

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
NOVEMBER 16, 2015  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2015-1018  
1507 E. 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET**

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**PROPOSAL**

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Demolish a ca. 1949 house.

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**ARCHITECTURE**

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One-story, rectangular-plan, front-gabled frame house with single and paired 1:1 windows with 3:1 wooden screens (now boarded up); partial-width, shed-roofed independent porch on ornamental metal supports; two-story, rectangular-plan, rear-gabled, frame addition to the rear.

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**RESEARCH**

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The house was built in 1949 by Rev. S.L. and Willie C. Davis, replacing a ca. 1910 house on the site. That earlier house had been the home of a blacksmith until around 1919, when it was rented by Cora DeWitty, an African-American laundress, and her family, several of whom became prominent in the African-American community in Austin. The DeWitty family lived here until around 1923; the house was then a rental property for several African-American families, until it was purchased by Rev. Silas L. and Willie Davis around 1939.

Silas L. Davis was born in Dale, Caldwell County, Texas, in 1888, to Andrew and Laura Davis, who had been born into slavery. Andrew Davis was from Texas, but his parents had come from Virginia. Laura Davis was from Arkansas, but her parents had come from Alabama. Silas was their third son. Andrew Davis was listed as a farmer in the 1900 U.S. Census; the two older boys in the family were listed as farm laborers, and 12-year old Silas was listed as being at school. By 1920, Silas had married Willie C. Thompson of Dale, Texas. They lived at Lytton Springs in Caldwell County, where Silas farmed. Silas was ordained in 1925; the 1930 U.S. Census listed him as a Baptist preacher in Seguin, Texas. After a short stint in San Antonio, where he was also a preacher, Silas L. Davis came to Austin in 1937 as the pastor of David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church; he organized Mount Cavalry Missionary Baptist Church two years later, and served as its pastor until his death at the age of 100 in 1988. Reverend Davis was known as a highly principled man, and through his presence and ministry, he had enormous influence in the East Austin African-American community. He was succeeded in the ministry by his grandson, the Rev. L.K. Jones. In 1998, the City of Austin renamed Washington Avenue in front of Mount Calvary in honor of Reverend S.L. Davis.

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**STAFF COMMENTS**

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The house is not listed in any City survey.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

