

Ochiltree, William Beck ^[1]

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18 Oct. 1811–27 Dec. 1867



William Beck Ochiltree. Image from the Texas Jurists Collection, Rare Books & Special Collections, Tarlton Law Library, University of Texas at Austin.

^[2]William Beck Ochiltree, lawyer and public official, was born in Fayetteville ^[3]. The only person of this name recorded in the 1810 census for the county was Elizabeth Ochiltree, whose household consisted of four females and one enslaved person, but no male. Young Ochiltree went first to the Florida Territory and then to Alabama, where he studied law. After practicing for a time in Alabama, he moved to the Republic of Texas ^[4] in 1839, continuing his law practice. In 1842 he was appointed judge of the Fifth Judicial District, a position that also made him an ex officio judge of the Texas Supreme Court. During the administration of President Anson Jones ^[5] (1844–45), Ochiltree served first as secretary of the Treasury (1844) and then as attorney general (1845).

Ochiltree wrote a series of articles for the San Augustine (Tex.) *Red-Lander* opposing the annexation of Texas to the United States. During the annexation and constitutional convention of 1845, he served as a delegate from Nacogdoches County and participated in the writing of the Texas state constitution of the same year. After the convention he again served as a judge but resigned to return to private law practice.

While working to bring about a two-party system in Texas, Ochiltree was a leader of the state's Whig party ^[6]. He ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Congress from the Eastern District of Texas in 1851 and finished second in the gubernatorial race in 1853. Two years later, he was elected a member of the sixth Texas legislature. Ochiltree also served as a delegate to the Texas Secession Convention in 1861 from Harrison County, to which he had moved in 1859. He went to Montgomery, Ala., in 1861 as a delegate and member of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America but resigned and returned to Texas to organize an infantry regiment for General John G. Walker's Division. Ill health in 1863 forced him to resign his commission, and he returned to Texas. He died in Jefferson, Tex., four years later.

Ochiltree County, Texas and Ochiltree, Texas are named in for William Beck Ochiltree. William Beck Ochiltree was the father of Major Thomas P. Ochiltree.

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Additional Resources:

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