

5

F Street

The Traffic Artery

A curious person might ask about F Street: How did all those charming homes get built on such a heavily trafficked road? Why would one build so close to so much noise, danger, and other annoyances?

The answer is that people did not build under these conditions. When most F Street homes were constructed, there was little traffic on the street because it came to a dead-end at Seventh. (The dead-end is visible in the 1946 aerial photograph reproduced as Fig. 2.4.)

But the large UC Davis and city expansions of the 1950s and 1960s changed all this for F Street. Development to the north demanded access from and to the south. F Street was thus “cut through” to the north and transformed from a quiet residential byway to a major traffic artery.

Despite being so beset, much charm persists on F Street (and traffic calming and diverting measures that would improve life on this street are not beyond the realm of possibility).

F Street is the Old North’s “Bungalow Heaven”

F Street has more classic bungalows than any two other Old North streets combined. Here we find 13 of the 32 that survive in the area, which is 41% of the total.

There are three in the 500 block, at 507, 513, and 519. Of them, historical resource surveyors inventoried 513.

At the northwest corner of Sixth Street west of F, we have 619 and 621 Sixth. The surveyors inventoried 621 Sixth.

The 600 block boasts the largest number of any Old North block and likely any block in Davis: eight. These are at 613, 618,

619, 623, 633, 637, 643, and 647. The historical resource surveyors have inventoried three of them, those at 618, 619, and 643.

F Street Residences, Residents, Rentals

As with G Street, here are numerical indicators of F's residential, resident, and rental "size."

1. RESIDENCES. Compared to other streets, F:

- 1) has an average number of residential units (60),
- 2) contains the largest number of signature homes (34), and
- 3) ties with E Street for the largest number of lot-dominant structures.

These measures tell us that F Street is robust relative to the rest of the Old North as regards the number and characteristics of its residential units.

F Street's geographical position as (1) somewhat farther from the railroad tracks (reducing train annoyance) but (2) closer to the original downtown than other Old North streets shows up in these statistics in terms of the street having the highest percentage of signature homes, which means people built on F earlier than on other streets.

2. TINY/HIDDEN ABODES. F Street has a "middling" number of tiny and/or hidden abodes (10 of 60 or 18%), ranking third behind E with 38% and G with 22%

3. RESIDENTS. F also ranks third in number of residents (127 of 609, or 21%), behind E with 25% and C with 24%

4. RESIDENTS IN SIGNATURE HOMES. F is fourth among streets on the percentage of residents who live in a signature home or in an ancillary abode on the same property (e. g. a converted garage or an apartment unit behind the lot-dominant structure) (88 of 127, which is 69%).

5. OWNER-OCCUPIED SIGNATURE HOMES AND ALL RESIDENCES. F street ties with C for last place in the percent of all its residential units that are owner-occupied signature homes (11 of 60, which is 18%).

6. OWNER-OCCUPIED VERSUS RENTAL SIGNATURE HOMES. Narrowing the focus to owner-occupancy of only signature homes rather than all residential units: *F Street ranks a clear dead last with 11 of 34—32%— of signature homes owner-occupied.*

As with G Street, the above statistic is important enough to warrant stating in the reverse: *F Street ranks first in the percent of its signature homes that are rentals (68%).*

7. ABSENTEE LANDLORDS OF RENTED SIGNATURE HOMES. Putting the misleading case of B Street to the side, F ties with C for the highest percentage of rental signature homes with landlords who give out-of-Davis addresses on their county tax roll listing (10 of 23 or 43%).

All the bungalows included in the ARG or HEC surveys are pictured and described in the pages ahead.

619 Fifth Street: Example of “Abode Creep”

The building at 619 Fifth Street (Fig. 5.1) is an example of an odd but wonderfully developed structure that is simply the rear part of 503 F. It is not on the 1921 or 1933 Sanborn maps, but the original garage portion appears on the 1953 Sanborn. That map shows an overhang to the right that is now enclosed while yet another overhang has been added to the right. This is an example of creating a home by slow, over-the-years creep.

5.1. 619 Fifth Street, an example of “abode creep.”



513 F Street (The Bentley Home)[†]

The 1980 HEC surveyors declared that 513 F’s “architectural values provide its primary significance. The bungalow is a good representative of Craftsman styling with typical materials, form, and image of the era. Although not large, the structure’s composition and scale add to its visual importance and presence” (HEC, 227-228).

