

**HISTORY OF MEMPHIS.  
THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF MEMPHIS**

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History of Memphis. The History of the City of Memphis by James D. Davis

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**JAMES D. DAVIS**

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*Mr. Owen*

PREFACE.



The principal object of this work is to preserve, as far as it now remains practicable, that portion of the History of Memphis liable to be lost by time and culpable neglect. More than half a century has passed since the territory on which it stands was laid off into lots, streets, squares and alleys, preparatory to the building of a town. Incidents and anecdotes of rare interest have died with those who alone knew them. Even individuals of standing and influence in their day, have been so completely forgotten, that in some instances where their names have slipped my memory I have been wholly unable to recover them from others. Take, for instance, the name of Judge Benjamin Foy, who lived immediately opposite, on the Arkansas shore. A few years ago, or before the publication of the "Old Times" stories, there were perhaps not twenty men on this bluff, who had ever heard of such a man, and yet he was once the most important personage within hundreds of miles distant—the man whom Volney, and other writers, statesmen and tourists sought for valuable information and social intercourse; the last Spanish Alcaldia this side of Texas, whose official duties glided from one government to another, with perhaps as little confusion as is now experienced by some of our country magis-

trates after the sitting of a new legislature. To save from oblivion such names, will be my greatest effort.

Reminiscences, prior to 1840, I will endeavor to give as full and accurate as possible. After that date I shall be less particular, from the fact that there are many living whose leisure and opportunities enable them to do the subject far greater justice than myself. I shall now have broken the ice, awakened an interest, and opened a field which will doubtless prove remunerative and interesting to future efforts in the same direction. In reference to our late unfortunate civil war, I shall have as little to say as possible; far rather would I obliterate than revive its memories; and were they even pleasant, would be out of place here. In my "Old Times Papers," numerous errors appeared, which, through the aid of Judge Lea, and others, I have been in a great measure able to correct. There are some who have made themselves quite noisy about errors. I have called to see some of these, and have been astonished to find how very defective their memories were, and when brought to a point, the difference would prove nothing more than what might occur between two conscientious witnesses in reference to a recent affray; and with rare exceptions, I was more confirmed in my opinions. (One singular feature, though, and which I am told by an old professional writer is a very common one, was, that I never gave offense where I anticipated or feared doing so, but invariably where I least dreamed of it.) Others, again, have expressed alarm lest their sacred names may be desecrated through these pages. To such I would say, make yourselves easy; I would not injure you for the world. I have offended some in my stories, as heretofore published, by failing to name them, and in some instances have done them injustice by such omissions; while others

have been terribly incensed at finding their names, even in complimentary terms, alluded to. These latter, however, were but few, and remarkable only for ignorance. All such names have since been omitted.

I have a large amount of manuscript, giving biographical sketches of important individuals, most of which would be well worthy a place, but I do not propose making this an advertising medium.

Upon the whole, however, I suppose I have gotten along fully as well as any one could, occupying as humble a position as myself. As to critics—a class of beings whom amateur authors are generally so desperately afraid of—I will say, go ahead and say just what you please.

THE AUTHOR.



## HISTORY OF MEMPHIS.

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A complete history of Memphis might require me to go back, if not to the discovery of the Mississippi river by DeSoto—which many believe to have occurred at this point—at least to give an account of its occupation by Governor Gayoso and the different other powers which alternately held it prior to its falling into the possession of the United States government, and more particularly the Indian wars, which have occurred within the memory of persons still living, and the names of the different forts erected on it. But these are all matters of history, and I should be able to add very little to what has already been written. I shall, therefore, select as my starting point the John Rice and John Ramsey grants, covering the territory on which the city of Memphis is situated; and as these grants have, from time to time, furnished subjects of controversy and litigation, I have thought proper to devote considerable space to them.

### THE JOHN RICE GRANT.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA. No. 283.

To all to whom these presents shall come—Greeting:

Know ye, that we, for and in consideration of the sum of ten pounds for every hundred acres hereby granted, paid into our Treasury by John Rice, have given and granted,

and by these presents do give and grant unto the said John Rice, a tract of land containing five thousand acres, lying and being in the Western District, lying on the Chickasaw Bluff. Beginning about one mile below the mouth of Wolf river, at a whiteoak tree, marked J R, running north twenty degrees, east two hundred and twenty-six poles; thence due north one hundred and thirty-three poles; thence north twenty-seven degrees, west three hundred and ten poles to a cotton wood tree; thence due east one thousand three hundred and seventy-seven and nine-tenth poles to a mulberry tree; thence south six hundred and twenty-five poles to a stake; thence west one thousand three hundred and four and nine-tenths poles to the beginning, as by the plat\* hereto annexed doth appear, together with all woods, waters, mines, minerals, hereditaments and appurtenances to the said land belonging or appertaining: To hold to the said John Rice, his heirs and assigns forever—yielding and paying to us such sums of money yearly, or otherwise as our General Assembly from time to time shall cause. This grant to be Registered in the Register's Office of our said Western District within twelve months from the date hereof; otherwise the same shall be void and of no effect.

In testimony whereof, we have caused these our letters to be made patent, and our great seal to be hereto affixed. Witness Samuel Johnson, Esquire, our Governor, Captain General and Commander in Chief, at Halifax, the twenty-fifth day of April, in the XIII year of our Independence, and of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.

By his Excellency's command.

SAM. JOHNSON.

J. GLASGOW, Secretary.

Scale of two hundred poles to the inch.  
\* Unavoidably omitted.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, }  
 Western District. }

By virtue of a warrant from the State Entry Taker, No. 382, dated the twenty-fourth day of June, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four, I have surveyed for John Rice five thousand acres of land, lying on the Chickasaw Bluff; beginning about one mile below the mouth of Wolf river, at a whiteoak tree, marked J R, running north twenty degrees, east two hundred and twenty-six poles; thence due north one hundred and thirty-three poles; thence north twenty-seven degrees, west three hundred and ten poles to a cotton wood tree; thence due east one thousand three hundred and seventy-seven and nine-tenths poles to a mulberry tree; thence south six hundred and twenty-five poles to a stake; thence west one thousand three hundred and four and nine-tenths poles to the beginning.

Surveyed December 1st, 1786,

ISAAC ROBERTS, D. S.

JOHN SCOTT, }  
 THOS. JAMISON, } S. C. C.

ORANGE COUNTY, REGISTER'S OFFICE, }  
 August 14th, 1789. }

The within Grant is registered in book M, folio 117.

By JOHN ALLISON, P. R.

STATE OF TENNESSEE, }  
 County of Shelby. }

Received five dollars, being the amount of the State tax on the within Grant. This 4th May, 1820.

WILLIAM LAWRENCE, Clerk.

STATE OF TENNESSEE, SHELBY COUNTY, }  
 Register's Office, 14th May, 1820. }

The foregoing Grant is duly registered in my office.  
 This 5th May, 1820. THOS. TAYLOR, R. S. C.