

7

D Street***Post-War Scars Amid Pre-War Splendor***

D Street is notable for its contrasts between very attractive pre-World War II homes and early post-war cheap apartments. Such contrasts are seen on other Old North streets, so D Street hardly has a corner on post-war scars amid pre-war splendor. The point, instead, is that these contrasts are particularly eye-catching on this street because it has so many outstanding, classic homes. Thus, despite the scars, D Street has enormous charm.

Bungalows on D Street

D ties with G Street in each having six of the Old North's 32 bungalows (19% of the total for each). One of these is in the 500 block, at 512 D. Four are in the 600 block, at 602, 612, 630, and 648 D. The sixth is at the north end of D, at 501 Seventh.

Three of the six appear in the city's inventory of historical resources and are written up below: 602 and 648 D, and 501 Seventh.

503 Fifth Street (The Morse Home)[†]

The HEC and ARG historical surveys describe 503 Fifth as a "one story wooden vernacular cottage . . . topped by a hipped roof. The house is severely unornamented, but the proportions . . . of the slanted bay derive from Italianate sources" (HEC, 167-168; ARG, 117-118).

The HEC surveyors think that this house is "a fine example of the vernacular tendency to use one or two fragments of a high art style to enrich an essentially utilitarian structure" (HEC, 168).

D Street Residences, Residents, Rentals

Employing the same seven points of profile used for G, F, and E Streets, these are D's population and housing statistics.

1. RESIDENCES. D Street ranks:

- 1) fourth among streets in numbers of residential units (41 of 281 or 15%),
- 2) third in percentage of signature homes (28 of 146 or 19%), and
- 3) third in percentage of lot-dominant structures (35 of 182 or 19%).

D's lower ranking on residences is largely due to the relative absence of apartments directly at the intersection of D with Seventh Street.

2. TINY/HIDDEN ABODES. D ranks next to last in tiny and/or hidden abodes, having only 8% of them (5 of 60) and exceeding only B Street, which has 2%.

3. RESIDENTS. Paralleling its smaller number of residences, D Street has relatively fewer residents, ranking fourth among the streets, with 15% of the population (89 of 609 people).

4. RESIDENTS IN SIGNATURE HOMES. D ranks third in the percentage of residents who live in a signature home or in an ancillary abode on the same property (63 of 89, which is 71%).

5. OWNER-OCCUPIED SIGNATURE HOMES AND RESIDENCES. D is in the middle of the spectrum on the percentage of all its residences that are owner-occupied signature homes. At 29% (12 of 41), it ranks third below B at 78% and G at 34%.

6. OWNER-OCCUPIED VERSUS RENTAL SIGNATURE HOMES. Focusing only on signature homes, 43% of them (12 of 28) are owner-occupied, ranking it fifth, (but still close to C, G and E at 44, 48, and 53%, in that order). Stating this generalization in the reverse: *D Street ranks second in percentage of its signature homes that are rentals.*

7. ABSENTEE LANDLORDS OF RENTAL SIGNATURE HOMES. Focusing in further and only on rented signature homes, we find that D ranks next to last among streets in terms of landlords who give out-of-Davis addresses on their county tax roll listing (4 of 16, which is 25%).

Estimated to have been constructed in 1896, 503 Fifth may be the oldest structure in the Old North, as well as among the oldest in all of Davis.

The HEC survey reports that "this was the first Davis . . . home of John Haussler," an early settler and rancher whose "family lived in the house until the early 1920s In 1929 the house was bought by Joe V. Morse and his bride Ona. Joe Morse did construction work on the UC Davis campus and eventually became a foreman" (HEC, 169). Mrs. Ona Morse lived in the house into the 1990s.

The house was in a serious state of disrepair after Mrs. Morse's death in the early 1990s, but, the ARG surveyors report it "has been extensively remodeled and renovated" in recent years (ARG, 118).

7.1. 503 Fifth Street (The Morse Home).



516 D Street

516 D (Fig. 7.2) was, for some years, owned by Mary Jane and George Vansell. In the early 1980s an elderly Mrs. Vansell told me that this tiny house was built at the rear of this lot as a temporary structure and in order to leave room at the center of the lot for an ordinary house the family planned to build later. However, she laughed, the family never seemed to get around to building that large new home on this lot.

