

Hill, Thomas Norfleet ^[1]

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by Claiborne T. Smith, Jr., 1988

12 Mar. 1838–24 July 1904

Thomas Norfleet Hill, jurist, was born at Kenmore, [Halifax County](#) ^[2], the son of Lavinia Dorothy Barnes and Whitmel John Hill, the grandson of Colonel Whitmel Hill who was prominent in the American Revolution. His mother had been a noted belle in her day, and the refusal of her cousin Jesse Bynum to introduce her to Robert Potter at a ball in Halifax was the cause of a long, celebrated, and bitter feud.

Hill was educated at the [Vine Hill Academy](#) ^[3] in Scotland Neck and later at the Warrenton Male Academy. After graduating from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[4] with a B.A. degree in 1857, he studied law with Judge [Richmond Pearson](#) ^[5] for two years. In 1860 Hill settled in Scotland Neck to practice. With the advent of the Civil War, he served for a year as a private in the Scotland Neck Mounted Riflemen (later Company G of the Third North Carolina Cavalry). In May 1862 he was elected solicitor for Halifax County and resigned from military service; he held that office until 1866. In 1877, with the creation of the inferior court system, he was elected chairman of the Halifax County inferior court board of justices and so remained until the system was abolished. After that, he practiced law in the town of Halifax.

Hill was considered learned in the law and was often called upon to serve as referee. Though urged by his friends to run for public office, he was by nature reserved and not a good politician. He ran unsuccessfully for the position of associate justice of the [North Carolina Supreme Court](#) ^[6] in 1878 and again in 1888. In 1902 he challenged Judge [Walter Clark](#) ^[7] as chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. In that unsuccessful bid, Hill ran as an Independent with Republican support. He died two years later and was buried in Trinity Cemetery, Scotland Neck.

In 1861 Hill married Eliza Hall, the daughter of Dr. Isaac Hall of Pittsboro and his wife Eliza Evans. Louisa Hall, her only sibling, married [John Manning](#) ^[8], professor of law at The University of North Carolina. Thomas and Eliza Hill were the parents of four sons and six daughters. Hill's second wife was Mary Amis Long, the daughter of Colonel [Nicholas Long](#) ^[9]; they had no children.

In later life, several of Hill's unmarried and widowed daughters resided together in the town of Weldon where they become local celebrities; one of them, Rebecca, lived to be over one hundred. His son, Stuart Hall Hill (1876–1948), attended The University of North Carolina from 1893 to 1896 and later settled in New York City. For a short time he was private secretary to Theodore Roosevelt. Stuart married Madeline Blossom but they had no children. On his death, he was buried in Scotland Neck. As a hobby, Stuart Hill prepared a series of manuscript volumes relating to the genealogy of many eastern North Carolina families. Copies of these attractively written studies, rich in the local history of the region, were deposited in the North Carolina Collection of The University of North Carolina Library, the Department of Archives and History in Raleigh, the New York Public Library, and other institutions.

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From:

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