

The Joshua Davies Family

Joshua Davies was born in 1818 in Sidney County, Maine, to Charles and Melinda Davies. As a young man, he worked in a cotton mill. He was industrious, hard-working, and saved as much as he could. In 1842, he married Sarah N Gay, daughter of Abner Gay and Anna Warren, one of 12 children born in Ackworth, New Hampshire. After their marriage, with the money Joshua had saved, they moved to Kenosha, Wisconsin, where he started a foundry and machine shop. They had 2 children born there. The oldest was daughter Genevieve, then son Squire. The youngest son, Reid, was born in Muskegon.

In 1857, the family moved to Muskegon, Michigan and arrived here on Sarah's 36th birthday. It was the abundance of saw mills in the area that attracted Joshua. He started the Davies Iron Works, a foundry and machine shop that made and repaired machinery and parts used in saw mills and later, marine and stationary engines. It was located on Western Avenue. Decades later, Lakey Foundry was established on the site. Joshua held many U.S. patents having to do with his business which was very profitable. In 1882, the annual product was valued at \$40,000 (\$1,038,733.33 in today's money). Muskegon had no shortage of lumber mills. In fact, Joshua, along with his two sons bought the Major Chauncey Davis Mill (where Squire had worked for a time) and operated it under the name of the Davies Brothers Mill. During their ownership, a young man was injured (losing both his legs) and sued the Davies Brothers mill for negligence in the amount of \$20,000. They sold the Mill not long after that. At one point, Joshua Davies owned the entire lakefront property at the end of Western Avenue once known as "Brewery Hill". The family home was located on the corner of Fourth and Clay. Joshua died suddenly of a heart attack in 1885 in Muskegon at the age of 67.

During their marriage, Joshua wasn't the only Davies family member to hold U.S. patents. He and Sara together held a patent issued in 1859 for a Bread Slicer. In 1860, Sarah was issued a patent for a Clothes Sprinkler that consisted of a bellows filled with water attached by a tube to a head (like our shower heads only much smaller). The bellows were squeezed to force the water through the tube and out of the head and onto the clothes. It did a much better job than flicking water from your fingers onto the clothes. In the year 1859 alone, over 6000 patents had been issued in the U.S. Up to that point, only 52 patents had been issued to women. So, for a woman to have a patent in her own name in the mid 1800's was not a common occurrence. After the death of her husband, Sarah became the major stockholder and was elected President of Davies Iron Works, a position she held for 10 years. She owned real estate and was one of a few women who held stock in Lumberman's Bank. She died 1 November 1895 at the age of 73. She left the bulk of her estate to her two eldest children, Genevieve and Squire. She left her youngest son, Reid, \$1. Her Will stated that it wasn't done of ill-will or unkindness but because she felt she'd done enough for him already. According to an inventory of her assets at the time, Reid already owed her \$864 (almost \$28,000 today). He contested the Will saying she wasn't of sound mind at the time.

Squire was the 2nd living child and the oldest son, born in Kenosha in 1849. During his life, he worked in a saw mill, was elected city treasurer, was part owner of Davies Brothers saw mill, he and brother Reid started a hennery with 1500 chickens to sell at the Muskegon Market when he was 25, was Secretary and Treasurer of Davies Iron Works and after his father's death he became its proprietor, he owned real estate and stocks, and was on the Muskegon Board of Trade. He was an avid fisherman and Vice President of the Muskegon Game and Fish Protection Association. He never married. Squire died suddenly of a heart attack (just like his father) in 1896 (before his mother's Will was completely probated). He was only 46 years old. After some confusion, his last Will, dated January 2, 1896 was found in his safe deposit box where it had been overlooked earlier. The Will provides for the purchase of a cemetery plot for the family, *except* for his brother Reid and any of Reid's family members. He left to his friend Dr. W. B. Hendel his boat and fishing outfit (reels, lines, hooks, etc.) He left his nephew Earl, his best watch and chain. The rest of his remaining property both real and

personal was to be divided between his sister Genevieve and his best friend, Mrs. Minnie E. Lewis. His Will states that "In making my last will and testament, I have not forgotten one Reid Davies, my brother. I have left him nothing because I believe him to be a dishonest, untruthful, avaricious, unprincipled, lazy, scheming person, devoid of nearly all manhood and unfit to be looked upon as my brother". So apparently, somewhere along the way, the two brothers had fallen out. At the time of his death, Davies Iron Works owed more in mortgage and taxes than it was worth. The total value of his estate was less than \$6000 before his bills were paid. This amount included \$2,100 from his mother's estate which had not yet been settled. Reid contested Squire's Will saying he wasn't mentally capable at the time and was overly influenced by his friend Minnie E. Lewis. I was unable to find out if Reid ever prevailed in contesting either his mother's or Squire's Wills.

