

Amite County, Miss.
February 22, 1841

My Very dear Boy,

I hope you are well and happy this morning; and if you possess one particle of your Father's disposition, you were up this morning long before day to read this old letter; and I may say, for that reason, for I have some hope that you are like me. I should have written this letter in a better hand. If this letter is not read before day, you may set yourself down as a sleepy headed boy. Why, if such a letter had been addressed to me at your age, sleep would have been a stranger to my eyes for the last month or two. In my last I promised to say something to you interesting in this. I will endeavor to redeem my pledge. You are 15 years old. And a boy at that age, if he has made the proper use of the faculties that God has given him, should be able to appreciate the worth of a parent's advice and know the inestimable advantages which education gives its possession over his more unfortunate fellow (faded out) ignorance. I must tell you, my dear boy, in this place; that education and talent without VIRTUE makes its possession the most dangerous character in the world. Reflect that if you wish to become a great man, you must be VIRTUOUS. Destitute of it, you will be the more vicious and corrupt. As you increase in knowledge, increase likewise in virtue. If you have been properly trained, you dispise duplicity in others and will not practice it yourself. You must avoid the liar, and lie not yourself. You must avoid the drunkard and gambler, and drink not and gamble not yourself. I take it for granted that at this time you are able to read and write and cyphers, even if you have not been at school a single day. I know how apt boys are to complain about learning and also that their teacher is a bad man. A good boy never complains, because he minds his business and troubles not his teachers, and therefore, he goes on smoothly. He is glad when school , and when he is not at school he studies as diligently as if he were there. My advice to you is to read a chapter or page or two, in some history every day. Also keep a copy book at home and write a line or more (as you may have the opportunity) every day. You must also keep a book in which to write down any interesting matters you meet with in the course of your reading. You would also do well to keep, from this day, a book to record every circumstance that occurs each day. Record the days it rains, the clear days, windy, cloudy, and when you grow to be a man you will find it to be very convenient for reference. In order to improve your memory you must exercise it in memorizing or committing to memory parts of speeches, sermons, hymns, poetry verse, and if you have a poor memory, you will soon find it improving. I ^{try to} recollect that when I first began to commit Geography ten or 15 times a day was burdensome, but in the course of , I could commit 100 lines and and attend to writing Parsing and Correcting false syntases. This shows at once what can be done if one will only persevere. When you commence anything in the way of learning, you must never quit until you have accomplished it. I told you in my last letter about spending your time in idle pursuits, such as hunting, fishing and going to frolics. My dear boy, no man ever became great and good by pursuing such little objects. When I was a goy I was fond of such sport, but I soon took a dislike to it, and for this reason, I acquired a taste for reading.

If you spend the time you would be hunting and trifling, to reading, you will never regret it, and rest assured, dear little boy, that your Father would frown on you whenever you did it.

You must save this letter and the others, and when ever you do wrong, you must read them, for it is your Father who is advising you. You must not keep the company of bad boys. When you wish anything you must ask your friends and not disobey those who have the care of you. My dear little boy, never do wrong. In my other letters, I have given you such instruction as I think you stand in need of, and they must not be opened by any person byt yourself, if you die, they must be burnt without being opened. The last letter contains besides advice, a succinct history of your father which, if you have been a good boy and have become a good scholar, will be quite interesting to you, but if you have been bad and become vicious, you had better never see it.

L.E. Daviss

You must not be too anxious to read my letters until the proper time, and they must not be opened until the time arrives.

TYPED FROM LETTER ADDRESSED TO AUGUSTUS FREDERICK DAVIS FROM LAWRENCE EDWIN DAVIS
BY TEMPLE DAVIS, DAUGHTER OF EDWIN DANIEL DAVIS, ON APRIL 21, 1982

ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO AUGUSTUS FREDERICK DAVIS, TO BE OPENED ON THE 30 OF JULY,
1845, WHICH IS YOUR BIRTHDAY. THIS IS MY WISH, AND I HOPE NO PERSON WILL DARE
VIOLATE IT. L.E. DAVIS

TEXT OF LETTER:

Amite County,

1841

To Augustus Frederick Davis:

My Dear Boy - A father's tenderest love induces me to address you in the
method I have chosen, hoping in the event of my death that these letters may be
of use to you. You are, at the time of opening this, five years old, too young
to comprehend my full meaning, and perhaps not able to read what I shall here
write, but if you are not, you must get some friend to read for you, and tell you
what I meant and teach you how to read, and your little fingers to write, and
then you will be a good Boy, and all good people will love you, but not as I
love you, for nobody can love you like your dear father. You must not be a bad
boy, but love and obey your mother. You must never tell a story, nor curse,
nor swear nor steal; if you do, when you grow to be a man, all good people will
hate you and speak bad of you, and you will be a disgrace to all your relations,
and they will be very sorry for you, and tell you how it would disturb me if I
were alive. You must not, therefore, be a bad boy, but try to be better than any
of your playmates. You must not fight nor quarrel with them, but be kind to
them. You must beg your friends to teach you how to spell, read and write.
By the time you are ten years old you will be a big boy and will open the
next letter to read what your poor dead father has left for you. The next is to be
opened when you are 15 and the last on the day that you are 20. It is the most
important of any containing many things interesting to you, if you have been a
good child. Farewell, my dear boy, God bless and take care of you.

