National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

805

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

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entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the National Register.	Name of Property			, to complete an items.
other names/site number	historia nama Cedar Street Rec	reation Center		
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street & number	other names/site numberJasper	G. Hayes Omega Cen	ter	
state North Carolina code NC county Craven code 0.49 zip code2.8560 3. State/Federal Agency Certification As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets certifier a recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide considered significant national register of Federal agency and bureau In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.) Signature of certifying official/Title Date State or Federal agency and bureau 4. National Park Service Certification I hereby/certify that the property is: Signature of the National Register See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet. determined ont eligible for the National Register.	2. Location			
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□ removed from the National Register	removed from the National Register.			
other, (explain:)				

<u>Craven County, NC</u> County and State

5. Classification					
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Res (Do not include pre	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
🔀 private		Contributing	Noncontributing		
☐ public-local☐ public-State		1	0	buildings	
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure	0	. 0	sites	
·	□ object	0	0	structures	
		0	0	objects	
			0	Total	
Name of related multiple potenter "N/A" if property is not part	roperty listing of a multiple property listing.)	Number of con in the National	tributing resources Register	previously listed	
N/A		N/A			
6. Function or Use					
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Functions (Enter categories from			
7. Description					
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)		Materials (Enter categories from	instructions)		
_Modern Movement		foundationco	ncrete		
			ncrete		
			tal		
		otherwo	odbc		

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Record # _____

8. Sta	atement of Significance	***************************************
Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)		Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
		Entertainment/Recreation
	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	Ethnic Heritage/Black
	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	
; ;	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.	Period of Significance 1948-1953
	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.	
	a Considerations	Significant Dates
(Mark "	x" in all the boxes that apply.)	1948
Proper	rty is:	1952
	owned by a religious institution or used for	1932
	religious purposes.	
		Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
☐ B removed from its original location.		N/A
□С	a birthplace or grave.	IV/ A
□ n ·	a cemetery.	Cultural Affiliation
	a cemetery.	N/A
□ E a	a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	
□Fa	a commemorative property.	
☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance	Architect/Builder	
within the past 50 years.		Unknown
(Explain	rive Statement of Significance the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)	
	jor Bibliographical References	
	graphy e books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one	or more continuation sheets.)
Previo	ous documentation on file (NPS):	Primary location of additional data:
□ p	oreliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested oreviously listed in the National Register oreviously determined eligible by the National Register Register designated a National Historic Landmark ecorded by Historic American Buildings Survey	State Historic Preservation Office Other State agency Federal agency Local government University Other Name of repository:
	#ecorded by Historic American Engineering	

10. Geographical Data
Acreage of Property less than one acre
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)
1 1 8 3 1 3 5 10 10 3 18 8 1 7 2 12 10 3 Zone Easting Northing 2 1 See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)
11. Form Prepared By
name/title Beth Keane, preservation consultant
organization <u>Retrospective</u> date <u>January 29, 2003</u>
street & number 2001 Metts Avenue telephone 910-815-1096
city or town <u>Wilmington</u> state <u>NC</u> zip code <u>28403</u>
Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)
Property Owner
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)
name New Bern Area Improvements Association, Inc.; c/o Bernard Pickens
street & number <u>1604 Hazel Avenue</u> telephone <u>282-638-5822</u>
city or town New Bern state NC zip code 28560

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

Narrative Description

The Cedar Street Recreation Center is a large one-story gymnasium located on an approximate one-half acre lot on the northwest corner of Bern and Cedar Streets in the Dryborough neighborhood of New Bern. Since its construction in 1948, the building has been in continuous use, first as a recreational center and basketball arena for the African American youth of the community and later as a venue for neighborhood gatherings and social events. Built largely by volunteer labor with donated materials, the building embodies the tenacity of the African American community to provide for themselves a recreational facility that they could use and take pride in. Although construction on the building began in 1948 with the erection of the concrete block walls, the building was not completed until 1952 when a wood floor and a roof were added. At approximately the same time, an addition to the front of the building provided restroom facilities, as well as a meeting room and storage space. A kitchen and an elevated stage flanked by small dressing rooms were added on the north side of the interior of the building in the 1970s after it ceased to function as a gymnasium.

