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Russell Wall
Georgia College & State University

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**LUCIUS QUINTUS CININNATUS LAMAR SR.:
THE INTERPRETATION OF HIS DEMISE**

Russell Wall

*Dr. Bob Wilson
Faculty Sponsor*

Sometimes justice casts a blind eye. Unfortunately, this principle defined the life of Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar Sr. Rising to prominence as one of the most significant figures in 1820s and 1830s Milledgeville, Lamar built a brilliant career and strong reputation as one of the leading legal minds of his time. Lamar's success eventually propelled him to what was likely the most coveted judicial position in the state of Georgia: Judge of the Ocmulgee Circuit. Sadly, Lamar's good fortune was short-lived, but not for the same reason that posterity has afforded.

Lamar's demise has been misinterpreted for generations. Erroneously, he has been known throughout history as the Judge who committed suicide after realizing that he had sent an innocent man to the gallows. While this presumption is questionable, some elements of the story are correct. Judge Lamar did preside over the star-crossed case in which an innocent man, Reverend John A. Johnson, was convicted and executed for the murder of Elenor Bustin. His innocence was not realized until some time after the execution. Also subsequent to Johnson's execution, Lamar committed suicide. For years, Johnson's revealed innocence and Lamar's suicide have been linked in a cause and effect relationship. Nevertheless, despite popular belief, evidence suggests no correlation between John A. Johnson's revealed innocence and the death of one of early Milledgeville's most distinguished citizens, Judge Lucius Q. C. Lamar.

Regardless of a connection between Johnson's innocence and Lamar's suicide, these two men still represent one of the most tragic tales in Georgia history. In Johnson's case, the legacy left is a chilling example of the potential repercussions of capital punishment. Lamar's journey remains a heartbreaking story of one man's rise and fall. Judge Lamar's downfall deserves careful attention, as it has been at the core of one of the most enduring myths in Milledgeville lore.

To understand the full impact of Lamar's demise, one must first explore his notable ascension to eminence. Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar was born July 15, 1797, in Warren County, Georgia. He was the oldest of nine surviving children born to John Lamar III and John's wife, Rebecca Lamar. Incidentally, John and Rebecca were first cousins. Lucius owes his unusual name to his

mother's brother, uncle Zachariah Lamar, who upon taking the privilege of naming several of the children, named them after his favorites from history and literature. Zachariah was an extremely wealthy planter, slave-owner, and merchant hailing from Milledgeville. Lucius had three brothers and five sisters. Brother Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar eventually became the second President of the Republic of Texas.

Lucius Q. C. Lamar came from planter stock. Around 1800, his father, John, settled along the Little River in an area that became Putnam County, about eight miles south of Eatonton, Georgia. Around this area, John built the family mansion, often referred to as Fairfield. The plantation, on which John Lamar is buried, included nine hundred acres, and, of course, a large number of slaves. As of 1935, the Lamar family home was still standing, but the land was in the possession of the Georgia Power Company. Presumably, the house fell victim to the damming of the Little River and subsequent flooding of the area for the construction of Lake Sinclair.

Lucius's boyhood at Fairfield is something of a mystery. Little is known of his childhood on the family plantation. What is known is that Lamar studied under Milledgeville lawyer Joel Crawford in 1816 after attending Franklin College in Athens, now known as the University of Georgia. After a time with Crawford, Lamar attended law school at Litchfield, Connecticut, from 1817 to 1818. Lucius returned to Georgia upon completion of his studies at Litchfield, and in 1818 he was admitted to the bar. Lamar was only twenty or twenty-one at this time. Shortly thereafter, on March 10, 1819, Lucius Q. C. Lamar married Sarah Williamson Bird, the daughter of Dr. Thompson Bird, a prominent Milledgeville physician. Together Lucius and Sarah had eight children; Susan Rebecca, Mary Elizabeth, Sarah Williamson, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Jr., Thompson Bird, Louisa Lenora, Mary Ann, and Jefferson Mirabeau Lamar, but only five survived into adulthood. L. Q. C. Lamar had begun his journey as a rising star in early Milledgeville.

Success seemed inevitable for young Lucius. Upon admission to the Georgia bar in 1818, Lamar formed a partnership with his former mentor, Joel Crawford. The young lawyer quickly displayed flashes of brilliance, organizing a thirteen hundred page compilation of the laws of Georgia passed from 1810 to 1820, sometimes referred to as the Georgia Statutes. Published in 1821, this was the first arranged digest of Georgia Laws. Without question, Lamar's product made the legal process in Georgia much more accessible and organized. For Lamar, the project was a massive undertaking that displayed an

expertise beyond his years. He also revised Augustine S. Clayton's *Georgia Justice*, which was published in 1819. Making a name for himself, Lamar obviously enjoyed unusual success and prosperity for a young man his age as he, along with partner Joel Crawford, developed a very lucrative law practice. Lucius Q. C. Lamar seemed poised for greatness.

