

HENRY HITCHCOCK

Fourth Chief Justice - 1836-1837

BORN: September 19, 1792; Burlington, Vermont
DIED: August 11, 1839; Mobile, Alabama

Henry Hitchcock, a grandson of Ethan Allen, grew up in his native state of Vermont. After graduating from the University of Vermont, he read law and was admitted to the bar in 1815. He traveled to the Mississippi Territory in 1816, locating first in Mobile and then in St. Stephens, the new Alabama territorial capital, to practice law. He was appointed territorial secretary in 1818 by Governor William W. Bibb, and represented Washington County in the Constitutional Convention of 1819.

When Alabama achieved statehood in 1819, the seat of government moved to Cahaba, and Hitchcock became the state's first Attorney General, a post he held until 1823. In 1826, when the state capital was moved to Tuscaloosa, Hitchcock returned to Mobile. There he was appointed federal district attorney, practiced law, and undertook various business ventures.

In January, 1835, the legislature elected Hitchcock associate justice of the Supreme Court, and in June of 1836 he was chosen chief justice. During his tenure on the court, he wrote 65 opinions, only two of which were accompanied by dissents. He resigned in January of 1837 and returned to Mobile to manage business enterprises adversely affected by the panic of that year.

Hitchcock was elected to represent Mobile County in the state legislature in 1839, but he died of yellow fever before the session began.

Henry Hitchcock was married in October of 1821 to Ann Erwin, of Nashville, Tennessee. They had five children.

Portrait attributed to THOMAS STORY OFFICER, 1810-1859
American artist, 19th century, working in Mobile circa 1835-1837
Oil on canvas