Reid Davies was born in Muskegon in 1858. He was the youngest of the three siblings. He had worked as a bookkeeper for S. C. Hall Lumber Company and had a couple of business ventures with his older brother, Squire, earlier in life. He was married to Helen "Nellie" H. Hackley, niece of Charles H. Hackley, in 1882. They had one child, Eva Louise Davies. They divorced in 1887. He later married Lettie Wylie in 1893 and moved from Chicago to Minnesota. In Minnesota, he is employed by the Shevlin Lumber Company. In 1900, four years after his brother's death, Reid was admitted to the Minnesota State Asylum with a complete physical and mental breakdown. He dies in the Asylum in 1907, at the age of 49. His body is returned to Muskegon and he is buried in the family plot in Evergreen Cemetery despite his brother's final wishes.

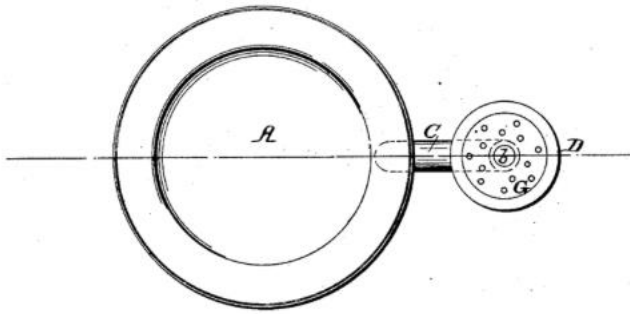
Joshua and Sarah's daughter Genevieve was their oldest child, born in 1845 in Kenosha, Wisconsin. She was 12 years old when they moved to Muskegon and finished her grade school education here and then went to college in Galesburg, Illinois. She returned to Muskegon to become one of its prominent teachers. She was married to William Murray and had two sons, Rowe and Guy Murray. After his death, she married Lyman E. Patten and had a daughter and son, Jessie Belle (Mrs. Ralph Banks) and Earl Patten. She and her husband were well known citizens of Muskegon. She died in Muskegon in 1909 at the age of 64.

(Sources: Ancestry.com, GenealogyBank.com – Muskegon Chronicle, Hackley Library – Genealogy & Local History Dept., Romance of Muskegon, Lakeshore Museum, patents.google.com)

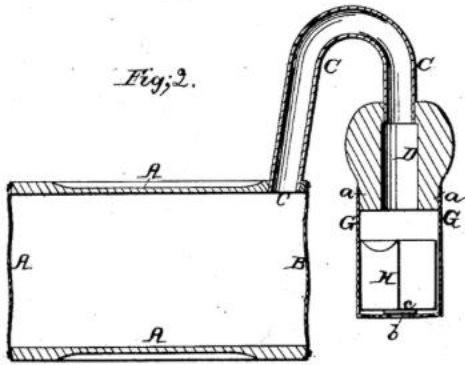
S. N. Davies,
Clothes Sprinkler.

N^o 30,565. Patented Nov 6, 1860.

Fig; 1.



Fig; 2.



Witnesses;
A. J. Spencer
J. W. Coombs

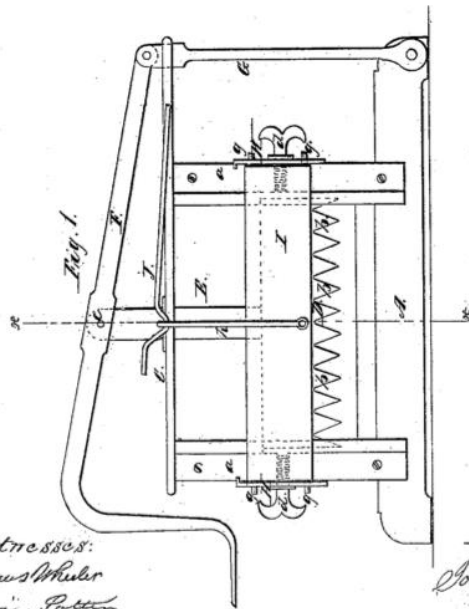
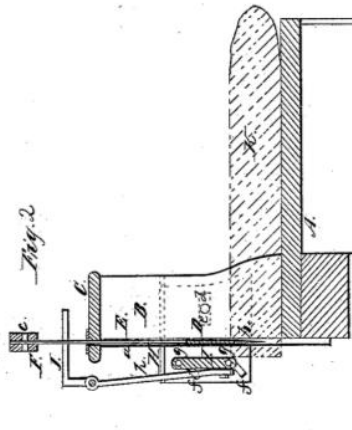
Inventor;
Sarah N. Davies
per Mumford & Co.
Attorneys

J. & S. M. Davies,

Bread Cutter,

No. 25,633,

Patented Oct. 4, 1859.



Witnesses:
Thomas Wheeler
Edwin Potter

Inventor
Joshua Davies
Sarah A. Davies



Davies Iron Works, Western Ave., Muskegon, MI 1874



Joshua Davies



Sarah (Gay) Davies