

DAVIDSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We don't just talk about Davidson's past... We are working to preserve it.

Winter 2011

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Street Smart

As you travel the streets of Davidson, have you ever wondered about the stories and people behind some of the names? Many of our streets are named for people or families that have been a part of the town's rich and unique history.

Griffith, Sloan, Beaty and Jackson Streets are all named after Davidson mayors:

James Lee Sloan, Jr., a local businessman and Davidson College graduate, served as mayor from 1900-1920. Known as "Mr. Jimmy Lee," he was instrumental in the founding of cotton mills in town.



Thomas M. Griffith served as mayor from 1933 until his death in 1940. During his time as mayor, **Griffith Street** was more of an alley. By the 1950s, it was the access road to Highway 21 and by the late 1960s it was one of the main entrances to town from the newly constructed I-77.

Ernest Beaty was a Davidson College graduate and a professor of Latin and German

at Davidson College. He completed Griffith's term and was elected as mayor in October 1941. After resigning as mayor in January 1946, he ran again and was re-elected in May 1947. He resigned again in May 1951, after being appointed to the County Board of Commissioners. His daughter, Mary Beaty, wrote books on the history of the town and the college.



Ernest Beaty

Frank Lee Jackson, was another Davidson College graduate, as well as the college treasurer and local business owner. He served as mayor from 1951-1969. **Jackson Street** was originally called Railroad Street and only ran from Depot Street to Delburg Street. When the street was extended to South Main Street in the 1980s, it was renamed in his honor.

The DHS is grateful for the generous work of the ninth-grade class at Community School of Davidson. Their holiday Alternative Gift Fair raised over \$4,000 for local non-profits. The DHS is honored to be one of the recipients.

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DHS Events

*All programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.
Please note dates, times and locations for each event.*

Tour of the Copeland House

Members only

Sunday, March 20, 4:00 pm

305 North Main Street, Davidson

Built in the 1870's around an older structure, the Copeland house is among the oldest homes in Davidson. A well-preserved example of an Italianate-style dwelling, it was the residence of the town's first medical doctor, and served as a boarding house for Davidson College students for over 100 years.

Jan Copeland Hampton will discuss the history and future of this historic home which has been in the Copeland family since the 1940's.



Walking Tours

April 30-May 1, 2011, 1:00 pm

Art on the Green, The Village Green

Come join us for a walking tour of downtown Davidson. Tours will be available at 1:00 pm on both Saturday and Sunday and will start from the DHS sign on the Village Green.

Davidson Town Day

May 7, 2011, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Stop by the DHS table to see our newest historic photo display and to get the latest information on our programs and activities!

History, Wine and Cheese

Join us for a relaxed evening of wine and cheese mixed with some history! Details to be announced.



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Other Davidson streets which recognize individuals are:

Watson Street is named for a man actually named Watson Street. A Davidson graduate, Watson Street served as a pastor of Unity Church, the mill church established in 1890 where the Reeves Temple AME Zion church is currently located. In 1927, Davidson College students began serving as pastors for the church. Watson Street was the student pastor in 1937, staying on after his 1938 graduation and leaving in 1939.

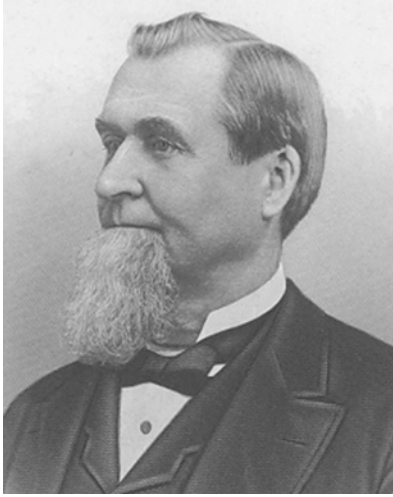
Lorimer Road, which was a new street in the mid 1920s, was designated Shelton Heights and Faculty Heights before officially becoming Sloan Street. In 1933, the town council changed the name of the street to "Lorimer" in accordance with the wishes of the residents. "Lorimer" was the middle name of William Lorimer Porter, a Davidson College professor, who had built the first house on the street in 1925.



