Holt, Thomas Michael (from Research Branch, NC OA&H) [1]

THOMAS MICHAEL HOLT

Governor: 1891-1893

by Jerry L. Cross

See also: Thomas Michael Holt [3], Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, Louisa Holt [4]

Holt had been affiliated with the Whig Party [9] in the antebellum years but listed himself as a Democrat while serving as Alamance County [10] commissioner, 1872-1875. He won election to the 1876-1877 session of the state Senate and served three terms in the North Carolina House of Representatives beginning in 1883. He was speaker of the house during the 1885 session. Running on the ticket with Daniel G. Fowle [5] in 1888, he was elected lieutenant governor.

Holt had been affiliated with the Whig Party [9] in the antebellum years but listed himself as a Democrat while serving as Alamance County [10] commissioner, 1872-1875. He won election to the 1876-1877 session of the state Senate and served three terms in the North Carolina House of Representatives beginning in 1883. He was speaker of the house during the 1885 session. Running on the ticket with Daniel G. Fowle [5] in 1888, he was elected lieutenant governor.

Long interested in education, Holt, prior to serving as governor, promoted the establishment of the Agricultural and Mechanical College (present North Carolina State University [11]) and served on the boards of trustees at the University of North Carolina and Davidson College [12]. He supported establishment of a normal school for white women (now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro[13]), college level facilities for blacks (present-day North Carolina A. & T. State University and Elizabeth City State University [14] were chartered by the 1891 legislature), and a new state institution for the deaf at Morganton. He advocated additional funding for Oxford Orphanage, the state mental institutions, and an expansion of the common schools. Holt also supported the growing movement to return elective control of local governments to the residents by repealing the law that gave the legislature the power to select justices of the peace [15].

Given a strong start by a revolutionary “farmers” legislature that concluded work just before he assumed office in 1891, the governor achieved virtually all of his goals. The people regained control of local governments; an increased tax rate assisted the public schools; and the appropriations for the state hospitals and the university were increased. As a former president of the North Carolina Railroad, however, Holt did not favor the creation of an unrestrained railroad commission. His thirteen years as president of the Grange and a long-time association with the State Fair afforded him an understanding of the farmers’ viewpoint.

Holt’s health weakened during his administration and he chose not to run for reelection in 1892. He retired to private life
but could manage his interests only on a part-time basis. A Presbyterian, he died on April 11, 1896, at his home on Haw River and was buried in Linwood Cemetery in Graham.

References:


E. M. Holt Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.


WorldCat (Searches numerous library catalogs)

Image Credits:

"Thomas Michael Holt." Photograph no. 53.15.1570. From the Audio Visual and Iconographics Collection, Division of Archives and History Photograph Collection, _State Archives of North Carolina_ , Raleigh, NC, USA.

Subjects:

Biographies

Governors

Authors:

Cross, Jerry L.

Origin - location:

Alamance County

From:

Research Branch, NC Office of Archives and History

19 February 2004 | Cross, Jerry L.

Source URL: https://www.ncpedia.org/holt-thomas-michael-research-branch

Links