

Planter F.W. Davie made a career in S.C. House

Frederick William Davie (1800-1850), who represented Chester District for five terms in the S.C. General Assembly, was born in Halifax, N.C., home of the Joneses, his mother's family.

Frederick was the youngest child of Gen. William Richardson Davie, a Revolutionary War hero, governor of North Carolina, envoy to France and founder of the University of North Carolina. But, although many of Davie Senior's achievements had taken place in North Carolina, he had grown up in the Waxhaws of Lancaster District and maintained a plantation he called Tivoli in Chester District near Landsford.

When it came time to educate young Frederick, his father sent him to Moses Waddel's famed Willington Academy in Abbeville District, S.C. And then he sent the boy, with some reluctance, to South Carolina College (now USC) and not to the University of North Carolina. He gave his reason in a letter to a friend, saying that he did not have a "very exalted opinion of that institution," but that he wished his son to "become early acquainted with those men among whom he is destined to live. . . . a knowledge of the world, that is of men and business, is of more consequence to our Standing and

Welfare in Life than all the Latin and Greek which has been taught since the days of Cicero and Aristotle."

Frederick William graduated with an A.B. degree in 1818 and promptly entered the law office of Chancellor Henry William DeSaussure to read law. However, he did not finish his studies for the bar. Instead, he returned to Chester District and became a planter, managing his ailing father's plantation.

His sister Sarah had married a son of DeSaussure, and Frederick William in May 1821 married DeSaussure's daughter, Octavia Theodosia. She died in October 1823. Five years later he married Mary Frederica Fraser, daughter of William Fraser, an early member of the S.C. House.

In 1826 Frederick William Davie began his 21-year career as a member of the S.C. General Assembly, where he served on numerous committees.

General Assembly sessions were short in those days, some lasting less than a month, and always began in December, a slack time for planters, who made up most of the membership. Davie took over his father's plantation. The 1830 census showed him owning only three slaves, but the 1840 number was 138 slaves — indicating that he had come into his inheritance.

Davie, along with Benjamin Massey, also had a franchise to operate a ferry across the Catawba

River near Landsford. In 1821 the state vested the Massey-Davie ferry for 14 years and established these rates: "for every wagon and team, or other four wheeled carriage, one dollar; for every two wheeled carriage, fifty cents; for every man and horse, twelve and a half cents; for every foot passenger or led horse, six and a quarter cents; for every head of cattle, hogs or sheep, four cents."

The Massey-Davie ferry rates were high, double the rates of some of the ferries of the time. Perhaps there was little traffic and the cost of posting a man to operate the ferry at Landsford was high enough to justify the increased rate.

The building of the Landsford canal took place in Davie's first term in office, and Davie's first assignment was one on the Internal Improvements committee, which was charged with overseeing canal and turnpike building. But, while the canal was successfully built and saw some traffic, it was not possible to bypass the Great Falls of the Catawba to the south. This must have been a bitter disappointment for Frederick William Davie.

Davie had no children. His will left bequests to his wife, his brother Allen Jones Davie and to a niece and nephews.

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