



The Justices of the Supreme Court of Louisiana 1865-1880

Evelyn L. Wilson

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Eighteen Justices served on the Supreme Court of Louisiana during the period 1865 to 1880. The Civil War and Reconstruction years were not easy for any of these men. Sentiment ran high and violence was common. Criticism was as harsh as it was unwarranted. The justices selected to serve in 1865 and 1868 were, generally, Republicans and supporters of the Union. Most of the lawyers practicing before them were Democrats who had fought for or supported the Confederacy. Operating in the face of open hostility, the court faced the task of bringing order to chaos as most courts had been closed during the war. In 1877, the era of Reconstruction ended when Democrats gained control of the state. The set of justices appointed in 1877 had been committed to the Confederacy and were opposed to the federal presence in the state. Though considered political conservatives, they were judicial activists, bending the law to ensure that justice, as they perceived it, prevailed. They were confident their decisions would be well received. This work provides a short biography for each justice and describes many of the cases decided by the court. The cases selected involve issues unique to this era or are particularly intriguing. This research was supported by the Education Committee of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. Evelyn L. Wilson is the Horatio C. Thompson Endowed Professor at the Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She clerked for Chief Justice John A. Dixon, Jr. at the Louisiana Supreme Court and practiced law before joining the Law Center in 1986. Professor Wilson has been a visiting professor in Virginia, Nigeria, Lithuania, Turkey and Nepal. She was selected as a U.S. Fulbright Senior Scholar in 2015. Wilson's scholarship has focused on Federal Jurisdiction, civil procedure, human and civil rights, and legal history. She authored the book, *Laws, Customs and Rights*, which tells the story of Charles J. Hatfield whose lawsuit caused the state of Louisiana to establish a law school at Southern University. and has co-authored a textbook entitled, *Louisiana Property Law*.

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