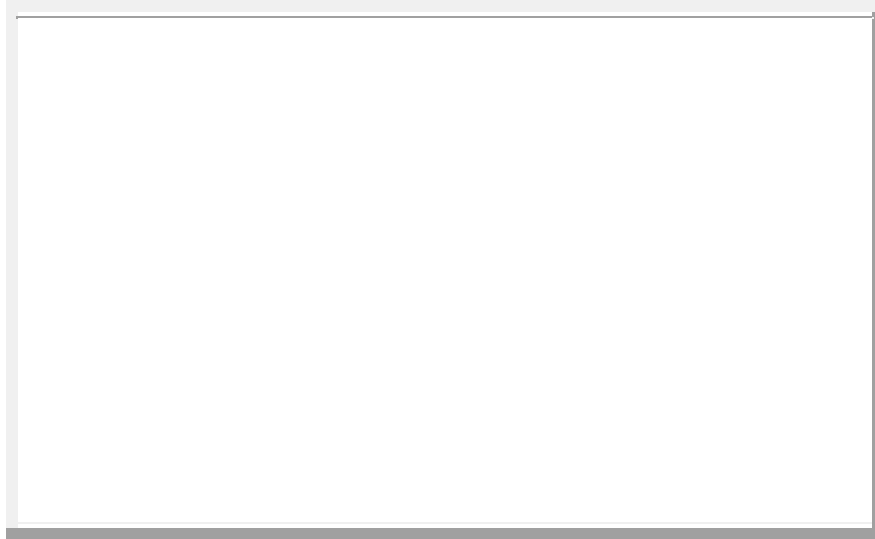


# BIDDLEVILLE-FIVE POINTS



Click on the map to browse

*by Dr. Thomas W. Hanchett*

Biddleville is Charlotte's oldest surviving black neighborhood. At its heart is Johnson C. Smith University, opened shortly after the Civil War as Biddle Institute to train black preachers and teachers. Biddleville began in 1871 as a village next to the college, distinctly separate from Charlotte, two miles from the center of the city. <sup>1</sup>

Around the turn of the century the city grew out to meet the village. The suburbs of Western Heights and Roslyn Heights were built, followed by the Smallwood Homes and Crestview subdivisions after World War II. The whole area today is called Biddleville-Five Points, taking its name from the original village and from the intersection of West Trade, West Fifth Street, Rozelles Ferry Road, and Beatties Ford Road adjacent to the JCSU campus near the center of the neighborhood.

The institution now known as Johnson C. Smith University had its formal beginning April 7, 1867. <sup>2</sup> Its founders were two young white Presbyterian ministers, Rev. S. C. Alexander and Rev. W. L. Miller, who believed there was a need to train leaders for the newly freed black population. <sup>3</sup> The idea of a college for "preachers and teachers" was looked upon by some as quite a radical notion. Many, including famous black educator Booker T. Washington years later, felt that blacks should first be trained in farming and manual labor. But Miller and Alexander and some of their fellow Presbyterians were adamant about the need for an educated black leadership.

First classes were held in a Presbyterian church at Fourth and Davidson (then simply "D" Street) in Charlotte's Second Ward. <sup>4</sup> A few years later the institution purchased the old Confederate Navy Building on East Trade Street, below where the Civic Center now stands. <sup>5</sup> The old structure was disassembled and its materials loaded on wagons, bound for a site in Second Ward, where prominent landowner Col. W. R. Myers donated a new site. The new location was on a hilltop north of the town where two old roads forked west toward Rozelles Ferry and Beatties Ford across the Catawba River. The eight acre parcel, officially deeded to the school's trustees in 1873, formed the nucleus of the present seventy-five acre campus. <sup>6</sup>

The first president of the institution was Rev. Stephen Mattoon. Like the founders, he was a white Presbyterian minister. In 1871 he and his wife Mary purchased from W. F. Davidson fifty-five acres of farmland across Beatties Ford Road from the college, just south of the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford railroad track (now Seaboard Coast Line Railroad). <sup>7</sup> Over the next forty-five years, the Mattoons sold the land off in small lots to blacks who wanted to settle near the college. This tract, which apparently covered the present Mattoon and Cemetery streets as well as portions of Campus Street and French Street, was the beginning of Biddleville.

