



NEW BERN PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026

PRESERVING NEW BERN ONE BRICK AT A TIME

MEMBERSHIP MEETUP

Join us May 14th, 6 PM, at the Firefly Cafe, 901B Pollock St. Food and beverages available for purchase.

Meetups are informal gatherings for NBPF members to socialize with our fellow preservationists. It's a great way to meet & get to know other members. We hope you will join us!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Interested in volunteer opportunities and how you can help with our mission to preserve and protect the architectural and cultural heritage of New Bern?

Email us
Info@NewBernPF.org

HOME SWEET HOME OPEN HOUSE

Join us May 1st and 2nd from 11 AM to 3 PM for a special open house event featuring two of the “6 Sisters”

Step inside these historic 1923–24 homes and experience their refreshed “before” as they await their next chapter. We’ll also share how this preservation project honors the legacy of the neighborhood lost in the Great Fire of 1922.

We’re excited to share that the houses have been successfully subdivided, front exterior protective covenants are now in place, and are **for sale** as owner-occupied properties.

Enjoy a cold beverage and homemade cookies as you tour. Both homes will be available for purchase offers during the event.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Energized by the success of our late-winter events — including the Annual Antique Show and a fascinating tour of St. John’s Masonic Lodge — we’re looking ahead to an exciting spring season.

While every season is special in New Bern, spring is especially beautiful. As I walk through our historic districts, I’m struck by the vibrant blooms — azaleas, star lilies, and other seasonal color — creating a stunning backdrop throughout the city. Alongside them, residents are out tending gardens and making thoughtful improvements to their homes. There’s a renewed energy everywhere you look.

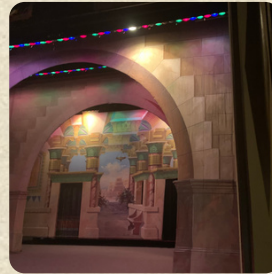
That energy is especially evident around Queen, Pasteur, and Hancock Streets, where new businesses, construction, and homes are bringing fresh momentum to the area.

Join us May 1–2 during the Heritage Homes Tour for refreshments and an exclusive look inside two of the 6 Sisters: explore their history, tour the homes, and imagine what’s next.

RECENT EVENTS

ST. JOHN'S LODGE PRIVATE TOUR

On January 24th we were given the rare opportunity to step inside one of New Bern's most remarkable historic buildings, the St. John's Masonic Lodge on Hancock Street. Our living history experience was hosted by Arthur Romans, Past Master of the Lodge and its current Secretary. Arthur not only provided an enlightening tour of the impressive Federal, Victorian, Art Deco, and Midcentury architecture throughout the structure, he also graciously shared his deep knowledge into the fascinating history of the lodge and unveiled historical artifacts from their archives. We are grateful for the amazing tour.



39TH ANNUAL ANTIQUE SHOW & SALE

Thanks to our wonderful sponsors, volunteers, vendors, and appraisers our 39th Annual Antique Show & Sale was a HUGE success! Feb 4th - 8th Maola at the Riverside was transformed into the ultimate antique show highlighting 25 curated vendors in 26 unique locations showcasing vintage and antique fine art, furnishings, lighting, jewelry, Oriental rugs and even garden treasures! The show also included three extremely knowledgeable restoration experts. Our First Look on Thursday night featured delicious hors d'oeuvres from Posh Nosh Fine Catering, scrumptious desserts from Sweet Memories Bakery, and beer & wine from Surf, Wind and Fire.

Guests enjoyed Friday's Appraisal Session, where five expert appraisers offered insightful evaluations of antique treasures. On Saturday, preservationist Robert Leath once again captivated the audience during the Preservation Session, he was joined this year by Beth Yarborough, who shared preservation guidance and hosted a book signing.

The Antique Show Committee is already planning the **40th Annual Antique Show & Sale**, scheduled for **February 18–21, 2027**. More details coming soon.



SAVING WHAT MATTERS

FROM ASHES TO LEGACY: WHY THE 6 SISTERS MATTER

Since May 2024, when the Preservation Foundation purchased the six identical historic townhouses on Pasteur Street — affectionately known as the “6 Sisters” — many have asked: Why these houses? What makes them unique and worthy of preservation?

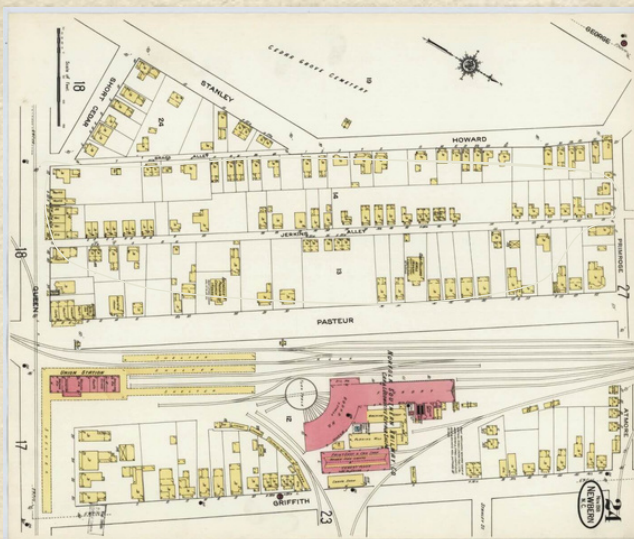
Beyond their value as early 20th-century vernacular Victorian/Arts and Crafts structures, these six buildings quite literally mark the beginning of preservation in New Bern. Here’s why. Many of you are familiar with the devastating 1922 fire, which destroyed 40 blocks of downtown, reduced more than 600 structures to ash, and left over 3,000 residents homeless.

