

Along 5th and Russell:

Reading the Davis Landscape

By Annie Miyadi

*diff. tiles or steeply
from the rest*

fairly traditional steeply top

*old geometric
details for a
Christie church*

*children's
top throughout often
v. worn plastic*

*very well mowed + tended
lawn*

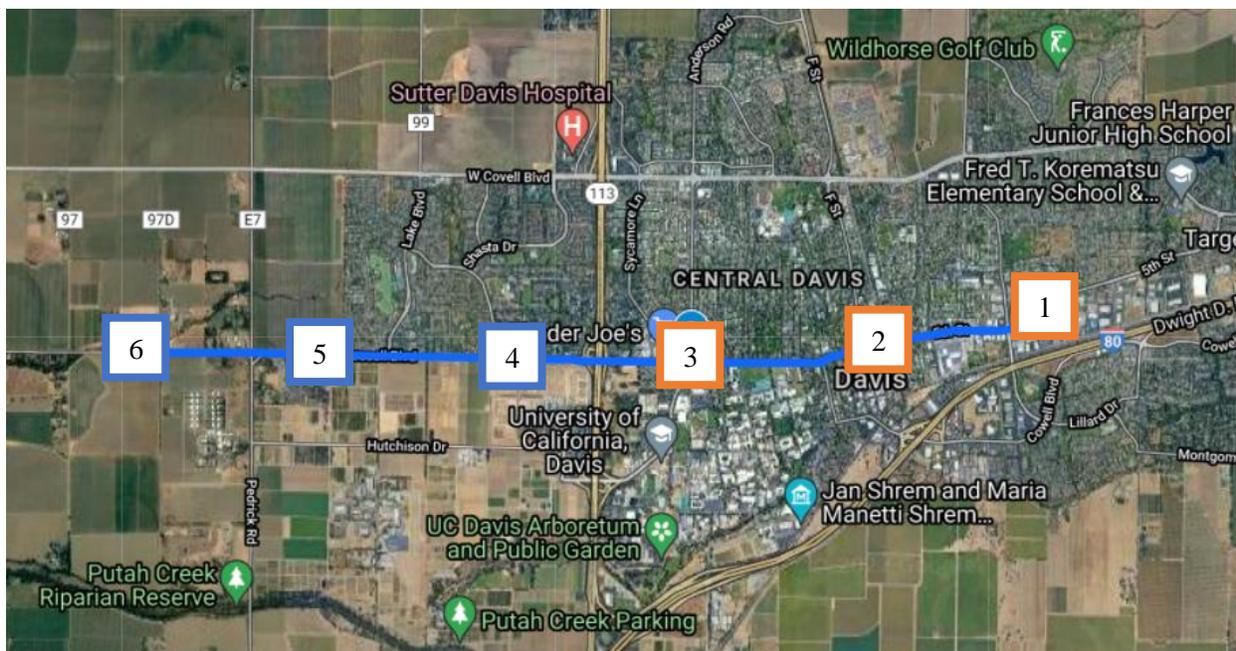
children's top



Introduction

To transect a space is to travel it with an engaged and open mind, sketching and observing details. When I plotted the course of my journey, classes were entirely online to combat Omicron. I was trapped indoors and alone. Amid this social and physical isolation, I decided that I would use my transect to familiarize myself with Davis. My transect is divided into two halves -- this is the suburban portion (stops 1-3), travelling westward along Russell/5th Street.

I began by traversing my chosen route and stopping once every mile to sketch and take down detailed field notes. I leveraged questions I posited during these stops to provide a launching point for further research. My research goal was to be able to look at the Davis of the present, and to point to the past developments which have lead up to it. At my first stop at the Davis police station, queries about the structure's origin date drew me into the (occasionally turbulent) history of the Davis police force and the expansion of the city's easternmost boundaries. During my second stop, at the intersection of 5th and G Street I noticed an office under construction for Wrigley. Curious about its possible connections to the candy company I eagerly dove into research which connected Wrigley's contemporary presence with the city's rich agricultural past. My third stop was the intersection of Anderson and Russell Boulevard, cheek-to-cheek with the Segundo dorms. From this geographical relationship I sought to explore how UC Davis and the city of Davis have interfaced and connected with one another through space and time. In many of the photographs and maps I have added annotations and highlights of pertinent details for clarity's sake.



Stop 1: the Davis Police Station

Part 1

When I stepped foot onto the grounds of the Davis police station I was shocked by its subtly complex architecture and atmosphere of tranquility. Upon first glance, I assumed that this iteration of the Davis police station was constructed during the 1970's, based on its formal similarity to my 70's elementary school. But the past of both the structure and the officers it represents is far more complex than it initially seems.

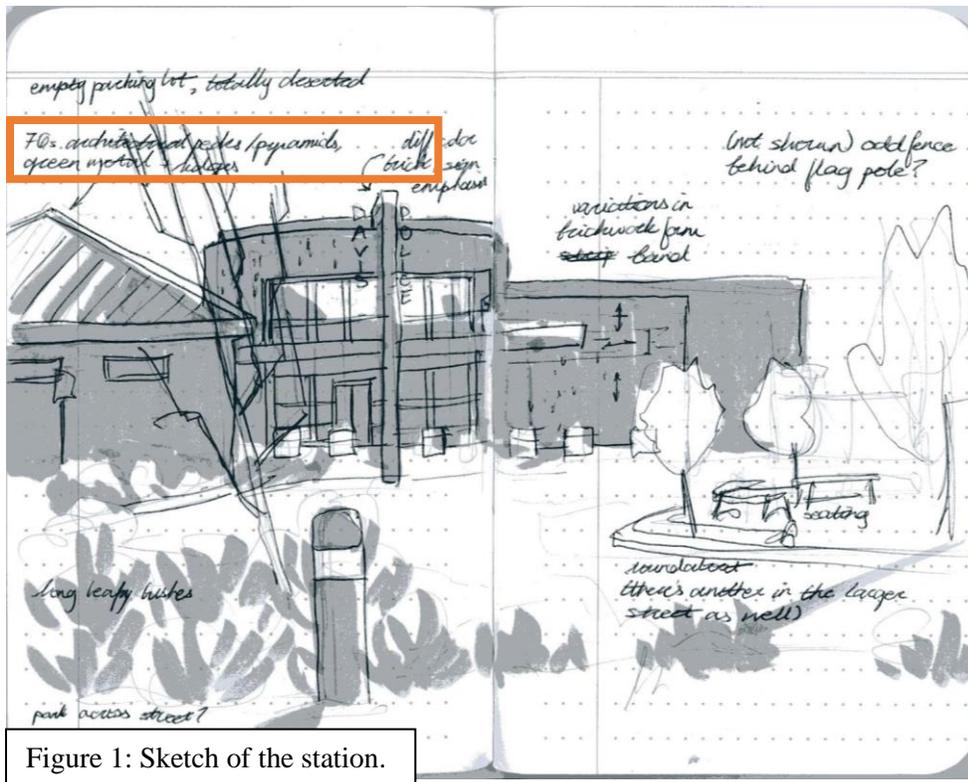


Figure 1: Sketch of the station.

