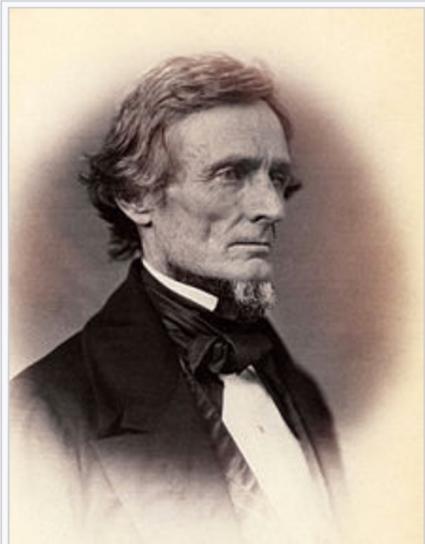


Jefferson Davis

President of the Confederacy

Compiled by D. A. Sharpe



Davis in 1859

Jefferson Finis Davis served as president of the Confederate States of America during the War Between the States. He has been called the man who "symbolized the solemn convictions and tragic fortunes of millions of men." He was not popular with the people of the South during the war, but he won their respect and affection after the war through his suffering in prison and also through his lifelong defense of the Southern cause.

Jefferson Davis is my 33rd cousin, once removed. He is the Uncle to Susanah Elizabeth Davis Abney, wife of James (Jim) Addison Abney of Lufkin, Texas. Jim is a brother-in-law of Martha Jane Dixon Abney, daughter of Judge Felix Benedict Dixon, the ancestor by whom my

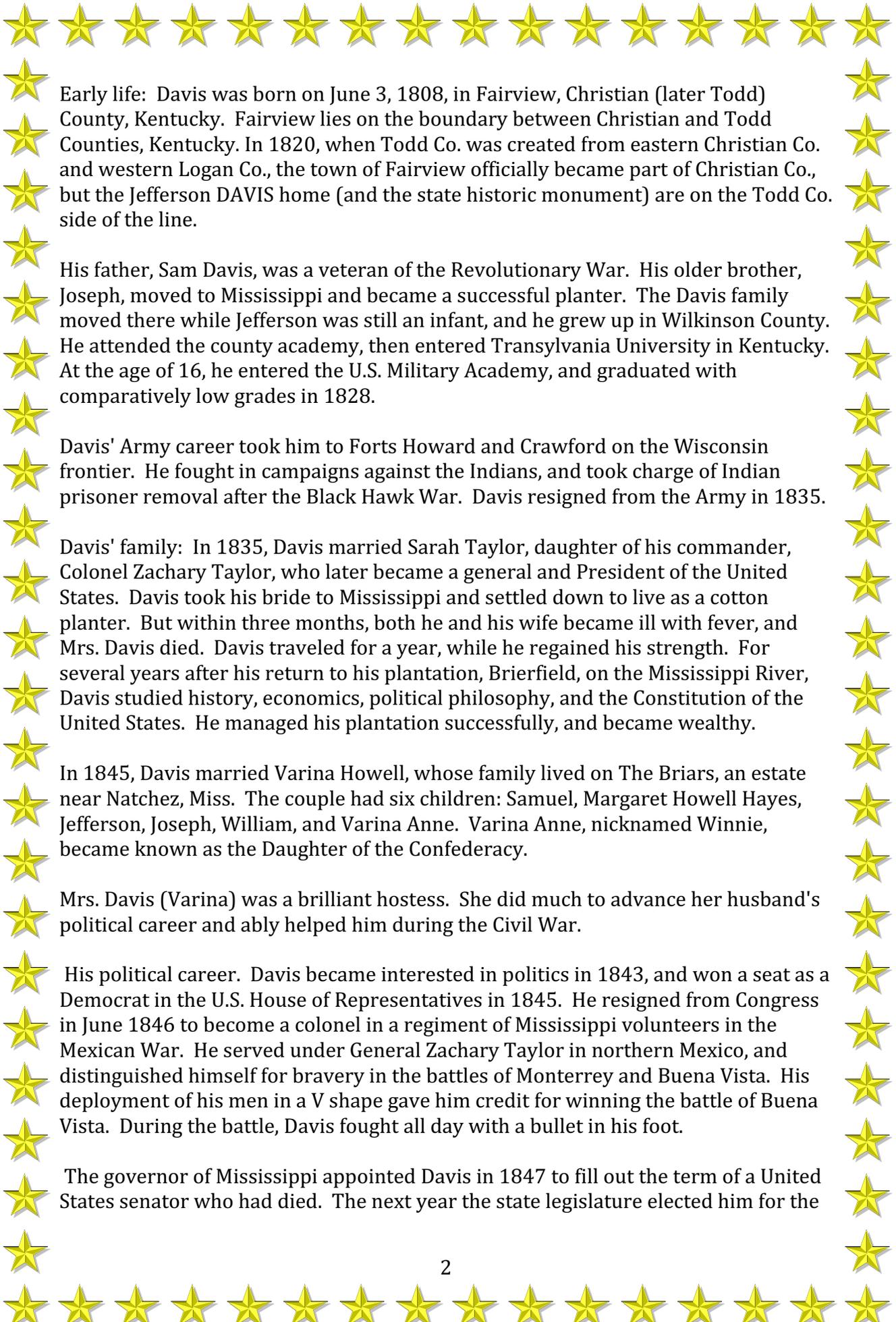
qualification was documented for membership in the Sons of the Republic of Texas. President Davis' first wife, Sarah Knox Taylor, is my 33rd cousin. Sarah is the third cousin, five times removed to my son-in-law, Steven O. Westmoreland. Jefferson Finis Davis is the brother of father-in-law of my great grand uncle.