The college was named the Henry J. Biddle Memorial Institute in honor of Major Henry Johnston Biddle, a white Union soldier killed in action in the Civil War. <sup>8</sup> Biddle's widow, Mrs. Mary D. Biddle of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, gave considerable financial support to the institution in its early years. In 1876 the institution was renamed Biddle University. <sup>9</sup>

Early presidents and most of the faculty members were white. In 1891 a black "teacher and preacher," Rev. Daniel J. Sanders, was named president of the University, and subsequent presidents and most faculty have been black. <sup>10</sup> Perhaps the most outstanding of the black presidents was Henry L. McCrorey who served from 1907 until 1947. <sup>11</sup> He began his administration by raising money to match a grant from Andrew Carnegie to build the [Carnegie Library](#) on campus. He also presided over the formerly all-male school's switch to co-education in 1933, and he developed a large black suburb off Beatties Ford Road along Oaklawn Avenue north of the campus, today known to its residents as McCrorey Heights. <sup>12</sup>



*The Carnegie Library At JCSU*

His greatest achievement came in the early 1920s when he interested a second well-to-do Pittsburgh widow in the school's cause. Mrs. Jane Berry Smith donated funds for eight new structures on the campus over the course of the decade, and set up an endowment fund. In 1923, in the midst of this major expansion, the college was renamed Johnson C. Smith University in honor of her husband. <sup>13</sup> The following year the college became a beneficiary of the James B. Duke Endowment. The fund, established by tobacco and utility tycoon James Buchanan Duke, helps support Duke University, Furman College, Davidson College, and JCSU, and has provided Johnson C. Smith University with more than 10 million dollars over the decades. <sup>14</sup>

Today's campus is a pleasant mix of recent buildings, most funded by the Duke Endowment, 1920 structures donated by Mrs. Smith, and a handful of buildings from the days of Biddle University. The centerpiece of the group is [Biddle Hall](#), topped by a brick clocktower that is visible from much of the city. The 1883 structure is Charlotte's finest remaining example of Victorian institutional architecture. <sup>15</sup> It features complex massing that may have been inspired by Jubilee Hall built a few years earlier at the prestigious black Fisk University. Biddle Hall's exterior has exuberant corbelled brickwork with brownstone trim, including brick crosses worked into the chimneys of the old chapel/auditorium at the rear of the building.



*Biddle Hall at JCSU*

Behind Biddle Hall is [Carter Hall](#), erected in 1895. <sup>16</sup> Named for donor Mary Carter of Geneva, New York, it was constructed by the students themselves. The Victorian design has four massive corner turrets and a delicate central cupola. Like Biddle Hall, it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A third nineteenth century structure that survives on campus is the Teachers' House, a two story frame dwelling of the type dubbed an "I" house by folklorists. The building dates from the early days of Biddle Institute, when lodging was included as part of a professor's salary. <sup>17</sup> The structure is decorated in the Stick style with bracketed eaves and massive bargeboards in the gables, the best example of the style in Charlotte today.

At least two early twentieth century structures are worthy of note. One is the Carnegie Library designed by Charlotte architects L. L. Hunter and Franklin Gordon and completed in 1912. It is a fine example of the Neo Classical style, with delicate white terra cotta columns and modillion cornices based on ancient Greek and Roman models. Charlotte once had two Carnegie-funded libraries. The downtown building has been replaced by the current main branch of the Charlotte Public Library, and the JCSU building, currently used for offices, alone survives. The second noteworthy edifice is the memorial [gateway](#) to the campus that was erected when the institution

was renamed in honor of Johnson C. Smith. The stone archway has been the symbol of the University, along with the early Biddle Hall clocktower, since the 1920s.

Across Beatties Ford Road from the University is the original Biddleville village. A *Map of Charlotte Township* drawn in the 1890s shows it as one of half a dozen villages ringing the edge of the city.<sup>18</sup> These "ring villages" are a phenomenon not noted in urban histories of northern cities. They deserve special study as a unique feature of southern urban geography.

The ring villages shown on the 1890s map, the earliest to illustrate the city's surroundings in detail, are Blandville along today's Bland Street off South Tryon, Biddleville on Beatties Ford Road, Seversville on the west side of West Trade Street in the area of the present Bruns Avenue Elementary School (built in 1925 as Seversville School), Greenville and Irwinville west of Statesville Road, and an unnamed string of lots off Providence Road that would soon become the heart of Cherry. Except for Seversville, which had grown up around a white-owned country store, all of these villages were populated by blacks when the areas were first included in the city directory in the twentieth century.