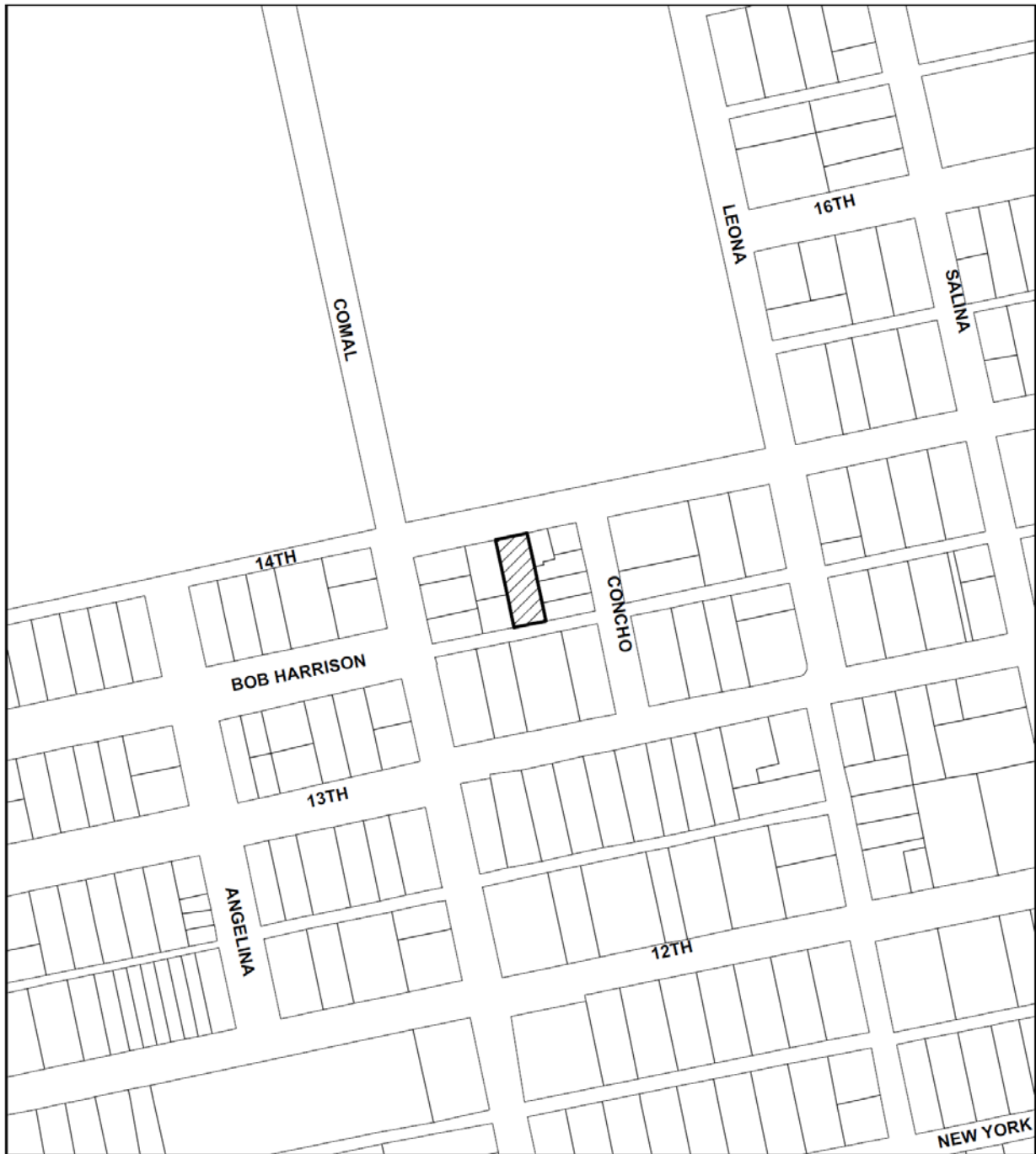
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This is an extremely difficult case. The house has obvious historical significance as the house that Rev. S.L. Davis built for his family in 1949, but the house is in a serious state of deterioration and is a danger to public health and safety. The house has been boarded up to secure it, but major structural issues remain.

The life and work of Rev. S.L. Davis are commemorated by the designation of his Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church as a historic landmark. It is truly unfortunate that this man's house has fallen into a state of complete disrepair as to almost require its

demolition at this point, as this would be a complement to Mount Calvary as a testament to the legacy of this great man and his works. However, staff does not believe that the house can be preserved at this point, so must reluctantly recommend release of the permit, but staff strongly recommends that the applicant erect an interpretive marker on the site to commemorate the location of the home of Rev. S.L. Davis. If the house were in better condition, staff would recommend the completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, but the sorry state of this house would do little to glorify the legacy of Rev. Davis at this point.

## LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

CASE#: HDP-2015-1018  
Address: 1507 E 14TH ST

1" = 200'

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.





1507 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
ca. 1949







## OCCUPANCY HISTORY

### 1507 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center  
 By City Historic Preservation Office  
 September, 2015

1992	Willie C. Davis, owner No occupation listed
1985-86	Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.
1981	Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.
1977	Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.
1973	Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.
1968	Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.
1962	Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue. Rear: Mrs. Scotty Blakemore, renter Maid

- 1959 Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners  
Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.  
Rear: Mrs. Scotty Blakemore, renter  
Maid, Ledwidge Student House, 2101-03 Nueces Street.
- 1955 Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners  
Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.  
Rear: Vessie Davis, renter  
Maid  
  
Valena Simmons, renter  
Maid
- 1952 Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners  
Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Avenue.

NOTE: The current house was built in 1949. Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis owned an earlier house on this site – the following is the occupancy history for that house, which is no longer extant.

