

Appleton's received the manuscript for the first volume of *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* in May 1880. Davis finished the last volume in April 1881. It was published on his birthday, June 3, in 1881.

At this time Davis settled into retirement, spending most of his time with Varina, his children and grandchildren. He gave many interviews and wrote several brief magazine articles. He also completed the manuscript for *A Short History of the Confederate States of America*, which was published in 1890.

### Death and Funeral

In November 1889, Varina objected to Davis' planned trip to Brierfield and then to New Orleans. Davis became very ill and was brought back to New Orleans where Varina met him. On December 5, 1889, Davis uttered his last words, "Pray excuse me, I cannot take it" in reference to medicine being offered to him by Varina. Davis died, most likely of pneumonia, at 12:45am on December 6, 1889 in New Orleans.

More than 70,000 people were reported to have viewed Davis' body at New Orleans City Hall and an estimated 200,000 people attended the funeral at Metairie Cemetery. Distinguished men spoke eulogies about his life, and the press, both North and South, contained articles extolling his character.

The burial vault in which he rested in New Orleans was to be only temporary. His body was removed and taken to Richmond on May 23, 1893. A special funeral train from New Orleans to Richmond carried his body while people lined the tracks to pay their respects to this honoured man. Davis lay in state at the state capitols of Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. The train then reached its destination on May 31, 1893, where 75,000 people witnessed the procession to Hollywood Cemetery.

### Citizenship Restored

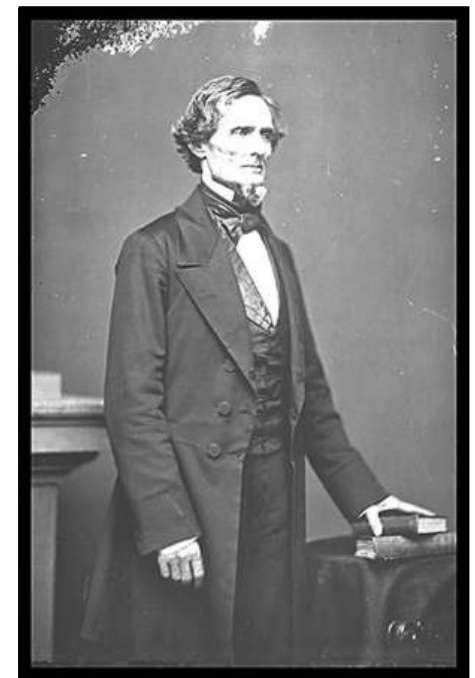
A joint resolution, restoring Davis' U. S. citizenship effective December 25, 1868, was passed by Congress and signed by President Jimmy Carter on October 17, 1978.



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# The Year of Davis



Jefferson Finis Davis  
June 3, 1808 to December 6,  
1889



# Life of Jefferson Finis Davis

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## Youth, Education and Military Service

Jefferson Finis Davis was born on June 3, 1808, in Christian County (now Todd County) in what is now a part of Fairview, Kentucky to Samuel Emory and Jane Cook Davis. His family ultimately settled in Wilkinson County, Mississippi and built Rosemount plantation. Davis received a classical education from several schools, including St. Thomas College, Jefferson College, Wilkinson County Academy, and Transylvania University. In 1824, Davis was appointed by President Monroe to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He was twenty when he graduated twenty-third in a class of thirty-three.

Davis served as a Second Lieutenant at various posts in Missouri, Illinois, and in the Iowa and Wisconsin territories from 1829 to 1832. In August of 1832, Davis escorted Chief Black Hawk from Wisconsin to St. Louis. He was promoted to First Lieutenant in 1833 and assigned to the Indian territory. On May 12, 1835, Davis resigned from the United States Army.

## Early Political Career

On June 17, 1835, Davis married Sarah Knox Taylor, the daughter of Zachary Taylor. However, their happiness lasted only three short months. Sarah died at Locust Grove plantation near Bayou Sara, Louisiana on September 15, 1835.

Davis established Brierfield plantation adjacent to his brother Joseph's Hurricane plantation on Davis Bend, twenty miles down the Mississippi River from Vicksburg. For almost ten years, Davis concentrated on his land and his studies.

In December 1843, he met and fell in love with Varina Banks Howell. They were married on February 26, 1845 at The Briars, her parents' home in Natchez, Mississippi.

