

Migration from England to Illinois

Name	Date	From	To
Dolor Davis (1593–1673)	1634	Kent, England	Cambridge, MA
	1635	Cambridge, MA	Concord, MA?
	1636-1638	Concord, MA	Duxbury, MA
	1639-1640	Duxbury, MA	Scituate, MA
	1639-1640	Scituate, MA	Barnstable, MA
	1655	Barnstable, MA	Concord, MA
	1666	Concord, MA	Barnstable, MA
Samuel Simon Davis (1639-1713)	1655	Barnstable, MA	Concord, MA
Lieut. Simon Davis (1683-1763)	1721	Concord, MA	Rutland, MA
Ensign Oliver Davis (1732-1803)	1756	Rutland, MA	Princeton, MA
Samuel Davis (1778-1849)	1805	Princeton, MA	Fredonia (Canadaway), Chautauqua , NY
Reed Davis (1814-1900)	1839	Arkwright, NY	St. Charles, IL
	1853	St. Charles, IL	Burlington, IL

Dolor Davis (1593–1673)

Dolor Davis was born about 1593, most likely in Kent, England, though no direct record of his birth has been found. The absence of baptismal records leaves open several possibilities. Dolor's parents may have been parishioners in a small Kent village whose records were lost or incomplete. They were likely literate enough, or valued learning enough, for Dolor to manage property and legal matters by young adulthood. Given his later alignment with Puritan communities in New England, his family may also have held reform-minded religious views, which were present in parts of Kent

during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. While we cannot name them, it is reasonable to imagine that Dolor came from a hardworking, modest rural family who provided him with the discipline, skills, and faith that later enabled him to build a new life across the Atlantic.

Dolar's Early Life

Much of what we can say about Dolar's early life must be drawn from context. Dolar would likely have grown up in a rural agricultural society during the final years of the reign of Elizabeth I and the early reign of James I. Kent was prosperous compared to many English counties, but life for ordinary families was still labor-intensive and structured by class. Since Dolor was later recorded as a servant in Marden in 1614, it is likely that he came from a modest family—perhaps the son of a small farmer, tradesman, or laborer. In rural England at that time, boys of limited inheritance prospects were often placed into service or apprenticeships in their early teens, both to learn a trade and to ease the financial burden on their parents.

By 1614, Dolor was named in the will of James Clarke of Marden as a servant who inherited a house and property. This is a remarkable detail. Servants did not commonly inherit real property unless they had earned exceptional trust, functioned in a managerial role, or perhaps had kinship ties to the household. By his early twenties, Dolor must have demonstrated reliability, skill, and good character. The inheritance suggests he had already achieved a degree of stability unusual for someone of servant status. It may also indicate that he had no strong inheritance prospects from his own family—otherwise, remaining in service into adulthood would have been less necessary.

Dolar later became a master carpenter, as records suggest, so his early years may have included apprenticeship training. Carpentry was a respected and essential trade in both England and New England, requiring precision and long training. His practical skills would have provided steady income and positioned him as a valuable member of any community.

Life in Kent

In the early 1600s, Kent was a rural and agriculturally rich county known as the “Garden of England.” Villages such as East Farleigh and Marden were small farming communities surrounded by grain fields, sheep pastures, orchards, and hop gardens. Most residents lived modestly in timber-framed houses and relied on agriculture or skilled trades for their livelihoods. Society was strongly hierarchical, and while opportunity existed, land ownership and advancement were often limited, especially for those born outside the gentry.

Religious tensions also shaped life in early 17th-century England. Under the reigns of James I and Charles I, conflict grew between the established Church of England and reform-minded Puritans who sought further changes. Many Puritans faced increasing pressure during the 1620s and 1630s, prompting thousands to emigrate during what became known as the Great Migration.

Marriage and Family

Later documentation suggests that Dolor likely held Puritan beliefs. By 1614, he owned a house and property in Kent and was established as a carpenter. About ten years after receiving his inheritance, he married Margery Willard in East Farleigh, Kent. Margery came from a staunch Puritan family,

which may have further shaped the religious character of their household. While living in England, the couple had three, or possibly four, children.

