

1200
April 4, 2014

Historic Landmarks Commission
Survey Committee
2100 Randolph Road
Charlotte, N.C. 28207

RE: Application for Petition for Historical Site: Lawrence Orr Story

Lawrence Orr was born May 14th, 1882. He was the 7th child of Alexander and Alicia Orr, former slaves. Lawrence Orr was born and raised in the township of Crab Orchard, which is now Hickory Grove of Mecklenburg County. His father was a landowner of property connected to Hickory Grove Road, which taught Lawrence the value of home and land. Lawrence Orr married Addie Dennis on May 25th, 1907. From this union they produced 10 children and purchased 10 acres of land near Hickory Grove Road, where they built their first home. Soon a street was made connect their property to Hickory Grove Road, making theirs the first and only house on the newly formed connected street. The street was named in honor of Lawrence Orr, as Lawrence Orr Road. His wife passed away giving birth to their 10th child, leaving him to raise all 10 children by alone.

The original home that Lawrence Orr built still stands at 5025 Lawrence Orr Road. Lawrence Orr encouraged other black owners to buy land around him. One couple he inspired was John and Nettie Wallace. They became the homeowners of their street, named Johnette Drive, currently connected to Lawrence Orr Road.

Lawrence Orr was an active member in the African American community, not only encouraging home and landownership, but advocating the right to vote. As a life member of Saint Paul Presbyterian Church in Hickory Grove, he connected with other men from surrounding black churches to form a petition committee. This group of men petitioned the county school board to build four new schools for African American children in the Hickory Grove area, as well as other surrounding counties. In the early 1930s, the committee was awarded the four schools, one named Clear Creek Negro School, which is currently J.H. Gunn Elementary School. In addition, Lawrence Orr owned and operated a general store at the corner of Shamrock Drive and Hickory Grove Road in the early 1930's, until his death in the mid-1940's. This was the only black-owned store ever built between Central Avenue, Hickory Grove Road, and Newell Hickory Grove Road (now W.T. Harris Blvd), a radius of over 15 miles. The school, Clear Creek Negro School, was demolished in 1983 and the general store no longer exists.

This is the reason for this letter is an appeal to have the house at 5025 Lawrence Orr Road designated as a historical site. As this was the first house that began the boom of the black community in Hickory Grove's history, homage should be paid to the community leader and activist that started it all. With so few historical African American structures in Charlotte, NC, we hope that preserving such legacy would be a priority for the city and its constituents. We would love and welcome the opportunity to present this property for consideration under

Sincerely,

Alphonso Maxwell
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Charlotte, NC 28212
(704) 537-7746

encl:

Potential Historic Landmark Form
Photographs of Property