

BOOK 3026 PAGE 187  
ORDINANCE NO. (1982)-905

mail. 4p  
AN ORDINANCE DESIGNATING THE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING OF THE BERRY O'KELLY SCHOOL IN THE CITY OF RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, A HISTORIC PROPERTY

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina authorized the creation of a Historic Properties Commission for the City of Raleigh and otherwise provided for the preservation of certain historic sites and buildings by the passage of Part 3B, Article 19, Chapter 160A North Carolina General Statutes; and

WHEREAS, the Raleigh Historic Properties Commission has made an investigation and recommended the following property be designated a Historic Property; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina State Department for Cultural Resources has made an analysis and recommendation that the following property be designated a historic property; and

WHEREAS, on the 4th day of May, 1982 a joint public hearing was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, Raleigh, North Carolina, by the Historic Properties Commission and the City Council of the City of Raleigh to determine whether the hereinafter described property should be designated a historic property; and

WHEREAS, all requirements of Part 3B, Article 19, Chapter 160A of the North Carolina General Statutes, preceding the adoption of this ordinance, have been complied with.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RALEIGH THAT:

Section 1. The property designated as the Agricultural Building of the Berry O'Kelly School, in the planning jurisdiction in the City of Raleigh, North Carolina, be and is declared a historic property. Said property being more particularly described as follows:

Agricultural Building of the Berry O'Kelly School, located on Method Road, west side, between Beryl Road and Woods Place.

Section 2. Those elements of the property that are integral to its historical, architectural, archaeological, or any combination thereof are as follows:

The importance of the Agricultural Building of the Berry O'Kelly School as an historic property lies in its association with that school and with the Method Community and Berry O'Kelly. It is the soul surviving structure of an eight building complex which comprise the Berry O'Kelly Training School, the largest rural black school in North Carolina in 1931.

REGISTERED  
FOR  
RECORDATION  
JUN 21 11 51 AM '82  
WAKE COUNTY, N.C.

The Agricultural Building, built in 1926 is a very straight forward, simple brick box, with the plain, tall proportions which represent a type of school building construction once characteristic of this area and region. The later addition repeats the original pattern established in the main block. Upon its completion, the building housed fully-equipped shops, a vocational agricultural laboratory, rooms for home economics, and a poultry incubation room in the basement.

Born in about 1816, died in 1931, Berry O'Kelly was a black philanthropist particularly concerned with educational opportunities for rural black children. He was the first Post Master of Method Post Office, served as President of the Mechanics and Farmers Bank, the Acme Realty Company and the North Carolina Negro State Fair; was a Steward of St. James A.M.E. Church, and a Trustee of Kittrell College.

Section 3. No building or structure that is designated in this ordinance located on the hereinbefore described site may be altered, restored, moved, remodeled, or reconstructed so that a change in design, material or outer appearance occurs unless and until a certificate of appropriateness is obtained from the Raleigh Historic Properties Commission or its successors.

Section 4. No building or structure which is designated in this ordinance on the hereinbefore described site may be demolished unless and until either approval of demolition is obtained from the Raleigh Historic Properties Commission or, after the Commission has received a completed request for demolition, one-hundred and eighty (180) days (or any other longer period of time required by N.C.G.S. 160-399.6 as it may be amended hereinafter) have elapsed.

Section 5. That all owners and occupants of the property hereinabove described, whose identity and addresses can be ascertained by the exercise of due diligence be sent by certified mail a copy of this ordinance.

Section 6. This ordinance shall be indexed under the property owner's name in the grantor and grantee indexes in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Wake County.

Section 7. City administration and the Historic Properties Commission are hereby authorized and directed to have erected an appropriate sign on the site hereinabove described setting forth the fact that said site has been designated a historic property by action of the Historic Properties Commission and the City Council of the City of Raleigh provided, should the owners of the hereinabove described property not consent to the erection of said sign on the described premises, City administration and the Historic Properties Commission are hereby authorized and directed to have said sign located on the public right-of-way adjacent to said property.

Section 8. In the event any building or structure is demolished in accordance with the ordinances of the City of Raleigh, this ordinance shall automatically be null and void.

Section 9. Any violation of this ordinance shall be unlawful as by law provided.

Adopted: 5/4/82

Effective: 5/4/82

Distribution: City Manager  
City Attorney  
Planning Department (2)  
Inspections Division (3)  
Historic Properties Commission  
Wake County Tax Supervisor  
Property Owner and/or Occupant  
Register of Deeds  
City Council

clk/34jt

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)  
COUNTY OF WAKE )

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CERTIFICATION

I, Gail G. Smith, City Clerk and Treasurer of the City of Raleigh, North Carolina, do hereby certify that the attached is a true and exact copy of Ordinance No. (1982) 905 adopted by the City Council at their meeting held on May 4, 1982.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Seal of the City of Raleigh to be affixed this 14th day of June, 1982.