Part 2: Site Changes

Law enforcement in Davis began with the town's incorporation in 1917, with the appointment of a city marshal and the first police facility standing on Oak Street. It was known as a "plank jail". The first full-time and paid police officer was hired in 1927. (Davis Police Department 2013 Annual Report, 2013) Figure 2 is a photograph of Davis's first chief of police, Floyd Gattrell a year later. (Lofland and Haig, 2000, pg. 62) The Oak Street facility was not to last. A 1937 letter sent by the Department of Social Welfare was deemed unfit for human habitation and a violation of state sanitation laws. (Williams, 1937) So in 1938 the Depression-era Works Progress Administration replaced it with an all-in-one building from which housed city hall, the fire, and police departments at 226 F Street. (Figure 3-7)

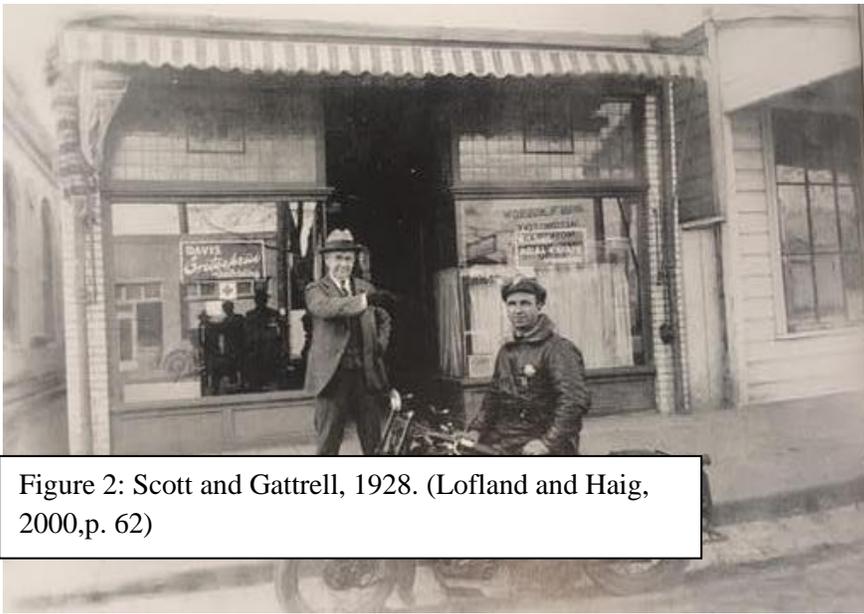


Figure 2: Scott and Gattrell, 1928. (Lofland and Haig, 2000,p. 62)

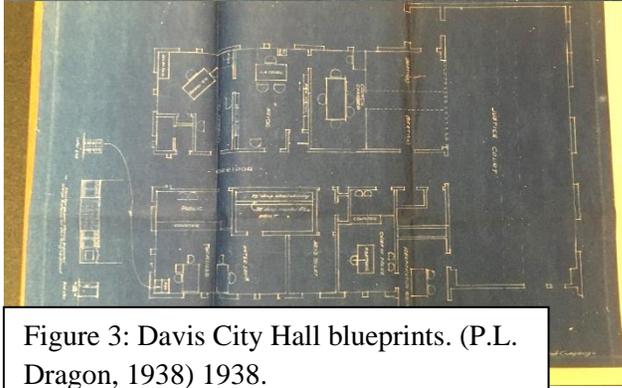
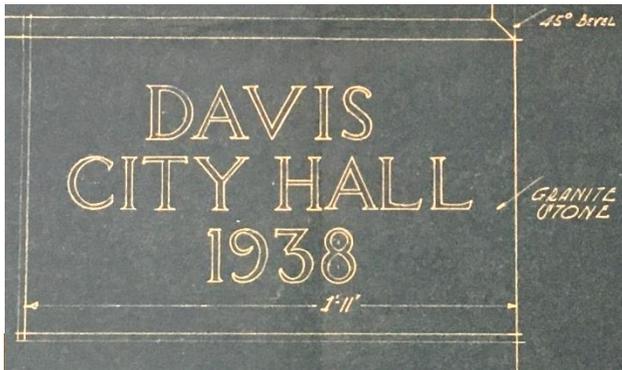


Figure 3: Davis City Hall blueprints. (P.L. Dragon, 1938) 1938.

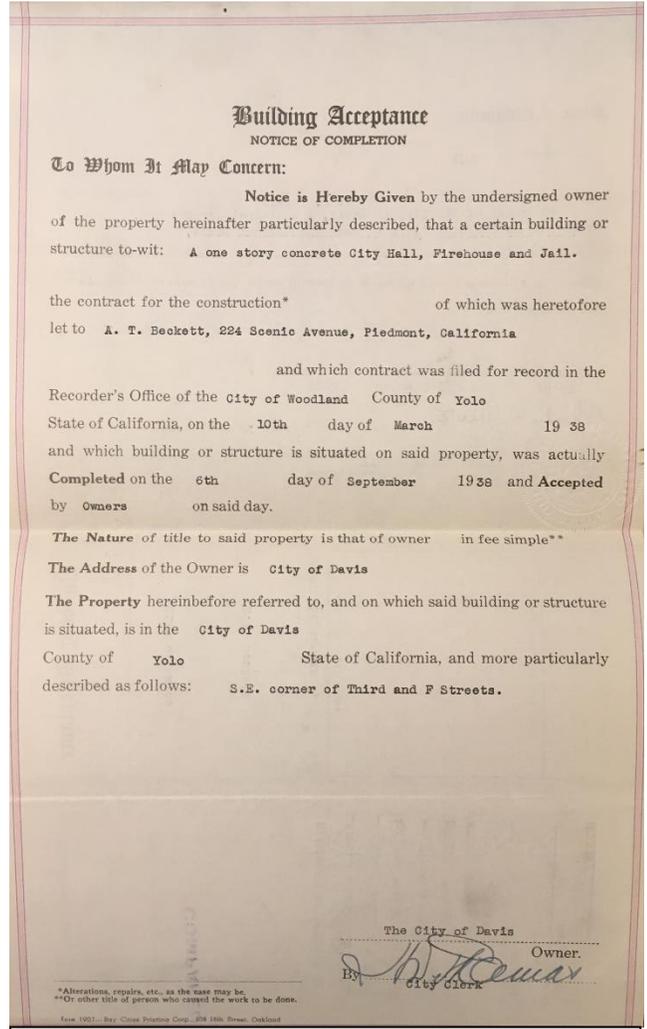


Figure 4: Building Acceptance. September 6, 1938.

