

THE DAVIS FAMILY

The story of the Davis family begins in America sometime prior to 1700 when the first persons of Scots-Irish ancestry settled in the new country. The story of the descendants of these early settlers begins in Louisiana in 1900-1902, and in Ruston in the 1920's.

The first Andrew Davis settled in Pennsylvania, then moved to North Carolina. Andrew Davis II was the grandfather of the four Davis brothers, John Melville, born January 4, 1852; James Miller born August 20, 1854; Virgil Montry, born April 19, 1857; Robert Wesley, born February 14, 1865; who established the lumber industry in Jackson Parish. The father of the four, John Dyogenous Davis was born in Tennessee in 1815, and upon reaching manhood moved by stages to Georgia, Mississippi and finally settled in Arkansas.

Farming on a tract of some 400 acres was the first occupation of the family, but they soon realized that with the growth and development of the South, building material was highly important. Consequently John D. Davis and his four sons established a sawmill near Prescott, Arkansas. The plant was later moved to a site near Waldo, Arkansas to take advantage of the newly constructed Cotton Belt Railroad. A second mill, operated by John M. and Virgil M. Davis was built at a little town named Lumber. Later James M. and Robert W. Davis also decided to move their mill adjacent to the new railroad and called their location New Lumber.

As the land became cut-over and at the time considered useless, there had to be other areas investigated and purchased, so the interest of the four brothers was turned southward. At the turn of the twentieth century vast forests of virgin pine and hardwood covered the rolling hills of North and Central Louisiana. Expansion of the south was underway and there was great demand for lumber for building purposes.

The four brothers, John Melville, James Miller, Virgil Montrey and Robert Wesley decided to combine their enterprise and move to Louisiana. They purchased thousands of acres of land and forests in Jackson, Bienville, Winn and portions of Lincoln Parish in 1900-1901, riding on horseback over much of the vast area. A spot ten miles south of Ruston on the Arkansas Southern Railroad, now the Rock Island, was selected for the establishment of the new town and new sawmill. The sawmill was built and completed in 1902, with the first log sawed by Pamie N. Davis on December 17, 1902, the father of Mrs. Marvin Green, Sr. The raw little town built in a wilderness area was named Ansley, the family name of Mrs. Virgil M. Davis, who was Marie Antoinette Ansley of Prescott, Arkansas.

Some twenty to thirty families, white and black, who had been employed by the Davis brothers in Arkansas filled a whole train with their household equipment and made the journey to Louisiana. It is reported that the engine broke down north of Ruston at the Chautauqua station and the remainder of the trip was made by wagons, hacks or on foot to the new town of Ansley.

Virgil M. Davis, his wife and small daughter Virginia, along with the youngest brother Robert or "Bob", Pamie N. Davis and his wife Mamie Warren Davis came to Ansley in 1902 and remained to run and supervise the business until the 1920's, when they moved to Ruston.

The John Melville Davis family remained in Waldo, Arkansas, where he and his wife, the former Mary Dennis, raised their two sons, Laurin and Galen. Laurin married Allie Murphy and they reared one son, Laurin Davis, Jr. and continued to live in Waldo. Laurin, Jr. married Josephine Blair and moved to Magnolia, Arkansas, an adjoining town. Their two children are Melville, who is now in Dallas, and Lanette, Mrs. Vince Blanchard of ElDorado, Arkansas. Galen A. Davis, the second son, married Floy Austin of Magnolia, Arkansas. They moved to Ruston in 1925, when Galen became connected with Davis Brothers Lumber Co. They purchased the James L. Martin home at 712 North Vienna Street which had been built in the early days of the century by the S. B. Ritchies. Mrs. Galen Davis continues to live in this location. Their daughter, Marianne, married Bobby Evans of Ruston, son of the late Eddie Evans. The Evans make their home in Baton Rouge where Bob is a C.P.A. Their two children are Barbara, Mrs. Frederick J. Hebert of El Dorado, Arkansas, and Laura, a student in high school in Baton Rouge.

