

= Jefferson Davis =

Jefferson Finis Davis (June 3 , 1808 ? December 6 , 1889) was an American politician who was a U.S. Representative and Senator from Mississippi , the 23rd U.S. Secretary of War , and the President of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War . He took personal charge of the Confederate war plans but was unable to find a strategy to defeat the more populous and industrialized Union . His diplomatic efforts failed to gain recognition from any foreign country , and at home , the collapsing Confederate economy forced his government to print more and more paper money to cover the war 's expenses , leading to runaway inflation and devaluation of the Confederate dollar .

Davis was born in Kentucky to a moderately prosperous farmer , and grew up on his older brother Joseph 's large cotton plantations in Mississippi and Louisiana . Joseph Davis also secured his appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point . After graduating , Jefferson Davis served six years as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army . He fought in the Mexican ? American War (1846 ? 1848) , as the colonel of a volunteer regiment . He served as the U.S. Secretary of War from 1853 to 1857 under President Franklin Pierce , and as a Democratic U.S. senator from Mississippi . Before the war , he operated a large cotton plantation in Mississippi and owned more than 100 slaves . After the war had ended , he remained a proud apologist for the cause of slavery for which he and the Confederacy had fought . Although Davis argued against secession in 1858 , he believed that each state was sovereign and had an unquestionable right to secede from the Union .

Davis 's first wife , Sarah Knox Taylor , died of malaria after three months of marriage , and he also struggled with recurring bouts of the disease . He was unhealthy for much of his life . At the age of 36 Davis married again , to 18 @-@ year @-@ old Varina Howell , a native of Natchez who had been educated in Philadelphia and had some family ties in the North . They had six children . Only two survived him , and only one married and had children .

Many historians attribute the Confederacy 's weaknesses to the poor leadership of President Davis . His preoccupation with detail , reluctance to delegate responsibility , lack of popular appeal , feuds with powerful state governors and generals , favoritism toward old friends , inability to get along with people who disagreed with him , neglect of civil matters in favor of military ones , and resistance to public opinion all worked against him . Historians agree he was a much less effective war leader than his Union counterpart Abraham Lincoln . After Davis was captured in 1865 , he was accused of treason . He was never tried and was released after two years . While not disgraced , Davis had been displaced in ex @-@ Confederate affection after the war by his leading general , Robert E. Lee . Davis wrote a memoir entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* , which he completed in 1881 . By the late 1880s , he began to encourage reconciliation , telling Southerners to be loyal to the Union . Ex @-@ Confederates came to appreciate his role in the war , seeing him as a Southern patriot , and he became a hero of the Lost Cause in the post @-@ Reconstruction South .

= = Early life and first military career = =

Davis 's paternal grandparents each immigrated separately to North America from the region of Snowdonia in North Wales in the early 18th century . The rest of his ancestry was English . After arriving in Philadelphia , Davis 's paternal grandfather Evan settled in the colony of Georgia , which was developed chiefly along the coast . He married the widow Lydia Emory Williams , who had two sons from a previous marriage .

Their son Samuel Emory Davis was born in 1756 . He served in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War , along with his two older half @-@ brothers . In 1783 , after the war , he married Jane Cook . She was born in 1759 to William Cook and his wife Sarah Simpson in what is now Christian County , Kentucky . In 1793 , the Samuel Davis family relocated to Kentucky , establishing what is now the community of Fairview on the border of Christian and Todd counties . Samuel and Jane Davis had ten children ; Joseph was the oldest son , born in 1784 ; Jefferson was the last and was born on June 3 , 1807 or 1808 , on the Davis homestead in Fairview . The year of

his birth is uncertain ; Davis gave both 1807 and 1808 , at different points in his life . Samuel had been a young man when Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776 . Jefferson was the third President of the United States , and Samuel , admiring him greatly , named his last son after the president . Coincidentally , Abraham Lincoln was born eight months later , less than 100 miles (160 km) to the northeast in Hodgenville , Kentucky . In the early 20th century , the Jefferson Davis State Historic Site was established near the site of Davis 's birth .

During Davis 's youth , his family moved twice : in 1811 to St. Mary Parish , Louisiana , and less than a year later to Wilkinson County , Mississippi . The international slave trade was prohibited in 1808 , and planters used the domestic slave trade to procure laborers for developing cotton culture in the Deep South . Three of Davis 's older brothers served in the War of 1812 . In 1813 , Davis began his education at the Wilkinson Academy in the small town of Woodville , near the family cotton plantation .

His brother Joseph , who was 24 years older , acted as a surrogate father and encouraged Jefferson in his education . Two years later , Davis entered the Catholic school of Saint Thomas at St. Rose Priory , a school operated by the Dominican Order in Washington County , Kentucky . At the time , he was the only Protestant student at the school . In 1818 Davis returned to Mississippi , studying at Jefferson College at Washington . Three years later in 1821 , he returned to Kentucky , where he studied at Transylvania University in Lexington . (At the time , these colleges were like academies , roughly equivalent to high schools .) His father Samuel died on July 4 , 1824 , when Jefferson was 16 years old .

Joseph arranged for Davis to get an appointment and attend the United States Military Academy (West Point) starting in late 1824 . While there , he was placed under house arrest for his role in the Eggnog Riot during Christmas 1826 . Cadets smuggled whiskey into the academy to make eggnog , and more than one @-@ third of the cadets were involved in the incident . In June 1828 , Davis graduated 23rd in a class of 33 .