At this point in his life, Davis first became involved in local and state politics. He was elected to the House of Representatives and took the oath to uphold the Constitution on December 8, 1845. During his time in Congress, there were many exciting issues. In his debates and speeches, his devotion to his country was evident, and he voted to further his country's interests. He resigned from this position in June 1846 when he was elected Colonel of the 1st Mississippi Regiment.

His regiment was involved in the Mexican War. Under the command of Zachary Taylor, Davis distinguished himself in the Battle of Monterrey and the Battle of Buena Vista. During the Battle of Buena Vista, Davis was severely wounded but would not leave the field until the victory was won. On May 17, 1847, Davis was appointed Brigadier General by President Polk, but he declined the rank on June 20, 1847 and returned to Brierfield.

Governor Albert G. Brown appointed Davis as interim United States senator in 1847. He was elected U.S. senator by the Mississippi Legislature on January 11, 1848 and re-elected on February 12, 1850. Davis accepted nomination as a gubernatorial candidate in September 1851 and resigned his seat in the U.S. Senate to campaign. He was narrowly defeated; however, this allowed him to retire to family life for a short period of time.

His retirement was interrupted in 1853, when he became Secretary of War under President Pierce. His portrait was added to the list of prominent men who had served in this position, and it remains displayed today.

Davis decided he again would like to serve the constituents of Mississippi, and was elected by the Mississippi Legislature as U.S. Senator in January 1856. He did not resign as Secretary of War until March 1857, when he took the oath as Senator. In the beginning of 1860, Davis introduced the resolutions on the relations of states. During this tumultuous time, Davis tried to keep the union together and opposed secession in hopes of a peaceable remedy; yet, he declared, he would stand by whatever action Mississippi chose to take. On January 9, 1861 the Mississippi State Convention voted to secede. On January 21st, Davis delivered his farewell speech and resigned his seat in the Senate.

## War Between the States

On January 23, 1861, Davis was elected Major General of the Mississippi Militia, a position he desired. A few weeks later, he was elected President of the Confederate States of America, a position he had neither desired nor sought. His inauguration was on February 18, 1861 in Montgomery, Alabama. On March 11, 1861, the Confederate Congress ratified the constitution. Davis found himself the president of an infant country facing a superior military force that wanted to crush the young government. Many difficulties presented themselves in the next four years that taxed him and his administration, such as the establishment of a military, financial system, foreign relations, laws, etc. While trying to create this new government, Davis was

faced with a war that burdened the people, land and economy of the South. He did his best to help the Confederacy succeed through five long years of war.

Davis left Richmond with many of his staff shortly before General Lee surrendered at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. On May 10, 1865, after being reunited with his family, Davis was captured in Irwinville, Georgia by Federal troops. With his family he was taken to Macon, Atlanta, Augusta and ultimately Savannah where he was placed on the *William P. Clyde* to sail to Ft. Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. He was illegally incarcerated at Ft. Monroe on May 22, 1865. He was charged by the U.S. Circuit Court, District of Virginia with treason in June of 1865 but no trial was set. On May 3, 1866, Davis saw his wife for the first time since their separation in Savannah, Georgia. Davis was finally granted a writ of habeas corpus on May 1, 1867, almost two years after he was captured. On May 13, 1867, Davis appeared in court where bail was set at \$100,000. Bail was posted by many business men from Richmond, Virginia and he was finally freed. A nolle prosequi was entered in his case in 1869, thus he was never brought to trial.

## Post-War Life and Career

As an exile, Davis traveled extensively after being released from prison, visiting with ex-Confederates all over the world, until 1869 when his indictment was finally dropped. At that time, he explored many business opportunities. On November 23, 1869 he was elected president of Carolina Life Insurance Company, from which he resigned on August 25, 1873. In 1875 he declined an appointment as Senator from Mississippi and the Presidency of what is now Texas A&M University and began a relationship with the Mississippi Valley Association. He was chosen as president of the American branch of this corporation in January 1876, at which time he and Varina moved to New Orleans. He gave up this position at the end of the same year.

On December 14, 1876, Davis signed a contract with D. Appleton & Co for his memoirs, at which time he rented a cottage from Sarah E. Dorsey at Beauvoir, near Biloxi, Mississippi. Here he began dictating his memoirs. In May of 1878, Varina moved to Beauvoir with her husband. Davis signed the deed for Beauvoir on February 19, 1879, as Mrs. Dorsey had deeded the property to him after her death.