These surveyors elaborate this assessment of architectural significance in these terms:

This symmetrical one and a half story Craftsman bungalow has a gabled roof with a generous broadly arched porch under the street side eaves that extends the full width of the house. Battered pillars support the roof at the porch corners. Slender brackets support gable overhangs. Surface materials are clapboard, shingles, wood with a clinker brick porch base. A dormer window with vents projects from the gabled roof (HEC, 227).

They also report on the long-standing multiple-occupancy of this house, a feature that is not immediately apparent from the street. “The building has been altered to accommodate additional units of

dwelling space and an added stair extends to the top story on the north side to provide access” (HEC, 227; Fig. 5.2).

5.2. 513 F Street. (The Bentley Home).



621 Sixth Street †

Constructed in the 1920s, 621 Sixth Street (Fig. 5.3) “is an excellent example of a Craftsman style bungalow [and] . . . is a strong contributor to a neighborhood rich in bungalow style structures,” opined the 1996 ARG surveyors (ARG, 282).

The special features of this stuccoed Craftsman include its “intersecting gable roofs perpendicular to the street. The gable over the main portion of the house is punctuated by an attic vent. The porch has a gable roof with the ridge running parallel to the street [and] is supported by two canted piers on bases with an additional area to be used as planter holders. The porch has a low arch that comes to a point in the center. A large tripartite window with an awning occupies the east end of the front elevation” (ARG, 281).

5.3. 621 Sixth Street.



618 F Street†

Probably built in the late 1910s, 618 F was among the first houses constructed on this block.

Like a number of other Old North homes, 618 F has seen the hard times of not being loved and cared for by its owner(s). However, this house has been more fortunate than some others because it now has owners who have invested in renovation and remodeling (Fig. 5.4).

5.4. 618 F Street in the late 1990s, after renovation and remodeling.



In Fig. 5.5 we get a glimpse of a former and sad period of 618 F's life.

5.5. 618 F Street before renovation and remodeling. (Courtesy Roxie Eichelberger)



619 F Street†

The 1996 historical surveyors considered 619 F Street (Fig. 5.6) “a particularly well designed and proportioned Craftsman style house” (ARG, 318).

Constructed sometime between 1910 and 1920, “this two story . . . home has a gable roof running parallel to the street. A large tripartite dormer window with its own gable punctures the main roof. Both roofs have bracketed overhangs. A front porch

runs the entire length of the house. Four tapered, classically inspired square columns support the porch and rest on a parapet wall. The house is clad with horizontal wood siding except in the gables of the main roof which are shingled. The front door is slightly off center and is the only asymmetrical feature of the front elevation. Large tripartite windows flank either side of the front door” (ARG, 317).

5.6. 619 F Street.



620 F Street†

Constructed in the early 1930s or late 1920s, 620 F (Fig. 5.7) has a “projecting porch supported by thin posts, . . . a gable roof that is perpendicular to the street [and] . . . is sheathed in horizontal wood siding” (ARG, 319).

ARG surveyors note that “the roof of the main house mimics the form of the front porch and has an attic vent. The front door is accessed off the small porch and there is one double hung window on the south side of the front elevation” (ARG, 319).

5.7. 620 F Street.



643 F Street[†]

The 1980 historical surveyors report that 643 F Street (Fig. 5.8) was constructed in 1916 “solely as an investment, a common past and present enterprise in Davis, and has always been used as a rental” (HEC, 230). Even so, 643 F Street has architectural value because of the “quality and execution of detailing combined with [its] careful proportions” (HEC, 230).

Specifically, “the proportions of the house emphasize its horizontality The shallow hipped roof . . . intersects the low gabled roof of the porch over the entrance The porch roof is supported by double posts set on stucco piers. The brackets at the eaves add ornament to the roofline. A shallow slanted cantilevered bay extends from the front of the house” (HEC, 229; ARG, 321).

5.8. 643 F Street.



623 Seventh Street (The Anderson-Hamel House)[†]

623 Seventh Street is a 1903 Queen Anne cottage which was originally located five blocks south of this site, at the northwest corner of Second and F streets, and moved to its current location in the late 1940s (Fig. 5.10).

- **HISTORY.** As noted earlier, unlike Woodland, which had (and still has) extensive turn-of-the century neighborhoods of mansions and near-mansions, Davis “was never a rich town” and had only a few “stately” homes (Dolcini, 1996, 156; Walters 1995, 1997; Pinegar and Wilkinson 1997).

