

Steven Dutcher Davis

Biographical History*



S. D. Davis



MRS. STEPHEN D. DAVIS

Steven Dutcher Davis (1820-1902) was the son of Levi Davis, grandson of Robert Davis of Moore County. He married Mary Parker abt. 1842.

Biographical History
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HISTORICAL ROOM

STEPHEN D. DAVIS.

While "the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong," the invariable law of destiny accords to tireless energy, industry and ability a successful career. The truth of this assertion is abundantly verified in the life of Mr. Davis. In financial circles he has worked his way upward from an humble position to one of affluence and is to-day numbered among the prosperous stockmen and farmers of Mills county, his labors having brought to him a splendid return.

Stephen D. Davis was born October 25, 1820, in Jackson county, Ohio, a son of Levi and Mary (Rudyard) Davis. The paternal grandparents of our subject were Robert and Nancy Davis. Robert Davis was a native of North Carolina and spent his entire life in that state, by occupation being a gunsmith. The maternal grandfather of our subject was Isaiah Rudyard, an old sea captain. Levi Davis, the father of Stephen D. Davis, was a native of North Carolina and was a farmer by occupation. In early life he was a member of the standing army for a time. At a period in the pioneer development of Ohio he came with his wife and children to the Buckeye state, the year of their emigration being about

1806. His last days were spent in Jackson county, Ohio. His wife, who also was a native of North Carolina, was again married, after her husband's death, and removed to Mills county, Iowa, a few years before her son Stephen became a resident of the county. Her remaining days were spent at her home here. Levi and Mary Davis were the parents of nine children; three sons and six daughters. Most of them were farming people, were married and have children and grandchildren.

Stephen D. Davis spent the years of his minority in Jackson county, Ohio. His educational privileges were extremely meager. He pursued his studies in an old-time log school-house, with its primitive furnishings and greased-paper windows. The methods of teaching also were rather crude and the school was supported by the subscription plan. But he made the most of his opportunities through life and by observation and experience gained much valuable knowledge. In his boyhood he displayed considerable musical ability and performed upon the fife. His father employed a poor old Dutch Revolutionary soldier who played the drum, while young Stephen played upon the fife. He also played the fife at the time when recruits were being solicited for the Mexican war and also for the Civil war.

He first came to Iowa in 1855, making the journey in a spring wagon. He was accompanied by his brother Robert and together they made the trip to the Hawkeye state to see the country and buy some land. In the fall of the year Mr. Davis removed to Iowa. Starting from Portsmouth, Ohio, he proceeded by boat down the Ohio and up the Mississippi river to Keokuk, where

he hired a man to bring him and his family across the country—a distance of eighty miles—to the home of his brother-in-law, David Rickabaugh. Here he purchased a yoke of oxen and with that outfit traveled to his destination. He first located a few miles south of the present site of Red Oak, in Montgomery county, but after a few months came to Mills county.

At the time of his marriage he had one hundred and twenty acres of poor land, a horse and a cow, but no money. In thirteen years from that time he was the owner of five hundred and seventy acres of land, entirely free from indebtedness. On coming to Mills county he located in Indian Creek township, near where the town of Emerson now stands, and after residing about one year at that place he took up his abode in Spring Valley, White Cloud township, in March, 1857. Here he purchased a farm of four hundred acres on section 29 and to this he has added until he now has nineteen hundred and sixty acres. His place is known as the Spring Valley Stock Farm on account of the fine spring which has a flow of about thirty gallons per minute. He has constructed a fine fish pond, which is supplied with water from this spring and contains an abundance of fish. He has made ditches one mile in length and has otherwise improved his property until it is most valuable. Mr. Davis is one of the most extensive farmers and stockmen of Mills county. He has ever prosecuted his work along well-defined lines of labor, has followed progressive methods, and his enterprise and industry have enabled him to continually add to his property. In addition to the home place he has a farm of one hundred and sixty acres near

Council Bluffs, one of one hundred and fifty-seven acres near Whiting, Iowa, and another of three hundred and twenty acres east of Onawa, Iowa. At one time he owned twenty thousand acres of land in Kansas, and he now has eleven hundred and twenty acres in that state, together with thirteen hundred acres in Texas, and six hundred and forty acres in South Dakota. He is at all times just, and probity is numbered among his chief characteristics.