Lawrence Edwin Daviss

Elizabeth
Huff

In this letter I intended to tell you something about you when you were a little baby, but I have not the time & paper, but I will in my next, and if you want to understand what I write in that letter, you must be a good boy and learn fast. You must not spend too much time in talking - but think, think, think, if you do not, you will never see many wise things, never to be witty, saying smart things to make fools laugh and laugh yourself - if you do, you will make yourself ridiculous in the estimation of men of true wisdom. You will be laughed at and shuned. Now, attend what I am going to say: Associate as much as possible with persons who are better informed than yourself and older - but if you think they excuse yourself and leave them. This to with idlers and fools is a perfect to you, and will prove a serious disadvantage to you. My paper is growing short. The following books you must read. History of States, of Rome & Greece, Charles 5th, Laws of Washington, Marion & Revolutionary Patriots, The News of the day to be found in newspapers. The Life of Bonaparte, Revolution in Europe, French Revolution, but books for you. But you must And you must write down your own ideas of things which will improve you in composition. I was a thousand miles from home before I was as old as you are now, without a friend and without money. You need not be too anxious to read my next, but you must be diligent in preparing yourself to read my whole history. I shall also address you on the day you are 21 years. I want you to study some profession, either medicine or law.

Adieu, my son, for five years,

Yr. affectionate Father

Augustus Frederick Daviss

L.E. Daviss

Voucher No. 19

Paid the 31 day of May 1863

L. H. Lewis

70000 Pigt C. S.

From the 1 day of Dec. 1863

To the 31 day of May 1863

Pay.....8

Forage.....

Amount..... 160 00

TEMPLE DAVIS
14 October 1982

ON: LAWRENCE EDWIN DAVIS AND
AUGUSTUS FREDERICK DAVIS

1800's

Lawrence Edwin Davis was born in Prince William County, Virginia, March 10, 1811, the son of John Franklin Davis and Melinda Luttrell Davis. He states that the family on both sides was well traveled and possessed splendid educations, so he was sent to tutors when quite small, and also tutored by his mother.

In 1828, at the age of 17, he was sent to boarding school. His interest in another boarding school led him to arrange of his own volition to attend by teaching for his board and tuition, which then was \$105.00 for the ten-month scholastic period. He admits that he had a strong mind and remarks that he never disclosed his plans in advance to avoid the chagrin he would feel should he fail. He mentions that, from some cause or another, he was a great favorite with the ladies and was as fond of them as they were of him. He speaks of studying the English and Latin bravely, and the headmaster of the school obtained for him a situation as teacher at Marmion, the residence of Dangerfield Lewis, a nephew of General Washington, in King George's County. It was thought by some that he had a serious notion of marrying at this time, but he says that such a thought never entered his mind.

Here he decided to seek his fortune and to see the world, stating that he could do nothing in an old county (then like a country). His father, much opposed to his leaving Virginia, would not finance or assist this undertaking, so on August 31, 1831, at the age of 19, he embarked on his travels with only \$9.62, walking and eating nothing on many days to save money. For many miles he traveled through Indiana and Illinois, and says of this time, "It would be of little use to undertake to describe what I suffered on the road, walking sometimes 45 miles a day. But under all suffering and fatigue, I never desponded." Reaching St. Louis, with little or no money, he began to teach, leaving a few months later to reach Boone County, where he taught on the two mile prairie. On these travels he renewed old acquaintances with friends and relatives who had emigrated from Virginia, and arriving in Jefferson City, the seat of Government, taught ten months and commenced the study of medicine, remaining there for five years.

On April 11, 1837, after a bout with what he calls billious fever (yellow fever) he left for New Orleans to embark for Texas. He says here, "When I arrived at that place, the billious fever was raging to a most alarming extent. I cannot describe the ravages committed by that scourge of the human family. There was no vessel ready to sail, and I was advised to leave there for the country, which I lost no time in doing. I was already sick, and I felt certain that I should have the Yellow Fever. And sure enough, on the 5th day after I left new Orleans, I was taken down with Yellow Fever. I had gotten as far as Woodville, Mississippi. I can't describe my suffering at this place. Suffice it to say, my life was despaired of by four doctors, and I was left with no person to attend to me for more than a week."