- 1949 Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners  
Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 1150 Coletto Street.
- 1947 Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners  
Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 1150 Coletto Street.
- 1944-45 Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners  
Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 1150 Coletto Street.
- 1941 Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis, owners  
Pastor, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 1192 Angelina Street.
- 1939 Harry F. and Hattie Nesby, owners  
Laborer  
NOTE: Rev. Silas L. and Willie Davis are listed as the renters of the house at 2301 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street; he was the pastor of the Davis Chapel Baptist Church, 2209 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1937 Rev. J.S. Hansbrough, owner  
Pastor, 19<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, 1500 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street.  
NOTE: Rev. Silas L. and Willie Davis are not listed in the directory.
- 1935 George and Amanda Shields, owners  
No occupation listed
- 1932-33 John E. and Rosa L. Williams, renters  
Janitor, B'Nai Brith Hillel Association, 2228 Guadalupe Street.  
NOTE: George and Amanda Shields are listed at 1505 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street; he had no occupation shown.
- 1930-31 Ollie and Birda McClain (colored), renters  
Truck driver, J.R. Reed Music Company, 805 Congress Avenue.

- 1929 Ollie and Berta McClain (colored), renters  
No occupation listed
- 1927 Ollie and Birdie McClain (colored), renters  
Drayman, J.R. Reed Music Company, 805 Congress Avenue.
- 1924 Rev. Arthur R. and Juliet Wheeler (colored), renters  
No occupation listed  
NOTE: Ollie and Birdie McClain are listed at 1200 E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street; he was a truck driver for J.R. Reed Music Company, 805 Congress Avenue.
- 1922 Cora DeWitty (colored), renter  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are Alex DeWitty, no occupation shown; Arthur DeWitty, no occupation shown; Ernest DeWitty, no occupation shown; and Hubert DeWitty, no occupation shown.
- 1920 Cora DeWitty (colored), renter  
Laundress  
Also listed are Arthur DeWitty, a laborer; Oscar DeWitty, a laborer; and Ransom DeWitty, a laborer.
- 1918 Louis E. and Amelia Thomson, renters  
Blacksmith, Peter Thomson, blacksmith, carriage, buggy, and wagon works, 410 Colorado Street.  
NOTE: Cora DeWitty is not listed in the directory.
- 1916 J. William Thomson  
Blacksmith, Peter Thomson, 410 Colorado Street.
- 1914 J. William Thomson  
Blacksmith, Peter Thomson, blacksmith, carriage and wagon manufacturer, 410 Colorado Street.
- 1912-13 J. William Thomson  
Blacksmith, Peter Thomson, blacksmith, carriage and wagon manufacturer, horse-shoer, machine forger, 410 Colorado Street.
- 1910-11 Ken Cameron  
Agent, American National Insurance Company of Galveston, 117½ E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street.  
NOTE: J. William Thomson is listed at 510 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street; he was a blacksmith for Alvin Thomson, blacksmith and horse-shoer, 506 Trinity Street.
- 1909-10 The address is not listed in the directory.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

### Rev. Silas L. and Willie C. Davis (ca. 1949 - 1994)

His 197 World War I draft registration card shows Silas Leonard Davis was 29 years old, and had been born at Dale, Texas. He was living at Dale, where he was a farmer. He had a wife, and claimed a physical disability. He was of medium height and a stout build.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Silas L. and Willie Davis as renters of a farm in Lytton Springs, Caldwell County, Texas. Silas L. Davis was 31, had been born in Texas, and was a farmer.

