

WILLIAM GILES JONES, 1808-1883
FOURTH FEDERAL DISTRICT JUDGE OF ALABAMA, 1859-1861
DISTRICT JUDGE OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, 1861-1865

William Giles Jones was born in Virginia, the son of a planter. He was educated at Hampden-Sidney College and the University of Virginia, and studied law with Attorney General John Robertson of Richmond. He was admitted to the bar in 1830 and moved to Alabama in 1834, where he was elected to the Legislature from Greene County in 1843, later practicing law in Mobile.



Jones again served in the Legislature from Mobile in 1849 and in 1859. On the death of Judge John Gayle, third District Judge of Alabama, in 1859, Jones was appointed as Fourth District Judge by President Buchanan. In 1861, Alabama seceded from the Union, and Judge Jones resigned. He was immediately appointed to the equivalent position in the new Confederate States by President Jefferson Davis. U.S. President Lincoln did not acknowledge secession and appointed George Washington Lane as U.S. District Judge. That court could not sit, however. Judge Jones actively presided over sessions of the Confederate District Court in Hunstville, Montgomery, and Mobile. At the close of the Civil War in 1865, he was arrested and indicted for treason against the United States government in the same court over which he had presided. Before Jones could be tried, Congress passed an act to relieve him from further prosecution. He returned to Mobile and practiced law there until his death.

(Enlarged Photograph of William Giles Jones, circa 1860.)