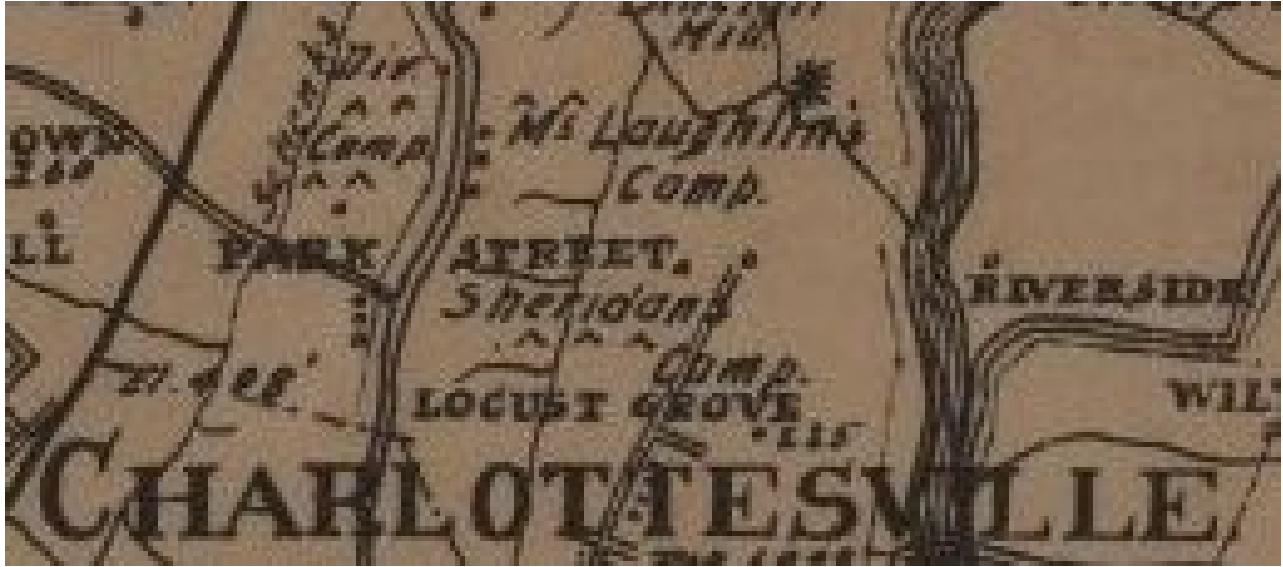


Charlottesville Parks & Rec Naming Consideration

Soccer field off Davis Avenue adjacent to Northeast Park



1890 Charlottesville Land Company Map. The shaded area is owned by the Company. The unshaded area is “Enderly”, with the road running east-west being what is now Watson Ave. The northern edge of the unshaded area appears to be north of where Davis Ave is now.



From the 1907 Massie Map

The property under consideration is currently known as “Davis Field” in the City GIS.

For thousands of years, this area was traveled through and lived in by Monacan Indians. In the early 18th Century, white Anglo-Americans pushed into the area, and in 1735 Nicholas Meriwether received a land grant of 1,020 acres that included this land. Meriwether was the largest landholder in Albemarle County and one of the largest in all of Virginia, amassing more than 30,000 acres of land, and enslaving many people over the course of his life. This particular 1,020-acre tract stretched west of the Rivanna River and became Meriwether’s plantation known as “The Farm.”

-- Jordy Yager, <https://mappingville.com/2020/01/16/1-lexington-ave/>

R. M. Davis



The street and field are named for Robert Marshall "Jack" Davis (https://cvillepedia.org/R.M._Davis), a real estate developer, Charlottesville City Councillor (1952-1960), and Charlottesville City Mayor (1956-1958). This is evidenced by Marshall Court and Marshall Street intersecting Davis Avenue. Davis’s father and son both have the same name, and he is typically referred to with the suffix “Jr.” during his time in office.

He is not directly related to Noah Knowles Davis (professor of moral philosophy at UVA), John A. G. Davis (law professor at UVA shot and killed by a student), either his son or grandson, both named John Staige

Davis, or Jefferson Davis (President, Confederate States of America).

Davis's ancestor, John F. Early, enslaved numerous Black people on his farm in Greene County, as recorded in the 1850 and 1860 censuses, and given his extensive family history in the area, it is likely others participated in enslavement.

It is my belief that the name "Davis" should not continue to be memorialized in this public park. During his time on City Council, he was a participant in maintaining a segregated and unequally-resourced school system and the active and persistent resistance to school desegregation. This notably included a vigorous court battle to resist lawsuits by Black parents in Charlottesville to force desegregation after the 1954 and 1955 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court made desegregation illegal and demanded that localities desegregate their schools with "all deliberate speed". Charlottesville, along with every other locality in Virginia, chose not to honor this ruling in order to prolong segregation as long as possible. As a member of City Council, Davis was an active participant in this resistance.

Similarly, as a real estate developer, he was a key participant in a segregated housing system that sought to exclude Black people from homeownership in a significant proportion of the city. Most new homes prior to 1948, when the Supreme Court ruled the practice unconstitutional in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, would have contained a racially restrictive covenant on the deed. After that, it would have simply been the policy of a developer selling new homes to only sell to white buyers. Unless evidence can be found to the contrary, it should be assumed the Davis participated in this near-universal practice.

Enderly

Just south of the Davis Field, at 603 Watson Ave, is the property known as "Enderly", and this is a name that should not be considered for the property. The text for VA DHR marker Q-42: "Built ca. 1859 in the Greek Revival style, Enderly was the home of William F. Gordon Jr. during the 1860s. Gordon served as clerk of the Virginia House of Delegates from 1859 to 1865... [William F. Gordon Jr.]

was temporary secretary of the convention that met in Richmond in 1861 to debate Virginia's secession from the Union. As special emissary of the convention, he delivered a copy of the Ordinance of Secession to Confederate President Jefferson Davis in Montgomery, Alabama."

Enderly was undoubtedly built by enslaved workers, with materials, particularly the bricks, fabricated by enslaved workers. In the 1860 census, Gordon is living at the house of notorious local Confederate R. T. W. Duke Sr., as this house was likely under construction, and renting one enslaved woman.

Sheridan

Another name that may be proposed is Sheridan, as General Philip Sheridan was the Union Army general who liberated Charlottesville from Confederate occupation near the end of the Civil War, and camped in this area as shown in the 1907 Massie Map. Most importantly, the presence of Sheridan's forces allowed the enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, liberating nearly half the population of Albemarle County who had been enslaved. The road to the east of Northeast park combines Sheridan Ave and, ironically, Calhoun Ave (Senator John C. Calhoun was a notorious pro-slavery advocate).

While there is an understandable desire to commemorate people involved in liberation, particularly to counteract the numerous places in the area named after Confederates such as Earlysville, Venable Elementary, and the former Lee and Jackson Parks. However, Sheridan is problematic because his forces committed numerous acts in the Shenandoah Valley during 1864 and 1865 that we would consider war crimes, particularly the significant destruction and theft of civilian property. Also, while there may be an understandable desire to counteract our numerous Confederate memorializations with a Union memorialization, this is misguided and should be avoided.