Mrs. Vansell herself, with daughter Jane, appears in Fig. 7.2. The year is 1922 and we know from the Sanborn maps of this area (Fig. 3.10) that the lots in this block to the north and northeast of 516 D are vacant, as the picture suggests about the northeast. In the distance, through the young almond orchard, one can glimpse 616 E (the vague white spot to the left), which is the only house on the west side of the 600 block of E Street at that time.



7.2. Mary Jane Vansell and daughter Jane photographed in front of 516 D Street in 1922. (Courtesy Jane Zakarian)

528 D Street (The Warner Home)[†]

The HEC historical surveyors label 528 D (Fig. 7.3) a “Colonial Revival” structure and a “superb example of 1930s interpretation of American Colonial imagery” (HEC, 213). However, other interpreters have thought it best described as “modified Tudor in style” and report that it “has not been changed structurally since it was built. Except for the updated kitchen, the house is completely original” (University Farm Circle, 1996, 5).

7.3 528 D Street
(The Warner
Home).



“Built in 1929 as a wedding gift for the newly-married” William and Fern Warner, 528 D “remained in the Warner family for over 60 years” (University Farm Circle, 1996, 5).

The house “presents to the street a collage of shallow gabled forms of various pitches. The composition is bisected by a brick chimney. The primary gable sweeps low on the left side to provide a wing wall pierced with an arch. There is a fan motif in wood relief over the entrance” (HEC, 213).

The ARG surveyors judged this house to be an “important part of the streetscape along this block of D Street” and as “one of the strongest Colonial Revival facades in this part of Davis” (ARG, 287).

537 D Street†

537 D (Fig. 7.4) is the Old North’s sole example of the “Moderne Style” of architecture, as well as one of the few examples of it in all of Davis (the Varsity Theater at 616 Second being another).

Built in 1940, 537 D has “nicely crafted, fixed, wrap around windows in the International Style,” which is a major variation on Moderne (ARG, 289). Indeed, it is the wrap around windows that create the illusion of the roof floating at the house corners that most strongly convey its Moderne character. In addition, the house is “L-shaped in plan, the entry is to the south of the projecting portion of the L. A flat cantilevered roof covers the entry” (ARG, 289).

7.4. 537 D Street.



510 Sixth Street: First Church of Christ, Scientist

The modern church now seen at the southeast corner of Sixth and D streets is a mid-1980s single-structure blending of two previous buildings, one a church and the other a combined Sunday School and reading room.

The original church, completed in 1925, was bungalow-inspired in style (Fig. 7.5).

7.5. 510 Sixth Street, the First Church of Christ, Scientist Davis before the mid-1980s remodel into the building now seen at the southeast corner of D and Sixth. (Courtesy First Church of Christ, Scientist Davis)



601 D Street†

601 D is an owner-occupied, brick -veneered home constructed in 1938 or 1939 (Fig. 7.6). Due to its architectural style and setting, many consider it to be one of the more attractive homes in the area.

ARG surveyors classify both 601 D and 528 D as Colonial Revival in style (ARG, 38). In the case of 601 D, this classification is prompted by the “well proportioned Palladian window on the front elevation,” which is “one of the few Colonial Revival houses in Davis with a Palladian window” (ARG, 291-2).

In addition, 601 D has “a gable roof that runs parallel to the street” combined with “two cross gables [that] intersect the main gable” (ARG, 291).

7.6 601 D Street.



Decorative fleur-de-lys type features appear above the windows in the two cross gable sections (and a third fleur-de-lys type feature appears on the back of the house). A concrete patio

with a low brick wall marks the main entry of the house and metal awnings overhang the front and side entries.

601 D is one of the few homes in Davis with a large basement. It also has a detached two-car, brick garage accessed from the alley.

602 D Street (The Grady Home)[†]

602 D “was built in 1913 by Robert and Emma Grady. Mr. Grady was employed . . . at the university. His wife, Emma, worked as a bookkeeper in the 1920s for the Nickerson Ice and Fuel Company. The house was sold in 1963 . . . but Mrs. Grady [rented it] until her death in 1967. It has since been used as a rental” (HEC, 215-216).

The HEC surveyors think this house (Fig. 7.7) is significant as a “strong architectural contribution as a middle class house” (HEC, 216). That is, it is a modest house built for people with modest means that nonetheless has some elegant design features.

