NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Lake O'Woods (Edward & Rebecca Pitchford Davis House)

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
N. side SR 1512, 0.6 mi. E. of NC 58

CITY, TOWN
Inez

STATE
North Carolina

3 CLASSIFICATION

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<th>STATUS</th>
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4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Mr. and Mrs. George Davis, Sr.

STREET & NUMBER
Rt. 3, Box 64

CITY, TOWN
Warrenton

STATE
North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Warren County Courthouse

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Warren County Inventory

DATE
1976

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Division of Archives & History

CITY, TOWN
Raleigh

STATE
North Carolina
DESCRIPTION

Lake O'Woods is a remarkably well-preserved plantation complex, typical of the prosperous antebellum plantations around Inez in southern Warren County. The complex, centering on a handsome Greek Revival dwelling in a neatly fenced yard, includes a collection of nearby domestic outbuildings and a number of farm buildings as well.

The two-story frame dwelling is perhaps the least altered of the local group of houses attributed to builder Albert Gamaliel Jones and is documented as his work. The house, which sits on a low foundation, is highly cubical: it is two stories high, three bays wide, and two deep; a wide baseboard, cornerposts treated as pilasters, and a well-articulated frieze define the facades. The shallow hip roof overhangs noticeably at all four sides, and is pierced by two interior chimneys of brick. The well-executed corner pilasters are treated in a distinctive fashion typical of Jones's work: they are symmetrically molded, stand on bases that break out from the baseboard, and carry crisply molded caps; at the outer corner is a vertical turned molding resembling a stack of spools. The cornerpost itself is said by the owner to be a single piece of wood, with only the corner spool element applied.

The three-bay main facade features large windows at both levels, containing six-over-six sash, and with symmetrically molded frames with well-defined roundel cornerblocks. This scheme recurs throughout the house. The central entrance is similarly treated, with sidelights, transom and corner lights outlined by heavy molded elements. The lights are filled with simple geometrical horizontal and vertical muntins. The triple form of the entrance is echoed at the second-level doorway, which repeats the sidelights only.

The entrance porch is simple but well-executed. Four fluted shafts with simple block capitals carry a wide unadorned entablature beneath a slightly overhanging flat roof. Pilasters at the facade repeat the design of the columns, and the sides of the porch are enclosed by an interesting balustrade: a central long horizontal panel is connected to an upper molded rail and lower single-board rail by a zig-zag of lattice.

At the northeast (rear) corner of the house is a small one-story gable-roof addition--part of the older house that was moved to the site and served as the dwelling for several years before the present house was built. (The other half of the early house is now the free-standing kitchen.) The rear bay of the east elevation is covered by a shed entrance porch, now enclosed; a simple shed porch also serves the central rear doorway.

The interior of the house follows, as expected from the exterior, a center-hall plan two rooms deep, with fireplaces centered on the walls between the front and back rooms on either side. The main stair rises front to back along the east wall in the front of the hall; it features square posts and curvilinear brackets at the treads. A second (enclosed) stair rises in the rear hall but is entered from the rear east room. Throughout the house the finish is consistently of a robust Greek Revival character and is very well-preserved. Massive symmetrically molded door and window frames of varying molding profiles occur, with very large roundel cornerblocks.
Walls are plastered, and baseboards are quite wide, and break out in a "foot" at the bases of doors. Doors have two long vertical panels, and many are expertly wood grained. Closets occur beside the chimneys, and in most rooms, paneled aprons appear beneath the tall windows.

The two front rooms are the most formally treated. The west parlor retains handsome marbleizing of the baseboard, and the robust mantel is also expertly marbleized in black. Similar to mantels found in houses attributed to Warrenton builder Jacob Holt, this mantel has a square fire opening framed by a symmetrically molded architrave with cornerblocks. To the front stand paired, tapered, fluted Doric colonnettes, which stand on a common molded projecting base and carry tall unadorned cornerblocks. The frieze between the blocks is articulated by a fluted half-round roll. Above is a wide molded shelf. The east parlor mantel is a simpler version of this one: the fluted tapered posts are flattened, but the fluted frieze roll recurs. This room is unique in having a wainscot--flat paneled with broad Greek Revival moldings. Other first and second floor mantels are simple Greek ones with various pilaster treatments. The finish of the second floor is of simple, consistent Greek Revival character.