Mr. Davis is a man of resourceful business ability, and in addition to the cultivation of his fields he has engaged in the stock business on a large scale. He keeps excellent grades of horses and cattle and these find a ready sale upon the markets. Mr. Davis is also a prominent factor in banking circles. He is interested in the First National Bank of Malvern, of which he is the vice-president. He is also financially interested in the First National Bank of Tabor, of which he was president for a year or two and is still a stockholder in the institution. He is also a stockholder in a bank in Athena, Oregon, and in one at Colton, Washington.

On the 7th of April, 1842, Mr. Davis was united in marriage to Miss Mary Parker, a native of Virginia, born September 17, 1821, and a daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Parker. Her father died in Jackson county, Ohio, and her mother died in the home of our subject after living with him for a quarter of a century. Mr. Davis and his wife traveled life's journey together for fifty-three years, sharing with each other its joys and sorrows, its adversity and prosperity. Mrs. Davis was a most estimable woman. Never throughout the long years of her married life was she known

to speak a cross word, no matter how great her worries or how tired she might be. She possessed a calm and even temperament under perfect control, and her devotion to her family was beautiful to see. She was a great Bible student, spending much time and thought over the holy scriptures and thus becoming familiar with the lessons of the Master and His apostle. Her knowledge of holy writ thus became extensive and her interpretation of it was seen in her daily life, in her kindliness, her love, her charity and her forbearance. Hers was indeed a beautiful Christian spirit, so in harmony with the teachings of the Christ that her influence was very marked among those who knew her. Ten children were born unto our subject and his wife: Marion T., Tacy L., Minerva A., Charles F. and six now deceased. The mother's death occurred August 31, 1895, at the age of seventy-three years, eleven months and fourteen days, and throughout the entire community her loss was deeply felt. She was a kind neighbor, a faithful friend and enjoyed the respect and confidence of all who knew her.

In his political views Mr. Davis has been a stalwart Republican from the year 1860, previous to which time he voted with the Democracy. Mrs. Davis was reared in the Baptist faith, and her earnest Christian example left a deep impression upon her children. As a citizen Mr. Davis is public spirited, giving an earnest co-operation to all movements for the general good. His life has certainly been a success. His entire career is illustrative of the fact that certain actions are followed by certain results; and his determined purpose, guided by sound business judgment, has enabled

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him to advance steadily toward the goal of success; and his methods will stand the closest investigation. He has certainly merited the distinction of being what the world calls a self-made man. This is the only title which the American republic confers upon its citizens, and it is one which may be proudly worn. Entering upon his business career without the aid of wealth or influential friends, he has advanced steadily, step by step, to a position of prominence in financial circles. As the years have passed he has added to his property and wealth through earnest labor, close application and sound judgment. Of such a record he may be justly proud, and so his history should be a source of inspiration and encouragement to others.

daughter of a farmer who later engaged in carpenter work, becoming still later a builder and contractor. Many structures are standing testifying to his skill, in this county, in Pottawattamie and in Fremont counties; and the famous barn near Crescent City, now owned by Solomon McMillan, was erected by him, in 1875. Our subject's mother survived her husband two years, her death taking place in 1883. They had a large number of children, the survivors being: J. J. Creamer, of Cedar county, Nebraska, who has one child; C. L. Creamer, of Elmwood, Cass county, Nebraska, who has five children; John E. Creamer, of Wickersham, state of Washington; Cynthia, the wife of B. F. Herbert, of Pottawattamie county, Iowa, who has a family of three children; and our subject.

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