These features include a “highly unusual decorative configuration in the front gable. This theme is reflected in the facade window and the consistency and quality of the design treatment suggest a careful designer Heavy shaped brackets support the porch gable, echoing the smaller forms used in the pediment ornament. A large front facade window, to the north of the porch, reflects the pediment pattern. The beam ends lift slightly at the outer ends, suggesting a slight Japanese influence” (HEC, 215).

7.7. 602 D Street
(The Grady
Home).



612 D Street[†]

Likely built between 1915 and 1920, 612 D (Fig. 7.8) is “Craftsman in detailing, [and] has a broad gable roof running perpendicular to the street. Heavy brackets ‘hold’ the roof overhang. The porch runs the entire width of the house and has a parapet railing. The porch support consists of two vertical members at either end, with one supporting the roof bracket. The overall character of the house is somewhat Swiss Chalet” (ARG,295-296).

The ARG surveyors remark that “this house contributes to the overall character of the neighborhood . . . and is a strong feature of this residential block” (ARG, 296).

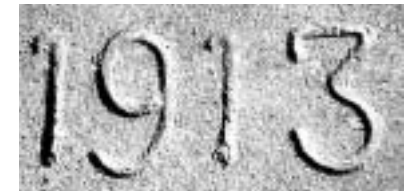
7.8. 612 D Street.



The Year “1913” in the sidewalk at 613 D Street

As described in Chs. 3 and 4, the sidewalks in the five blocks of Bowers Addition were laid in 1913. The “1913” pressed into the wet cement at 613 D (Fig. 7.9) is one of the two surviving indications of the year. (The other is at 623-25 G.)

7.9. The year of starting Bowers Addition and laying the sidewalk pressed into the cement in front of 613 D.



Water Systems: Pedder and The City of Davis

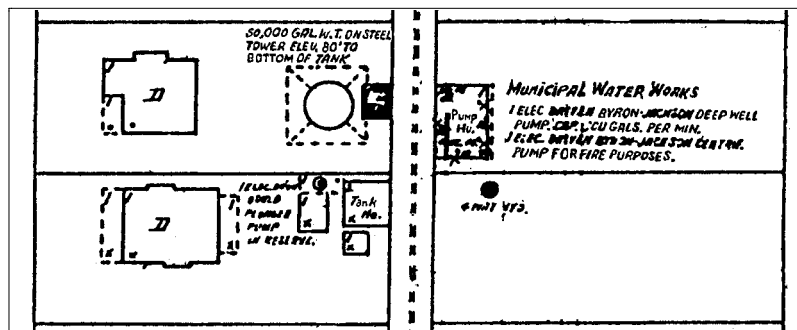
Before Davis’ incorporation in 1917, people got their water from their own wells or from one of two privately operated small water companies.

One of those companies was owned and operated by A. R. Pedder, the person who managed Bowers Addition at the level of selling properties and contracting to build a limited number of homes. In order to make lots more attractive to builders, in the mid-1910s, he developed a water delivery system to serve the five blocks of the Addition.

This system centered on a well sunk at the rear of 612 D Street and a 50,000 gallon capacity tank on an 80-foot tower next to it at the rear of 616 D (Fig. 7.10).

The other water system, which was larger and provided service to the main part of Davis to the south, was apparently unreliable. After the incorporation of Davis in 1917, public demand for a municipal water system grew and a bond issue to fund it passed by a 3 to 1 vote on November 4, 1919 (DE, 11-7-19).

The city began this new Municipal Water Works by buying both the existing private systems, including the 616 D lot with the water tank and tower *and* the bungalow on it (Fig. 7.11).



7.10. 1921 Sanborn map of 616 D (the top left lot), 612 D (bottom left), 617 E (top right), and 611 E (bottom left).

Pedder built this bungalow in 1918 (or so) for a single man who was paid to live there and maintain Pedder's water tower and pump. For this reason, the internal layout of this house was distinctive in not having a bedroom. Instead, just behind the living room, there was an alcove in which a folding "Murphy bed" was installed.

After buying the Pedder system, the city made 616 D and adjacent lots the center of the new Municipal Water Works. This house continued to be the required residence of whomever managed the water system (DE, 11-5-20).

7.11 616 D Street, bungalow built to house the manager of the Pedder water system.