Near and east of the house is the kitchen--the early house, said to have been built about 1790. The one-story-with-attic gable roof building has beaded weatherboards and mitered door and window frames with nine-over-nine sash. Within, the walls are lathed and plastered, and a chair rail serves as window sills above a sheathed wainscot. It was originally two rooms on each floor, and the attic was heated. The chimney has been rebuilt to serve the kitchen and the first-floor fire opening is a huge one suitable for cooking.

Other outbuildings and structures near the house include an outhouse (a four-holer), a log chicken house, an early smokehouse and a later one of logs, a mounted farm bell, and a well. To the west of the yard some distance is a collection of barns, arranged around an open farmyard. Notable is a stable said to date from early in the nineteenth century.
**PERIOD** | **AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE** | **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**
---|---|---
PREHISTORIC | ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | **LITERATURE**
1400-1499 | ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | ECONOMICS
1500-1599 | AGRICULTURE | LAW
1600-1699 | ARCHITECTURE | MILITARY
1700-1799 | ART | MUSIC
1800-1899 | COMMERCE | PHILOSOPHY
1900- | COMMUNICATIONS | POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

**SPECIFIC DATES** | 1829, 1852 | **BUILDER/ARCHITECT** Albert Gamaliel Jones

Lake O'Woods is a well-preserved, complete mid-nineteenth century plantation complex carefully maintained by the grandson of the couple for whom it was developed. The farm was established in 1829 for Edward and Rebecca Davis, who moved a small early house to the site and erected outbuildings. The present main house was built in 1852 by Warren County builder Albert Gamaliel Jones and is important as the only documented Warren County house by Jones, who also worked in Franklin and Hertford counties. Jones's distinctive handling of Greek Revival details is seen in this and other houses in the rural community of Inez, where family tradition associates him with several Davis family houses. The plantation complex, with its kitchen, smokehouse, outhouse, well, and group of barns and stable, is the center of a working farm in a rural landscape.

**Criteria Assessment:**

A. Associated with the antebellum agrarian prosperity of the plantation system that dominated Warren County and the entire Roanoke Valley section of the state.

B. Associated with the career of a notable regional builder, Albert Gamaliel Jones; the documentation of the house as his work is significant among his domestic and institutional buildings in Warren, Franklin, and Hertford counties.

C. Embodies distinctive personalized and regional adaptations of the nationally popular Greek Revival style, adapted to the climate and social needs of the plantation family and the skills of the local builder.
When Edward Davis (1806-1896) of Warren County married his cousin Rebecca Pitchford on December, 1829, his father, Burwell Davis (1756-1846) assigned him a piece of land on Fishing Creek near Warrenton. According to family tradition the couple bought a nearby house built in 1790 and moved it to this site. Some if not all of the present outbuildings are believed to date from ca. 1829, including the well. The small house served them many years, and six of their eight children were born there. In his will of 1846 Burwell Davis relinquished ownership of the land--about 300 acres--to his son Edward Davis.

In 1852 Edward and Rebecca Davis decided to build a new house and they commissioned Albert Gamaliel Jones, a local carpenter and builder, to oversee the construction. In December of that year one of their daughters, Mary, wrote to her brother, Matthew, who was attending the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, describing the family's disappointment at the delay in construction:

You need not have been afraid to come home for fear you would have been pestered by the rattling of hammers, for Mr. Jones has not come yet.

We expect when he does come, he will bring a host of workmen with him, and turn up Jack at once, he promised to have the house finished by Christmas but I don't expect to see him before that time, if then.

He has disappointed Pa very much. Ma says if she can't get a new house to live in, she can live in this, as long as she is let live, if she can't do any better. Mr. Jones is not bound to have the house finished before next June, but I am afraid he will not have it done by that time. As they have put it off so late, it is careless about being pestered with the workmen this winter.

The structural work of the house was nearly complete by May 23, 1853, when Rebecca wrote to her son describing the builder's progress:

The workmen have nearly gotten through. They will leave tomorrow, part of them. One or two will stay to finish up, by the time you arrive the last nail will have been driven, but the plasterers have not commenced, nor the inside painters, so I expect the very worst mess will be while you're at home, and you can't run from it, for they are building or fixing for it almost [sic] any where you may chance to go.
We were much in hopes that the house would have been done by June, but alas, I fear I shall spend the summer where I am, in fact I have little expectations of any thing else.