The original building comprised a rectangular plan, approximately 110 feet by 91 feet, with walls about 13 feet high. Although it has a Cedar Street address, the building faces east to Bern Street. The building was constructed with concrete blocks manufactured by a local company. Stacks of projecting concrete blocks form a series of buttresses spaced evenly along the north, west, and south elevations. Six windows with replacement glass and two doors are positioned along the wall of the south elevation between eight buttresses. The easternmost main entrance protrudes five feet from the wall and access is gained through double-leaf metal doors with strap hinges. A hipped roof of standing-seam metal covers the entrance vestibule. The western entrance on the south elevation is flush with the main wall of the building. Similar to the main entrance, it is comprised of double-leaf metal doors with strap hinges.

The rear of the building (west elevation) features five buttresses and four six-over-two, double-hung sash windows. An outline marks the location of a previous entrance which has been filled in with concrete block. Seven buttresses interspersed with nine six-over-two double-hung sash windows comprise the north elevation.

The 1952 wing on the east elevation, likely planned from the beginning, is also constructed of concrete block. The addition measures thirty feet by ninety-one feet and the walls are approximately nine-feet high. Four small awning windows with frosted glass are positioned high on the wall of the south elevation. An enclosed entrance vestibule, measuring six feet by twenty-seven feet is centered on the east elevation wall. A three-foot wide door on the south side of the vestibule provides access to the interior. A

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2

Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

six-foot-wide covered walkway along the front wall leads to the entrance. Five small fixed-sash windows are located on the east elevation: three situated east of the vestibule and two west of the vestibule. The words "Cedar Street" are inscribed near the top of the front elevation of the vestibule. A protruding air conditioning unit is located in the wall between the two words. The north elevation of the wing contains three six-over-two, double-hung sash windows. Several electric panel boxes are also positioned on the wall of the wing's north elevation. A wooden bowstring truss roof system protected by standing-seam metal covers the main block of the structure. Exposed purlins are visible on the west elevation of the building.

The interior of the main block of the building is composed principally of a large open room: previously the gymnasium space, it now functions as a a multi-purpose space. The interior walls are of concrete block, while wood flooring covers the raised concrete floor structure. A suspended ceiling was installed in 1976, along with ceiling fans and lights, concealing the wood truss roof structure. At the same time, a raised stage with flanking dressing rooms was positioned along the north wall of the building. A kitchen containing a refrigerator, sink, stove, and several cabinets, was installed in the northeast corner of the building during the same period.

A door on the east wall leads to the meeting room in the wing. The meeting room has wall-to-wall carpeting, simulated wood paneling, and a suspended ceiling. Several small storage closets are accessed from the meeting room. Adjacent to this room are the women's and men's bathroom facilities, each containing several stalls and sinks.

The community center takes up a majority of the one-half acre lot on which it is situated. A small front lawn partially enclosed by a chain link fence and a narrow landscaped strip of grass on the south side of the facility help to soften the exterior of the concrete block building. A row of cedar trees line the front boundary along Bern Street. A narrow alley, known as Smith Street, runs behind the building. A new wooden sign is positioned in the grass strip in front of the south elevation of the building. It reads: "Jasper G. Hayes Omega Center" and has a symbol of the fraternity above the name. A large heating and air conditioning unit on a raised frame platform is situated at the northeast corner of the building. Ducts from the unit are attached to the front wall of the building.

