

“MINNIE AND GRACE DAVIS HOUSE”

(formerly E. Everett Davis House)

Located on the northwest corner of Middle Country Road and Winfield Davis Drive.



Minnie and Grace Davis Home, Photo from E. Davis circa 1895



Minnie and Grace Davis

(excerpted from Longwood's Journey)

The Squire Lester Davis home was built of brick in 1841. He and his wife Harriet (Woodhull) Davis raised their seven children in this house. The home was located north of Middle Country Road and west of Winfield Davis Drive.

Its structural system was masonry load bearing walls. The walls of the house on the first floor were one foot thick. The walls on the second floor were six inches thick. The house had five fireplaces, three on the first floor and two on the second floor.

Many alterations were made to the house. In 1887 the summer kitchen was moved forward and attached to the house. Then in 1915 the front porch, which was small, was removed and a larger one added. In 1945 a rear dormer was added to the attic. Included with the property was a barn built about 1890. The East end of the barn was used as a carriage house.

The Minnie and Grace Davis House had a couple of things that made it important and historical. The house was a great example of mid-nineteenth century architecture. Most of its historical importance came from Squire Lester Davis. He was the Justice of the Peace. As Justice of the Peace he held court in the north end of the dining room.

Unfortunately a fire destroyed this house. The fire occurred in 1991. Apparently some homeless people were living there illegally and set it on fire. Whether it was on purpose or accident no one knows.

People involved with the house

Squire Lester Davis was born on April 9, 1813 and died Feb. 28, 1890. Squire Davis married Harriet Woodhull (1819-1888) and together they had seven children. One son was Samuel Davis who served as an officer on the

USS Kearsarge during the Civil War. While on the Kearsarge Davis caught Yellow Fever and died March 21, 1866.

Another son **E. Everett Davis (1860-1943)** became the next owner of the house. He married Margaret Stein (1867-1960) and raised three children, **Minnie, Grace**, and a son Woodhull. Minnie was born in 1888 and Grace in 1893. Neither Minnie nor Grace ever married. Both became teachers in the Coram school system and became involved members of the Coram community. After some years in Coram they moved to Yonkers to continue their teaching careers. When they retired they moved back to the Coram house. Here they spent the rest of their lives with Minnie dying at age 97 in 1985 and Grace at age 93, 1986. Both are buried in the Union Cemetery in Middle Island next to their parents.

A Visit to the Everett Davis House

by

Larry Boddy, 2003

"The first time I remember visiting the Everett Davis house was about 40 years ago. The "Davis Girls" (as they were known) told my mother how much they regretted living on the main road as no one stopped for Halloween, and how much their elderly mother (a woman in her 90's) would love to see children. My mother packed us up and off we went. At that time I was not as impressed with the age of the house, but much more the age of the oldest resident of our town.

That would be the first of many visits I made to the house over the years, as the Davis's and Boddy's had known each other from the early years of the 20th century. My paternal great grandparents and the Davis's owned beach houses in the same community on Fire Island and one of my grandfather's sisters married Albert Smith of Coram (a childhood friend of Minnie and Grace).

Both Minnie and Grace took great pride in their house, and loved to show people their home. The main portion of the house was built by their grandfather in 1841, of bricks he made himself from a clay pit located across the street from the house, and baked in a kiln onsite. Two brick molds now refinished hung on the wall as small shelves for brick-a-brack. The main floor in this section of the house held "twin parlors" (a more formal room for company and more casual room for the family), a long hallway with stairs to the second level, and the "borning room" were several generations of Davis's were delivered. The remainder of the lower level was an "out kitchen" that was originally not part of the main house, and an oversized dining room that was built to bridge the once separate structures.

The dining room possessed a corner cupboard and mantle that were salvaged from the much older house next door. They would also explain that the fireplace in the room (one of five in the house) replaced the larger "beehive oven" used for baking when the family got their first stove.

The front parlor was the more interesting of the two as it held many of the oldest furniture of the house, and a beautiful oversized sampler (about 12x24 inches) wrought by Harriet Woodhull (grandmother of the sisters) outlining the history of her family. It was here that Grace would explain that her grandmother had made three similar samplers, one for the Davis's, one for the Miller's, and theirs of the Woodhull family. The two others were owned by other branches of the family.

On the second floor were two bedrooms and a former bedroom that had been converted to a bathroom when indoor plumbing was added to the house. The plan followed the same plan as the lower level. The third floor originally contained a small bedroom and large attic. The attic was used to store food through the winter. Grace would talk of how every year the family would butcher a hog and hand the hams, sausage and bacon in the attic to keep it cool. During my years in high school, and college, I mowed the lawn for the

sisters, a task my uncle did for Grace's parents. Several years later I took to looking in on Grace after her sister needed full time nursing care and she was alone.

It was in these later years that Grace shared stories of her life in Coram. While I always thought of Grace as a perfect lady, always in a dress and beautifully groomed, as a girl, she and her siblings had a wonderful life on a farm. I remember her telling me how they all climbed up to the roof of the two and a half story barn and jumped off hanging on to a rope to see how far they would fly. She also told me how my grandfather had challenged her to "skin an eel". When I remarked that this seemed out of character for her she agreed but added "he challenged me to a bet, and I was never able to pass up a bet".

Grace also talked of how all the produce from the farm was taken by buckboard to Port Jefferson and shipped to Connecticut, and winter sleigh rides. She always said how dangerous it was going up and down the Coram-Selden Hill. Apparently it was much steeper in her time, and if you look carefully you can see how it was trimmed and tapered

Like other children of her generation, the Davis children went to grammar school in Coram, but had to attend high school in Port Jefferson. Grace and her siblings "boarded" with a Port Jeff family during the week and were picked up by their father on Fridays to spend the weekends with the family. Graduation was held at what is now Theatre Three.

Grace was in her mid-nineties when she died at the end of the summer. A few days before her death she told me with great pride how she had done yard work at the home she loved so much every day that season. She was laid out in the front parlor of her home in the same manor of all her ancestors. She was the last of her line to live in Coram."

Written by,

Larry Boddy

February, 2003

Note: All information excerpted from the Longwood's Journey website which is located at http://www.longwood.k12.ny.us/community/longwood_journey

All that is left now are ashes, soil and a simple sign along Middle Country Road at Winfield Davis Drive (...and yes, there was a Winfield Davis), but even that has not escaped the wrath of our modern day via the vandalism of 'tagging':



July 12, 2015: *UPDATE*****

Well folks, unfortunately historical items left unprotected to the advances of time do not age like fine wine. As of today, even the sign to the left is no more. Only thing there is the post it was mounted on.

June 29, 2016: *UPDATE*****

Current plans are for a home for developmentally disabled adults to be built on this site. The **Coram Care Center** has plans filed with the Town of Brookhaven.