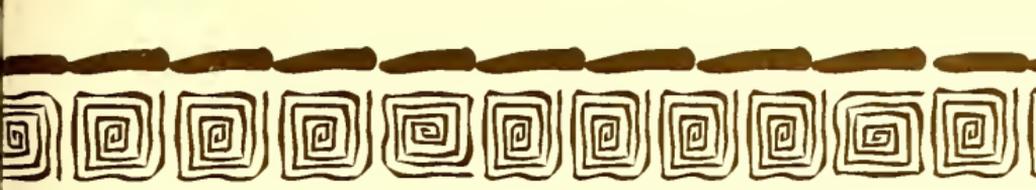
(N. Fourth and Harnett Streets)

Access to the public: exterior viewing only.

The intersection of N. Fourth and Harnett streets is located in a section of Wilmington called Brooklyn. No one knows exactly how this historic neighborhood got its name, but the community has always had a dubious relationship with the rest of the city. Originally settled in the early 19th century, Brooklyn was and remains physically isolated by a deep ravine and railroad right-of-way. Bridges at N. Fourth and N. Sixth streets provided the only access. During Reconstruction, thousands of people streamed into Wilmington looking for work, and the community's population rose dramatically. By the 1890s, the lower end of N. Fourth Street had become Brooklyn's commercial center, with several grocers, cobblers, bakers, and eating houses. The population at that time was a mixture of rural white migrants from the countryside, struggling immigrants, unskilled black laborers, and a rising black professional class. It was a volatile combination, and in 1898, Brooklyn exploded.

On the morning of November 10, a group of white men, mostly armed, returned to their homes in Brooklyn after having burned the offices of *The Daily Record*, a black newspaper across town (**site 11**). At the intersection of N. Fourth and Harnett streets, they came upon a group of black men, mostly unarmed, who had gathered on the southwest corner to discuss the new and violent turn of events. The whites ordered the blacks to disperse. They refused, and after a heated exchange of words, the first shots of the day were fired. Over the next few hours, Wilmington experienced one of the worst politically- and racially-motivated episodes in American history. Homes and churches were damaged, businesses were destroyed, and lives were forever altered. When the smoke cleared, three white men had been wounded, and at least seven blacks were dead. Most of the city's violence had taken place in Brooklyn, and an unknown number of the neighborhood's black residents sought refuge in nearby swamps and cemeteries. Others hid in their homes, and some fled Wilmington altogether. By nightfall, the *Wilmington Messenger* reported that "an uneasy calm" had descended over the city. Putting aside their fear of reprisal, many Brooklynites returned within a few days and began the painful process of rebuilding their community.

Although the psychic scars remained in Brooklyn for decades, signs of physical recovery were evident within a year. Despite the recent violence, Wilmington remained North Carolina's leading city, and the 3,500 or so blacks who fled between 1898 and 1900 were soon replaced by migrating sharecroppers and agricultural laborers. By 1910, N. Fourth Street was thriving once again. Through the combined efforts of newcomers and old-timers, the neighborhood survived, and even prospered for a time, but it was never the same. At present, there are plans to erect a physical memorial to Brooklyn's loss along N. Third Street.



14. Business District

Red Cross Street and adjacent area bounded by N. Fifth, Campbell, N. Seventh, and Walnut streets.

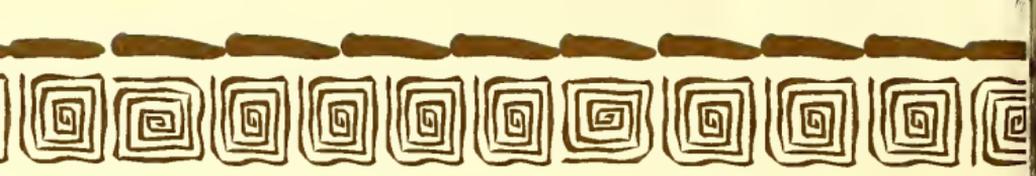
Access to the public: exterior viewing only.