Wedding photograph of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 1845

Davis' marriage to Sarah Knox Taylor, the sister-in-law to my great uncle James (Big Jim) Addison Abney, was June 17, 1835. Unfortunately, Sarah died September 15, 1835. Davis' second marriage was to Varina Anne Banks Howell on February 28, 1845, a decade later.

Davis was a statesman with wide experience. He served in the United States House of Representatives and the Senate, and as a Cabinet member. He also won distinction as a soldier. He was a thoughtful student of the Constitution and of political philosophy.



Early life: Davis was born on June 3, 1808, in Fairview, Christian (later Todd) County, Kentucky. Fairview lies on the boundary between Christian and Todd Counties, Kentucky. In 1820, when Todd Co. was created from eastern Christian Co. and western Logan Co., the town of Fairview officially became part of Christian Co., but the Jefferson DAVIS home (and the state historic monument) are on the Todd Co. side of the line.

His father, Sam Davis, was a veteran of the Revolutionary War. His older brother, Joseph, moved to Mississippi and became a successful planter. The Davis family moved there while Jefferson was still an infant, and he grew up in Wilkinson County. He attended the county academy, then entered Transylvania University in Kentucky. At the age of 16, he entered the U.S. Military Academy, and graduated with comparatively low grades in 1828.

Davis' Army career took him to Forts Howard and Crawford on the Wisconsin frontier. He fought in campaigns against the Indians, and took charge of Indian prisoner removal after the Black Hawk War. Davis resigned from the Army in 1835.

Davis' family: In 1835, Davis married Sarah Taylor, daughter of his commander, Colonel Zachary Taylor, who later became a general and President of the United States. Davis took his bride to Mississippi and settled down to live as a cotton planter. But within three months, both he and his wife became ill with fever, and Mrs. Davis died. Davis traveled for a year, while he regained his strength. For several years after his return to his plantation, Brierfield, on the Mississippi River, Davis studied history, economics, political philosophy, and the Constitution of the United States. He managed his plantation successfully, and became wealthy.

In 1845, Davis married Varina Howell, whose family lived on The Briars, an estate near Natchez, Miss. The couple had six children: Samuel, Margaret Howell Hayes, Jefferson, Joseph, William, and Varina Anne. Varina Anne, nicknamed Winnie, became known as the Daughter of the Confederacy.

Mrs. Davis (Varina) was a brilliant hostess. She did much to advance her husband's political career and ably helped him during the Civil War.

His political career. Davis became interested in politics in 1843, and won a seat as a Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1845. He resigned from Congress in June 1846 to become a colonel in a regiment of Mississippi volunteers in the Mexican War. He served under General Zachary Taylor in northern Mexico, and distinguished himself for bravery in the battles of Monterrey and Buena Vista. His deployment of his men in a V shape gave him credit for winning the battle of Buena Vista. During the battle, Davis fought all day with a bullet in his foot.

