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**I**n this booklet I report the results of City Council elections held in Davis, California from the first one in 1917 through the year 2000—a total of 43 election events.

The statistics of these 43 elections are presented in four tables, which are on facing pages 6-7 and 8-9. Each of the four tables covers two decades or a little longer : **1**, 1917-38; **2**, 1940-58; **3**, 1960-78; and, **4**, 1980-2000.

## Goals

One of my goals in assembling these statistics and offering some interpretive commentary on them is to provide historical perspective for Davis elections yet to come. With historical data at hand, I hope to encourage more realism and accuracy in how the results of future elections are interpreted.

I am prompted in this by the many elections in which I have heard candidates and pundits describe results in extravagant terms such as “the strongest mandate in the history of the city” and “ran stronger than anyone has ever run before.”

#### 4 *Davis City Council Elections*

Declarations such as these may be true, but what is the evidence? With the compilations in this booklet, we will now be better able to evaluate the above and similar kinds of claims.

Stated more broadly, a key goal of this research is to enlarge consciousness of ourselves as participants in a city's political heritage that exhibits both significant continuities and significant changes.

With the panorama of Davis' entire voting history, perhaps we can better grasp the degrees to which and the ways in which election results are (or are not) more of the same.

## Sources

The data presented in Tables 1 through 4 are assembled from varied sources.

**1. 1917.** The election of 1917 created the first city government of Davis. But because that government did not yet exist, the election was conducted by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. The canvas of the results appears in the Board's minutes of March 12, 1917. The volume containing these minutes is at the Yolo County Archives in Woodland.

**2. 1918-28.** The official reports of the 1918-1928 elections are found in the series of volumes titled *Minutes of the Council* located in the vault of the Davis City Offices in Davis. These Minutes contain voting numbers by candidate for election years 1920-1928. For 1918, the rank-order of the results is reported, but numbers of votes are not given.

**3. 1930-1946.** Starting in 1930, the election canvas was reported in a separate resolution rather than in the minutes. Unfortunately, City officials cannot locate Council resolutions for the years 1930-1946, including those containing the canvases of elections.

Having no official reports for 1930-46, I have used the unofficial ones printed in the *Davis Enterprise*. This source provides most of the missing years, but we are still missing two elections. The *Enterprise* reports nothing on the elections of 1932 and 1934—nor do the four other area newspapers I searched. Although the student government elections at the University Farm are given detailed front page coverage by the *Enterprise* in 1932, the Council election of the same week is not reported—nor is the Davis City Council mentioned much during the entire year.

Official canvases give the total number of people who voted, but the *Enterprise* reports do not do so for the five elections spanning 1938-1946. In these cases, I have estimated the total voters from ancillary information and labeled the estimates "e."

**4. 1948-1980.** Also located in the City of Davis vault, a second set of volumes, *Council Resolutions*, starts in 1948 and comes forward to include the year 1980. I have used this record for that period.

(Both sets of these volumes are also publicly available on microfiche in the City of Davis Planning Department. Fortunately, I did not learn about this additional but very awkward-to-use source until after I had gone through the two sets of the "real thing.")

**5. 1982-2000.** Data on elections for 1982-2000 were obtained from the Yolo County Clerk's Office. This office's records for Davis appear to begin in 1982. That is, neither the County Clerk nor the Yolo County Archives have Davis Council election results prior to 1982.

My files on these 43 elections are open to review and/or photocopying by any serious inquirer interested in the details.

## How the Tables Are Organized

Several organizational aspects of the four tables need explanation.

- ◆ **The Four Tables.** In order to create as panoramic a vista as possible, I have arrayed as many elections as physically practical on a single page and on facing pages. This results in assembling all 43 elections on two facing-page displays. By this means, I hope to encourage perception of, and reflection on, the longer sweep of matters in Davis political history.
- ◆ **The Central Percentage.** For election purposes, officials calculate the percent of votes received by a candidate on the basis of all votes cast. In recent years this produces numbers such as one wins with 16% of all the votes. This is less useful for understanding candidate strength and historical trends than using the number of people who voted as the percentage base. This is the percent in boldface type seen on the first line of each candidate's cell. For example, in Table 1, in 1917, 318 people voted (third line from the bottom) and J. Anderson received 199 of their votes (top cell under "'17,("), which is 63%.
- ◆ **Non-Vote/Bullet Voting.** In the at-large, plurality-wins type of voting used in Davis elections, a person votes for two candidates in one election and three in the next. These multiple votes create the possibility of casting less than one's allotment. Called "bullet voting," this is sometimes advocated as a way to insure that one's favorite candidate wins by not also voting against her or him by casting all one's votes.  
 Bullet voting can be roughly measured by adding all the votes cast for the candidates and subtracting that number from the total possible number of votes, which is the number of voters times the number of allowable votes. The resulting raw number of "Votes Not Cast" is shown in parentheses in the second row from the bottom of each table. The percent that number is of all possible votes is shown in boldface type in the same row.
- ◆ **Turnout.** As can be seen, calculations of the percent of registered voters going to the polls become more common as we approach the present. This is because this calculation, or the data needed for it, are not given in early reports. Those for years prior to 1940 come from my laborious count of the printed Great Register lists of Davis voters in the Yolo County Archives.
- ◆ **Candidate Names.** For brevity and clarity, only the last name of each candidate (with an initial where necessary to distinguish the few candidates with the same last name) is entered in each of the four tables. However, the reader should know everyone's full name. Therefore, I have provided an index of each candidate's full ballot name together with the year or years they were on the ballot.