Although the Davis family appears to have been prospering in Kent, increasing religious pressures in England during the 1620s and 1630s may have influenced their decision to leave. For committed Puritans, the tightening control of the Church of England and the policies under Charles I created uncertainty and concern. Despite owning property and having an established trade, the family was willing to relinquish the security of their home for the promise of greater religious freedom in America.

Immigration to New England

In 1634, Dolor Davis emigrated to New England, arriving in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with his brother-in-law, Simon Willard. Margery and their children followed on a separate vessel later in 1634 or 1635. Once settled in Massachusetts, Dolor and Margery expanded their family with three additional children, including Samuel, born in 1636, from whom this family line descends.

Cambridge Settlement (1634–1635)

Upon his arrival in Cambridge, Davis was granted 25 acres of land outside the town limits. In 1635, he purchased a house lot within the town itself, located at the northwest corner of what is now Winthrop Street and Dunster Street, between present-day Harvard University and the Charles River. At the time, Cambridge was a small but growing settlement, founded in 1630 and home to approximately 60–70 families by 1635.

Despite having only recently established himself there, Davis was among the nearly half of Cambridge's population who left the town in 1635. Limited land for livestock and internal church disputes prompted this significant migration.

Years of Movement: Duxbury, Scituate, and Barnstable (1638–1655)

Although it is assumed that Davis initially traveled with Simon Willard to Concord, there is no surviving record of land ownership there at that time. By 1638, Davis was living in Duxbury, and by 1640 he had acquired land in Scituate, Massachusetts.

In Scituate, Davis was a member of the church led by Rev. John Lothrop, a figure of importance in early New England religious history and another ancestor in this family line. Disagreements within the congregation—particularly over baptism—led Lothrop and many of his followers to relocate to Barnstable. Davis appears to have aligned with this group, though his settlement in Barnstable occurred gradually between about 1640 and 1643.

From approximately 1643 to 1655, Dolor Davis and his family resided in Barnstable.

Later Years: Concord and Return to Barnstable (1655–1673)

In 1655, Davis relocated once again, this time returning to Concord, Massachusetts, where he remained for about eleven years. By 1666, he had moved back to Barnstable, where he spent the remainder of his life.

Dolor Davis died in Barnstable in 1673. His will was proved on 2 June 1673, confirming his long residence and standing within the community.

Conclusions

Dolor Davis's frequent relocations may be explained by his occupation as a master carpenter, a skilled trade that would have been in demand across developing colonial towns. Surviving land records show him purchasing property in some communities while possibly residing in others, suggesting a degree of mobility consistent with his profession.

Although gaps remain in the historical record, it is clear that Davis and his family lived successively in Cambridge, Duxbury, Scituate, Barnstable, Concord, and finally Barnstable again. His life reflects both the instability and opportunities of early colonial New England, as well as the adaptability required to thrive there.

Samuel Simon Davis (1639–1713)

Samuel Simon Davis was born in Massachusetts in 1639, shortly after his parents, Dolor Davis and Margery (Willard) Davis, emigrated from Kent, England. His childhood was shaped by frequent relocations as his father pursued work as a master carpenter and followed shifting religious affiliations. These moves took the family through several Massachusetts towns before they finally settled for a time in Barnstable.

In 1655, when Samuel was about sixteen years old, he moved with his father from Barnstable to Concord, Massachusetts, a move that would define the remainder of his life.

Marriage and Family

Samuel Davis married Mary Meadows on 11 January 1665 at Lynn, Massachusetts. He was twenty-one years old at the time. The couple settled in Concord, where they raised seven children, all born during their time there.

Settlement in Concord and Bedford

Samuel Davis established himself as a farmer (husbandman) in that portion of Concord which was later set off as the town of Bedford. His farm lay on the back road from Concord to Bedford, approximately three miles from Concord village, near the edge of the river meadow—land well suited to agriculture.

