



Joseph Henry Lumpkin: Georgia's First Chief Justice

Paul DeForest Hicks

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This biography of Joseph Henry Lumpkin (1799-1867) details the life and work of the man whose senior judgeship on Georgia's Supreme Court spanned more than twenty years and included service as its first Chief Justice. Paul Hicks portrays Lumpkin as both a civic-minded professional and an evangelical Presbyterian reformer. Exploring Lumpkin's important contributions to the institutional development of the Georgia Supreme Court, Hicks discusses Lumpkin's opinions in cases ranging in concern from family conflicts to slavery. He also shows how Lumpkin cleared a way through the thicket of antiquated laws that threatened to strangle the growth of corporate banking and business in Georgia. Treated in depth as well are the evolution of his views on slavery and secession and his involvement in social and economic reform, including temperance, education, African American colonization, and industrialization.

Hicks also covers Lumpkin's undergraduate days at the University of Georgia and Princeton, his experiences as a state legislator and successful lawyer, and his family life. Among the family members portrayed are Lumpkin's older brother, Wilson, a two-term governor of Georgia; and Lumpkin's son-in-law, Thomas R. R. Cobb, cofounder with Lumpkin of the University of Georgia Law School.

Joseph Henry Lumpkin played an important role in the public life of Georgia during the formative era of American law and the age of sectionalism. Here is a full and compelling portrait of Lumpkin as an individual of both intellect and passion, on and off the bench.

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