Assisted by the success that he enjoyed early in his career, Lamar acquired a substantial residence in Milledgeville. While Fairfield was nearby, this was the traditional Lamar family home, the home of his father. Lucius did spend some time at the family home, as Lucius Q. C. Lamar Jr. was born there in 1825. The exact location of the Milledgeville house is debatable, but Lucius Lamar most definitely had his primary residence in the town. Evidence suggests the location of the house to be on the square outlined by Jefferson Street to the west, Hancock Street to the south, Elbert Street to the east, and McIntosh Street to the north, otherwise known as Square twenty-nine. Deed records link Lamar to "Lot Number one in Square twenty-nine," and a corresponding map shows the lot to be presently occupied by Duckworth Farm Supply, at the corner of McIntosh and Elbert Street.

Clearly, the Lamar house is not standing today, but perhaps the house that once stood was a John Marlor creation, as evidence shows payments made from the account of Lucius Q. C. Lamar to the well-known architect. Surely a Marlor home symbolized the very best in Milledgeville architecture. Such an assertion seems likely, as Marlor's designs can still be seen dotting the landscape of Milledgeville. Lucius's wife, Sarah, sold the lot for \$1200 to Hannah Hubbard in 1837, nearly three years after Lucius's death. This was certainly a substantial amount of money for a tract of land that totaled "a fraction less than one acre," as the deed terms it. However, it seems probable that Lamar owned more of the square at one time given the inventory of outside facilities, which included four horses, three cows, two calves, as well as carriages and wagons. Maybe Hubbard sold the lot piece by piece. Eventually Hubbard sold the portion "formerly owned and occupied by Sarah Lamar" to Hugh Treanor in 1851. Considering the extensive estate inventory and the possible Marlor connection, one can only imagine the grandeur of the house that occupied the lot.

Aside from the town lot, Lamar owned very sizable tracts of land. The 1831 Baldwin County Tax Digest shows that Lucius Q. C. Lamar was paying taxes on 241 slaves and over 17,000 acres of land in counties including Baldwin, Pulaski, Twiggs, Laurens, Wilkinson, Bibb, Irwin, Early, Dooly, and Henry. This extensive estate made Lamar

one of the wealthiest men in the area. However, the landholdings are mysteriously absent in the 1833 Baldwin County Digest, showing only a few hundred acres. While several explanations are possible, Lucius Q. C. Lamar probably owned the estate outright, owing the 1833 absence to sale, error, or oversight, as the 1833 tax digest is in deplorable condition today. In support of the prospect that the huge estate was truly that of Lucius Q. C. Lamar, an 1828 tax digest shows a comparable estate to that of the 1831 tax digest. In any case, Lamar's wealth was rapidly increasing.

With success, money, and a good last name, Lamar became an important fixture in Milledgeville society. Records link Lucius Q. C. Lamar with a network of Milledgeville notables, including R. J. Nichols, Samuel Rockwell, and even Samuel Buffington. Of course, it is difficult to determine if these men were mere business associates or friends, but a July 16, 1834, piece in the *Federal Union* affirms that Samuel Rockwell was truly a dear friend. Lamar was also active in the local schools, as payments link him to Midway Seminary, and the Southern Recorder reveals that he served as a trustee for the Scottsboro Male Academy. Perhaps he had children in both of these schools. Nonetheless, Lamar was obviously a very involved citizen in Milledgeville.

Lucius Q. C. Lamar's legal career climaxed when he was appointed Judge of the Ocmulgee Circuit in 1830. Georgia had no superior court at the time, but this was probably the most prestigious position given the fact that it encompassed the Milledgeville area, as Milledgeville was the capital of Georgia at that time. Hence, Lamar was a well-respected member of the Milledgeville community, had guided a very successful law practice for a number of years, was proven to be a brilliant legal mind, and as he ascended to the judgeship at the age of 33, he had become the youngest man ever to hold that position in Georgia. Apparently, he performed his duties well. As contemporary Samuel Rockwell asserted, "At the bar, he was an ingenious and able advocate and an excellent jurist. . . On the bench, he exhibited a soundness of judgment and depth of learning beyond his years." Lamar's name was respected throughout the state.

