

1. WHAT THIS EXHIBIT IS ABOUT

This exhibit gives a brief glimpse of life in Davisville (now Davis) over the single year of 1905, one-hundred years ago.

It does so with special focus on the town's preoccupation with becoming the site of the "State Farm School," a new agricultural research and teaching unit of the University of California.

We begin with an account of Judge Peter Shields' campaign leading up to the March 18, 1905 signing of legislation creating a commission to select a site for that school.

This act triggered the flurry of Davisville campaigning that is exhibited on the following panels.

The better to set the context, we begin, just below, with a few views of 1905 Davisville – its surroundings, streets, buildings, and people.

Enjoy!

**John Lofland and Jim Becket
Exhibit Designers
The Davis Historical Society**



The trophy awarded the Jerome C. Davis farm in 1858 for being the "most improved stock farm in the state" by the California State Agricultural Society.

(On display in the Hattie Weber Museum)

Yolo County had many large, fine farms in the mid-1800s.

- One of the finest: a 12,000 acre property owned by Jerome C. Davis

However, a series of unfavorable weather years, weakening grain markets and declining soil fertility were not kind to Davis.

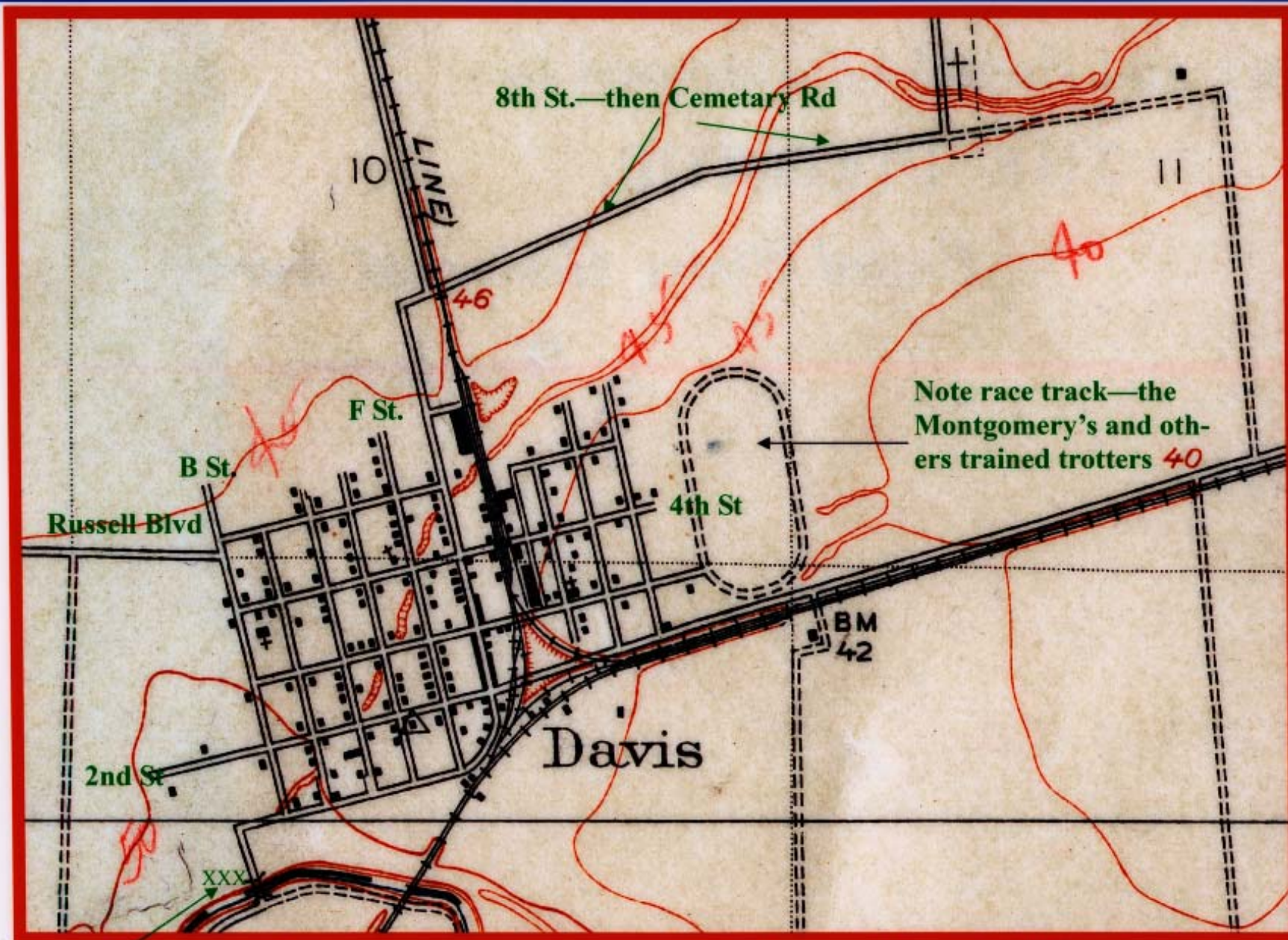
- He was forced to mortgage his fine farm.
- The California Pacific RR Company picked up one of the mortgages in 1867 and completed their line from Vallejo through the farm in 1868.
- The "Big Five" owners of the Cal-P, (acting as the Davisville Land Company) then "created" Davisville, selling lots and small farms.