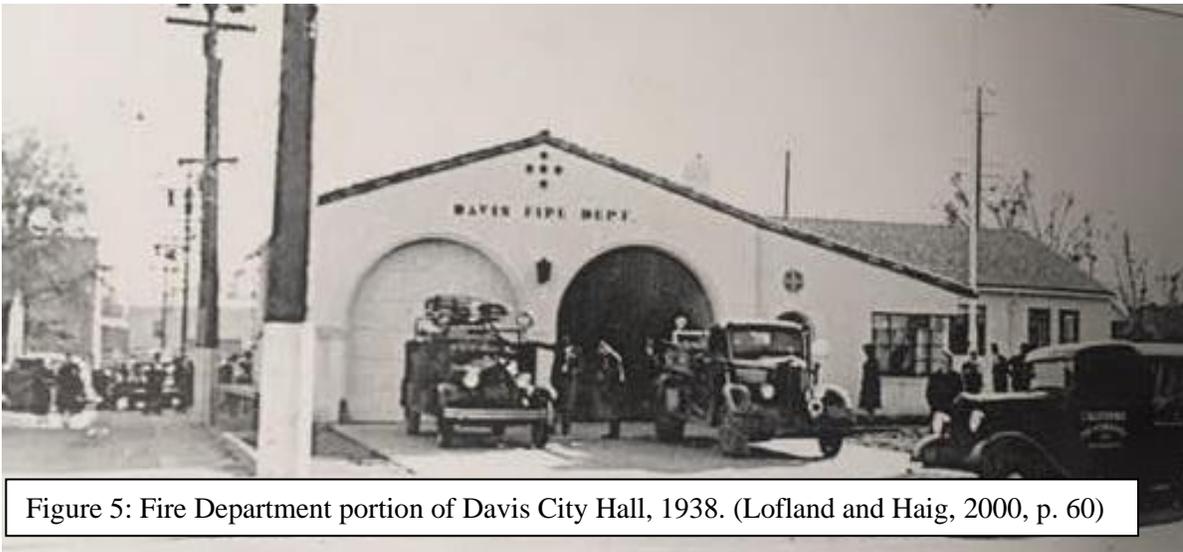


Figure 5: Fire Department portion of Davis City Hall, 1938. (Lofland and Haig, 2000, p. 60)

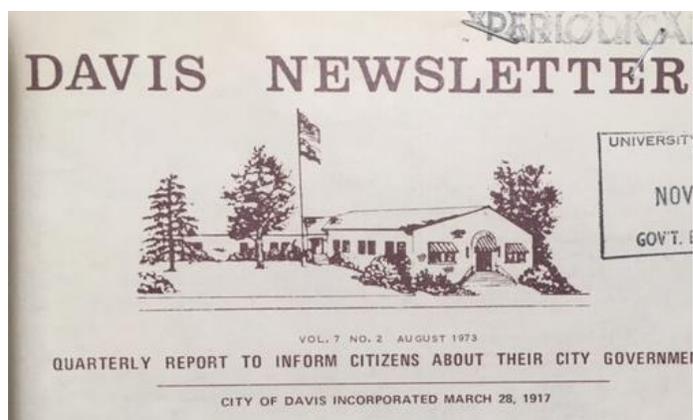


Figure 6: Davis Newsletter 1973, illustration of the city hall.



Figure 7: Davis Police Station and other city facilities, c. 1982. (Lofland, 2016, p. 30)



Figure 8: Photo of the station today.

This facility was used for multiple decades until city functions could no longer be contained there. The resulting split of municipal functions resulted in the erection of the police station I visited on 5th Street. The Davis Local Wiki vaguely places the 5th Street police station's construction in "the early 2000's". ("Davis Police Department - Davis", n.d.) The municipal almanac "Davis From The Inside Out", published in 2000, does not mention it, which caused me to place its completion was after that. According to "Davis: Transformation" by John Lofland, the station was constructed in 2001 by the Indigo Architecture firm (Lofland, 2016, p. 30; "Our Projects," n.d) A careful examination of microfiche from 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 was fruitless, but all evidence points to its likely construction in this period.

Part 3: City Expansion

My hypothesized date for the construction of the Davis police station is further corroborated by a careful examination of the expansion of Davis's city limits. For Figures 9 through 13 (and throughout this paper) my transect route is traced in blue, and city limits appear in yellow.

Figure 12 is a historical blueprint of Davis which essentially ends the city at fourth street—my transect runs through fifth. (“Davis”, n.d.) Logically this makes sense. Davis began as a whistlestop town (initially known as “Davisville”) which would have begun at first street. As the town expanded, new streets would have been added to the North, increasing in number. This grid-based approach is common in American city development, and corresponds to the meridian-base approach of the Jeffersonian grid. Though the city's landmass did not expand until the 40's, by 1933 more buildings were added. (Figure 13, “Official Map of the City of Davis,” 1933) By that point, 5th Street (appearing in blue) was built.

Figure 9 is a development phasing map of Davis from the mid-70's which indicates that the probable location of the police station was a part of the “urban reserve”, a term which is undefined and ambiguous. It also includes a road named “Wilson Boulevard” which ran between Mace Boulevard and Pole Line Road and seems to no longer exist. (“City of Davis development phasing,” 1975) My hypothesis about this “urban reserve” label is that it indicates that the land was intended to be held back for long term later development, not a part of the shorter-term phase one and two they indicated here. The archival specialist helping me explained that the city of Davis intentionally restricts the outward expansion of the city in order to keep property values high, a view reinforced by the numerous articles I read in the Davis Enterprise contesting new construction. Keeping areas in reserve for the future would have been a part of a long-term approach towards development, and very in-character for the city.

Figure 10 is a section of a 1984 map of Davis. This closeup shows that the “urban reserve” has been developed into the Rancho Yolo Mobile Home Park, whose memorable concentric circles remain a distinguishable aerial landmark. The map also indicates that the city limits end only a couple of blocks away from where the park ends. (“Zoning and house numbering map, City of Davis, California,” 1984) This is roughly where the police station stands today.

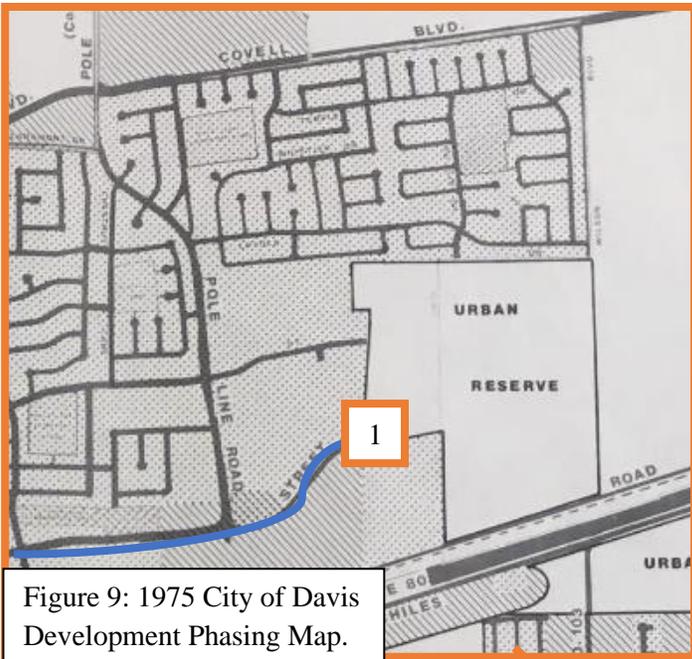


Figure 9: 1975 City of Davis Development Phasing Map.