He did recover, and began teaching school in Amite County. His first pupil was Elizabeth Pinah Huff, daughter of Benjamin Huff and Sara Berryhill Huff. During the next 18 months, he states he had looked around at the girls as he had done in Virginia and Missouri, and it was Elizabeth to whom he proposed marriage. They were married on the 15th day of October, 1839, after which they traveled to the home of his father for their honeymoon, he not having seen his family for ten years, staying four months.

Their son, Augustus Frederick Davis, was born July 30, 1840 - a son whom Lawrence Edwin adored. He relates that the child was born very sickly, and after taking him to the funeral of a relative, he became so ill with hives that he was not expected to live. He was four months old, and Lawrence Edwin worked diligently employing every method he knew, to keep him alive and breathing. He says of that time, "You were all my hopes for happiness in this world, and so I saw more trouble on your account than on all the misfortunes that ever befell me."

During this time, Lawrence Edwin himself became terminally ill, and undertook the sequence of letters to be opened by his son on subsequent birthdays, attempting to convey to this cherished son all the philosophy, advice, spiritual guidance and scholastic instruction which would benefit him in his absence, admonishing him to become a useful man, to be honest, truthful, to receive a thorough and well-rounded education and to behave at all times as becomes a gentleman. They are written beautifully, in an old English hand, with perfect composition and grammar, although he states that he writes hurriedly, not knowing how long he will live. The first letter begins by saying, "My Dear boy, a father's tenderest love induces me to address you in the method I have chosen, hoping in the event of my death that these letters may be of use to you." This way, his love for his son transcended his death, which occurred shortly and when he was only around thirty years old.

I believe that his son fulfilled his hopes from the letters we have from Augustus Frederick, written as an officer in the Confederate army to his wife, Julia Ann Reynolds Davis.

Augustus Frederick, or Fred, as he signs his letters, began serving in the Company of his uncle, Newton Lawrence Huff, as 1st Sargeant, and then became Captain. His letters were carried to Julia through the lines by his body servant, Henry, and are lively narratives of skirmishes with the Yanks and vivid pictures of life in Camp.

Of the life in camp, he writes through the years of the early 1860's, where he and his sharpshooters are in conflict with Yankee cavalry, and they later board railroad cars then walk 200 miles to the main army. In the camps, whole regiments were quarantined with Smallpox, and he himself became ill occasionally. There was little food, and they subsisted for days on only buttermilk, sometimes having bacon and cornbread. On long marches in dry weather the dust was very disagreeable and water scarce. Many fell dead with sun stroke, and men in the hospitals were so neglected that flies covered their faces. In other regiments men were shot daily for desertion. His regiment never wavered, and he remarked that they believed if they could substitute their's for Pemberton's, that they could more readily whip the Yankees in Mississippi. At one time he said the Yanks were camped across a river from them, calling them to come into the river swimming, while they kept large guns trained on them with which they could begin shelling them at any time. At one time he stated that only two were left of his original company.

He relates news to Julia of their friends and acquaintances who are in the army, and says he has heard that the negroes are leaving the home places in Mississippi and going to the Yanks, and heard that his Grandmother Huff's Griff had gone also.

On March 5, 1864, he writes that Congress has called in all the Confederate money in circulation and that Confederate bonds were being given for all the old bills, which would, in April, be worth only 66-2/3 cents on the dollar, and that after the 1st of January it would be taxed 100%, therein being worthless.

At one time they had 4" of snow, and their clothes became tattered and worn. Henry was able to bring a few items of clothing for Fred. Ministers somehow made it to the camps and conducted church services all possible. 3,000 prisoners were exchanged each week.

Fred spoke of going to the lines of battle, and said he would go cheerfully. He said, "I think there is a narrow chance for me to ever see you and my dear boy again, and it makes my heart melt within me. But if I never see you again, I hope to meet you both in a better world than this. He closed that letter by saying, "Every evening when the sun is sinking low, I will be praying for divine guidance when into battle lines I go, and may you be praying for me at the same time, So our prayers together may reach the throne divine."

In addition to the stress of their environment, there was the constant worry of the safety of their loved ones at home. Fred wrote, "I hear that no crops are being made at home, and not only the soldiers are the sufferers, but those dear ones whom we have left at home will have to suffer for the want of bread. I am fearful that the Yanks will take Mississippi, and then I do not know what will become of you all. I hope they never find the way to where you are. The north will not give up, and the south will not give up, until the last one of us is gone to our heavenly home and those at home are starved to death, Then, and not till then, I fear this wicked war will close. If you hear of our fighting, be of good cheer, for if I fall, you shall not be ashamed of the name I leave. If it be the will of God for me to follow thousands of my fellow soldiers to the grave in the fields of carnage and death, I must go.

He was only 22 years old.