

Hoke, Michael ^[1]

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by Claude H. Snow, Jr., 1988

2 May 1810–9 Sept. 1844

Michael Hoke, lawyer, politician, and public figure, was the second of eight children born to John and Barbara Quickle Hoke in [Lincoln County](#) ^[2]. The Hoke ancestors had come from the Alsace district of France in the early eighteenth century and settled in the Lincoln County area. By the time of Michael's birth, the family was already well known across the state; his father then was associated with [Michael Schenck](#) ^[3] in the manufacture of cotton textiles in the South.

Hoke was first educated in the schools of his native county. In 1827 he was enrolled at Captain Alden Partridge's school at Middletown. Among Hoke's contemporaries who attended the school were Thomas and Paul Cameron, [Thomas Bragg](#) ^[4], and George Little. Hoke left the institution in 1829 and began his legal studies with Judge St. George Tucker of Virginia. He later received instruction from Judge Robert H. Burton, of Lincoln County, whose daughter he would eventually marry.

In time, Hoke became a brilliant lawyer and a conspicuous figure in public life. He represented Lincoln County in the House of Commons in the 1834, 1835, 1836, 1838, and 1840 sessions, serving on the committees on education, privileges and elections, and rules of order, as well as other special committees. From 1838 until his death, he was a trustee of [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5].

In 1844 the Democrats nominated Hoke for governor of North Carolina against the highly celebrated [Whig](#) ^[6] candidate, [William A. Graham](#) ^[7]. The two men were intimate friends, born in the same county, and at the height of their careers. Both were highly respected across the state, regardless of political lines. During the campaign the Whigs called their opponents "Locofocos," but did not feel they could apply this title to Hoke, whom they considered to be unlike most leaders of the Democratic party. Although the Democrats were defeated in the election, Hoke's campaign dealt the first serious blow to Whig supremacy in North Carolina.

After the election Hoke resumed his legal practice. A few weeks later, he was taken ill at a court session in [Mecklenburg County](#) ^[8] and died in Charlotte at age thirty-four. The cause of death was attributed to a fever (probably malaria) contracted during the summer while he was campaigning in the eastern counties. His death was mourned by the entire state, and his remains were interred at Lincolnton.

Hoke was survived by his wife, Frances Burton Hoke, and six children including Mary Brent, who married Hildreth H. Smith, onetime professor at The University of North Carolina; [Robert Frederick](#) ^[9], the noted Confederate general; and George, a physician.

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Additional Resources:

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