Wilmington's African-American citizens have owned and operated successful businesses for more than two centuries. Before the Civil War, the heaviest concentration of black and white establishments was downtown along Market and Front streets. As cafe owners, barbers, boot and shoe manufacturers, blacksmiths, fishmongers, tailors, grocers, and pawnbrokers, African-American entrepreneurs served a mixed clientele in the 19th century.

By 1897, Hill's Wilmington city directory listed 125 black-owned enterprises. Most were still downtown, but some were clustered in a secondary business district along Red Cross Street. Stretching for several blocks, it combined small, one- and two-story commercial structures with converted residences that housed a variety of shops and offices. One of these was John H. Shaw's Sons Funeral Home. Established at its present location, 520 Red Cross Street, in 1895, the firm specialized in "first-class" funerals, and eventually owned the first motorized hearse in the state. It is the oldest African-American firm in Wilmington. An additional cluster extended along N. Fourth Street between Hanover and Bladen (**site 13**). Tragically, many of Wilmington's black tradesmen fled or were banished from the city following the 1898 political coup and violence. Thomas Miller, for example, a pawnbroker and money-lender, escaped to Norfolk, leaving the contents of his Dock Street store and numerous indebted customers. These exiled entrepreneurs were quickly replaced by a counterflow of new merchants and professionals. By 1900, there were 144 black-run businesses, and by 1903, there were 160. As a result of Jim Crow legislation, however, African Americans were restricted to certain neighborhoods, and these new businesses were segregated. Red Cross Street became the primary "colored" business district.

The area around Red Cross Street prospered as the port city enjoyed the commercial growth inspired by two world wars. In 1920, a group of prominent African Americans founded the Community Hospital at 415 N. Seventh Street. Located in a two-story frame house, it quickly attracted doctor's offices, dentists, druggists, ambulance services, and insurance companies. By the 1950s, there were three other undertakers on Red Cross Street competing with Shaw's, as well as grocers, dry goods suppliers, notaries, lawyers, dress makers, coffee shops, and hair dressers. Other notable establishments in the business district included the Wilmington Colored Library, the Elks Temple, Payne's Hotel, and St. Stephen AME Zion Church. When Wilmington's chief employer, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, moved its downtown offices to Jacksonville, Florida, in 1960, the city's economy suffered a near-fatal blow. Many African Americans lost their jobs, and the recession of 1957-1963, coupled with the "white flight" to the suburbs, caused many downtown businesses to close. By the 1970s, Red Cross Street was a shadow of its former self.

Today, downtown Wilmington and its surrounding historic district are experiencing economic revitalization. One area of renewed growth is the old N. Fourth Street cluster, where future plans call for a modern supermarket and an African-American community center. If this initiative is a success, then Red Cross Street's merchants may see a change in fortunes as well.



15. Williston Industrial High School and Williston Senior High School

319-401 S. 10th Street

Access to the public: exterior viewing only.

The name "Williston" has long been associated with quality public education in Wilmington. The first Williston stood on S. Seventh Street (**site 6**). By the turn of the century, this building was old and overcrowded, so the Board of Education acquired seven blocks of land to the east, and made plans to build a larger, two-story, brick structure at the corner of 10th and Church. When this second Williston school opened its doors in 1915, the Board of Education demolished the old Seventh Street building, which locals referred to as "Mother Williston," and transferred its students to the new facility.

At first, the school housed grades 1-7 only, but in 1918, the state legislature passed a new law, which required all North Carolinians to have four additional years of education. D. C. Virgo, the principal, went door-to-door trying to convince black parents to enroll their children. He succeeded, and in 1919, Williston admitted students for grades 8-12. In addition to vocational training, the school offered a full college preparatory program including the liberal arts, mathematics, the sciences, and foreign languages. Under Virgo's dynamic leadership, Williston Industrial became a model for black secondary schools in North Carolina, and enrollment skyrocketed.