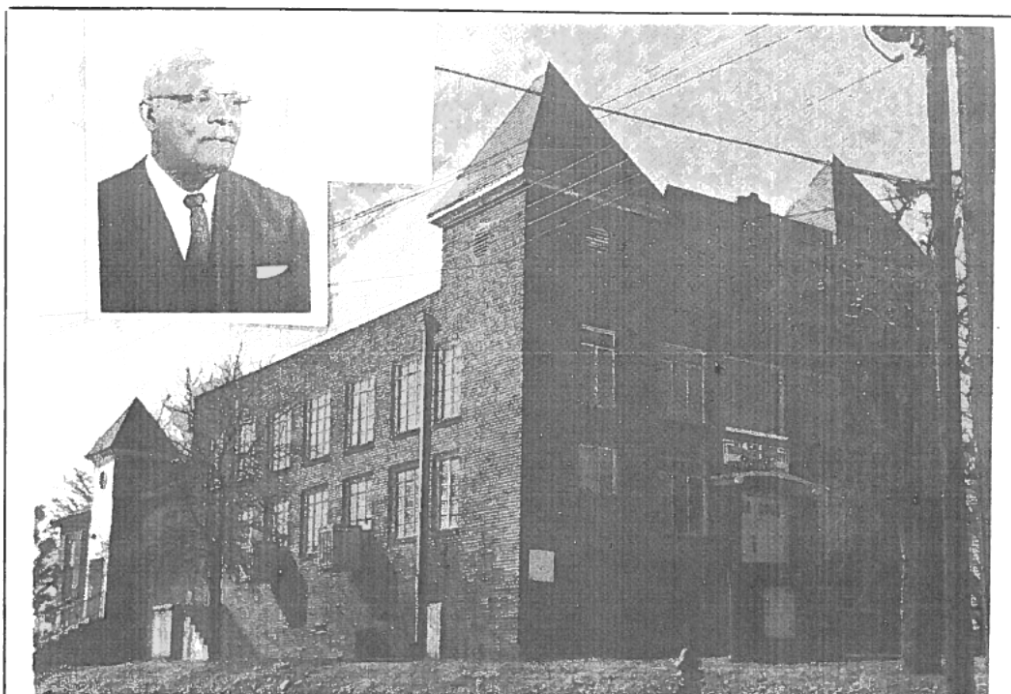
Willie Davis was 25, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 2 children listed with them: Od, 3; and Dimple, 5 months.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows S.L. and Willie Davis as the owners of a house in Seguin, Texas, which was worth \$500. S.L. Davis was 42, had been born in Texas, and was a preacher in a Baptist Church. Willie Davis was 33, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 6 children.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Silas and Willie Davis as the owners of this property; the former house on this site was worth \$1,300. Silas Davis was 48, and was listed as a preacher. Willie Davis was 43. They had children living with them. The family had lived in San Antonio in 1935.

Willie C. Davis died in 1994.





### *Congratulations*

## **Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church**

2111 Washington Avenue

Austin, Texas

Phone GR 2-2844

**REV. S. L. DAVIS, Pastor**

**Sister Olivia Harris Woodfork, Clerk**



Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, organized October 23, 1939 at 2301 E. 12th St., Austin, Texas. The first worship was held in the home of Bro. and Sis. Willie Marshall, 2103 E. 12th St. The first house of worship was the Community Center, 1192 Angelina St. The modern edifice at 2111 Washington Avenue bespeaks the ability of a stalwart leader to strive toward perfection.

### **REV. AND MRS. S. L. DAVIS**

Rev. and Mrs. S. L. Davis celebrated their Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary, January 11, 1966. Rev. Davis boasts of being equal to Jacob where offsprings are concerned. Another favorite expression of Rev. Davis: "Thank God I have a 'Spotted Calf's interest in St. John'."

*Austin History Center*

From St. John Regular Missionary Baptist Association  
One Hundredth Annual Session, July 17-30, 1967

*Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The most significant and deep-rooted foundations in East Austin is the organization of Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2111 S. L Davis Ave.

Mount Calvary was organized October 23, 1939 in a church parsonage, 2301 East 12<sup>th</sup> street, Austin, Texas, occupied the ousted Pastor, accompanied by two other ministers and fifty- nine members.

The name Mount Calvary was submitted by Sister Roberta Marshall.

While absent from the room, the organizer, Reverend S.L Davis was chosen pastor. He was escorted by Reverend A.C Clark back into the room and informed of his election as pastor of Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist church.

The first worship service was held one week after the organization of Mount Calvary, at 2103 East 12<sup>th</sup> the home of Mr. and Mrs. W.R Marshall. The Community Center located at 1142 Angelina, was the next shelter for Mount Calvary until February 16, 1941. The members would enter the edifice facing Coleto Street, clear of debt and Mount Calvary was only three years, three months and 28 days of age.

A decision was later made to enlarge the church and with faith, prayer and determination the church as it now stands was completed in 1950. Mount Calvary would be the first brick built church among black churches in East Austin.

Note burning ceremonies was held in 1977, the church was free and clear of financial debt.

A root out of dry ground, today a monument, asset and pride and joy to the community, city, state and nation under the leadership of one master minded, man of God, called by God to lead God's people to higher heights, the man the late Reverend S.L Davis.

Reverend S.L Davis was a dynamic preacher and teacher. As quoted by T. Lewis "to name all the honors that have been bestowed upon Rev. S. L. Davis it would require a book." Reverend S.L. Davis served as pastor of Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist church until the Lord called him to rest, May 29, 1988 at the age of 100.