Following graduation , Second Lieutenant Davis was assigned to the 1st Infantry Regiment and was stationed at Fort Crawford , Prairie du Chien , Michigan Territory . Zachary Taylor , a future president of the United States , had assumed command shortly before Davis arrived in early 1829 . In March 1832 , Davis returned to Mississippi on furlough , having had no leave since he first arrived at Fort Crawford . He was still in Mississippi during the Black Hawk War but returned to the fort in August . At the conclusion of the war , Colonel Taylor assigned him to escort Black Hawk to prison . Davis made an effort to shield Black Hawk from curiosity seekers , and the chief noted in his autobiography that Davis treated him " with much kindness " and showed empathy for the leader 's situation as a prisoner .

= = First marriage and early career = =

Davis fell in love with Sarah Knox Taylor , daughter of his commanding officer ; future president Zachary Taylor . Both Sarah and Davis sought Taylor 's permission to marry . Taylor refused , as he did not wish his daughter to have the difficult life of a military wife on frontier army posts . Davis 's own experience led him to appreciate Taylor 's objection . He consulted with his older brother Joseph , and they both began to question the value of an Army career . Davis hesitated to leave , but his desire for Sarah overcame this , and he resigned his commission in a letter dated April 20 , 1835 . He had arranged for the letter to be sent to the War Department for him on May 12 when he did not return from leave ; he had made no mention to Taylor of his intention to resign . Against his former commander 's wishes , on June 17 , he married Sarah in Louisville , Kentucky . His resignation became effective June 30 .

Davis 's older brother Joseph had been very successful and owned Hurricane Plantation and 1 @, @ 800 acres (730 ha) of adjoining land along the Mississippi River on a peninsula 20 miles south of Vicksburg , Mississippi . The adjoining land was known as Brierfield since it was largely covered with brush and briers . Wanting to have his youngest brother and his wife nearby , Joseph gave use of Brierfield to Jefferson , who eventually developed Brierfield Plantation there . Joseph retained the title .

In August 1835 , Jefferson and Sarah traveled south to his sister Anna 's home in West Feliciana Parish , Louisiana ; the plantation was known as Locust Grove . Their goal was to spend the hot summer months in the countryside away from the river floodplain , for their health , but both of them contracted either malaria or yellow fever . Sarah died at the age of 21 on September 15 , 1835 , after just three months of marriage . Davis was also severely ill , and his family feared for his life . In the month following Sarah 's death , he slowly improved , although he remained weak .

In late 1835 , Davis sailed from New Orleans to Havana , Cuba , to help restore his health . He was accompanied by James Pemberton , his only slave at that time . Davis observed the Spanish military and sketched fortifications . Although no evidence points to his having any motive beyond general interest , the authorities knew that Davis was a former army officer and warned him to stop his observations . Bored and feeling somewhat better , Davis booked passage on a ship to New York , then continued to Washington , D.C. , where he visited his old schoolmate George Wallace Jones . He soon returned with Pemberton to Mississippi .

For several years following Sarah 's death , Davis was reclusive and honored her memory . He spent time clearing Brierfield and developing his plantation , studied government and history , and had private political discussions with his brother Joseph . By early 1836 , Davis had purchased 16 slaves ; he held 40 slaves by 1840 , and 74 by 1845 . Davis promoted Pemberton to be overseer of the field teams . In 1860 , he owned 113 slaves .

In 1840 , Davis first became involved in politics when he attended a Democratic Party meeting in Vicksburg and , to his surprise , was chosen as a delegate to the party 's state convention in Jackson . In 1842 , he attended the Democratic convention , and , in 1843 , became a Democratic candidate for the state House of Representatives from the Warren County @-@ Vicksburg district ; he lost his first election . In 1844 , Davis was sent to the party convention for a third time , and his interest in politics deepened . He was selected as one of six presidential electors for the 1844 presidential election and campaigned effectively throughout Mississippi for the Democratic candidate James K. Polk .

= = Second marriage and family = =

In 1844 , Davis met Varina Banks Howell , then 17 years old , whom his brother Joseph had invited for the Christmas season at Hurricane Plantation . She was a granddaughter of New Jersey Governor Richard Howell ; her mother 's family was from the South and included successful Scots @-@ Irish planters . Within a month of their meeting , the 35 @-@ year @-@ old widower Davis had asked Varina to marry him , and they became engaged despite her parents ' initial concerns about his age and politics . They were married on February 26 , 1845 .

During this time , Davis was persuaded to become a candidate for the United States House of Representatives and began canvassing for the election . In early October 1845 he traveled to Woodville to give a speech . He arrived a day early to visit his mother there , only to find that she had died the day before . After the funeral , he rode the 40 miles (64 km) back to Natchez to deliver the news , then returned to Woodville again to deliver his speech . He won the election .

Jefferson and Varina had six children ; three died before reaching adulthood . Samuel Emory , born July 30 , 1852 , was named after his grandfather ; he died June 30 , 1854 , of an undiagnosed disease . Margaret Howell was born February 25 , 1855 , and was the only child to marry and raise a family . She married Joel Addison Hayes , Jr . (1848 ? 1919) , and they had five children . They were married in St. Lazarus Church , nicknamed " The Confederate Officers ' Church " , in Memphis , Tennessee . In the late 19th century , they moved from Memphis to Colorado Springs , Colorado . She died on July 18 , 1909 , at the age of 54 .