Biddleville was founded after the Civil War around its college, as we have noted, and Cherry was developed as a "model Negro housing development" in the 1890s by the white Myers family.<sup>19</sup> The genesis of the other black communities is not known. They may have developed after the Civil War from the slave quarters of old farms. This seems particularly possible in the case of Irwinville, because it is known that the Irwin family owned a large farm that extended to West Trade Street, including the present site of Irwin School and Irwin Street.<sup>20</sup> It is also possible that some of the villages grew from pre-war clusters of free blacks and slaves who did not live on their masters' property. Historian Richard C. Wade noted in his study *Slavery in the Cities* that "there were parts of town with clusters of colored inhabitants. By the 'forties and 'fifties it was apparent in most places that Negroes were settling on the periphery of the cities" of the southeast.<sup>21</sup>

Today it is difficult to visualize these early villages because, with the exception of Biddleville and the comparatively recent [Cherry](#) village, they have been demolished. Greenville and Irwinville were bulldozed as part of the Greenville Urban Renewal project. Only a handful of dwellings survive near Bland Street, which was part of the West Morehead Urban Renewal area. More study is needed with U. S. Census data and land ownership records to understand the history of Charlotte's ring villages.

Though it is unique in its reason for founding, Biddleville is a good place to get a picture of what the other ring villages may have been like. The original Mattoon property apparently ran from the present Seaboard Coast Line railroad track, which

had been built in 1861, to French Street, along the west side of Beatties Ford Road.<sup>22</sup> Early on this nucleus was augmented by sales to blacks from other white landowners. By the 1890s the village extended to the present West Trade Street. *The Map of Charlotte Township* from that decade shows three rows of houses, the present Solomon Street, Campus Street, and Beatties Ford Road.

It is interesting to note the linear arrangement of the dwellings, seen also in the other ring villages on the map. There were no houses built on cross streets, to form blocks, and there was no attempt to arrange the buildings to create a central square, another popular type of village design. The lines of houses are reminiscent of the rows of cabins seen in slave quarters on some antebellum plantations. Perhaps the arrangement of Biddleville was a survival of patterns learned in slavery days, or perhaps it came from an earlier source. In any case it was different from the around-the-block form favored by white Charlotte in the century.

The neighborhood has seen much change over the years, especially along busy Beatties Ford Road, but its narrow lanes still have a village feel. According to longtime resident Barzilla Thomas, in 1981 all buildings in the village except for the recent JCSU dormitory on Beatties Ford Road predated World War II.<sup>23</sup> Further research is needed to determine whether any early cabins survive under later remodelings on Beatties Ford, Campus, or Solomon streets.

The present study has identified three significant sites in the original village. One is the old black cemetery at the west end of Cemetery Street. It is in poor condition, recently cleared of years of overgrowth as part of the creation of an adjacent city park. The oldest stone dates back to 1908, though it is not unlikely that there were earlier burials. Of special interest are two raised graves of more recent vintage, surmounted by unusual concrete crosses.

Three blocks away at 529 Campus Street is the old [Mount Carmel Baptist Church](#).<sup>24</sup> It began in the 1870s in a frame structure which probably gave Campus Street its original name, Church Street. When the city annexed Biddleville the street was renamed Carmel Street to avoid confusion with Church Street in downtown Charlotte. The present church building dates from 1918, a period of black prosperity in the city. The large brick Gothic style structure was built from a design by Louis Asbury. The congregation has now moved to larger quarters outside the neighborhood, and the street has been renamed Campus Street for the JCSU dorms at its southern end. Residents still regard the old Mount Carmel Church building as a symbolic center of the community.

South on Campus Street at the corner of Dixon Street (probably named for early black property owner Amanda Dixon) is the [home of George E. Davis](#). Davis was the

University's first black professor, a Ph.D. graduate of Howard University who taught Natural Science from 1886 through 1921 and served as Dean of Faculty for many years.<sup>25</sup> After his retirement he became an official with the North Carolina State Education Department. George E. Davis Science Hall erected on the campus in 1922 was named for him. In 1928 he had an imposing two story brick house built, still the largest in the whole Biddleville-Five Points neighborhood.



