

# Researching 1917-City Davis Buildings

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In recent years, some owners and others interested in buildings within the 1917 boundaries of Davis—the incorporating city limits—have asked me to help them research the histories of such structures. Responding without charge to these requests, I have developed a list of sources to consult. I think the number of people who might have an interest in this topic is small but important. The better to help them, I here set forth in a public way the sources I have identified and used. Further, I offer access to my personal Davis history collection, without charge, to people who want to research these “original city” buildings.

As of December, 2002, these are my suggested research sources and activities:

1. If you are the owner, you can look at the assessor file on your building kept by the Yolo County Assessor in Woodland (office building to the left—as you face it— of the county Court House).
2. In that same building, the land on which your building stands has a deed history in the Office of the Recorder. This tells little about the structure, but the maps are good and the land valuation is a clue as to what is on it. It is difficult, however, for a lay person to use these records. One needs technical mastery of the language and system. As an alternative, you can hire a title company to do the work for you. With good results, I have myself used the Fidelity National Title Company, which has a Woodland office.
3. The Yolo County Archives, on Buckeye in Woodland, has additional title records, the Larkey Collection, and other resources.
4. The microfiche files behind the public counter in the building department in the Davis City Hall sometimes have records of permits to do work on your building.
5. If there has been recent activity regarding permits or such at your building, the Davis planners might have a separate file in the hands of the planner assigned the case.
6. Esther Polito, City Cultural Services Manager, might have a file being kept by the Historical Resources Management Commission.
7. In 1933, the City did an inventory for tax assessment purposes that shows year of construction, a footprint, and the valuation, The originals are in a thick black binder located in the UCD Department of Special Collections. (I have a photocopy of that inventory.)
8. Also in the UCD Department of Special Collections, there are building and "urban survey" record sheets on each Davis property covering roughly the years 1946-60. (I have a copy of each record for homes in the 1917 City.)
9. The Shields Special Collections Department has an extensive collection of aerial photos of the City prior to World War II. I have digital versions of most of them. Using Photoshop, detailed searchings and enlargings are possible.
10. The Sanborn Map Company conducted perhaps twelve mappings of Davis between 1881 and 1955. Some copies of some of these maps are available at Public Works, Shields, Parks and Rec., and the Hattie Weber. I have digital versions of six sets. When all else fails, these can help identify a period of construction. They can also reveal “footprint” changes.
11. The detailed data sheets of the 1930 Census have recently been made public and I have acquired a copy of them. They provide a new source of data on Davis structures and who lived in them.
12. For whatever reason, Edwin McBride kept a book titled “Homes Completed in Davis from 1911 to 1938.” There is a copy of this list at the Hattie Weber and I have a copy.
13. As part of my research for *Old North Davis*, in 1995 I set up a file on every Old North property and I have accumulated varying amounts of public information on each since then.
14. Curiously, there are Davis street directories for only two years, 1970 and 1976. Published by Polk there are copies in Shields.
15. There are a number of additional sources. Some are published and some are unpublished. Quite importantly, some are human beings who might have memories that can be helpful regarding particular buildings.