

[Davidson, Martha Campbell]

Mrs. Martha Davidson Aided Husband Taking Supplies to Union Army
Celebrates Her Eighty-Eighth Birthday In Quiet Way—
Many Friends Call Upon Her At Home

Mrs. Martha Davidson of this village yesterday celebrated her 88th birthday in a very quiet way. She is in excellent health and enjoyed visiting with all her friends. There were many callers.

Mrs. Davidson has the distinction of being one of Middleport's oldest residents and conceded to be the only living woman in Western New York State who saw real battles having accompanied her husband, the late Robert Davidson, during the Civil War, in his service delivering supplies by boat to the battle fronts.

Mrs. Davidson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Perry W. Campbell was born in a log house north of the village, now known as the Slayton Settlement, the home which was later sold to Sylvester Day.

Mr. Campbell was one of the early settlers, coming from the state of Vermont before the opening of the Erie Canal. He made the trip by the way of the wagon route, through uncut forests.

Mr. Campbell proved to be one of the best masons of his day and a number of buildings are standing today which are monuments to the work of Mrs. Davidson's father. He would drive to Middleport from the Ridge [now Ridge Road] accompanied by his wife and daughter Martha Campbell, they returning to care for the stock while Mr. Campbell worked on the First Universalist church here. Mrs. Davidson has been active in the Universalist church until a few years ago.

Robert Davidson, her husband, in his early days was a packer in a flour mill, owned by Avery Delano upon the canal bank in Middleport. Later he owned a line of packets and tugs operating out of Buffalo. When the war broke out his packets were thrown into the Union service transporting grain to the union soldiers as well as their supplies. It was upon one of those return trips that Mr. Davidson and Miss Martha Campbell were married and left for the war zones immediately afterward.

Mrs. Davidson's first trip took her to Philadelphia where they lived for three weeks, leaving there when the packets and tugs were thrown into service along the Potomac and Rapahernock [Rappahannock] Rivers. On one of these trips she was within eight miles of Richmond and the Confederate stronghold. Upon another trip Mrs. Davidson was within seven miles to Antietam while the battle was raging. It was upon this trip that one of the barges caught fire and threatened the whole fleet. While in Washington they lived in the American Hotel from where they witnessed the Grand Review.

When the war ended Mr. Davidson sold his barges in Washington and returned to Middleport where he made his home. He served as village trustee for seven years and after the year of 1884 he built the Middleport Opera House. Later his nephew entered partnership with him and the theatre was operated under the name of Davidson and Van Dyke. In 1904 they took a trip to Nome, Alaska, and in 1906, Mr. Davidson died.

[Davidson, Martha Campbell]

Today Mrs. Davidson is the only one of her family living and many enjoy to sit and hear her relate the exciting times of the Civil War days and of her meeting with President Lincoln, her trip to Washington at Lincoln's death and her many trips into the battle regions.

Mrs. Davidson is able to care for herself, is interested in the times of the day, enjoys the radio and to all who visit with her are given a great deal of pleasure.

Union-Sun & Journal, Lockport NY, Thu. 24 Jan 1929

Middleport Woman, 93 Years Old, Dies

MIDDLEPORT, Feb. 27—Mrs. Martha Davidson, 93, who died Sunday night in the Blocher home, Williamsville, was born January 23, 1841, in the Slayton Settlement road, Niagara county. She was the widow of Robert Davidson, who died in 1906.

Mr. Davidson owned a line of packets operating out of Buffalo to Rochester. When the Civil War broke out he placed his packet lines at the disposal of the government, carrying provisions and grain from Western New York to the Potomac river into Virginia.

Mrs. Davidson, formerly Martha Campbell, accompanied her husband on these trips to within eight miles of Richmond and seven miles of Antietam with supplies while the battle was raging its fiercest. After the war Mr. Davidson sold his barges in Washington and returned to this section, where he engaged in farming until he came to Middleport to make his home. Mrs. Davidson had been in the Blocher home about one year and a half.

The only surviving relative is a niece, Mrs. Jennie Hill, Parts, Ill.

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Transcribed on 23 Jul 2012 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY