



## The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Historic Savannah Foundation Began with the Davenport House!



For the upcoming year the Davenport House Newsletter will consider the saving of the Davenport House, the founding of Historic Savannah Foundation, and 1955.

### 1955 – World and National Events in the Year of the Founding of HSF

- Congress authorizes the president to use force to defend Formosa.
- Ike says A-Bomb would be employed in war; Ike suffers heart attack.
- Supreme Court orders school segregation to end “in reasonable time.”
- Interstate Commerce Commission bans segregation on Interstate trains and buses.

**TV Premiers:** “The Lawrence Welk Show,” “Gunsmoke,” “Captain Kangaroo,” “The Mickey Mouse Club”

**Academy Award Best Picture:** *Marty*; **Plays:** *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, **Musicals:** *Damn Yankees*

**Hit Songs:** “The Ballad of Davy Crockett,” “Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White,” “Cry Me a River”

- College girls wear black leotards, tweed jumpers, camel-hair and gray coats.
- Weekly church attendance is 49 million adults, half the total adult population.
- Construction of suburban shopping centers and motels increases.
- “Pop art” gains attention with Robert Rauschenburg’s *Bed*, incorporates a real pillow and quilt on a stretcher, along with other objects and design material.
- The population explosion created a shortage of 120,000 teachers and 300,000 schoolrooms.
- “Smog,” or “poisoned air”, becomes a public concern.
- The minimum wage goes from \$.75 to \$1.

**New Words and Usages:** Automated, certified mail; junk mail, rock-and-roll, A-line, atomic rain, church key, cue card, bombed, stoned, isolation booth, blast off, Third World

**Fads:** Davy Crockett hats; pink shirts; mooning; stuffing people into cars; pizza (replacing hamburger snacks); Tutti-Frutti; driving around

**First Appearance:** Ten-story display ad on Time Square, plastic containers shipping, Disneyland (Anaheim, CA), auto seat belt safety law (Illinois), electric stove for home use, Neiman-Marcus (Houston), Merengue (dance), Crest, Special K, Colonel Sanders’ Kentucky Fried Chicken, Ford Thunderbird (two-seater), H & R Block, Whirlpool, roll-on deodorant

Reprint: Savannah newspaper article dated February 26, 1948

### Historic Davenport House Is Suffering from Neglect

By Lillian Bragg

Savannah trails far behind her sister cities, New Orleans and Charleston, in awakening to the realization that many of her old historic houses are being torn down, in the loss of these places of interest, the city is the loser in more ways than one.

Even those “up and coming citizens” who profess a great distain for anything from the nostalgic past, the disappearance, or the utter lack of care given these places of interest, should be seen as a financial loss to the city at least.

Tourists by the thousands yearly flock to cities that reek with history. Savannah is far richer in history than either Charleston or New Orleans, but she has allowed herself to be outsmarted by her sister cities. Charleston and New Orleans have preserved and restored and marked their historic spots, and they have done a selling job to the world at large. Now these two Southern cities have their hotels filled with tourists, and every day their streets are dotted with groups of visitors following on the heels of guides who point out places of far less interest than a great many places Savannah would be, if properly attended to.

One of the city’s former beautiful residences, which has been left to fall into decay is the Davenport house that stands on the corner of State and Habersham streets. Unimproved for over a half century, it faces an impoverished, unimproved square. Local lovers of beauty and of Savannah have long sighed over its plight. Now they weep. A door has been cut in the front through the brick and now there is a dark, dreary little shop with a light bulb above, and a dilapidated iron frame that once held a canvas covering, framing it. The only decoration, if deco-

ration it can be called, is the wash-tub of garbage that stands eternally by the side of the door.

The graceful pair of winding stone stairs, guarded by usually lovely-patterned wrought iron railing leads to a doorway that vied with any house in the city in beauty. The original marble mantels from the house are now in the Mills B. Lane home on Gaston street, east. Everything that went into the building of this pretentious home was the very best. Even the dolphin head water spouts are of copper. [Actually they are iron.]

The house was built in 1800 [actually 1820] by Josiah [Isaiah] Davenport, the owner. He was a builder of many of Savannah’s finest homes, and of the old Martello Tower at Tybee that Savannahians remember so well. This tower was originally for observation purposes after it was used by Fort Screven as an aiming station and still later a little house was built on top of the tower and Mrs. Evans, the postmaster at Tybee lived there for many years.

Mr. Davenport called himself a carpenter, but he was more than that. He was an excellent architect [but not a trained architect], a top notch contractor and a prominent citizen. His children became well-to-do cotton folk, and a granddaughter married Gen. Henry R. Jackson [though he was not a general when she married him]. The descendants of the Jackson family are outstanding citizens today. So it can be seen that Josiah [Isaiah] Davenport founded a well-known Savannah family.

Every few years there are rumors of movements afoot to start an organization for the preservation of Savannah’s places of historic worth but to date nothing concrete has been done, and gradually time is taking its toll. Fortunately a number of smaller houses have been restored, but there are dozens that still beg for restoration to their former beauty and charm.