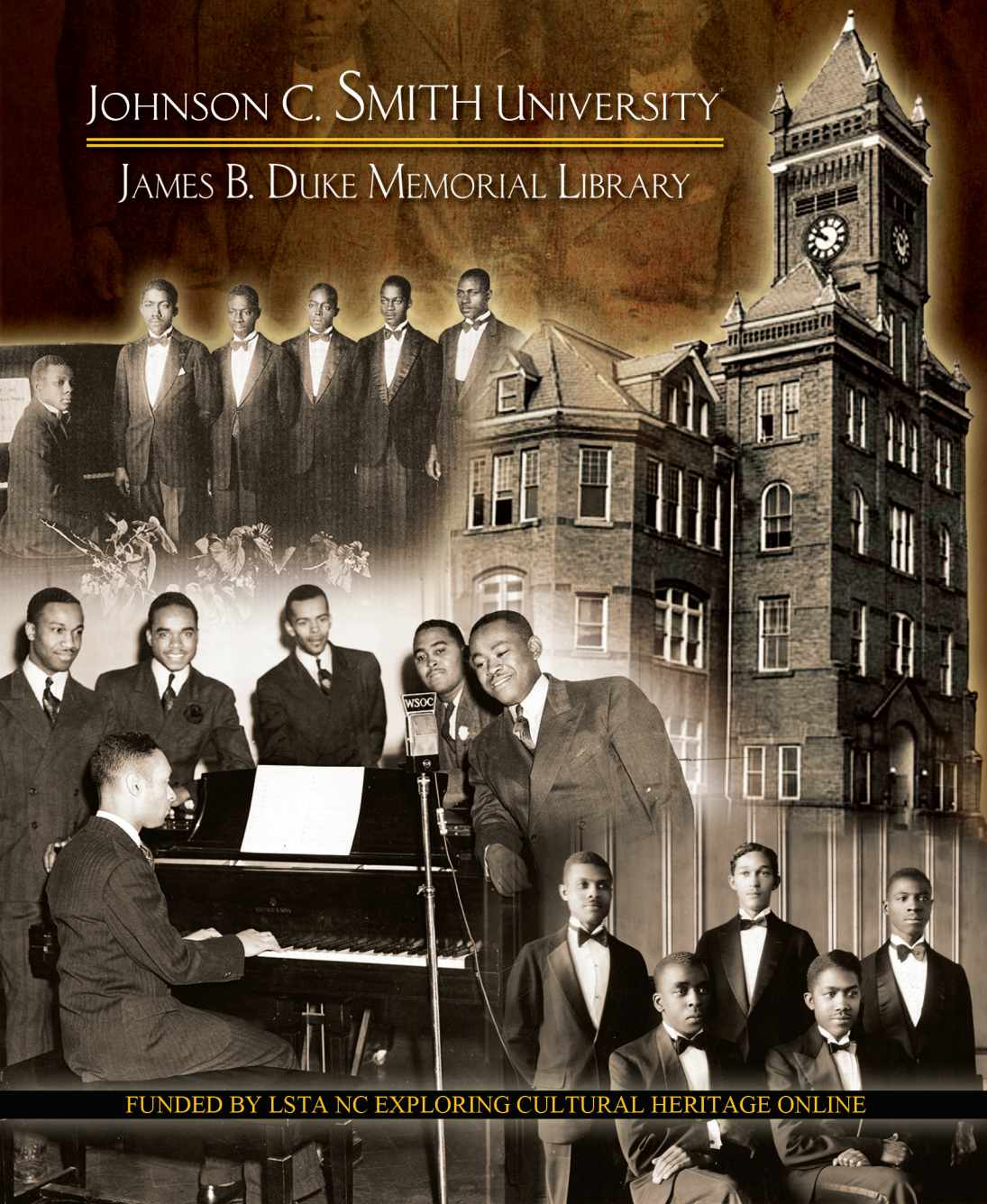


# SAVING THE MUSIC

THE HISTORY OF BIDDLE UNIVERSITY QUINTET

JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY

JAMES B. DUKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY



FUNDED BY LSTA NC EXPLORING CULTURAL HERITAGE ONLINE

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

Working on *Saving the Music: The History of Biddle University Quintet* has been a joy. When I first learned about this group, I was captivated. I wanted the world to know how this group's melody and a cappella music touched so many lives. If you are a lover of history or appreciate holding a piece of artifact in your hands, then I know you will enjoy viewing original photographs of the Biddle University Quintet. When you hear the rendition of ballads and hymns of Negro Spirituals sang from the mouths of these young African American men from the early 1900s, a sense of jubilee will grace you.

