

Edward Graham Davis, Sr.

FAMILY HISTORY



by
Thelma Davis Pittman

July 10, 2008

***“You don’t choose your family. They are
God’s gift to you, as you are to them.”***

—Bishop Desmond Tutu

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Cousins,

Thank you for blessing us with your presence. As stated above, God chose you to be part of this family, so please cherish this event and know you are loved.

Please take the opportunity to thank Elizabeth Ritchey for having the vision for this reunion and also for being such a gracious hostess. Many have volunteered to make this a memorable event with great food and fellowship, so give them a hug.

Thanks to Thelma Pittman for her history narrative, Edward Pond for his genealogy charts and photos, Ann Styron for allowing us to copy the Davis Family Crest, originally provided by Pearl Davis, Lou Davis and children for recording this event and to God for making us Family.

Thom Styron

Grandson of Rebecca Davis Styron “Girlie”

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The purpose for writing this paper is to recount some of the findings of my research, through the years, and my conclusions drawn from it, of the Davis family. A reunion is being planned soon, at the home of Jim and Elizabeth Ritchey on the shore at Davis. There could be no better place to hold this reunion. It was in the early 1700’s that William Davis and his wife Mary Wicker, with their family, established a homestead on this shore. The family owned Davis Island, Davis Ridge, Davis Shore, hundreds of acres at the head of Oyster Creek and many acres of the Outer Banks. From my personal research, I cannot tell you exactly where their home was located, but I have heard that Archie Davis, the best genealogist of his day, put their home at almost the exact location of the Charlie Bowser house.

William Davis had eight sons and one daughter. He divided his land among his sons. The daughter did not get much, as women were only chattel in that day. She did, however, receive in his will: ***“I give unto my daughter Abigail one mouse collar mare that has ben always***

cald hern also one feathere bed and furnitud two cowes and calves to her and heirs ever.”

One of William & Mary’s sons was Nathan. Including his inheritance, he also acquired a large amount of land and other property. He became the owner of Davis Ridge, which was inherited by Nathan’s son, James.

It was at Davis Ridge where we find James, living on his plantation, in the early 1800’s. James got the name “Whispering Jim”, because he talked so loudly. Like his father before, “Whispering Jim” was a wealthy man. I did not realize it until about 10 years ago, when I requested from the State Archives, a copy of his estate papers. He owned many slaves, as did his ancestors. He had everything necessary to sustain his household, every tool available at the time, cattle, oxen, hogs, chickens and sheep. He had boats, seines, canoes, muskets, and a windmill. He also had some fine things like candelabras, and what really surprised me, a pianoforte. There was a schoolhouse at the Ridge, because I have seen references in deeds of the property line going to the schoolhouse. A portion of an article published in the Weekly Recorder, Beaufort, NC, Feb. 10, 1888, about the Davis family reads as follows, “***One of them was known as WHISPERING JIM (son of Nathan) and it is said that***

he could be heard, at least a mile on a calm evening in an ordinary conversation. The kind hearted, generous and popular ex solicitor of the old third, now sixth Judicial district of this state, is a descendent of William, which will in part, at least account for his wonderful lung powers. It seems that their greatest sin, with some exceptions of course, is and was their total aversion to manual labor”. Whispering Jim had four sons and three daughters.

Wallace Willis Davis, the oldest son of Whispering Jim, left the Ridge and purchased 21 acres at Davis Shore, in 1825. The property had belonged to his uncle, Freeman, and transferred a couple times before Wallace. The land went from the sound where Dr. Kerry Willis lives to the turn in Croaker Street. I believe Wallace lived on the eastern portion of the property for two reasons. One is the location of the cemetery, and the other is that he and his youngest son, Nathan, lived together for many years after Wallace’s wife, Charlotte, died. That is the section of the property he gave to Nathan. Wallace and Charlotte had four children. The oldest was named James, no doubt after his grandfather. He married a Salter and lived at the head of Oyster Creek near his wife’s parents. He died when he was about 36 years old and left a widow and thee children. They did not, however, inherit any of Wallace’s property. He gave his son, Edward,

Sr., our ancestor, 8 acres of the back land, (the western portion) on Croaker Street. He gave his youngest son, Nathan, 8 acres of the shore land. Nathan was the father of Mrs. Leah Piner (Doran Gray's grandmother). He gave his daughter, Adeliza, the land in between. Adeliza was the mother of Uncle Bob Willis, Monroe Willis (Ms. Dessie's father), and others.

