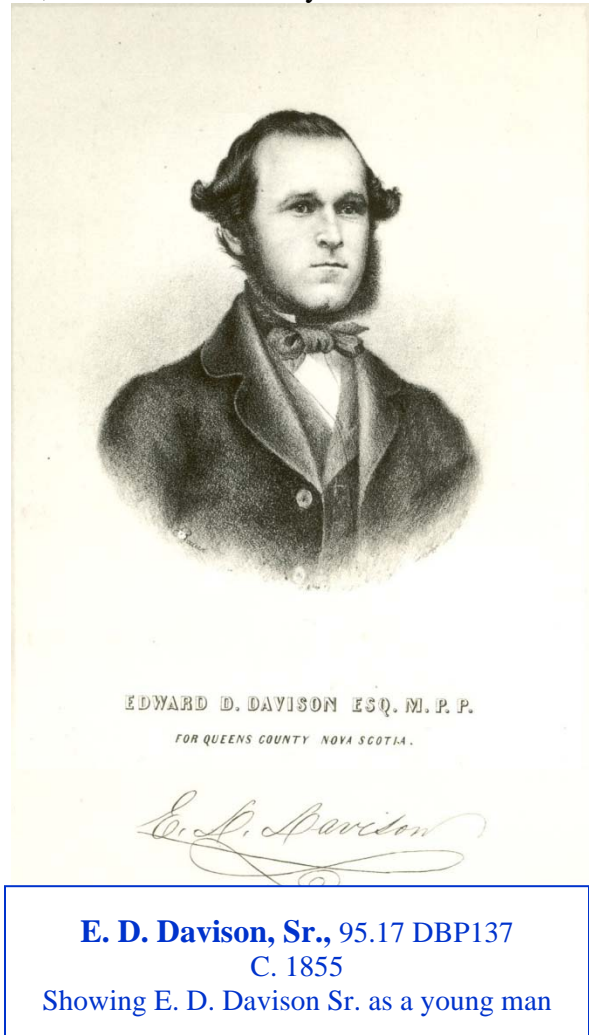


Edward Doran Davison Sr. –The Lumber King

Edward Doran Davison Senior was born in 1819 at Mill Village, Queens County. Growing up under the guidance of his maternal Aunt Catherine Doran, a woman with savvy business sense and management skills, who operated the property that Davison would later inherit at the age of 18.¹ It is no surprise that he became a successful businessman in both Lunenburg and Queens County.

Besides inheriting his grandfather's property in Queens County at a young age, he also married young, at only 20 years of age. His first wife was Desiah Mack, a native of Queens County, and together they had a total of ten children, seven of whom out-lived their father.² His second wife, who he married in 1887, was Martha Hopkins Campbell. They had no children together.

Edward Doran, Senior, added to his successful business and many acres of woodland in Queens County by purchasing land and mills along the upper reaches of the LaHave River, and in 1865 he moved to Bridgewater to manage his newly acquired mills.³ Very quickly, with the help of three of his sons- Charles Henry, Edward Doran Jr., and Francis Doran- E.D. Davison & Sons flourished.



¹ William E. Marshall, "Davison, E.D" (Bridgewater, N.S., 1894) from Archives Community File, Biography and Index MG1, Vol. 255.

² M. B. DesBrisay, *History of the County of Lunenburg*, 3rd ed. (Bridgewater: The Bridgewater Bulletin Ltd., 1967), 220.

³ Tom Sheppard, *Historic Bridgewater* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2008), 103.



**Members of the E.D. Davison & Sons firm, 668.1 DBP137
C. 1890**

E.D. Davison Senior is located in the center of the montage.
Frank Davison located in the left hand corner. Frank built a large house on
Aberdeen Road and was the first mayor of Bridgewater.

In less than 20 years, E.D. Davison & Sons employed more than 350 men and at least 50 teams of oxen running five mills.⁴ By this time, the total amount of property owned by E.D. Davison & Sons was an astounding 200,000 acres.⁵ There is no doubt that the E.D. Davison Company was a successful venture, employing many local men, and giving E.D. Davison Sr., the opportunity to give generously back to the community.

A passage from *History of the County of Lunenburg*, from the passing of E.D. Davison, Sr., reads “ ‘At the time of his death he had fairly earned the proud distinction of having the

⁴ Catherine Prass, “Davison, Edward Doran,” *Dictionary of Canada Biographies*, (2005).

⁵ Murry Barkhouse, *Famous Nova Scotia* (Lancelot Press, 1994), 64.

largest lumber business in the Province, and one of the largest in the Dominion', ”⁶ adding that even with age, Davison never lost any of his “abundant energy”.⁷

His home was located at the corner of what are now Aberdeen Road and Elm Street. On the A.F. Church map, dating from 1883, the Davison home is called “Oak Hill”. When his grandson, Fred Davison, son of Charles Henry Davison, inherited the property, he demolished the original structure and, in 1915, built a home of his own which still stands.⁸

Francis Davison, E.D. Davison Senior’s son, built his home next to his father’s on Aberdeen Road (87 Aberdeen Road).