In 1905, U. S. Geological Surveyors mapped the "Swingle Quadrangle." This excerpt from it shows "Greater Davisville," 1905.

Geological Surveys are known for accuracy in counting buildings — the black squares and rectangles shown.

Shown are 177 Davisville structures in 1905 — 7 are still standing 100 yrs later.

(Current street names have been inserted in green for reference.)



XXX approximate location of Jerome Davis Stock Farm Buildings



Some of the earliest irrigation systems in the state were constructed in Yolo County, but dry land grain farming was still king in the late 1800s, and mule drawn machines, like the one above, “marched across wheat fields like an army.”

(Quote from Scheuring, pp 6; picture from Lofland, pp 67)

The economy of Davisville in 1905 was still primarily based on agriculture, and most of the principals involved in our story were either farmers, or derived their income from servicing the farming industry.

Below is a mule drawn wagon train of sacked grain waiting at the A. J. Plant warehouse, located along the RR tracks.

We will hear more of A. J. Plant as we progress through the story.

(Picture from Hattie Weber Museum)





(Picture from the Hattie Weber)

The T.G. Schmeiser Manufacturing Co. was established in 1905. Early advertisements were for the "Equalizer Hitch," but the "Sure Pop" Almond Huller became a major product.

Almonds were a key crop in the early 1900s, and Davisville Almond Growers Association almonds won a Gold Medal at the St Louis exposition!

"TG" invented or improved a large number of farm mechanisms, was a charter member of the Almond Growers Assn., and organized his own water company.



The family home, built in 1911, still stands at 334 I St.

(Picture from 2003 HR Inventory)



William Dresbach founded the first general store in 1868, co-owned in 1875, as shown, by W. F. Bane.

It was a successful business venture and a popular gathering place. The father of G. W. Pierce Jr., one of our story's principals, is the second gun to the right.

