Construction During a Pandemic: Leap of Faith and Confidence Personified

On December 3, ground was broken by Historic Savannah Foundation for the long hoped and planned for Davenport House/Kennedy Pharmacy evolution project to expand the Museum facilities, allowing for the complete interpretation of the 1820s house from basement to attic. This expanded interpretation is made possible by moving the museum operation functions to the pharmacy building. By 2022, all will be in place to offer an exceptional, refined story that will broaden understanding of the 1820 house and household, as well as explain Historic Savannah Foundation’s role in the survival of the Port City. Right now the transformation at the corner of Habersham and Broughton Street is happening before our eyes.

Moving the museum shop to Broughton Street, Savannah’s historical retail shopping thoroughfare, is significant. A presence on Broughton Street, with the accompanying signage, will increase the institution’s profile for shoppers, explorers and wanderers in addition to museum goers. “The relocated and upgraded shop will offer quality gifts and opportunities for visitors to take remembrances of their visit home and in so doing, support the good work of the Museum and HSF,” says shop manager, Gaye Kurmas. “This will be the first time the DH has ever specifically designed a retail space. In the past we made-do with used display cases and less than adequate lighting,” adds Jamie Credle. The rehabbed Kennedy Pharmacy shop will be inviting and welcoming from the moment patrons step in its door. The upstairs apartment space will be converted into offices, museum collection storage, rest space for docents and a kitchen to facilitate the Museum’s hospitality activities.

While the operational shifts are extremely important, “they are not driving the boat,” Credle says. It is interpreting the house and having the facilities to tell an inspiring story that resonates truth that is the goal. Once operations have moved, which should take place in the late summer, exhibit designers with dmdg2 will work their wizardry in recreating the basement with the room divisions and feel of 1820s above ground basement. Historically, the space was a work and living space for the enslaved household of up to 12 people during the decade. Designers will utilize video, as well as sounds and smells, (tactile experiences too as can be incorporated as Covid 19 wains) to inform visitors of daily life and daily cares.

The expansion has been a dream a long-time-coming and the pandemic threatened to delay it further. As
fundraising had already taken place and having confidence in the future – particularly the future of Savannah tourism – HSF leaders felt that this was the best opportunity to give the gift of public history to Savannah at a time when it is needed. Along with new exhibits in the Davenport House, the Kennedy Pharmacy will offer a brief audiovisual orientation experience to ground visitors in the uniqueness of Savannah as an urban area in the remarkable Lowcountry environment. The culminating experience – another audio visual piece - will be housed in the new addition behind the Kennedy Pharmacy and will expound on the extraordinary revitalization of the city through historic preservation. “None of our work would take place without the historic preservation movement. We are following the adage, ‘Knowledge is power,’ in executing this building project and creating these experiences,” says HSF President and CEO, Sue Adler. “The past few months have forced us to slow down, reassess what we value and set forth on a path to emerge as more thoughtful citizens. Everyone involved with Historic Savannah Foundation is proud of this building project and what it will mean,” Adler adds.

Please consider a gift to the project and contact Megan Kerley (mkerley@myHSF.org). Also know that the Museum continues to operate at a reduced capacity because of the pandemic. If you have not made your contribution to the 2020-21 Friends of the Davenport House Annual Giving Campaign, please know it is needed. Stay well and follow the news of OUR projects.

Kurdys Threesome Make the Museum a Family Affair: Carmen, Cailyn and Kenzie Kurdys - Docents.

The Kurdys family’s experiences with the DH date back to 1993, when Carmen first visited the house on her college tour of SCAD prior to admission. She graduated, married, and now has a vacation rental business with her husband, John, in the Landmark District. Their two daughters, Cailyn, a senior, and Kenzie, a sophomore, both at Savannah Arts Academy, are graduates of the SAA Junior Interpreter Program. It was Cailyn who started the Kurdys’ tour guiding endeavor. She heard about the SAA JI program from Rebecca Robinson who was participating at the time. Cailyn was selected to be in the program in 2018 through her American History AP class. Once she began, she said to herself, “Mom would want to do this too!” Carmen took docent training in 2019. Kenzie was identified by her teacher, Mr. Michael Johnson, and participated in the SAA 2020 class, which will forever be remembered as the Covid-19 class. Ten young people met in-person for the class and gave their first tours to the public the weekend of Thanksgiving. It was during this culminating activity that Kenzie met Mr. Johnson in-person for the first time since her classes have been via Zoom. Cailyn is back in-person at SAA for the last two months of her high school career, while Kenzie opted to wait and return to in-person schooling in the fall. Carmen is taking the changes in stride. After a serious fire at one of their properties last March and a pandemic, sharing the DH along with all the extra time at home with her family has brought the Kurdys solidarity and closeness. Cailyn and Carmen are on the DH schedule giving tours and Kenzie will not be far behind.
Friends of the Davenport House Museum – 2020-21 Appeal