Despite Lamar's stature, much of his legacy has been tainted by the memory of John A. Johnson. Johnson, a Methodist minister, had built a reputation as a bit of a fanatic, a "perfect terror to evil doers in his section." As a minister he was also notorious for leading camp meetings and revivals. According to Judge E. E. Brown, a contemporary of Johnson and Lamar, Johnson's fervor made him "known throughout the entire country." Unfortunately for Johnson, he would soon be famous for more than just his religious zeal.

Reverend Johnson's life experienced a devastating twist in February of 1833, as he was indicted for the November 13, 1832, murder of his wife's twelve-year-old sister, Elenor Bustin. Bustin lived with the Johnson family, and was described by contemporary Benjamin Askew as "pert" and "lively," but "probably had a bad temper." Reverend Johnson was suspected of the murder after joining a search party for the missing girl. After probing the area near his home, Johnson told the party that they need not look there for he had "examined the woods carefully." Nevertheless, the party continued the search and found Bustin's body in those very woods, about three hundred or four hundred yards from Johnson's house. Suspending Bustin's lifeless body was some sort of cotton yarn tied around her neck and connected to a hackberry bush. She was leaning forward with her feet touching the ground, but her hands were hovering above the ground. Large tracks, presumed to be those of a man, were found near the scene. Witness Mary Moore said that Johnson looked guilty when she first saw him near Elenor Bustin's dead body. Moore reported that Johnson seemed to care little about the death of the girl, and that Johnson said "if anybody thought he killed her, he was ready to abide the law." Eyewitness William Dunn commented that Johnson made this defense before any accusations were made by members of the search party.

The ensuing trial unjustly defined the lives of both Lucius Q. C. Lamar and John A. Johnson. Maintaining his innocence, Johnson pled not guilty to the charge of murder, as the honorable Judge Lamar presided. Several character witnesses testified on Johnson's behalf, but Johnson never took the stand in his own defense. Contrary to popular belief, Johnson's wife did not testify against him. Although the evidence was circumstantial, the jury found the Methodist minister guilty. Of course, the responsibility of sentencing Johnson fell on Judge Lamar. In keeping with the proper punishment of the time, Lamar sentenced him to be hanged. The execution was to be carried out on November 15, 1833. Johnson's fate, it appeared, was sealed.

Reverend Johnson received a ray of hope in the days before his execution. Governor Wilson Lumpkin granted a respite of the sentence until November 22, 1833, as a bill had been introduced in the Georgia General Assembly for Johnson's pardon. A number of state senators argued for Reverend Johnson's life. The effort included Judge Eli Baxter of Hancock County, who depicted the minister as "a good and humble man, a poor man living on a farm and preaching on Sundays without reward or hope thereof." Conversely, Jacob Wood, the chair of the Georgia Senate, made a speech opposing the pardon. Regardless, the Senate sided with Johnson, as the States' Rights

Party narrowly defeated the Union Party in favor of the pardon. However, much to Johnson's dismay, the House proved to be a different story. Representative Thomas Glascock of Richmond County condemned the minister after taking the floor. Sympathy for Johnson further soured as a result of the efforts of a fellow minister who tried to sway the vote. Despite the pains of Johnson's friends, the House voted overwhelmingly against the pardon. Guilty or not, Johnson would go to the gallows.

The citizens of Milledgeville seemed to be captivated by the trial, as well they should have been. The trial presented a known man of God in a horrible murder case. To intensify matters, a whole series of eerie circumstances surrounded the execution. To begin with, the State Capitol burned the day after Johnson's original execution date. A few days before Johnson was hanged, the infamous "Night the Stars Fell" could be witnessed, an extraordinary astronomical event that lit up the night sky, sending many into a panic and leading some fanatics to the drastic conclusion that the world was coming to an end. Despite the ominous environment, John A. Johnson met his fate. Johnson was hanged in the presence of three or four thousand people at one o'clock in the afternoon on Friday, November 22, 1833, at the order of Judge L. Q. C. Lamar. The execution was carried out in Milledgeville, although the exact location of the gallows is unknown. Still, the controversy was far from over.