The James Miller Davis, or "Jim" Davis family chose to make their home in Ruston. They purchased a large two-story frame house on a spacious oak shaded lawn on the outskirts of town. The house had been the home of an early president of Louisiana Industrial Institute, now Louisiana Tech University. It was located where the present Louisiana Tech baseball stadium is now built. The Louisiana Tech tennis courts are located where the James M. Davis orchard once stood. All the family was active in community activity and devoted members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. James M. Davis and Alice McMillan were married in Arkansas before coming to Louisiana. They were the parents of eight sons and daughters who lived to maturity. They were: Pamie, Mae, Grace, Ivan, Paul, Ruth, Bess and Carl. The descendents of the James M. Davis follows:

Pamie Nundrus Davis and his wife, the former Mamie Warren, were married in 1902 and made their home in Ansley where Pamie was engaged in the Davis Brother business. They moved with their daughter, Margaret, and son, James Warren, to Ruston in the summer of 1925, making their home at 520 West Mississippi Avenue.

Margaret Miller Davis married Dr. Marvin Tarpley Green, Sr., an eminent surgeon and physician and the founder of the Green Clinic. The Greens

have two sons, Dr. Marvin T. Green, Jr. and Dr. James Davis Green, both outstanding physicians. Dr. Marvin is a surgeon and Dr. James a radiologist. Dr. Marvin T. Green, Jr. and his wife, the former Louise Brooks of Florida, have two children, Cindy and Marvin T. Green, III. Dr. James Davis Green married Elizabeth Emmons of Ruston whose father is a well known educator. Their two children are Andrew and James Miller.

James Warren Davis married the former Helen Green, and later Lucile Nicols. He was long associated with Davis Brothers Lumber Company. James and Helen's children are Mary Margaret Davis, Larson of West Monroe, and James W. Davis, Jr. a pilot on Delta Airlines. James W. Davis, Jr. married Peggy Manning and their children are James W. Davis, III and Paul. Their home is in Houston, Texas.

Mae Davis married Jay Horton, who was long associated with the Rock Island Railroad. They also lived on West Mississippi Ave. and had no children.

Grace Davis married Will Hadley, a salesman, and lived across the street from the family home on West Mississippi Avenue. They had no children.

Ivan Davis had a severe illness as a child which left him with a speech and hearing defect. While at school for training he met and married Eugenia Wilson of Florida who had a similar handicap. Ivan was self-employed and taught manual training in a school for the deaf in Arkansas where ^{he} and his wife made their home. They had no children.

Dr. Paul McMillan Davis, the third son of the family was a well known dentist in Ruston. His wife was the former Lilley Mae Sentell from the Sentell family of planters of Bossier Parish. Mrs. Paul Davis continues to make her home at 201 Everett Street where she has lived since her marriage. They have three children, Dr. Paul M. Davis, Jr., Martha and Lillybeth.

Dr. Paul M. Davis, Jr. is an orthopedic surgeon with a practice in Alexandria, Louisiana where he makes his home. He is married to the former Frances Bolton. Their three children are Paul M. Davis, III, Frances, and James Bolton.

Martha Davis lives in Bossier City. Her husband is James Plummer and their three children are James Plummer, III, Paul McMillan and Kenneth Lane.

Lillybeth is Mrs. Earl A. Webb. She and her husband make their home in Shreveport and at Toledo Bend. Her two children are Beth Ferguson and Jim Ferguson. Jim and his wife, Debora, have a small daughter, Rochelle. Their home is in Shreveport.

Thomas C. McLure

Ruth Davis, the sixth child of the James M. Davis family, married /"Dan" McLure also of Ruston, but early in their marriage they moved to Alexandria where they made their home. They are the parents of three children, Thomas C. McLure, Jr., James Miller McLure and Mary Beth McLure.

Thomas C. McLure is an attorney in Alexandria, Louisiana. His late wife and the mother of his three children was Cecile Gutierrez of Biloxi, Mississippi. Their children are Mary Carolyn, married to Arthur Tischer, and twin sons, Thomas and John McLure.

Dr. Thomas McLure practices medicine in New Orleans and is married to the former Virginia Taylor. John McLure is an attorney, associated with his father's firm in Alexandria. His wife was the former Judith Jenkins.

The second son of the McLures is James McLure who has an executive position with the Equitable Insurance Company. He and his wife, the former Mary McGill, make their home in Shreveport. Their three children are Virginia, married to Richard Van Schroeder, Maryann, whose husband is Freeman Eugene Fisher, and James M. McLure, Jr.

The daughter of the McLures, Mary Beth, is married to Putman Calhoun and has made her home in Florida since her marriage. Her children are Nancy Calhoun, married to Ron Birchall, Ann and Kate.

Bess Davis was the youngest daughter of the James M. Davis. She married Aubrey Crow, a teacher, and during the latter years of her life made her home with her sister, Mae Davis Horton. They have one daughter, Alice.

