

DANNER FAMILY HISTORY

Researched & written by Melvin J. Collier, great-grandson of Mary Danner Davis

Patriarch: **Edward “Ed” Danner**
Born: 1832, Union County, South Carolina
Died: September 15, 1876, Como, Mississippi

Matriarch: **Louisa “Lue” Bobo Danner**
Born: January 21, 1842, Union County, South Carolina
Died: July 5, 1921, Como, Mississippi

Edward Danner’s life was filled with insurmountable hardships, notable bravery, and unspeakable endurance. Ed was born into slavery in 1832 in Union County, South Carolina, on a plantation on the banks of the Enoree River. This plantation was owned by Thomas Getzen Danner, Jr. Ed’s mother, father, and siblings were also enslaved on this plantation. According to Robert Danner, there was some Indian ancestry in Edward’s family, but no specifics are known and have been verified. Thomas Danner died in 1855, leaving his farm to be managed by his widow, Alice, and their children. Shortly after Thomas’s death, Ed soon became forcibly separated from his family.

Ed was only with his parents and siblings for the first 27 years of his life. In 1859, he was sold to Dr. William J. Bobo and was taken to Como, Mississippi in Panola County, never to see his family again. Dr. Bobo had recently moved his family and the enslaved people on his farm to Mississippi from Union County, South Carolina in 1858. On a visit back to South Carolina the following year, he had "purchased" Ed.¹ After the Civil War, Ed retained the Danner surname. In the Danner Civil War pension file, Jim Danner gave the following testimony about Edward’s decision to take the Danner name: *“After about the first year after the War he took the name of Danner because he and his father formerly belonged to the Danners, so he said, and ever since we have all gone by this name.”*² Harry Arnold of Como also stated, *“... after the war when the colored people got to changing up their names, he changed his name to Danner, his father’s name. I changed mines from Stewart to Arnold, my father’s name.”*³

Research has found that Ed’s father was a man named **Jack Danner**, who was never taken away from South Carolina. Jack was born in South Carolina around 1805. In 1880, twenty-one years after his son had been sold to Dr. William Bobo, he was still living in Union County. He was a house carpenter living near Union, S.C. Research has also found that during the time Ed was sold to Dr. Bobo, Alice Bates Danner sold Jack and others to other slave-owners there in Union County before she packed up and moved to Arkansas with her sons. Perhaps the Danners needed money

¹ Deposition E – Ben Bobo, in the case of Lue Danner alias Bobo, Claim No. 452154, widow’s pension file, National Archives Dept., Washington, D.C.

² Deposition B – James R. Danner, in the case of Lue Danner alias Bobo, Claim No. 452154, widow’s pension file, National Archives Dept., Washington, D.C.

³ Deposition H – Harry Arnold, in the case of Lue Danner alias Bobo, Claim No. 452154, widow’s pension file, National Archives Dept., Washington, D.C.

for their move to the West and the establishment of another plantation there. They took only eight enslaved people with them to Grant County, Arkansas in 1859. Those eight people were Harriett Danner and her seven children. Research findings suggest that Ed and Harriett Danner were probably brother and sister. The Danners of the Malvern, Hot Springs, and Prattsville, Arkansas areas are the direct descendants of Harriett Danner.

When Ed was taken to the Bobo Place in Mississippi, a young, “mulatto” house servant caught his eye. Her name was **Louisa**, who was commonly known as "**Lue**". She was the oldest of at least thirteen children born to **Clarissa “Mattie” Bobo**, who was also enslaved on the Bobo Place. Her father was said to be a white planter named Elijah Wilbourn, who had also moved to Panola County, Mississippi from Union County, South Carolina. Ed and Lue were allowed to marry on December 26, 1860, with a “jump-the-broom” ceremony performed by Rev. Squire Bobo, an enslaved preacher on the plantation.⁴ This special marriage ceremony was brought over to America by enslaved Africans from the Akan culture of Ghana. Ed & Lue’s marriage was not regarded as legal due to the unjustly laws of the land concerning slave marriages. However, in their eyes and in the eyes of their family, friends, and the enslaved preacher performing the marriage, their marriage was just as sacred, if not more, as Dr. Bobo’s marriage to Margaret Boyce. This marriage brought on the next generation and was inevitably a part of the Danner Family’s existence today.