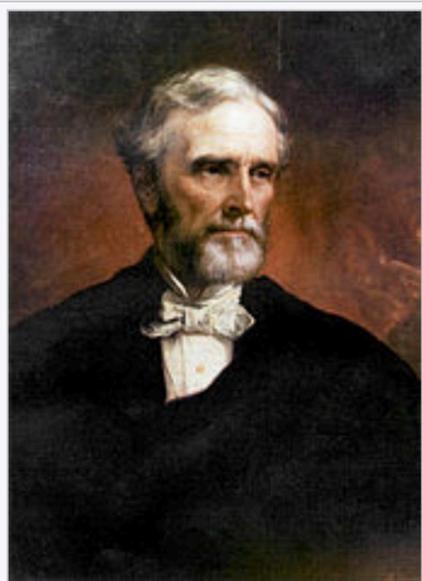
The governor of Mississippi appointed Davis in 1847 to fill out the term of a United States senator who had died. The next year the state legislature elected him for the

rest of the term, and in 1850 for a full term. Henry Clay's famous compromise measures came before the Senate in 1850, and Davis took an active part in opposing them in debate. He believed in a strict interpretation of the Constitution, and loyally supported Senator John C. Calhoun, a Southern states' rights leader.

Davis believed that Mississippi should not accept the Compromise of 1850, and resigned from the Senate in 1851 to become the candidate of the States' Rights Democrats for governor. He lost the election, and retired to his plantation in Wilkinson County.

Secretary of war. President Franklin Pierce appointed Davis Secretary of War March 7, 1853. Davis improved and enlarged the Army during his term. One of his earliest acts was to hear and heed "the demands for military air, ordering the establishment of a post at some practicable location in the Davis Mountains Region, the heart of the Mescalero Apache country. Pursuant to this, orders came down military channels for troops in Texas to march westward and to locate the post." This, of course, became Fort Davis.

Source: "Old Fort Davis," Page 9.



Postwar portrait of Jefferson Davis by Daniel Huntington

He introduced an improved system of infantry tactics, and brought in new and better weapons. He organized engineer companies to explore routes for railroads from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. He even tried the experiment of importing camels for Army use in the western deserts. At the close of the Pierce Administration in 1857, Davis was reelected to the Senate from Mississippi. In the Senate, Davis no longer advocated secession, but he defended the rights of the South and slavery. He opposed Stephen A. Douglas' "Freeport Doctrine," which held that the people of a territory could exclude slavery by refusing to protect it. Davis also opposed Douglas' ambition to be the Democratic presidential candidate in 1860.

On January 21, 1861, the future president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, and four other Southerners resigned from the U.S. Senate. On February 18, 1861, Davis was sworn in as the President of the Confederacy, coincidentally on the same day that Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain) published "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

Macon, Noxubee County, Mississippi is an important place for our family, with the Boggess family having deep roots there. The main street of Macon is names

Jefferson Street, It's naming purportedly came from the occasion when Jefferson Davis laid the cornerstone for the Noxubee County Courthouse in 1860. This was the second courthouse to be built on that site in the central part of town.

Spokesman for the South: Davis became the champion of the constitutional right of a state to choose and maintain its own institutions. He demanded that Congress protect slavery in the territories. In the positions he took, Davis considered himself the heir of Calhoun.

After Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States, Mississippi passed an Ordinance of Secession, and Davis resigned from the Senate in 1861. Davis hoped to become head of the Army of the Confederate States. But shortly after his return to Mississippi, the convention at Montgomery, Ala., named him Provisional President of the Confederacy. He took the oath of office in Montgomery, Alabama on February 18, 1861. He was inaugurated as regular President of the Confederacy on February 22, 1862. His Confederate Vice President was Alexander H. Stephens.

Leader of the Confederacy: Davis was probably not the wisest choice for President. His health was poor. Although he was a good administrator, he proved to be a poor planner. He had difficulties with his Confederate Congress, and bitter critics condemned his management of the war, charging that he was too watchful of his powers. Some modern historians view Davis as a rigid constitutionalist who was too inflexible in his ideas on command and strategy.

Soon after General Robert E. Lee surrendered, Davis was taken prisoner, and imprisoned at Fort Monroe. A grand jury indicted him for treason, and he was held in prison two years awaiting trial. President Abraham Lincoln and Confederate Vice President Alexander H. Stephens held a peace conference aboard a ship off the Virginia coast on February 3, 1876. The talks deadlocked over the issue of Southern autonomy.