John A. Johnson's approach to death seemed a convincing affirmation of his innocence. An account of the scene included in George Yarbrough's *Boyhood and Other Days in Georgia* discloses that Johnson arrived at the gallows, read from the Bible, selected a hymn and sang it, and knelt to pray. Solomon Smith, an actor in Milledgeville at the time of Johnson's trial and subsequent execution, offered another revealing glance of the scene from the gallows in his book, *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years*. Smith had the following to say regarding Johnson's execution:

On the gallows he [Johnson] seemed quite unconcerned. He had evidently made up his mind to die, all intercessions to the Legislature on his behalf for a pardon having proved unavailing. His wife, who was mainly instrumental in proving his guilt, was on the gallows with him, and seemed anxious that her husband should forgive her before he suffered. The poor man, whose hands were fast tied, could not embrace his wife, but allowed her to embrace him, and appeared rather pleased when she got through with her caresses. Mr. Johnson was then asked if he had anything before he suffered the extreme

penalty of the law. He said, 'I have nothing to say except that I hope all of you, my friends, who came to see this sight, when your time comes to die, may be as ready to meet your God as I am. I die innocent.'

Even with the uncertainty of the Johnson's guilt, public opinion still appeared to favor the jury's verdict. An unknown Federal Union reporter covering the execution remarked on the ambiguity of the episode, noting the "painful uncertainty" surrounding Johnson's trial and execution. According to the article, Johnson's case strengthened the cause of a bill before the General Assembly, which called for "perpetual imprisonment" instead of death in convictions founded on circumstantial evidence alone. However, Judge E. E. Brown, a citizen of Milledgeville at the time of the Johnson trial and close friend to Lucius Q. C. Lamar, painted a different picture. Judge Brown recalled that as the crowd left the execution, many struggled with "how a man, particularly a minister of the gospel, could be so hardened as to die with a lie on his lips." Brown implied that few believed Johnson's last words.

Although many accepted Johnson's guilt, a later admission proved the minister's innocence. Sometime after the execution, someone confessed to the murder of Elenor Bustin. While the identity of the killer has been difficult to uncover, it has been established that Johnson was, in fact, innocent. Both Judge E. E. Brown and Solomon Smith asserted that that the murderer was a black man in Mississippi who confessed to the crime from the gallows. George Yarbrough's version of the confession, allegedly taken from a member of the Georgia Legislature serving during the Johnson trial, is consistent with that of Brown and Smith. Yarbrough revealed that in the time after Johnson's execution, "a negro was hung in one of the Western States," and that this man, "acknowledged his guilt and confessed the murder of the little girl in Georgia for which Rev. Mr. Johnson, the Methodist preacher, was hung."

The supposed aftermath of the true killer's admission has been falsely espoused for decades. The prevailing thought remains that Judge Lamar, stricken with guilt upon hearing the admission of Ellen Bustin's murderer, committed suicide in a state of grief. The belief has been that Lamar simply could not bear the thought that he sentenced an innocent man to die. Historian and scholar James Bonner, the leading authority on Milledgeville history, is largely responsible for establishing the cause and effect relationship between the killer's admission resulting in Johnson's exoneration, and Lucius Q. C. Lamar's suicide. Bonner seemed to embrace the popular story in his

work, Milledgeville: Georgia's Antebellum Capital. As the text reads, "after the minister [Johnson] was hanged, a man in Mississippi confessed to the deed from the gallows. In a fit of melancholia, Lamar came into his house, quietly kissed his wife and children, then walked into the garden and shot himself."

Bonner was not alone in his contention. Consistent with Bonner's position, Yarbrough subscribed to the popular story in his account of the Lamar story. Yarbrough contended, "The judge who presided in the case, on hearing it [the admission of Bustin's killer] walked into his garden and blew his brains out with a pistol." Yarbrough's version also suggests that most of the individuals instrumental in Johnson's execution, including the jury, came to an "unnatural death." No matter how fantastic, the tragic tale of Judge Lucius Q. C. Lamar was developed by Yarbrough's recollection and Bonner's scholarship. Until recently, their viewpoint was the only interpretation of the unfortunate story.

While Yarbrough's account undoubtedly played a role in the proliferation of the widely accepted Lamar story, Bonner's influence ensured that the story became firmly entrenched in the annals of Milledgeville's rich history. Bonner's *Milledgeville: Georgia's Antebellum Capital* is still considered the preeminent work on Milledgeville's past. As a result, Bonner's analysis of the Lamar story has long gone uncontested. Nevertheless, a closer look at the way in which each man, Yarbrough and Bonner, came to his respective conclusion reveals glaring inconsistencies that challenge the accuracy of the Lamar story as told by Yarbrough and Bonner. Is it possible that these men had it wrong? A thorough examination of their sources suggests that it is both possible and probable.