When Edward, Sr. (called Eddard) was 23 years old on Sunday, Dec. 2, 1849, he married Rebecca Jones (called Becky Eddard), from Smyrna. She was the daughter of Kilby Jones and Hannah Davis, from another of the Davis lines. My research leads me to believe, they built the house on Croaker Street, inherited, along with approximately 5 acres of the western portion of the land, by his youngest son Edward, Jr. Description of the house, by Edward Pond, ***“This Edward Davis, Sr.’s house was not the pegged timber frame Colonial style house that was built at Davis Shore by the earliest Davis Shore residents. Those former pegged timber frame house styles had passed out of fashion at Davis Shore in the early 1800’s. Instead the 1849 Edward Davis, Sr.’s house was a modified saltbox frame house, a style built until about the time of the Civil War when the house architecture style changed once again. That Edward G. Davis, Sr.’s 1849 house was a later Davis Shore style of house, (small saltbox with front porch, storey and***

half, 4 room on first floor, with passage way and a shed kitchen on the back, with upstairs attic”. It was the same house torn down by Al Duncan and Mary Frances Willis after hurricane Isabel. That is where they lived and were the parents of 6 sons and 2 daughters. When Edward, Sr. was about 44 years old, he died. I have been told it was before his youngest son, Edward Jr. (Uncle Eddie), was born in 1871, but Edward Pond comes up with a date after that, when Uncle Eddie was a few months old.

When we think of the year 1870 or 1871, a few years after the end of the Civil War, it is impossible to imagine how hard it must have been for Rebecca. She was left a widow, with 8 children and her oldest was 17. The South had “Gone with the Wind”, and Davis Shore was no exception. It was our hardest economic period in the history of this Nation. My mother, Delia, used to say, ***“Aunt Becky Eddard said to Mama, ‘you better be in hell with no claws than left in this world with a gang of boy youngans.’”*** From all I ever heard, the older sons kept the family going with the help of Moses. Anyway, Becky Eddard evidently was able to keep possession of the land, unlike many of her neighbors, who lost theirs in sales at the courthouse door.

Now, Moses, is another story, all its own. Moses became a legend in this neighborhood. The kindness

and faith of “Uncle Mose” was a favorite topic of Grayden Paul’s writing and story telling. Lou Davis sent me papers, a year or so ago, from the State Archives, showing Moses’ various ownership transfers. Moses was the property of Anthony Davis, Rebecca’s grandfather, from Smyrna. In the division of Anthony Davis’ slaves, Moses, was acquired by Rebecca’s uncle, Isaac W. Davis, who in turn sold him, along with 2 other slaves, to Edward, Sr. and Edward’s brother-in-law, George Linquish, for \$1600.00, January 11, 1858. Moses came to Davis Shore with Edward, Sr. and Rebecca, and although he was soon free, lived near or with the Davis family, the rest of his life. Because I have heard so much how he helped every one in the community, I feel he must have helped Rebecca as well. I found him in the 1900 census living in the household with Uncle Antny (Anthony) and Uncle Kib (Kilby). But, by 1910 he was in a household alone, and Uncle Antny was living with Uncle Kib, Aunt Kate and Harvey (Corbett Harvey). When Moses fell from a horse and was injured, the people of the community took care of him. When he died the blacks from the Ridge, came to get his body, to bury in the black cemetery there. However, the people of Davis Shore asked to let them have the body, and he is the only black, known buried, in the neighborhood. They promised to give him a proper burial and care for his grave forever. His grave is in Murphy cemetery and being taken care of

to this day. Mr. Carlie Willis made a wooden marker for him, with a brass plate. It reads, ***“Moses Davis, d. 07-10-1910 He was best known for his love to help others. May his soul rest in peace.”***

