

Warren Ransom Davis

(8 May 1793 – 29 Jan 1835)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from South Carolina, born in Columbia, South Carolina May 8, 1793; pursued preparatory studies; was graduated from S. Carolina College (now the University of S. Carolina) at Columbia in 1810; studied law; was admitted to the bar in 1814 and practiced in Pendleton, S. Carolina; State solicitor of the western circuit 1818-1824; elected as a State Rights Democrat to the 20th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Congresses and served from March 4, 1827 until his death; had been reelected to the 24th Congress; died in Washington, D.C., January 29, 1835. Interment in the Congressional Cemetery.

The National Intelligencer, Friday, January 30, 1835, p. 3

The lamented decease of the Honorable Warren R. Davis, one of the Representatives of the State of South Carolina in Congress, which occurred in this city yesterday morning, arrested the proceedings in both Houses of Congress. The melancholy event was announced to the House of Representatives, in terms more than usually appropriate, just, and eloquent, by Mr. Pickens, the Representative from South Carolina; and, when the news reached the Senate officially, it was responded to with equal eloquence and feeling by the distinguished elder Senator from that State. After voting to attend the Funeral of the deceased at 12 o'clock today, and to wear the usual mourning, both Houses immediately adjourned.

The National Intelligencer, Saturday, January 31, 1835

The funeral of the late lamented Warren R. Davis, of S. Carolina, took place yesterday from the Capitol, according to previous arrangement. The gloom of the day rendered the occasion yet more gloomy. Neither House of Congress transacted business afterwards; the Senate adjourning over to Monday.

An occurrence took place at the close of the ceremony at the Capitol, which produced naturally a great sensation at the time, which can be heard by no one without shuddering, and which, if the consequence had been equal to the apparent purpose, would have signalized the day by a horrible catastrophe.

[We were not witnesses of it, and, in our account of it, speak from information, but from information entirely to be relied on.]

As the President of the United States (Jackson), who was present at the solemn ceremony of the funeral, came into the portico of the Capitol from the Rotunda, a person stepped forward from the crowd into the space in front of the President, and snapped a pistol at him, the percussion-cap of which exploded without igniting the charge! This person was struck down by a blow from Lieutenant Gedney, of the Navy, who happened to be near; he also received a blow promptly aimed at him by Mr. Secretary Woodbury; but, before receiving either blow, snapped a second pistol at the President. The cap of that lock also exploded without igniting the charge! The perpetrator of this daring outrage was of course immediately seized and taken in custody by the Marshal of the District, by whom he was carried to the City Hall, where he underwent an examination before Chief Justice Cranch. His name, it appears, is Richard Lawrence, by trade a painter, a resident for two or three years in the first ward of this city, and formerly of Georgetown. The gentlemen whose testimony was taken before the Judge, were Mr. Secretary Woodbury, Mr. Secretary Dickerson, Mr. Burd, Representative from Pennsylvania, Mr.

Randolph, Sergeant at Arms of the House, Mr. Kingman, one of the Reporters for the National Intelligencer, and Lieutenant Gedney. The pistols, which had been secured by Mr. Burd, were of brass, and, on examination in court, were found to be well loaded with powder and ball, which our readers would suppose, until the fact is stated, could hardly have been possible. How extraordinary (and O how fortunate!) the failure of the evident design of this miserable maniac, (for so he must be considered, under all the circumstances,) against the life of the President! We say he is a maniac because the act shows him to be insane, and not because any evidence of his insanity was produced on his examination; though we have heard that he has been heretofore confined for acts of violence indicating an unsound mind.

On his examination, the unhappy man declined making any explanation or cross-examining the witnesses. We have heard no rational motive even conjectured for his crime.

The offence being a bailable one, and excessive bail being forbidden, bail was demanded to the amount of a thousand dollars, for want of which the prisoner was committed for trial, the Judge intimating that if he had been able to give bail, sufficient securities would have been required, in addition, to insure his good behavior. He will be tried of course at the next term of the court.