

The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey: A History of Political Parties in the United States, From 1834 to 1864; Especially as to the Origin of the Confredetate State (Classic Reprint)

John Witherspoon Bose

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Excerpt from The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey: A History of Political Parties in the United States, From 1834 to 1864; Especially as to the Origin of the Confredetate State

As biography of a determinate individual actor, written from sources contemporary with the living character described, must be allowed as the basis of the most valuable history, the public has the right to know the strength of the claims of this volume to fidelity to its subject. In the early years of my manhood, which were the closing years of Mr. Yancey's life, I saw him often, heard him speak, and had favorable opportunities for observing both his public and private life. In a period of five years occupied, in a desultory way, in the collection of data and the preparation of this narrative of his life, I have been the grateful beneficiary of courtesies and attentions from most of the eminent men of Alabama and some noble ladies who knew him best and who survive him. His personal and political foes and rivals have been as frank and ready to place me in possession of facts and opinions concerning him as his personal and political friends and supporters. I was favored by the personal friendship, and confidence, in this undertaking, of his brother, the late Hon. B. C. Yancey, who was in constant correspondence with me up to the time of his recent demise, exchanging visits, in person, with me.

Completed truth must measure to the leader of the South in the most interesting and decisive period of American history, that austere justice yet unpronounced - yet a blank, most confusing, in the on-rushing tide of American life. Whether the admitted difficulties which now, since his time, beset Republican simplicity and equities of government are of normal growth, coming out from the original American idea, or whether they are of the character of revolution, as he taught, obstructive, even fatal, to the original American idea, is the vital question which, with or without the story of his life, must command of the Saxon lineage in America unabated and unabating inquiry.

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