



SO: HOW MUCH HISTORY?

So, how much history *did* Davis have and how much *is* left?

The answer is, of course, it depends on your standard or context of comparison. Compared to zero heritage buildings and zero survival, 583 and 330 might appear quite robust and lush.

However, compared to other communities with which Davis competes in many ways, its surviving heritage of buildings seems to me rather modest. This is, though, only my impression. I do not have directly comparable counts.

In the absence of pertinent numbers, another kind of context for comparison is provided by Virginia and Lee McAlester's detailed compilation, *A Field Guide to America's Historic Neighborhoods and House Museums: Western States* (Knopf, 1998, 736 pages).

These authors describe the rich stock of heritage buildings in some fifty California locations. These include such superficially surprising communities as Chico, Eureka, Ukiah, and Martinez.

Davis is not mentioned, nor are Woodland, Auburn, Placerville, Columbia, or Mendocino, among many places that seem to me to have noteworthy, if not large, stocks of heritage buildings. At least, whatever stock there is has not been locally promoted in a way that catches the attention of cosmopolitan preservationists like the McAlesters.

VARIATION IN SURVIVAL/DEMOLITION BY AREA

The question of how much history leads us to the question of where do we find it within the entire town of Davis (shown in Photo 1 circa 1939 and in Photo 2 in September, 1946).

Dividing buildings in terms of the four main early areas of the town, in Table 2 on page 7 we see that in 1945 some 40% of all buildings were in the Downtown, the area bounded by B, Fifth, the tracks, and First Streets.

The rest of the buildings were spread somewhat unevenly among the other three areas:

- University-Rice (First to Fifth, B to A), 20%
- Old North (Fifth to Seventh, B to the tracks), 27%
- Old East (Second to Sixth, the tracks to L), 13%

In Photos 2-4 on pages 13-15 we see many of the Downtown buildings as they appeared in 1946, when Eastman Studios of Susanville, California photographed Davis from an airplane. In order to increase the visibility of structures, the western section of the Downtown is shown in Photo 3 and, with some overlap, the eastern section is in Photo 4. (All the photos contain much detail and are best viewed with a magnifying glass.)

The Eastman Studio photos of 1946 slight the University-Rice area. But another flight in 1953 provides the exceptionally clear view shown in Photo 5 on page 16. It is slightly out of our period, but not enough to distort a depiction of heritage buildings.