

## The Davis Bottom History Preservation Project

### The Hathaway Family Homestead (1865-2008)

The Hathaway family established one of the first homes in Davis Bottom at 208 West Pine Street. Robert Elijah Hathaway, his stepfather Isham and Cyrus Hathaway filed a deed to purchase the property on December 26, 1865 (Giles 2011). The three men were all veterans of the U.S. Colored Troops, and likely pooled their army pay to purchase the 2.67-acre lot from Richard Martin. The Hathaway family eventually had two homes on the lot. The small shotgun home was the birthplace of the Hathaway children. The family also built a larger, two-story home next door, as well as several outbuildings. The Hathaway homes were surrounded by the Combs lumberyard and railroad tracks, which ran directly behind their lot. When coal-powered, steam locomotives passed, the family had to be on guard against fires started by smokestack embers (Giles 2011).



The houses were demolished in 1983, but the property “stayed in the Hathaway estate from 1865 to 2008,” according to Yvonne Giles, Director, Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum. The lot has been transferred to The Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum.

*Figure 1: The Hathaway homes, West Pine Street, ca 1960s. Courtesy, The Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum.*

### The Hathaway Family

Many members of the extended family occupied the two Hathaway homes from the late 1800s to the early 2000s. The smaller, one-story shotgun house was home to Robert and Rachel Hathaway. Robert Elijah Hathaway worked as a waiter and a Christian preacher. His wife, Rachel, bore three children before her death in 1874. All three of the Hathaway children became professionals. Fannie, the oldest, was a teacher and principal at nearby Patterson and Carver Elementary Schools. Eva, the youngest, was a nurse. And, Isaac Hathaway became a nationally recognized artist and professor.

*Figure 2: The Hathaway family, ca 1890. Seated: (left) Robert Elijah, and Isaac. Standing: (left) Fannie and Eva. Courtesy, Mosaic Templars Cultural Center.*



## Isaac Hathaway's home studio

As a young boy, Isaac Hathaway experimented with clay, which he gathered from the nearby quarry and creek that once ran through the Davis Bottom valley (Perry 1939). The family supported Isaac's artistic talent from an early age. Isaac also received training from teachers at Lexington Normal School (a.k.a. Chandler), The New England Conservatory in Boston, and The Art Academy of Cincinnati.



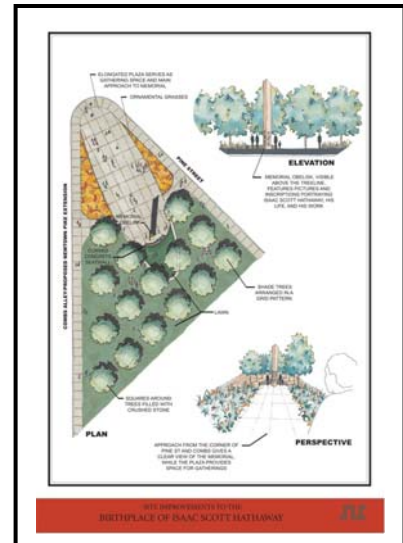
After his advanced studies, Isaac Hathaway returned to Lexington in 1900. He and his father set up an art studio in the old chicken coop behind the family home on West Pine Street. Hathaway quickly earned commissions from local and national institutions. From his home studio in Davis Bottom, Hathaway created a plaster model of Morrison Hall for Transylvania University, a life mask of poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, a death mask of W.C.P. Breckinridge, a death mask and bust of Cassius M. Clay, and a model of the Bath County meteorite for the Smithsonian Institution. (Perry 1939; Giles 2011)

Figure 3: The Hathaway chicken coop (1940s), which Isaac Hathaway used as his art studio from 1900 to 1907. Courtesy, The Kentucky Historical Society.

## Birthplace Memorial

The Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum plans to build a memorial park at the birthplace of Isaac Scott Hathaway after completion of the Newtown Pike Extension project. Architectural plans for the site call for a plaza, memorial obelisk and small park on the corner of West Pine and the old Combs Alley.

Figure 4: Architectural Plan, "Site Improvements to the birthplace of Isaac Scott Hathaway." Courtesy, The Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum.



## Contributing Scholars

Yvonne Giles, Director, The Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum

## References Cited

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1939 Isaac Scott Hathaway interview of February 2, 1939. *Federal Writer's Project Papers*, Collection no. 03709, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.