In 1696, Davis purchased his homestead in what is now western Bedford. This homestead became the center of his family and farming life for many years.

Military Service and King Philip's War

Samuel Davis served in the colonial militia during King Philip's War. From August 1674 through January 1675, he was credited with service under Major Simon Willard, his uncle by marriage and a prominent military leader.

On 4 August 1675, Davis marched with the company of Captain Parker under Major Willard to the relief of Brookfield, participating in one of the most critical campaigns of the war. This service placed him among the men who defended frontier settlements during one of the most dangerous periods in early Massachusetts history.

Character and Legacy

Later town histories record that Samuel Davis bore the name of the first member of the family to settle in the Concord–Bedford area and describe him as a man who, through industry and frugality, accumulated property not merely for himself but for the benefit of others. He was remembered for contributing generously to the church he attended, donating furnishings as a memorial to his parents and siblings—an act reflecting both prosperity and deep family loyalty.

Samuel Simon Davis died in 1713, having lived more than fifty years in Concord and Bedford. His life exemplifies the second generation of New England settlers: native-born, land-owning, civically engaged, and shaped by both warfare and community building. Through his children and the land, he left a lasting imprint on the town that would become Bedford.

Lieut. Simon Davis (1683–1763)

Lieutenant Simon Davis was born in 1683, probably in Concord, Massachusetts, into a well-established second-generation New England family. He grew up in the Concord–Bedford area at a time when the original frontier had stabilized into organized farms, roads, and churches. By the early eighteenth century, land in Concord was largely settled and subdivided, leaving limited opportunity for younger men to acquire large or independent holdings.

Like many men of his generation, Simon Davis came of age just as Massachusetts was pushing westward into lands recently contested during King Philip’s War and later conflicts. The promise of land, economic advancement, and civic influence lay not in the older towns along the Charles River, but on the frontier of Worcester County.

Marriage and Decision to Move West

In 1719, Simon married Dorothy Heald at Stow, Massachusetts. Within a year or two of their marriage, Simon made the pivotal decision to leave Concord. By about 1721, he moved with his young family to Rutland, then a newly settled and still dangerous frontier community. For a young married man with ambitions, Rutland offered what Concord no longer could.

Life on the Rutland Frontier

Settling in Rutland in the early 1720s meant entering a world that was still only tenuously controlled by English settlers. Homes were widely spaced, roads were rough or nonexistent, and relations with Native Americans—though less openly hostile than during earlier wars—remained uncertain.

Simon Davis quickly emerged as a leader in this frontier community. By 1723, he was operating an inn, an important institution in a frontier town that served travelers, militia members, and town meetings.

That same year, Davis was waylaid and nearly killed by Native Americans, a stark reminder of the dangers of frontier life. Such encounters were not uncommon in Worcester County during this period and required constant vigilance, militia service, and mutual reliance among settlers.

Civic, Military, and Church Leadership

Simon Davis's title of Lieutenant reflects his service in the local militia, a critical role in protecting frontier towns. Beyond military duty, he became deeply involved in civil governance.

On 13 May 1740, he joined others in petitioning the General Court to divide the growing settlement and create a new township named Holden. This petition was granted, and Simon Davis was chosen as moderator of the first town meeting of Holden on 4 May 1745, a mark of exceptional trust and respect. His leadership spanned civic, judicial, military, and religious spheres—hallmarks of a principal man in an eighteenth-century Massachusetts town.

Family and Legacy

Simon and Dorothy (Heald) Davis were the parents of eight children, all raised amid the challenges and opportunities of frontier life. Dorothy survived her husband by more than a decade, dying on 21 July 1776.

Lieutenant Simon Davis died on 21 February 1763, having spent more than forty years shaping the communities of Rutland and Holden. His life reflects the outward movement of New England families in the eighteenth century—men who transformed wilderness into towns through endurance, public service, and leadership.