In 1931, the Board erected a new, three-story, brick building with stone trim on the corner of S. 10th and Nun. Designed to house grades 8-12, the school had many amenities that others lacked, including lockers, a gymnasium, an auditorium/cafeteria, and well-equipped laboratories. Although its students still had to use second-hand textbooks and desks, Williston surpassed most black schools in the United States, and was a source of great local pride. In 1936, the school was destroyed by a terrible fire and rebuilt using the original blueprints. When Williston Senior High was built next door in 1953, Williston Industrial became Williston Junior High. It is now called Gregory Elementary.

The tradition of excellence continued at Williston Senior High School. Like its namesakes, this Williston offered more than an education; the school's marching band, Glee Club, and Thespian Club were widely known, and its athletic department produced top athletes like Harlem Globetrotter Meadowlark Lemon and Wimbledon Champion Althea Gibson. Additional highlights included a monthly African History program, and an annual debutante ball. The school's academic record remained intact as well, and many students won scholarships to universities like Hampton, Tuskegee, Yale, and Duke. In 1968, the Board of Education acted to desegregate Wilmington's public school system. At that time, the building became an integrated middle school, and grades 8-12 were transferred to the county's formerly white high schools (**site 17**). Although Williston Senior High ceased to exist, its alumni association maintains an active presence.

16. St. John's Museum of Art

114 Orange Street

Access to the public: Tues.-Sat., 10am-5pm; Sun., 12-4pm.

763-0281. Fee. HA.

The museum's permanent exhibit includes paintings by Minnie Evans, a nationally-known, African-American artist. Born in Pender County, North Carolina, in 1892, Evans lived in Wilmington as a child and later moved to Wrightsville Sound, where she remained until her death in 1987. In her youth, she began to have powerful, mystical dreams and



Artist Minnie Evans poses before one of her paintings at the St. John's Museum of Art. Photograph by Melva Calder. Courtesy St. John's Museum of Art.

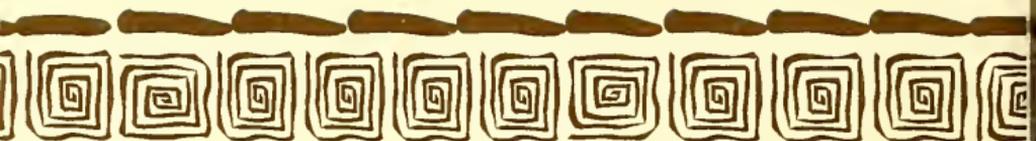
visions. At the age of 43, she started to record these surrealistic images on discarded scraps of paper; by the 1940s, she was producing up to seven pictures a day, but she was not "discovered" until nearly 20 years later. When asked about her source of inspiration, Evans explained that something supernatural was guiding her hand. A product of her strong religious faith, every color, image, and design, just happened: "I can't ask myself any questions about this whatever," she said, "so I just do what it comes to me to do." Some of her artwork includes angels, crucifixion scenes, or portraits of Christ, but others incorporate brightly-colored flowers, trees, birds, strange animals, and human faces. *Newsweek* described her as "breathtakingly gifted" and her drawings and paintings have been exhibited in both New York and London. Though subject to prejudice and discrimination at home, Evans has received praise and admiration throughout the world.

17. New Hanover High School

1307 Market Street

Access to the public: exterior viewing only.

Built between 1919 and 1921, New Hanover High School was an exclusively white school until 1968, when the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina ordered the Cape Fear region to