It is a project such as this that reminds us of the value of history and the continued need to preserve it. Imagine a world where people could not learn about past accomplishments, or learn about the evolutionary changes of one's culture or heritage. Imagine a world where you could not learn about man's past deeds. This is the beauty and the excitement of history – the discovery of new found knowledge coming to life!



*Saving the Music: The History of Biddle University*

*Quintet* may appear as a simple story; however, if you dig deeper, its true essence is about supporting what you love. The young men of Biddle University Quintet loved Biddle University, now known as Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU). They showed their love and appreciation by using their voices to help raise money for the University. This simple act documents early fundraising activities initiated by students across Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU) campuses. In these present economic hard times, this story can be an inspiration to us all to examine our talents and how those talents can be used to support HBCUs.



JCSU is fortunate to have in our archives instantaneous discs (record albums) from the 1940s that have survived. Thanks to the generous financial support from LSTA North Carolina Exploring Culture Heritage Online (NC ECHO), we are able to share this piece of JCSU's history with the community.

*-Monika Rhue, MLIS*

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

JCSU realized the value of documenting the Biddle University Quintet and the University Glee Club when a 94-year-old alumnus requested original recordings of the group from the archives. The only known recordings available were from the instantaneous discs which were reviewed by a Media Preservationist in 2004. After his evaluation, we knew the instantaneous discs were valuable and that extreme caution should be implemented in handling and caring for the collection. The Preservationist recommended that the collection be transferred into another medium for access.

In 2006, a donor visited JCSU's first online digitization project, "Down Through The Years: The Heritage of Johnson C. Smith University," at <http://library.jcsu.edu/echo/>. This visit led the donor to contribute an original record album of Biddle University Quintet from the 1920s to JCSU's archives.

These events and circumstances, in turn, led Monika Rhue, the University Archivist at that time, to write a planning grant to research how to transfer these fragile instantaneous discs into digital audio and to create an online website of the Biddle University Quintet.



JCSU received the project planning grant from LSTA NC ECHO. The grant was the first step in learning about the best practices for handling and transferring the instantaneous discs into digital audio. The project team worked closely with George Blood, owner of Safe Sound Archive. Mr. Blood, along with his assistant Jonathan Thorn, was very instrumental in aiding JCSU in setting up a workflow for the project. They also helped with selection and purchase of equipment and software needed to complete the project. The planning grant allowed the library staff to conduct a pilot test of transferring 30 instantaneous discs into digital audio format.

In 2008, JCSU received the LSTA Digitization Grant to transfer over 500 instantaneous discs into digital audio and create an online website with photographs and memorabilia of the Biddle University Quintet and the University Glee Club. JCSU is pleased to share *Saving the Music: The History of Biddle University Quintet* with the Charlotte community.

Please visit the website at <http://library.jcsu.edu/biddlequintet/>.



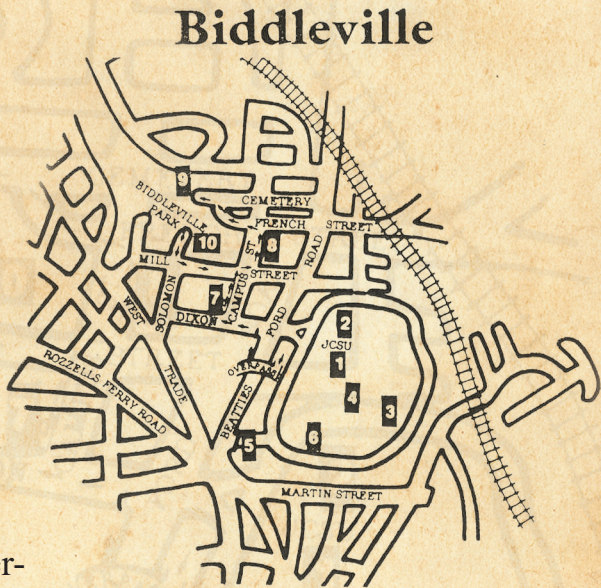
# HISTORY OF BIDDLEVILLE COMMUNITY

## INTRODUCTION

The institutionalization of Jim Crow laws forced racial segregation throughout the United States. Racial segregation became the