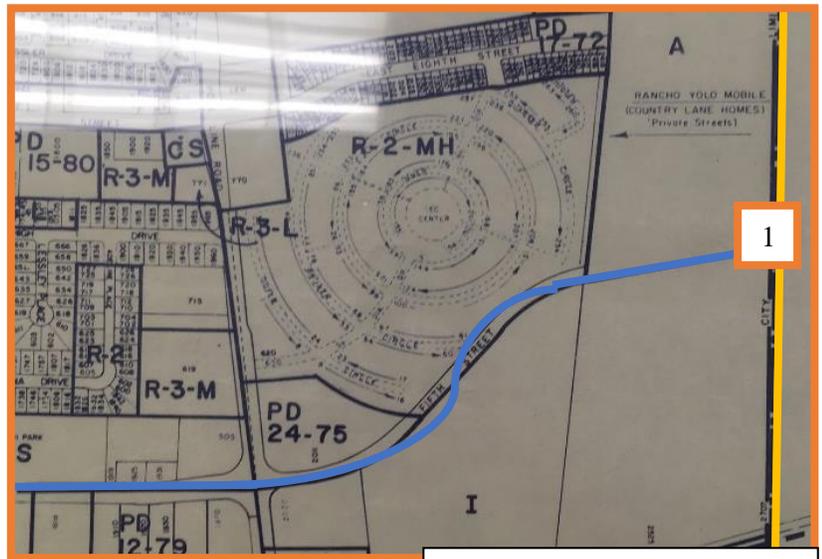


Figure 10: 1984 Davis Zoning and House Numbering Map

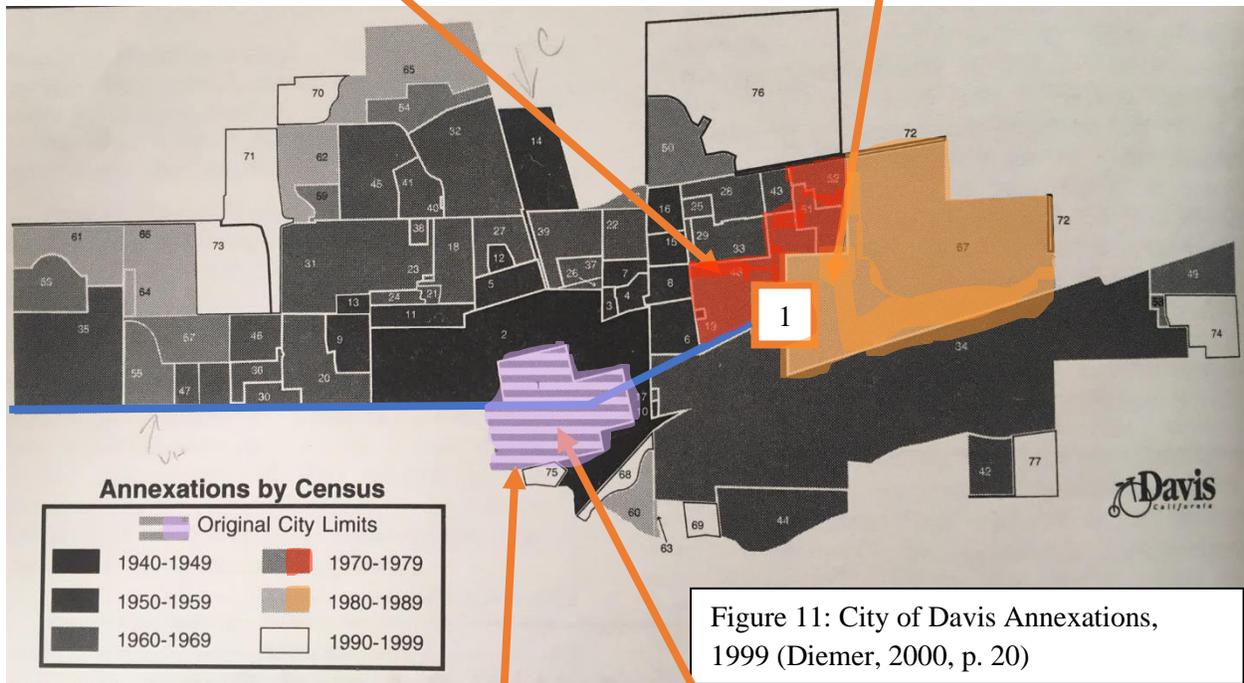


Figure 11: City of Davis Annexations, 1999 (Diemer, 2000, p. 20)

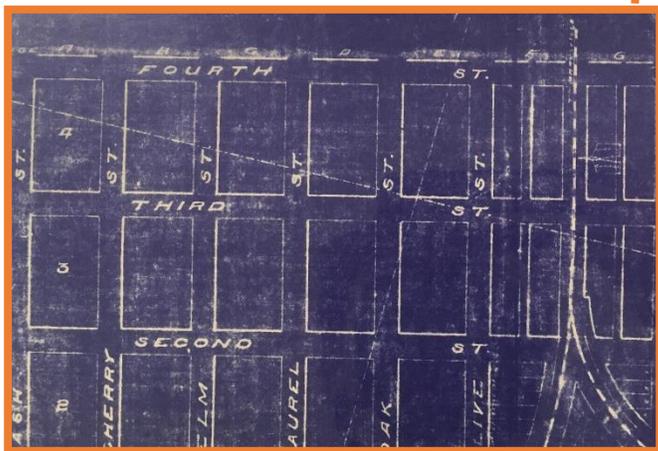


Figure 12: 1870 blueprint of Davis.



