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100th Anniversary of Supreme Court Justice Joseph R. Lamar's Death Honored in Augusta

Saturday, January 2, 2016 marks the 100th Anniversary of the death of Joseph Rucker Lamar, a notable Augustan, lawyer, Georgia State Representative, and United States Supreme Court Justice for whom several local landmarks including the Joseph R. Lamar Boyhood Home, Lamar Building, and the Joseph R. Lamar Elementary School are named.

Joseph R. Lamar lived in Augusta for much of his lifetime, making his first home at the Manse of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), then 51 McIntosh Street, where his father was the minister. Lamar was neighbor, playmate, and schoolmate of the future President Thomas Woodrow Wilson, who lived next-door in the Presbyterian Manse. The two were teammates on the Lightfoot Baseball Club alongside other neighborhood boys. Lamar attended several schools, including the Academy of Richmond County in Augusta before graduating from Bethany College in West Virginia, and studying law at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. He married Clarinda Huntington Pendleton, the daughter of the President of Bethany College. Following their wedding, Lamar accepted a partnership with Henry Clay Foster and would practice law in Augusta until 1910. Lamar and his wife lived at 1209 Greene Street (now razed) with their three children, Philip Rucker Lamar, William Pendleton Lamar, and Mary Lamar, who died as an infant.

Before William Howard Taft nominated Lamar to the Supreme Court of the United States in December of 1910, he served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1886 to 1889 and the Supreme Court of Georgia from 1901 to 1905. The family lived in Augusta at 1006 Johns Road in Summerville before moving to Washington, D.C. He was only the sixth justice ever appointed by a president of an opposing political party and only the second Justice appointed from the State of Georgia. Joseph Lamar and his childhood friend Woodrow Wilson were reunited after Wilson was inaugurated as President in 1912. During his four active years on the Court, Lamar wrote 113 opinions, with only eight being dissenting opinions.

In September of 1915, Joseph R. Lamar suffered a paralytic stroke that prevented him from taking his seat in the new term of the Supreme Court. Lamar died shortly afterwards on January 2, 1916 at his home in Washington, D.C. He rests eternally in Summerville Cemetery in Augusta, the place he called home for many years.

The Joseph R. Lamar Boyhood Home, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is located at 415 Seventh Street in Augusta, Georgia. The house currently serves as the headquarters for Historic Augusta, Inc. and the visitors center for the Boyhood Home of President Woodrow Wilson, next-door. Information about Joseph R. Lamar and the Lightfoot Baseball Club is presented in tours of the Boyhood Home of President Woodrow Wilson, offered at the top of the hour from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Thursday-Saturday. The house museum and visitors center will be closed on New Year's Day. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$3 for students K-12, and free for children under age five. To learn more about Lamar's legacy, contact Historic Augusta, Inc. at 706-724-0436 or visit www.wilsonboyhoodhome.org.