

## **DAVIS HISTORY MATTERS**

**The Davis Historical Society Monthly Newsletter  
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### **1. ANDERSON BANK BUILDING SAVED, BUT THEN BURNS**

It is perhaps old news by now, but the big preservation event of the month was nonetheless the Council denial of Jim Kidd's plan to install a new set of windows in the façade of the Anderson Bank Building.

Anyone interested in the details of this episode should consult the News section of our web site ([davishistoricalsociety.org](http://davishistoricalsociety.org)), which has further information and the URLs of the Enterprise coverage.

Ironically, exactly one week later—on Christmas Day, December 25—the building caught fire in what officials characterize as a possible arson. As of this writing the situation and the future of the building are highly uncertain.

### **2. MONTGOMERY ARTIFACTS TO THE HATTIE WEBER**

Mrs. Miriam Montgomery died recently and her daughter has been in Davis settling the estate. DHS members Audrey Hastings and John Lofland arranged with the daughter to have a small number of items donated to the Hattie Weber Museum of Davis.

These include a guest book that Mrs. Montgomery kept of visitors to her home at 425 J Street between December of 1946 and January of 1954, a virtually hand-crafted Quessenberry pill box bearing a three digit phone number, and a small first aid kit given out as an advertisement by Del's Fix-it Shop.

Miriam and Del Montgomery ran Del's Fix-it Shop for many years in Davis, including a period housed in the recently demolished Terminal Hotel Building.

### **3. 319 RUSSELL BLVD DEMOLISHED ON DECEMBER 18**

On December 18<sup>th</sup>, the same day as the Kidd Anderson Building hearing, 319 Russell was demolished. This was a pre-World War II building on a lot that is part of the College Park subdivision.

Inquiry at the City Planning and Building Department found that the permit had been applied for on July 15 and granted on November 12, 2002.

Under the City's current demolition ordinance, no public notice or review aside from the City building official is required for buildings outside the historical, 1917 City boundaries and that are not designated as historic/historic resources.

An improved ordinance has been in the works at the staff level since the demolition of the Terminal Hotel Building, but progress on it has been slow and the Planning Department has apparently assigned it a low priority. DHS member lobbying might be in order, some DHS members have commented.



**Photograph of the Demolished 319 Russell Blvd.**

#### **4. PROGRESS IN DHS ORGANIZATION**

The DHS has made reasonable progress as an organization over its first month since founding on November 17, 2002. Here are highlights:

- Treasurer Dennis Dingemans and President John Lofland opened an account in the name of the DHS, depositing \$350.00 collected at the November 17 formation meeting. An additional \$130 from new members after that date was deposited on December 26. The DHS membership is now 33.
- Through the excellent and free help of the wonderful Davis Community Network people, the DHS now has a web site up and running. The URL is simply [www.davishistoricalsociety.org](http://www.davishistoricalsociety.org). It is still bare-bones, but the basic documents are all there. The Web Site Committee will soon begin work on raising the site's level of sophistication.
- The DHS now has three official listserves, one for the Board, the Members, and the public (called Announce). The first two are functional and the third is in process. Details on are the Listserve page at the DHS web site.

## 5. CHAIR APPOINTMENTS

Here are first chairs of our nine standing committees. More will follow.

Mary Ann Harrison, Chair, the Archives Committee

Heather Caswell, Chair, the Education Committee

Merrily DuPree, Chair, the Preservation and the Email Committees

Lyn Lofland, Chair, the Publications Committee

John Lofland, Chair, the Research Committee

## 5. OP-ED

### **Magical Beliefs, Small Retailers and Preservation by John Lofland**

The opinions expressed in this op-ed are those of the author and are not necessarily the views of *Davis History Matters* or the Davis Historical Society.

In Jim Kidd's recent effort to add out-of-character windows to the Anderson Bank Building, we saw many small business people again and again proclaim that certain kinds of windows were critical to the success of the small retailer.

Curious about this, I went on the web and researched the topic of small business success and failure. This turns out to be a well investigated question on which there are a great many quantitative, scholarly inquires.

Signal to me, while there are some well-identified causes of failure and success, the nature of a store's windows are not among them. Instead, we find lists of causes of these kinds:

- **Poor planning**
- **Lack of capital**
- **partnership problems**
- **Lack of management expertise**
- **Incorrect pricing structure**
- **Inadequate record keeping**
- **Failure to see and take advice**
- **Cash flow problems**
- **Neglect**
- **Marketing problems**

### **Typical Summary List of Causes of Retail Success and Failure**

It could not find even one mention of windows as a cause of failure/success, although at least a few studies surely exist.

How, then, are we to understand the fact that so many small business people believe something for which there no scientific foundation—beliefs, that is, that have a magical quality rather than a reasoned basis?

Let me offer a possible answer that the pioneer anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski developed when he was studying a South Pacific island society. Below, I reproduce a capsule summary of his theory of magical behavior:

***The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski lived among and studied the people who had long lived on islands in the south Pacific Ocean. He observed something intriguing about their behavior when they went fishing.***

***If the people went fishing in the dangerous, turbulent, shark-infested waters beyond the coral reef, they performed specific rituals to invoke magical powers for their safety and protection. But if the people went fishing in the calm waters of a lagoon, they treated the fishing trip as an ordinary event and of no ceremonial or ritualistic significance. Why did they use magic in one situation but not the other?***

***Malinowski concluded that humans are more likely to turn to magical or occult powers when they face situations where the outcome is important and uncertain, beyond their control (as with sharks). Magic was used for important situations when chance or luck matter a lot.***

#### **Summary of the Malinowski Theory of Magical Behavior**

The key variables here are the degree of importance (risk) and the degree of certainty one will be a success. The higher the risk and the lower the certainty of success, the more likely that people will develop magical beliefs and rituals.

Small business activity tends to fit this profile: high risk, low certainty of success. Hence, it is a situation conducive to the growth of such magical beliefs as “ windows are critical to success.”

However, there is much positive to be said for magical beliefs and behavior despite their irrationality. Believing certain things and performing certain actions can serve to control anxiety. In so helping a person keep her or himself together, magic can be helpful even if the magical beliefs and actions themselves have no impact on the success sought.

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