Illustration of Jefferson Davis in prison

Horace Greeley and other Northern men became his bondsmen in 1867, and he was released on bail. He was never tried.

On February 25, 1870, Hiram R. Revels, a Republican, became the first black member of the United States Senate as he was sworn in to serve out the unexpired



term of Jefferson Davis. Even though he resigned in 1861, the Civil War had precluded Senate representation from Southern States.

His last years: Davis spent his last years writing and studying at "Beauvoir," his home at Biloxi, Miss., near the Gulf of Mexico. Davis published *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* in 1881 as a defense against his critics. Davis appeared often at Confederate reunions, and eventually won the admiration of his fellow Southerners.

In 1876, the University of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical School was dedicated as the first public institute of higher education in Texas. Jefferson Davis was offered the beginning Presidency, which was a distinct honor for him. He considered the generous offer and elected to remain in his retirement.

He died on Dec. 6, 1889, and was buried in New Orleans. His body was moved to Richmond in 1893. The state of Mississippi presented a statue of Davis to Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol in 1931.

Davis' birthday, June 3, is a legal holiday in seven Southern states. Louisiana celebrates it as Confederate Memorial Day. Kentucky celebrates it as Confederate Memorial Day and as Davis' birthday.

(Source: World Book Encyclopedia, CD Version, 1998, Contributor: Thomas L. Connelly, Ph.D., Former Professor. of History, University. of South Carolina)

In 1978 President Jimmy Carter signed a bill restoring U.S. citizenship to Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

(Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/20031017.html?th>)

About the political inclusiveness of David, the following is quite descriptive:

"This article shows a different side of Jefferson Davis, the Confederacy, and the South--a side under-appreciated if even known by most Americans. With the exception of Davis scholars and non-mainstream Southern scholars, most may not know that President Davis broadened the circle of inclusion for minority communities, that the Confederacy was vigorously supported by minority communities, including Catholics, Jews, and Native Americans, and that religious minorities succeeded politically more so in the antebellum South than in the North.

"When Davis put together the inaugural cabinet of the Confederacy, he not only included men from various Southern states, he included men from various religious communities. In choosing Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, Davis forged the first tri-faith administration in American history, something that would not happen again until the twentieth century. Considering the history of religious conflict in the West,



this was no small achievement. Furthermore, when comparing the Confederate Administration of Jefferson Davis and the Union Administration of Abraham Lincoln, Davis' was consistently more diverse, more religiously inclusive than Lincoln's.

"It may be said that Davis was ahead of his time. On the issue of diversity, Davis pushed the acceptable bounds of nineteenth-century American politics as no chief executive had done before him or any in the decades immediately after him.

Through executive appointment, President Davis recognized the three great religious peoples that have shaped the course of American history--Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.

"This purpose of this article is not only to describe the extent to which Jefferson Davis employed the politics of recognition, it also offers two clues as to why he used it: his personal character and the party culture of the Democratic Party of which Davis was a life-long member."

Source:<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-141167602.html>



Jefferson Davis burial site at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia, beneath a life-sized statue

Jefferson Davis was deeply religious. Davis was brought up to believe in the Bible. He studied the Bible carefully, in English and in Greek, and he quoted from it repeatedly in his letters.³¹ He attended church regularly. On two occasions after two of his children had died prematurely, he was heard to say, "Not my will, but thy will be done."

While Davis was away from home fighting in the Mexican War, he wrote to his wife and asked if she had remembered his request "on the subject of prayer" because he wanted to be sure she was being prayerful. He also advised her to "be pious, be calm, be useful, and charitable and temperate in all things."

