

# John Avery Boys Club: A Look Back Over 40 Years



**FIRST BUILDING ON CORNER OF RAMSEY AND PETTIGREW**  
Old Wonderland Theater



**BASKETBALL IN THE FIRST BUILDING**



**DAUGHTERS OF LATE JOHN AVERY VIEW PORTRAIT**  
WITH W.J. KENNEDY, JR.

**FIRST SPADE**



**GROUND BREAKING FOR THE PRESENT**  
BUILDING



**SOME ATTENDEES AT GROUND BREAKING**

Last week, Durham's John Avery Boys' Club, Inc., observed its 40th anniversary at the organization's annual meeting and banquet. The Club's unfathomable contributions are often taken for granted by most of Durham's population. So are the works of its nationally recognized executive director since 1945, Lee W. Smith, Jr.

This week and next, we'll take a look back at John Avery Boys' Club, through pictures and story.

Records pertaining to the organization and development of the John Avery Boys' Club reveal that constant contact was being maintained with the National Organization of Boys' Clubs of America; and that as early as October, 1934 a Director of Field Services conferred with a group of black citizens and left with them an outline of procedure to be followed in organizing a Boys' Club.

On March 16, 1939, Mrs. Mamie Dowd Walker, then Judge of the Juvenile Court of Durham, requested the Negro Citizens Committee to help solve the problem of juvenile delinquency among black boys of the community. The committee responded to the request of Judge Walker and initiated a financial campaign for funds to start a Boys' Club project. On May 13, 1939, a temporary organization of the club was formed.

The financial campaign resulted in total cash and pledges of \$2,012.09 and on April 6, 1940 the name of the club was selected. On June 22, 1940, articles of incorporation were approved; and, on November 26, 1940, operation began in the old Wonderland Theater building at the corner of Pettigrew and Ramsey streets, with a total of 115 boys enrolled. The club was approved as a participating agency of the Durham Community Chest on January 21, 1943 and, effective December 13, 1944, it became a member of Boys' Clubs of America.

Early in 1949, with an enrollment of 453 boys, an excessive number for quarters then occupied at 508 Fayetteville Street, a campaign was initiated to raise \$75,000, the estimated cost of a new building to serve 1,000 boys. Total cash contributions of \$63,226.34 were received from nearly 1,000 contributors. Pledges of additional funds, together with donations of services, especially by brick masons, and gifts of building materials, made possible the completion of the new building, on what was then valued at approximately \$125,000. It was dedicated on October 25, 1959.

During the years the City of Durham was involved in acquiring land in the area for its Urban Renewal Program, including an East-West Expressway, the property of the John Avery Boys' Club was required as a part of its right-of-way. The Redevelopment Commission of Durham acquired title to the Club's property on May 1, 1967 for \$117,649.02; of which \$30,004.60 was paid to the mortgage and \$87,600 net to the Club.

Under an agreement with the wrecking firm, all of the steel, plumbing fixtures, doors and door frames, lighting fixtures, and metal window frames in the building were salvaged and were available for rebuilding the facility; using the original blue prints and specifications, except that the basement was to be eliminated and that area added to the surface space.

The new site for the new club building is at the southwest corner of Pettigrew and Grant streets. Architects estimated the cost of the new building at \$156,000, not including the cost of the land which was \$25,510.

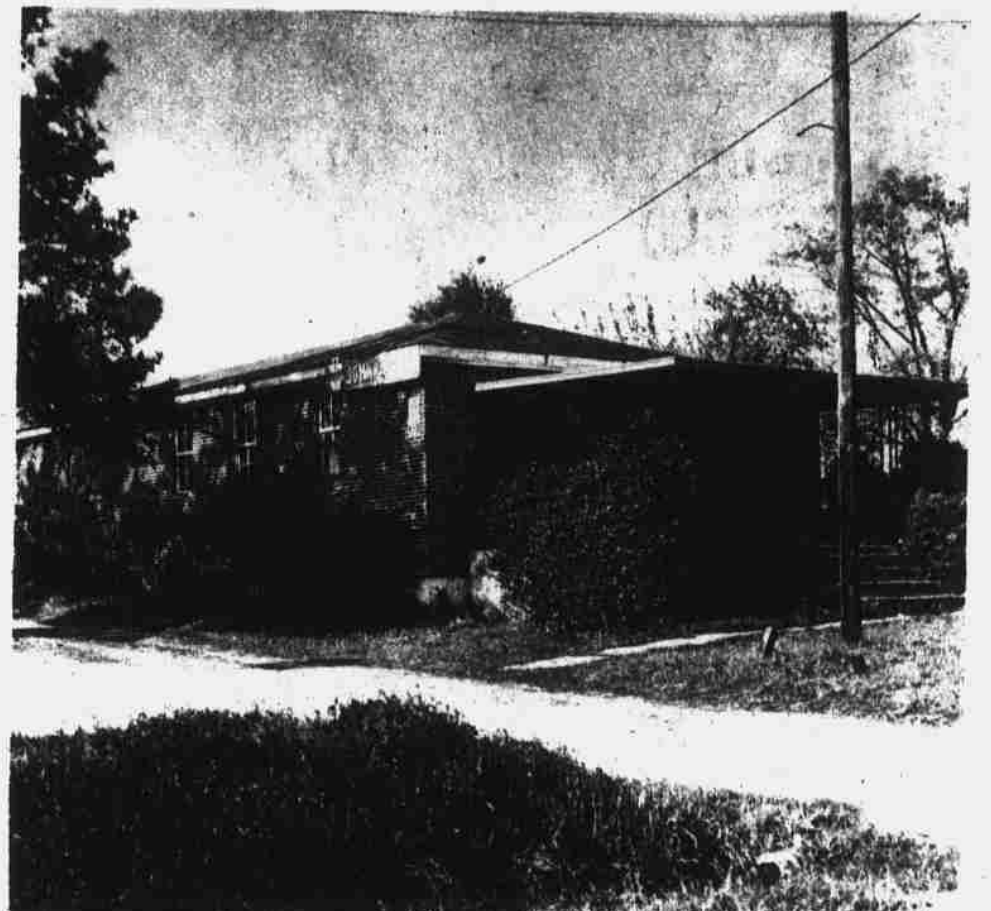
During the months of May and June, 1969, a Capital Funds Campaign was initiated with a goal of \$100,000 in cash and pledges; payable during 1969-1972. As of September 10, 1972, a total of \$78,708.58 had been received.

