

JUL 08 2024

RECEIVED
at Meeting

Statement of support for landmark status for 2227 Parker Street, Berkeley, the Davis property.

By Lyndon Comstock

I believe this property should qualify for landmark status as to both its cultural and its historical significance. I respectfully disagree with the portions of the Commission staff report pertaining to the property's project's merits on those two criteria.

My first point pertains to the cultural significance of the property. In this respect, I must refer you to my book, *On Parker Street: The Evolution of a Berkeley Neighborhood 1855-1965*. The central figure in the book is Mary Jean Davis, whose principal residence for nearly ninety years, from December 1893 until 1981, was 2227 Parker.

The staff report dismisses the cultural significance of the property in a single paragraph, stating about the Davis family, "There is no evidence that these individuals made lasting or far-reaching contributions..." I disagree, and put forward my book as evidence to the contrary. A significant portion of my two hundred page book about Southside Berkeley focuses on 2227 Parker and the Davis family. I have a photo of the workshop at 2227 on the book cover and include the transcript of a 1980 interview with Jean Davis.

The staff report presumes that the key figure as to the property's significance is Frank A. Davis, the stepfather of Mary Jean Davis. He was certainly crucial relative to the development of that property since he purchased the land in the 1876 Blake Tract auction, built the house in 1877 and then the workshop, and operated, with the participation of his father and several employees, the tool and die business in the workshop. He and his business did receive local press coverage.

However, I regard Mary Jean Davis as the central person in the history of the property.

To gain a perspective on Jean's role and significance would require a review of the role of women in Southside Berkeley from 1855 on, particularly vis-à-vis the relatively minor degree of public recognition that they received. For example, in my view, Margaret Leonard in particular, and also Millicent Blake, were more important over time to Southside Berkeley than their much more famous husbands, and I give them more attention in my book for that reason.

The most succinct way to put it, as to Jean Davis, is that she was an anchor of her neighborhood over a very long period of time. If you speak to someone who was a long-term resident of the neighborhood during her lifetime, they will probably have known her.

Cultural significance ought to be seen, in my view, as something substantially deeper than a recognition of who gained media attention during their day. In the case of the Davis family and particularly Jean Davis, as people who were significant in providing shape and cohesion to a community over a sustained period of time.

The property itself still serves as a physical manifestation of the Davis family. Both the house and the workshop structure behind the house are still entirely recognizable relative to their

Late Communications
Landmarks Preservation Commission

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Name: Joy Tang

Berkeley Residence: 2222 Parker Street, Apartment 1/2

Dear Members of the Landmarks Preservation Commission,

I am writing this as a renter of 10+ years on Parker Street, currently living across the street from the building being discussed. I will be moving away, out-of-state, in one month. But via this letter, I offer my perspective on neighbors' efforts to bring attention to historic places in Berkeley.

Starting in 2020, one of my greatest resources has been my Berkeley walks. I believe I have nearly walked Berkeley end-to-end, going north to the fire trails or south to Aquatic Park or as far West as REI (San Pablo). People who visit me comment on how beautiful it is here.

I cannot speak comprehensively on the different housing needs Berkeley faces. However, I am glad there are neighbors who can spotlight what is here in South Berkeley, what is valued and why. I hope that as Berkeley progresses it is also able to resource parts of what has made Berkeley a unique place to live.

July 8, 2024

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Landmarks Preservation Commission
City of Berkeley

The Frank A. Davis Home and Workshop site meets the significance criteria of the LPO

Dear Commissioners,

Under our City of Berkeley Landmarks Ordinance, it is the property that receives the designation of Landmark.

The Frank A. Davis property includes a distinctive nineteenth century tool and die workshop, which is to date the *only* known and identified architectural property of its type in Berkeley. Can you think of another building like this in Berkeley? If there is not another, then it is the only one. Furthermore, the support from neighbors for the preservation of this site makes it clear that it is valued as part of the neighborhood fabric.

Therefore this site satisfies the criteria for consideration under section 3.24.110 of the Berkeley Municipal Code:

"3.24.110 A 1. (a) Property that is the first, last, only or most significant architectural property of its type in the region;"

and

"3.24.110 A 1. (c) Architectural examples worth preserving for the exceptional values they add as part of the neighborhood fabric."

Sincerely,

Gale Garcia