It looks to me, like it would take almost a month to clean up after they are done. You have no doubt anticipated living in the new house this summer, I have told you what the prospect is, but you can occupy it, when you come, if you choose and say "I'm monarch of all I survey".

In August Mrs. Davis complained that the family still had not moved since the house had not been painted, but apparently they soon occupied the new dwelling. Why and when the Davis plantation came to be called "Lake O' the Woods" is not certain, but family tradition claims that the name came from a lake which was once located on the property.

The builder of the Davis house, Albert Gamaliel Jones, resided in Warren County with his wife and seven children. He owned ten slaves who probably served as laborers for his building projects. Jones constructed a number of homes in Warren County particularly around the community call The Fork, now Inez. He also constructed the Columns Building at Chowan College, Murfreesboro, 1851-1852. There are other Jones buildings in Murfreesboro as well. It was after completing the college project that he began work on the Davis home. In the mid 1850s Jones evidently went far into debt and was forced to take the insolvent debtor's oath in Warren County court. A letter by Rebecca Davis to her son Matthew indicates that as a result of his insolvency Jones had to relinquish his carpentry tools and work shop to another Warren County resident, Whit Kearny. "Since Albert Jones gave up his hands and tools to Whit Kearny," she wrote on May 25, 1855,

their work house, over 100 feet long, and all the tools have been burnt, also the college kitchen upwards of 100 feet long with all their cooking aparatus [sic] and water works, fixed to throw water on every house on the lot. It took place in the work house while the hands were gone to eat. Whit has been down, says a negro stole some tools & set fire to the house. I believe every thing on the lot was completed except an office. Every thing that Albert Jones possessed has been sold, they have had considerable pulling and hauling over his plunder. He was here this week trying to buy corn, but your Pa was not at home, and if he had been he wouldn't have sold any corn even if he had it to spare, prospects are too gloomy.

Apparently in 1856 Jones left Warren County for Louisburg in Franklin County. There the family of future poet and writer Edwin Wiley Fuller probably commissioned...
him to build a house on Main Street. The house, which was completed in 1856, featured a spool motif on the corners that also appears on other buildings by Jones. In 1857 the former Warren County builder supervised the construction of the Louisburg College Main Building. The 1870 census fails to list Jones, and whether or not he left the county of Franklin after the Civil War is not known.

The Davis plantation had a thriving agricultural economy. The 1850 census indicates that Edward Davis owned 300 acres of unimproved land and 320 acres of improved land on which he produced a variety of crops including Indian corn, wheat, oats, and potatoes; and he had a considerable number of cattle, horses, sheep, and swine. The census of that year records no tobacco crop but the same document for 1860 reveals a tobacco production of 13,000 lbs. Davis's personal estate was valued at $35,000 in 1860 and it included 39 slaves ranging from 1 month to 64 years of age.

Something of the Davis's relationship with their black slaves—whom Mrs. Davis occasionally referred to as "our family"—is indicated in an 1853 letter from Mrs. Davis to Matthew:

We have had a sick family since you left. Lucy died Friday after you left, the next day your Pa had the negro houses white washed having heard that it was conducive to health. Patty is very sick at this time, has nothing of Lucys complaint, looks like she has consumption. I never expect to see her up again, in fact I expect her to die very shortly and then what shall I do, she's my milker, gardener, & spinner, & seamstress. Lucy was a very valuable woman but I shall miss Patty much the most. I went to see her previous to commencing this letter, I told her I was going to write to you, and asked her what I should say for her.

She said, tell Mass Matt I may see him again in this world for what I know, but if never do I hope to see him in a better one.

Matthew Davis was perhaps the best known member of the Edward Davis family. Born in 1830, he graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1855 and in that same year the Louisburg Male Academy Board of Trustees selected him as principal of that institution, a job he held until 1881. He served as superintendent of schools in Franklin County until 1884. In 1896 he reorganized the Louisburg Female College and served as its president until his death in 1906. Constructed in 1911, the Davis wing of the Louisburg College Main Building is named for him.
The Civil War brought hardship and despair to the Davis family. Four sons served in the Confederate Army: Burwell, Weldon, Thomas, and George. In 1863 a great sadness fell on the household when Weldon Davis was killed at Kelly's Ford, Virginia. A year later despair once again prevailed at "Lake O' the Woods" when news came that Thomas, age nineteen, had been killed at Cedar Creek, Virginia. "I just can't bear it," wrote their bereaved mother, to think, speak, or write about, and when I lie down at night, and it comes to my mind. I soar aloft in my imaginations, and leave all earthly things behind. I think of a happy home is Heaven, that bright celestial city, with pearly gates and golden streets, and of all the happy host of love ones that I hope to meet there to praise God forever... I just know that if I reflect much upon it, and indulge myself, it would be more than my mental or physical powers could stand.

