

Sarah Davis

(14 Sep 1787 – 12 Sep 1881)

Davis. Entered into rest September 12, 1881 at 4 o'clock a.m., Mrs. Sarah Davis widow of the John Davis of Abel in the 94th year of her age. Funeral on Wednesday the 14th inst. from the Second Baptist Church, corner of 4th street and Virginia ave. s.e. at 2 o'clock p.m. Relatives and friends of the family are respectfully invited to attend. Interment at Congressional Cemetery.

The Evening Star, September 13, 1881

The Death of Mrs. Sarah Davis

Mrs. Sarah Davis, of East Washington, who died yesterday morning, as stated in The Star, was probably the only person who ever shook hands with all the President's of the country except President Garfield. She was in the 94th year and was born in the District near Bladensburg. She died at No. 1010 I street southeast, where she has lived for about 60 years. She had been an active member of the East Washington Baptist church for nearly 75 years. Her husband, John Davis, who died about 25 years ago, had charge of the Navy Yard during the War of 1812, and took all of the records and other valuable documents of the government to Montgomery county in a wagon to save them from being destroyed by the British.

The Washington Post, September 13, 1881

A Long Life Ended

Death of Mrs. Sarah Davis at the Age of 94 Years

Mrs. Sarah Davis, one of the oldest and most highly respected ladies in East Washington, died at her residence, 1006 I street southeast, yesterday morning, at the ripe old age of 94 years. She was the widow of John Davis, who was for many years master plumber at the Navy Yard, this city. Mrs. Davis was born in the District and resided here the best portion of her life. She boasted of having seen all the Presidents except Gen. Garfield, and at the laying of the corner-stone of the Capitol stood by the side of Gen. Washington. She was for a long time a member of the board of managers of the Washington Orphan Asylum and a leading member of the Second Baptist church. Her oldest son, Dr. C.W. Davis, served in the Mexican war on the staff of Gen. Wool.

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Mr. John B. Larner

Editor of Records of the Columbia Historical Society

Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Larner:

I enclose a copy of a clipping taken from my mother's "Scrap-book." You will observe at the close of the notice it is stated that Mrs. Sarah Walker Davis had shaken hands with every President from Washington to Hayes.

Having been born in this City prior to the Civil War, I may say that I have seen every President from Lincoln to Coolidge, with only one President in doubt, namely Andrew Johnson. Without question I have seen every President from Hayes to Coolidge.

It is a matter of regret that the date of the clipping cannot be given with accuracy. The stone over Mrs. Davis' grave at the Congressional Cemetery gives the following information:

In
Memory of Sarah Walker
Wife of John Davis
of Abel
Born
Sep. 14, 1787
Died
Sep. 12, 1881

When quite young I was allowed to accompany my Mother to call on Mrs. Davis at her home at the Navy Yard, and I remember her distinctly. The fact that she had seen General Washington lay the corner-stone of the Capitol was well authenticated and often alluded to in my Grandfather's family.

Very truly yours,
Frank L. Stickney

The Evening Star,

Ninety-Four Years

Death of an Aged Lady Who Saw the Cornerstone of the Capitol Laid

One of the most remarkable women in the District, Mrs. Sarah Davis, died early yesterday morning at her residence on I street south-east, near the navy yard aged ninety-four years. She was the widow of John Davis, of Abel, and mother of Dr. Charles Davis, who died eleven years ago, and Abel Davis, who died eight years ago. The former was once consul to Guaymas, and at the time of his death a translator in the State Department. His daughter, Mrs. Brown, survives him. Abel Davis was for many years president of the Fireman's Insurance Company of this city. Both were men of note, and highly respect in this community. Mrs. Davis saw Washington lay the cornerstone of the Capitol on the 18th of September, 1793. She was then a little girl, six years of age. A few years afterward she saw the Father of His Country at Rockville, Md., and was fond in after life of telling an incident of that occasion. So great was the enthusiasm that the people took the horses from the carriage and pulled it along the crowded thoroughfares. At a certain point the carriage was stopped by the crowd opposite to where she was standing. Directly in front of her a mother proudly lifted up her curly-haired boy to get a glimpse of General Washington. The little fellow burst out in exclamation: "Why mother, he's only a man!" Washington heard the remark and laughingly called the child to him, gave him a coin, and said: "Yes, my son, only a man; always remember that."

Mrs. Davis was born in an old mansion near where the Congressional Cemetery is now located, was married in the same house, died within sight of the place and will be buried in the cemetery tomorrow at two o'clock from her late residence 1006 I Street southeast. She had traveled considerable, was a well-educated lady of the old school, and had shaken hands with every President from Washington to Hayes. She was tall and commanding in appearance, with a strong and pleasant face, keen black eyes and affable manner. The witty sayings, charitable doings, and the recollections of her eventful life she was so fond of relating will not soon be forgotten by those who had the pleasure of an acquaintance with Aunt Sally Davis.