T. Watson Street

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J.B. Shearer

Shearer Street takes its name from Dr. John Bunyan Shearer, president of Davidson College from 1888-1901. This street may have once been part of North Main Street. For years, North Main Street crossed over the railroad tracks just south of the present day Beaty Street intersection. By the 1920s, North Main Street had been straightened in order to meet the Public Highway being built from Mooresville on the east side of the railroad tracks. An African-American community known as Shearer Town, after Dr. Shearer who had built and rented residences there, was located nearby and may be the reason this particular street came to have his name.

Several other streets took their names from local families:

Thompson Street was named for the oldest house on the street, the Thompson family home, built around 1870. No other homes were built on this street until the 20th century.

Potts Street was originally part of South Main Street. Prior to the 1920s, the section of South Main Street that proceeds down the hill from Walnut Street and under the RR overpass did not exist. In order to follow South Main Street towards Cornelius, it was necessary to take a sharp right turn just south of what is now the DUMC Youth House, head west across the railroad tracks and then south along what is now Potts Street. When South Main Street was straightened in the 1920s, the street was renamed for the Potts family who lived for many years in one of the oldest homes on the street.



The Potts House

Grey Road was the road to the W.R. Grey farm. William Richard Grey graduated from Davidson College in 1880 and was a professor of French and Latin at the college for over 40 years.

There are many other streets in Davidson which bear the names of local families such as Gamble, Goodrum, Cathey, Armour, Mock and Jetton. Do you know the story behind these or other street names in Davidson? If so, we would love for you to share it with us!

Special thanks to Jan Blodgett, Davidson College Archivist for her contributions to this article.

Sources:

Beaty, Mary. *Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 until 1937*. Davidson: Warren Publishing, 1979.

Blodgett Jan. "Beyond Main and Concord – Davidson Street Names." *Around the D*. 28 July 2009.

Davidson College Archives. 15 January 2011.

<<http://blogs.davidson.edu/aroundthed/2009/07/beyond-main-and-concord---davidson-street-names.html>>

Davidson College Archives Collections Database: Local History Database
<<http://library.davidson.edu/archivesdb/localquery.asp>>

Johnson, Ralph W. *David Played a Harp*. Davidson: Blackwell Ink, 2000.

A Note from the President

Happy New Year! In the spirit of the holiday season I know I speak for the past and current board members when I express thanks and gratitude for Harper Newbold's contributions to DHS over the years. Sadly he passed away on December 29. On behalf of the Davidson Historical Society, I extend heartfelt condolences to his wife Betty and the family. We are thankful for his dedication to DHS.

We move into the new year with a focus on growing our membership and in particular our ability to engage the community through active volunteerism. We have found over the years that it is through engaging in our history that we appreciate the best of our past. Each year DHS produces or sponsors several programs aimed at educating our members about our history in Davidson and the region. There are many opportunities to serve on committees so please consider responding "yes" to the volunteer box on your membership renewal form this year!

DHS is excited this year to be working on a few new efforts. We are actively looking for an opportunity to find a space downtown that can accommodate a gallery and small office. DHS hopes to be able to display historical artifacts and the growing photo archives. We are also very excited to announce that Jan Blodgett and Ralph Levering have graciously offered to donate the publishing rights to a book on the history of Davidson which they are co-authoring.

Please continue to encourage folks to join DHS and I look forward to seeing you at our programs this year!

Dave
David Malushizky



DAVIDSON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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The Davidson Historical Society

was founded in the late 1980's by a group of concerned citizens led by Taylor and Irene Blackwell. Over the years DHS has presented programs by outstanding local and regional personalities on varying topics, toured historically significant sites in the area, and financed projects which promote the history of the area.