After the purchase, Pedder's well at the rear of 612 D was found to be inadequate for the needs of the now much-enlarged water system. The two lots across the alley at 611 E and 617 E were purchased for a new well and pump house (Fig. 7.10). This original City Well 1 was housed in a red brick building to the rear of 617 E and connected to the water tower on the other side of the alley.

7.12 1946 aerial view of the Davis water tower. Fifth Street runs across the bottom of the picture. The future Eighth Street runs across the top. D Street, on the left, becomes a footpath at Seventh. (Excerpt, Eastman photo 4704, Courtesy UC Davis Special Collections)



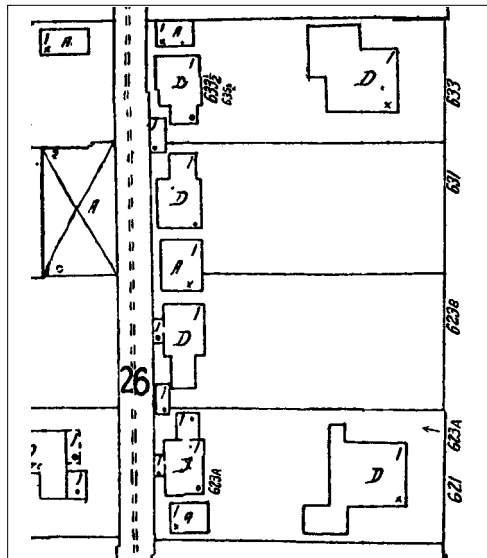
With the drilling of the new well seen today toward the E Street end of 617 E, the brick pump house and tower were removed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The tower was a quite conspicuous landmark for several decades of the town period and is fondly remembered by many Davis old-timers (Fig. 7.12).

621 through 633 D Street: Irwin Court

In the 1920s, prominent local rancher and influential Davis citizen Lynn Irwin purchased the four lots at 621 through 633 D for the purpose of creating a cluster of small, rental cottages and homes. Built slowly, the cluster eventually achieved the configuration shown in the 1945 Sanborn map reproduced in Fig. 7.13. Planned with an open central lawn around which cottages were clustered, the complex came to be called “Irwin Court.”

7.13. 1945 Sanborn Map of Irwin Court, 621, 623-25, 627-29 and 631-33 D Street. The dotted double line indicates the alley between C and D Streets. The rectangle containing an “X” is Pedder’s construction shed at 632 C. The cottages behind 621 and 633 D are still standing.



In Fig. 7.14, we get a partial view of Irwin Court from the vantage point of standing beside 621 D and looking north across the lawn toward 631 D and the person standing in front of the door of that house. In the background to the right, we see the apartment house on the northeast corner of D and Seventh streets.

After Irwin’s death in 1957, the four lots comprising the Court were divided among members of his family. The family member who inherited the two middle lots sold them to a public-spirited, local real estate agent and developer who, despite

neighbor objections, demolished the cottages and erected 623-25 and 627-29 D.

7.14. Home at 633 D Street as viewed from the “front” of 621 D Street and across the open lawn of Irwin Court, late 1950s. (Courtesy Isabel Sparks)



I think the most positive thing one can say about these two apartment buildings is that preservationist consciousness has risen such that they could not be built today. Along with some others in the Old North, 623-25 and 627-29 give us compelling examples of what to avoid.

621 and 633 D Street

Knowing that there was once an Irwin Court allows us to make sense of 621 and 633 D, the two houses that historically flanked the open lawn of the complex.

Both now appear odd because neither fronts the street. From the sidewalk, we look at a side of each house because the front of each looks toward what used to be the lawn of the Court. Each home now faces the side of an unattractive apartment building. So, these two homes, in effect, lost their front yards when this community-minded developer inserted his boxes.

630 D Street†

630 D Street (Fig. 7.15) is one of the “eight little bungalows” described in Ch. 3 as having been built by A. R. Pedder in the Old North and the Davis Downtown over the 1910s (Sherwin 1986).

The ARG surveyors characterize 630 D as a “Craftsman style” bungalow with a “gable roof perpendicular to the street.

The porch gable echoes the line of the main gable . . . Thin posts support the slight arch of the porch” (ARG, 297-298).

These surveyors also appraise this house as a “significant contributor to the streetscape” (ARG, 298).