Figure 13: Official Map of the City of Davis, 1933

Stop 2: 5th and G Street Part 1

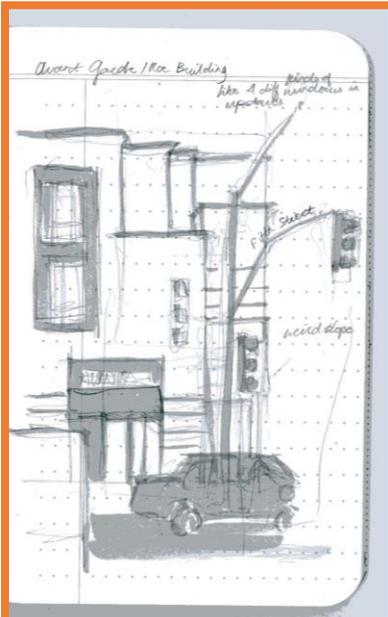


Figure 14: Avant
Garde/Roe Building

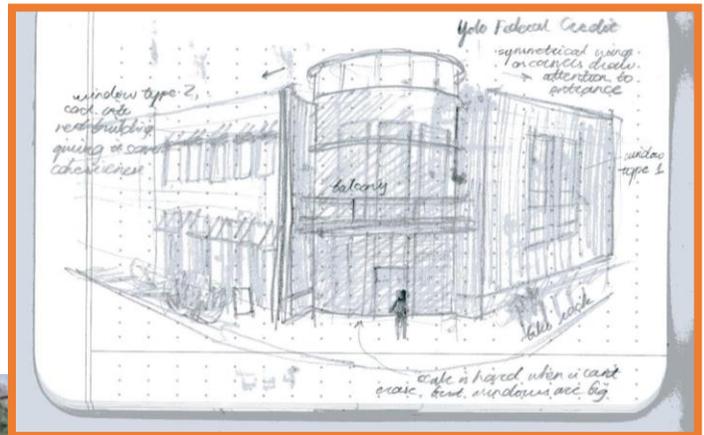


Figure 15: Yolo Federal

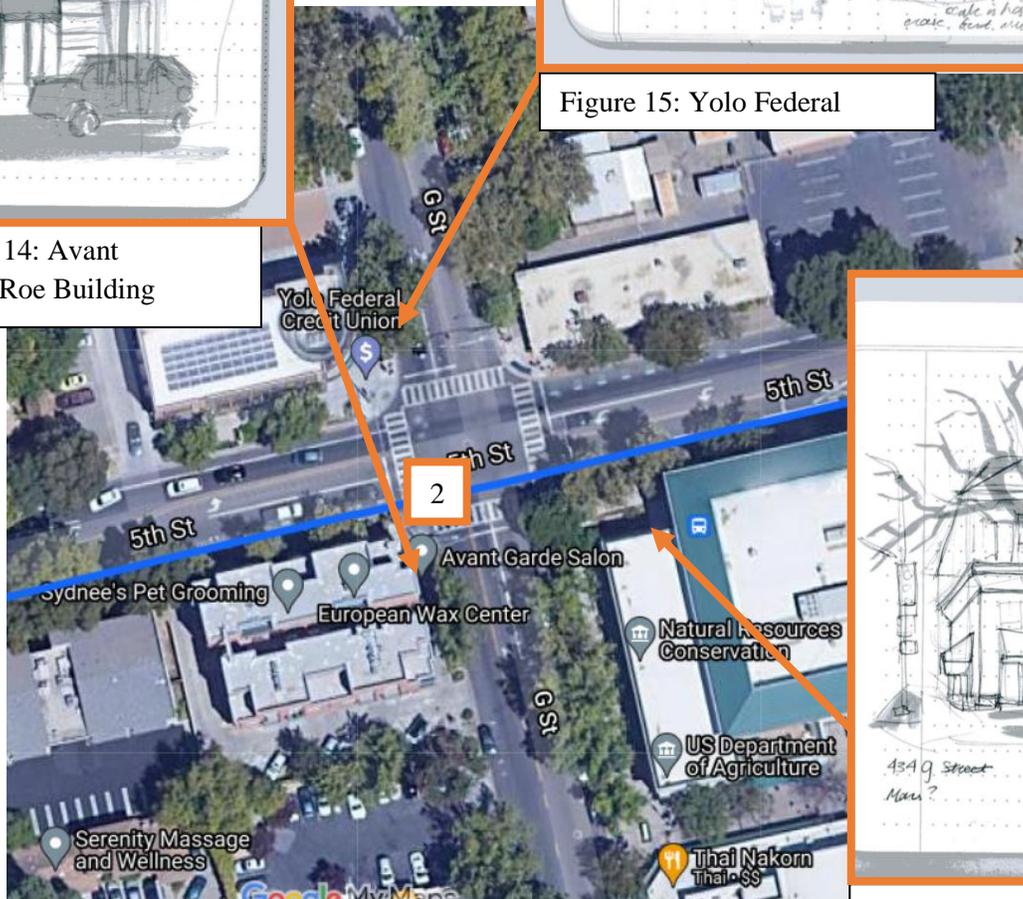


Figure 16: 434 G

My second stop was at a four-way intersection between 5th and G Street. This included several buildings, the most notable of which were the Avant Garde Salon, Yolo Federal Credit Union, an unnamed office space at 434, and Hibbert Lumber (see Figures 14-16). While walking past 434 G Street, I was surprised to spy a large plaque reading “Mars” and a significant amount of construction underway. It looked as though the whole floor was being replaced. I failed to capture what I saw of the building’s interior thanks to poor lighting and the glass’s reflection

(Figure 17). For such a seemingly quiet building (Figure 18), there appeared to be a lot happening on the inside. What I immediately concluded after seeing the “Mars” plaque was that the building was slated to be a future office for the candy company Mars Wrigley, known for being the creators of M&M’s, Twix, Skittles, Snickers, and other confectionary delights. The city is distant from the economic center of San Francisco, and it lacks the inexpensive land and tax benefits which often serve to draw corporations. So why on earth would a major food corporation choose to locate themselves in Davis?



Figure 17: Sitting in front of 434 G Street

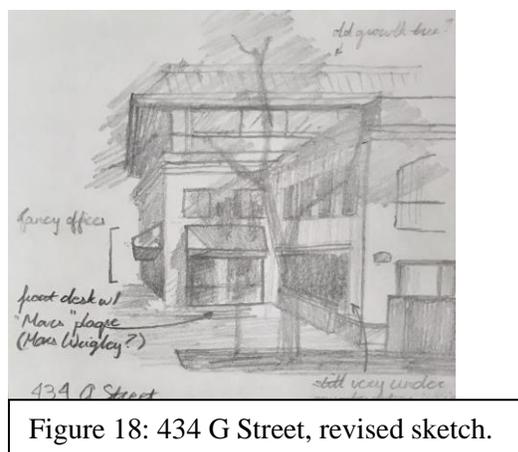


Figure 18: 434 G Street, revised sketch.

During my agriculture development and plant science classes, I received an answer: the university itself. The College of Agricultural and Environmental Science conducts cocoa bean research funded by Mars. The partnership between Mars Wrigley and Davis began in 1974, leading to research on specific crops (such as cocoa, peanut, and mint), natural dyes, aflatoxins, and other agroecological subjects. (About MARI, n.d., Filmer, 2020) During a tour of the Mars Wrigley greenhouses on campus Allison enthusiastically told me about the company’s plans for 434 G Street: the facility is intended to be a level 2 biosafety area to study integrated pest management (IPM). The location was chosen to place it within the vicinity of other Mars facilities, but far enough to protect the rare genomes they tend to.



Figure 19a-b: Interior of the on-campus Mars Wrigley Cacao Genetics and Breeding program.

Part 2: Agricultural Changes and Continuities



Figure 20: “Looking North up G Street at Fifth, c. 1910” (Lofland and Haig, 2000, pg. 109)



Figure 21: “Looking North up G Street at Fifth, c. 1938” (Lofland and Haig, 2000, pg. 112)

Like all of Davis(ville) during the early 20th century, the intersection of 5th and G was agricultural. The horses in figure 20 were named Henry and Dick (after the farmers they belonged to), and the railroad responsible for Davis’s eventual explosion in population stands a block to the right. During the Great Depression era when the police station was constructed, this same area contained grain warehouses to the right, single family homes, and a boardinghouse (see figure 21 and figure 13 for a map of the town in 1933 which corroborates this). From the early 1900s to the mid-40’s, Davis was a small, stereotypically rural town. The bustling, tree-lined streets now known to the downtown simply were not present. The whole area was indistinguishable flatlands and fields with small amounts of single family residential.

Since then, the city of Davis has expanded as UC Davis has grown. With UCD’s soaring reputation as a site of high level agricultural innovation came more students, more professors, more money, more shops and more businesses. This residential neighborhood was incorporated in the expanding downtown’s commercial zoning and put to denser use. In 1997 5th and G Street as it is now began to take form. Ground was broken to build space for USDA offices, a large movie theater, retail, and parking. (Diemer, 2000, pg. 44)

From a dirt road to grain storage to USDA offices to the cutting edge Wrigley labs, 5th and G Street has proven to be an interesting site to trace the simultaneous development of agriculture and of Davis.