*Davis House*

Over the years, Biddleville became known as a favored residential area for the black elite, along with Brevard Street in Second Ward and the North Myers-East Seventh street area in First Ward. Families who wanted to raise their children in an intellectual atmosphere gathered around the University, with its cultural offerings. Residents included not only college students, professors, and alumni, but also public school teachers, including the principals of Second Ward High School and First Ward's Alexander Street Elementary. Small wood frame houses on tight lots line the narrow streets, interspersed with occasional brick-faced cottages. A handful of more substantial two-story houses are scattered at intersections. Today the areas adjacent to the campus are remarkable for their residential stability, with some homeowners living in the same houses they purchased in the early years of the century.

Around the turn of the century, a new era dawned for Biddleville as the city grew outward to include the old village. In 1897 the first "streetcar suburb" was platted in the area.<sup>26</sup> It was a triangular piece of farmland just south of the campus, previously owned by the Davidson family. Its developer was W. S. Alexander, who was laying out Elizabeth on the other side of town at the same time. The new area he called Western Heights was bounded by West Trade, Martin and Frazier Streets. Once the subdivision was established the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company

extended its trolley tracks out West Trade Street, commencing service April 25, 1903.<sup>27</sup>

For several years Western Heights was a white area, just like the old Seversville village across West Trade. Though the trolley served Biddleville and its college as well as the white areas, the route was known as the Seversville line. In the 1920s the Western Heights area shifted from white to black, though some white residents remained.<sup>28</sup> The last of these was grocer A. H. Frazier, a member of the family which owned the land that became Summit Avenue and part of Frazier Street. Some current residents remember him living in a house that still stood in early 1983 at 127 Frazier Street.

When Western Heights opened to black residents, speculators quickly crowded its vacant lots with small houses. Most of the present structures in Western Heights date from the late 1910s or early 1920s. The most interesting group is that which lines Summit Avenue. The structures include a number of "[shotgun](#)" houses, a long narrow dwelling once common in Charlotte's black neighborhoods. As noted in the Architecture Section of this report, the room arrangement of the shotgun, one room behind the other with no hall, can be traced back to dwellings in Africa.<sup>29</sup> Despite its frequent use in the twentieth century as cheap rental housing, the shotgun has a proud Afro-American heritage. Narrow Summit Avenue, with its front porches crowding the street, is today the best preserved reminder of what most of the city's black neighborhoods looked like before Urban Renewal.

In the early 1920s another white suburb was built next to Biddleville. This was Roslyn Heights, platted by the Roslyn Realty Company in 1923 and 1925.<sup>30</sup> Its small bungalows line Roslyn Avenue and the short cross streets between West Trade Street and Rozelle's Ferry Road. This area, like the old Seversville village, remained white until the 1960s when the Urban Renewal destruction of Second Ward downtown created a massive shift in Charlotte's black population.

Immediately after World War II a large development of small, wooden homes was built on new streets straddling West Trade beyond Roslyn Heights.<sup>31</sup> It was called, with perhaps unintended ironic humor, Smallwood Homes. Like Roslyn Heights it was occupied by white working class families until the 1960s.

The area may be of some historic significance despite its recent vintage, because it is believed to be the first project by Charles Ervin, who became the largest homebuilder in the Southeast during much of the post-World War II boom. Ervin, a part-time brick mason, was living near the present intersection of Rozelle's Ferry Road and Boulevard Road not far from the Smallwood site in 1947 when he built a house for himself (now gone). Before the structure was completed, Ervin was offered a price he could not turn



down. Recognizing the strength of the postwar housing market, Ervin quickly worked his way into the housebuilding field as a developer. He was a millionaire at age thirty-one and by 1968 his company had built in the Charlotte area alone 10,000 single family dwellings, 2,000 apartment units, and about 2 million square feet of retail, office and warehouse space.<sup>32</sup> Ervin suburbs today ring the city, including Raintree, Tanglewood, Idlewild, Derita Woods, Springfield, Montclair, Starmount, Westchester and more.<sup>33</sup> Among his later developments was another adjacent to Biddleville. The Crestview subdivision platted in 1961 extended Mattoon Street and opened Crestview Drive, with new brick ranch houses for black buyers.<sup>34</sup>

Many of Ervin's suburbs were laid out by Charlotte civil engineer C. E. Blankenship. The pair began their collaboration with the Smallwood street plan. When the first map of Smallwood was filed at the Register of Deeds office in 1947 there was no developer's name. An extension recorded in 1948 bears the name of Charles Ervin, indicating that these humble homes represent one of Charles Ervin's very earliest large scale developments, and probably his first.<sup>35</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, deed book 7, p. 512.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur A. George, *100 Years, 1867-1967: Salient Factors in the Growth and Development of Johnson C. Smith University* (Charlotte: J.C.S.U., 1968), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. See also Inez Moore Parker, *The Biddle-Johnson C. Smith Story* (Charlotte: Charlotte Publishing, 1975), pp. 3-5.

