

## DAVIS PLANTATION

DAVIS — ROBINSON

After the Revolutionary War the Monticello community became one of the wealthiest sections of Fairfield County. Many handsome mansions were built during this period of affluence which lasted from the 1780's until the Confederate War in the 1860's. A few of these survived the Federal invasion by General Sherman's troops, among them the old Davis home which is now one of the proudest and most elegant mansions in the county.

The main body of this house is covered with a hipped roof through which two mammoth inside chimneys protrude. It is fronted with a classic gabled portico supported by four tremendous round columns resting on heavy masonry bases. A beautiful fanlight window adorns the center of the portico gable which overhangs the upstairs balcony and the first floor veranda. Wings extend on one side and to the rear of the building.

Doctor James B. Davis, who lived here, was one of the most colorful figures of his time. He was a son of the illustrious Doctor Jonathan Davis and his wife Rebecca Kincaid Davis, a daughter of Captain Kincaid of Revolutionary fame. Doctor Jonathan Davis was a highly educated man, a Baptist minister, and a successful planter and educator. It was due to his efforts that the Jefferson-Monticello Academy and the Furman Institute were established in Fairfield. Doctor Furman, founder of the Institute, married two of his daughters.

James B. Davis was born December 31, 1809, on his father's estate near Monticello. He was educated at the Jefferson-Monticello Academy, South Carolina College, South Carolina Medical College, and the Medical College of Pennsylvania. He has been described as one of the most handsome and talented men of his era. His wife, whom he married in 1830, was Mary Elizabeth Scott of Richland County, a most charming and gracious young woman who was noted for her beauty and grace both in this country and abroad.

After practicing medicine for two years in Winnsboro, Doctor Davis gave up his public practice and retired to the family plantation where he devoted his time to his agricultural interests and to the breeding of thoroughbred horses and livestock. In these fields he became a leader. He was an active figure in the Fairfield Agricultural Society and in the State Agricultural Society. His fame in these pursuits were proclaimed abroad and in 1845 he was appointed Minister of Agriculture to Turkey where he and his family lived until 1849.

While in Turkey he became a close friend of the Sultan Abdul Mojid, who was interested in the promotion of the cultivation of cotton in his empire. In gratitude for the excellent work by Doctor Davis the Sultan bestowed rich and handsome gifts upon the family. Upon their preparation for returning home he presented Mrs. Davis with a purse of \$20,000.00 for herself and her heirs. To the doctor he gave rare and valuable animals, some of whose breeds had been carefully guarded and never before been allowed to leave the country.

Failing health and the loss of the sight in one eye prompted Doctor Davis to return to America for the Turkish climate was against him. His animals



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were left on the Sultan's farm in the care of an agent. Their shipment was delayed due to the fact that the Cashmere goats had to be brought across the desert in baskets on the backs of camels. When they arrived in England they attracted the attention of the Earl of Derby who tried to purchase a pair of the goats. Doctor Davis stated that they were not for sale but that he would trade a pair of them for some Brahman cattle that had been in the Zoological Garden of London. These animals were known as the Sacred Cows of India and had been brought to the Gardens for exhibition by the British East India Company.

Several days later the Earl arranged for the trade, "a magnificent white bull, and a beautiful fawn-colored heifer, and for this pair he received in exchange one pair of Persian Goats, leaving the nine that were brought to the United States with the Brahman Cattle, and a pair of black water buffalo, which Doctor Davis had purchased in Turkey . . ." These were the first Brahman Cattle to be brought into this country.

In August 1849, Doctor Davis and some of his animals arrived in Charleston. The Steamship HUNTINGTON had arrived earlier, in June of the same year, with the first of the stock. For a short while the Davises lived in Charleston in a house on the corner of East Bay Street and Longitude Lane. They later moved to a home that he purchased near Columbia on the Garner's Ferry Road. After his father's death he returned to the family estate at Monticello where he died in 1861 at the age of fifty-one.

Upon his return to Fairfield Doctor Davis was given the nickname of "Turkey Jim" by his neighbors. He is buried with other members of his family on his plantation in the old Davis Cemetery not a far distance from the house.

His treasured herd was not destroyed during the War Between the States. After those perilous days members of the family sold some of the stock in Kentucky, Texas, Florida, and Georgia.

The Davis family continued to own this grand old house until it was purchased by the father of the present owner, Mr. Ross Robinson. The Robinsons keep the place in the true Southern tradition. The spacious halls and elegant rooms are furnished with family heirlooms and the grounds are well-kept surrounded by green pastures whose white fences enclose herds of fine cattle and beautiful saddle-horses.

## MONTICELLO METHODIST CHURCH

The MONTICELLO METHODIST CHURCH was one of the first Methodist congregations in Fairfield County. The original building was erected some time before 1820. As the membership grew this little house of worship was enlarged on several occasions. The present building was erected in 1861.

This building, although it has but recently passed its century mark, is a fine example of the rural churches of the ante-bellum period. On the exterior it is plain but classic, a rectangular structure covered with a gabled roof supported by four large columns on the front, a spacious tall porch is fronted and flanked by five easy-rising steps.