Of the six sons and 2 daughters of Edward, Sr and Rebecca, three sons never married. Charlotte married Dewitt Willis, but had no children. Elva (Elvie) married William Finley Styron and had one son, Harvey Styron. Kilby (Kib) married Kate Davis, from another Davis line and they had one child, Corbett Harvey. Edward, Jr. (Eddie) married Rose Willis, and had one child to reach adulthood, Effie. My grandfather, James (Jim) married Elizabeth Jones Willis (Bet Jones), and they had 6 children.

Edward and Rebecca named their first child Martin Ross (Uncle Mart). There were many Martin Rosses throughout the area. The name had originated with a Baptist preacher, who toured the area in the early part of the 19th century. Martin Ross never married. Their next child was James (Jim), my grandfather, no doubt named for Edward Sr.’s grandfather James “Whispering Jim”. Anthony (Uncle Antny) was next, named for Rebecca’s grandfather Anthony Davis, a prominent person in the history of the Smyrna community, who was instrumental in organizing the Baptist church there and gave the land

where it is still located. Uncle Antny never married. Wallace came next, named for his grandfather. He never married, went to Tyrrell County to fish for herring, died, and was buried there. Then came Kilby (Uncle Kib), named for Rebecca's father, Kilby Jones. Elva (Aunt Elvie) was next and I have no idea where they got her name. Then came Charlotte (Aunt Charlotte), without a doubt named for her grandmother, Charlotte, Wallace's wife. The last was Edward Jr. (Uncle Eddie), named for his father.

My grandfather, James (Jim) was the father of 6 children. Uncle Irvin and Uncle Dick (Richard) were twins. Rebecca (Aunt Girlie) who married Linwood Styron, the mother of Virgil & Leon, Elvin (Uncle Tad), a daughter Eva Pearl, who died at age 13 with diphtheria, and my father, Alvin. When my Daddy was 11 years old, his father, Jim, died with what the old folks called pellagra. He had sores that would not heal. Diabetes was unheard of then, and after so many in the family were diagnosed with it, my mother would say, "that is what killed Uncle Jim Davis." Just as the generation before had taken care of each other, so my father's family did the same with the help of those old unmarried uncles. I heard Uncle Tad (Elvin) say, "Uncle Mart loved Irvin, Uncle Antny loved Dick, Papa loved Girlie, Mama loved Alvin and no body loved me." Then he would laugh.

Martin Ross had bought land from his Uncle Nathan and built a house. That is the property Uncle Irvin acquired and the house where his family was raised. Anthony, so I have heard, gave Uncle Dick (Richard) his house. Aunt Girlie (Rebecca) was married by the time her father died. Uncle Tad (Elvin) went to work, at a very early age, with Mr. Luther Paul, in his machine shop on the shore. He then went to Beaufort with Luther Paul when he moved. Uncle Irvin took my grandmother Bet and my Daddy to live with him. When grandmama Bet got sick, she went to Aunt Girlie's, but my Daddy stayed with Uncle Irvin and Aunt Lena until he married my mother. By that time they had 5 children. The whole family was very clannish. They loved each other dearly and took care of their kin.

Kib (Kilby) will never be forgotten for his dry wit. There are so many tales about him. I will tell a couple. He worked so hard, one day trying to drive a pipe in the ground to locate water (stick a pump). Someone passed by and he said, "Katie may want water, and Corbett may want water, but Kibbie don't want a damn drop." Then there was the time he was at the Oyster House, opening oysters, when Ms. Retha stuck an oyster knife all the way through her hand. She fainted and was bleeding profusely. They laid her out on the car on the dock they rolled up and down the wharf. Ms. Carthagenia, Retha's

aunt, became very excited and began to say, “bring some water.” They carried her a pail of cold water and she dumped it overboard, they carried her a pail of warm water and she dumped that overboard. Uncle Kib said, “sheee wants, rain water.”

Martin Ross was more interested in world events, as was Uncle Irvin, his favorite nephew.

