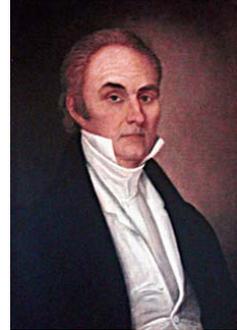


CHARLES TAIT, 1768-1835  
FIRST FEDERAL DISTRICT JUDGE OF ALABAMA

Charles Tait was born in Virginia but moved with his parents to Georgia after the Revolution. He was educated at the Wilkes Academy, Washington, Georgia, and at Cokesbury College in Maryland. While at Cokesbury, aged 19, he was thrown from a horse and his leg was so injured that it was amputated. His wooden peg leg is owned today by the Alabama Department of Archives and History. He began to practice law in Elberton, Georgia, in 1798 and was elected judge of the Western Circuit of Georgia in 1803. He became a U.S. Senator in 1809. He was involved in a celebrated “duel” with Judge Dooly of Georgia, in which Dooly refused to participate unless his leg was encased in a hollow tree limb to simulate Tait’s handicap.



Senator Tait was influential in the admission of Alabama to the Union in 1819. He moved to the new state soon after statehood was granted, acquiring lands on the Alabama River in Monroe and Wilcox Counties. In 1820, he was appointed by President Monroe as the first U.S. District Judge of Alabama. He presided over the court during the period that the state capital was at Cahawba. He was considered one of the most learned men of his day, with notable achievements in literature and the sciences. He was a distinguished orator and debater. Tait resigned from the court in 1826 in order to devote his time to planting. He died in Wilcox County in 1835, leaving many descendants.

(19th Century photograph of a lost life portrait of Charles Tait.)