Jefferson Davis , Jr . , was born January 16 , 1857 . He died of yellow fever at age 21 on October 16 , 1878 , during an epidemic in the Mississippi River Valley that caused 20 @,@ 000 deaths . Joseph Evan , born on April 18 , 1859 , died at the age of five due to an accidental fall on April 30 , 1864 . William Howell , born on December 6 , 1861 , was named for Varina 's father ; he died of diphtheria at age 10 on October 16 , 1872 . Varina Anne , known as " Winnie " , was born on June 27 , 1864 , several months after her brother Joseph 's death . She was known as the Daughter of

the Confederacy as she was born during the war . After her parents refused to let her marry into a northern abolitionist family , she never married . She died nine years after her father , on September 18 , 1898 , at age 34 .

Davis had poor health for most of his life , including repeated bouts of malaria , battle wounds from fighting in the Mexican ? American War and a chronic eye infection that made bright light painful . He also had trigeminal neuralgia , a nerve disorder that causes severe pain in the face ; it has been called one of the most painful known ailments .

= = Wartime colonel = =

In 1846 the Mexican ? American War began . Davis resigned his House seat in early June and raised a volunteer regiment , the 155th Infantry Regiment , becoming its colonel under the command of his former father @-@ in @-@ law , General Zachary Taylor . On July 21 the regiment sailed from New Orleans for Texas . Colonel Davis sought to arm his regiment with the M1841 Mississippi rifle . At this time , smoothbore muskets were still the primary infantry weapon , and any unit with rifles was considered special and designated as such . President James K. Polk had promised Davis the weapons if he would remain in Congress long enough for an important vote on the Walker tariff . General Winfield Scott objected on the basis that the weapons were insufficiently tested . Davis insisted and called in his promise from Polk , and his regiment was armed with the rifles , making it particularly effective in combat . The regiment became known as the Mississippi Rifles because it was the first to be fully armed with these new weapons . The incident was the start of a lifelong feud between Davis and Scott .

In September , Davis participated in the Battle of Monterrey , during which he led a successful charge on the La Teneria fort . On February 22 , 1847 , Davis fought bravely at the Battle of Buena Vista and was shot in the foot , being carried to safety by Robert H. Chilton . In recognition of Davis 's bravery and initiative , Taylor is reputed to have said , " My daughter , sir , was a better judge of men than I was . " On May 17 , President Polk offered Davis a federal commission as a brigadier general and command of a brigade of militia . Davis declined the appointment , arguing that the Constitution gives the power of appointing militia officers to the states , not the federal government .

= = Return to politics = =

= = = Senator = = =

Honoring Davis 's war service , Governor Brown of Mississippi appointed him to the vacant position of United States Senator Jesse Speight , who had died on May 1 , 1847 . Davis took his temporary seat on December 5 , and in January 1848 he was elected by the state legislature to serve the remaining two years of the term . In December , during the 30th United States Congress , Davis was made a regent of the Smithsonian Institution and began serving on the Committee on Military Affairs and the Library Committee .

In 1848 , Senator Davis proposed and introduced an amendment (the first of several) to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that would have annexed most of northeastern Mexico , but it failed on a vote of 11 to 44 . Southerners wanted to increase territory held in Mexico as an area for the expansion of slavery . Regarding Cuba , Davis declared that it " must be ours " to " increase the number of slaveholding constituencies . " He also was concerned about the security implications of a Spanish holding lying relatively close to the coast of Florida .

A group of Cuban revolutionaries led by Venezuelan adventurer Narciso López intended to forcibly liberate Cuba from Spanish rule . Searching for a military leader for a filibuster expedition , they first offered command of the Cuban forces to General William J. Worth , but he died before making his decision . In the summer of 1849 , López visited Davis and asked him to lead the expedition . He offered an immediate payment of \$ 100 @,@ 000 (worth more than \$ 2 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 in 2013) , plus the same amount when Cuba was liberated . Davis turned down the offer , stating that it was

inconsistent with his duty as a senator . When asked to recommend someone else , Davis suggested Robert E. Lee , then an army major in Baltimore ; López approached Lee , who also declined on the grounds of his duty .

The Senate made Davis chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs on December 3 , 1849 , during the first session of the 31st United States Congress . On December 29 he was elected to a full six @-@ year term (by the Mississippi legislature , as the constitution mandated at the time) . Davis had not served a year when he resigned (in September 1851) to run for the governorship of Mississippi on the issue of the Compromise of 1850 , which he opposed . He was defeated by fellow Senator Henry Stuart Foote by 999 votes . Left without political office , Davis continued his political activity . He took part in a convention on states ' rights , held at Jackson , Mississippi , in January 1852 . In the weeks leading up to the presidential election of 1852 , he campaigned in numerous Southern states for Democratic candidates Franklin Pierce and William R. King .

= = = Secretary of War = = =

Franklin Pierce won the presidential election , and in 1853 made Davis his Secretary of War . In this capacity , Davis began the Pacific Railroad Surveys in order to determine various possible routes for the proposed Transcontinental Railroad . He promoted the Gadsden Purchase of today 's southern Arizona from Mexico , partly because it would provide an easier southern route for the new railroad ; the Pierce administration agreed , and the land was purchased in December 1853 . He saw the size of the regular army as insufficient to fulfill its mission , and maintained that salaries would have to be increased , something which had not occurred for 25 years . Congress agreed and increased the pay scale , and added four regiments which increased the army 's size from about 11 @,@ 000 to about 15 @,@ 000 . Davis also introduced general usage of the rifles that he had used successfully during the Mexican ? American War . As a result , both the morale and capability of the army was improved . He became involved in public works when Pierce gave him responsibility for construction of the Washington Aqueduct and an expansion of the U.S. Capitol , both of which he managed closely . The Pierce administration ended in 1857 after Pierce 's loss of the Democratic nomination to James Buchanan . Davis 's term was to end with Pierce 's , so he ran for the Senate , was elected , and re @-@ entered it on March 4 , 1857 .

