

Biddle Memorial Hall



1. Name and location of the property: The property known as Biddle Memorial Hall is located on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University at 100 Beatties Ford Rd., Charlotte, N.C. 28216.

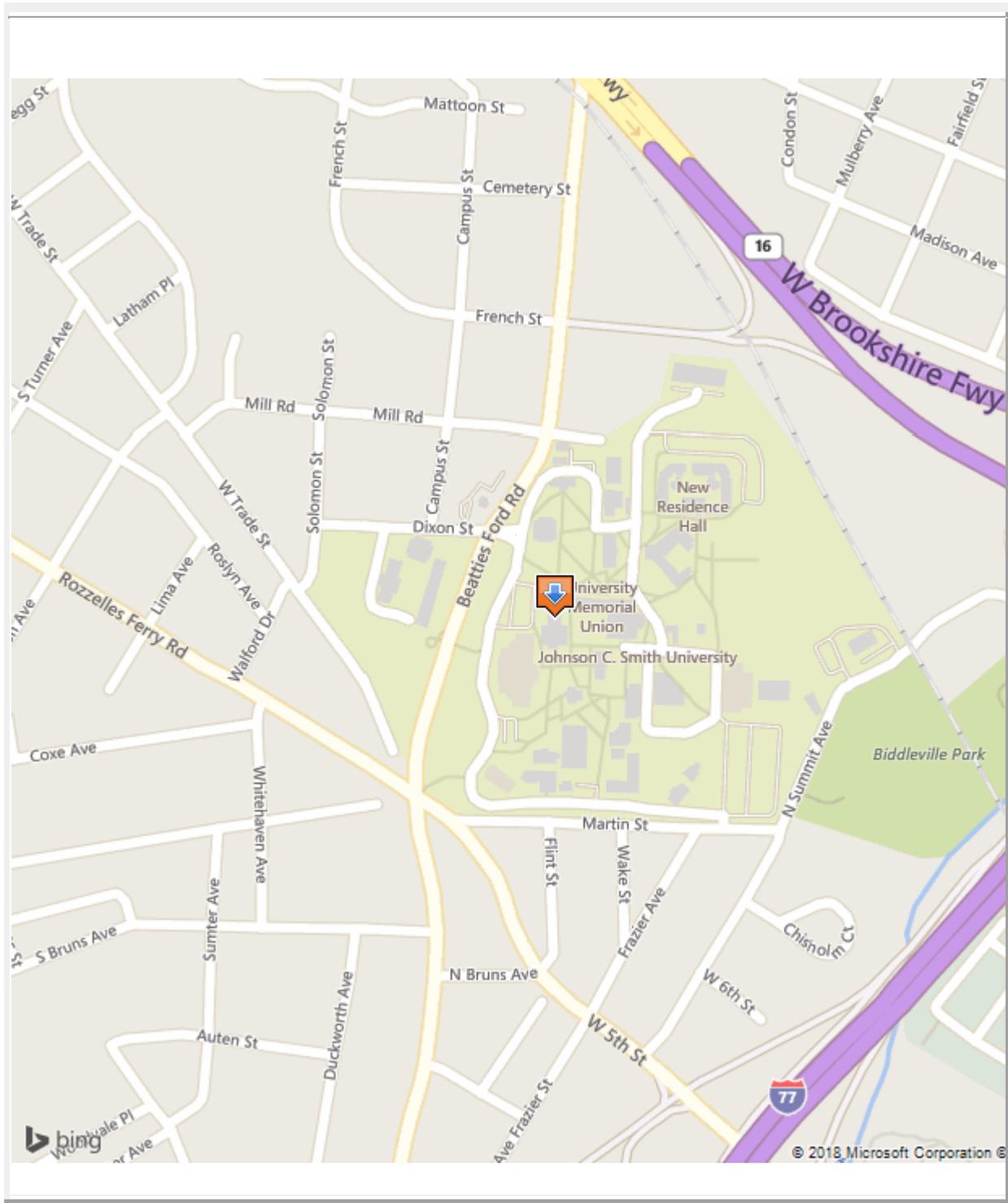
2. Name, addresses, and telephone numbers of the present owners and occupants of the property: The present owner and occupant of the property is:

Johnson C. Smith University, Inc.
100 Beatties Ford Rd.
Charlotte, NC. 28216

Telephone: 704/372-2370

3. Representative photographs of the property: Representative photographs of the structure are included in this report.

4. A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains two maps. A tax line map depicts the location of the campus of Johnson C. Smith University. The second map depicts the location of Biddle Memorial Hall on the campus.



5. Current Deed Book Reference of the property: The land which comprises the campus of Johnson C. Smith University is listed in the following deeds in the Mecklenburg County Registry:

a. Deed Book 9. Page 323; Filed November 1. 1873, W. R. Myers and S. C. Myers to trustees S. S. Cushland, Luke Dorland, A. S. Billingsley, S. Mattoon, and William Richardson.

b. Deed Book 15, page 423; Filed November 11, 1876, S. C. Alexander and N. R. Alexander to trustees S. S. Murland, Luke Dorland, S. Mattoon, A. S. Billingsley, and Millard Richardson.

c. Deed Book 33, Page 239; Filed July 26, 1882, L. W. Perdue and A. S. Perdue to trustees.

d. Deed Book 55, page 598; Filed November 12, 1887, Mary R. Severs and H.C. Severs to trustees.