By scrutinizing Yarbrough's work, the potential for error becomes evident. In *Boyhood and Other Days in Georgia*, Yarbrough offered no footnotes or bibliography to validate the story. Published in 1917, Yarbrough's book is an autobiography with little standard for accuracy. The Lamar story was included as a collection of reminiscences from his lifetime; a story Yarbrough supposedly heard from a former member of the Georgia General Assembly who served during the time of the great debate over Johnson's destiny. Surely by the time Yarbrough's autobiography was published, the Lamar story had ample opportunity to be altered and sensationalized, perhaps owing the link between the Johnson's revealed innocence and Judge Lamar's suicide to selective memory or natural assumption. Nonetheless, mere speculation is not enough to reject Yarbrough's account.

Problems with Bonner's research are more apparent. First and

foremost, Bonner's entire excerpt regarding the Lamar story in Milledgeville: Georgia's Antebellum Capital centers around an article included in the September 16, 1919, edition the *Union Recorder*. This was the only source that Bonner cited. A scholar of Bonner's stature could be expected to employ a higher level of research than relying on a newspaper article some eighty-five plus years after the event in question. However, this particular article was based on the recollections of Judge E. E. Brown, an old friend of Lamar's. According to the article, Brown recorded his memory of the Johnson episode in 1884. In analyzing Brown's reminiscences of the affair in question, it is clear that Brown did not connect the admission of Ellen Bustin's murderer with Lamar's suicide. Brown simply revealed that "some time after" Johnson's execution, Lamar "committed suicide by blowing out his brain with a pistol." A link between the two events seems to have been a product of Bonner's imagination, as was Bonner's contention that Lamar had previously developed doubts about the guilt of Johnson and that Lamar "quietly kissed his wife and children" before committing suicide. There is simply no reference to these happenings in the article.

Problems also arise when the timeline of events is taken into consideration. Obviously, Bonner was not aware of the time frame involving Johnson's execution, Lamar's suicide, and the infamous confession. Judge Brown asserted that "several years later" the confession was made. In other words, several years after Johnson's execution, the minister was exonerated. Solomon Smith elaborated on Judge Brown's claim, stating that the confession was fourteen years after Johnson's execution.⁵² Even George Yarbrough's version of the story implied that the confession was a substantial period of time after Johnson's execution.⁵³ All of this is important in rebuffing the traditional Lamar story, because Judge Lamar was dead within a year after Johnson's execution. Johnson was executed on November 22, 1833, while Lamar committed suicide on July 4, 1834, less than eight months after Johnson's execution. This provided a rather small window of time for Bustin's murderer to make his way to Mississippi, commit another crime, get arrested for that crime, undergo the judicial process, be executed, and then for word of his confession to reach Milledgeville. Given the timeline revealed by Brown, Smith and Yarbrough, it seems all but certain that Lamar was already dead by the time of the confession.

Even if Lamar was alive and caught wind of the confession, it is unreasonable to conclude that he would have felt an overwhelming responsibility for Johnson's wrongful death. After all, a jury found Johnson guilty, not Lamar.⁵⁴ Judge Lamar had no choice but to sen-

tence Johnson to die; it was the proper legal doctrine and only acceptable penalty of the time.⁵⁵ He was simply discharging the duties imposed upon him by the state of Georgia. Lamar's sentencing statement was short and concise. There was nothing sentimental about it. He made no mention of the complexities of the case.⁵⁶ In addition, Judge Brown contended that for some time after the confession of Bustin's murderer, a large majority of those who remembered the case still believed Johnson was guilty. While Johnson's innocence was later accepted, Brown suggested that initially many thought it "was merely an effort to save the name of the family."⁵⁷ In light of this atmosphere of doubt one wonders if Judge Lamar would have paid any mind to the supposed confession of some anonymous man in the Mississippi.

Primary source evidence reveals no connection between the confession and Lamar's suicide. By closely looking at the recorded recollections of friends, contemporaries of Lamar's suicide, and by carefully combing through newspapers of the time, there is nothing that hints at any correlation between Lamar's suicide and Johnson's exoneration. Lamar's contemporaries expressed shock and grief at the suicide. Practically every account relates Lamar's failing health as the only reasonable cause for the terrible tragedy.⁵⁸ A connection between the confession and Lamar's suicide did not emerge until years after Lamar's death.

Although the elusive confession did not appear in any primary sources documenting Judge Lamar's death, his declining health was widely chronicled. Lamar definitely suffered from a severe case of dyspepsia, which caused him immense stomach pain.⁵⁹ In fact, it seems that Judge Lamar's dyspepsia grew progressively worse in the last year of his life, as his "sinking health" became "obvious to all who saw him."⁶⁰ The fact that Lamar's condition was so severe that his dyspepsia became public knowledge suggests the degree to which he must have been suffering. Lamar probably suffered from a more serious ailment. Given the severity of Judge Lamar's condition, as well as the similarity of symptoms, it seems feasible that Lamar may have been suffered from stomach cancer. In any case, considering the limited medical knowledge of the time, Lamar probably had little chance to ease his pain. A cure was clearly out of the question.

