

## WHO WAS R. MEANS DAVIS?



R. Means Davis was born in Winnsboro, SC in 1849. Means had been a newspaper editor and school teacher. He was a member of the South Carolina College Class of 1872 and received his law degree in 1872. His vivid personality as well as experience in his varied careers made him one of the most effective members of the College staff. Davis was the only professor of history and political economy until 1899 -1900. He also taught in the law school. His standards for graduate work were high; in the catalogue of 1888 and 1889, R. Davis assured his prospective graduate students in history and political economy that he would make them undergo a regimen of specialized reading that would take at least two years to accomplish. Davis passed away in 1904

Compiled and edited by Dr. Pat Feehan  
Thoroughly proofed by Madonna Stoehr

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South Caroliniana Library Digital Collections

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## Davis College University of South Carolina The First 100 Years



School of Library and Information Science  
College of Mass Communications and Information  
Studies  
University of South Carolina

## Davis College

A glance at the building inventory of the University of South Carolina reveals that no building was constructed on the grounds of the University after the Civil War until 1909.

The first building to be constructed after this hiatus was Davis College. In 1908, the South Carolina legislature appropriated \$30,000 for a new structure and trustees of the University decided it



should be devoted to lecture rooms. The college, the first to be planned and supervised by the University's architect, C. C. Wilson, was built by the King Lumber Co. of Charlottesville, VA for a cost of \$34,273.

The college was to be erected on "the green" (later to be named Gibbes Green), east of the wall enclosing the university grounds on a lot purchased from the estate of Malachi Howell in 1838. The wall was built in 1808 to improve the appearance of the grounds. It was the conviction of the authorities that the wall would also aid in maintaining better discipline. In 1835, the committee on college repairs replaced the ragged wooden fences with a brick wall six feet nine inches high and of such thickness that would insure durability.

The college was formally opened on Founders' Day, January 14, 1910. The address of the occasion was made by Lewis W. Parker. "R. Means Davis College" was selected as the name of the new building in honor of the late professor R. Means Davis who passed away in 1904.

The first floor of R. Means Davis College had been assigned to the departments of mathematics and engineering, history and political economy, and modern languages; the departments of English and ancient and modern languages were located on the second floor.

### THE "THIRD USC"

From 1909 until the Depression seven more buildings, academic and residential, were built primarily in the eastern half of university grounds (about 4 square blocks of the central campus. These were Barnwell (1910), Thornwell (1913), Woodrow (1914), Currel (1918- originally named Petrigru), Sloan ( 1927), the Melton Observatory (1928), and Wardlaw (1930). The buildings are quite similar in many ways. They are all less than four floors high but were designed to look impressive through the use of such elements as the columns on Davis, Barnwell and Wardlaw.



Most of these buildings are located in an area which several generations of Columbians know as Gibbes Green. Named for Major Wade Hampton Gibbes, who owned much of the land in the area, the green originally consisted of land bounded by Pendleton, Bull, Pickens, and Greene Streets. Acquired by South Carolina College in 1838, the area was kept for many years as an open space, serving as a playground, ballfield and park. The city of Columbia in 1909 was also laying claim to the greater part of the green. The claim of the university to build there was sustained by the supreme court of the state in 1910.

In 1934, a Civil Works Administration grant paid for repairs to LeConte, Davis, Sloan, Rutledge and DeSaussure colleges and other buildings. They would stand strong to hold further generations of university students.



Although today Davis houses the School of Library and Information Science, many alumni will remember that it was the home of the Department of English until 1968.

In 1966 - 1967 the request of Dr. Thomas Jones, President of the University, for establishing a graduate library school was approved by the Board of Trustees. The library school was one important part of Dr. Jones' plans for expanded graduate education programs at USC.

After an extensive search, which took about two years, Dr. Wayne Yenawine, Director of Libraries at the University of Louisville, and a former dean at Syracuse University Library School, was appointed as Dean of the College of Librarianship.

On September 1, 1970 Dean Yenawine and Mrs. Placidia Bell opened the doors to Davis College, new home of future Library and Information Science professionals.

