

## Davis Historical Society



Davis, California

## davisvilletoday

## Davis Christmas Past

by Lyn Lofland

## Special points of interest:

- Two of Joann Larkey's 164 columns between 1969 and 1973 reproduced by Lyn Lofland
- "Christmastime in Davisville - 1898"  
And
- "Christmas at the Schoolhouse."  
1921

## Glimpses of Christmas

## Past:

From the *Enterprise* col-

## umns of Joann Larkey

## edited by Lyn H. Lofland

Between December 4 of 1969 and May 10, 1973, Joann Leach Larkey (author of *Davisville '68: The History and Heritage of the City of Davis, Yolo County, California* (Davis, CA: The Davis Historical and Landmarks Commission, 1969) published 164 columns in a *Davis Enterprise* series titled "Portraits

of the Past." As befits this holiday season, two of these, which describe Davis' community-level Christmas festivities, are excerpted, in part, below.

## From "Christmastime in Davisville-1898"

The pages of the *Enterprise* . . . provide a vivid word-picture of the holiday season at the turn of the century. On December 16, a front-page announcement stated, "A public Christmas tree and entertainment will be given in Good

Templar hall Christmas Eve by the citizens of our town. Everyone is at liberty to place presents on the tree for friends and relatives and all are cordially invited to enjoy the excellent entertainment which has been prepared. . . . Although this has been a very poor sea-

son, good old Saint Nick will not forget our little city. He will, in fact, give us two trees and two entertainments."

A description of

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## Too Much For This Issue, by Editor Jim Becket

We really tried to cover too much in this issue. Consequently, some items were reduced, hopefully without too much damage to their content. ♪ We wanted a Christmas piece and are indebted to Lyn Lofland for providing that. ♪ We felt it was important to provide at least some information about the "B Street Visioning Process," as there are several Historical Resources and other community features involved. Even though brief, we hope it provides useful information to you without being overly editorial. (We found it difficult to be both of those—brief and non-editorial.) ♪ We have provided limited descriptions of those HRs within the range of the "Vision" for your information. ♪ Since another HR, the Bank of Yolo, could be involved in another redevelopment project downtown, Wendy Nelson provides an excellent description of it. This is one that was reduced, but we will provide her full version at a later date.

**Merry Christmas. Jim Becket**





A couple of months ago, the Davis City Council began a formal "Visioning Process" for the development of B Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, rather than approach the issue by the usual lot by lot, approach. Community Workshop #1 was held October 26, 2004, under the leadership of the City and Bruce Race, a consultant who has done group work for the City before. Detailed results of that workshop are available on the City Website. A second meeting, Community Workshop #2, was held December 6, 2004. Although more evident in #2 than #1, the two workshops were dominated by B Street, or nearby, property owners and "downtown" developers. Those with a historical, but not financial, interest were not well represented, especially at #2.

Though not well represented, the historical aspect of B Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> is significant. First, there is the obvious: 337 B and 232 B are designated Historic Resources (HR). When 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is included, 232 3<sup>rd</sup> is also so designated. And, although not designated, 301 B, currently the home of Ciocolat, previously Giselle's and historically the Scott home, presents a rare (in Davis) opportunity for capitalizing on history. (To wit: the December issue of *Sunset* magazine lists Ciocolat as one of "Five Great Bakeries for the Season" along with one in Berkeley and three in San Francisco. It would have been so much cooler if the notation could have talked about the "1904 historic house turned bakery" or the "Judge William Scott Historical Home turned bakery" rather than the "1930s house turned bakery."

But in addition to the obvious, there is the less tangible, the historic streetscape, especially opposite Central Park. Central Park is not a

## The B Street Visioning Process

historical resource, but it is a product of civic action to keep it as a park rather than commercial development. In addition, B Street itself, as the path of East/West Hwy 40 and North/South Hwy 99 through Davis, a short section of the Lincoln Highway, connecting to the outer world through the historic Richards Blvd. subway, is historic in its own right.