= = = Return to Senate = = =

In the 1840s , tensions were growing between the North and South over various issues including slavery . The Wilmot Proviso , introduced in 1846 , contributed to these tensions ; if passed , it would have banned slavery in any land acquired from Mexico . The Compromise of 1850 brought a temporary respite , but the Dred Scott case , decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1857 , spurred public debate . Justice Taney ruled that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional and that African Americans had no standing as citizens under the constitution . Northerners were outraged and there was increasing talk in the South of secession from the Union .

Davis 's renewed service in the Senate was interrupted in early 1858 by an illness that began as a severe cold and which threatened him with the loss of his left eye . He was forced to remain in a darkened room for four weeks . He spent the summer of 1858 in Portland , Maine . On the Fourth of July , Davis delivered an anti @-@ secessionist speech on board a ship near Boston . He again urged the preservation of the Union on October 11 in Faneuil Hall , Boston , and returned to the Senate soon after .

As he explained in his memoir *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* , Davis believed that each state was sovereign and had an unquestionable right to secede from the Union . At the same time , he counseled delay among his fellow Southerners , because he did not think that the North would permit the peaceable exercise of the right to secession . Having served as secretary of war under President Pierce , he also knew that the South lacked the military and naval resources necessary for defense in a war . Following the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 , however , events accelerated . South Carolina adopted an ordinance of secession on December 20 , 1860 ,

and Mississippi did so on January 9 , 1861 . Davis had expected this but waited until he received official notification . On January 21 , the day Davis called " the saddest day of my life " , he delivered a farewell address to the United States Senate , resigned and returned to Mississippi .

= = President of the Confederate States of America = =

Anticipating a call for his services since Mississippi had seceded , Davis had sent a telegraph message to Governor John J. Pettus saying , " Judge what Mississippi requires of me and place me accordingly . " On January 23 , 1861 , Pettus made Davis a major general of the Army of Mississippi . On February 9 , a constitutional convention met at Montgomery , Alabama and considered Davis and Robert Toombs of Georgia as a possible president . Davis , who had widespread support from six of the seven states , easily won . He was seen as the " champion of a slave society and embodied the values of the planter class , " and was elected provisional Confederate President by acclamation . He was inaugurated on February 18 , 1861 . Alexander Stephens was chosen as Vice President , but he and Davis feuded constantly .

Davis was the first choice because of his strong political and military credentials . He wanted to serve as commander in chief of the Confederate armies but said he would serve wherever directed . His wife Varina Davis later wrote that when he received word that he had been chosen as president , " Reading that telegram he looked so grieved that I feared some evil had befallen our family . "

Several forts in Confederate territory remained in Union hands . Davis sent a commission to Washington with an offer to pay for any federal property on Southern soil , as well as the Southern portion of the national debt , but Lincoln refused to meet with the commissioners . Brief informal discussions did take place with Secretary of State William Seward through Supreme Court Justice John A. Campbell . From Alabama , he later resigned from the federal government . Seward hinted that Fort Sumter would be evacuated , but gave no assurance .

On March 1 , 1861 , Davis appointed General P. G. T. Beauregard to command all Confederate troops in the vicinity of Charleston , South Carolina , where state officials prepared to take possession of Fort Sumter . Beauregard was to prepare his forces but avoid an attack on the fort . Lincoln dispatched a small fleet of warships , troops , and transports from the navy yard in New York to resupply and re @-@ enforce Fort Pickens and Fort Sumter , although he told Davis they would not fire unless fired upon . They did arrive but were unable to help and just watched the action from 10 miles out .

Davis faced the most important decision of his career : to prevent reinforcement at Fort Sumter or to let it take place . He and his cabinet decided to demand that the Federal garrison surrender and , if this was refused , to use military force to prevent reinforcement before the fleet arrived . Major Anderson did not surrender . Beauregard bombarded the fort on April 12 . The Confederates launched an artillery attack on Fort Sumter until it surrendered . No one was killed in the artillery duel , but the attack on the U.S. fortress meant the fighting had started . President Lincoln called up state militia to march south to recapture Federal property . In the North and South , massive rallies were held to demand immediate war . The Civil War had begun .

At the start of the war , nearly 21 million people lived in the North compared to 9 million in the South . The North had vastly greater industrial capacity , built nearly all of the locomotives , steamships , and industrial machinery , and had a much larger and more integrated railroad system . Nearly all of the munitions facilities were in the North , while critical ingredients for gunpowder were in very short supply in the South . The Union had a large navy , whereas the new Confederacy had only a few captured warships ? the handful it built were failures . The Union blockade made imports via blockade runners difficult and expensive .

When Virginia joined the Confederacy , Davis moved his government to Richmond in May 1861 . He and his family took up his residence there at the White House of the Confederacy later that month . Having served since February as the provisional president , Davis was elected to a full six @-@ year term on November 6 , 1861 and was inaugurated on February 22 , 1862 .

In June 1862 , in his most successful action , Davis assigned General Robert E. Lee to replace the wounded Joseph E. Johnston in command of the Army of Northern Virginia , the main Confederate

army in the Eastern Theater . That December he made a tour of Confederate armies in the west of the country . Davis had a very small circle of military advisers . He largely made the main strategic decisions on his own , though he had special respect for Lee 's views . Given the Confederacy 's limited resources compared with the Union , Davis decided that the Confederacy would have to fight mostly on the strategic defensive . He maintained a mostly defensive outlook throughout the war , paying special attention to the defense of his national capital at Richmond . He attempted strategic offensives when he felt that military success would both shake Northern self @-@ confidence and strengthen the peace movements there . The campaigns met defeat at Antietam in Maryland (1862) and Gettysburg in Pennsylvania (1863) , as well as in Kentucky during the Confederate Heartland Offensive (1862) .