Burwell and George survived the conflict, although George was captured at Spotsylvania Courthouse, Virginia, in May, 1864, and was imprisoned at Point Lookout, Maryland, and then Elmira, New York, from August, 1864, to June, 1865. At the end of the war, according to family tradition, Union soldiers camped in a grove near the Davis home and one night posted a guard in front of the house.

The Edward Davis family (which residing at "Lake O' the Woods," in 1880 included Davis, his wife, son, William Edward, and a black servant, Jack Johnson) weathered the lean years of Reconstruction and continued to run their farm although without the prosperity of antebellum days. The family lost considerable capital with the emancipation of their slaves and the 1880 census reveals that the value of their farm production for the previous year was only $110. The value of the farm including land, fences, and buildings was estimated at $2,200. Family history states that in 1890 half of the old 1790 family house, which still remained on the property, was added to the 1853 house and that the kitchen of the old structure is today "as it was in 1829" when Edward and Rebecca Davis set up housekeeping.

Edward Davis died in 1896. In his will written in 1884 he evidently left the tract which included his house to his youngest son, William Edward Davis (1858-1936). William was born and lived all his life in the house Jones built for his parents. When William Edward Davis died in 1936 the property passed to his wife Blanche E. Davis who sold it to her daughter Virginia D. Lawrence in November, 1937. The following year Virginia D. Lawrence and her husband, C. G. Lawrence, sold the property to her brother George W. Davis who still owns "Lake O' the Woods." George W. Davis is the grandson of Edward Davis for whom the house was built and son of William Edward Davis.
Footnotes

1 Warren County Marriage Bonds, Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; Blanche Egerton Baker, "Edward Davis," an unpublished manuscript in the compilation entitled "Davis" by Agnes Hunter Davis and Lula Hunter Skillman, History Preservation Section, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, p. 78; Warren County Original Wills, Burwell Davis, 1846, Archives, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

2 Mary A. Davis to Matthew S. Davis, December 14, 1852, Matthew S. Davis Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, hereinafter cited as Matthew Davis Papers.

3 Rebecca Pitchford Davis to Matthew S. Davis, May 33, August 1, 1853, Matthew Davis Papers.


5 Rebecca Pitchford Davis to Matthew S. Davis, May 23, 1855, Matthew Davis Papers.


8 Rebecca Pitchford Davis to Matthew S. Davis, August 1, 1853, Matthew S. Davis Papers.

9 Matthew S. Davis Papers, passim.


12. Warren County Original Wills, Edward Davis, 1884, Archives N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 75 acres—see attached description

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
75 acre property of present house tract, see attached plat.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

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FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/ TITLE  Description prepared by Catherine W. Bishir, Head, Survey and Planning Branch.
Significance prepared by Joe Mobley, Research Branch

ORGANIZATION  Division of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER  109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN  Raleigh

STATE  North Carolina

DATE  27611

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  
STATE  
LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE  State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE  November 2, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

GPO 892-453

Matthew S. Davis Papers. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.


Warren County Records. Raleigh: N. C. Division of Archives and History. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Marriage Bonds, Census).

According to the census of 1860, Edward Davis, who built the plantation house at "Lake o'the Woods" in 1852, owned 320 acres of improved land and 300 acres of unimproved land. His father Burwell Davis had left him 300 acres of this in 1846 (Warren Will Book 39:183). The present owner, George W. Davis, inherited or acquired from family about 500 acres, much of it formerly owned by his father and grandfather. The 75 acres he bought from his sister, considered the house tract and includes the outbuildings, has been continuously associated with the house, is in farm use and is thus the nominated property.
Lake O'Woods
Inez vic., Warren County
North Carolina, 75 acres

UTM References
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C--17/761620/4020940
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