

Bridgers, John Luther, Jr. ^[1]

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by H. C. Bridgers, Jr., 1979

5 May 1850–1 Apr. 1932



A photograph of John Luther Bridgers, Jr. published in 1919. Image from the Internet Archive.

^[2]John Luther Bridgers, Jr., attorney, farmer, guardsman, and author, was born in Tarboro at [the Grove](#) ^[3], the home of his parents, Rebecca Louisa Dicken and [Colonel John L. Bridgers](#) ^[4]. He went to school locally under [Professor F. S. Wilkinson](#) ^[5] and then briefly attended the Groves School in [Granville County](#) ^[6] before entering the Virginia Military Institute. He was graduated from [Virginia Military Institute](#) ^[7] in 1870 and, despite his military and civil engineering training, elected to read law in the office of George Whitfield in Wilson.

He passed the bar examination before attaining his majority and was required to wait until 1871 before being admitted to the bar. For more than half a century he conducted a successful law practice in Tarboro, with clients including the [Atlantic Coast Line Railroad](#) ^[8], the town of Tarboro, and [Edgecombe County](#) ^[9]. He was judge of [Edgecombe](#) ^[9]'s first inferior court and was a very active member of the [American Bar Association](#) ^[10]. An inveterate convention goer, he was also much in demand as a speaker at local functions, especially [Democratic](#) ^[11] rallies. He held various offices in many local concerns.

He did not desert his early military training completely. For eight years he was captain of the Edgecombe Guards, and



"Hilma," the home of John L. Bridgers, Jr., Tarboro, N.C. Courtesy of ECU Special Collections. ^[12] later he commanded the Edgecombe Home Guards for several years, eventually holding a colonelcy on the staff of Governor A. M. Scales ^[13]. During World War I ^[14] he was chairman of the Council of Defense for Edgecombe County.

His greatest contribution to posterity was his collaboration with J. Kelly Turner in writing the informative History of Edgecombe County ^[15]. However, neither law, writing, nor soldiering were his true fortes. His favorite occupations were hunting and looking after the crops on the more that fourteen hundred acres of his farms Middleplace and Teleco and his homeplace Hilma. He inherited his father's love for agriculture and devoted much of his energy toward its improvement.

On 11 Dec. 1872, Bridgers married Laura Placidia Clark (9 Nov. 1850–1 Mar. 1933), daughter of former Governor Henry Toole Clark ^[16]. Their children were: Elizabeth Haywood, who married Pierre B. Cox and then Benjamin F. Finney, later vice-chancellor of the University of the South at Sewanee ^[17]; Henry Clark ^[18]; Mary Irwin, who married Frank P. Williamson of the Philippines; Laura Placidia, who married the Reverend Robb White; and Rebecca Routh. Both parents died at Hilma, and they along with three of their children were buried in the yard of Calvary Episcopal Church.

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