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- Anonymous in memory of Ben Head
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- Harriet Meyerhoff in memory of Dr. David Byck

These are donors who responded to the Friends of the Davenport House Annual Giving Campaign since the appeal which began in November 2020.

Thank you for your generosity to the Davenport House!
At the end of the day on March 16, 2020 the DH shut its doors – with John Sorel giving the last tour - for who knew how long as the world began its Covid-19 spring 2020 lock down. The DH's second floor training room was set for the week's tea pro-gram and remained untouched for the next five months as a relic of “past times.” To say the last twelve months has been unimagi-nable is so understated as to be a cliché. There are not words to encompass all that has taken place. We have experienced loss and jolting change. I keep a Covid tally in the back of my day-book categorized by “scares,” “had it”, “died.” All of these cat-e-gories have multiple entries.

The last thing we did that seemed normal in March 2020 was get out the spring Friends newsletter expecting - hoping - to be able to celebrate the house’s 200th birth-day in May. We are still hoping to celebrate again soon but have moved on from commemoration to anticipation. Our construction project is happening. Foundation work is taking place, as I type, for the addition to the Kennedy Pharmacy. If all stays on sched-ule, the next Friends newsletter you receive will be written from an office on the second floor of that building. It is all unfolding before our eyes. It is almost as stupefying as the pandemic, only with opposite emotions.

As vaccine availability accelerates, the DH staff recently brought up the idea of a spring party. Though we forewent the annual garden party last June, now seems a reasonable time to think that we can sensibly and safely gather in-person again. Hopefully, by the first weekend of June everyone who is going to get vaccinated will be. We would not attempt this if the Museum’s cautious staff had not thoroughly consid-ered everyone's safety. Let’s plan to get together and agree not to embrace, but be ready to be social and catch up. We are going to have to do it sometime. You will receive an invitation in the mail. The event is scheduled for June 6 from 6 to 8 p.m.

And, I hope you are keeping a journal, as your children and posterity will want to know how you – as an everyday person – lived through this historic time. Your documentation will be useful in the future and may be therapeutic now.

In the spirit of catharsis, we asked DH leaders to comment on two things, the pandemic and me and the pandemic and the DH. Here are some of the responses:

The Pandemic and Me: Fortunately, I was on the lucky side of this crazy Covid-19 year. I had a mild case of Covid-19 in March. Working from home and no commute meant longer walks in the morning with my dog, Warren, more time to garden and enjoy life. Unfortunately, there are many others who can not write about their Covid-19 experience. RIP.

The Pandemic and Davenport House: Like other businesses and museums in Savannah, the Davenport House closed in the spring. The summer and fall brought some tourists to Savan-nah to enjoy our beautiful city. Operation expenses are the same, but revenues are down. Now is the time to support your local non-profit organizations.

Cathy Adler

The Pandemic and Me: I learn how to overcome the trials and tribulations of isolation, to protect the health of myself and others.

Sue Adler

The Pandemic and Me: Most-ly I have found this to be a sad and trying time; but also a time for deep reflection. My sincere hope is that we all emerge from the pandemic stronger and kinder.

The Pandemic and the DH. I am grateful to the DH and the DH staff for their resilience during these tough times.

Sue Adler
The Pandemic and the DH: I adapted to the unfortunate circumstances by pivoting, and learning to flourish in uncharted territory.

Olivia Arfuso

The Pandemic and Me: The pandemic has taught me that I am more flexible than I thought. If you had told me this time last year that I would be working from home for a full year, I would have never believed you or believed I could do it. Yet, here we are.