= = = Administration and cabinet = = =

As provisional president in 1861 , Davis formed his first cabinet . Robert Toombs of Georgia was the first Secretary of State and Christopher Memminger of South Carolina became Secretary of the Treasury . LeRoy Pope Walker of Alabama was made Secretary of War , after being recommended for this post by Clement Clay and William Yancey (both of whom declined to accept cabinet positions themselves) . John Reagan of Texas became Postmaster General . Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana became Attorney General . Although Stephen Mallory was not put forward by the delegation from his state of Florida , Davis insisted that he was the best man for the job of Secretary of the Navy , and he was eventually confirmed .

Since the Confederacy was founded , among other things , on states ' rights , one important factor in Davis 's choice of cabinet members was representation from the various states . He depended partly upon recommendations from congressmen and other prominent people . This helped maintain good relations between the executive and legislative branches . This also led to complaints as more states joined the Confederacy , however , because there were more states than cabinet positions .

As the war progressed , this dissatisfaction increased and there were frequent changes to the cabinet . Toombs , who had wished to be president himself , was frustrated as an advisor and resigned within a few months of his appointment to join the army . Robert Hunter of Virginia replaced him as Secretary of State on July 25 , 1861 . On September 17 , Walker resigned as Secretary of War due to a conflict with Davis , who had questioned his management of the War Department and had suggested he consider a different position . Walker requested , and was given , command of the troops in Alabama . Benjamin left the Attorney General position to replace him , and Thomas Bragg of North Carolina (brother of General Braxton Bragg) took Benjamin 's place as Attorney General .

Following the November 1861 election , Davis announced the permanent cabinet in March 1862 . Benjamin moved again , to Secretary of State . George W. Randolph of Virginia had been made the Secretary of War . Mallory continued as Secretary of the Navy and Reagan as Postmaster General . Both kept their positions throughout the war . Memminger remained Secretary of the Treasury , while Thomas Hill Watts of Alabama was made Attorney General .

In 1862 Randolph resigned from the War Department , and James Seddon of Virginia was appointed to replace him . In late 1863 , Watts resigned as Attorney General to take office as the Governor of Alabama , and George Davis of North Carolina took his place . In 1864 , Memminger withdrew from the Treasury post due to congressional opposition , and was replaced by George Trenholm of South Carolina . In 1865 , congressional opposition likewise caused Seddon to withdraw , and he was replaced by John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky .

Cotton was the South 's primary export and the basis of its economy , and the system of production the South used was dependent upon slave labor . At the outset of the Civil War , Davis realized that intervention from European powers would be vital if the Confederacy was to stand against the Union . The administration sent repeated delegations to European nations , but several factors prevented Southern success in terms of foreign diplomacy . The Union blockade of the Confederacy led European powers to remain neutral , contrary to the Southern belief that a blockade would cut off the supply of cotton to Britain and other European nations and prompt them to intervene on behalf of the South . Many European countries objected to slavery . Britain had abolished it in the 1830s , and

Lincoln 's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 made support for the South even less appealing in Europe . Finally , as the war progressed and the South 's military prospects dwindled , foreign powers were not convinced that the Confederacy had the strength to become independent . In the end , not a single foreign nation recognized the Confederate States of America .

= = Strategic failures = =

Most historians sharply criticize Davis for his flawed military strategy , his selection of friends for military commands , and his neglect of homefront crises . Until late in the war , he resisted efforts to appoint a general @-@ in @-@ chief , essentially handling those duties himself . On January 31 , 1865 , Lee assumed this role , but it was far too late . Davis insisted on a strategy of trying to defend all Southern territory with ostensibly equal effort . This diluted the limited resources of the South and made it vulnerable to coordinated strategic thrusts by the Union into the vital Western Theater (e.g. , the capture of New Orleans in early 1862) . He made other controversial strategic choices , such as allowing Lee to invade the North in 1862 and 1863 while the Western armies were under very heavy pressure . When Lee lost at Gettysburg , Vicksburg simultaneously fell , and the Union took control of the Mississippi River , splitting the Confederacy . At Vicksburg , the failure to coordinate multiple forces on both sides of the Mississippi River rested primarily on Davis 's inability to create a harmonious departmental arrangement or to force such generals as Edmund Kirby Smith , Earl Van Dorn , and Theophilus H. Holmes to work together .

Davis has been faulted for poor coordination and management of his generals . This includes his reluctance to resolve a dispute between Leonidas Polk , a personal friend , and Braxton Bragg , who was defeated in important battles and distrusted by his subordinates . He was similarly reluctant to relieve the capable but overcautious Joseph E. Johnston until , after numerous frustrations which he detailed in a March 1 , 1865 letter to Col. James Phelan of Mississippi , he replaced him with John Bell Hood .

Davis gave speeches to soldiers and politicians but largely ignored the common people , who came to resent the favoritism shown the rich and powerful ; Davis thus failed to harness Confederate nationalism . One historian speaks of " the heavy @-@ handed intervention of the Confederate government . " Economic intervention , regulation , and state control of manpower , production and transport were much greater in the Confederacy than in the Union . Davis did not use his presidential pulpit to rally the people with stirring rhetoric ; he called instead for people to be fatalistic and to die for their new country . Apart from two month @-@ long trips across the country where he met a few hundred people , Davis stayed in Richmond where few people saw him ; newspapers had limited circulation , and most Confederates had little favorable information about him .