catalyst for the development of black neighborhoods in the US. These neighborhoods created their own schools, churches, restaurants, grocery stores, drug-stores, barber-shops and movie theaters. In

1949, Congress enacted the federal urban renewal program which drastically destroyed the black communities. Blacks were forced out of their neighborhoods, only to witness the construction of new high rise apartments for high-income families. Urban renewal affected many black communities nationally. Similar to Biddleville, only a few post-bellum black communities survived urban renewal destruction.



# HISTORY OF BIDDLEVILLE COMMUNITY

Charlotte's oldest and beloved neighborhoods grew out of the trading and manufacturing of textiles during the 1870s-1920s. The development of the railroads increased the growth and livelihood of its citizens. During this time, Charlotte neighborhoods became clearly defined for whites and blacks (Hanchett, pg. 2-3). Black neighborhoods started spreading in the 1910s throughout Charlotte. The largest dwellings of blacks were in the Brooklyn community in Second Ward. Blacks also dwelled in the First and Third wards in the West Morehead area, Fourth Ward around Sixth and Graham Streets, Cherryville and Biddleville. These black neighborhoods, like others around the US, created their own schools, churches, restaurants, grocery stores, drugstores, barbershops and movie theaters. Within the neighborhoods, a visitor could also find the first black library in the south, the first black hospital, and first black street car. Some of Charlotte's black neighborhoods were

developed right in the heart of southeast (near Uptown) Charlotte. These black communities were destroyed through urban renewal, forcing its residents to spread throughout Charlotte. The urban renewal program displaced 1,007 families and





demolished 1,480 structures in the former Brooklyn community (Hanchett, pg. 250). The only black community that was not destroyed by urban renewal was Biddleville.

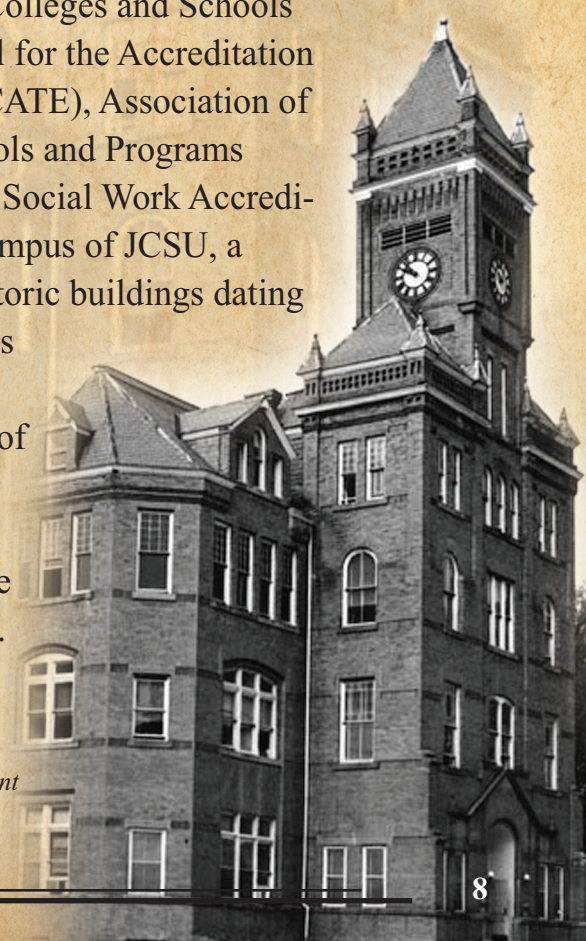
Biddleville is the oldest post-bellum, streetcar black community in Charlotte. It commemorates a largely self-sufficient, late 19th and early 20th century suburban community. Biddleville community was built around Biddle University (now JCSU) in 1867. JCSU's first president Reverend Stephen Mattoon, a white Presbyterian minister, purchased 55 acres of land and sold it to blacks who wanted to settle near the college. JCSU grew steadily in the 1870s, with many blacks settling near the college, giving birth to the Biddleville community. The beginning of the Biddleville community covered Mattoon, Cemetery Street, Campus Street and French Street. Biddleville continued to thrive.