Whether obvious or intangible, B Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and intersected by 3<sup>rd</sup>, has significant historical relevance. It is a point at which the City's articulated goals of preservation and commitment to infill development meet and beg clarification for practical and beneficial community implementation. Four very general graphic options were presented in Workshop #1, being reduced to three for Workshop #2. Option #1 is basically status quo, with the addition of alley units. It received little support. Frequent comments: "Nothing will happen." "There is no incentive." "Outdated." "Wasted space." Option #3 went too far the other way for a seeming majority. In this option, the HRs are to be relocated and both "B and 3<sup>rd</sup> become urban streets and an extension of downtown." This option adds a projected 179 net units, 192 bedrooms, 23,430 square feet of commercial and 161 parking spaces. It would require changes in lot size and pattern and centralized property management. One (cynical?) reaction to this option was that it was designed to be so bad that people would accept #2 with relief. Be that as it may, Option #2, which retains B Street as "predominantly residential in use and character" and which puts an

emphasis on intensifying residential uses within existing lot pattern," did appear to have consensus acceptance. HRs remain and even 301 B, the current home of Ciocolat, which is not currently designated as a HR, appears to be retained. While not anywhere near as expansive as #3, this option projects the addition of 67 net additional units, 106 bedrooms, 12,330 square feet of commercial and 37 parking spaces.

Perhaps the least tangible is the streetscape. And for B Street between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, perhaps the term is "parkscape." Comments were made about the impact of the development on the park, and one group report stated that they all felt "we could do better by our park." But so far, there has not been much about what the "better" might be. One developer talks about "framing the park" and the implication is for high rise structures, possibly patterned after the new building on the southwest corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and C. Some years ago, a successful battle was waged to create a garden like western edge of Central Park, thereby matching the residential front yards across the street. Even the compromise option #2 destroys those front yards, with only the two historical buildings retaining the setbacks necessary for front yards. By using the existing "B Street look" of 301 and 337 as guides, creative architecture would undoubtedly be able to come up with frontages that matched both the park and history, while providing increased units, bedrooms, and parking to the rear.



## The Davis Historical Society As a Post-Modern Web Organization by John Lofland

In its recent downsizing, the DHS may have become an early example of a new and proliferating form of civic association.

This new form might be called the "web organization." Two key features of it are 1) a web site that creates a public presence and communicates organizational identity and information and 2) email lists that get out timely news and help to organize collective action.

These two features are rather easily achieved and simple to operate, facts that obscure their significance. Web sites and email are, in fact, stunning expansions in the capacity to coalesce expression of interests-in-common and to communicate, in a rapid fashion, timely information relating to those interests.

Recall the cumbersome devices of only a few years ago, which included printed and mailed newsletters and flyers, telephone "trees,"

scheduled meetings, and crisis convened assemblies.

The web does not supplant the old devices, of course. But, it does make for a new order of possibilities for collective action.

For us in the DHS, these new possibilities involve, among other matters, our two email lists.

Our longer list ("davishistorymembers") has 70-some members. People on it receive newsletters and bulletins on breaking events. (Another dozen or so members do not have email.)

Our shorter email list is a "leader group" (officially termed the "davishistoryboard"). It has twelve names, eleven of whom are members of the DHS Board or chairs of committees (6 of the former, 5 of the latter). This group takes action in the name of the DHS, but only on matters of consensus. So far, this has worked very well.

As has been the policy from the outset, any DHS member needs only to ask to have her or his

name placed this shorter list (or to be removed from it) (email the list moderator, Merrily Dupree, at [mmdupree@sbcglocal.net](mailto:mmdupree@sbcglocal.net)).

The web site and the email lists are the vehicles of the post-modern entrepreneurial spirit animating the DHS. If a DHS member thinks our Society should do something, these two web resources provide the means for promoting that something.

In an old-fashioned and merely modern organization, a DHS member would say: "I think the DHS ought to do X."

But now, in our post-modern web form, a DHS member says: "I volunteer to lead an effort to do X; I ask the DHS Board of Directors to adopt X as an official project; and I call on members to help me do X in ways Y and Z."

So, among other features, the DHS is a radically permeable and member-driven structure kept reasonably coherent by the leader group.