To finance the war , the Confederate government initially issued bonds , but investment from the public never met the demands . Taxes were lower than in the Union and collected with less efficiency ; European investment was also insufficient . As the war proceeded , both the Confederate government and the individual states printed more and more paper money . Inflation increased from 60 % in 1861 to 300 % in 1863 and 600 % in 1864 . Davis did not seem to grasp the enormity of the problem .

In April 1863 , food shortages led to rioting in Richmond , as poor people robbed and looted numerous stores for food until Davis cracked down and restored order . Davis feuded bitterly with his vice president . Perhaps even more seriously , he clashed with powerful state governors who used states ' rights arguments to withhold their militia units from national service and otherwise blocked mobilization plans .

Davis is widely evaluated as a less effective war leader than Lincoln , even though Davis had extensive military experience and Lincoln had little . Davis would have preferred to be an army general and tended to manage military matters himself . Lincoln and Davis led in very different ways . According to one historian ,

Lincoln was flexible ; Davis was rigid . Lincoln wanted to win ; Davis wanted to be right . Lincoln had a broad strategic vision of Union goals ; Davis could never enlarge his narrow view . Lincoln searched for the right general , then let him fight the war ; Davis continuously played favorites and

interfered unduly with his generals , even with Robert E. Lee . Lincoln led his nation ; Davis failed to rally the South .

There were many factors that led to Union victory over the Confederacy , and Davis recognized from the start that the South was at a distinct disadvantage ; but in the end , Lincoln helped to achieve victory , whereas Davis contributed to defeat .

= = = Final days of the Confederacy = = =

In March 1865 , General Order 14 provided for enlisting slaves into the army , with a promise of freedom for service . The idea had been suggested years earlier , but Davis did not act upon it until late in the war , and very few slaves were enlisted .

On April 3 , with Union troops under Ulysses S. Grant poised to capture Richmond , Davis escaped to Danville , Virginia , together with the Confederate Cabinet , leaving on the Richmond and Danville Railroad . Lincoln sat in Davis 's Richmond office just 40 hours later . William T. Sutherlin turned over his mansion , which served as Davis 's temporary residence from April 3 to April 10 , 1865 . On about April 12 , Davis received Robert E. Lee 's letter announcing surrender . He issued his last official proclamation as president of the Confederacy , and then went south to Greensboro , North Carolina .

After Lee 's surrender , a public meeting was held in Shreveport , Louisiana , at which many speakers supported continuation of the war . Plans were developed for the Davis government to flee to Havana , Cuba . There , the leaders would regroup and head to the Confederate @-@ controlled Trans @-@ Mississippi area by way of the Rio Grande . None of these plans was put into practice .

On April 14 , Lincoln was shot , dying the next day . Davis expressed regret at his death . He later said that he believed Lincoln would have been less harsh with the South than his successor , Andrew Johnson . In the aftermath , Johnson issued a \$ 100 @,@ 000 reward for the capture of Davis and accused him of helping to plan the assassination . As the Confederate military structure fell into disarray , the search for Davis by Union forces intensified .

President Davis met with his Confederate Cabinet for the last time on May 5 , 1865 , in Washington , Georgia , and officially dissolved the Confederate government . The meeting took place at the Heard house , the Georgia Branch Bank Building , with 14 officials present . Along with their hand @-@ picked escort led by Given Campbell , Davis and his wife Varina Davis were captured by Union forces on May 10 at Irwinville in Irwin County , Georgia .

Mrs. Davis recounted the circumstances of her husband 's capture as described below : " Just before day the enemy charged our camp yelling like demons ... I pleaded with him to let me throw over him a large waterproof wrap which had often served him in sickness during the summer season for a dressing gown and which I hoped might so cover his person that in the grey of the morning he would not be recognized . As he strode off I threw over his head a little black shawl which was around my own shoulders , saying that he could not find his hat and after he started sent my colored woman after him with a bucket for water hoping that he would pass unobserved . "

It was reported in the media that Davis put his wife 's overcoat over his shoulders while fleeing . This led to the persistent rumor that he attempted to flee in women 's clothes , inspiring caricatures that portrayed him as such . Over 40 years later , an article in the Washington Herald claimed that Mrs. Davis 's heavy shawl had been placed on him to protect him from the " chilly atmosphere of the early hour of the morning " by the slave James H. Johnson , Davis 's valet who served Davis during the Civil War . Meanwhile , Davis 's belongings continued on the train bound for Cedar Key , Florida . They were first hidden at Senator David Levy Yulee 's plantation in Florida , then placed in the care of a railroad agent in Waldo . On June 15 , 1865 , Union soldiers seized Davis 's personal baggage from the agent , together with some of the Confederate government 's records . A historical marker was erected at this site . In 1939 , Jefferson Davis Memorial Historic Site was opened to mark the place where Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured .

= = Imprisonment = =

On May 19 , 1865 , Davis was imprisoned in a casemate at Fortress Monroe on the coast of Virginia . Irons were riveted to his ankles at the order of General Nelson Miles who was in charge of the fort . Davis was allowed no visitors , and no books except the Bible . He became sicker , and the attending physician warned that his life was in danger , but this treatment continued for some months until late autumn when he was finally given better quarters . General Miles was transferred in mid - 1866 , and Davis 's treatment continued to improve .

