

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	AUG 11 1975
DATE ENTERED	OCT 14 1974

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Biddle Memorial Hall, Johnson C. Smith University

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Corner of Beatties Ford Road and West Trade Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Charlotte

VICINITY OF

9th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Mecklenburg

119

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Johnson C. Smith University (Dr. Wilbert Greenfield, President)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Mecklenburg County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

West Trade Street

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Biddle Memorial Hall is a Romanesque Revival building of monumental scale. It is five bays wide and stands three-and-one-half stories above a raised basement. The three center bays project as a pavilion, separated by brick pilasters that rise a full story above the main block; and the center bay rises high above the rest in an elaborate clock tower with a pyramidal slate roof; there are bartizans at each corner. The bartizans and the pyramidal roofs are repeated on the bays flanking the tower also giving these bays the character of nascent towers. Slate is used on the main roof as well.

The building exhibits boldly executed masonry which combines various shapes and textures, both in the brick and in the stone work. Heavy corbel cornices occur beneath the roofline. Bands of diagonally set soldiers mark the tops and bottoms of the windows at each level, and the windows themselves have combinations of flat and segmental arches in addition to stone sills and rusticated stone lintels. The window sizes, shapes, and groupings vary from story to story, within the stories, a strong symmetry is maintained. The two outer bays of the front elevation have large wall dormers with one arched window flanked by rectangular, shorter ones in a Palladian-like motif. The front entrance has a large ten-light transom surmounted by a fanlight. There is a heavy, elliptical brick arch surrounding the fanlight. A molded stone gable accentuates the entrance bay and the stone molding carries in a straight line over the windows flanking the door, concluding with tiny stone bartizans in relief.

The sides of the main block are divided into three sections: a center bay (with entrance to a cross hall) is flanked by large, projecting, three-faceted bays which extend three full stories rising to a small dormer in the center plane of the three faceted roof. The central bay rises to a gabled wall dormer abutted by large bartizans with convex pyramidal roofs and foliated finials. To the rear is a three-story, rectangular brick auditorium joined by a three story corridor; both are on raised basements. The wing extends four bays to the rear and has a hip roof. At each corner of this section is a bartizan with pyramidal roof having a delicate metal finial. There is a cupola-like ventilator box on a raised platform in the center of the roof ridge; this vent has a roof and finial similar to the bartizans. To the rear of the auditorium, at the northwest corner, is a three-story square stair tower adjoined (to the north) by a one-story, apsidial wing which has an extension to the north, covered by a shed roof.

The front door opens into a center hall which is intersected midway by a cross hall. The cross hall contains stairs which are framed by arches leading from the center hall.

The interior finish is typically Victorian. The entrance area contains a wainscot consisting of a molded chair rail with vertical beaded boards in the dado; the wainscot carries up the stairs. The doors have four panels with wide molding, arranged with two vertical panels with a horizontal panel above and below. In most cases the doors are surmounted by transoms. The radiators are quite interesting, having intricate vine designs on each end as well as across the tops of each section. The open-string stairs are identical, both having a heavy molded handrail supported by one large turned baluster on each tread. The brackets have a broad but graceful foliated motif. The newel is large and square with a molded cap; it has large roundels at the handrail level and incised curvilinear designs below.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Biddle Memorial Hall, Johnson C. Smith University, was built in 1883 to serve as the main building for a college for blacks, established in 1867. The ambitious Romanesque Revival building, an impressive structure with a dramatic tower and elaborate brickwork ornament, continues to serve as the school's administration building.

Soon after the end of the Civil War citizens in Charlotte began to recognize the need for facilities for educating Negroes, "lest their last state be worse than the first." To this end, Johnson C. Smith University was founded in 1867--with less than twelve students and two teachers. The school was first named Biddle Memorial Institute in appreciation of the first large cash donation which was made by Mrs. Mary Duke Biddle of Philadelphia and Durham (a tobacco heiress). The movement began at a Presbyterian church meeting in Charlotte on April 7, 1867, which resulted in the establishment of a mission school for blacks. The principal movers were Samuel C. Alexander and Willis L. Miller (both white Presbyterian ministers) and the first school building was the old Confederate Navy Building, purchased for \$150.00. The school was moved to its present location in 1868; the original eight acres which formed the nucleus of the present campus was donated by William R. Myers, Charlotte entrepreneur. Dr. Stephen Mattoon was elected president of the school in 1869 and served in that capacity until 1884. Dr. Mattoon was selected for the position, it was reported, "because of his understanding of races other than his own gained while serving as a missionary to Siam." (One of his daughters became the mother of Norman Mattoon Thomas, minister and author, who was the nominee of the Socialist party in many presidential elections.)

