

**Denise Dunbar**  
 Publisher & Executive Editor  
 ddunbar@alextimes.com

**Margaret Stevens**  
 Sales Director  
 mstevens@alextimes.com

**Caitlyn Meisner**  
 Editor  
 cmeisner@alextimes.com

**Sydney Kodama**  
 Reporter/Photographer  
 skodama@alextimes.com

**Hannah Marr**  
 Intern

## ADVERTISING

**Margaret Stevens**  
 mstevens@alextimes.com

**Marty DeVine**  
 mdevine@alextimes.com

**Patrice V. Culligan**  
 pculligan@alextimes.com

**Tina Franco**  
 Office Administrator  
 tfranco@alextimes.com

## DIRECTOR OF ART & DESIGN

**Jessica Kim**  
 graphics@alextimes.com

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Kim Davis**  
**Mark Eaton**  
**Mark Edelman**  
**Thompson Eskew**  
**Kim Gilliam**  
**Ryan Hopper**  
**Lexie Jordan**  
**Audrey Keefe**  
**Louise Krafft**  
**Brianne McConnell**  
**Jim McGrath**  
**Erin Shackelford**  
**Dr. Vivek Sinha**  
**Sandra Smith**  
**Kathryn Ziemer**

## ALEXTIMES LLC

**Denise Dunbar**  
 Managing Partner

**The Ariail family**  
**Suzanne Brock**  
**William Dunbar**

# 'The Lynching At Alexandria'

BY JOHN MICHELLE, JR.

*This week we honor the lost life of Joseph McCoy, who was lynched on April 23, 1897. This article ran on May 1, 1897, in the Black-owned Richmond Planet. It is reprinted here exactly as it first appeared almost 128 years ago.*

"Almost within the shadow of the capitol at Washington, within a few minutes ride of the official residence of the President of the United States and the halls of Congress, with Virginia militia as spectators, and the United States troops a few steps away, a murderous mob, composed of men who knew better on Friday, April 23, 1897, took from the station-house at Alexandria, Va., the crouching trembling form of Joseph McCoy and hanged him to a lamp-post.

This act was in violation of the laws of Virginia and the statutes of the United States. It was murder pure and simple and as it was premeditated, executed with precision, it was murder of the first degree.

Every citizen, white or black, young or old who took part in this disgraceful proceedings is guilty of as heinous a crime as the one with which McCoy stood charged.

It lessens his responsibility, even if proved to be true in as much as it goes to show that the murdered youth was



PHOTO/ BY SIMMONS, WILLIAM J. - SIMMONS, WILLIAM J., AND HENRY MCNEAL TURNER. MEN OF MARK: EMINENT, PROGRESSIVE AND RISING. GM REWELL & COMPANY, 1887. P320-321, PUBLIC DOMAIN, [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/W/INDEX.PHP?CURID=51901416](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=51901416)

John Mitchell Jr.

a product of the community in which he lived, the majority of which stood ready to commit any crime including murder.

The damage to the city of Alexandria is incalculable, in that it places that community before the world as a city of lawlessness, where officials disregard their oaths of office and without warrant or excuse suspend the law.

What must be thought of a people who would elect such material to office? It shows that the city government is rotten to the core.

The crime with which McCoy stood charged forms no part of the contention. No

law-abiding citizen would hesitate in the performance of the duty to see laws executed. If the prisoner were guilty, there were men in Alexandria to see that he was legally punished.

It was thought that the colored youth had violated one of the statutes; it is known that certain persons have been guilty of the same crime.

The Mayor of the city bid the guilty go free. The militia was not called upon and the officers of the commonwealth defied. The state which objected to Federal interference and refused to call upon the President for United States troops now finds within its

confines a city which is pursuing the same policy.

Gov. O'Ferrall deprecates the outrage. He is sworn to 'take care that the laws are faithfully executed.' The Mayor of Alexandria has disregarded his sworn obligation. The lawless elements have trampled upon the statutes of the commonwealth. His Excellency knows of these facts. What steps will he take on the premises? What investigation of the circumstances will he institute? Will a reward be offered for the murderers? Will the guilty parties be arraigned before a court of law, where the stigma placed upon them by the better class of citizens can rest, and the guilty ones pointed out?

The eyes of the world are upon our Governor. The proximity of the outrage to Washington has attracted national attention. What will be done about it? Our Governor is courageous. He is fearless in the performance of a duty. The way is plain. What will the answer be?"

*To learn more about Joseph McCoy, please visit: [alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/in-memoriam-2025-joseph-mccoy-april-23-1897](http://alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/in-memoriam-2025-joseph-mccoy-april-23-1897).*

*Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.*