The Cedar Street Recreation Center is located in a quiet residential neighborhood. One- and two-bedroom early-twentieth-century houses, in addition to mid-twentieth-century infill housing, constitute the remainder of the block. The Ebenezer Presbyterian Church, built in 1924 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, sits diagonally across the street on the southeast corner of Bern and Cedar streets.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Continuation Sheet

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Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

Statement of Significance

The Cedar Street Recreation Center meets National Register Criterion A as a landmark to the recreation and ethnic heritage of African Americans in New Bern. Community involvement resulted in the construction of the building, the first recreation center built in the City of New Bern for the African American youth of the city. The building was erected with the aid of financial donations from local residents and through the hands-on labor provided by a class of local high school students and a group of World War II veterans. Since its construction in 1948, the facility has been at the center of community affairs, serving as a meeting place for the New Bern Civic League, providing a sports arena for the local high school basketball team and neighborhood youth, and contributing much needed space for a neighborhood kindergarten class. In later years, the building has served as a venue for the community's public gatherings and social events. The simple concrete block structure, well-preserved and carefully maintained, continues to provide the Dryborough neighborhood in the City of New Bern with a public gathering place in which to hold meetings, concerts, church banquets, dances, and local theater productions. The period of significance extends from 948 to 1953. Although the center continues to play a vital role in the African American community of New Bern, the post-1953 period is not of exceptional significance.

Section 8: Historical Background and Criterion A: Recreation and Ethnic Heritage

The Cedar Street Recreation Center is located in the Dryborough district, a two-block area bounded by Queen Street on the south, West Street on the west, Bern Street on the east, and Cedar Street on the north. Dryborough was platted in 1806 when a wealthy white Wilmington-area investor named William Dry bought a tract of land and gave it to his newly married daughter Susan, and her husband, Benjamin Smith. Smith, who became the governor of North Carolina from 1810 to 1811, had the parcel laid out in streets and lots, offering the properties for sale. A scattering of houses was constructed over the next several decades. By 1859, enough citizens lived in the area for officials to enlarge New Bern's town boundaries and formally make North George, North Bern, and North West streets part of the city (Hanchett, p. 55).

After 1865, development to the north of Queen Street accelerated appreciably. Education and employment opportunities drew many African Americans to New Bern. The black population grew by nearly twenty-five percent each decade from the 1860s to the century's end. Entrepreneurs, realizing the new arrivals would need housing, developed new subdivisions north and west of Queen Street (Hanchett, p. 53).

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

Although a good portion of Dryborough was consumed in the Great Fire of 1922, the area rebuilt quickly. Many of New Bern's leading African American residents moved to Dryborough, constructing attractive one- and two-story houses. In addition, the surrounding area became a center for community institutions with a mix of stores, businesses, churches, and fraternal buildings, enhancing the character of the neighborhood. Adding to the desirability of the area was Kafer Park, created from burned-over land on George Street during the New Deal of the 1930s. New Deal funds also constructed an Armory at George and Queen streets (today the New Bern Police Station), and a Community Center for whites on George Street. After World War II, ranch style houses filled the remaining vacant lots along George and Bern streets, rounding out a vibrant district (Hanchett, p. 55).

In the early 1940s, an organization known as the New Bern Civic League was organized in Craven County. The league was made up of African American civic leaders and interested citizens who worked for the betterment of their race. The league realized that there were no indoor recreational facilities for the black youth of the Dryborough community. Basketball games were played on outdoor playgrounds. The George Street and Craven Terrace Recreation Centers were reserved for the exclusive use of the white population. The following excerpt from an article in the June 19, 1948, issue of *The Sun Journal* expresses the city's realization of the need for a recreational center to serve the black population of New Bern: "Recreation under city auspices for colored population took a huge step forward Sunday, June 27, at the Craven Terrace Recreation Center when City Recreation Director, Mike Lewis, organized the first Negro Recreation Council. Mr. Lewis minced no words when he explained the path to the goal sought will be no bed of roses."

Lewis proceeded to call for volunteers to serve on the Recreation Council and appointed eight willing citizens. He also urged immediate implementation of the following three steps: (1) an agreement be reached with the Craven Terrace Recreation Center for sharing their facility with the African American youth of New Bern; (2) an effort be made to locate an outdoor recreational area and baseball field, and (3) information for a new recreation center be gathered and presented before the board of alderman.

It was also decided that the next meeting's agenda would include a discussion of fundraising ideas for a new community center. A consensus was reached that a "Negro" recreation booklet, similar to the one already published by the white recreation council, needed to be published. Lewis proceeded to express "gratification for the interest of the citizens on the council and promised that predicted action will follow, not next month, or next week, or tomorrow, but today."