The Queen Anne here at 623 Seventh was among the small number of Davis’ slightly more stately turn-of-the century houses. While impressive and the home of a member of the Davis elite, it is quietly modest in scale compared even to other affluent Davis

homes of the same period. (Notice its neighbor, the Weber home, in Fig. 5.9.)



5.9. The Anderson-Hamel house in its original location at the northwest corner of Second and F streets. This photograph was taken around 1910 and looks west along Second Street, toward the University Farm. The large home in the center of the photograph is the Weber mansion, which was torn down to make way for the Brinley Building now at the northeast corner of Second and E. (Courtesy Hattie Weber Museum)

John B. Anderson, a Canadian who came to the Davis area in 1893, had the house built in 1903. He started the Davisville Cash Store, was involved in forming the Bank of Davis in 1913, and served as Davis' first mayor after city incorporation in 1917 (Tyler 1992).

5.10. 623
Seventh Street,
The Anderson-
Hamel House.



The house was purchased by another Davis elite family—the Hamels—in 1923. Members of this family lived in it into the 1940s and it was then bought by a member of the Quessenberry family who moved it in order to clear the way for the Quessenberry Drug Store at Second and F streets (Tyler 1992).

- **DESECRATION AND RESTORATION.** In the 1950s the house was “modernized” by removing all its external Queen Anne features and it became a decaying, nondescript rental.

Noni and David Storm purchased it in the early 1970s and went to great pains to restore it to its original appearance. This process included the good luck of discovering the original gingerbread woodwork in the four-foot crawl space under the house. Other details were reconstructed from an early photograph of the house (Tyler 1992).

- **RECENT USES.** The Storms originally used the restored house as the office of Storm Engineering, but later converted it to a bed and breakfast inn, a venture that was not commercially successful. Used again as a residence in the early 1990s, it has more recently become an office.

- **ARCHITECTURE.** A Queen Anne cottage, the HEC and ARG surveyors describe 623 Seventh as composed of two gabled sections integrated by a hipped porch roof. The narrow clapboard of the walls is contrasted with the fishscale shingles of the gable ends. There are louvered vents in the gables, with cornice moldings, and a dentil course at the line of the soffited eaves.

The porch has turned columns, jigsaw panels with pendant, and a railing made of geometrically arranged rectangles. [It] is accessed via four steps. Several window openings occur under the roof of the porch which turns the corner on the east elevation (HEC, 179; ARG, 125).

Following the observations in Ch. 1 on windows taller than they are wide, note the conspicuous presence of tall windows in 623 Seventh. Indeed, one of the owners, Noni Storm, has remarked on the key importance of these windows in providing “excellent natural lighting” and avoiding a “dark feeling” (Tyler 1992).

- **HISTORICAL STATUS.** In 1997, Davis had 33 “Designated Historical Resources,” which are houses, other structures, and physical formations considered culturally important enough to warrant degrees of legal protection from change without public consideration.

The 33 are themselves divided into two classes: simply Historical Resources (18 in number) versus Outstanding Historical Resources (13 in number). The latter enjoy more legal protection against change or demolition than the former.

Seven of the 13 Outstanding Historical Resources are houses and, pertinent here, the Anderson-Hamel home is one of those seven. In the words of one writer, this home has the social standing of a “precious architectural gem” (Tyler 1992).

The Seventh and F Area in the Middle 1920s

We are fortunate that the Mary and George Vansell family liked to take photographs outdoors in the 1920s and that their daughter, Jane Zakarian, saved these images, for their pictures create valuable windows on the early years of Old North life and its landscape. In addition to photos seen in other chapters, in Fig. 5.11 we have a 1920s view in the vicinity of F Street along Seventh.

5.11. Summer, 1924 photo of Mrs. Mary Jane Vansell and daughters Jane and Margaret Alice taken in front of 713 Seventh looking south with G Street to the left and F Street to the right. 631 G is seen on the left and 620 F is seen on the right. Both houses are still there. (Courtesy Jane Zakarian)



As mentioned in Ch. 3 and elaborated earlier in this chapter, F Street ended at Seventh Street for most of Davis’ history. It was cut through to Eighth Street and further north only after World War II. As might be expected, turning F Street into a major north-south traffic artery has had many effects on the lives of people living there. In particular, the traffic tends to discourage families with small children and to encourage student rental housing, a trend evidenced in the statistics on F Street given at the beginning of this chapter.