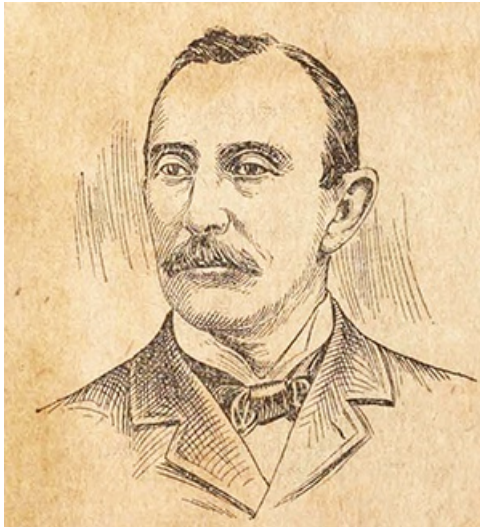


Justice, Michael Hoke ^[1]

Justice, Michael Hoke

by B. W. C. Roberts, 1988

13 Feb. 1844–12 Feb. 1919



An engraving of Michael Hoke Justice published circa 1897. Image from the Braswell Memorial Library, Rocky Mount, N.C.

Michael Hoke Justice, Confederate ordnance officer, attorney, state senator, and Superior Court judge, was born in [Rutherford County](#) ^[2]. He was the fourth of six children of the Reverend Thomas Butler Justice, a Baptist minister from [Buncombe County](#) ^[3], and his wife Harriet Bailey, formerly of [Henderson County](#) ^[4]. Other Baptist ministers in the family included a great-uncle, Thomas Justice, and two brothers, Charles Baylum Justice and Thomas Butler Justice.

After attending school in Rutherford County, young Justice entered the Rutherfordton Academy at age ten. Five years later he transferred to Golden Grove Seminary near Spindale for several more years of study. On 14 July 1862, at age eighteen, he enlisted in Company F, Sixty-second North Carolina Regiment, of the Confederate Army; later he was promoted to ordnance sergeant. At the end of the war he began studying law under Judge John B. Bailey in Asheville and was licensed in January 1868. Establishing an office in Rutherfordton, he practiced law until appointed judge.

After the war Justice was elected mayor of Rutherfordton. In 1876 he became the first [Democrat](#) ^[5] since the end of the Civil War to serve as senator for the Thirty-ninth District, made up of Rutherford and [Polk](#) ^[6] counties. In 1884 he became the Democratic presidential elector for his district. Later he was a state senator in the legislative sessions of 1897, 1899, and 1901, serving as chairman of the Judiciary Committee in 1899 and 1901. In a speech to the 1900 Democratic convention, Justice presented [Charles B. Aycock](#) ^[7] as a gubernatorial candidate. In 1901 Governor Aycock appointed him a Superior Court judge for the Sixteenth Judicial District. While Governor [Locke Craig](#) ^[8] was in office, Justice served as chairman of a [commission to establish controversial regulations for railroad freight](#) ^[9]. During the state Democratic convention of 1904 held in Greensboro, he was nominated for the Supreme Court by [W. T. Crawford](#) ^[10] but lost the election to Judge Hoke.

Justice was a member of the First Baptist Church in Rutherfordton and attained the highest rank in the [Masonic Order](#) ^[11]. He was a member of the Rutherfordton Hotel and Improvement Company, and served on the board of directors and as counsel for the Citizens' Building and Loan Association. The charter for the Asheville and Thermal Belt Railroad Company was written by Justice. As a director he also supported the Rutherfordton Military Institute.

On 21 Mar. 1865 Justice married Margaret ("Maggie") L. Smith, the daughter of James M. and Martha Smith of Buncombe County; they had six children: [Edwin J.](#) ^[12], Charles, Butler Alexander, Martha McCree, Gaston Bailey, and Michael Hoke, Jr. In 1895 he married Lula B. Tanner, the daughter of Andrew and Amy Carolina Tanner of Saluda, and they had a daughter, Louisa. Justice died on the day before his seventy-fifth birthday and was buried in the Rutherfordton Cemetery. Two oil portraits of him are in the possession of his descendants.

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"Senator M. H. Justice, who made the motion to separate the trials of the Wilsons." Engraving. Engraving. (circa 1897?). Daughtridge Scrapbook. 29. Local History Collection. Braswell Memorial Library, Rocky Mount, N.C. <http://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/ncmemory/id/107559>^[15] (accessed December 29, 2014).

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