Dyspepsia was certainly an unpleasant presence in the Milledgeville area at the time of Judge Lamar's death. A November 20, 1833, issue of the Southern Recorder includes an advertisement acknowledging the dreadful illness, as a doctor named Peters offered a newly developed remedy to better treat "those distressing maladies

of mind and body, which are generally comprehended under the sweeping terms dyspepsia and liver complaints." Peters apparently saw patients at his office on Wayne Street, adjacent to the post office, or at the Union Hotel. Among the symptoms Dr. Peters identified were "sourness or burning of the stomach" and "great irregularity of appetite," as well as nausea, "weakness of the stomach," and "irregularity of the bowels." Peters also recognizes such cerebral effects as irritability, drowsiness, "pain in the head," "dizziness or vertigo," "confusion of mind attended with a loss of memory," "melancholy," and "affection of sight and hearing."⁶¹

There is great reason to believe that Judge Lamar suffered heavily from the mental effects of dyspepsia. Friend and mentor Joel Crawford commented that Lamar's "nervous system was liable to accidental spells of depression, which not only impaired his capacity for social companionship, but, at times, the highest energies of his mind."⁶² Another account established a more direct relationship between Lamar's mental state and the dyspepsia, asserting that "his condition of mind has been brought about by the wretched ill health under which Judge Lamar has labored for a number of months past."⁶³ Despite Lamar's mental distraction, he seemingly performed his professional duties well.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, as with his dyspepsia, the fact that Lamar's declining mental health was obvious to those who knew him implies the seriousness of his condition. Judge Lamar was mentally unstable at the end of his life, a direct result of his stomach problems. Perhaps Lamar viewed suicide as his only escape from the physical and mental torment he experienced on a daily basis.

Judge Lamar's mental condition was the only motive offered by primary documents addressing his suicide. Joel Crawford pinpointed insanity as the "true and only cause."⁶⁵ The close working relationship that Crawford shared with Lamar certainly gives his claim much credibility. If anyone knew Lamar, it was Crawford. After all, Crawford had guided Lamar from a young man with ambitions of law school, to the heights of judge of the Ocmulgee circuit. Dr. Tomlinson Fort, another of antebellum Milledgeville's most prominent citizens, concurred with Crawford upon investigating the suicide. Fort concluded that Lamar committed the act in a "state of distraction."⁶⁶ The July 9, 1834, *Georgia Journal* speculated on Lamar's mental state on the day of his suicide, remarking:

The Dyspepsia which during that period had been growing progressively worse, had its usual effect in disordering his mind, as it always does in a manner and degree corresponding with the constitutional

habits of the patient; causing sometimes slight depression of spirits, and varying in others through all degrees to the most extravagant and even frantic delirium. Its affect on Judge L was monomania; where the reasoning faculty is deranged or broken up as to one subject only, all the rest of the structure remaining entire. The chimera that beset him was, that he was already insane, or would certainly become so; and it is obvious from a multitude of facts and circumstances which we may perhaps hereafter present more a large, that the horror of this dreadful conviction drove him to the fatal act.

Extant records allow for a limited reconstruction of Lamar's last day. July 4, 1834, was likely another day of hell for Lucius Q. C. Lamar. As Milledgeville was vibrant with the excitement surrounding the Fourth of July celebration, Judge Lamar's life was fading away. He likely attended the spirited oration of his cousin, John B. Lamar, which was "distinguished for chasteness of style, and exquisitely beautiful imagery," while "the citizens of Milledgeville enjoyed the pleasure of a harmonious celebration." Perhaps Lamar attended the public dinner that was held in town. Sources indicate that Lamar was present at the exercises at the Statehouse, but whether or not the oration and dinner occurred at that location is uncertain. Of course, Judge Lamar stood out as a well-known public figure, doubtlessly mulling as others were jubilant. Those who saw Judge Lamar that day remarked he was "sometimes cheerful," but his disposition at the celebration was "generally grave and even sad." Some remarked on how distant Lamar looked.

