

Davis recalls Daleville's history

By PAT RADAKER
Herald correspondent

DALEVILLE — "Daleville has become a bedroom town where people come to sleep and pay the lowest taxes possible," says Martin Davis — one of Daleville's young octogenarians.

The 89-year-old retired school teacher is scheduled to present the city's history via slides during Daleville's three-day birthday celebration, scheduled today through Saturday.

SPEAKING OF the community's history, Davis credits three important events with the building up of the community — the establishment of a canal for travel between Daleville and Anderson in 1831, the extension of the New York Central Railroad from Ohio to Missouri in 1852, and the discovery of natural gas in the area about 1886.

The first well was located across from the Christian Church. Two others were located on the property that has since become the Davis Fruit Orchards, owned by Martin Davis.

Several industries came to Daleville when natural gas was discovered. Some included a bottle factory, a shoe factory, a tile factory, a wagon factory, and a foundry that made stoves for Sears and Roebuck.

ACCORDING TO Davis, the foundry burned down before his time.

"An explosion caused by burning gas in the tile factory killed one worker and seriously injured the owner," he says.

He also says the bottle factory experimented with using gas made from coal when the natural gas supply was depleted.

"GAS BROUGHT industry to Daleville. When it left, so did industry," he says.

Copies of the *Daleville Centennial News*, published in November 1938, and numerous boxes of slides are part of Davis' collection of records concerning the city's history.

Looking up the Nov. 1 issue of the short-lived paper, Davis points out information about the Daleville-Anderson canal. The purpose of the canal was to provide transportation of goods between the two towns. The canal, which followed the White River, was built by the Anderson Hydraulic Company.

THE CANAL ATTEMPT was a failure, because too much gravel in the area allowed the water to seep away.

Davis was born in Kansas, July 20, 1895, on the 80 acres his father homesteaded after his discharge from active duty in the Civil War at the ripe old age of 19.

The family returned to Daleville, when Davis was 7, to be near relatives. William Dilts, Union Township's first settler, was Davis' great grandfather.

IN 1915, DAVIS graduated from high school. He is the only member of his family and of his graduating class to receive a college degree.

Right after high school, Davis began working in some of the area factories, including Delco and Guide. He started at the hourly rate of 26 cents and worked up to 32 cents an hour.

After he was laid off at Remy, he did carpentry work for a while, then, unexpectedly, he received an offer to teach industrial arts to a class of sixth graders on Grosse Isle in Michigan.

THE TEACHING OFFER was made after he completed just one year's work in an electrical engineering course at Purdue.

"I had no training to teach, but I'm a naturally handy person with my hands," he says.

From there, he went to Oakwood, Mich., where he taught industrial arts and coached basketball and baseball. He and his wife did not want to stay in the Detroit area, and she had taught in Daleville, so they returned and he completed his work at Muncie

Normal School for a teaching license.

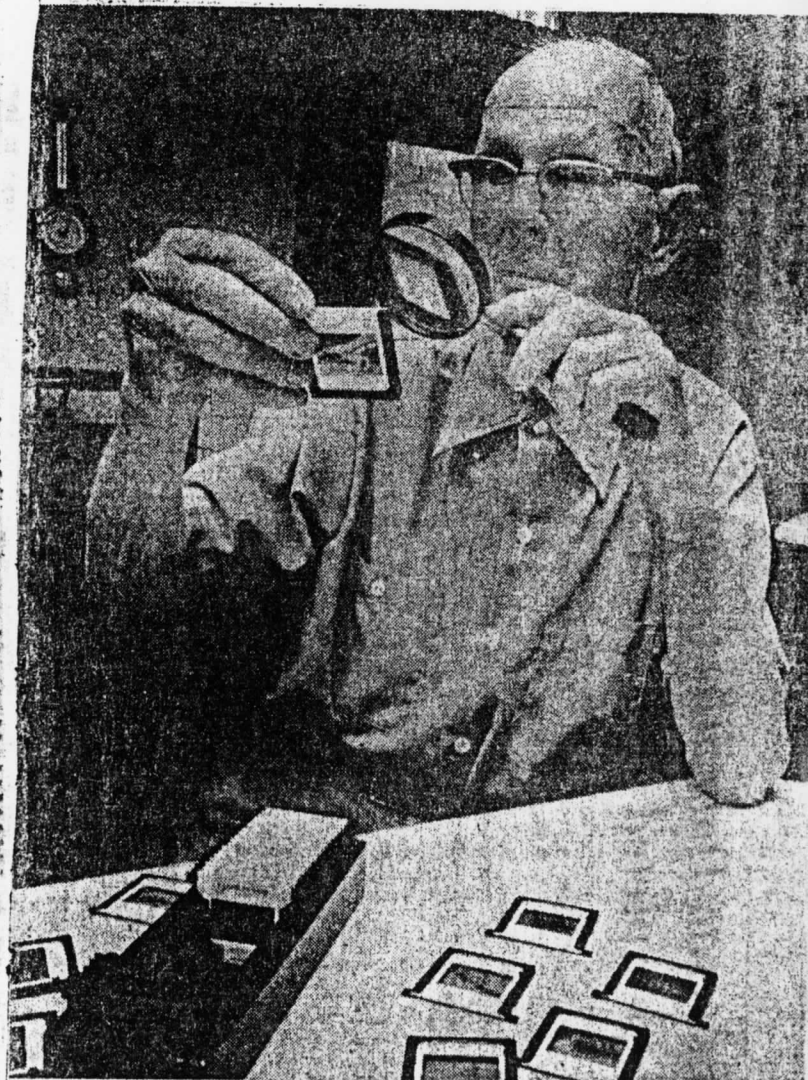
AT DALEVILLE, DAVIS taught industrial arts, math, and physics until he retired in 1953.

While there, he introduced a class in sheet metal work as a part of the industrial arts courses and taught it without the aid of many of the machines that were available at the Normal School, now known as Ball State University.

He published a manual of exercises and projects for use with his students.

In 1951, Davis established a metal working shop in the Daleville School, salvaging old government machinery and designing his own equipment when necessary. After he retired, he says no one continued with that project.

1984



Octogenarian — Martin Davis will give a presentation on Daleville's history during the city's birthday celebration, today through Saturday.

(Dale Pickett)

DALEVILLE

