

RICHARD BUSTEED, 1822-1898
U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE OF ALABAMA, 1864-1874

Richard Busteed was born in Ireland, son of a strong emancipationist who moved to Canada. Busteed moved to New York where he was a Methodist preacher and was licensed to practice law in 1846. In 1860, he was lawyer for the aggrieved husband in a notorious divorce case in which the press reported his denunciation of the wife as “the harlot of the nineteenth century.” At the outbreak of the Civil War, he became a Brigadier-General in the Union army.



In 1864, Busteed was appointed by President Lincoln as Federal District Judge of Alabama, to succeed George Washington Lane, who had died in office. The court did not actually sit until federal rule was re-established in 1865, at which time Busteed became one of the most unpopular judicial figures in Alabama history. He was seen as corrupt and, on visits to the North, he was quoted as heaping “the vilest abuse upon the Southern people.” In December 1867, he was shot on the street in Mobile by U.S. District Attorney L.V.B. Martin, who then approached Busteed’s “crumpled form” and fired two more shots into him. Mr. Martin went to Texas and was never prosecuted, while Busteed recovered rapidly. With the weakening of carpetbag rule, impeachment charges were brought against Busteed, charging non-residence, failure to hold court, and improper use of his official position. To avoid being removed from office, he resigned in 1874. He died in New York City in 1898.

(Photograph of Richard Busteed in Union uniform, circa 1863)