The church later began a search for the next pastor. The pastoral call was extended to Reverend L.K Jones on July 26, 1988. He accepted the call and became the second pastor in the history of the Mount Calvary church. Pastor Jones is a faithful minister devoted to winning the souls to Christ and determined to do the will of God.

The church became a participant in foreign Mission on April 24, 1994; Pastor L.K Jones journeyed to Belize, South America.

## Washington Ave. renamed for ex-pastor

By SCOTT S. GREENBERGER  
American-Statesman Staff

Even at a time when neighbors, not patrol cars, policed the neighborhoods of East Austin, the Rev. Silas Leonard Davis stood out.

In the tight-knit East Austin of the 1930s, everybody knew everybody and parents looked out for their neighbors' children as well as their own. Yet Davis' moral stature was such that state District Judge Ralph Yarborough would try misdemeanor cases in Davis' East 12th Street home, often designating the reverend as an unofficial parole officer.

"He knew he could hold those people morally responsible for their conduct," son Floyd Davis said of the relationship between Yarborough, later a legendary U.S. senator and his father.

Ten years after Davis died at the age of 100, the City Council on Thursday acted to preserve his memory by renaming Washington Avenue, the site of his church, as "S.L. Davis Avenue."

Davis, a son of former slaves, was born in 1888 in Dale, about 25 miles southeast of Austin.

He was ordained in 1925, and pastored in Spring Hill, Fayetteville, Gay Hill, Oltine and San Antonio before coming to Austin in 1937 to head David Chapel

See Washington, B6

## Washington Ave. renamed in honor of ex-pastor Davis

Continued from B1

Missionary Baptist Church.

In 1939, Davis organized Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, and in 1950 he supervised the construction of the church's current red-brick building. His grandson, the Rev. Leonard Jones, succeeded him as pastor in 1988. Davis was strict, both in his interpretation of the Bible and his philosophy for raising children.

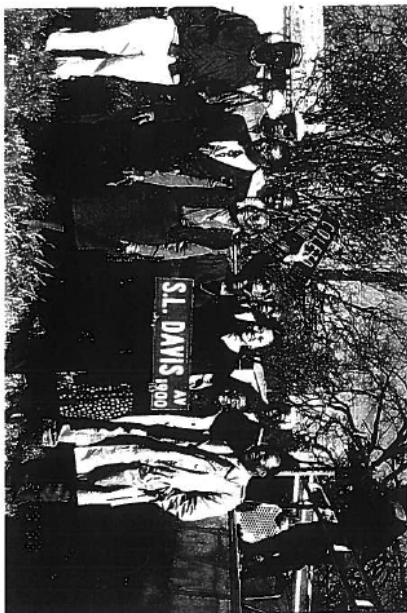
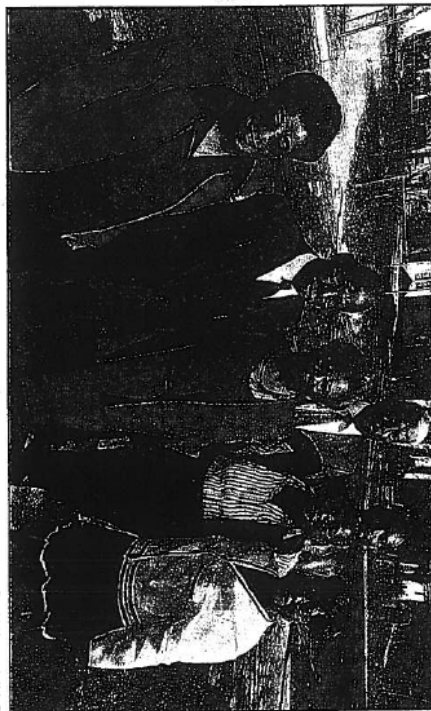
"My dad spanked. He knew how to spank. He came up knowing the spanking," Willie Ray said.

Davis was more than a preacher.

Relatives of the Rev. Silas Leonard Davis gathered at Davis' former church on Washington Avenue, which is being renamed for Davis.

From left are Teresa Lewis, Floyd Davis, Vessie Tutt, Willie Ray Davis, Scottie Ivory, Leonard Jones and Barbara Dotson.