*Gail G. Smith*  
Gail G. Smith  
City Clerk and Treasurer

## THE BERRY O'KELLY SCHOOL AGRICULTURE BUILDING

The importance of the Agriculture Building of the Berry O'Kelly School as an historic property lies in its association with that school and with the Method Community and its premier resident, Berry O'Kelly. It is the sole surviving structure of an eight-building complex which comprised the Berry O'Kelly Training School.

The Method neighborhood in West Raleigh has its own unique history which is also part of the history of Raleigh. Its origin and development was one example of the manner in which former slaves - freed but landless after the Civil War - and white landowners, by their own initiative and unaided by the federal government, attempted to build a new economic order in the South to replace the ante-bellum plantation system of agriculture which had been destroyed by the war and its aftermath. Method originated with the decision of General W. R. Cox, a Confederate veteran, to sell part of his plantation just west of Raleigh in small plots to blacks on easy terms, and the use of this opportunity by some of the latter. Called earlier Save-Rent or Slabtown, from the moving there of blacks from Raleigh to avoid high rents and the use of slabs cut from timber there to build houses, its name was changed to Mason Village to recognize the community leadership of Lewis Mason. The latter was the son of Jesse Mason who, along with his half-brother Isaac Kelly, was one of the first purchasers of land from General Cox in 1872. Later, after becoming a railroad stop, its name was changed to Method. (1)

About 1880 a young man came to Method who was destined to become unquestionably its outstanding resident. Born in Chapel Hill about 1860, Berry O'Kelly was orphaned at birth by the death of his mother, Frances O'Kelly whose family name

he bore. He was raised by his mother's relatives and attended school for some time in Chapel Hill. Moving to Method where a member of his relatives lived he became, before his death in 1931, not only its best-known citizen but also the most prominent black leader in Wake County with even wider influence and recognition. (2)

At age 22 O'Kelly secured employment in a general store which a Mr. C. H. Woods had opened in 1879 at Method to supply the villagers with staples - side meat, meal, lard, molasses, etc. He thus began a highly successful business career unusual for a person of humble beginnings and limited schooling - he finished only "the grades." He soon became a partner in the enterprise and the sole owner, purchasing Woods' interest when the latter moved to Oklahoma. The business underwent rapid expansion under O'Kelly's direction. The stock of the store was broadened to include items such as shoes, clothing, yard goods, and fresh meats and it soon became a shopping center for the county. He branched out into commission merchandising selling to area stores and colleges. Being adjacent to the Seaboard and Southern railroad tracks, he built a warehouse where fertilizer, farm equipment and other non-perishable farm goods were unloaded. Proximity to the railroad led him to secure train and postal service for the community. He persuaded the railroad to make stops at Method and in 1890 a post office was opened in his store with O'Kelly as postmaster, a post he held the rest of his life. O'Kelly's business acumen and recognized integrity resulted in his accumulation of considerable wealth. When he died in 1931 his estate, consisting chiefly of real estate in Raleigh and Wake County, was valued at about \$155,000.00 in the depressed property values of that time. That his abilities were recognized by his contemporaries is shown by the fact that he served as President of the Mechanics and Farmers Bank, a black financial institution in Raleigh, as President of the Acme Realty Company and as a trustee of Kittrell College. (3)

O'Kelly did not confine his activities to business. He was a philanthropist as well as being very public-spirited and civic minded, taking an active part in political, religious and educational affairs with particular interest in establishing improved opportunities for the betterment of members of his own race. (4) He became a recognized political leader in western Wake County and at one point succeeded in persuading the highway commission to have the highway cross the railroad in front of his store when paving the extension of Hillsborough Street. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the State Interracial Commission and for some time President of the North Carolina Negro State Fair. With Booker T. Washington he helped found the National Negro Business League. His religious interests were reflected in his being a Steward of St. James A.M.E. Church in Method and a lay member of the General North Carolina Conference. However, the main focus of his philanthropy and civic endeavors was on education, particularly the improvement of educational opportunities for rural black children. To this end he contributed much of his wealth and time, centering most of his interest around the Berry O'Kelly Training School. (5)