Alice Crow Williamson grew up in Ruston, attended Louisiana Tech and continues to make her home in Ruston, living in the Cypress Springs area. Her husband, Huey Williamson, teaches at Louisiana Tech and has long been associated with the Athletic Department of the University. The Williamsons have four children, Beverly, Janice, Albert Huey and John Clint. Beverly is Mrs. Joe Marcantil and they have two children, Joel and Brooke. Janice is Mrs. David Thiel and lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Albert is at home and John Clint in high school.

Carl Davis is the youngest of the eight sons and daughters of James M. and Alice Davis and the only surviving member of the family. He was long associated with the Davis Brothers Lumber Company and drove to Ansley each day from his home on Bonner Street. His wife was the late Irene High of Ruston. They have three children, Carl, Jr., William Horton ("Billy"), and Alice Marie.

Carl, Jr. is unmarried and lives in Houston.

William H. "Billy" and his wife, the former Beverly McKenzie, make their home in Ruston. Billy is a specialist in forestry.

Alice Marie is married to Richard Hinton, "Dickie", who is in the educational system in Ruston. Their three children are Bill, Curt and Mike.

Virgil Montrey Davis married Marie Antoinette Ansley and moved to Ansley when the new sawmill was ready for operation and houses built. Besides their small daughter, Virginia, they brought to live with them Mrs. Davis' aunt, Mrs. Harriet Livingston Whiteside. Three daughters were born in Ansley - Alverne Miller, Helen Louise and Dorothy Dell. They grew up attending the local school until ready for college. Virginia attended Newcomb College, New Orleans, graduated from Southern Methodist University and did post-graduate work at Columbie University. Alverne attended Newcomb and graduated from S.M.U. Helen attended Louisiana Tech and S.M.U. and Dorothy graduated from Randolph-Macon College, Lynchburg, Virginia.

The Virgil Davis family moved to Ruston in the late summer of 1921 to 710 North Vienna Street, buying the W. S. Pitney home originally built by George Hardy, making extensive alterations to the house.

Virginia married Glenn Eugene Laskey, a petroleum geologist originally from Oklahoma. They have one daughter, Ann Marie Laskey who married Howard Cecil Kilpatrick, Jr. of Washington. D. C. They now make their home in Gulfport, Mississippi and have three daughters, Virginia, Elizabeth Ansley and Ann Louise.

Mrs. Laskey has been active in the work of the Methodist Church, serving as National President of the Women's Division of the United Methodist Women from 1964-1968. She continues to live at 710 North Vienna Street. The family home burned in 1953 but was replaced by a South Louisiana colonial type raised cottage.

Alverne Miller and Virginia were married in a double wedding ceremony, performed in Trinity Methodist Church located where J. C. Penney Co. now stands. Alverne married Alexander Trotter Hunt of Winnfield and Hodge, Louisiana. Alex was connected with the Hodge-Hunt Lumber Company in Hodge, Louisiana and has continued the expansion of the lumber industry throughout his lifetime. They lived in Hodge where their first two sons were born, Virgil Davis Hunt and Alexander Trotter Hunt, Jr.

In 1933 they moved to Ruston and bought the D. K. Brown property, 701 North Vienna Street, where they now live. Thomas Morgan Hunt was born in Ruston, where all three sons are now in business.

Virgil Davis Hunt married Sandra Gray of Minden. They live on North Bonner Street and have three children, Elizabeth, Virgil Davis Hunt, Jr. and Martha.

Alex Hunt, Jr. is engaged in the lumber industry, continuing the profession of his father and two grandfathers, John Hunt and Virgil M. Davis. He married Laura Margaret James of Ruston and live in Llanfair. Their two sons are Alexander Trotter Hunt, III and James Davis Hunt.

Thomas Morgan Hunt is unmarried and has a position with the Willamette Industries.

Helen married Allen Barksdale whose family were longtime residents of Ruston and prominent in Ruston and Lincoln Parish political, cultural and civic affairs. Allen, a well-known attorney, practiced law in Ruston where the couple established their home. They are the parents of three daughters, Antoinette, Dorothy Dell and Mary Helen.

Antoinette (Toni) married Marshall Terry who teaches English and Creative Writing at Southen Methodist University. They make their home in Dallas and have two daughters, Toinette and Mary Marshall.

