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## Filmmaker finds treasure capturing Charlotte history

Donald Devet has produced four videos that provide a unique perspective on the city.

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Slideshow

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Donald Devet has made several videos exploring the historical roots of the Queen City. BONNIE DEVET PHOTO



Michael J. Solender for Neighbors of the City. His column is called 'neighborhoods'

### More Information

- [Want to see the videos?](#)

"If These Bricks Could Talk" - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oNURDPHoZk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oNURDPHoZk)



"Save Our Signs" - [vimeo.com/14419008](http://vimeo.com/14419008)

"A Victim of Our Own Success" - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YeerPibPY0&feature=channel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YeerPibPY0&feature=channel)

"A Second Home: Charlotte's Burgers & Joints" - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFaoXQ3U078](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFaoXQ3U078)

Sometimes history is looking us right in the eye and we don't even see it.

The Queen City is full of brick buildings, historic signs and even neighborhood burger joints that have much to tell about our past, if only we could unlock their secrets.

Donald Devet, a Dilworth video producer and filmmaker, has done just that.

Devet has been telling stories since he was a young boy fascinated by puppetry. He turned his passion for entertaining others into his first paying job supporting a weekly children's show at the local CBS affiliate in Columbia, S.C.

Though only 17 when he started, Devet worked his way up to hosting and producing the show, soaking up knowledge and experience that would serve him well during a successful career as a Web and television producer.

More than 40 years later, with extensive television and video production experience under his belt, he's put his talent behind exploring the historical roots of the Queen City.

Devet doesn't have to look far to see fascinating glimpses of Charlotte's past that are in danger of being lost, and he aims to rectify that. Devet has researched, documented and produced four short videos over the past year that provide a unique perspective on contemporary Charlotte through its historic past.

"It is important to remind Charlotteans of our city's past," says Devet, who now heads his own video production company, Now & Then Video.

"Our community has a rich history that is vital in helping people understand how Charlotte developed the way it did."

Devet's first film to tap into Charlotte's wealth of history was "If These Bricks Could Talk," produced last year in cooperation with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

The film features the story of the historic Fire Station No. 2 on South Boulevard.

Those not familiar with Dilworth's evolution and history at the turn of the 20th century might not realize the instrumental role the firehouse played in establishing this storied neighborhood.

Using narrative from several knowledgeable sources - including Ted Alexander, the regional director of Preservation North Carolina, and John Hannan, Charlotte's fire chief - the film incorporates photographs of the era and current footage to tell a fascinating story.

The film documents the role this simple yet important building played in protecting the neighborhood against fire, allowing Dilworth to grow and ultimately thrive.

Devet next put his talents to work on a project developed for Historic Charlotte Inc. and that group's effort behind the Save Our Signs campaign.

"Save Our Signs" explores the wonderful stories behind the eclectic and iconic signs in and around Charlotte. Punctuated by absorbing details behind many of Charlotte's most famous vintage signs - think JFG Coffee, Open Kitchen, Park Road Shopping Center and Ratcliffe's Flowers - this short film is as much a visual delight as it is a local history lesson.

Zeke Foard, retired owner of SignArt, and Diane Althouse, executive director of Historic Charlotte Inc., are two featured experts who share behind-the-scene stories about some of the Queen City's most significant visual landmarks.

Two additional videos Devet recently produced for Charlotte ViewPoint offer nostalgic perspectives on our city that inform and entertain. "A Victim of Our Own Success" looks back at the retail heyday of uptown Charlotte during the late 1950s through the migration of retailers to the newly developed shopping malls of the 1970s.

"A Second Home: Charlotte's Burgers & Joints" is a more contemporary look at three existing popular local eateries, each with a rabid fan base.

While not a retrospective, the film does tap into the nostalgic feel found at these neighborhood institutions and the sense of place their patrons identify with.

"My interest in documenting the wealth of history found here in Charlotte comes from seeing how little is remembered about our past," said Devet.

These little gems he's created make sure that we'll be able to hold onto those memories well into the future.

Michael J. Solender is a freelance writer who covers Charlotte neighborhoods. Have a story idea? Reach him at [michaelsolender@gmail.com](mailto:michaelsolender@gmail.com).

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