A one-room private "pay school", located in a log hut and offering a two-month term for \$4 tuition, apparently existed in Method as early as 1871. This school was replaced by a two-teacher school in 1873, and in 1895 a new school was built on the site which later became the Berry O'Kelly High School campus. With periodic additions to buildings and faculty this school served as the community school until 1914. In that year from these modest beginnings began the real growth to what became by 1931 the largest rural black school in the state, the Berry O'Kelly Training School for Negroes. (6) That growth resulted largely from the leadership and support of O'Kelly who had become familiar with progress in education for blacks throughout the South by his continued attendance at the Tuskegee Conference. O'Kelly was aided in his efforts by several of the school's principals, notably

C. H. Hunter, J. H. Bias, H. L. Trigg, and E. A. Cox, and by other community leaders. He had been instrumental in having a county training school established at Method by the consolidation of three schools in the county and accordingly it was named the Berry O'Kelly Training School. The school had ceased to serve just the Method village but became the main educational facility for blacks throughout Wake County. The next step in its advancement was securing accreditation by the state, a major goal O'Kelly had for the school and one to which he devoted his efforts as chairman of the school committee. Working with the principals and others he succeeded in improving the school's physical facilities, faculty and curriculum sufficiently that by 1923 it was placed on the list of accredited high schools, one of three rural black schools to be thus recognized. (7)

By that time O'Kelly had become aware that the education furnished by the school was narrowly vocational compared to the programs of high schools which prepared students for further academic and professional areas. In the early 1920's he began to make plans to complement the Training School with that type of high school. This would involve additional buildings and to help finance their construction he sought and secured the help of the philanthropist, Julius Rosenwald, with whom O'Kelly had become friendly at the Tuskegee Conferences. The Rosenwald Foundation contributed significantly to the financing of the new high school. O'Kelly donated ten acres of land adjacent to the existing school plant. The building program included a girl's dormitory with dining facilities for students and faculty built in 1922, a general classroom building for the new high school in 1923, and a new vocational building in 1926. The latter included fully-equipped shops, a vocational agriculture laboratory, rooms for home economics, and a poultry incubation room in the basement. This building, with an addition built in 1949-1950, is the one now referred to as the Agriculture Building of the Berry O'Kelly School. It is the only remaining structure of the original campus complex which by 1927



comprised eight buildings. (8)

The school now reached its highest level. It had achieved a reputation as probably the best school for rural black children in the state with particular leadership in vocational agriculture. Consequently, it attracted students from many parts of the state. However, the state-wide movement from improved black educational facilities produced an increasing number of schools in Wake and other counties. The result was a steady decline in the number of boarding students and closing of the boarding department. The school now concentrated its efforts in Wake County and especially in Method, where it conducted not only regular classes for enrolled students but also a program of extension education for non-enrolled residents of the area. The high school program was continued until 1955 when the last class was graduated. (9) The elementary school program continued until 1967. By this time it was no longer a private school but was part of the Wake County public school system. The school was closed largely as an aftermath of the 1964 Supreme Court decision outlawing public school racial segregation. Since it was in an all-black community, the school was an obvious target as a place to begin school integration by reassignment of pupils. More and more Method children were assigned elsewhere and, with declining enrollment, the Board of Education decided to close the school at the end of the 1966-1967 school year. (10)

#### Bibliographical Note:

The material for this sketch has been secured from the following sources:

Cox, E. A.: "The Berry O'Kelly Training School: a Tribute and a History",  
in North Carolina Teachers Record, (official Publication of the North  
Carolina Negro Teachers Association), Vol. II, No. 3 (May 1931).

Edwards, Bertha Maye: The Little Place and the Little Girl. N.Y. 1974,  
Carlton Press.

The News and Observer, March 15, 1931 (Berry O'Kelly obituary)

Wake County, Board of Education, Minutes.

Wake County, Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Estates File,  
File No. 6960, Estate of Berry O'Kelly; Administrator Bonds, Book R,  
p. 27.

Conversation with Garrett Laws, Garner, N. C., former Vocational Agriculture  
Teacher, Berry O'Kelly School.

Conversation with Edward Curtis, Raleigh, N. C., President, Method Civic  
League.