<sup>4</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "[Biddle Memorial Hall: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1976). George, p. 2; Parker, p. 5. This area was known as "Logtown," the city's poorest section, soon to become the black area known as Brooklyn.

<sup>5</sup> George, p. 2; Parker, p. 5; Morrill, "Biddle Memorial Hall. . ."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, deed book 9, p. 323.

<sup>7</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, deed book 7, p. 512. A sketch map of the parcel is in the Biddleville file of the Lawyers Title Company, 301 South McDowell Street, Charlotte.

<sup>8</sup> George, p. 2; Parker, p. 5; Morrill, "Biddle Memorial Hall..."

<sup>9</sup> George, p. 6; Parker, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> George, p. 11; Parker, pp. 11-12; Morrill, "Biddle Memorial Hall. . ."

<sup>11</sup> Parker, p. 15; George, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Parker, pp. 16-17, 20, 22; George, pp. 15-21, 25-46. City of Charlotte, Department of Engineering, "1:3000 Subdivision Map."

<sup>13</sup> Parker, pp. 19-22; George, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Parker, p. 20, see also city directories in 1920s.

<sup>15</sup> Morrill, "Biddle Memorial Hall. . .". Information on specific buildings in this section was developed through the use of the city directory collection and vertical files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library, supplemented by the books by Parker and George, except as noted. Biddleville-Five Points has proved one of the most difficult Charlotte neighborhoods to study, especially before 1930, because street numbers changed frequently. Buildings for which the Historic Properties Commission has completed Survey and Research Reports are indicated by footnotes.

<sup>16</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "[Carter Hall: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "The Teachers' House at Johnson C. Smith University" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> Butler and Spratt, "Map of Charlotte Township..... 1892." Copies are in the collection of the Historic Department of the Mint Museum, Charlotte, and the City of Charlotte Historic Districts Commission.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Earle Sumner Draper, interview with Earle Sumner Draper, Jr., based on questions prepared by Thomas W. Hanchett, Vero Beach, Florida, March, 1982. "W. S. Myers" vertical file in the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

<sup>20</sup> F. W. Beers, C. E., "Map of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. . .," 1877. Copies of this map are available from the City of Charlotte Department of Engineering.

<sup>21</sup> Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: the South 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 275 .

<sup>22</sup> LeGette Blythe and Charles Brockman, *The Hornets' Nest: the Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), pp. 261-62. John Gilbert and Grady Jefferys, *Crossties Through Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: The Helios Press, 1969), p. 8. The line was originally called the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad and connected Charlotte and Lincolntown.

<sup>23</sup> Barzilla Thomas, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, Charlotte, N.C., July 1981.

<sup>24</sup> William H. Huffman, "[Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1983).

<sup>25</sup> Parker, pp. 8-9.

<sup>26</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, deed book 101, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Dan L. Morrill and Nancy Thomas, "[Biddleville](#)," in the New South Neighborhoods brochure series (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> City directories collection, Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

<sup>29</sup> John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977), pp. 122-138. "The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts: Notes on the Exhibition" (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977), p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, Map Book 3, pp. 34-35.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Map Book 5, p. 287; Map Book 6, p. 17; Deed Book 1166, p. 329; Deed Book 2095, p. 545.

<sup>32</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, March 10, 1968. See also *Charlotte Observer*, April 14, 1957; May 1, 1960; August 24, 1962.

<sup>33</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, plat map index.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Map Book 9, p. 403.

<sup>35</sup> William S. Michaels, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, November 1981. Michaels is Ervin's lawyer.

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## **BIDDLEVILLE - FIVE POINTS: Significant Structures and Sites**

**BIDDLE HALL**, 1884

**JCSU Campus**

**Designated in National Register of Historic Places**



Biddle Hall, the main building at Johnson C. Smith University, is perhaps Charlotte's finest example of Victorian institutional architecture. It is a cluster of towers, bays and dormers embellished with carefully detailed brickwork and brownstone trim. Chiseled in the cornerstone is the Latin motto "Sit Lux" -- Let There Be Light. When Biddle Hall was built it served as classroom facility, dining hall and chapel all in one. One can still see the crosses worked into the brick chimneys on what was the rear chapel wing. For a hundred years the soaring clocktower has dominated the western skyline of the city.

