

Eugene Gartley

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- **Newspaper article.**

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Reminiscing

Another Yazooan related to president

(Written for the Yazoo Historical Society)

By ROBERT BOWMAN

In the last column was an article about the nephew of Andrew Jackson, Harmon A. Hays, who is buried in the old Cage Cemetery near Little Yazoo. Now, we find there was another Yazooan who had close family connections to another President—Jefferson Davis.

He was Eugene Gartley who lived near the Cages, at Plainsville Plantation near Dover, and was the son of Colonel William Gartley and Mrs. Elizabeth O. (Harrison) Davis, widow of Major Robert V. Davis.

Mrs. Elizabeth Davis was from Natchez, the daughter of Nathaniel Harrison. When her husband died, she married his first cousin, Colonel Gartley, who was married the first time to Julia Ann Balfour and had a son, Captain William F. Gartley. Captain Gartley married Lou Helm, daughter of Dr. William Helm of Dover.

He organized the Yazoo Rangers, buying the horses himself with his own money, going all the way to Texas to get them. They were inducted at Liverpool and later served with General Price in Missouri.

After Colonel Gartley's wife died, he and Mrs. Davis had several children who died

young, having only one, Eugene, who survived to adulthood. Eugene said in a letter to his daughter that his father, Colonel William Gartley, was bitten by a little dog in October 1856, went mad and died.

The following February, his mother, Mrs. Gartley, went on a visit with Eugene to his Aunt Susan Davis' at "Davis" near Canton. She was the wife of Major Isaac Davis, oldest brother of President Jefferson Davis.

They had moved to Madison County after leaving Davis Island, south of Vicksburg, when a bad storm had killed their infant son and crippled Major Davis.

Another son was General Joseph R. Davis, a lawyer, who was on President Davis' staff, known as "Buddie" to Eugene. While Eugene and his mother were visiting, she took pneumonia on the way up from Plainsville Plantation, Yazoo County, and died there at Major and Mrs. Davis' home. Mrs. Gartley called Eugene's aunt to her bedside and gave him to Mrs. Davis to rear.

In the above-mentioned letter, Eugene goes on to say that Davis Residence was built on real Gothic style, had nine rooms, in ten acres of woods and was one of the finest houses in the county. He said that Lucy George, a house servant, hid the silver there between the house and the cistern under the grass and the yankees rolled all over it but never found any.

"Lucy was as true as steel to the last to my aunt," he said. "She did not marry until after her death. My aunt's dying request was to give Lucy 40 acres and a house, but mortgages covered everything so they couldn't do so."

Further on the letter states that Eugene received 3,000 acres of land for his share of the Gartley Estate in Yazoo County and his half-brother, Capt. Bill Gartley received 1500 acres. He said he got all vacant house and William got all improved land to the Big Black River. (See photo of canal dug by slaves on the plantation near the Big Black River.)

Eugene sold his land to Dr. J. J. Steinriede of Benton for \$1.00 per acres in 1874. Dr. Steinriede had loan him money to pay taxes on the land for several years. Eugene's reason for

selling the land, he writes, "There was no railroad. It is an unhealthy country. I would not be living today if I had been there. The money I took to Memphis and attended college. I stayed at Uncle Jeff Davis' house, 98 Court Street, Memphis. I attended Cousin Maggie's marriage (his only child married) to Mr. Addison Hays, son of General Hays. Stayed there until I left for New Orleans."