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Continuation Sheet

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Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

Meanwhile, the New Bern Civic League had already begun plans to construct the needed facility. A deed dated May 11, 1945, documents the sale of a portion of Lot 53 on the northwest corner of Bern and Cedar streets by G. Allen and Dorothy G. Ives to G. A. Moore, B. S. Rivers, T. L. Bynum, I. H. Smith, I. A. Daves, G. L. Hill, F. R. Danyus, C. S. Blount, and W. T. Lewis, trustees for the New Bern Civic League. The deed excluded the front portion of Lot 53 measuring fifty by ninety feet belonging to J. C. and Dessie B. Jones (Deed Book 385, p. 266).

After acquiring the parcel of land, the League appealed to the community for monetary donations. Students solicited funds by selling individual concrete blocks at five cents a block to be used in the construction of the center. Stevens Brick and Block Company, the local concrete company, donated the concrete for the footing. Mr. F. R. Danyus, the principal for West Street High School, allowed the school's brickmason class, under the guidance of their teacher, Jasper G. Hayes, to construct the building. A group of World War II veterans, also enrolled in a brick laying class at West Street High School, joined in the effort, working on the building at night (Bell interview, April 22, 2002).

An article under "Negro News" in the May 1, 1948, edition of *The Sun Journal* reported:

"Construction has started on the community center building. The building is being constructed of concrete blocks and is planned to be large enough to take care of all the recreational needs of the community. It is felt that a building of this kind will be of great benefit to all the young people of the community, as well as organizations and groups who would desire to use it. To complete the building, approximately 20,000 building blocks are required. About 10,000 of this amount have already been purchased by the Civic League. This leaves a balance of 10,000 still to be secured. The league is expecting all organizations and individuals to help in securing the remainder of the blocks. The entire month of May has been designated as "Block Month" and every organization, group, and individual in the city will be given an opportunity to contribute."

Construction of the building continued until the walls reached the height that was considered sufficient for the intended purpose and uses of the building. At this point, the donations collected had been exhausted. The building remained at this incomplete stage, with no roof or floor, for approximately two years. During that two-year period, the West Street High School students played their basketball games inside the unfinished building. The Civic League also held their meetings in the building. In 1950, the Civic League contacted a roofing company to obtain a bid for the construction of a roof for the

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

building. Because the cost of the roof was more than the League could afford, they requested support from the City of New Bern. The City agreed to complete the building if the League would deed the land and the building to the city. The League agreed to do so and the land was deeded to the City on January 18, 1951 (Deed Book 453, p. 49). The City of New Bern proceeded to finish construction of the building in 1952, including an east-side addition that included a spacious meeting room and restroom facilities.

The City of New Bern acquired the remaining portion of Lot 53 from Lisbon and Esther Granger Baker, Jr., in February of 1953 for \$1,500.00 (Deed Book 482, p. 407). The Bakers had purchased the parcel from the Jones in February of 1951 (Deed Book 464, p. 538). The fifty-foot-deep lot became the front yard of the center. From the early 1950s until the mid 1970s, the Cedar Street Recreation Center was used as a facility for the recreation of African American children. The center also ran a kindergarten for the neighborhood children during those years. The building ceased to operate as a recreation center when it was replaced by two new facilities, the Stanley White Center on Chapman Street and the West New Bern Recreation Center on Pine Street.

The New Bern West Street- J. T. Barber Athletic High School Hall of Fame was organized in 1998 to honor outstanding athletes and leaders of the community who had participated in sports at Central, West Street, and J. T. Barber High Schools. Basketball team members who played in the Cedar Street Recreation Center elected to the newly formed Hall of Fame include Walter Bellamy, Jr. in 1998, Edward Bell and Simon E. Coates in 1999, James Midgette in 2000, and Alfreda Collins in 2001.