Upon marrying Grandma Lue, Ed became the father of her two young sons, **Jim & Mack**, who she had from a previous marriage. According to the Danner pension file, Lue had been previously married to a man named Mack Ray, who was enslaved by the neighboring Ray Family there in Union County, South Carolina.⁵ However, when Dr. Bobo moved everyone to Como, MS, Lue suffered the pain of being separated from Mack, never to see him again. Fortunately, she soon found love again when Ed entered her life. Raised by both Ed and Lue, Jim and Mack took the Danner surname. Mack Danner even paid homage to him by naming his youngest son for him. Together Ed & Lue had 8 additional children – 4 sons, **Alfred, Alexander, P.I. Moseley, and Edward, Jr.** and 4 daughters, **Mary, Frances, Laura, and Mattie.**

Several weeks before the birth of **Alfred**, Ed Danner and his brother-in-law, **Eli Bobo**, escaped from the Bobo Place and headed to Memphis, Tennessee to join the Union Army. Congress had passed two acts in 1862 that allowed for the enlistment of African-American men in the Civil War. However, official enrollment occurred after the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. Approximately 200,000 free and enslaved African-Americans joined the Union, fighting diligently for their freedom. Ed enlisted on August 15, 1863 at LaGrange, Tennessee and became a private in Company I of the 59th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment of the United States Colored Troops. He enlisted under the name Edward Bobo.

⁴ Deposition A – Lue Danner, in the case of Lue Danner alias Bobo, Claim No. 452154, widow’s pension file, National Archives Dept., Washington, D.C.

⁵ Ibid.

During his service in the Civil War, Ed contracted a stomach disease called dyspepsia while serving post and garrison duty in Memphis, Tennessee and in Corinth, Mississippi. He suffered from severe pains in his stomach and frequent vomiting. Despite his illness, Ed continued on in the Union Army, fighting for freedom for him and his family. However, his fight was short lived. On June 10, 1864, during the Battle of Brice's Crossroads at Guntown, Mississippi, Ed was captured by Confederate soldiers. They were threatening to kill him until Alexander Bobo, the son of Dr. Bobo who was a Confederate soldier, rescued him from the soldiers. Ed died at the young age of 44 of dyspepsia on September 15, 1876 near Como, Mississippi. Grandma Lue was 7-months pregnant with their last child, Edward Jr.

After the death of her husband, Grandma Lue Danner raised her ten children alone. She was the epitome of a strong Black woman who worked hard to take care of her family. She eventually purchased 100 acres of land from R.G. Wooten in 1898, the same year she applied for a widow's pension. Her sons helped her farm the land, which became the family's main source of income. Grandma Lue not only stressed hard work, but she desired that all of her children receive an education, something that she did not have. During slavery, the inhumane laws of the land prohibited the education of enslaved African-Americans. All of her daughters became teachers at some of the earliest African-American schools in Panola & Tate County. They were students of the Reconstruction era, and they later became the educators of the next generation in northern Mississippi. They taught at St. Andrews School, Coleman School, St. Paul School, and Mt. Zion School in Tate County and Mt. Moriah School & Beulah School in Panola County during the 1880's and 1890's.

Grandma Lue Danner was also a very spiritual woman. Her grandson, Robert Danner, recalled that she would start to shout and sing praises to God as she walked to Mt. Moriah Methodist Church. People in church could hear her coming as she shouted, "*Thank You Jesus!*" She certainly had a lot to be thankful for. Grandma Lue had survived the inhumanities of slavery for the first 23 years of her life. Luckily, she was never separated from her mother, and she grew up with a number of sisters, brothers, aunts, and uncles. She also bore ten children, all who survived, when many mothers lost a number of children during and shortly after childbirth. All ten of her children married, started families of their own, and the family tree rapidly expanded. Some of her children remained in Panola County, and others migrated to Arkansas, Tennessee, and Oklahoma. When Grandma Lue died in 1921, she left a family legacy of hardworking children and 63 grandchildren.