Dorothy Dell lives in Monroe, Louisiana. Her husband is Lamar Bufington who is engaged in the retail lumber business. They have three daughters, Helen Lois, Mary Ansley and Leigh.

Mary Helen also makes her home in Dallas. Before her marriage to Michael McFarland, a native of Dallas, Mary Helen was associated with a television agency. "Mike" is in business in Dallas and they have one son, Michael McFarland, Jr.

The youngest daughter, Dorothy Dell Davis, attended high school in Ruston, then after her graduation from college married John Campbell Ritchie, "Jack". His mother and father came to Ruston in the early days of the century where S. B. Ritchie and Associates established the hardware and furniture company. Jack is a well-known business man, having successfully managed Ritchie's Furniture Company until sold to Bill Rogers. The Ritchie home is built from old brick that once were in the old main building of Louisiana Tech University. This building was destroyed by fire in the late 1930's. The Ritchies have two children.

John Ansley Ritchie, unmarried, lives in Tucson, Arizona and operates a travel agency.

Susan Gordon Ritchie married Henry Shirley of Ruston. They live on Maple Street and have three children, Susie, John and Dorothy.

The youngest brother, Robert Wesley Davis, remained a bachelor for several years after coming to Ansley. In 1908 he married the former Charlotte Arabelle Long of Winnfield. They made their home in Ansley in a large house where they entertained frequently. Their daughters, Mary Olive and Charlotte, grew up in Ansley, attending the local school, then later attended Randolph-Macon, Breneau and L.S.U. They moved to Ruston in 1921 and bought the E. L. Kidd home at 609 North Vienna Street. This home, an example of early Ruston architecture, has been donated by Mary Olive Davis Green and Charlotte Davis Parrott to the City of Ruston as a museum.

Mary Olive Davis married Dr. Felton Green, a prominent dentist connected with the Green Clinic. Their children are Martha Charlotte Green Talley of Austin, Texas; William Davis Green of Ruston, and Roberta Carolyn Green Hinton of Ruston. Grandchildren are Jerry and Mary Elizabeth Hinton of Ruston and Robert, Davis and Martha Talley.

Charlotte Davis married Dr. Robert W. Parrott, a physician who practiced in Ansley and Alexandria. Their children are Robert Davis Parrott of Ruston, John K. Long Parrott of Ruston and Mary Charlotte Parrott Broussard of Houston, Texas. The grandchildren are Robert Franklin Broussard and Charlotte Davis Broussard of Houston, Texas.

In 1952 Davis Brothers Lumber Company celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of a successful lumber industry with an appropriate ceremony. Tribute was paid to the founders and to the many original employees and descendents who came to Louisiana when the business began. Davis Brothers was one of the earliest lumber manufacturers to establish a conservation program so that there would be continuous growth of the forests to keep the plant in constant operation, even during the years of the depression in the 1930's.

A disastrous fire in 1953 swept the sawmill away but the Board of Directors with Mrs. R. W. Davis, president, Mrs. Alex Hunt, vice president, Pamie Davis, general manager and Galen A. Davis, secretary-treasurer, decided to rebuild the plant. Operation was continued for a number of years, but due to changing conditions the manufacture of lumber was discontinued in 1957. The Company continued to operate by placing the holdings of approximately 65,000 acres under the management of Pomeroy and McGowan, with Curry Patton as chief forester. Emphasis was placed on the sale of forest products, land management, reforestation, and leasing of land for oil and gas.

Sale of the entire property was made to the Willamette Industries in December 1971, the closing of a family industry that lasted almost seventy years.

The first officers of Davis Brothers Lumber Company were: James Miller Davis, President; John Melville Davis, Vice President; Virgil Montrey Davis, General Manager; and Robert Wesley Davis, Secretary-Treasurer.

Other members of the family who later served as officers and directors were: Mrs. R. W. Davis, Mrs. V. M. Davis, Pamie N. Davis, Galen A. Davis, Dr. Paul M. Davis.

The last officers and directors were: Mrs. Alverne Davis Hunt, President; Mrs. Mary Olive Davis Green, Vice President; Laurin E. Davis, Jr. of Magnolia, Arkansas, Secretary-Treasurer; Carl Davis, Office Manager and Assistant Treasurer.

Family History prepared by

Virginia Davis Laskey

(This narrative deals principally with the families of James Miller Davis, John Melville Davis and Virgil Montrey Davis. A more detailed account of the Robert Wesley Davis family is included elsewhere in the volume)