Pope Pius IX (see Pope Pius IX and the United States) , seeing himself a prisoner in the Vatican , after learning that Davis was a prisoner , sent him a portrait inscribed with the Latin words " Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis , et ego reficiam vos , dicit Dominus " , which correspond to Matthew 11 : 28 , " Come to me , all you that labor , and are burdened , and I will refresh you , sayeth the Lord " . A hand - woven crown of thorns associated with the portrait is often said to have been made by the Pope but may have been woven by Davis 's wife Varina .

Varina and their young daughter Winnie were allowed to join Davis , and the family was eventually given an apartment in the officers ' quarters . Davis was indicted for treason while imprisoned ; one of his attorneys was ex - Governor Thomas Pratt of Maryland . There was a great deal of discussion in 1865 about bringing treason trials , especially against Jefferson Davis , and there was no consensus in President Johnson 's cabinet to do so . There were no treason trials against anyone , as it was felt they would probably not succeed and would impede reconciliation . After two years of imprisonment , Davis was released on bail of \$ 100 ,000 , which was posted by prominent citizens including Horace Greeley , Cornelius Vanderbilt and Gerrit Smith . (Smith was a former member of the Secret Six who had supported abolitionist John Brown .) Davis went to Montreal , Canada to join his family which had fled there earlier , and lived in Lennoxville , Quebec until 1868 also visiting Cuba , and Europe in search of work . Davis remained under indictment until he was released from all liability by the presidential amnesty issued by Johnson on December 25 , 1868 .

= = Later years = =

In 1869 , Davis became president of the Carolina Life Insurance Company in Memphis , Tennessee , where he resided at the Peabody Hotel . Upon General Lee 's death in 1870 , Davis presided over the memorial meeting in Richmond . Elected to the U.S. Senate again , he was refused the office in 1875 , having been barred from Federal office by Section Three of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution . He turned down the opportunity to become the first president of the Agriculture and Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A & M University) .

During Reconstruction , Davis publicly remained silent on his opinions ; but privately he expressed opinions that federal military rule and Republican authority over former Confederate states was unjustified . He considered " Yankee and Negroe " rule in the South oppressive . Like most of his white contemporaries , Davis held the belief that blacks were inferior to whites . The historian William J. Cooper has stated that Davis believed in a Southern social order that included " a democratic white polity based firmly on dominance of a controlled and excluded black caste . "

Ownership of the Brierfield plantation was embroiled in court cases , with the politics of the state judges playing a key role . Only after the Democrats took control of the state supreme court in 1881 did Davis , for the first time in his life , gain legal title .

In 1876 , Davis promoted a society for the stimulation of US trade with South America . He visited England the next year . In 1877 , Sarah Anne Ellis Dorsey , a wealthy widow who had heard of his difficulties , invited him to stay at her estate and plantation house of " Beauvoir " on the Gulf Coast (facing the Gulf of Mexico) in Biloxi , Mississippi . She provided him with a cabin for his own use and helped him with his writing through organization , dictation , editing , and encouragement . Knowing she was severely ill , in 1878 Dorsey made over her will , leaving Beauvoir and her financial assets of \$ 50 ,000 (equivalent to \$ 1 ,227 ,000 in 2014) to Jefferson Davis and , in the case of his death , to his only surviving child , Winnie Davis . Dorsey died in 1879 , by which time both the Davises and Winnie were living at Beauvoir . Over the next two years , Davis completed *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* (1881) .

Davis 's reputation among ex @-@ Confederates was restored by the book and by his warm reception on his tour of the region in 1886 and 1887 . In numerous stops , he attended Lost Cause ceremonies , where large crowds showered him with affection and local leaders presented emotional speeches honoring his sacrifices to the would @-@ be nation . Such events helped the South come to terms with their defeat and continued for decades after the war . The Meriden Daily Journal stated that Davis , at a reception held in New Orleans in May 1887 , urged southerners to be loyal to the nation . He said , " United you are now , and if the Union is ever to be broken , let the other side break it . " Davis stated that men in the Confederacy had successfully fought for their own rights with inferior numbers during the Civil War and that the northern historians ignored this view . Davis firmly believed that Confederate secession was constitutional . The former Confederate president was optimistic concerning American prosperity and the next generation .

Davis completed A Short History of the Confederate States of America in October 1889 . On November 6 , he left Beauvoir to visit his plantation at Brierfield . While in New Orleans , he was caught in a sleety rain , and on the steamboat trip upriver , he had a severe cold ; on November 13 he left Brierfield to return to New Orleans . Varina Davis , who had taken another boat to Brierfield , met him on the river , and he finally received some medical care ; two doctors came aboard further south and found he had acute bronchitis complicated by malaria . They arrived in New Orleans three days later , and he was taken to the home of Charles Erasmus Fenner , an Associate Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court . Davis remained in bed but was stable for the next two weeks ; however , he took a turn for the worse in early December . Just when he appeared to be improving , he lost consciousness on the evening of December 5 and died at 12 : 45 a.m. on Friday , December 6 , 1889 , in the presence of several friends and with his hand in Varina 's .

His funeral was one of the largest in the South . Davis was first entombed at the Army of Northern Virginia tomb at Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans . In 1893 , Mrs. Davis decided to have his remains reinterred at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond . After the remains were exhumed in New Orleans , they lay for a day at Memorial Hall of the newly organized Louisiana Historical Association , with many mourners passing by the casket , including Governor Murphy J. Foster , Sr. The body was placed on a Louisville and Nashville Railroad car and transported to Richmond , Virginia . A continuous cortège , day and night , accompanied his body from New Orleans to Richmond . He is interred at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond .