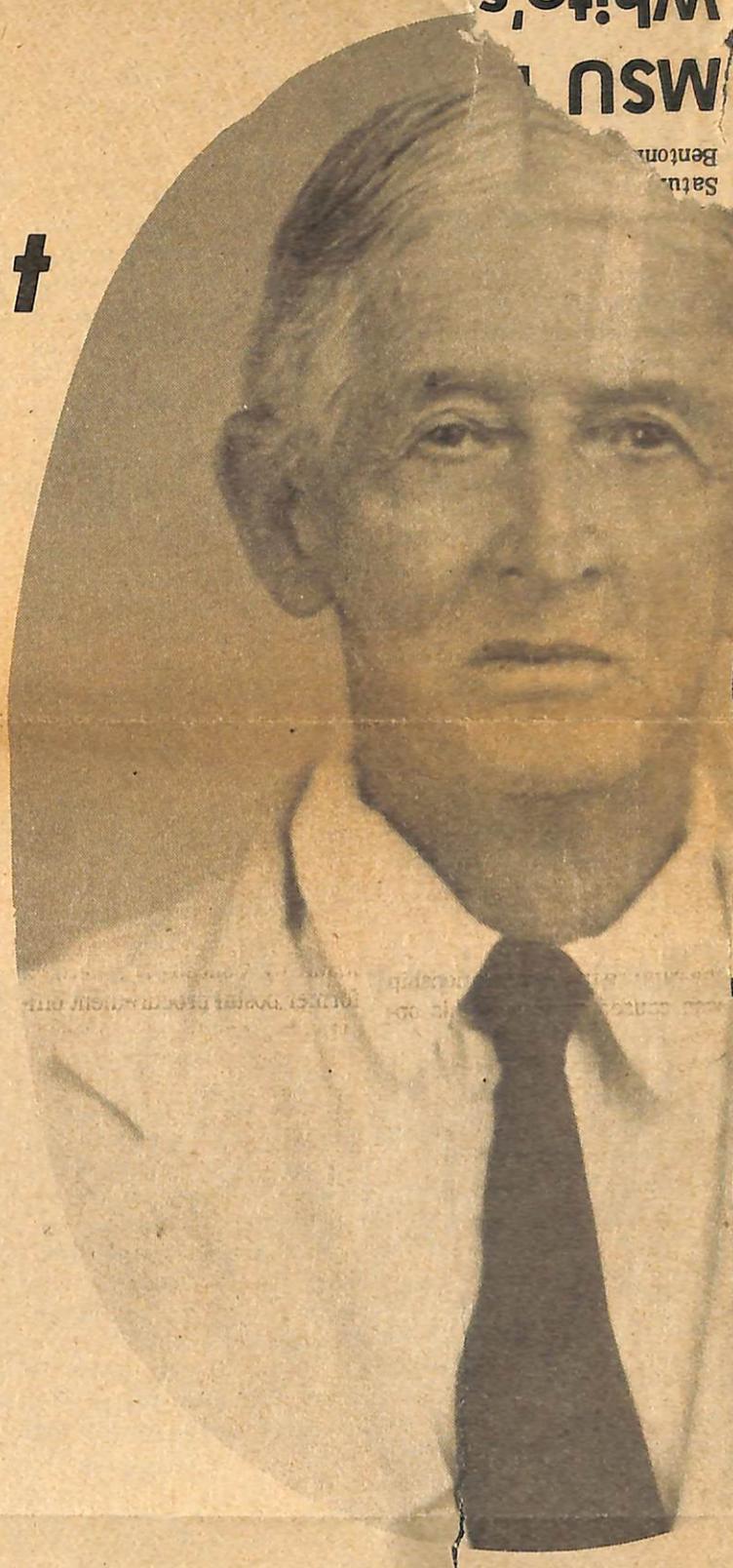
Ironically, today, just 102 years later, there is a railroad; the country seems very healthy; and the land is worth a lot of money!

Captain William Gartley lived at Plainsville Plantation, which was partly blown away along with the carriage house in a storm, until he died in 1890. After Col. and Mrs. Gartley died, Captain Gartley was guardian of his half brother, Robert Davis, who was ill in the Civil War and his half sister, Mary Elizabeth Davis, who married Daniel Greenleaf Harris and lived in the old Davis house near Rose Hill, between Bentonia and Dover.

So from the above, we see another Yazoo County resident was closely related to a President and even lived with him after the Civil War when he was attending college.

There were four family connections between this family and Jefferson Davis: Susan Gartley whose mother was a Davis, married Isaac Davis, brother of the President; Landon Davis (Uncle) had two grandsons who married two of Jefferson's sisters; and another uncle, Lewis Gartley Balfour, married the granddaughter of Jefferson's oldest sister, Anna Smith.

Eugene's half sister, Mary Elizabeth (Davis) Harris who is buried near the old Harris place has descendants still living in Yazoo County—Bobby Harris



EUGENE GARTLEY
Lived with President Jefferson Da

and his family; Mrs. Thomas (Lois) Milner and family; Mrs. Thomas (Lois) Milner and family; and Mike Harris.