L. Walter Seegers  
August, 1981

LWS/mcd

THE BERRY O'KELLY SCHOOL AGRICULTURE BUILDING

NOTES

1. Edwards, Bertha Maye: The Little Place and the Little Girl, pp. 11, 14, 29.
2. Ibid., pp. 27, 30-31; Berry O'Kelly obituary, in Raleigh, N. C., News and Observer, March 15, 1931.
3. Edwards: op. cit., 26-31; Berry O'Kelly obituary, in Raleigh, N. C., News and Observer, March 15, 1931; Wake County, Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Estates File, File No. 6960, Estate of Berry O'Kelly; Wake County, Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Administrator Bonds, Book R. p. 27; conversation with Edward Curtis, President, Method Civic League.
4. Edwards: op. cit., pp. 28, 30.
5. Ibid., p. 31; Berry O'Kelly obituary, in Raleigh, N. C., News and Observer, March 15, 1931.
6. Ibid., Cox, E. A.: "The Berry O'Kelly Training School: a Tribute and a History", North Carolina Teachers Record, Vol. II, No. 3 (May 1931).
7. Ibid., Edwards: op. cit., pp. 22-25; Berry O'Kelly obituary, in Raleigh, N. C., News and Observer, March 15, 1931.
8. Edwards: op. cit., pp. 32-33; conversation with Garrett Laws, Garner, N. C., former Vocational Agriculture Teacher, Berry O'Kelly School; Wake County

Board of Education, Minutes, August 3, 1925, August 14, 1925; September 7, 1925; February 7, 1927; June 14, 1927; February 6, 1928.

9. Berry O'Kelly obituary, in Raleigh, N. C., News and Observer, March 15, 1931; Cox: op. cit., Edwards: op. cit., pp. 33-34.

10. Wake County Board of Education, Minutes, January 23, 1967.

The Agricultural Building of the Berry O'Kelly School is the only remaining original component of the school complex. The building is undoubtedly representative of the kind of construction that characterized the other school buildings. It is a very straightforward, simple brick box, approximately 25 x 25'. Of an orange-red brick, laid in common bond, it has the plain, tall proportions that are associated with the commercial and institutional types from which it originated.

The main entry faces north and is placed symmetrically between six windows, now infilled with another shade of red brick. These six windows, flat-headed and resting on a broad, deep sill and those of an equal number down each side, would have given the building a liveliness which is now missing. Other elements which lessened the building's purely utilitarian character are the attached shed roof on heavy curved brackets which shelters the entry door and the decorative "cornice line" of bricks placed on end under a pulled row of headers approximately 18" below the parapet which is finished with a wide, flat concrete coping. This parapet conceals the built-up roof which slopes gently to the south end of the building.

A later addition, attached directly to the south wall, is somewhat larger in size, but repeats the original patterns established in the main block, except that seven windows fill the east and west sides and the parapet is stepped down twice to give the roof line additional interest and the roof sufficient slope for drainage.

The most significant feature of the building is that it represents a type of school building construction which was once characteristic of the area and the region.

The Agricultural Building of the Berry O'Kelly School is the only remaining original ~~brick~~ component of the school complex. The ~~brick~~ building is undoubtedly representative of the kind of construction that characterized the other buildings. It is a very straightforward, <sup>approx. 25x25'</sup> simple, ~~utilitarian~~/~~brick~~ brick box. A ~~single~~ single-story building, it ~~nevertheless~~ has the plain, tall proportions that ~~are~~ are associated with the <sup>commercial</sup> warehouse and factory types from which it was adapted.

The main entry faces north and is ~~is~~ placed symmetrically between six windows, now infilled with a darker shade of red brick. These ~~six~~ six windows and those of equal number resting on a broad deep sill down each side would have given the building a <sup>typical</sup> ~~view~~ character which is now missing. ~~The but which is~~ <sup>Other elements</sup> ~~alluded to by~~ the attached shed roof on brackets which

shelters the entry door and the decorative "cornice line" of bricks on end under a pulled row of headers approx. 18" below the flat, cemented parapet of the roof. <sup>which is found in many of the</sup> ~~The~~ <sup>conceals</sup> built up roof slopes gently to the south.

A later addition, <sup>attached to the south side of</sup> of somewhat larger size repeats the original pattern established in the <sup>main</sup> block except that seven windows fill the east and west sides and the parapet is stepped down twice to give the roof line additional interest.

The most significant feature of the building is that its design is of a type & kind of school building construction which was basic to the American system.