Before the fire, the neighborhood was vibrant and bustling, home to restaurants, doctors’ offices, grocery stores, meeting halls, places of worship, and dozens of single-family homes.

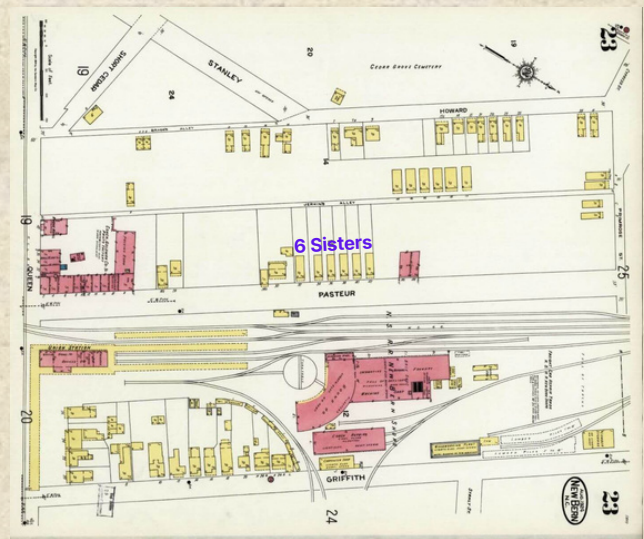
On December 1, 1922, all of this was gone in less than 24 hours — nothing left standing. In the aftermath, an extraordinary community response took shape. The U.S. Army provided hundreds of tents, creating a literal tent city to shelter families through the winter. Within two years, permanent homes and businesses began to rise from the ashes.

Among the first were these six townhouses, the “6 Sisters” on Pasteur Street. At the same time, a citywide preservation effort emerged, led by citizens determined to protect what remained. That movement gave rise to New Bern’s Historical Society and, eventually, the Preservation Foundation.

In that sense, the 6 Sisters mark where preservation in New Bern began, a lasting symbol of the resilience and determination that have defined this city since its founding.



BEFORE FIRE - 1913



AFTER FIRE - 1924

FROM SCANDAL TO SETTLEMENT: THE GORDON HOUSE STORY

Patrick Duff, a Scottish lawyer, fled to America in 1757 with his uncle's housemaid — by then his wife — adopting her surname, Gordon. After a brief stay in Edenton, the couple moved to New Bern when it became the colonial capital.

By 1771, they had prospered enough to build this home. In a letter to Signer William Hooper, Patrick remarked that his law practice was suffering because he was busy building his house. Given his professional circle, which included Governor Tryon and architect John Hawks, it's likely Hawks designed the residence.

Patrick enjoyed the home for only three years before his death. Mary lived until 1786, leaving behind a detailed will and estate that included the house, thirteen enslaved people, and personal property. The estate was intended for her son Patrick, if of age, or otherwise for relatives in Florida. But Patrick had been sent back to Scotland for schooling, and no one in New Bern knew his exact age.

That uncertainty led to a legal saga. The younger Patrick — later known as Duffy — completed his education and set out for India, leaving a will in favor of his uncle. He never arrived. Whether accident or foul play was never resolved, though suspicions lingered.

The resulting estate dispute stretched on for 32 years. In 1818, attorney William Gaston informed the Florida heirs they had won, only to report that no assets remained, citing incomplete records.

Architecturally, the house is equally compelling. In 1771, Hancock Street marked the edge of town, and the lot extended to the river. The home's unusual placement reflects that earlier landscape. A north-facing porch shelters the entrance, while a piazza added in 1786 once overlooked the water. Uncommon in New Bern, the house also features a full basement that originally housed the kitchen, laundry, and wine cellar.

When municipal water arrived in 1892, the large parcel was subdivided for additional housing: five homes in total, three of which survive today.

Today, the New Bern Preservation Foundation holds a preservation covenant on this home.



NEW BERN PRESERVATION FOUNDATION 2026 EXECUTIVE BOARD

John Barnes, President
Richard Parsons, Vice President
Charles Benson II, Treasurer
Cathy Alix, Secretary

STAY CONNECTED

Instagram: @preservenewbern
Facebook: NewBernPF
Website: NewBernPF.org
For questions or to share your preservation story,
contact Info@NewBernPF.org.