

Hattie Weber Museum tells our stories, Davis Enterprise 11/13/21



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Special to The Enterprise

The Hattie Weber Museum documents Davis’ history. Whether you are a lifetime Davis resident or a student who is eager to move to a big city upon graduation, you are part of the city of Davis’ history. To begin to immerse yourself in our local history, let’s first take a look at the history of the building in which the history museum is located.

The door of the Hattie Weber Museum of Davis has the word “library” on it. The word has been confusing many prospective visitors. In fact, the boutique museum has an inextricable historical connection to the first library in Davis. The story began with a club called the Bachelor Girls.

Before the Information Age, a library would be the first place to go if someone wanted to obtain information. Between the 1850s and the 1880s, the first settlers were getting themselves situated in Davisville (our city’s original name). The pioneers understandably wanted to organize a reading room for Davisville residents to borrow books and find information.

A small reading room on G Street was born. Then the growing need for a bigger and more formal library was recognized. However, there was only one problem — lack of funds. The solution would soon come with the formation of a club consisting of eighteen dedicated unmarried women.

On Feb. 22, 1909, the Davis Bachelor Girls was founded for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a free library in Davis. The namesake of our history museum, Hattie Weber, was one of the founding members of the Bachelor Girls’ club.

The Bachelor Girls organized dances, spinning bees and other other events to raise funds. In the 1920s spinning bees, the Bachelor Girls were probably making yarns to sell. (Spinning bees were American Revolution Era public events in which women would hand make cloth to boycott English textiles.

In other words, spinning bees existed in Colonial America, not long before the United States would be established as an independent country. History is fascinating, isn't it?). The dedicated young women also conducted business canvassing to raise funds to eventually build the library building originally located on F Street.

In 1910, two Bachelor Girls' charter members raised sufficient funds to purchase a lot where the very first Davis library would be built the following year. Hattie Weber was appointed the first librarian. At the time, the library was officially named the Davis Free Library. The lot was located on Oak Street, which was later renamed F Street.

Our museum is in the original building of the first Davis library. The building was moved from F Street to C Street on wheels in 1988. Yes, you read it right! How cool was that? As a matter of fact, you are welcome to come to our museum and check out the picture that captured the moment when our building was on wheels. The picture is located in the exhibit called the Davis Public Library.

Now let us go back to the history of our history museum a little bit. In 1923, the lot of the Davis Free Library was sold to the County of Yolo. As a result, the Davis Free Library was now called the Yolo County Free Library. On February 9, 1923, after the Davis Free Library became the Yolo County Free Library, the Davis Bachelor Girls decided to become the Davis Library Club.

The Davis Library Club would serve as a fundraising body for the Yolo County Free Library for many decades to come. On May 13, 1959, Friends of the Davis Library was established to expand the Davis Library Club's fundraising efforts.

On Dec. 17, 1968, the current Yolo County Library, Mary L. Stephens branch, was built to accommodate the need of an ever-growing local population. The building that hosted the first Davis library became a teen center. In 1988, the building was "rescued" before it would be demolished.

This is the history of our Hattie Weber History Museum. We welcome you into our museum to learn more about who came before us and what happened before you and I moved to Davis. We are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays. We will soon have a new exhibit that honors three former Davis residents who went through the Japanese Internment during World War II. We hope to see you soon!

— Lulu Zhang graduated UC Davis with a bachelor's degree in history. Her passion for history and writing led her to volunteer at the Hattie Weber Museum, where she hopes she can spark more interest about the museum among Davis residents and UCD students.