



# **William Lowndes Yancey and the Coming of the Civil War (Civil War America)**

*Eric H. Walther*

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William Lowndes Yancey (1814-63) was one of the leading secessionists of the Old South. In this first comprehensive biography, Eric H. Walther examines the personality and political life of the uncompromising fire-eater.

Born in Georgia but raised in the North by a fiercely abolitionist stepfather and an emotionally unstable mother, Yancey grew up believing that abolitionists were cruel, meddling, and hypocritical. His personal journey led him through a series of mentors who transformed his political views, and upon moving to frontier Alabama in his twenties, Yancey's penchant for rhetorical and physical violence was soon channeled into a crusade to protect slaveholders' rights.

Yancey defied Northern Democrats at their national nominating convention in 1860, rending the party and setting the stage for secession after the election of Abraham Lincoln. Selected to introduce Jefferson Davis in Montgomery as the president-elect of the Confederacy, Yancey also served the Confederacy as a diplomat and a senator before his death in 1863, just short of his forty-ninth birthday.

More than a portrait of an influential political figure before and during the Civil War, this study also presents a nuanced look at the roots of Southern honor, violence, and understandings of manhood as they developed in the nineteenth century.

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