e. Deed Book 69, page 629; Filed November 1, 1894, W. R. Myers, Jr., to trustees.

f. Deed Book 124, Page 254; Filed March 30, 1898, Mary L. Mattoon et al .to trustee W. E. Thomas, Emma M. Thomas.

g. Deed Book 208, page 201; Filed February 13, 1906, D. J. Sanders and F. P. Sanders to trustees.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

The history of Biddle Memorial Hall is intimately bound up with the history of Johnson C. Smith University. Johnson C. Smith University was founded by two white ministers (Rev. S. C. Alexander and Rev. W. L. Miller) under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. It was known as The Henry J. Biddle Memorial Institute in honor of Major Henry J. Biddle, a Union soldier who was killed in action during the Civil War. During its formative years Mrs. Mary D. Biddle, the wife of Major Biddle, gave considerable financial support to the institution.

The school was originally housed in a small church located near the present location of Fourth and Davidson Streets. A few years after its feeble beginning, the old Confederate Navy Building located on East Trade St., below where the Civic Center now stands, was purchased. This building was to be moved to another location on Seventh Street, somewhere between College and Caldwell Streets. Colonel William R. Myers discouraged the ministers about moving to that site and offered them property where the school now stands. The gift of eight acres by this outstanding Charlotte citizen was the nucleus of the present site.

In 1883 the name of the institution was changed to Biddle University. In 1921 because of the many generous gifts which she had made to the institution in honor of her husband, Mrs. Jane M. Smith was notified by the Board of Trustees that the name of the institution had been changed to Johnson C. Smith University.

The first president of the institution was Rev. Stephen Mattoon. For nearly two and a half decades the presidents and most of the faculty members were white. In 1891 the institution had its first black president, Rev. Daniel J. Sanders. Since that time all of its presidents and the majority of the faculty have been black.

Biddle Memorial Hall was constructed in 1884. It was the first substantial building erected on the current campus (see appended photograph #1), and is the oldest surviving structure on the campus. Dominated by a massive but elegant clock tower, the structure contains 40,045 square feet of floor space. Its ornamentation and overall massing are typical of institutional architecture during the Victorian era. Originally it consisted of an auditorium with a balcony, the President's offices the Registrar's offices, the Business Office, the first library, classrooms, and restrooms. It currently serves as the general administration building of the University. Currently the building also contains portraits and pictures of the founders, presidents, benefactors, and of other individuals directly connected with the growth and development of the University.

7. Documentation of why and In what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N. C. G. S. 160A-399.4:

a. Historical and cultural significance: The Survey Committee of the Commission has examined this structure and has judged it to be of architectural significance. The Survey Committee reports that the buildings, materials are of Flemish bond brick with sandstone cornices, pediment, and lintels. There are brick bearing walls, with possible post and beam construction. Additional details of the structure are:

- 1. Diagonal soldier coursing in line with window lintels.
- 2. Motif varies the window lintel treatment: sandstone 1st and 4th floor, brick jack arch 2nd floor, brick spring arch on the 3rd floor.
- 3. Basket weave infill brick panels as surface reliefs.
- 4. Corbeled brick cornice.
- 5. Slate spires and roof.
- 6. Ornate detailing on chimney.
- 7. Octagonal apse.
- 8. Watch tower center pavilions.
- 9. The windows have been replaced with aluminum sash.

The fact that the structure has been judged to be of architectural significance coupled with the fact that it is the oldest surviving structure on the campus of the only black institution of higher education in Mecklenburg County, suggests that Biddle Memorial Hall meets this criterion.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: The building is in generally good repair. As stated above, it is currently the general administration building for the University. The building is therefore highly suited for preservation.

c. Educational value: The educational value of the building is substantial. First, it is the only example of this genre of institutional architecture in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. It also serves as a symbol of the rich heritage of Johnson C. Smith University, and of the local black community.

d. Cost of acquisition restoration, maintenance, or repair: The Commission has no intention of acquiring this property. The cost of acquisition would be high. The structure is in need of some repair, especially to the exterior and the roof detail. However, the cost would not be unreasonable in relation to the overall worth of the building. The maintenance costs are currently carried by Johnson C. Smith University.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: The interior graciousness of this structure would permit many alternative or adaptive uses. However, it is assumed that the University will continue to determine the use of the structure.

f. Appraised value: Attached to this report is a real estate appraisal card which reveals that the land and property itself is appraised at \$1,019,680.00. Again, the Commission has no intention of acquiring this property. And the University is not required to pay taxes on this property.

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: It is assumed that Johnson C. Smith University shall continue to operate the property.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion in the National Register: The Commission believes that the investigation carried out by the Survey Committee suggests that Biddle Memorial Hall might qualify for the National Register on the grounds of Criterion C -- (properties) "that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values". Biddle Memorial Hall would not meet the other criteria for inclusion on the National Register.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: Biddle Memorial Hall is highly significant in the history of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. It stands as a magnificent monument to what was accomplished by a newly-liberated people in an atmosphere that has been described as "hostile." This structure was built under trying circumstances and by people who had very meager financial resources. It is the oldest surviving building of the first and only private institution of

higher learning open to blacks in the immediate and surrounding counties. Over the years speakers of national renown, including a President of the United States, have spoken in this structure. Concerts, recitals, art exhibits, these are only some of the refined events which have graced the halls of Biddle Memorial Hall.