

Holt, Martin Hicks ^[1]

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by Ralph Hardee Rives, 1988

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Engraving of Martin H. Holt published in 1908. Image from Internet Archive.

^[2]Martin Hicks Holt, educator, lay leader in the North Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant church, and legislator, was the son of John Foust and Louisa J. Williams Holt and a great-nephew of the antebellum North Carolina educator and statesman, Archibald D. Murphey ^[3]. The family on his paternal side pioneered in cotton manufacturing in the North Carolina piedmont.

After attending Oak Ridge Institute ^[4] in Guilford County ^[5] and Kernersville High School, Holt received a bachelor's degree from The University of North Carolina ^[6] and a master of arts degree from Western Maryland College. For a time he also studied law. He began his teaching career at Kernersville in 1872; later he taught at the Tabernacle High School and was a salesman for a wholesale grocery business. In January 1879, Holt joined his brother, John Allen ^[7], at Oak Ridge Institute, which they purchased in 1884. The brothers were associated as teachers and joint proprietors of the institute for about thirty-five years. Martin Hicks was junior principal and head of the academic department. As a result of their strong religious convictions, they made a standing offer of free tuition to Methodist Protestant ministerial students and to the sons of Methodist Protestant ministers in the North Carolina Conference.

In 1893 Holt was a member of the North Carolina General Assembly ^[8], where he served as chairman of the committee on education and as a member of several other committees including finance and corporations. He was responsible for raising the tax rate for public education and was instrumental in increasing the appropriations for the educational and charitable institutions of the state. Holt became an initial director of the North Carolina Deaf and Dumb School at Morganton and served continuously for many years. From 1893 to 1897, he was a member of the board of trustees of The University of North Carolina. He also was a delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Protestant church in 1888 and 1912.

Holt was considered to be "a speaker and a debater of more than ordinary ability . . . of poetical temperament, and . . . [one who delighted] in [the] study of the classics." In 1878, he married Mary A. Lambeth of Guilford County; they became the parents of two sons and a daughter. One son, John Harvey, taught for some years at Oak Ridge Institute. Holt was buried in Oak Ridge.

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