Anthony loved Dick. He carried him with him fishing, and everywhere he went. I have heard the story of one time he and Uncle Dick went to Beaufort in a sail skiff. There was no other way to go, anywhere. They started back, the wind breezed up and he was afraid to come around Davis Island into Core Sound. He went ashore at Marshallberg and went to Emmie Julie’s house. He knew Emmie Julie, because she had married in the Wade family, lived at Davis Shore a few years and when her husband died, she went back to be near her folks at Marshallberg. He asked Emmie Julie if he could spend the night. She consented and then he said, “I’ve got Brother Jim’s, Dick, with me.” Emmie Julie exclaimed, “My God I hope in this world.” Emmie Julie was Laz Taylor’s grandmother.

Aunt Elvie and Uncle William lived where Rodney keeps his boats and the church parking lot. I remember

them sitting on the porch, and visiting with friends, going up and down the road. Uncle William died first and her son, Harvey, tried getting several caretakers for her. It didn’t seem to work out, so he took her to Washington, DC, where he lived, and that is where she died.

Aunt Charlotte is the only one I know in the Davis family, who lived to be a real old person. She was five days short of 95. Next to that, was, Aunt Elvie who died at 79 and Uncle Kib at 75. If any of you have the Davis genes, don’t expect to live to be real old. Aunt Charlotte was the historian of the family, and how I wish I had asked her more questions.

Edward, Jr. (Uncle Eddie) and Aunt Rose lived in the old home place until they died. Their daughter, Effie, had married Blake Pond. When Uncle Eddie suffered a stroke, they moved in with them. Uncle Eddie was bed ridden for several years, and it was during that period the last child, Edward Pond, was born in the old family home. I have heard Aunt Effie tell how every morning, while Uncle Eddie lived, after his stroke, Aunt Girlie and Ms. Leah came to their house and helped her bathe and get him ready for the day. After Aunt Rose died, Uncle Blake and Aunt Effie moved back to the Pond house and she sold the Edward Davis, Sr. house and a portion of the land to Harold Willis. I understand Eugene Pond’s heirs still own the remaining western portion of the property.

We still have those names today. I feel sure James Styron was named for Virgil's grandfather, James (Jim) Davis. Virginia's son, James Hughes, may have been as well. We still have a Wallace. The Edwards keep coming. We had a new Edward Pond born this summer. We have the Irvins, a Richard, the Elvins and Alvin. We have had many Corbetts and Davis (Corbett IV) has promised me another Kib. We will see.

I hope I have been able to convey some of my family research and the conclusions I have made, because of it. I will always be proud to be a Davis, from Davis Shore.