“In 1889, the city register reported 200 adults were living in Biddleville, and in the 1890’s, the community extended to West Trade Street” (Hanchett, pg.135). The residents of Biddleville were teachers, professors, ministers, blue collar workers and farmers. Many graduates and professors of the University contributed to the growth and development of Biddleville. JCSU continues to anchor the neighborhood of Biddleville. The University offers over 30 academic programs to its current student body, consisting of over 1,500 students. Presently, there are 103 full-time faculty members, 77% of whom hold doctorates and terminal degrees. The institution is accredited by the following organizations: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and Council on Social Work Accreditation (CSWE). On the campus of JCSU, a visitor can see several historic buildings dating back to 1883. Biddleville’s survival is a testimony of the strength and integrity of people who became entrepreneurs and homeowners during a time of racism and segregation.

**Source:**

*Sorting Out the New South City:  
Race, Class, and Urban Development  
in Charlotte, 1875-1975*  
Thomas W. Hanchett, 1998



# SAVING THE MUSIC: THE HISTORY OF BIDDLE UNIVERSITY QUINTET

African Americans used spirituals throughout history to express hope, faith and love in a world that once held them in bondage. Spirituals were spontaneous and filled with religious fervor and interpretation of Christianity. A wide range of elegance and arrangements were composed to perform slave hymns and ballads.

In 1891, Fisk University organized the Fisk Jubilee Singers, the first singing group among HBCUs to raise money for their institution. This group introduced the world to the sweet a cappella hymns and ballads of slavery and became the inspiration for many HBCUs to create singing groups to raise funds for their respective institutions.

In 1908, Dr. Thomas Alexander Long, Director of Music and professor at JCSU, organized Biddle University Quintet. The Quintet first appeared at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA in 1909. After a successful performance, the Quintet was invited to sing before the supreme judicatory



body of the Presbyterian Church for 30 consecutive years. The popular Biddle University Quintet traveled extensively throughout