David Kennedy/AA-S



## Mount Calvary minister dies at 100

By Tara Parker Pope  
American-Statesman Staff

The Rev. Silas Leonard Davis, who friends said preached the scripture for nearly 70 years with an unwavering commitment to the Gospel, died Wednesday, 11 days after his 100th birthday.

Scottie Ivory, Davis' daughter, said

reaching the 100-year mark was an important milestone for Davis, who never lost faith that he would celebrate a century of living.

"When he got to be 98 years old, he said 'I'm 98, and I'm glad to be here, but I'm not going to ask the Lord to be 100, I'm just going to trust that he'll let me get 100 years old, and I'll be satisfied,'" Ivory said.

The son of two former Texas slaves, Davis helped to organize Mount Calvary Baptist Church, 2111 Washington Ave., in 1939, and preached there until November when his health forced him to slow down.

Family members said Davis had memorized many scriptures. In the middle of the night and while in the

See Davis, B6



The Rev. Silas Leonard Davis never lost faith he would celebrate a century of living.

# Davis

From B1

hospital, he was often called by other preachers searching for a Biblical reference for their sermons.

Friends said Davis was a dynamic and eloquent speaker who stood apart from many other preachers because of his commitment to teaching his congregation as well as preaching to them.

"He was one of the greatest doctrinal teachers of his day. He had the charisma, but his forte was that he was one of the few preachers who was rooted and grounded in the doctrine of the faith," said the Rev. Raphael Smith, of the Mount Olive Baptist Church in Austin. "You have a lot of present-day ministers who are trying to swoon and sway you with platitudes, but he stayed strictly as a Biblical teacher."

Dr. Floyd A. Davis, Davis' son, described his father as an inspira-

tional man whose words were not soon forgotten by his congregation. He said his father, who had 11 children during his 72 years of marriage, has trained at least 17 ministers.

"He's a preacher, and he's a teacher. He felt it was just as important to make sure people understood the word as it was to preach the word," Davis said. "He was one who taught about Jesus, but nobody escaped knowing what sin was when he got through preaching."

Services for Davis will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday at St. John's Tabernacle, with burial in the Evergreen Cemetery.

Call 445-4040 for  
home delivery.

Austin American-Statesman

Obituary of Rev. S.L. Davis  
Austin American-Statesman, March 31, 1988





**Reverend Silas Leonard Davis**

Reverend S.L. Davis, 100 years and 10 days old, died Tuesday morning, March 29, 1988.

He was the proud organizer and pastor of Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, Austin, Texas. Mount Calvary had its beginning October 23, 1939. He served as active pastor until his death.

Other positions held during his ministerial career include: moderator of LaGrange Western Landmark Association; member of the Board of Trustees of Mary Allen College, Crockett, Texas; bible instructor for Ushers Convention of the National Baptist Convention of America; Saint John District Association; pastoral instructor for Saint John School of Religion; president of the BYPU (BTU) Department of State Congress of Christian Workers (42 years). Because of his rich background of knowledge and experience with the Congress, he was led to compile and publish *Four Decades*, a book treating each Sunday school and BYPU session. The book contains documental and worthwhile bits of information.

He was a member of Beacon Light Masonic Lodge #338 and Rose of Sharon Chapter 277 Order of Eastern Star.

Reverend Davis was nominated and selected as a recipient of the prestigious Black Heritage Award in recognition of his service to the Austin-Travis County community for so many years, by the Black Heritage Committee, Austin Independent School District.

His belief in God sustained him. His request to the Lord was to let him live to see his 100th birthday - REQUEST GRANTED!

Reverend Davis was the son of the late Andrew and Laura A. Davis; born in Saint John Colony, Dale, Texas, March 19, 1888; received his public school education in his native community; perfected an educational career at Guadalupe College and Samuel Huston College; and served as trustee of the public school in his district.

He was married in 1916, to Willie C. Thompson of Dale, Texas. To this union 11 children were born. One daughter, Valena A. Simmons; and one son, James Davis, preceded him in death.

He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Mrs. Willie C. Davis; three sons, Reverend O.D. Davis, Mr. Willie R.

Obituary of Rev. S.L. Davis  
Austin American-Statesman, April 1, 1988

	Rev.S.L. Davis		1507 E. 14th St.	
			W.50'	
40	36	8	of 6	B
-				
box gar. & cow shed				
295n - 11-17-39				
None				

Building permit to Rev. S.L. Davis for the construction of a box garage and cow shed at the former house on this site (1939)

Rev. S. L. Davis 1507 E. 14th St.

