

JOEL BASCOM BROWN

Associate Justice - 1919-1921 and 1927-1953

BORN: May 18, 1872; Somerville, Alabama
DIED: April 13, 1953; Montgomery, Alabama

Joel Bascom Brown grew up in Morgan County and worked as a machinist in the railroad shops of Decatur. He attended the Morgan County public schools and Hartselle Male and Female College, graduating in 1889. Then he read law and was admitted to the bar at Cullman in 1892. In the following years he practiced law throughout northern Alabama and served as city attorney in Cullman from 1904 to 1914.

Brown's judicial career began in 1914, when he was elected associate judge of the Court of Appeals; he became presiding judge of that court in 1917. He continued in that role until October, 1919, when Governor Braxton Bragg Comer appointed him to the Supreme Court to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of James J. Mayfield. He served a little over a year and was defeated in the election. Nevertheless, six years later, he ran again and was victorious. He remained on the court until his death. For a two year period beginning in 1949 Brown served as acting chief justice when Chief Justice Lucien Gardner was ill.

Joel Bascom Brown married Minnie Heidelberg of Cullman in 1898; after her death in 1939, he married Rebecca Knight Odum, daughter of associate justice Thomas E. Knight.