⁶ DesBrisay, 219.

⁷ DesBrisay, 219.

⁸ Bill Plaskett, “26 Elm Street,” Built Heritage Files, September 26, 1985.

87 Aberdeen Road The Mansion on the Hill

Both Francis and Edward Doran Davison Jr., bought property around their father's home on Elm Street in 1885⁹ and it was later divided up among some of E.D. Davison's sons and grandsons. 87 Aberdeen Road was the home of Francis Davison, the third son of E.D. Davison, Sr.

Francis was an "office man" in his father's firm of E.D. Davison & Sons, after successfully attending commercial college.¹⁰ Commonly call Frank, he continued working at his father's business, even after it was sold to an American firm upon the death of his brothers (being renamed Davison Lumber Company Limited).¹¹



Davison House, 95.4.9 DBP3B
C. 1890

The home and property of Frank Davison. Built around 1889

⁹ Bill Plaskett, "87 Aberdeen Road," Built Heritage Files, September 26, 1985.

¹⁰ F.T. Freeman, "In A Reminiscent Mood," March 3, 1964.

¹¹ "A Lumber King of Nova Scotia," Halifax Herald, November 11, 1913.

Even though he chose to winter in Toronto,¹² Frank still remained active in the community of Bridgewater, as a member of the school Board, implementing plans for a new school. He was instrumental in acquiring the property for the new building. He was also a member of the Royal Conservation Commission in 1907,¹³ and denoted generously to various organization, churches and schools, including Mount Alison and Dalhousie University.¹⁴

Frank Davison also took up the momentous challenge of being Bridgewater's first mayor in 1899.¹⁵ The task fell to him to unite the town after the devastating fire and to rally the community together to rebuild its commercial district.

His home is a gracious and stately house located on Aberdeen Road. It is both impressive in its architectural detail and imposing in its size. Constructed in the Late Victorian Modified Gothic style in 1889,¹⁶ the house has three large dormers on the front of the home, each measuring a different height and a different size. The right dormer is the widest and has a gabled roof and a three sided recessed bay window just above the veranda. Ornamental brackets support a decorative shelf complete with a circular designed bargeboard and dentils just below it. The pedimented dormer sits over the recessed bay window and is trimmed in the same circular designed moulding as the shelf below it. Just below the small window is a scale shingle design.



Davison House, 95.4.9 DBP3B
C. 1890
The home of Frank Davison in detail.
Built around 1889

The middle dormer, which could also be deemed a tower, also has a three sided bay window, although it is not recessed and is smaller than the right most dormer. This dormer is also complete with a three sided hipped roof. The tower itself incorporates the same decorative bargeboard and dentils as the right hand dormer, tying the two together with fine architectural detail. A pedimented window hood adorns the two windows and an unusual Dutch gable roof tops of the central dormer.

¹² Halifax Herald, November 11, 1913.

¹³ *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*. Vol. XVIII. (Halifax: Wm, Macnab & Son, 1914), 38.

¹⁴ Sheppard, 44.

¹⁵ David Allison, *History of Nova Scotia*, Vol. III, 1916, 146.

¹⁶ Plaskett, "87 Aberdeen Road."

The dormer on the left is the simplest of the three. It is complete with pilasters and possesses the same dentils decoration that is present on the other dormers.

While each dormer is constructed in a different manner, with diverse architectural details and different methods of construction, they are tied together with similar details (ie. the dentils, the woodwork, and the decorative bargeboard). The three dormers are imposing as well as being beautiful and they create an interesting asymmetrical facade.

The house is also complete with a veranda that wraps around one side of the building. Pediments, one above the front entrance of the veranda, and another on the side entrance of the veranda, add small decorative details that fit well with the overall style.

The top section of the roof on the left hand side of the house extends slightly beyond the wall creating an overhanging section of the roof to protect the third floor square oriel window, which projects from the side of the building.

The house stretches out toward the back of the property with a large ell, built with just as much detail as the facade of the house.

It is said that the house was made with all local woods, which is not surprising considering that Frank Davison was part of Nova Scotia's largest lumber manufacturer. What is surprising is the fact that it rumoured to contain 3,000 square feet of solid oak flooring throughout the house, with about 60 windows in total.¹⁷

After the death of Frank Davison, the house passed to his wife Ella Davison and then to their only son, Reginald Davison. After Reginald, the home left the Davison family.

The mansion is an excellent example of late Victorian architecture that has survived for one hundred and ten years.

¹⁷ Bill Bees, "Ancient Manor Monument to Gracious Living in N.S. in the 19th Century," *The Chronicle Herald*.

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