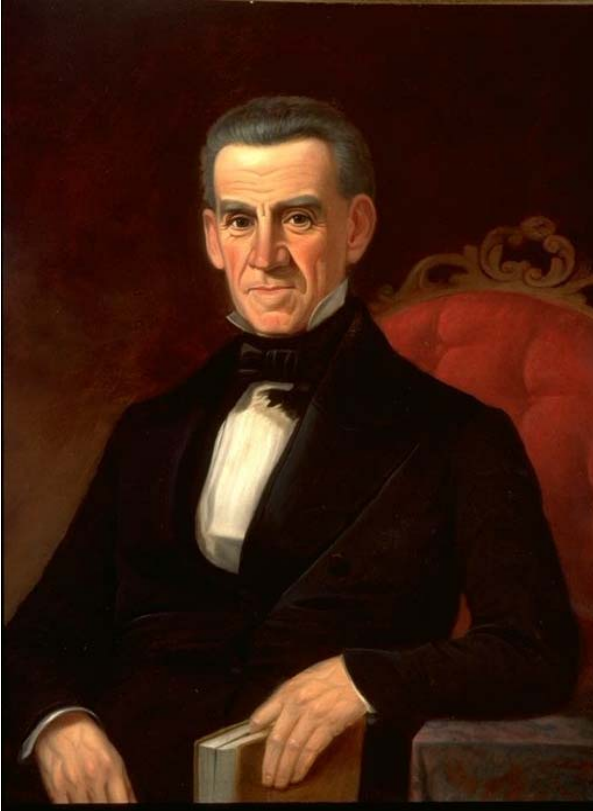


CLEMENT COMER CLAY

First Chief Justice: 1820-1823

BORN: December 17, 1789; Halifax County, Virginia
September 7, 1866; Huntsville, Alabama



***Portrait by WILLIAM FRYE, German
1822-1872
Oil on canvas, 1853***

Clement Comer Clay was born in Virginia and raised in Tennessee, where he was admitted to practice of law in 1809. He moved to Huntsville in the Mississippi Territory in 1811. He served in the Alabama territorial legislature in 1817 and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1819 where he chaired the committee which drafted the first constitution of Alabama.

In 1819, Clay was elected by the General Assembly as judge of the 5th Judicial Circuit on December 14, 1819, and on May 10, 1820, was chosen as the state's first chief justice by his fellow circuit judges. During his tenure as Chief Justice he wrote twenty reported opinions. He resigned on December 18, 1823, to return to his law practice.

In 1827, Clay was elected to the General Assembly serving as Speaker of the House. From 1829 to 1835, he served in the U.S. Congress. In 1835, Clay was elected Alabama's eighth governor. In July 1837, the General Assembly elected him to fill a vacancy in the U.S. Senate where he served until his resignation in 1841. He prepared a digest of Alabama's laws. In 1843, Clay was appointed to fill an unexpired term as a judge of the Supreme Court of Alabama.

Clement C. Clay was married in 1815 to Susanna Claiborne Withers, also originally from Virginia. Clay was elected to the Alabama Hall of Fame in 1953 and the Alabama Lawyers Hall of Fame in 2009.

Junius Moore Riggs Collection

Location: Antebellum Gallery, 3rd Floor, Heflin-Torbert Judicial Building