

# DAVIDSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*We don't just talk about Davidson's past... We are working to preserve it.*

Spring 2013

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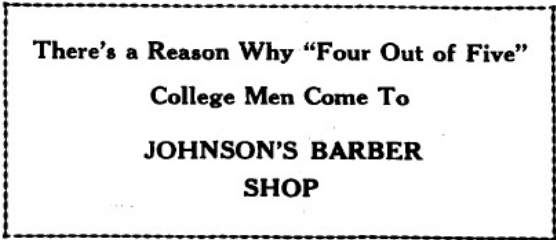
Lucy March  
*Intern and Campus Liaison*

The DHS is grateful for the generous work of Danica Alter's 9th grade advisory at the Community School of Davidson. This class represented DHS at their Alternative Gift Fair, which raised money for local non-profits. The DHS is honored to be one of the recipients.

## **Shoe Shines and Picket Lines: Johnson's Barbershop and Student Protest Culture**

On April 2, 1968, two black men entered Ralph Johnson's barber shop and asked for a hair cut. Johnson, a well-established and successful African American businessman, refused both of the men service. This exchange would set into motion a politically charged event that would have a great impact on the town of Davidson as well as the College.

Johnson received a letter from a group of Davidson College students the next day, which stated that they asked their fellow students not to patronize Johnson's barbershop until he changed his policy of only cutting the hair of black students and not black townspeople. Since the College is so economically im-



1933 Advertisement for Johnson's Barbershop (From the *Davidsonian* Archives)

portant to the town, these students felt that a boycott would incite a change in customer attitudes and hopefully encourage Johnson to change his policy.

The day after the barbershop boycott began, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. The

proximity of these two events shows how pervasive the sense of justice was at the time, and which strongly influenced the attitudes of college students throughout the country, even in the sleepy town of Davidson. Students were inspired by the nationwide call to action against the Vietnam War and racial discrimination, but felt that they had no outlet on the small, isolated campus. The perceived injustice taking place at their local barbershop became this outlet through which they manifested the protest culture typical at other college campuses during this tumultuous time.

*(Continued on page 3)*

# D H S Events

*All programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.*

## Davidson Ice Plant

*Members only*

**Sunday, April 21st, 4:00 pm**

**416 S Main Street, Davidson**

The Davidson Ice Company began delivering ice in May of 1922. Before this plant opened, ice was supplied to the Davidson area from plants in Mooresville and Charlotte, which had difficulty keeping up with the local demand. Once a six-ton ice plant, the building is now home to Campania Cafe and Davidson Violins.

Buddy Caldwell and David Little will share their stories, memories and artifacts from the ice plant. Buddy's grandfather worked at the ice plant, and his father, Kenneth Caldwell, and David's father, Harold Little, co-owned the ice plant for over 25 years. Come learn how the ice plant was once an integral part of life in Davidson!



Campania Café, site of the former Davidson Ice Company.

## Davidson Town Day

**Saturday, May 4, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

**Davidson Town Green**

Stop by the DHS booth to see our newest historic photo display and to get the latest information on our upcoming programs and activities!

**Want to attend our Members Only event but are not currently a DHS member? Joining is easy... join online at <http://davidsonhistoricalsociety.org/JoinUs.asp>, or you may join prior to the start of the program, just plan to arrive a few minutes early. We appreciate your support!**



## DHS Holiday Ornaments

Thanks to everyone who purchased our 2012 annual pewter holiday ornament commemorating the 175th anniversary of Davidson. We have almost sold out completely, with only about one dozen remaining! If you missed out, the 2012 ornament is still available for purchase as part a set of 5, which also includes our 2008 (Beaver Dam), 2009 (Helper Hotel), 2010 (SPC Transformer House) and 2011 (Eumenean Hall) ornaments. Sets are \$45 each and are available at Main Street Books.

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Two students that participated in the protest were Bob Lane ('68) and William March ('71). Both March and Lane expressed that at the time, they would have taken advantage of any opportunity to protest. At the same time, they were also motivated by the cause. As March recalled, "the war was tied to everything. It was a racial thing...there was definitely a conflation between these issues." Several of the brothers in Sigma Chi who were recruited outside of North Carolina to play basketball were more likely to consider themselves a



Maloy (far right) with his fraternity brothers  
(Courtesy of Davidson College Archives)

part of this growing culture of protest, and hoped to shake up what March jokingly called a "hot bed of student rest."