Ensign Oliver Davis (1732–1803)

Ensign Oliver Davis was born in 1732, the eldest of eight children of Lieutenant Simon Davis and Dorothy (Heald) Davis. When Oliver was about ten years old, his father brought the family from Concord to Rutland, Massachusetts, then a frontier settlement in Worcester County. Oliver grew up during a formative period in Rutland's history, witnessing its transformation from a sparsely settled outpost into an organized town with established civic and church life.

As the eldest son in a large family, Oliver would have assumed early responsibility, helping with farming, defense, and community labor. His upbringing combined agricultural work with exposure to militia culture, public service, and frontier resilience—traits embodied by his father.

Move from Rutland to Princeton (1756)

In 1756, at about twenty-four years of age, Oliver Davis moved from Rutland to Princeton, Massachusetts, a neighboring town recently incorporated in 1759 (previously known as part of Rutland District and adjacent lands). This move occurred during a period of intense regional change and conflict, coinciding with the French and Indian War.

Several factors likely influenced Oliver's decision to relocate. By the mid-eighteenth century, Rutland land was increasingly divided among established families. Princeton offered newer farms and the possibility of independent landownership. Additionally, Rutland had suffered devastating attacks

during earlier conflicts, particularly the 1740s. Some families chose to move to slightly more defensible or newly reorganized towns like Princeton.

The move from Rutland to Princeton was not a long-distance migration but represented a deliberate step outward, consistent with the generational westward movement seen throughout New England.

Military Service in the Revolutionary Era

Oliver Davis later served in the American Revolutionary War, attaining the rank of Ensign, an officer position often held by men of local standing and reliability. His service placed him among those who defended Massachusetts communities and supported the patriot cause during a time of profound political and social upheaval.

He enlisted from Princeton in Captain Joseph Sargen's company, Col. Josiah Whitney's regiment. Though specific details of his service have not been researched, his rank suggests leadership responsibilities—likely involving the organization, supply, or command of men from his local area.

Family and Later Life

Oliver Davis married and raised a very large family, with records suggesting twelve children. Such a household reflects both the agrarian demands of eighteenth-century life and the expectation that children would contribute labor to the farm and family economy.

He spent the remainder of his life in Princeton, where he became part of the town's early fabric. His lifetime spanned the colonial period, the Revolution, and the early years of the United States—an era of dramatic transformation.

Ensign Oliver Davis died in 1803, leaving behind a large network of descendants and continuing the Davis family's pattern of service, settlement, and westward expansion within Massachusetts.

Samuel Davis (1778–1849)

Samuel Davis was born in 1778, the youngest of twelve children of Oliver Davis and Mary (Read) Davis, longtime residents of Princeton, Massachusetts. By the time of Samuel's birth, his family had lived in Princeton for nearly twenty years, and many of his older siblings were already leaving home to establish families of their own.

Samuel occupies a critical place in the Davis family line as the link between the early Massachusetts Davis ancestors, beginning with Dolor Davis, and Reed Davis, who later settled in Illinois. Despite this importance, Samuel does not appear in some compiled family trees of Oliver Davis. The absence is due primarily to the fact that no contemporary birth record for Samuel has been found.

To resolve this gap, ProAncestry Genealogists undertook a detailed investigation of the ancestry of Reed Davis, Samuel's son. Through a combination of autosomal DNA evidence, Y-DNA analysis, and close examination of anecdotal and circumstantial records, researchers concluded that Samuel Davis was indeed the son of Oliver Davis and the father of Reed Davis. While this conclusion cannot be confirmed by direct documentary proof, the convergence of genetic and historical

evidence supports the identification with high confidence, sufficient to place Samuel securely in this lineage.¹

Marriage and Family Life

Samuel Davis married Sally Fisher in 1803 in Princeton, Massachusetts. Together they raised six children, two of whom later migrated west to Illinois, continuing the family's long-established pattern of westward movement in search of opportunity.

Samuel's marriage connected him to the Fisher family, pioneers in western New York. Sally's father, Ichabod Fisher, Sr., built the first tavern in Cassadaga, New York, signaling the family's deep involvement in early frontier settlement.