Beth Brooks

The Pandemic and Me: Since we brought Mother to live in an assisted living facility two miles from our home on Wilmington Island, I have taken care of her dog. Nell and I walk each morning before sunrise. Before the pandemic I used to be cheered with the light from the rising sun through the trees on the marsh looking toward Tybee. It meant a new day and all the possibilities that went with it. Now, I do not enjoy dawn so much. I would rather it stayed dark, rather it stayed 6 a.m., so Nell and I could continue our ramble before the news of the day unfolds.

Jamie Credle

The Pandemic and Me: It was certainly disconcerting to say the least that I had to worry about this invisible potentially deadly enemy that lurked in the shadows and in daylight the entire year. Was it close by? Was it distant? Who was a carrier? Would I survive if I contracted it? Questions like these were always on my mind, especially when I discovered that people I knew either had it or had had it. The threat affected my personal life, kept me away from my family and stopped me from trying new things, visiting new places. Wearing a mask was new and I have to admit that I resisted it a little in the beginning but after a while it became natural. The mask became a necessary object that you had to have with you all the time – like your car keys or your driver’s license. I lived under a constant stress, not severe or debilitating, but always there in the background and it wore me down. Living by myself,

The Pandemic and the DH: Covid put an end to so many things that we had done every day for years, programs that were our livelihood, and the Museum’s livelihood. But it forced us to step out of that mold and rethink what we could do to keep the Museum going. If anything about the pandemic could be viewed as positive, this may be it. All of us need to be shaken up from time to time and figure out how to adopt new behavioral patterns and develop new routines in order to survive. Even when the pandemic is under control, we won’t completely go back to what we knew before because this has

DH protocol posted for keeping it safe.

I felt more intensely being isolated and alone. Thankfully, I was able to continue to work and interact with people here and when home, I made the decision to take chances with my health by continuing to visit my local hangout so I could at least stay in touch with friends. It really pointed out the importance of social interaction to me especially when the entire community is facing the same threat.
changed us all.

Jeff Freeman

The Pandemic and Me: I now have enhanced group computer meeting skills. However, I miss seeing family and going places. It’s become clear to us that we go to restaurants and “out” a lot less than many people, however!

The Pandemic and DH: DH came up with a thoughtful and cautious set of procedures to reopen and resume fulfilling its mission of educating visitors while taking advantage of a slow time to move forward on KP/Kitchen/Urban Slavery Project.

But, I think that we will come back stronger and better, especially with the new space at the pharmacy and the reinterpretation of the basement.

Katherine Keena

Another thought for the Pandemic and the DH: I will be really happy when the day comes that I can take down that sneeze guard at the register!

Gaye Kurmas

The Pandemic and Me: It forced me to reset my daily life/routine and to refocus my priorities on the things that really matter in life like family, health, friends, helping the needy and living each day to the fullest.

The Pandemic and the Davenport House has given me a stronger appreciation for what the Davenport House represents to Savannah on a day-to-day basis. Our team pulled together in a safe and logical way to tell our story and bring some joy and history to our visitors and city.

John Leonti

The Pandemic and Me: I had time to be introspective - restructuring personal, family, social and community service outlook. I deemed what was truly most important and began to refocus (and found there was time to breathe, enjoy and be thankful for what has been given to me – and what I can give of self).

The Pandemic and the DH: The Davenport House has been and remains an important avenue. The history, shared stories and experiences, as well as the forward thinking of holding onto and sharing its past is invaluable for today into tomorrow.

Connie McCay

The Pandemic and Me: Means that our recently adopted Corgi assumes that her two personal servants will always be available to her 24/7… Means that cleaning is still occasionally required even if you’re not entertaining… Means that enjoying the pleasure of our own company becomes an imaginative artform… Means that tragic losses can somehow get trivialized in spite of their magnitude…

The Pandemic and the DH: Means that we can all look our best even when we "Zoom-in" on one another… Means that historic homes are survivors and preservers of their stories, even if their "walls don’t literally talk"… Means that adaptation and flexibility are the keys to managing change and setting standards for success… Means that Southern Hospitality is alive and well in the Hostess City…

Bob Prettyman

The pandemic has disrupted normalcy in our family, social, business, and spiritual lives. The Davenport House has done a phenomenal job in the last 12 months to restore some of that normalcy by steering operations through a safe course for the staff and visitors. We use a motto at church that: we invite, welcome and connect with our congregation. The Davenport House has lived that motto during the pandemic where we still invited guests, welcomed them to Savannah and connected in ways that I personally needed to try to capture some normalcy.

