



# Davidson Historical Society

Fall 2007

Don't miss our program on September 16!

Join us for a tour of the magnificent Brawley Mansion in Mooresville.

We will have a short business meeting to introduce our new board members and vote on changes to the DHS constitution. We will also serve light refreshments.

## Our Purpose

*The Davidson Historical Society promotes an understanding and appreciation of the history of Davidson, North Carolina and its surrounding area.*

## The Life of Miss Ada Jenkins

*Last April, DHS hosted a panel discussion on the history of the Ada Jenkins School and Center. The panel members, a student and a teacher from the school, and an administrator from the early days of the center, shared their first-hand experiences with an eager audience. Based on the number of questions that were posed regarding Ada Jenkins, the woman, it became clear that there was great interest in learning even more about this remarkable woman. So to follow up on this interest, DHS has done some research and would like to share with you what we have discovered about Miss Ada Jenkins.*

Ada Mitcham (or Mitchum) was born in Arkansas in 1882 to a prominent middle-class African-American family. Her parents were from South Carolina. Education was apparently important to the family as all of the Mitcham children were educated professionals, including at least one son who was a physician.

Ada graduated from Clark University in Atlanta, Georgia. While in college, she met Albert G. Jenkins, a student at the Gammon Theological Seminary. Albert was from Houma, Louisiana, and had graduated from New Orleans University. They were married about 1906 - Ada was 24 and Albert was 34.

Early in their marriage, Ada and Albert served as missionaries on the West Coast of Africa. They returned to the United States for the birth of their first child, a son, Pliny Wheeler Jenkins, in April 1908, in New Hanover County, North Carolina. In June 1909, their second child, daughter Portia N Jenkins, was born in Hickory, North Carolina.

Albert's position as a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church caused the Jenkins family to relocate often as he was called to different congregations. In 1910, the family was living in Hickory, and in 1920, they were in New Orleans. They also lived in the North Wilkesboro area, possibly in the early 1920's.



*Miss Ada Jenkins  
Photo courtesy  
Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, PLCMC*

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# Events Calendar 2007-2008

Programs are at 4 p.m. at Davidson Town Hall unless otherwise noted.

## Sunday, September 16, 2007 Tour of the Brawley Mansion

Completed in 1904 by Espy Watts Brawley, this Queen Anne home is located on 23 acres of woods and pastures near downtown Mooresville. Brawley, a leading farmer, cotton and cottonseed oil manufacturer, and banker, called his home "Lawndale", but it is now known to the community as "The Brawley Mansion." Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the home has been undergoing restoration since 2004 and is now available for weddings, meetings and specials events.



Come learn about the history of this lovely home and the exciting plans for its future!

*Meet at 3:30 p.m. at Davidson Town Hall to carpool or meet us at 4:00 p.m. the Brawley Mansion, 601 Williams St., Mooreville*

## Sunday, November 18, 2007 Local Mill Life

Join us for a panel discussion on local mill life. This program is part of "Davidson READS," a community-wide program of Davidson Parks and Recreation, the Public Library and Main Street Books. Look for more activities and speakers this fall. The book for "Davidson READS" is The Bridge by Doug Marlette.

## Sunday, January 20, 2008 A Town by Any Other Name Leslie Rindoks

Davidson resident and author Leslie Rindoks will discuss her book about the history of Cornelius. The town of Cornelius celebrated 100 years of incorporation in 2005, but vibrant communities existed in that area long before that date. Ms. Rindoks book covers the history back to the 1700s.

Join us to learn more about our southern neighbor and how its history intertwines with Davidson's.

## Sunday, March 16, 2008 Davidson Reminiscence Project Dr. Kristi Multhaup

Dr. Kristi Multhaup, Psychology Professor at Davidson College and students from her *Autobiographical Memory & Reminiscence* class will discuss their work for the Fall 2007 Reminiscence Project. The Reminiscence Project pairs students with an older member of the community to interview them and document their life story.

Come learn how the students interviewed and documented these personal stories, and about the psychology of memory and reminiscence.

At our meeting on September 16, the membership of DHS will be asked to vote on changes to our constitution. Copies of the revisions will be available at the meeting. If you would like a copy in advance, please look on our website,  
[www.DavidsonHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.DavidsonHistoricalSociety.org)  
Or call to have one sent to you,  
Elizabeth Martin 704-892-3739.

Have you found us on the  
World Wide Web?



Look for our website  
[www.DavidsonHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.DavidsonHistoricalSociety.org)

Check back often! Our website is still being developed.

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During the 1920's, the Jenkins family moved to Charlotte. Albert served as pastor of Simpson Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church on South Graham Street. The Jenkins home was also on South Graham Street, in the Third Ward section of Charlotte.

In August 1930, Albert passed away at the age of 58 following a brief illness. It was after his death that Ada moved to Davidson. She had started teaching at the Davidson Colored School around 1927, and she continued to teach and serve as principal of the school for 17 ½ years. During her tenure, Ada, with the help of other community members, raised funds to build a new brick school house to replace the wooden schoolhouse that had been previously destroyed by fire. The new schoolhouse opened in 1937, and is now the main building of The Ada Jenkins Center.

Ada Jenkins passed away in January 1945 at the Lowrance Hospital in Mooresville. Her obituary in the *Charlotte News* stated that, "she won the respect and good will of all who knew her." Both Ada Jenkins and the Reverend Albert G. Jenkins are buried in the Pinewood section of the Elmwood/Pinewood Cemetery in Charlotte.

Ada and Albert's children continued on in their parent's footsteps. Pliny Jenkins (d. 1993) served as a minister in the United Methodist Church. Portia Jenkins (d. 2005) earned multiple college degrees and taught at the high school and college levels. Portia married Mr. John Crawford in 1945, and they had a daughter, Christine Crawford, who also works in the field of education, carrying on the legacy of Miss Ada Jenkins.

*Our special thanks to Ms. Christine Crawford of Greensboro, grand-daughter of Ada and Albert Jenkins, for her contributions to this article.*

### A page from history...

*This advertisement appeared in the  
Davidson College Magazine, 1909.*

*Shared by the Davidson College Archives.*



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# D·H·S

## *A Note from the President...*

We are excited about the coming DHS year! We have planned four excellent programs and I hope you will join us for all of them. See page 2 for the detailed descriptions.

We wrapped up our previous program year with a booth at Davidson Town Day in May. We talked to lots of wonderful folks, many of them new to the DHS. A drawing at the end of the day gave away two books on local history. Reva Davis won a copy of They Married Confederate Officers, and Luann Christine won a copy of Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 until 1937. Our thanks to everyone who stopped by to chat and enter our drawing!

A committee has spent time this summer on extensive revisions of the DHS Constitution. Many of the changes are just updates so it matches our actual practices. We have made some exciting changes in the structure of the executive board and our committees to meet our current and future challenges. We removed some old committees that we haven't actually had in years and created a few new ones. New committees include Research & Reference, Newsletter, and Website. On the enclosed membership form you will find opportunities to help the DHS with these new and on-going projects. I hope you'll take this opportunity to become more involved in DHS.

If you are a current member, we hope you will renew your membership. If you are new to the DHS or have let your membership lapse, *now* is a great time to join!

Elizabeth Martin



### **Davidson Historical Society**

Post Office Box 144  
Davidson, NC 28036

[www.davidsonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.davidsonhistoricalsociety.org)

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

**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.