Walter Bellamy, a nationally famous basketball player, began his career while playing for West Street High School at the Cedar Street Recreation Center in the 1950s. Bellamy graduated from Indiana University in 1961 and went on to play professional basketball with the Chicago Packers, Chicago Zephyrs, the Baltimore Bullets, the New York Knickerbockers, the Detroit Pistons, the Atlanta Hawks, and the New Orleans Jazz. Bellamy also played for the United States gold metal winning basketball team in the Olympic Games in Rome, Italy, in 1960. Bellamy was elected to the National Basketball Hall of Fame in 1993 (Bell interview, April 22, 2002).

Edward Bell, a player on both the football and basketball teams for West Street High School in 1956, was captain of both teams in 1956 when the football team became the first state champions from the City of New Bern. In 1957, the basketball team was

one game away from winning the state championship games, held in Durham. Both teams had the same coach, Simon E. Coates, who coached the basketball team at the Cedar Street Recreation Center. James Midgette, another outstanding athlete who played at West Street High School, excelled in both football and basketball. He was drafted by the

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

San Francisco Giants and was sent to Sanford, Florida as a member of the Florida League in 1958. Later, he served in the capacity of coach, mentor, and umpire for many youth activities in the New Bern community. Alfreda Collins is the first African American female athlete elected to the New Bern West Street - J. T. Barber High School Athletic Hall of Fame. She was a member of the basketball team and softball club during her years at J. T. Barber High School. She went onto become a member of the Women's Athletic Association during her enrollment at A & T State University, where she participated in basketball, volleyball, field hockey, tennis, and softball (Bell interview, April 22, 2002).

The Cedar Street Recreation Center was renamed the Jasper G. Hayes Omega Center on May 18, 1998, to honor posthumously a New Bern civic leader and a teacher in the city school system for many years. Born in 1910 in Fincastle, Virginia, Hayes graduated from the West Virginia State College and served in World War II. He taught in the New Bern city school system for twenty-five years, retiring in 1972. Hayes also served on several local governmental and community organizations and committees. He was a charter member of the New Bern Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and a longstanding member of Saint Cyprian's Episcopal Church. Hayes and his students contributed to the construction of the recreation center. A plaque in the Center lists the above contributions and adds: "he and his wife, Jeannette S. Hayes, and two daughters, Charlene Hayes Davis and Gloria Hayes Peterson, teachers all, have served as outstanding role models for the youth of the city." Jasper G. Hayes died in 1997.

In 1978, the New Bern area of Nu Alpha Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity entered into a lease agreement with the City of New Bern for the lease of the Center for \$1.00 a year. The lease was renewed on two occasions. On September 28, 1999, the City of New Bern transferred the property to the New Bern Area Improvements Association, Inc., a nonprofit corporation made up of members of the fraternity (Deed Book 1730, p. 876). The Association manages the facility, using it for meetings and also renting the building to various organizations for banquets, concerts, dances, and local theater. Since its inception, the Cedar Street Recreation Center has played a vital role in the community, initially serving as the first indoor recreational facility for the African American youth of New Bern, while at the same time providing kindergarten classroom space for the neighborhood children. In later years, the well-maintained facility has provided a site for important community public gatherings and social events.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 8

Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

Bibliography

- Collins, Charles *Study List Application for the Cedar Street Recreation Center* (2001), Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History files.
- Craven County Deed Books, Office of Register of Deeds, Craven County Courthouse Annex, New Bern.
- Craven County Tax Records, Craven County Tax Office, New Bern.
- Hanchett, Thomas W. and Ruth Little <u>The History and Architecture of Long Wharf and Greater Duffyfield: African American Neighborhoods in New Bern, North Carolina</u>. A report prepared for the City of New Bern Historic Preservation Commission. April 1994 (n.p.)
- Keane, Beth interview with Edward Bell on April 22, 2002.
- Morning Edition, The New Bern Sun Journal. Negro News column, May 1, 1948, p. 8 and June 24, 1948, p. 3.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 9

Cedar Street Recreation Center Craven County, North Carolina

Verbal Bounday Description

The boundaries of the nominated property coincide with the boundaries delineated for lot 8-007-316 on the accompanying Craven County tax map. The lot measures 195 feet by 107.3 feet.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the original two parcels of land associated with the building.