John Sorel

The Pandemic and Me: This year has been very difficult for a social outgoing personality like me.

The Pandemic and the
DH: I’m very sad and sorry the pandemic has left the Davenport House with its high educational and social value, so financially vulnerable to be closed forever.

Deb Walsh

The Pandemic and Me:
I am fortunate that my work has been semi-remote with clients abroad for over a decade. We were able to continue our daily lives right from the office in our home building. The one downside was being physically unable to visit parents.

Zoom meetings proved to be a great DH communication throughout the Pandemic. I learned to Zoom because of these meetings and I know I was able to attend more meetings than usual because they were on Zoom! And because of Zooming with DH, I was able to walk my Dad in assisted living through downloading Zoom and "visiting" regularly.

I hate that I haven’t stepped foot in the DH for a year (only outside for the official shovel - in-the-ground event) but I am happy that Jamie offered so many ways to continue the work of the DH.

The Pandemic and Davenport House.
Like other businesses and museums in Savannah, the Davenport House closed in the spring. The summer and fall brought some tourists to Savannah to enjoy our beautiful city. Operation expenses are the same but revenues are down. Now is the time to support your local non-profit organizations.

Brook Wilford

DH SPRING PROGRAMS

“POTABLE GOLD: SAVANNAH’S MADEIRA TRADITION

Selected dates in April 2021

PROGRAM DATES: April 1, 2, 8, 16, 22, 30
TIME: 5:30 p.m.
ADMISSION: $22 (must be 21 years of age).
Plus tax.
Reservations recommended. Limited attendance to ten people.
LENGTH OF PROGRAM: 75 minutes
Experience the historic atmosphere of the Davenport House while learning about and tasting a unique and flavorful wine. The performance requires that guests be able to walk up and down stairs and maneuver in the candlelit rooms.

EARLY BIRDS’ WALKING TOUR: DISCOVERING 1820’S SAVANNAH

Saturdays in April 2021

PROGRAM DATES: April 3, 10, 17, 24
TIME: 8 a.m.
LENGTH OF PROGRAM: 120 minutes
DISTANCE OF WALK: 2.5 miles.
See what survives of the 1820s Savannah that master builder Isaiah Davenport knew. Coffee and treats in the Davenport House garden will follow.

SPRINGTIME TEA AT THE DAVENPORTS’

Wednesday, Thursdays and some Friday afternoons in May 2021

PROGRAM DATES AND TIMES: May 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 27, 28
TIME: 5 p.m.
Reservations recommended. Limited attendance.
LENGTH OF PROGRAM: 60 to 75 minutes.
Learn about tea traditions and experience an early 19th century tea in Davenport House’s beautiful courtyard garden.
On inclement weather dates, tea will be taken inside the house museum in a delightful fashion.
The performance requires that guests be able to walk up and down stairs.

EARLY BIRDS’ PRESERVATION WALKING TOUR OF THE LANDMARK HISTORIC DISTRICT’S EAST SIDE

Saturdays in May 2021

PROGRAM DATE: May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
TIME: 8 a.m.
LENGTH OF PROGRAM: 100 minutes.
DISTANCE OF WALK: 2.5 miles
Take an early morning walk through one of the oldest and most varied neighborhoods to learn how historic preservation has revitalized downtown Savannah.
Coffee and treats in the Davenport House garden to follow.

For additional information:
www.davenporthousemuseum.org
912-236-8097
info@davenporthousemuseum.org
Graduating Junior Interpreters’ Profiles

Name: Ava Burr
Parent: Tonya Edwards
School: Savannah Arts Academy
How long have you been with the DH?: I have been with Davenport since the fall of my sophomore year, September 2018.
What things have you been involved in here at the DH?: I love all the Holiday interpretations, as well as the Holly Jolly tours, the Yellow Fever interpretations (even though I am not an actor), and the Savannah Voice festival opera events (I love those!). The holiday tours after Christmas are my favorite, as they’re a perfect blend of history, fun, and festivity.
What can you say about your time here at the DH and how has it prepared you?: The Davenport House has shown me how interesting and personal history really is. I am so glad I’ve worked here—I have learned so much and met so many amazing people.
Future plans: I plan to major in history in college. I am currently undecided as to where I will attend, but have gotten into Agnes Scott, UVA, and the University of Michigan.