Stop 3: Anderson and Russell

Part 1

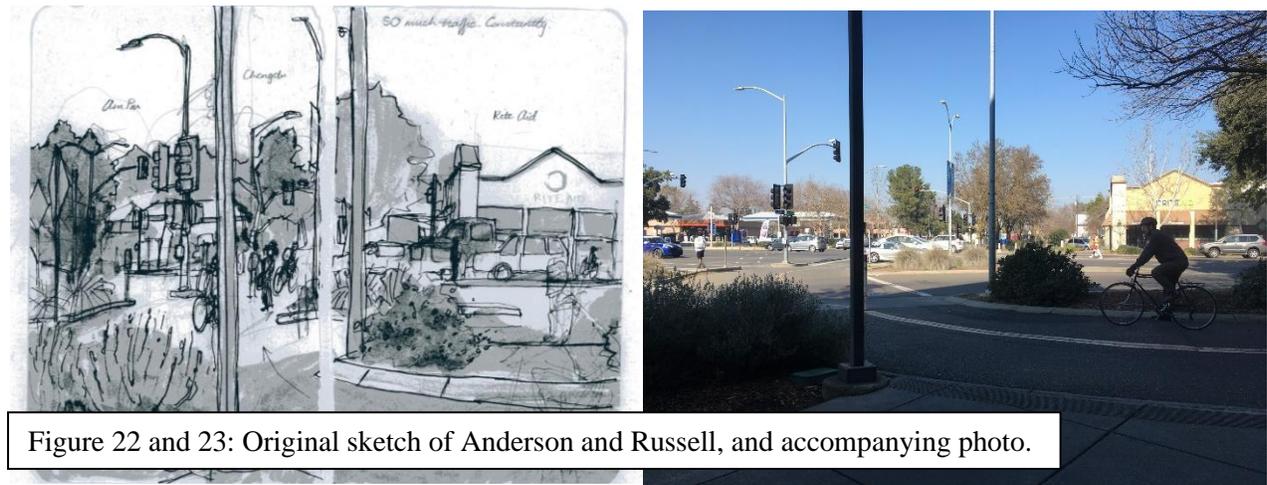


Figure 22 and 23: Original sketch of Anderson and Russell, and accompanying photo.



Figure 24: Anderson and Russell, revised sketch.

Stop 3 is the one I was most familiar with prior to completing my transect: the intersection of Anderson and Russell. I struggled to depict this in my sketches, but the intersection is bustling with cars, pedestrians, and cyclists. I noticed two women on the medians trying to sell flowers to the cars nearby. Groups of students on bikes and on foot crossed together, chatting whilst they went here and there. And the cars! they whizz and zoom unpredictably by (the reputation of Californian drivers is justifiably poor). (Figures 22-24) The noise alone was enough to make my blood pressure spike. Directly behind where I was situated stands the Segundo dorm complex. Because of this the intersection is a common crossing site for students walking to Rite Aid for first aid supplies, Trader Joe's for groceries, or the Old Teahouse for a late night boba run.

Part 2: From Quiet to Bustling

This 1917 sketch of the University Farm shows campus shortly after its formation. (Scheuring, 2001, p.43) The state highway running through the top would become Russell Boulevard and continues to demarcate which land is part of campus and which is part of the city.

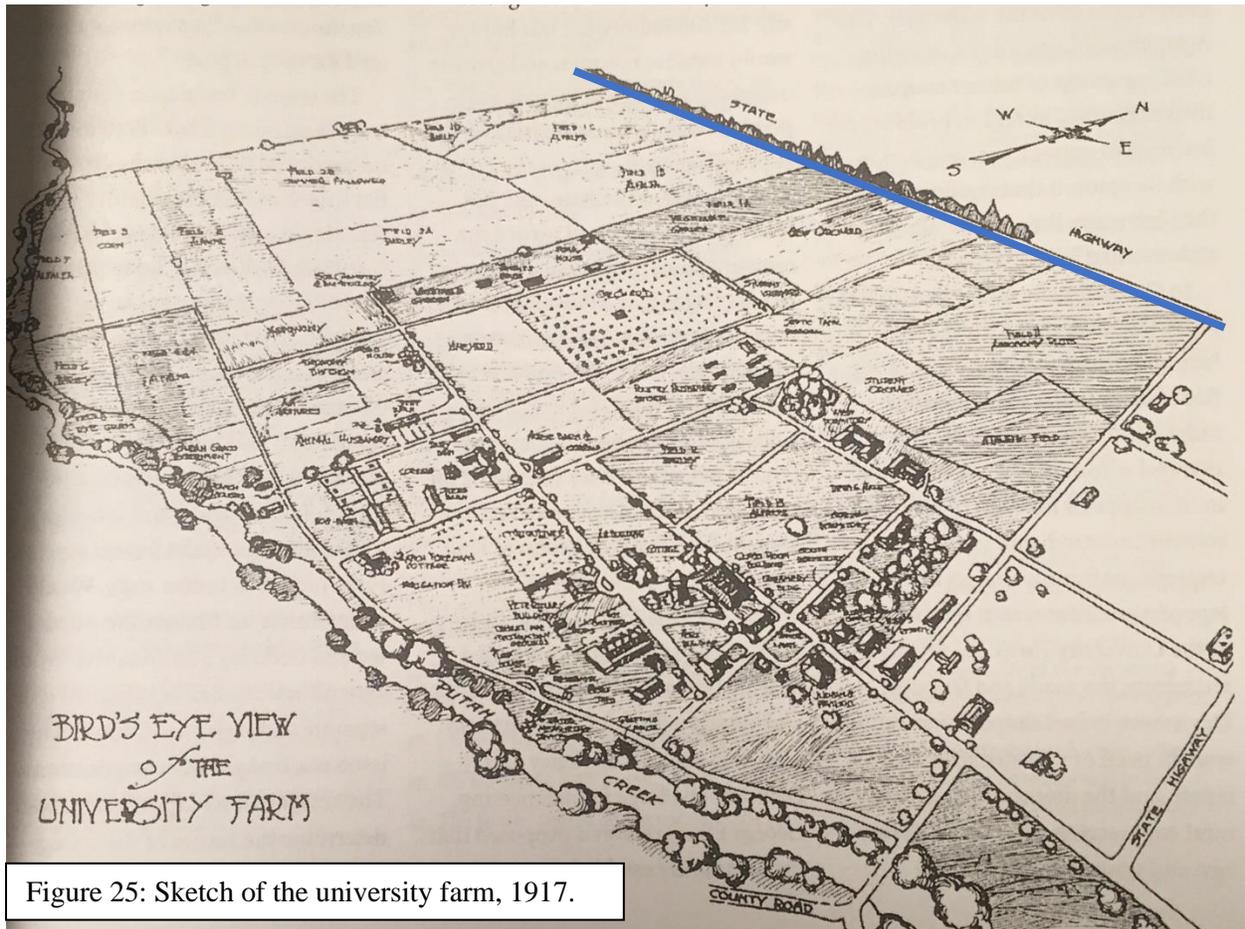


Figure 25: Sketch of the university farm, 1917.