Abundant Bldg. Larry O'Keller Sept 1970

25 x 25 square block approx. <sup>tail</sup> ~~tail~~ on  
~~into~~ basement entered - 1/ west side under shed - and gone  
main entry on n side center under attached  
shed on heavy machine - 3 low steps on n  
plinth on each side -  
3 windows on each side to n long & w sides

Common bond lead red, soft, tan joints -  
flat roof built up - <sup>bricks</sup> ~~bricks~~ capped  
stone -  
decorative band of bricks at "cornice" line

later addition stepped down from ridge. Windows  
30 x 25' Windows along sides & across back -

interior in accessible. whole large space w/ d.  
for use

November 30, 1981

The owner of the Berry O'Kelly School Agricultural Building:

Wake County Board of Education  
601 Devereux Street  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27605

(919) 755-6959

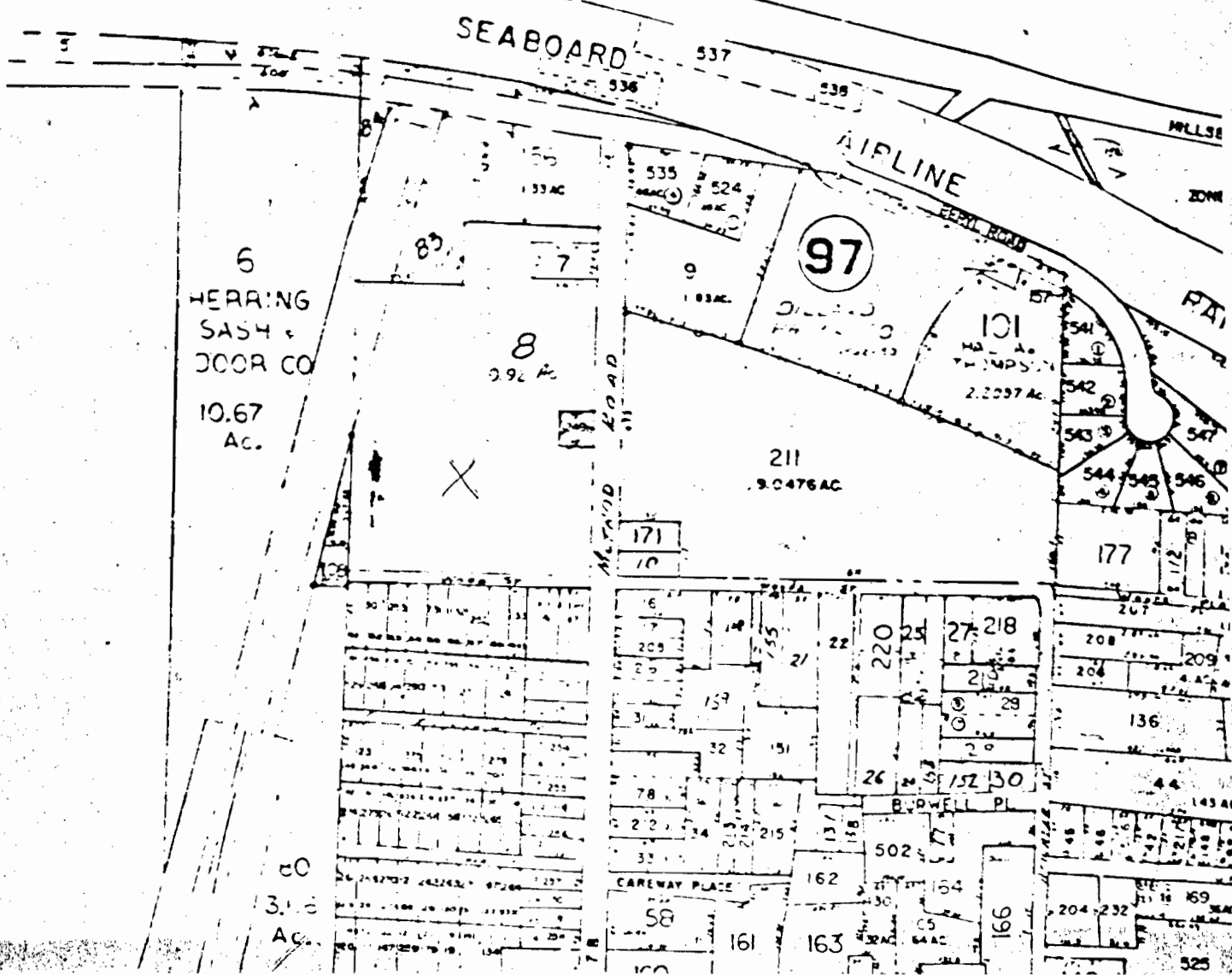
The current deed book reference for the property:

Book Number 2415

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BELTLINE

6

80

108

8

120	167	179	119	134
	121			147
				150
				118

123	124	125	116	117

129	128	170	127	126	115
					113
130	131	132	133	114	112

171	10
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CAREWAY PLACE

33	34	213	214	215
212				
78				

31	159	205	216	18	17
				16	
				164	
				209	
				155	21

WOOD PLACE

LIGON

150	58	161
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