Migration to Western New York (1805)

In the winter of 1805, Samuel Davis joined a small migration westward, traveling as a teamster driving an ox team for Judge Zattu Cushing, who was relocating from Vermont to what is now Fredonia, New York. At that time, the region was still largely wilderness, with few roads and scattered settlements.

During their journey along the frozen surface of Lake Erie, the party narrowly escaped death when a severe snowstorm overtook them near nightfall. Aware of dangerous cracks in the ice, they huddled together, blowing a horn at intervals in the hope that someone might hear their distress signal. Two men from Eighteen Mile Creek recognized the signal and guided them safely to shore with lanterns. By morning, the ice had vanished entirely from the lake—underscoring how close the party had come to disaster.²

Settlement, Farming, and Innovation

Samuel Davis remained in Fredonia for a year, working for Judge Cushing and clearing approximately ten acres of land. In payment for this labor, he received a parcel of land later known as the Linus Sage farm. There he built a small log house, noted for having what was remembered as the finest floor in the settlement, made of split poles carefully planed.

The following spring, Samuel's wife, Sally, their children, and household goods were brought west by her brother, Ichabod Fisher, Jr. Samuel soon demonstrated remarkable agricultural skill and foresight. He established the first fruit tree nursery in Chautauqua County, having brought with him a half-bushel of apple seeds and young trees carefully selected in Princeton, Massachusetts. He maintained this nursery even after selling his original farm and purchasing additional properties.

Over the years, Samuel bought, improved, and sold multiple farms in Fredonia, Cassadaga, and surrounding areas. On one property, he cleared four acres of creek-bottom land, planted winter wheat, and harvested forty bushels per acre, an exceptional yield at a time when wheat sold for one dollar per bushel.

¹ The report and documents have been uploaded on the *Ancestry.com* website in the Gallery.

² Details from the letters of Rueben Davis.

Distilling Herbal Oils

Later in life, Samuel Davis entered the business of distilling medicinal oils from wild herbs, an enterprise that proved highly profitable. Using a small still capable of processing a wagonload of herbs, he produced oils from wormwood, peppermint, spearmint, smartweed, and yarrow, among others.

Yarrow oil was especially valuable, selling for sixteen dollars an ounce, and was widely used to relieve toothache by killing the nerve without pain. Samuel gathered the plants himself from local meadows, distilling leaves, blossoms, and stalks together. The work was economically and agriculturally beneficial, as livestock avoided yarrow, making its removal desirable.

In just two months of operation, Samuel reportedly earned three hundred dollars clear of expenses, selling his oil in New York City through an agent in Fredonia. Even into his seventies, he remained industrious, inventive, and physically active.

Death and Character

Samuel Davis died on 14 April 1849 at Burnham Hollow, while temporarily staying on a neighboring farm during the winter. He was seventy years old at the time of his death and had intended to return home in the spring.

A family remembrance published in 1900 described him as “one of the best men that ever lived in this country,” noting that he was “loved by everyone who knew him.” His life reflected the defining traits of the Davis family across generations: kindness, hard work, innovation, and a willingness to push westward into new lands.

Conclusion

Samuel Davis stands as a vital bridge between early colonial Massachusetts and the nineteenth-century Midwest. Though the documentary record of his birth is incomplete, the accumulated genetic, historical, and anecdotal evidence places him firmly within the Davis lineage. Through his children—particularly Reed Davis—and their migration to Illinois, Samuel helped carry the legacy of Dolor Davis into the next phase of American expansion.

Reed Davis (1814-1900)

The parentage of Reed Davis was investigated by ProGenealogists, who concluded that he was the son of Samuel Davis and Sally (Fisher) Davis. Reed Davis, our direct ancestor, later migrated to Illinois, where he first secured a federal land patent in St. Charles, Kane County, and subsequently purchased a farm in Burlington, Kane County.

[Reed’s life is told in the Biographical Sketch.]