Thelma

Edward G. Davis, Sr. & Rebecca Jones *

Martin Ross Davis

James Davis & Elizabeth Jones Willis

Irvin W. Davis & Lena Willis

Louise Davis & Eric Hill

Elsie Davis & Frank Hunt

Elizabeth Davis & Tommy Potter

Virginia Davis & Walter Hughes

Pearl Davis & Jimmy Davis

I.W. Davis & Carolyn Willis

Jessie Lee Davis & Charles Paul

Richard Davis & Mittie Davis

Betty Davis & Neil Styron

Betty Davis & Clinton Piner

Rebecca (Girlye) Davis & Linwood Styron

Virgil Styron & Alice Williams

Elvin Leon Styron & Nellie Lawrence

Elvin Leon (Tad) Davis & Lillian Snyder

Eva Pearl Davis

Alvin Davis & Delia Pond

Thelma Davis & Elbert Pittman

Margaret Davis & Jack Gaskill

Anthony Davis

Wallace Davis

Kilby Davis & Katie Davis

Corbett H. Davis & Minnie Willis

C. H. Davis & Janet Wade

Ann Marie Davis & Roy D. Styron

Elva Davis & William Finley Styron

Harvey Styron & Ada Roberts

Rosalie Styron & Charles Dondero

Elva Janet Styron & Paris Brickey

Harvey Styron & Brooksie Montgomery

Charlotte Davis & Dewitt Willis

Edward G. Davis, Jr. & Rose Willis

Effie Davis & Blakely Pond

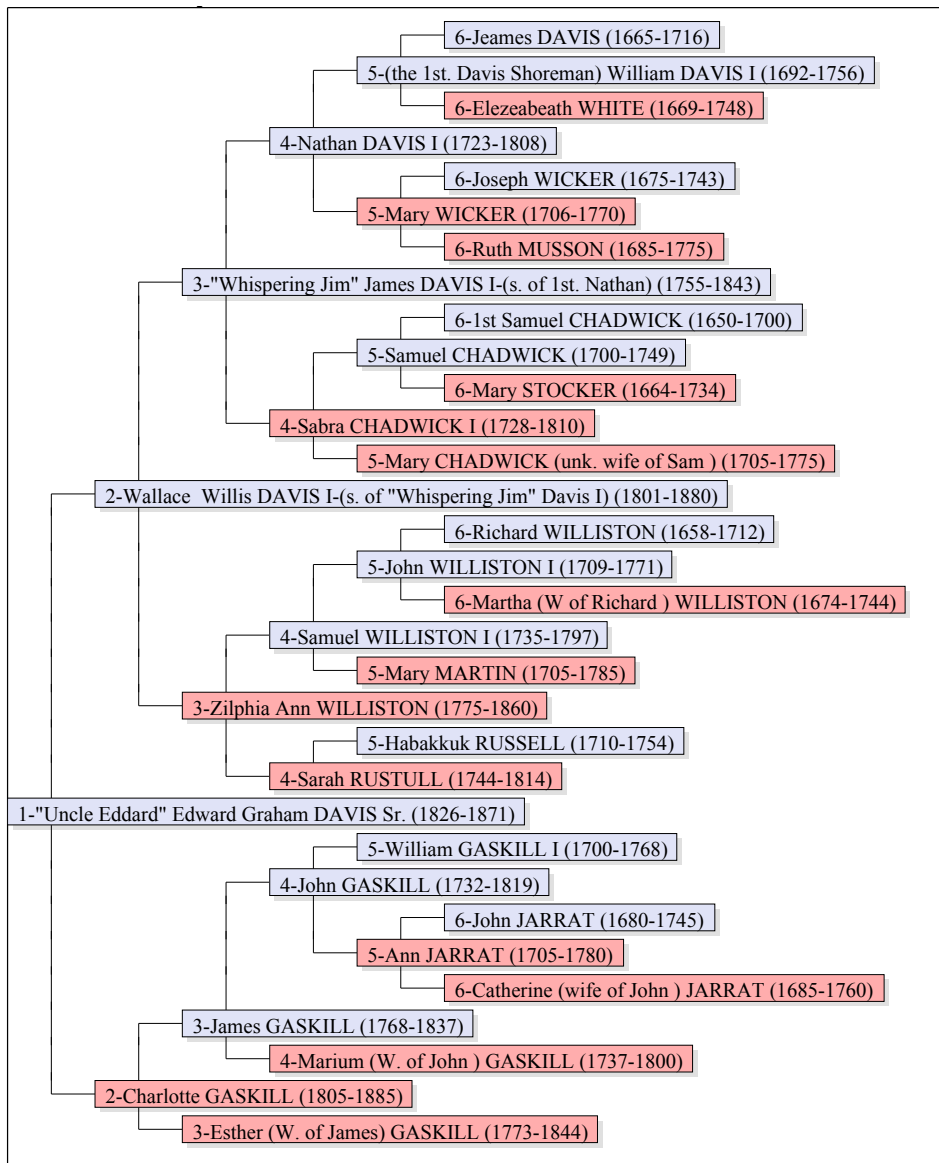
Eugene Pond & Andra Hamilton

Edward Pond & Dorothy Willis

Grady William Davis

* In order of birth... **bold** is clan with descendents

Ancestry Chart of "Uncle Eddard" Edward Graham Davis, Sr.



from The DownEast Project in July 2008 by Ed Pond of Davis Shore, NC