Figure 26: 1928 gate to the University Farm looking from Highway 40 to campus.

In 1928, student volunteers created a gated front to the University Farm, now known as the College of Agriculture (see Figure 26). (Dingeman & Scheuring, 2013, p. 36) This was when Russell was known as Highway 40 or the Lincoln Highway.



Figure 27: 1947 yearbook photo of coeds at the gate.

Almost two decades after its construction, this 1947 yearbook photo shows postwar coeds exiting the same gate (see Figure 27). (Dingemans & Scheuring, 2013, p. 55) Their joyous cycling reflects the campus's expansion and growth following the war—and the rising popularity of the now-ubiquitous form of transport and symbol of the city.

The 1960 numbering map (Figure 28) shows that land south of Russell was university property and hints at the extent of the university's research and training farmland. There was some residential, but mainly farm lots north of Russell. ("City of Davis, California: including the University of California at Davis," 1960) The U-shaped fork on the right was the Aggie Villa, postwar housing for students and their families who were using the GI Bill to study. It was eventually demolished and no longer stands.

Two years later (1962), the Davis university became a part of the UC system. According to the City of Davis website, this marked the beginning of several decades of population and construction boom (similar to that occurring in other parts of California) before a more environmentally conscious attitude caused growth to level out. ("History," n.d.) I found a photograph of Davis two years after it became a part of the UC system, and four years after the numbering map: Figure 29 was taken aerially in 1964. The four original Segundo dorms are visible in the southeast corner. ("Aerial photos of Yolo County, California," 1964) The majority of the area is still farmland. Where the Rite Aid is located there seems to be an unidentifiable structure. But the corner where the AM PM is now was just fields. Where the Segundo Service

Center and Market are there are fields. Though Figure 15 hints at the extent of rural spaces in Davis, it is the clear imagery in Figure 16 which truly drives the difference home. Similarly comparing the sketch of university farm in 1917 (figure 25) and figure 30, a northwest-facing aerial photograph of Davis in 1967, shows how a mere five decades have altered the town and campus. (Pickerell, 1968, p. 162-163) The beginnings of suburban sprawl on the northern half of Russell are just barely visible, and campus has exploded with new construction. Where West Davis housing (the Green and Sol) now stand, there are still largely fields.

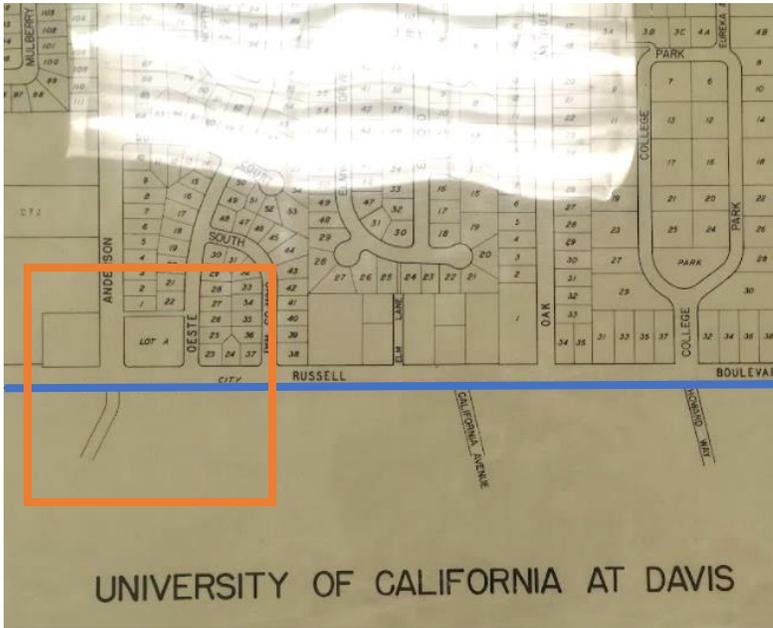


Figure 28: Closeup of 1960 map of Davis.

