



• *Educator*

Sallie Ellis Davis

1877–1950

Inducted 2000

Sallie Ellis Davis was born in Baldwin County, Georgia, circa 1877. She was the child of an African American woman and a native Irish man. She was responsible for educating hundreds of African American children not only in academics, but also in life skills.

After completing studies at the Eddy School in Milledgeville, she attended Atlanta University, graduating with a normal school degree in 1899. Sallie Davis started teaching at the Eddy School before graduating from Atlanta University. Her tenure included teaching and serving as principal. She worked at the Eddy School for a half-century.

Despite the physical and economic restrictions faced by the school throughout its existence, she possessed the fortitude to offer her students a larger view of themselves and instilled within them a sense of pride. According to Carolyn Taylor-Thomas, a former student, she:

Many of her students went on to become productive citizens throughout Georgia and beyond. While many of them characterized her as "harsh, stern, exact," they also praised her as a caring teacher who "demanded greatness only because she wanted her students to achieve it."

Sallie Davis was known to make her home available for students from rural areas to board so they could further their education and achieve their goals. She often provided meals and clothing to children whose families found it difficult to provide the basic necessities of life. While she could easily have chosen to live her life as a daughter of privilege, Sallie Davis made the decision to help others realize their potential despite the odds in a segregated South.

The legacy of Sallie Davis lives on. After she died in 1950, Baldwin County recognized her by naming the Sallie Ellis Davis School in her honor. In 1990, the Sallie Ellis Davis Foundation was formed by a group of Baldwin County citizens, several of whom were former students of Davis. Their mission is to create an African American

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heritage museum in her former home to promote African American history.

“One of the favorite sayings of Mrs. Davis comes to mind whenever I think of her. She used to look at us when she would talk to her classes, and she would always tell her class, ‘Hitch your wagon to a star.’ ”

– Otelia Edwards, great niece and former student

Sallie Ellis Davis is as much a role model for youth today as she was in the first half of the 20th century. Her wisdom and dedication have transcended time. According to local memory, educating children was her devotion and she never missed a day of

teaching. For her legacy as an educator who touched the lives of hundreds, induction into the Georgia Women of Achievement is an appropriate honor for Sallie Ellis Davis.

Additional Resources

Sallie Ellis Davis Foundation

P.O. Box 1912
Milledgeville, GA 31061