The Pandemic and Me: The pandemic has been pretty standard for me.

Name: Isabel Davis
Parent: Maria Andrews
School: Savannah Arts Academy
How long have you been at the Davenport House?: About 2 and half years.
What things have been involved in?: I have been involved in Holly Jolly Tours, Super Museum Sunday, and Christmas Tours.
What can you say about your time here at the DH and how it has prepared you for the future?: The DH has been a special time for me, providing unbelievable experiences, friends and acquaintances, and especially a deep love for history. I would say it has prepared me for dealing with the public sphere of any job, especially feeling prepared to give speeches to large or small groups of people.
Future Plans?: Attending college with plans to major in a English and Linguistic Dual Degree and minor in Music.

Pandemic and Me: Like many the pandemic has provided me time to explore myself as person. Otherwise I would never have started a book club or composed a lot of music, which has shown me that I have profound love for composition. So in retrospect, the pandemic has given me exorbitant amount of me time which I am thankful for.

Name: Hilmy Rukmana
Parent: Rita Zahrara & Deden Rukmana
School: Savannah Arts Academy
How long have you been with the DH?: ~ 3 years
What things have you been involved in here at the DH?: Before the pandemic hit, I primarily found myself as a docent for the DH, typically giving AM tours. Besides tours, I helped host a few wedding ceremonies and extraneous events, led mini-tours for Savannah Trolley Tours, (briefly) helped in the gift shop, and helped film and produce a digital version of Raleigh’s Yellow Fever play.
What can you say about your time at the DH and how has it prepared you?: I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Davenport House. I've garnered countless memories while
working here, whether it be toasting Ben and Jerry's ice cream with my JI crew or almost crying with Sîan during an anniversary celebration in the DH gift shop. No amount of ignorant tourists or deadly viruses could ever taint my memories of the Davenport House, for it's a house I'd call home, with loving coworkers, a welcoming environment, and experiences that have prepared me with interpersonal skills I don't think I could find elsewhere.

**Future plans:** I plan to attend the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) as an Environmental Engineer major (though I am already considering switching to Industrial Design).

**The Pandemic and Me:** As much as I hate to admit it, COVID definitely hindered a promising year. As the DH first started to open its doors to a pandemic-infested world, I thought it best to start working the shop, thinking it the most sanitary and best while balancing a senior year with virtual classes, college applications, and a second job. Little did I know, a life of isolation, constant sanitation, and a sprinkle of anxiety took the best of me, and I *regretted* had to make a few sacrifices.

**Name:** Ariana Kalantari  
**Parent:** Behrooz Kalantari and Firouzeh Rahbari  
**School:** Savannah Arts Academy  
**How long have you been with the DH?:** I first began volunteering around October of my sophomore year and began working in January of my sophomore year.  
**What things have you been involved in here at the DH?:** Along with the job of giving tours of the home itself, I played the fiddle in the Holiday Tours for two years (sophomore and junior year), acted in the Tea shows of the Spring (sophomore year), and acted in the Yellow Fever show (junior year). I also helped with Super Museum Sunday in my sophomore and junior years.  
**What can you say about your time at the DH and how has it prepared you?:** My time and experiences at the Davenport House have truly been a highlight of my teenage years. Aside from the inexplicable amount of knowledge I have gained through the program, I have also been exposed to the world of historical restoration and museum function which is incredibly unique, if I do say so myself. My confidence in my own knowledge and public speaking was cultivated as I shared the stories of my home city with fellow admirers, paying tribute to the legacy of rebirth the city stands for in itself. Without the Davenport House I would not be as eloquent, open-minded, gregarious, or well-rounded as I am today and, for that, I am eternally grateful.  

**Future plans:** I plan to pursue medicine and become a serving neurosurgeon with contributions to the field of medical technology on the side (which I will, hopefully, run my own corporation within).  

**The Pandemic and Me:** Alongside all of the emotional, physical, and community-wide damage the pandemic brought, a reduction of pace came with it. This slower, easy-going change in lifestyle gave me time to sort through my own values and goals and plan ahead. I have made and lost friends, connections, and memories
which have shaped my future in their own ways. Above all, my gratitude for life stands stronger than ever, a notion that I will take with me as I grow.