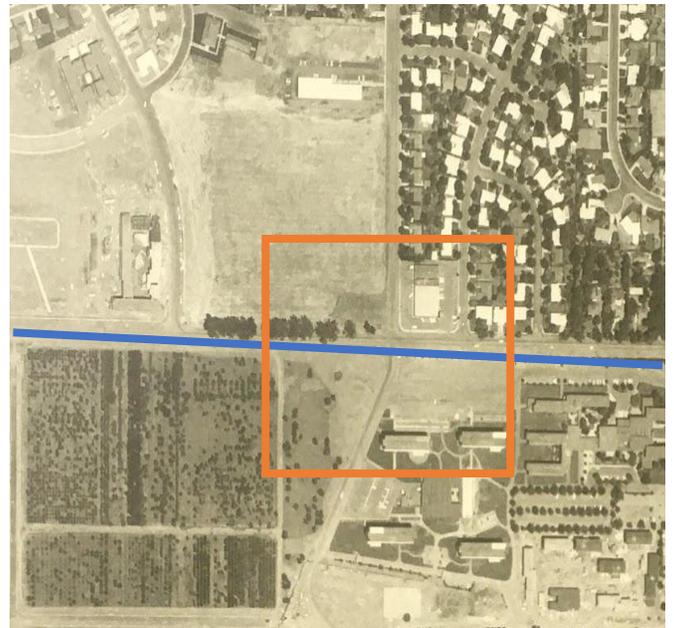


Figure 29: 1964 closeup aerial photo

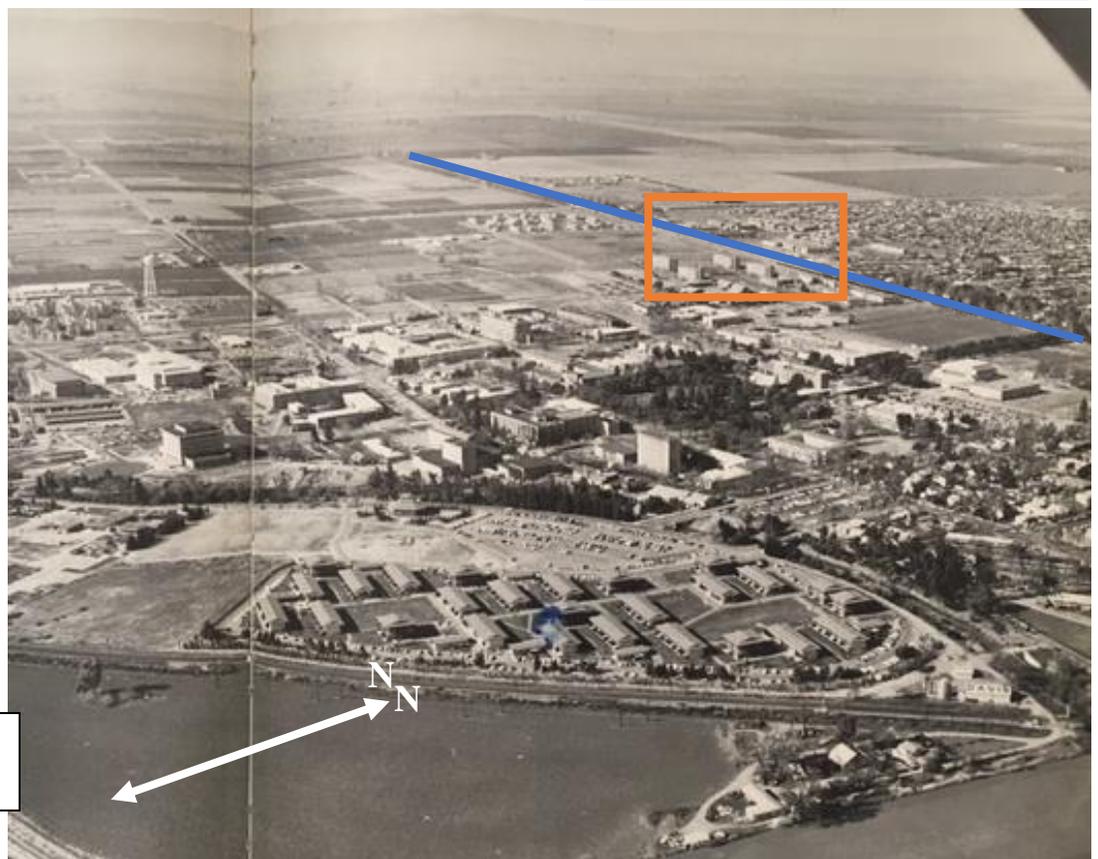


Figure 30: 1967 aerial photograph of Davis.

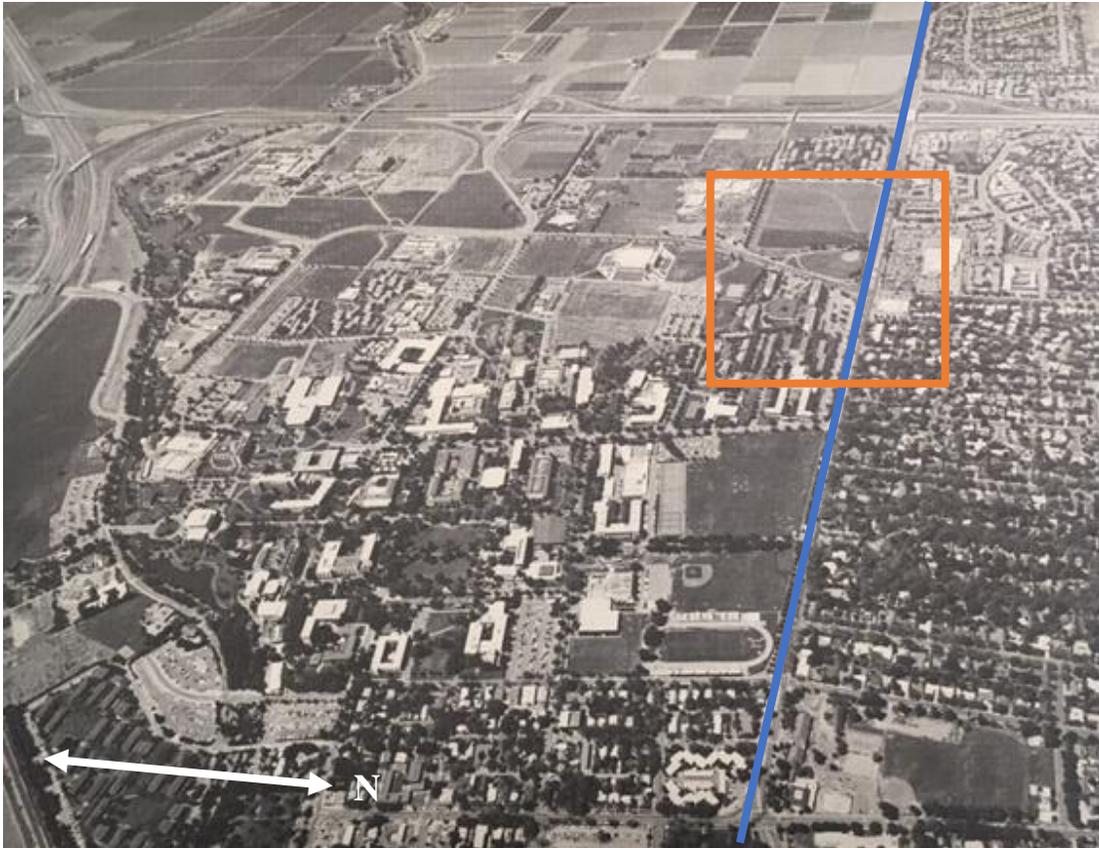


Figure ??: 1983 westward-facing aerial photograph of UC Davis. (Prytanean Honors Society, 1983)

Originally State Market was located at the corner of Anderson and Russell, but in 1996 it closed, eventually relocating to Oakshade Town Center and being renamed to “Harvest”. In 1999, Rite Aid would move into the space State Market once occupied (from Rite Aid’s original location in University Mall). (Diemer, 2000, p. 43, 45) It stands there today.

The intersection of Anderson and Russell has functioned very differently over time. When UC Davis was known as University Farm and Russell as the State Highway and Highway 40, the intersection’s historic delineated the separation between campus fields and other property. With the campus’s expansion and incorporation in the University of California system this separation became more porous, particularly as new construction and more housing was needed to accommodate this growth.

Conclusion

Though Davis may appear to be a sleepy and non-descript college town, there is always more than meets the eye. Stop 1 at the Davis police station helped me see just how much the city has expanded since its whistle-stop days, through its shifting location and through the eastward expansion of city limits. Stop 2 at the intersection of G and 5th Street gave me the chance to see how UC Davis (especially our globally renowned agriculture program) has had ramifications on the development of Davis businesses. Anderson and Russell (Stop 3) was the closest to home—it helped me capture a glimpse of what UC Davis might have been like in the “good old days” and how suburban development has followed the campus’s expansion.

Throughout my research I have seen how Davis has transformed. Though citizens can and will dig in their heels and attempt to prevent the city from becoming “the next Orange County” I see increased suburban development as almost inevitable. With climate change, places which were once hotspots for housing in California will become unbearably warm and places with rural land to spare such as Davis will end up absorbing increasing amounts of climate and fire refugees. Much like they have elsewhere, real estate in the city will also become increasingly expensive until only the most wealthy or determined can stay. I dearly hope this grim prediction does not come to pass, but there is no telling what the future will hold. Davis may someday be part of a megalopolis stretching from Sacramento to San Francisco – or it may remain a small college town settled against a backdrop of rich green fields.

John Brinckerhoff Jackson, quoted in a paper by Lewis, said this: “Over and over again I’ve said the commonplace aspects of the contemporary landscape—the streets and houses and fields and places of work—could teach us a great deal, not only about American history and American society, but about ourselves, and how we relate to the world. It s a matter of learning how to see.” (“The Monument and the Bungalow”, Jackson, in Calo 1989, quoted by Lewis 1998) What I enjoyed most about this assignment was not just learning about Davis, but also learning how to read a new language: the landscape itself. Rather than overlook the mundane, I seized this opportunity to utilize my sketches and observations of modern-day Davis to posit questions whose answers I found nestled within the city’s history.

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