

E. D. Davison, The Lumber King

Edward Doran (E.D.) Davison hailed from Mill Village, Queens County, but he is considered one of the founding fathers of the town of Bridgewater. Losing his parents at a young age, he grew up under the guidance of his Aunt Catherine Doran, a woman with savvy business sense and management skills, who operated the family's flourishing farming and fishing business that Davison inherited in 1827 at the age of 18. At age 20, E. D. married Desiah Mack, a native of Queens County, with whom he had ten children. He married his second wife Martha Hopkins Campbell of Liverpool in 1887. They had no children.

Davison was enterprising and innovative, and by the mid 1800's, he owned thousands of acres of woodland in Queens County. He added to his successful business by purchasing land and mills along the LaHave River in Lunenburg County, and in 1865 he moved to Bridgewater to manage his newly acquired mills.

E.D. Davison & Sons flourished. In less than 20 years, there were five mills, with 350 men employed, using at least 50 teams of oxen. A passage from *History of the County of Lunenburg* reads, 'Their sale of lumber, the output of which averages twelve million feet, is about \$120,000 yearly. They import from forty to fifty thousand dollars' worth of goods annually, and the volume of business passing through their books amounts to \$200,000 per annum.'

Thanks to E. D. Davison & Sons, Bridgewater had become a thriving lumber and shipping town. The Davisons were a large family, well respected and generous. Their home, known as Oak Hill, was located at the corner of what are now Aberdeen Road and Elm Street. They took a great interest in town affairs, including politics. In fact, E.D.'s son Francis, or Frank, became the town's first mayor after incorporation in 1899.

In February 1984, E. D. Davison caught a cold, developed pneumonia and died. According to Tom Sheppard, in his book *Historic Bridgewater*, 'the Halifax Herald said that a deep gloom had been cast over the town, and the counties of Lunenburg and Queens had been met with an irreparable loss.'

Edward Doran Davison was buried in the family plot in Mill Village. The business passed into the hands of his four sons. At the time of his death, E.D. had earned the proud distinction of having the largest lumber business in the Province, and one of the largest in the Dominion.