40 36 8 W.50' of 6 B

General repairs to res.

25064 10-12-43 \$700

Day labor

None

Building permit to Rev. S.L. Davis for general repairs to the former house on this site (1943)

Rev. S. L. Davis 1507 East 14th St

40 West 50' of 6 8 E 30

Frame residence.

40403 3-7-49 \$500.00

Owner

5

Building permit to Rev. S.L. Davis for the construction of this house (1949)

OWNER Rev. S. L. Davis ADDRESS 1507 East 14th. St.  
PLAT 40 LOT 50' of 6 BLK 8  
SUBDIVISION C. R. Johns  
OCCUPANCY Extend Res. & garage  
BLD PERMIT # 106192 DATE 12-14-67 OWNERS  
ESTIMATE 100.00  
CONTRACTOR Owner NO. OF FIXTURES -  
WATER TAP REC # Exist. SEWER TAP REC # Exist.  
Frm. addn. to res. & tie exist. garage to res. & remodel  
750 sq. ft.

Building permit to Rev. S.L. Davis for the rear addition (1967)



Florent Rouffignac  
903 E.13<sup>th</sup> St  
Austin ,TX 78702  
512-296-7246

Historic Landmark Commission  
City of Austin

Re: 1507 East 14<sup>th</sup> St. Demolition

Honorable Commissioners:

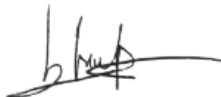
My family lives in Swede Park and is familiar with this property. In fact, we have seen it sit in complete disrepair for years now. We are delighted someone is trying to demolish it as it is unsafe and an eyesore. It also most probably helps the vermin strive in the area.

We also hear the seller is working with a buyer that will engage a local East Austin architect and local East Austin builder, and that the home is for a young couple wishing to start a family and live there with their aging grandparents—this, as far as we know, is not an investor speculating on the property. This matters to us and is exactly what we want in Swede Hill.

Please issue the demolition permit so this coveted lot in a great neighborhood can contribute to the neighborhood and the owners can get their lives together. The fact that Rev. SL Davis lived may be interesting, but does not merit historical designation. There is a street named after him and we hear that his own family supports the demolition. We feel there are alternatives that the City can explore to honor the Reverend's memory.

Best regards,

Florent Rouffignac

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Florent', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kevin Smith  
1004-A East 13<sup>th</sup> Street  
Austin, TX 78702  
512-964-3864

Historic Landmark Commission  
City of Austin

Re: 1507 East 14<sup>th</sup> St. Demolition

Honorable Commissioners:

My family lives in Swede Park and is familiar with this property. We have seen it sit in complete disrepair for years now and are delighted someone is trying to demolish it—it is unsafe, an eyesore, and the knows the family that owns it needs the money.

We also hear the seller is working with a buyer that will use a local East Austin architect and local East Austin builder to build a home is for a young couple that wants to start a family and live there with their aging grandparents. This matters to us and is exactly what we want in Swede Hill!

Please release the demolition permit so this gorgeous lot in a great neighborhood can **contribute** to the neighborhood instead of detract from it and the owners can get their lives together. The fact that Rev. SL Davis lived there does not merit historical designation, nor do the owners or the buyers want historical designation.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Regards

Kevin Smith



Abraham Rothbaum  
1201 East 13th  
Austin, TX 78702

Historic Landmark Commission  
City of Austin

Re: 1507 East 14<sup>th</sup> St. Demolition

Honorable Commissioners:

My family lives in Swede Hill and is familiar with this property. We have seen it sit in complete disrepair for years now —the current structure is unsafe, and an eyesore, and the family that owns it apparently wants to sell.

We also heard the owner is working with a buyer that will use a local East Austin architect and local East Austin builder to build a home is for a young couple that wants to start a family and live there with their aging grandparents. This matters to us.

Please release the demolition permit so this gorgeous lot in a great neighborhood can contribute to the neighborhood instead of detract from it. The teardown house does not merit historical designation to me, nor do the owners or the buyers seem to want historical designation.

Thanks,



Abe Rothbaum