Mike Maloy, a basketball star on campus as well as the first African American to be accepted to a fraternity at Davidson, served as an inspiration for many of the student protestors, including March, Maloy's brother in Sigma Chi (later Machi House). March recalled that Maloy was present at the protests, and that Maloy and his other brothers in the fraternity were a large part of the reason he was aware of the issue. Lane recalls that there was a sense of general agreement on this issue among students throughout the campus.

Overall, the protests were a pivotal moment in Davidson town and college history, even receiving coverage by the *Charlotte Observer*. It was a time when police officers tear gassed students at Duke University during anti-war protests, there seemed to be an opportunity in Davidson to really able to make a difference. Despite this, March realized that "even the most committed protestors were still going to class and trying to graduate" and that Davidson College students were still "on the periphery" of campus protest culture. Indeed, Lane also remembers a certain sense of insularity and protection from the rest of the world, which students on campus today might refer to as the "Davidson bubble."

The protest and coverage surrounding the protests and the resulting pressures ultimately caused Johnson to close the barbershop. Lane says that in retrospect, had he been given the opportunity, he would have participated in the protests again.

There was one thing Lane would have done differently, however. "I would have sat Johnson down and had a conversation with him. I would have taken the momentum and used it to help the student body look out and find other ways to express their values and help people in a broader environment. Momentum is precious — especially when you win." An important lesson for students of any age.

Sources:

Blodgett, Jan and Ralph Levering. *One Town, Many Voices: A History of Davidson, North Carolina*. Davidson, NC: Davidson Historical Society, 2012.

Davidson College Archives Collections Database: *Davidsonian Database*.  
<[http://library.davidson.edu/archives/davidsonian/davidsonian\\_collection.asp](http://library.davidson.edu/archives/davidsonian/davidsonian_collection.asp)>

Davidson College Archives Collections Database: *Always Part of the Fabric: A Supplement*.  
<<http://sites.davidson.edu/archives/digital-collections/always-part-of-fabric-supplement-2>>

Johnson, Ralph W. *David Played a Harp*. Davidson: Blackwell Ink, 2000.

Lane, Dr. Robert C. Telephone interview. February 11, 2013.

March, William. Telephone interview. February 9, 2012.

# A Note from the President

Dear Friends and Supporters,

A front page series in the *Charlotte Observer* during February told the story of Jimmie Lee Kirkpatrick, the first young black man to play football at Myers Park High School. It is an emotional and symbolic story of the civil rights struggle in Charlotte and more generally throughout the south. The stories of our lives, woven together, create the history of a city, or a town, or a village. To me, it was a reminder of the mission of DHS to keep the stories alive that form the fabric of Davidson's history and the substance of our spirit.

So it is with this mission in mind that this year we begin a new program to host an annual internship with Davidson College. We expect our interns to bring fresh eyes to our program, to revitalize our community outreach and to forge a more permanent bond with Davidson College. Members of our board interviewed applicants in early January and I am pleased to report that two candidates were selected, one for this spring semester and one for next fall.

Our spring intern, Lucy March, is already at work. Lucy has done much of the research and authored the lead article you see in this edition of the newsletter. She is a graduating senior and member of Phi Alpha Theta History Honors Society. Kseniya Kuprovska, a sophomore English major, will serve as our intern for next fall. We are extremely pleased to have these two outstanding students help with the work of the Society to promote an understanding and appreciation of the history of Davidson and its surrounding area.

As you know, we depend on you for our support. If you haven't joined or renewed your 2013 membership, please do. It's easy, just go to <http://www.davidsonhistoricalsociety.org/index.asp>, click the "Join Us" tab at the top and either use the "on line" service or download the form.

  
Ed Harris



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HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

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The Davidson Historical Society was founded in 1991 by a group of concerned citizens led by Taylor and Irene Blackwell. Over the years DHS has presented programs by outstanding local and regional personalities on varying topics, toured historically significant sites in the area, and financed projects which promote the history of the area.