

JOHN GAYLE, 1792-1859  
THIRD FEDERAL DISTRICT JUDGE OF ALABAMA

In John Gayle's lifetime, he held nearly every distinguished office that the State of Alabama could bestow. Born in South Carolina, he graduated from the College of South Carolina (today the University of South Carolina) in 1813 and immediately moved to Claiborne on the Alabama River, then in the Mississippi Territory. He was a member of the legislative council of the first Territorial Legislature in 1818. He became solicitor of the first judicial circuit in 1819 and was elected to the state legislature in 1822. He was circuit judge in 1823 and served on the Alabama Supreme Court from 1824 until 1828, when he resigned. In 1831, he was elected Governor of Alabama, serving two terms.



The Gayle administration, during the period when Tuscaloosa served as Alabama's capital city, was notable for the dramatic events involving Indian Removal from the state and for the building of Alabama's first railroad. In 1846, Gayle went to Congress where he served one term. He returned to Alabama when President Zachary Taylor appointed him to succeed William Crawford as Federal District Judge in 1849.

Gayle was immensely popular and was considered a kind public servant and a firm and incorruptible judge. He was married twice and left many descendants. The library of the University of Alabama is named for his daughter, Amelia Gayle Gorgos. Judge Gayle died in Mobile in 1859.

(Copy of portrait of John Gayle, circa 1835.)