One can only speculate on the thoughts racing through Judge Lamar's mind on the day he decided to take his own life. Reports indicate that Lamar's friends had been as supportive as possible given the situation, and looked forward to Lamar's returning health. Apparently, his "mental disquietude and distrust of himself" were taking a toll on his friendships. Accounts suggest that at the urging of his friends, Lamar was preparing to travel. Maybe, in a moment of clarity, Lamar saw that these efforts were for naught. Perhaps he finally realized he would never escape his illness. The mystery may go unsolved, but whatever happened that day, Judge Lamar had had enough. Just before sunset, he returned to his Milledgeville home in an unstable state. Lamar entered his house, wrote a short farewell note to his family, and walked into the garden and shot himself in the head with his pistol. Thus, Judge Lucius Q. C. Lamar Sr. took his life

only a few days before his birthday. He would have been thirty-seven years old on July 15. The sun had set on an otherwise bright and ambitious existence.

Judge Lamar's death was met with sadness and grief throughout the state. In the days after Lamar's death, members of the Ocmulgee circuit wore crape on their hats to commemorate their fallen judge. Following Lamar's funeral service, citizens of Milledgeville followed the casket to the final resting place, while the Bar trailed "as a body of mourners." Lucius Q. C. Lamar was buried in Memory Hill Cemetery in Milledgeville, Georgia; the town of his rise and fall. Lamar's gravestone stands today on the west side of the cemetery, in Lot 21 of Section E. A touching memorial written by Judge Iverson L. Harris, a personal friend of Lamar, is included in the inscription: Sacred to the memory of Lucius Q. C. Lamar, late Judge of the Ocmulgee Circuit. Who during a brief service of five years discharged the duties of that high office with probity, firmness, assiduity and unquestionable reputation. The devoted love of his family, the ardent attachment of personal friends, the admiration of the bar, and the universal approbation of his enlightened administration of justice attest the goodness and eminence of one arrested by a death too early in the bright and useful career in which he had been placed by his native state.

Subsequent to Lamar's death, his legacy was altered for reasons not fully understood. Either out of ignorance, or a desire to dramatize an already appealing story, the traditional Lamar myth was born. Accordingly, Lamar's death has been long connected with John A Johnson's revealed innocence. This version of the story has become deeply rooted in Milledgeville tradition. However, the fact remains that such a connection simply does not exist. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that even concrete evidence will be powerful enough to dislodge the long enduring Lamar myth.

Whatever associations Lamar's name awakens, his memory should not be limited to his tragic end. Lamar's name should rouse more pleasant recollections. He certainly should not be remembered as the judge who committed suicide for sending an innocent man to the gallows. Likewise, he should not be remembered simply as the father of Lucius Q. C. Lamar Jr., whose fame often overshadows the career of Lucius Sr. Rather, he should be recognized as an important, influential early Georgian. Lamar's reputation before that fateful trial speaks for itself. His status was well-deserved and hard-earned, and future histories should show Judge Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar Sr. the respect he deserves.

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Footnotes

1. Wirt Armistead Cate, *Lucius Q. C. Lamar: Secession and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 13-14.
2. *Ibid.*, 15.
3. Eleanor Colson, Lamar Family Genealogy: Lucius Q. C. Lamar, Jr., taken from *History of the Lamar or Lemar Family in America* by Harold Dihel LeMar (Omaha: Cockle Printing Company, 1941); available from http://members.aol.com/elenor_col/LamarFamily.html; internet; accessed 12 March 2004.
4. James B. Murphy, *L. Q. C. Lamar: Pragmatic Patriot* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 5.
5. Colson.
6. Cate, 16.
7. Georgia, Baldwin County Marriage Record A (1806-1836), 2; Colson.
8. Murphy, 7. Susan Rebecca, Lucius Jr., Thompson Bird, Mary Ann, and Jefferson Mirabeau were the surviving children.
9. Lucius Q. C. Lamar, *A Compilation of the Laws of the State of Georgia: 1810-1819, Inclusive* (Augusta: T. S. Hannon, 1821).
10. Cate, 17-18.
11. Colson. Georgia Justice is a digest of Georgia laws as well, but it is not as extensive or encompassing as the Georgia Statutes.
12. Murphy, 5.
13. "The Lamars," *Milledgeville (Georgia) Union Recorder*, 7 February 1893.
14. Georgia, Baldwin County Deed Record 19, 344; Georgia, Baldwin County Plat Record 2 (Milledgeville from a survey by Dr. Mitchell), 147.