In 1883 the current administration building, Biddle Memorial Hall, was constructed at a cost of \$40,000. The funds for the building were secured to a great extent through the efforts of a faculty member, Reverend Thomas Lawrence, under the auspices of the Board of Missions for Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Substantial responses to Reverend Lawrence's efforts came from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, with \$10,000 received from the Freedmen's Bureau and \$1,400 from Mrs. Mary Duke Biddle. The new university building "was constructed 97 x 67 feet, four stories high, with an extension, 66 x 45 feet which provided an Audience Chamber on the west end capable of seating approximately 600, including its rear balcony." The ambitiousness of the building suggests it was designed by an architect, but no information has been located concerning its authorship. The bricks for the building were made by students "under supervision"; student labor was also utilized in the construction of the building. For several years this building provided space for the major offices and operational centers: classrooms, reading room, registrar's quarters, business office, president's office and other quarters vital for the execution of the general program.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Blythe, LeGette, and Charles Raven Brockmann. Hornet's Nest, The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Charlotte, North Carolina: published for Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County by McNally of Charlotte, 1961.

Logan, Frenise A. The Negro In North Carolina, 1876-1894. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1964.

Marsh, Blanche and Kenneth Frederick Marsh. Charlotte, Carolina's Queen City. Columbia, South Carolina: The R. L. Bryon Company, 1967

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	513000	3899830	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

<u>Research and architectural description by Charles Greer Suttlemyre, Jr., survey</u>	DATE
ORGANIZATION	specialist
<u>Division of Archives and History</u>	30 July 1975
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>109 East Jones Street</u>	919/829-7862
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Raleigh</u>	<u>North Carolina</u>

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Tommy New Dwyer

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 30 July 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST *Ronald M. Greenberg*
 WEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 10/14/75

DATE 10/14/75

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE one

The auditorium roof is supported by exposed, paneled beams which run across the width of the room. The beams are carried on ornamented brackets; they are supported in turn by three series of arches running the length of the room. The spandrels are decorated with elaborate art nouveau designs and the arches spring from slender, chamfered posts which rest on chamfered bases. The posts have molded bands near their tops as well as their flared bases. To the rear is a small balcony which has a solid balustrade consisting of a molded rail and a run of square panels with heavy molding above a corresponding row of large bosses. Suspended at intervals by chains are art nouveau light fixtures of a Byzantine character. The room contains a wainscot like the entrance hall. There are theatre type wooden seats with metal ends that are decorated with a large diamond design and parallel, zig-zag lines above and below the diamond. The four tall windows on each side of the auditorium have paired, four-over-four sash windows with multi-paired, large over-windows consisting of random colored glazing.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

In 1888 the school had a faculty of thirteen and a student body of 187; the express object of the institute was the education of Negro teachers and ministers. Nearly one-third of its total enrollment in 1888 was preparing for the ministry, and tuition was free in all departments. While Dr. Mattoon was president, the name, Biddle Memorial Institute, was changed to Biddle University and on March 1, 1923, the name was changed to Johnson C. Smith University in recognition of generous gifts by Mrs. Jane Berry Smith in honor of her husband who is said to have made his fortune from a tin mill. It was at this time that the main building became Biddle Memorial Hall.

In 1925, alumni, students and friends collected \$6,025 and installed a carillon chime clock in the building's tower. Through the years the school has grown through gifts of people such as Mrs. Biddle and Mrs. Smith, as well as an endowment by James B. Duke, assuring the school of continued support; Biddle Memorial Hall has continued to be the center of the campus operation. With a view of greater utilization of space, the interior of Biddle Memorial Hall underwent significant renovations in 1955 and in 1974. In addition, quite recently all its wood window casements were replaced with metal ones. Despite these minor changes, the exterior and much of the interior retain their original appearance.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE one

- Mecklenburg County Records, Mecklenburg County Courthouse, Charlotte, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds).
- Mecklenburg County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds).
- Parker, Inez M. Unpublished history of Biddle Memorial Hall. Filed with Survey and
Planning Unit, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.
- Tompkins, D. A. History of Mecklenburg County and The City of Charlotte from 1748 to
1903. Charlotte, North Carolina: Observer Printing House, 1903.