



DECEMBER, 2003
DAVIS HISTORY MATTERS:
THE DAVIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 13, December, 2003
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1. YOLO COUNTY ARCHIVES TOUR, MAY 2.

Members of the Davis Historical Society will have an opportunity to tour the Yolo County Archives in Woodland on Sunday, May 2 from 2 to 4 PM. (This is a change from the previously announced May 9th.)

The tour will be conducted by Mel Russell, County Archivist, who will highlight archive holdings relating to Davis.

Because of physical limitations at the Archive, the tour is capped at twenty DHS members on a first-come-first-served basis. Sign-ups started at the Annual Meeting and a few spaces remain. If you are a DHS member and want to go on the tour, call John Lofland at 758-5258 to sign-up.

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More details on the tour will be reported as we get closer to May.

2. NOVEMBER 16 SECOND ANNUAL MEETING A CELEBRATION SUCCESS

The DHS celebrated its first year of highly successful existence at the Hattie Weber Museum Sunday afternoon November 16th.

Several important actions were taken and matters were discussed. All are reported in the Minutes soon to be posted in the News column of www.davishistoriccity.org. The more important items are also reported below.

The highlight of the meeting was a tour of Harrington Place at 430 D Street. The project architect, Scott Neeley, gave a most informative walk-about talk explaining preservationist and innovative features of the four building project.

3. RESULTS OF THE DHS ELECTIONS.

At the DHS's formation in November, 2002, three positions were given one rather than two year terms in order to create staggered terms. The three offices with one year terms were Vice-President, Secretary, and one At Large Board member.

A Nominations and Elections Committee consisting of Robin Datel (Chair), Jim Frame and Tansey Thomas developed a slate of candidates for these three positions. This slate was presented to the Second Annual Meeting. The nominees were Phyllis Haig for Vice-President, Sharla Harrington for Secretary, and Audrey Hastings for At Large Board Member.

Nominations from the floor were requested. There were none and the three proposed nominees were elected unanimously.

4. NEW DUES STRUCTURE.

The Board has adopted a new dues structure. One year memberships will be \$10.00, two years \$18.00, and three years \$25.00.

5. SLIGHT SHIFT IN THE MEMBERSHIP YEAR.

In order to simplify record keeping, the membership year will be shifted slightly from November-October to January-December. In this way the awkward two year expression (e.g., "05-06") will become a cleaner one year (e.g. "05").

This means that current members will get an extra month of or so of "free" membership.

6. MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL UNDERWAY.

Dennis Dingemans, Treasurer, Sharla Daly Harrington, Secretary, and Mary Ann Harrison, Board Member, are organizing a mailing to renew memberships for 2004. You should get a renewal request, with a return envelope, soon. But before that, you will receive an emailed renewal request.

Or, you can right away simply send a check for \$10 (one year membership), \$18 (two years), or \$25 (three years) to Dennis Dingemans, DHS Treasurer, 645 C Street, Davis, CA 95616.

7. NEWSLETTER CHANGES TITLE.

In the course of use over the first year, the title "Davis History Matters" has not seemed sufficiently clear. Therefore, a more straightforward title will be employed starting with

the first issue of volume 2 (2004). The new title will be the *Davis Historical Society Newsletter*, or *DHS Newsletter* for short.

8. DHS AND DDBA EXPLORE WALKING TOUR PROJECT.

Davis Downtown Business Association (DDBA) Executive Director Laura Cole-Rowe has proposed that the DDBA and the DHS work together in developing a historical walking tour of the downtown.

Education Committee Co-Chairs Sharla Harrington and Mark DuPree are interested in the possibility of such a project and exploratory talks are currently underway.

This is conceived as a fairly substantial undertaking that would require grant funding properly to execute. Possible expenses of some magnitude include professional design and reproduction of printed materials that might be produced.

9. OP ED: PROFESSIONAL HISTORY OBSCURES DAVIS HISTORY?

by John Lofland

Some months ago, a book titled *Cultivating California* came to my attention

Written by Texas A&M associate professor of history David Vaught, its subtitle is *Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920*.

Published by John Hopkins University Press in 1999, it is a comparative study of specialty crops in four areas of California over the years indicated.

The four crops and areas are raisins around Fresno, fresh fruit around Newcastle, hops around Wheatland, and—surprise, surprise!--almonds around Davisville.

The central and analytic topic of the book is Carey MacWilliams' famous "factory in the fields" thesis about California factory-farming that was formulated in the 1930s. That thesis may have fit that and later decades, Vaught argues, but it was wrong for the founding period of California farming and "cultivating."

The exact nature of his argument and its merits need not concern us here, save to say that Vaught tries to document that early growers were less rational capitalists who exploited labor on a factory model than they were lifestyle "cultivators."

Vaught uses the four case-areas to work out his fresh approach to this history.

The relevance of this book to readers of the *DHS Newsletter* is that on about one-quarter of the pages we get fresh information on (and analysis of) Davisville area history.

In particular, we learn a great deal about one George Washington Pierce, a major mover and shaker of the era. (This is made possible by the fact that Pierce kept a diary from the late 1870s through the 1920s. It is in UCD Special Collections and Vaught used it.)

As an aside, let me remark that Vaught's account greatly strengthens the school of thought holding that Pierce, not Judge Shields, is the "father" of UCD. Without Pierce's enormous work, the Farm would have gone elsewhere, some claim. (In a just world, the UCD library would be called Pierce, not Shields.)

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Be these historical disputes as they may, my point is that the book is organized such that one has to look very closely to discover the Davis materials.

My question is: how much history of this analytic sort contains Davis information that does not come to our attention because historical and analytic debates shroud it?

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