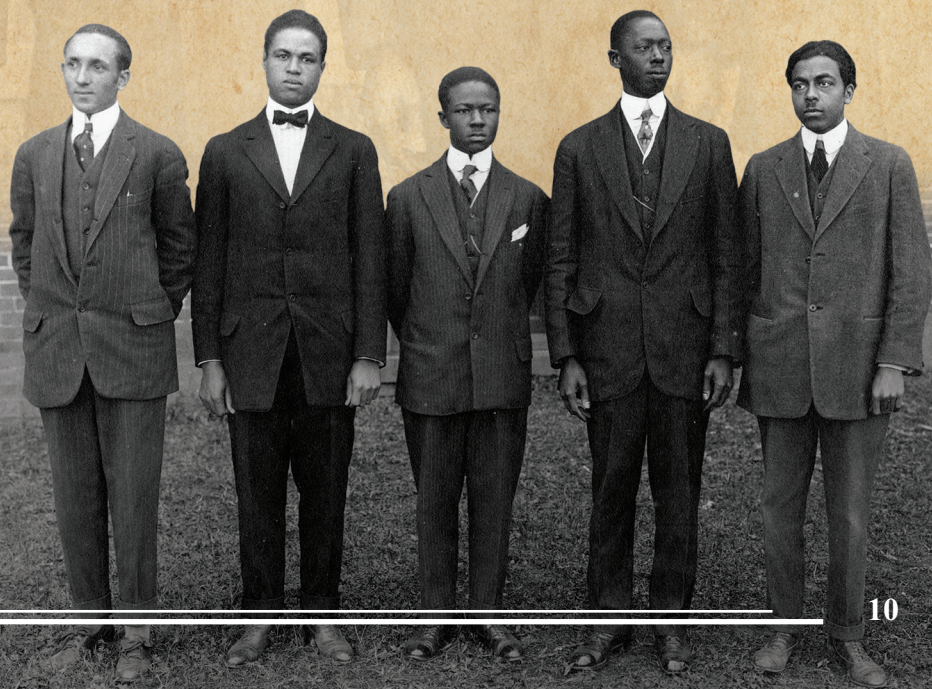


the Carolinas performing before various audiences. This sensational singing group made many records that were distributed throughout the US. Biddle University Quintet had a long and successful musical career until the popularity of ensemble singing declined in 1926.

Later that year, Mr. W. S. Peyton organized the University Glee Club, which, under the directorship of Mr. Peyton, Mr. Carroll and Mr. Christopher W. Kemp, grew into a new ensemble known as the University Choir. Almost 40 years later, on January 10, 1964, the choir was selected, out of more than 50 Presbyterian schools, as the official broadcasting choir for the United Presbyterian Church, USA.

### **Biddleville Quintette: Who Are They?**

In addition to the well-known Biddle University Quintet, another well-known group was present in the Charlotte community. This group was known as Biddleville Quintette. Many people believed that members of Biddle University Quintet were also a part of Biddleville Quintette; however,



Monika Rhue found no documentation to support a connection between the two groups. In some publications, Biddle University Quintet was referred to as University Quintette. Both groups were performers and toured the southern states, as well as Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and California.

Biddleville Quintette, led by Biddleville resident Adam Brown, had several recordings with Paramount and Parthe in the late twenties. The *Chicago Defender* published photographs of Biddleville Quintette in 1926 and 1927 to publicize Paramount's latest religious artists. Some of the photographs resemble Biddle University Quintet. Biddleville Quintette was the first signing group from Charlotte, NC to make records. *Document Records Limited* has reproduced recordings by the Biddleville Quintette. To hear selective rendition of the Biddleville Quintette visit our website at <http://library.jcsu.edu/biddlequintet/>.

Further research is needed to learn more about Biddleville Quintette, one of the leading religious groups from the south and their connection to Johnson C. Smith University's Biddle University Quintet.



# BIOGRAPHY OF DR. THOMAS ALEXANDER LONG

In 1908, one year after joining JCSU, Dr. Thomas Alexander Long realized his vision of organizing a musical group at the university through his creation of Biddle University Quintet. The sweet melody of the Quintet's a cappella hymns rang loud throughout the Carolinas, successfully gracing its audiences until 1926.

For 40 years, Dr. Long served the University in many capacities, acting as the Director of Music and teaching English, Latin, French, Science, History and Sociology. He retired in June 1947. Throughout his career, he was a member of the American Sociological Society, Academy of Political Science, American Geographical Society, American Guild of Organists and an Elder member in the Seventh Street Presbyterian Church at the time of his retirement.





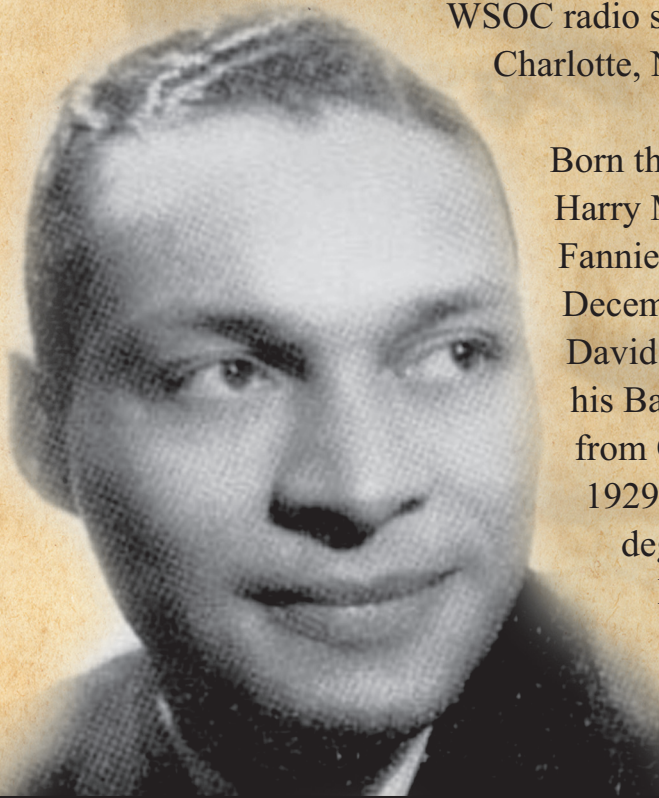
## BIOGRAPHY OF DR. THOMAS ALEXANDER LONG