## CARTER HALL, 1895

### **JCSU Campus**

#### **Designated in the National Register of Historic Places**

Students who complain about work-study jobs today should be glad they were not going to school when Carter Hall was erected. This massive Victorian style brick structure was built entirely by students of the college. Note the four big turrets at the corners, and the delicate wooden cupola in the center of the roof, all characteristic of Victorian architecture. The building was named after its donor, Mary Carter of Geneva, New York, one of a number of northern Presbyterians who helped fund the college in its early days.

## CARNEGIE LIBRARY, 1912

### **JCSU Campus**



This small building with its columned portico is the city's earliest surviving Neoclassical style institutional structure. Charlotte's architectural firm of Hunter and Gordon based the design on the buildings of ancient Greece and Rome. The portico has Doric columns of white-glazed terra cotta, topped by a triangular pediment inspired by a Greek temple. A delicate modillion cornice of terra cotta runs around the building. The library was built in part with funds donated by Andrew Carnegie, the wealthy founder of United States Steel who helped erect hundreds of such buildings across the country. Charlotte once had three Carnegie Libraries. The two downtown

have been demolished and this building at Johnson C. Smith is the only one to survive.

## **TEACHERS' HOUSE, 18??**

### **JCSU Campus**

This is one of the oldest buildings on the Johnson C. Smith campus. It dates from the era when the college provided housing for professors as a supplement to their meager salaries. The crossed "bargeboards" in the gables are an example of the so-called "Stick style," a variation on Victorian architecture that is especially rare in Charlotte. Note also the wooden brackets under the eaves, another Victorian trademark. The house has been moved more than once over the years, and its front porch has been enclosed. Overall, the Teachers' House is in remarkably good condition, however, and an important reminder of the college's early days.

## **JOHNSON C. SMITH MEMORIAL GATEWAY, c. 1923**

### **JCSU Campus**

This stone arch with its iron gates is the twentieth century symbol of the University. In the 1920s, Mrs. Jane Berry Smith, a Pittsburgh philanthropist, donated eight new buildings and an endowment fund to the struggling Biddle University, more than tripling its size. The institution was renamed Johnson C. Smith University in honor of her late husband. This memorial gate commemorated the new name and provided a fine entrance to the refurbished campus.



### **DR. GEORGE E. DAVIS HOUSE, 1890s**

#### **301 Campus Street**

Dr. George Davis was the University's first black professor. He graduated from Biddle University, as it was then known, in 1883 and went on to attain a Ph.D. in medicine from prestigious Howard University. Davis returned to Charlotte to teach Natural Science from 1886 through 1921, and was Dean of Faculty for many years. His hiring signaled the beginning of a shift in the college's staff from northern white teachers and administrators to southern black ones. It was striking proof of how much the University had done in just three decades to train black leaders.

After his retirement Davis served as an official with the North Carolina State Education Department and built this house. It is one of many professors' residences in Biddleville. A two story brick structure on a prominent corner lot, the Dr. George E. Davis House is still the neighborhood's most imposing residence in the 1980s.

6/18/00



## **OLD MOUNT CARMEL BAPTIST CHURCH, 1918**

### **529 Campus Street**

Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church has long been a center of the Biddleville community. For decades Campus Street was called Carmel Street, and back when Biddleville was still a village separate from Charlotte it was named Church Street. The brick Victorian Gothic structure was built from plans drawn by Louis Asbury, a leading Charlotte architect who also designed the old County Courthouse and Myers Park United Methodist Church, among many other major Charlotte buildings. The Mount Carmel congregation dates back to 1878. Today it is housed in a larger building and Old Mount Carmel is rented to another denomination.

## **SHOTGUN HOUSES, 1920s**

### **Summit Avenue**

Some say the "shotgun" house type was nicknamed for its resemblance to a long, narrow shotgun barrel. A shotgun is a one-story dwelling consisting of three or four rooms lined up one behind the other, with no hallway. This unusual room arrangement has been traced back through Haiti to western Africa.

Today this street of houses, set close together with their porches lining the narrow lane, is the best collection of shotguns left in Charlotte. It is important to preserve



some examples of these humble houses to show our children what black neighborhoods once looked like, and to celebrate the survival against the odds of an Afro-American house type.