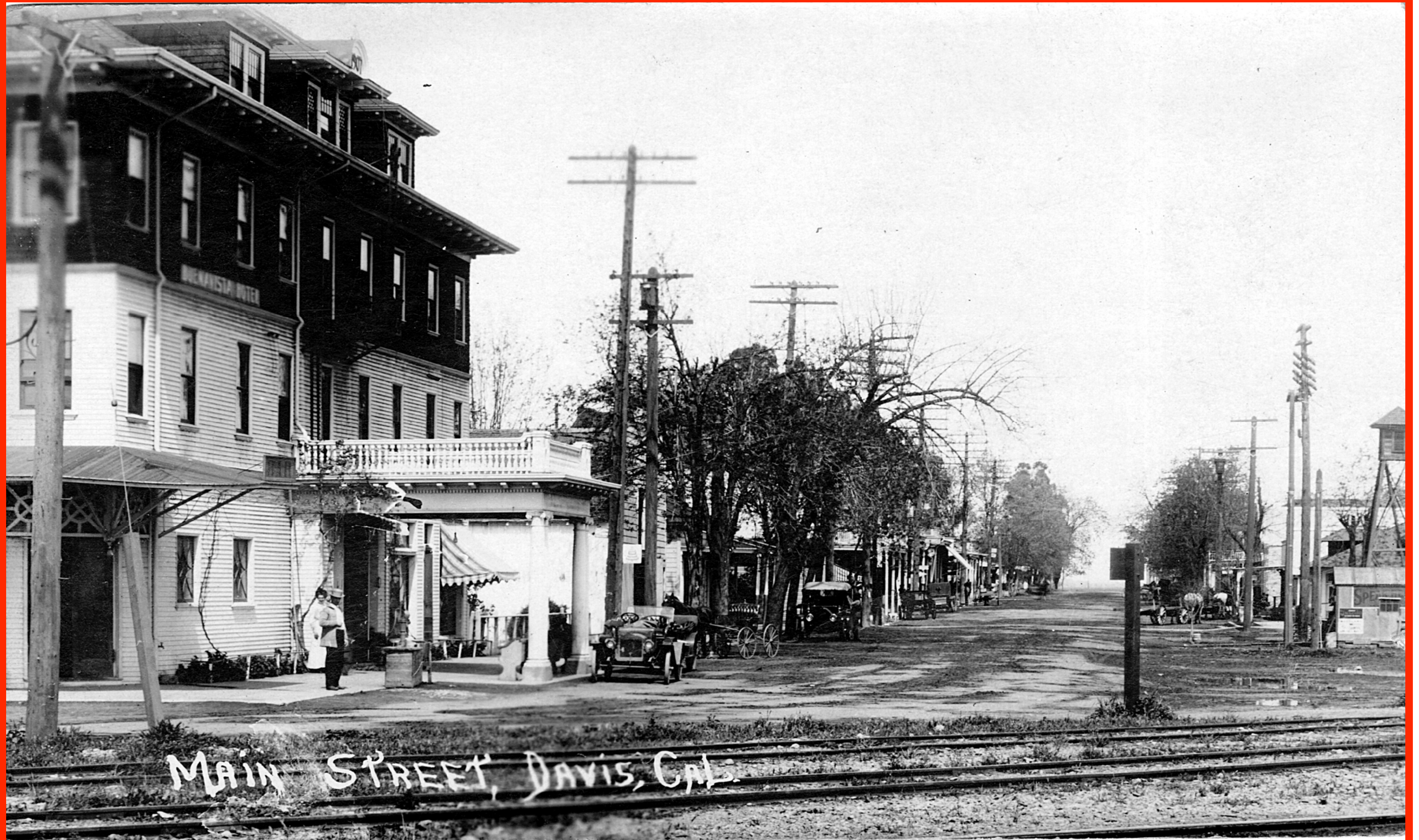
(Picture from U. C. Special Collections and in Larkey, p 58 and Lofland, p 67)

Dresbach is not a direct part of our 1905 story, having left Davisville in 1877 to play the "Big Market" in San Francisco. He made quite a name for himself there and was twice President of the Produce Exchange, passing away in 1901.

While in Davisville, however, he was the first postmaster and is credited with naming the town; was an agent for the land company; and owned a livery stable, a hotel with saloon, and a large grain storage warehouse. In short, he was a major cog in early Davisville business.



He built the Dresbach Mansion (604 2nd St.) for his family in 1875. (Picture from 2003 HR Inventory)



Looking North Up G Street, Circa 1910