Dr. Long received his AB degree from Lincoln in 1889 and his STB degree in 1892, continuing on to receive his PhD. He furthered his studies at Columbia University, New England Conservatory of Music, Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania and Richter Music Studio in Niagara, NY. Dr. Long published several articles, including Across the Continent in 1906 and What Price Culture in 1922.

Born October 8, 1864 in Franklinton, NC, Dr. Long passed away in Charlotte, NC on December 4, 1950. He was a faithful member of the Seventh Street Presbyterian Church for 40 years where he taught Young Men's Bible Class. In addition, Dr. Long served as the delegate to the World Sunday School Convention held in Zurich, Switzerland. Dr. Long was not married and did not have children.

# BIOGRAPHY OF DAVID EDWARD CARROLL

David Edward Carroll was a well-known organist from Louisville, KY. Mr. Carroll taught piano, organ and music history at JCSU. Serving as the Director of Music at JCSU from 1935 to 1947, he groomed the men and women at JCSU in performing recitals and concerts throughout the Carolinas. Under his directorship, the University Glee Club and Choir performed on several radio outlets, such as WBT and WSOC radio stations in Charlotte, NC.



Born the son of Reverend Harry Moorman and Fannie Noll Carroll on December 12, 1907, David Carroll received his Bachelor degree from Oberlin College in 1929 and a Master degree from Chicago Musical College, completing

# BIOGRAPHY OF DAVID EDWARD CARROLL

further graduate work at Indiana University. In addition, Mr. Carroll taught music theory at West Virginia State College (1930-1935); served as the associate professor of music and college organist at Virginia State University in Petersburg, VA (1947-1963); and taught at Trenton Conservatory of Music (1963-until retirement).

Mr. Carroll was a member of the St. Paul United Methodist Church, serving as organist for 11 years. He held memberships in the NACCP, Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcast Network "The 700 Club", was a lifetime member of the National Association of Negro Musicians, and a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. On September 4, 1943, David Carroll married Marie Hilton, a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory of Music. The Carroll's did not have children.

In April 1985, Mr. Carroll died at the age of 77 at his residence on Reservoir Street, Trenton, NJ. He was buried at Franklin Memorial Park in Trenton, NJ.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project is made possible by a grant from LSTA NC ECHO. A detailed report of the project activities and best practices can be reviewed online at <http://library.jcsu.edu/biddlequintet/>.

We are thankful to NC ECHO agency for allowing us to share this brief history of Biddle University Quintet. It is my hope that this research will continue to explore the rich heritage of the choir directors and singers who traveled throughout the United States singing Negro Spirituals. Additional research is needed to locate documents, photographs and artifacts of Biddle University Quintet.

The success of this project is made possible by a team effort. Many individuals assisted in the digitization and preservation of these instantaneous discs. I am very thankful for the library staff and the administrators at JCSU for supporting this project. I hope the alumni and the Charlotte community enjoy this brief history of the Biddle University Quintet.

*-Monika Rhue, MLIS*

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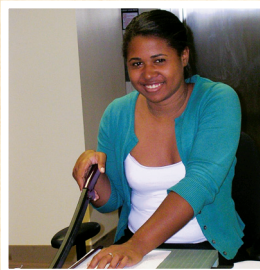
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the music on the website.

For a personal copy of Biddleville Quintette music visit  
<http://www.document-records.com>.

Special thanks to Barbara Allen for her administrative support.

Photographs are courtesy of the Inez Moore Parker Archives at  
JCSU <http://archives.jcsu.edu/library2/digidefault.htm>

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