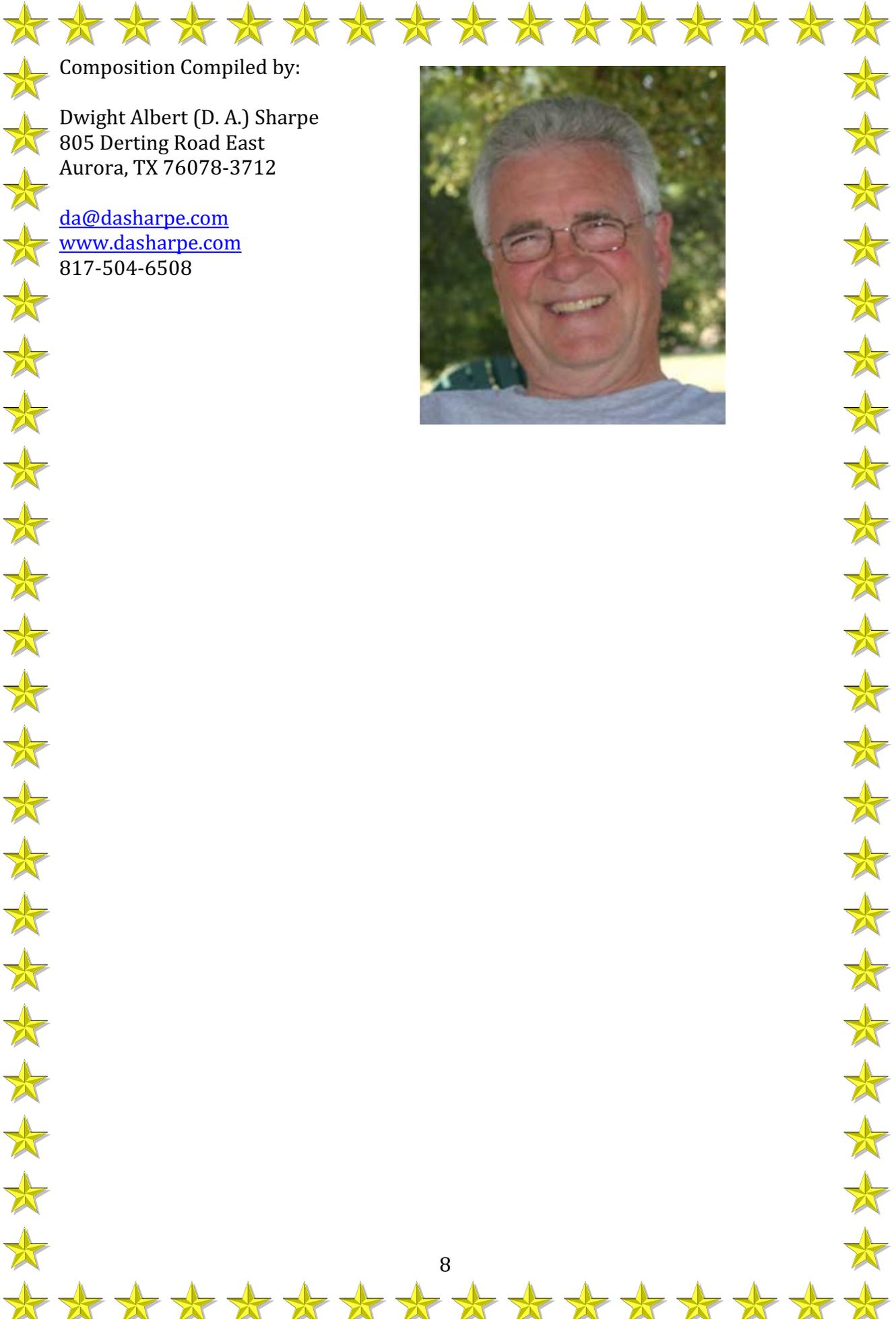
As president of the Confederacy, Davis proclaimed national days of prayer and fasting. On more than one occasion, he was seen kneeling in prayer in the presidential mansion.

Source: <http://michaelgriffith1.tripod.com/jeffersondavis.htm>. "JEFFERSON DAVIS: HIS CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP STYLE, AND RACE RELATIONS, by Michael T. Griffith, 2003. Michael T. Griffith holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Excelsior College in Albany, New York, two Associate in Applied Science degrees from the Community College of the Air Force, and an Advanced Certificate of Civil War Studies and a Certificate of Civil War Studies from Carroll College in Wisconsin. He is a two-time graduate of the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, in Arabic and Hebrew, and of the U.S. Air Force Technical Training School in San Angelo, Texas. He is the author of four books on Mormonism and ancient texts, and of one book on the John F. Kennedy assassination. He has completed advanced Hebrew programs at Haifa University in Israel and at the Spiro Institute in London, England. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Religious Studies from The Catholic Distance University in Hamilton, Virginia.



Jefferson Davis at his home, c. 1885 

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)



Composition Compiled by:

Dwight Albert (D. A.) Sharpe
805 Derting Road East
Aurora, TX 76078-3712

da@dasharpe.com
www.dasharpe.com
817-504-6508