The DHS shares the above features with other web organizations and this form of organization is burgeoning. Indeed, it is something new under the sun. As such, the future of this type of human undertaking is exceptionally difficult to envision, but certainly of interest to watch.

### "Davis Radical Changes, Deep Constants" by John Lofland



This book by Davis Historical Society's own John Lofland should be read by anyone with even the slightest interest in Davis History. John lays out two features of Davis: First, the ways of life here have changed radically, but second, there have been

many forms of continuity.

It is a total history of Davis divided into nine sections, starting with "Expectant Davisville, 1868—1871" and ending with "Contested Davis, 1990- - " There was a reading and book signing event at the Avid Reader,

where the book is for sale, on November 11. We promised a review for this issue of *davisvilletoday*, but ran out of space. So we'll just encourage you to read it. You'll enjoy it and learn a lot, too. Editor Jim Becket





The McDonald House—337 B Street



Ciocolat 301 B Street



Jacobson-Wilson House—232 B



The Yolo Bank Building 301 G

## Endangered Species: Historical Resources in the Path Of Progress by Jim Becket

### B Street Visioning

The article on the B Street Visioning Process on Page 2 mentions several sites which are designated as Historical Resources by the City of Davis but are within the range of the "vision." Their eventual fate is undecided, but the label of endangered species does not seem inappropriate!

How well do we know these sites?

First, is the McDonald House, 337 B Street. It is currently owned by Davis residents Scott and Leslie Gordon, who bought it and lived there when they were first married in the 1970s prior to a move to the Bay area. According to the Historic Resources Inventory of the 70s, the house was built around 1904, although Leslie believes it was earlier than that. When the farm was subdivided, the area was known as the McDonald Subdivision. According to the Inventory, "This house is

significant because of its architectural integrity, its streetscape contribution, and its association to an early Davis family." The Gordons are dedicated to its preservation and restoration. (Note: The vegetable garden on the north reflects the interests of the current graduate student tenants, friends of the Gordons' son.)

Next comes 301 B, the current home of Ciocolat, a living example of adaptive re-use. It was formerly Giselle's Travel but originally the home of Judge William Scott and his wife Kathryn. The structure is not designated as an HR, although its historic significance is outstanding.

John Lofland quotes William Scott extensively, declaring that "over these almost 37 years (that he owned, edited and published the *Enterprise*), William Scott was the *Davis Enterprise*." (John Lofland, *Davis, Radical Changes, Deep Constants*. Page 34) He was a promoter

of the town without equal, as John's quotes attest.

Then, still on B, but between 2nd and 3rd and facing west, comes 232 B, the Jacobson-Wilson House. Built in 1914-15 by John Jacobson, a carpenter on campus who built several houses on the street and served as contractor on others., this house is currently almost hidden by the shrubbery. James Wilson, professor of Animal Husbandry at the university purchased the house in 1923 and it was the Wilson family home for many years. Since it faces west between 2nd and 3rd, it is not part of the "parkscape" nor within the scope of the current "vision."

### Downtown Redevelopment

In addition to the B Street Visioning Process, the City has announced plans to revamp a portion of downtown (*The Davis Enterprise* Tuesday, November 9, 2004. The area under consideration is E to G and 3rd to 4th.

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these . . . festivities, which reportedly delighted both old and young was published on December 30. "The cantata and Christmas tree at the Presbyterian church on Christmas eve was a grand success and, judging by the number of encores, it was highly appreciated by the large audience assembled. The children executed their parts of the program in admirable manner and showed that they had received careful instruction. The Christmas tree was twenty feet high, reaching from floor to ceiling, bearing 106 twenty-five cent presents—one for each minor pupil enrolled in the Sunday school. Underneath the tree and around its trunk was [a] pile of 200 sacks, containing an apple, an orange, nuts, and candy to the weight of one and one-half pounds each, sufficient in number to supply all the Sunday school scholars and all visiting children. The whole school arranged in four tiers, one above another in front across the end of the church beside the beautifully decorated forty-candle-lit Christmas tree, formed a magnificent picture, long to be remembered by those who saw it. "In the Good Templar hall, immediately at the close of the Sunday school Christmas entertainment, another program of

musical and literary numbers was begun and and occupied the large audience for over an hour. . . . The Christmas tree was loaded with presents for old and young which Santa Claus proceeded to distribute when the program was finished. Many little hearts were made glad" (*Davis Enterprise*, December 24, 1969).