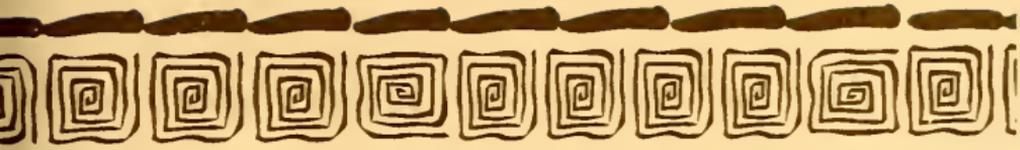


integrate. Neither blacks nor whites in Wilmington were eager to do so. Previously, all black students in New Hanover County had attended either the old Williston Industrial High School on S. 10th Street or Williston Senior High School, its successor (**site 15**). Though dissatisfied with the limits of Jim Crowism, the city's black residents had worked hard to establish their own institutions, and the majority feared the loss of autonomy and group identity that desegregation would cause. Their fears were well-founded. In Wilmington, as elsewhere, the process of integration was securely in white hands. The local school board closed the community's beloved Williston Senior High and divided its students between New Hanover and nearby Hoggard High, where, despite assurances from teachers and administrators, black students faced overt discrimination and hostility.

On May 7 and 8, 1970, cultural tensions between white and blacks students turned to violence. One student was stabbed, another was cut, and at least 20 people were arrested. By this time, black students had a formal list of complaints, which they submitted to New Hanover principal John Scott. That summer, they drafted a new school constitution, which would allow representation in student government based on the percentage of blacks and whites. Submitted to the faculty in September, the constitution was tabled, and the students staged repeated sit-ins that fall to protest their unequal treatment. By Thanksgiving, the students had the support of many adults, including their parents, older siblings, ministers, and neighbors. Following a New Hanover football game on December 18, 1970, there was a riot that resulted in the arrest of 17 African Americans, some of whom were not students. In January 1971, a black student named Barbara Swain was injured in racial violence at the school. When the administration suspended Swain, and not her assailant, another riot occurred.

By early February, the students were openly boycotting the school. They formed their own "alternative school" at the Gregory Congregational Church (**site 6**), and they asked the Virginia-North Carolina Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ to send a field organizer to Wilmington. The commission sent a former UNC-Charlotte student, Ben Chavis, who had led numerous other boycotts for the UCC-CRJ. A white supremacist group called the Rights of White People (ROWP) sent representatives to the city as well. In three days, the peaceful demonstration planned by the students escalated into an unparalleled week of arson, assault, sniper fire, and looting. During a controversial 1972 trial, Chavis and nine of his student-followers were indicted and charged with firebombing a grocery store near Gregory. After repeated appeals, the convictions were overturned in 1980. By that time, the process of restructuring Wilmington's educational system was well underway.





A special thank you to Dr. Margaret M. Mulrooney, professor, and her Community Studies class of the Public History Program at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. We acknowledge and thank the following students for their research and hard work:

- Kathleen Browing*
- Robert S. Bua*
- Leigh Anna Butler*
- Sue Ann Cody*
- Angela Marie Crews*
- Robert Allen Dail, Jr.*
- Andrew Earl Duppstadt*
- Jeffery Lee French*
- Michael Joseph Hutton*
- Tisha Renae Kennedy*
- Katherine T. Makepeace*
- Hamiyd Abdul Muhammad*
- Heath Fran Richardson*
- Steven Elliot Scruggs*
- Kimberly Dawn Sims*
- Randall Halse Stewart*

This brochure offers an excellent opportunity to explore, understand, and appreciate the history of African Americans in Wilmington, North Carolina. Visitors are invited to take walking or driving tours of sites that span more than two centuries and range from the homes of ordinary people to national historic landmarks. While not comprehensive, the 17 points of interest included here are intended to highlight the contributions of Wilmington's black citizens to this city's collective heritage.

It was first prepared by students in "Community Studies," a course offered through the Public History Program at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and taught by Dr. Margaret M. Mulrooney. Dr. Mulrooney coordinated and edited the final version. Production assistance was donated by the Division for Public Service and Extended Education at UNCW and the Chancellor's Office. A resource book containing additional information about these sites is available at the following locations: Local History Room of the New Hanover County Library, Curriculum Materials Center at UNCW and Education Office of the Cape Fear Museum.

Photo taken by Louis T. Moore in the 1930s. Courtesy Cape Fear Museum (Image: IA105) and the New Hanover County Library.

