



Gunfight on the Davis Farm

- Roy Davis Mark, 27 Sept. 2009

The story of John Davis and the gunfight was told and retold by his granddaughter Grace Lena O'Barr-Mark. Grace died in 1980, but the story is still told by her son, John Davis' great grandson Roy Dearing Mark. The date and some of the details have become fuzzy or lost through the years; as of this writing it has been almost 150 years since the event of those Civil War days.

John Lusk Davis had immigrated to Texas from Tennessee sometime before 1850. He eventually settled in the East Texas county of Hunt. By the time of the Civil War he was married, owned a farm and was raising a family. His farm was located about halfway between Wolfe City and Celeste near the Webb Hill Community. Mr. Davis' young family at that time consisted of his wife Elizabeth and first daughter Mary. His first son was born in February of 1865, so depending on exactly when the incident occurred, baby Bedford may have been in the home as well. Also in the home and on the property were several slaves, exactly how many is now unknown.

Toward the end of the Civil War two men drifted by the Davis place and as was the custom of the day exchanged pleasantries with Mr. Davis. What was discussed and the men's intentions have been lost over the years, but the exchange must have been pleasant as the men were invited to stay for supper. In the ensuing hours though, Mr. Davis became uneasy and suspicious of the men's intentions.

After supper, the group retired to the living room and was setting around the fireplace. One of the Davis' babies was in a cradle sitting on the floor. The baby was either Mary or possibly Bedford, a detail lost over the years. There is one detail about the incident, albeit apparently irrelevant to the subsequent event that has been retained in the telling and re-telling of the story. One of the men had a smoking pipe and tobacco with him and after supper he asked one of the slave kids to fetch him a firebrand from the fireplace to light his pipe. Later, Mr. Davis, apparently growing more wary,

walked over to the mantle and strapped on his gun belt. The situation then escalated until gunfire was exchanged between the men and Mr. Davis. At one point one bullet ricocheted off the wood floor just under the baby's cradle. In the exchange, Mr. Davis was shot in the leg.

After the gunfight the men left. The family and Mr. Davis hid out in a nearby plum thicket, in case the men came back. A neighbor, Steve Green rode 14 miles to Greenville to get a doctor to come to the Davis Farm to treat Mr. Davis.

After the birth of the Davis' second daughter Eunice in 1868, and Eunice's daughter Grace O'Barr in 1894, the young Grace had memories of playing in that living room and running her finger through the trough in the wood floor made by the bullet that came close to hitting her Aunt Mary, - or was it her Uncle Bedford?

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Note: Details of this story were supplied to the author, by Roy Dearing "Himmie" Mark