The new fireproof building was completed and occupied as of July 22, 1972. It contains 13,783 square feet of floor space to serve 1,000 boys; a gym with built-in basketball court, a woodwork shop room, class and club rooms, games room, administrative offices, kitchen, arts and crafts room, adequate toilet facilities, combination dressing room with metal lockers and showers, and a library. It was opened for enrollment of boys, ages seven through twenty, and full operation on August 21, 1972. Dedication was held on Sunday afternoon, October 29, 1972, at 808 East Pettigrew Street.

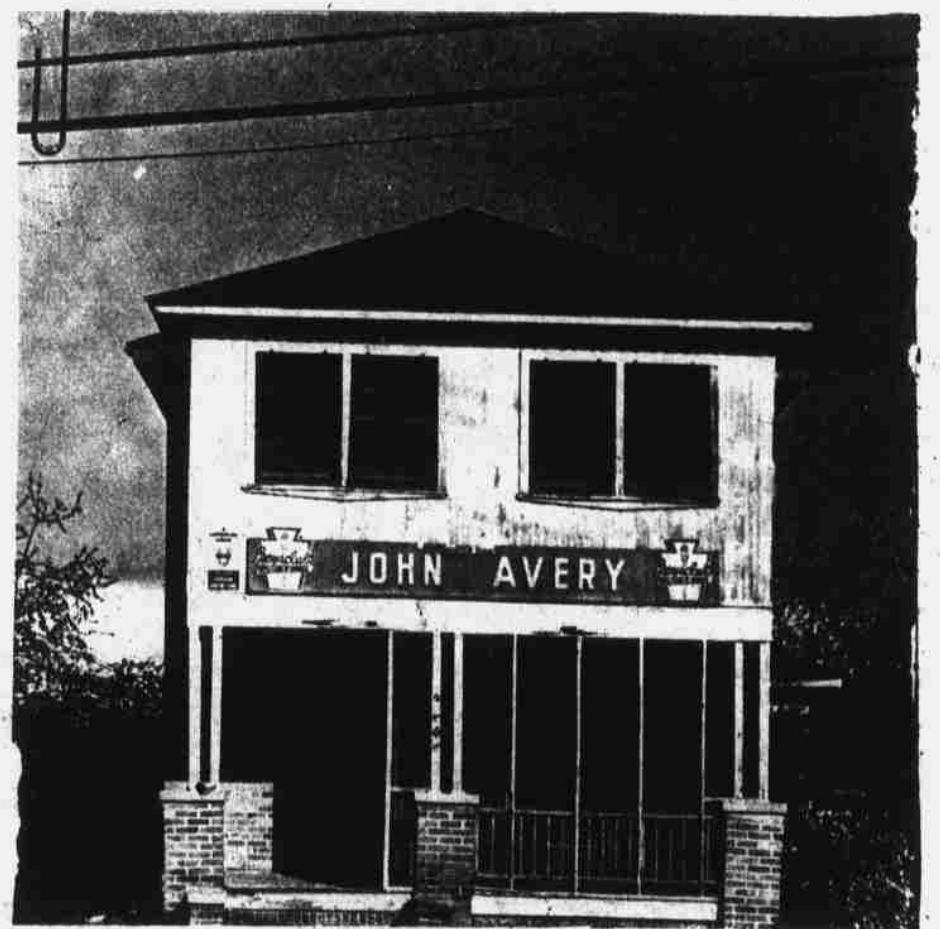
Next Week: To The Present



**SECOND BUILDING**  
Fayetteville Street



**THIRD BUILDING**  
Fayetteville Street



**FOURTH BUILDING**  
Fayetteville and Hope Streets