



**JOANN MARIE DAVIS**  
**1938**

**Biography:**

Joann Marie Davis is an author, a family historian, a genealogist, a corporate manager and a long-time member of the Detroit-based Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society (FHWGS). The FHWGS, which is the first African American genealogical society in Michigan, focuses on the study, documentation, and preservation of African American life, heritage, and history.

A strong sense of family pride, an interest in history, and an affection for parents and grandparents have motivated Ms. Davis to document the births, marriages, deaths, events, and transitions that are pertinent to the Allen, Carter, Davis and Gwynn families. She has written more than 30 chapters of her four family histories. The chapters, upon completion, are given to family members and donated to the Detroit Public Library, Burton Historical Collection; the Library of Michigan, Lansing, Michigan; the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York, NY; and the State Library of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC.

In 1990, Ms. Davis wrote for publication 28 biographical profiles of her family members. The profiles were published in *The Heritage of Blacks in North Carolina*, a book that chronicles the lives and progress of past and contemporary North Carolinians. Additionally, she has written

unpublished works, such as *Women of Commitment and Action*, booklets that commemorate the personal and professional lives of 19 African American women; *Salute to Centenarians*, oral interviews that include the observations and comments of persons who are 100 years of age or older; *How to Write a Family History*; *How to Conduct Oral Interviews*; *Search the Sources to Find Your Roots*; *A Young Person's Guide to Writing a Family History*; and *Once upon a Time in Shiloh: Recollections of Life on a North Carolina Farm in the 1940s*. During the early and middle 2000's, she wrote *The Life Story and Family History of Wallace Shurly Williams: Early African American Police Officer, City of Detroit Police Department*; *Margaret McCall Thomas Ward: Founder of the First African American Genealogical Society in Michigan*; *Dr. Gilbert Alan Maddox: Educator, Historian, and Pioneer in Black Radio and Television Broadcast Media*; and *Dr. Norman McRae, Jr.: Author, Educator and Scholar in African American History*.

In addition to writing narratives that commemorate the lives of family members and persons who contribute to the African American community, Davis has contributed many hours of personal volunteer service to the Detroit community. She is a Life Member of the NAACP and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, two organizations that have a history of service and the advocacy of human and civil rights.

Ms. Davis, who is a member of Second Ebenezer Church, has lived in Detroit since the 1960s. She grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, received her education in the Grand Rapids Public Schools, and graduated from Central High School.

In 1966, she graduated from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan with a Bachelor of Arts (B. A.) degree and a Secondary Education Teaching Certificate. In 1973, she earned a Master of Arts (M. A.) degree in English Literature from Wayne State University. In 2003, she earned a Diploma in Christian Studies from Ashland Theological Seminary, Detroit, Michigan. Davis is also a Registered X-Ray Technologist who graduated from the Jersey City Medical Center in Jersey City, New Jersey and a Dental Nurse who graduated from Elkhart University in Elkhart, Indiana.

Shortly after graduating from Wayne State University in 1966, Davis began a long career at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) in Detroit, Michigan. She began her career with the company as a Technical Writer. Later, she worked as a Publications Specialist, Benefit and Program Analyst and Surveyor of Health Care Providers. Over the years, she was the manager of a variety of departments that were responsible for approving providers for BCBSM participation and training telephone representatives who serviced facility and professional providers. Davis made an important career move in 1980. She became the Manager of Provider Services Administration. She was the first African American to hold this position. Initially, her scope of responsibility included Provider Publications, Provider Education, and Provider Credentialing. Later, her responsibilities were extended to include Provider Inquiry Training and Managed Care Training for internal staff and telephone representatives who serviced facility and professional providers. Provider Services Administration was responsible for publishing provider manuals and instructional materials, maintaining a provider database, training internal staff, and conducting educational seminars for more than 20, 000 BCBSM participating facility and professional health care providers. She held this position until 1992. From 1992 to 1995,

however, Davis was employed in the position of Total Quality Management (TQM) Administrator for the BCBSM Government Business Group. In this position she was responsible for improving work efficiencies and reducing costs.

During her career, Ms. Davis has worked as a journalist, teacher, technical writer, an administrator, X-ray Technologist, and a corporate manager. In 1996, she retired from a long and successful career with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan in Detroit, Michigan.

**Firsts:**

1980 - First Black woman appointed as manager, Provider Services Administration, Blue/Blue Shield of Michigan responsible for conducting educational seminars for physicians, hospitals, and over 30,000 health service providers

1990 – First known attempt by an individual or group to conduct a genealogical study of a statewide group of African-Americans and preserve the materials in volume form

**Documentation:**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM)

BCBSM Physicians' Newsletter, The Record, Joann Davis, Manager of Provider Services Administration, Keeping 30, 000 Providers Up to Date, Dec. 1984, Vol. 24, No. 12

Ebony Magazine, "Speaking of People," Joann Davis named first African American Manager, Provider Services Administration, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM), Detroit, MI, November 1987

BCBSM Physicians' Newsletter, The Record, Joann Davis, Manager of Provider Publications, publishes manuals for physicians (2-15-1992, Vol. 32, No. 4)

Friday Report, BCBSM Newsletter, Joann Davis named Total Quality Manager, Government Business Group, August 21, 1992

Joann Davis, Honored at Program, On Whose Shoulders Do We Stand, Named a 2014 Trailblazer, Managers of Color Honored for Their Contributions to BCBSM, Detroit, MI

Retirement from BCBSM, Gala, Newspaper Article in Michigan Chronicle, 1996

YWCA of Metropolitan Detroit

YWCA of Metro Detroit 1981 Annual Report, A Year of Challenge and Courage in the YWCA, Joann Davis, Chairperson, Corporate and Communication Committee, honored for raising funds to reopen Interim House, Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims and Dependent Children, 1981

YWCA of Metro Detroit Honors 23 Volunteers for Outstanding Service, Joann Davis named as an honoree, Detroit Free Press, March 1986

Induction of Honorees into YWCA Hall of Fame, Joann Davis inducted into Hall of Fame for

Personal Volunteer Service, April 11, 1987

Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society (FHWGS)

Joann Davis received Margaret McCall Thomas Ward Tribute in February of 1990, Virginia Fuller, President, FHWGS

Chairperson, Book Committee, publication of Our Untold Stories: Collection of Family History Narratives, Feb. 5, 2001, Peggy Williams, President, Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society

History Maker Award, Joann Davis, Honoree, 2015, for Life long commitment to researching, documenting, preserving African American life, culture and history

Displays, Presentations, and Articles Written about African Americans

Article published in American Visions magazine, December 1987, "A North Carolina Wildlife Christmas Tree"

Black History Month speaker at St. Stephen AME Church, Detroit, MI, "Family Roots Program Set for February 17 at St. Stephen", Michigan Chronicle, February 1991, 4 - B

Published 28 family history narratives in The Heritage of Blacks in North Carolina, 1990

Wrote 19 biographical profiles about women who live or who have lived in Michigan, Women of Commitment and Action. Booklets were on display at Wayne State University, David Adamany Library, Third Floor, Special Collections, 1996

Booklets Salute Exceptional Local Women's Achievements, article published in Michigan Chronicle, Feb. 10 - 16, 1996, Page C-8

Article published in About . . . Time Magazine, "Jelly Jars, Quilts and Flour Sacks, Preserving Memorabilia from a Shiloh Farm," Feb. 1997, Vol. XXV, No. 2