= = Legacy = =

Jefferson Davis served in many roles . As a soldier , he was brave and resourceful . As a politician , he served as a United States senator and a Mississippi congressman and was active and accomplished , although he never completed a full term in any elected position . As a plantation owner , he employed slave labor as did most of his peers in the South , and supported slavery . As president of the Confederate States of America , he is widely viewed as an ineffective wartime leader ; although the task of defending the Confederacy against the much stronger Union would have been a great challenge for any leader , Davis 's performance in this role is considered poor . After the war , he contributed to reconciliation of the South with the North , but remained a symbol for Southern pride .

Some portions of his legacy were created not as memorials , but as contemporary recognition of his service at the time . Fort Davis National Historic Site began as a frontier military post in October 1854 , in the mountains of western Texas . It was named after then @-@ United States Secretary of War Jefferson Davis . That fort gave its name to the surrounding Davis Mountains range , and the town of Fort Davis . The surrounding area was designated Jeff Davis County in 1887 , with the town of Fort Davis as the county seat . Other states containing a Jeff Davis County or Parish include Louisiana , Georgia and Mississippi .

Numerous memorials to Jefferson Davis were created . The largest is the 351 @-@ foot (107 m) concrete obelisk located at the Jefferson Davis State Historic Site in Fairview , marking his birthplace . Construction of the monument began in 1917 and finished in 1924 at a cost of about \$ 200 @,@ 000 .

In 1913 , the United Daughters of the Confederacy conceived the Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway , a transcontinental highway to be built through the South . Portions of the highway 's route in Virginia , Alabama and other states still bear the name of Jefferson Davis .

Davis appeared on several postage stamps issued by the Confederacy , including its first postage stamp (issued in 1861) . In 1995 , his portrait appeared on a United States postage stamp , part of a series of 20 stamps commemorating the 130th anniversary of end of the Civil War . Davis was also celebrated on the 6 @-@ cent Stone Mountain Memorial Carving commemorative on September 19 , 1970 , at Stone Mountain , Georgia . The stamp portrayed Jefferson Davis , Robert E. Lee and Thomas J. " Stonewall " Jackson on horseback . It depicts a replica of the actual memorial , carved into the side of Stone Mountain at 400 feet (120 m) above ground level , the largest high relief sculpture in the world .

The Jefferson Davis Presidential Library was established at Beauvoir in 1998 . For some years , the white @-@ columned Biloxi mansion that was Davis 's final home had served as a Confederate Veterans Home . The house and library were damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 ; the house reopened in 2008 . Bertram Hayes @-@ Davis , Davis 's great @-@ great grandson , is the executive director of Beauvoir , which is owned by the Mississippi Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans .

Based at Rice University in Houston , Texas , The Papers of Jefferson Davis is an editing project to publish documents related to Davis . Since the early 1960s , it has published 13 volumes , the first in 1971 and the most recent in 2012 ; two more volumes are planned . The project has roughly 100 @, @ 000 documents in its archives .

The birthday of Jefferson Davis is commemorated in several states . His actual birthday , June 3 , is celebrated in Florida , Kentucky , Louisiana and Tennessee ; in Alabama , it is celebrated on the first Monday in June . In Mississippi , the last Monday of May (Memorial Day) is celebrated as " National Memorial Day and Jefferson Davis 's Birthday " . In Texas , " Confederate Heroes Day " is celebrated on January 19 , the birthday of Robert E. Lee ; Jefferson Davis 's birthday had been officially celebrated on June 3 but was combined with Lee 's birthday in 1973 .

Some memorials to Davis have become controversial . Washington State Route 99 bears the name of Jefferson Davis Highway . In 2002 , the state 's House of Representatives unanimously approved a bill that would have removed Davis 's name from the road . However , a committee of the state 's Senate subsequently killed the proposal .

In the former Confederate capital of Richmond , Virginia , the Museum of the Confederacy was involved in a controversy regarding a statue of Davis donated by the Sons of Confederate Veterans in 2008 . Likewise , a statue of Abraham Lincoln , donated to the Civil War Visitor Center in Richmond in 2003 , resulted in protests .

In 2011 , the County Board of Arlington County , Virginia , voted to change the name of Old Jefferson Davis Highway , the original route of Jefferson Davis Highway in the county , after the Board 's chairman made disparaging remarks about Davis . However , the name of Jefferson Davis Highway itself , a portion of U.S. 1 that only the Virginia General Assembly could rename , remained unchanged .

In its 2016 legislative package , the Arlington County Board asked the Virginia General Assembly to rename the portion of Jefferson Davis Highway (U.S. 1) that was within the County . However , no member of Arlington 's legislative delegation offered any such legislation during the 2016 session of the General Assembly .

In May 2015 , the student government at the University of Texas at Austin voted almost unanimously to remove a statue of Jefferson Davis that had been erected on the campus South Mall . Beginning shortly after the Charleston church shooting of 2015 " black lives matter " had been written repeatedly in bold red letters on the base of the Davis statue . Previous messages had included " Davis must fall " and " Liberate U.T. "

The University of Texas officials convened a task force to determine whether to honor the students ' petition for removal of the statue . Acting on the strong recommendation of the task force , UT 's President Gregory Fenves announced on August 13 , 2015 that the statue would be relocated to serve as an educational exhibit in the university 's Dolph Briscoe Center for American History

museum . The statue was removed on August 30 , 2015 .

Robert E. Lee 's United States citizenship was posthumously restored in 1975 . Jefferson Davis had been specifically excluded from earlier resolutions restoring rights to other Confederate officials , and a movement arose to restore Davis 's citizenship as well . This was accomplished with the passing of Senate Joint Resolution 16 on October 17 , 1978 . In signing the law , President Jimmy Carter referred to this as the last act of reconciliation in the Civil War .