15. Georgia, *Baldwin County Book of Returns*, Book D (1831-1842), 214.
16. Georgia, *Baldwin County Book of Appraisements* (1827-1850), 166-175.
17. Deeds, 344.
18. Appraisements, 166-175. While tax records do not explicitly disclose the value of the house, the estate inventory suggests the residence must have been something of a showplace. The inventory includes several expensive pieces of furniture, a highly-appraised piano forte, expensive dining room pieces, and a huge library among other things.
19. Georgia, *Baldwin County Tax Digest* (1831).
20. Georgia, *Baldwin County Tax Digest* (1833).
21. Georgia, *Baldwin County Tax Digest* (1828).
22. Returns, 175-178. R. J. Nichols was a very successful businessman and one of the wealthiest men in the Milledgeville area. At one time he claimed residence of what is now known as Lockerly Hall; in fact, some speculate that he built Lockerly. Samuel Rockwell was a banker, attorney, mayor of Milledgeville, trustee of Oglethorpe University, and Georgia Senator. Samuel Buffington owned a tavern in Milledgeville and his name still adorns one of the bars downtown.
23. Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 16 July 1834.
24. Returns, 175; *Milledgeville (Georgia) Southern Recorder*, 4 December 1833.
25. Cate, 18.
26. Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 16 July 1834.
27. "Tragedies Here of Long Ago Recalled," *Milledgeville (Georgia) Union Recorder*, 16 September 1919.
28. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 23 November 1833; Georgia General Assembly, House, Evidence in the Case of the State vs. John Johnson on an Indictment in Baldwin Superior Court for Murder (6

November 1833).

29. General Assembly.

30. George W. Yarbrough, *Boyhood and Other Days in Georgia* (Nashville: Smith and Lamar, 1917), 142; General Assembly.

31. General Assembly.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 23 November 1833.

34. *Ibid.*

25. Hamilton W. Sharpe, "An Interesting Reminiscence," *Savannah Morning News*, 2 October 1886; "About the Lamars," *Savannah Morning News*, 6 January 1911.

36. Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 20 November 1833.

37. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 23 November 1833.

38. Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 27 November 1833; *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 23 November 1833.

39. Yarbrough, 142. Yarbrough was a Methodist minister who grew up in middle Georgia. His account of Johnson's approach to the galls is supposedly taken from an unnamed member of the Georgia General Assembly who served during the time of the debate over Johnson's guilt or innocence and shared the story with Yarbrough.

40. Solomon Smith, *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1868), 100.

41. Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 27 November 1833.

42. "Tragedies Here of Long Ago Recalled," *Milledgeville (Georgia) Union Recorder*, 16 September 1919.

43. *Ibid.*; Smith, 100.

44. Yarbrough, 142.
45. James C. Bonner, *Milledgeville: Georgia's Antebellum Capital* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), 39.
46. Yarbrough, 142.
47. Yarbrough, 142.
48. "Tragedies Here of Long Ago Recalled," *Milledgeville (Georgia) Union Recorder*, 16 September 1919.
49. James C. Bonner, *Milledgeville: Georgia's Antebellum Capital* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), 39.
50. "Tragedies Here of Long Ago Recalled," *Milledgeville (Georgia) Union Recorder*, 16 September 1919.
51. Smith, 100.
52. Yarbrough, 142.
53. Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 27 November 1833; Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 9 July 1834.
54. General Assembly.
55. Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 27 November 1833. This article reveals that while the General Assembly was considering changing the law, substituting perpetual imprisonment for death in cases based on circumstantial evidence, they had not done so yet.
56. General Assembly.
57. "Tragedies Here of Long Ago Recalled," *Milledgeville (Georgia) Union Recorder*, 16 September 1919.
58. *Milledgeville (Georgia) Southern Recorder*, 9 July 1834.
59. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 9 July 1834; Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union, 9 July 1834.
60. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 9 July 1834.

61. *Milledgeville (Georgia) Southern Recorder*, 20 November 1833.
62. Stephen F. Miller, *The Bench and Bar of Georgia: Memoirs and Sketches, II* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott and Co., 1858), 137.
63. *Milledgeville (Georgia) Southern Recorder*, 9 July 1834.
64. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 9 July 1834.
65. Miller, 138.
66. *Milledgeville (Georgia) Southern Recorder*, 9 July 1834.
67. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 9 July 1834.
68. *Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union*, 9 July 1834; *Milledgeville (Georgia) Southern Recorder*, 9 July 1834.
69. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 9 July 1834.
70. Ibid.
71. *Milledgeville (Georgia) Federal Union*, 16 July 1834.
72. *Milledgeville Georgia Journal*, 9 July 1834.
73. *Milledgeville (Georgia)*, Memory Hill Cemetery, Section E, Lot 21.
74. "The Lamars," *Milledgeville (Georgia) Union Recorder*, 7 February 1893.