7.15. 630 D Street.



642 D Street

642 D Street was built on this double lot (one of the few such lots in the Old North) in 1938 by James Duthie, contractor, who lived just across the alley from this site, at 637 E Street (also a double lot).

Given the physical ease with which the soon-to-be occupants of 642 D—Mr. and Mrs. Hubbs—could complain to him about his materials or workmanship after they moved in, I think we can assume that he put 642 D together quite properly.

The current owners showed me the construction contract that had been passed on to them by the previous owners. With their permission I reproduce it in Fig. 7.16. I do so because I find the trust these parties had in one another to be quite poignant.

The Hubbs were likely undertaking the biggest purchase they would ever make, but they could begin it with a handwritten agreement covering one page. What makes us pause, of course, is the contrast between such an agreement today, replete with specialists and complex contract prose, and this one in 1938.

Along with the contract and original plans for the house, the current owners also received a photograph of it, which I reproduce in Fig. 7.17. The text on the back of the photograph is

quoted in the caption. It, also, is a poignant fragment of a bygone America.

TELEPHONE 253	637 E STREET
JAS. DUTHIE CONTRACTOR AND BUILDER DAVIS, CALIFORNIA	
April 19 th 1938	
I propose to build a home for Mr and Mrs O W Hubbs to meet all $\frac{1}{4}$ of minimum requirements, and to plans and specifications purchased from Guy L Rosebrook for the sum of \$5800.00 Five thousand eight hundred dollars	
House to be brick veneer (used brick)	
Garage to be brick "	
No tile wainscote, floor and base only	
$\frac{5}{16} \times 2$ select plain white strip oak floor	
Electric fixtures	50.00
Finish hardware	60.00
no Window shades	
no Sidewalks	
Windows cleaned allowance \$10.00	
Metal corners in all plaster angles	
Putch creek gravel in all foundations	
Shingles $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches to weather	
Basement excavation 25 ft x 23 ft	
No electric wiring except as shown on plans	
120.000 BTU Furnace	
Jas Duthie	

7.16. Contract for the construction of 642 D Street. (Courtesy Steve Tracy)

7. 17. 642 D Street. The text on the back of this photograph reads: "January, 1940, Mrs. James Lewis Rock while visiting in Davis, Cal." (Courtesy Steve Tracy)



648 D Street†

ARG surveyors judged 648 D Street (Fig. 7.18) to be “one of the more interesting bungalows in the immediate area. The design of the piers at the porch is especially significant The front porch occupies two thirds of the elevation and is supported by squat piers on masonry pedestals A series of gable roofs are perpendicular to the street with the attic gable having a decorative vent” (ARG, 291-292).

Likely “constructed between 1910 and 1920,” the house “contributes to the overall character of this end of D Street” (ARG, 292).

7.18. 648 D Street.



501 Seventh Street[†]

Among the many bungalows in the stock of early Davis homes, ARG surveyors labeled 501 Seventh (Fig. 7.19) one of “the best examples” of the genre (ARC, 40).

Although quintessentially a bungalow, the form is also unusual and the “bracketed extension” . . . over the “large scale tripartite window on the ground floor” may be “a remnant of the original roof” (HEC, 177). That is, this was likely, in the surveyor’s view, a one story house to which the second story has been added—albeit in a consistent style. However, Davis residents in their 80s and 90s to whom I have mentioned this possibility all vigorously protest that it was always a two-story house.

The historical surveyors additionally believed that other features of 501 Seventh were probably “alterations and additions” and mention “the sleeping porches over the ground floor entry porches” as such (ARG, 123).

In these ways, 501 Seventh is a “fine example of the visual changes that can occur to a structure over time” (HEC, 178).

Recall that the Bowers Acres strips of one acre lots were laid out along the north side of Seventh Street and put up for sale in late 1913. 501 Seventh’s estimated year of construction is 1915. It is therefore among the very few homes surviving from the earliest period (HEC, 178).

7.19. 501
Seventh Street.





Like F Street, D Street ended at Seventh for the bulk of Davis history and was only "cut through" after World War II.

And also like F but less intensively, D Street access to Eighth Street creates traffic. For a period in the early 1990s, some D Street residents worked for traffic-calming measures of several sorts— such as one or more speed bumps. For complex reasons, though, no such devices were ever put in place.