#### From "Christmas at the Schoolhouse" [1921]

Fifty years ago in Davis the annual community Christmas party was held in the local schoolhouse. An announcement of the events, published in the *Enterprise* of December 9, 1921, outlines the program which was highlighted by a Cantata, musical selections by the Davis band, and Santa's perennial visit. A glance at the program may provide a bit of holiday nostalgia for those who remember the occasion in Davis, or for those who recall similar events held in schoolhouses throughout the world. Local residents were informed: "The Beggars of Christmas,' a Cantata selected by the teachers of the Davis Grammar School as a part of the Community Christmas program, will be presented at the Auditorium. . . Thursday evening, December 15 at 7:30 o'clock. The Cantata is a breezy Christmas play, the theme of which is woven around a group of beggars who beg for alms on Christmas even. Spirited musical numbers, artistic costumes, and ef-

fective choruses, including Goblins, Snow Fairies, Christmas Sprites, and even Santa Claus himself, unite in making fun for young and old. . . . Santa Claus has been invited and has signified his intention of being present with a Christmas gift for every boy and girl. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Come early and get good seats. Be sure to bring the 'kiddies' to see Santa Claus" (*Davis Enterprise*, December 23, 1971).



**Note:** A photocopied compilation of the Larkey columns are available at the Hattie Weber Museum (which also houses the originals). But since these provide such a rich trove of historical materials on Davis, it would be advantageous to have them more widely available. As such, the DHS Publication Committee is exploring the feasibility of re-publication.

**Editor's Note:** *Lyn Lofland is the Chair of the Publications Committee of the Davis Historical Society and is in charge of the "Larkey Project."*





*Davisvilletoday*

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**We're on the web!**  
**davishistoricalsociety.org**

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The only HR in the area is on the SE corner of 3rd and G, The Noodle Express.

In describing this building, Wendy Nelson writes:

The Bank of Yolo at 301 G Street is listed on the City of Davis Register as a "Merit Resource" because it has historical value to the citizens of the City of Davis. Built in 1910, it is a single-story building of the Classical Revival style. As one stands on the east side of G Street, facing the building's front façade, you can't help but be impressed by the large, glassed arched opening set upon a massive base of horizontal bands, giving the appearance that the building is much larger than it is. The glass arches are repeated on the south- and north-facing façades, bring-

ing an air of dignity to an otherwise simple stucco building. The flagpole perched on the flat roof serves as the only reminder of the buildings civic past.

As noted by architectural historian, Bridget Maley, in the city of Davis Register, the Bank of Yolo "is an example of an important American architectural genre: the small-town bank. The building design was obviously influenced by the work of architect Louis Sullivan whose mid-western bank buildings inspired national trends in bank design during this period."

The Bank of Yolo was one of two banks established in the early 1900s, the other, the Bank of Davis was located a block south at the corner of 2nd and G streets, known today as the Anderson

Bank building, also on the Davis Register. While the Bank of Davis survived the stock crash, the Bank of Yolo did not, closing in 1933. The Bank of Yolo did, however, repay its depositors within a few years. The building later served as the Davis branch of the Bank of America and now houses the Noodle Express restaurant. The structure itself maintains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, and association. Integrity is an extremely important criterion for listing on the Register. But perhaps equally important is that the building contributes to the historic character of the Downtown/ Commercial area of Davis, as such, any negative impacts to this historic building would result in a tremendous loss for the citizens of the City of Davis.

### The Purposes of the Davis Historical Society\*

The purposes of the DHS are to carry on programs of public education on the history of Davis, to encourage historical preservation in the Davis area, and to promote research and publication on Davis history, including the archiving of historical documents and artifacts.

The first letters of the five words summarizing these purposes spell the word "paper." These words are: Publication, Archives, Preservation, Education, Research.

\* As listed on the Web