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## Nicholas Davis

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Westmoreland: Nicholas Davis  
**Limestone County - Nicholas Davis**

FRANK WESTMORELAND

Nicholas “Nick” Davis was born in Hanover County in 1781 in an area known as “the slashes.” His father had fought in the American Revolution, and as a neighbor and close friend of Henry Clay, it is no surprise that he had a great influence on young Nick. Henry Clay uprooted his family and moved to Kentucky, and Nick, his wife Hartha Hargrave Davis and their child moved to Kentucky as well.

Nick Davis was described as being tall, well-proportioned, with deep blue eyes that indicated kindness and charity. When war broke out against England once again, Nick felt obligated to join the fray, just as his father had done in the American Revolution. He had heard much about a Tennessean named Andrew Jackson as well as an abundance of good land further South. Nick sold out, lock, stock, and barrel, and headed to Limestone County where he purchased a large tract of land on March 17, 1817. Like many other early settlers, he began building a log cabin, which he named Walnut Grove. In time, his plantation would expand to include 2312 acres of land.

In 1819, it was announced that the convention to write the constitution would convene in Huntsville. Davis was chosen as a delegate from Limestone County, and was further honored when he was chosen as one of the 15 men who actually wrote the document under Clement Clay’s leadership. When their task was finished, Davis was again chosen as a delegate to the first legislature later that fall.

Davis was elected to the Senate in 1820 and presided over the session in Cahaba that winter. Historian and writer Albert James Pickett wrote that “his impartiality, honesty, firmness, talents, and efficiency caused him to continue in the office of President of the Senate for the period of ten years.”

In 1829, Davis ran for Congress, but was defeated by his old friend Clement Comer Clay. He ran for governor, but was defeated by John Gayle and yet another time by Reuben Chapman. When he retired from politics in 1844, his loss was felt immensely.

Nick returned to his home in Limestone County, which surprisingly had not changed too significantly from when he first built it in the early 1800s. Although he had acquired much wealth over the decades, his lifestyle,

Huntsville Historical Review, Vol. 32 [2007], No. 1, Art. 15 and his home, remained unpretentious. It had been enlarged however, to accommodate the many friends who spent days upon days visiting the Davis home, including the Henry Clay family.

Nick did acquire one expensive habit – that of horseracing. He brought his ponies to the Green Bottom Inn, John Connally's racing establishment in Huntsville, on many occasions. Though Davis had once admired Andrew Jackson, he found his ponies in direct competition with Jackson's, and as a result, developed a dislike of the Tennessee hero. He transported his horses to compete as far away as Mobile, New Orleans, and Nashville.

Nicholas Davis died in 1856, having never achieved his political aspirations. Still, he was known for admirable qualities, and although history will not list him as an Alabama governor, he will be remembered for his kindness, generosity, manners, and character. His children and descendants were well-known and accomplished in their own right. Among them, Zebulon Pike Davis was a five-time mayor of Huntsville.

A large monument to commemorate the lives of Nick and Martha Davis still stands near the site of the old homeplace, probably razed by fire. Nick Davis Road was appropriately named in his honor, and there are many of his descendants left in Limestone County today, including this author.

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