Name: Cailyn Kurdys  
Parent: Jon & Carmen Kurdys  
School: Savannah Arts Academy  

How long have you been with the DH?: I have been with the Davenport House since my sophomore year of high school when I first participated in the Junior Interpreters program.

What things have you been involved in here at the DH?: I have given tours to the public, helped out on JI days, been a part of the holiday evening candlelight tours, helped with Super Museum Sunday, and other various volunteer opportunities with the Davenport House.

What can you say about your time at the DH and how has it prepared you?: My time at the Davenport House has been wonderful. It has given me a way to impact many people's lives, and teach them the history of a house that is important to Savannah's history and preservation. I can share my passion for history with others, and it provides me a way to constantly keep learning. My time at the Davenport House has prepared me for the real world. It has taught me to be flexible and has given me leadership, public speaking, and people skills to be able to comfortably interact with the public.

Future Plans: I am still undecided on my college of choice. I have been accepted to Savannah College of Art and Design and both Virginia Commonwealth University and its Honors College, and am still waiting to hear back from Vassar, Brown University, and Rhode Island School of Design. I plan to pursue art and major in jewelry design, in hopes of running my own business or working in a big jewelry house in the future. I also would love to combine my love of jewelry and history, and eventually work in a museum specializing and curating jewelry exhibits.

The Pandemic and Me: When I would think of what my senior year would be like, I was not expecting this. Covid came out of left field and has completely turned our lives upside down. Now we are starting to find a sense of normalcy with the Pandemic, but it was not like that at the start. I remember last spring stressing over AP exams, thinking of all the memories I was missing out on, and all the seniors that I never got a chance to properly say goodbye to. But there were the good parts too, spending more time with my family, getting a break from the fast-paced lifestyle I was so used to living, and the daily bike rides that my family and I would go on that provided a release to all the emotions I was holding in. Being able to go back to work at the Davenport House definitely gave my life a much-needed sense of normalcy, and was a good change to the monotony I was living for so long during Quarantine.

Name: Emma Madsen  
Parent: Heather DuCloux  
School: Savannah Arts  

How long have you been with the DH?: I participated in the Junior Interpreter summer program of 2019 and was added as a docent officially in October.

What things have you been involved in here at the DH?: I loved participating in
the Yellow Fever program 2019 and 2020, along with helping out at JI parties prior to COVID.

**What can you say about your time at the DH and how has it prepared you?:** Thanks to the Davenport House I now feel like my public speaking skills have improved along with confidence in myself. Being able to tell the story of the house to people every day and have them enjoy it definitely gives me hope for what I'll be able to do in the future.

**Future plans:** I actually hope to go into medicine, but being a docent at the Davenport House will always be apart of who I am as a whole. While I'm particularly interested in diseases at the moment, anything and everything is always subject to change. For all I know, I could be a storm-chaser later in life!

**The Pandemic and Me:** It's been tough for everyone. I wish, being able to see everyone at school again in person along with all the fun senior things that we won't be getting. They don't matter at all in the long run, but I wish that I could enjoy a cookout on SAA's lawn with Ava while sitting in the sun. I wish we could be persuaded to vote for X or Y for Prom Queen or King with donuts and muffins before first block. I probably miss hanging out in front of the school most of all, while everyone waited to be picked up after last block. Just a crowd of students laughing and having a good time after a day of work. Now I just close my computer screen when class is done. So you could say I'm happy they've begun to let students return in person, including me.
A delightful way to say Happy Mother's Day

Now in the DH Shop!
Shipping available.
To:

Friends of the Davenport House: Annual Giving Response Info

☐ $1—49 – Brick Mason  ☐ $50—149 – Carpenter  ☐ $150—249 – Master Builder
☐ $250—599 – Alderman  ☐ $600—999 – Fire Warden  ☐ $1000— McKinnon Circle

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Contact information: 912-236-8097, info@davenporthousemuseum.org

Well suited! Beth Kinstler found this photo and several others of a well-dressed man posing in what looks like a new suit in front of the DH ca. 1950. We are interested in old photos which show the building. Thank you, Beth.