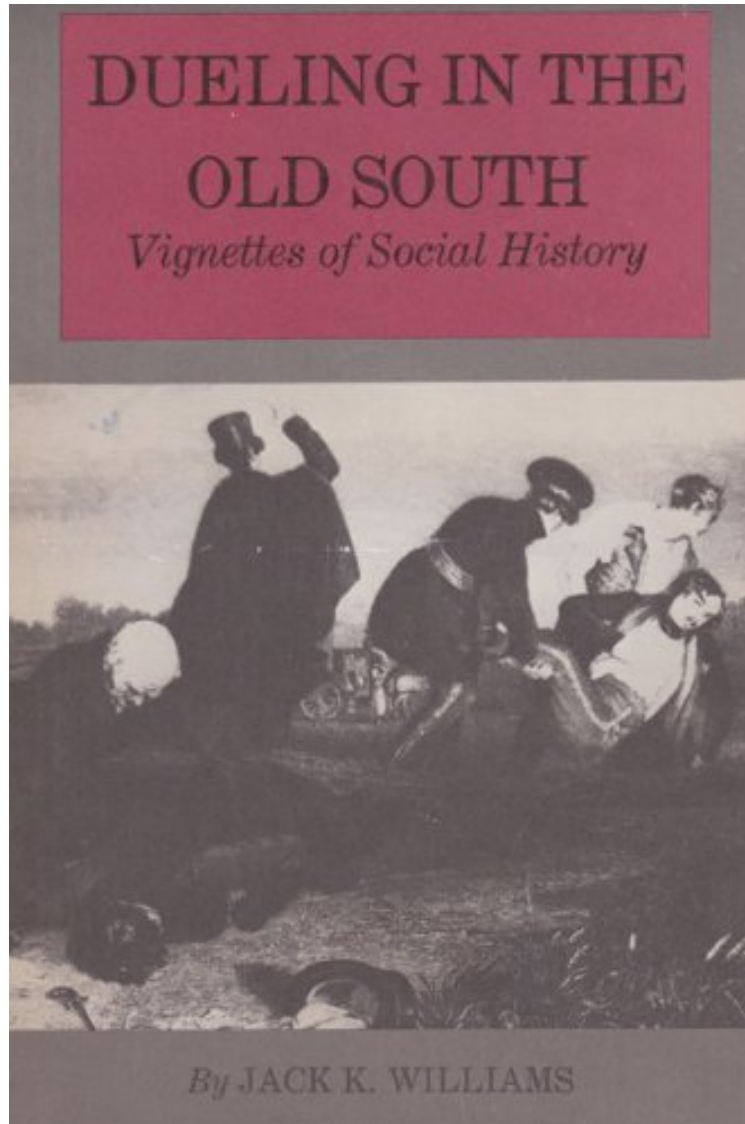


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Dueling in the Old South: Vignettes of Social History

Jack K. Williams

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When the code of honor ruled the antebellum South or at least its upper classes the slightest insult might give rise to a pistol duel at twenty paces, conducted with elaborate politeness. A crime on the statute books but a matter of honor to Southern gentlemen, dueling reflected the pre-Civil War individualism of this caste and their distaste for legal governance of their personal affairs. An understanding of the gentry's acceptance of dueling may even throw light on the mentality of those who led the South into a great mass duel, the American Civil War. This highly readable book gives a lively account, replete with colorful examples, of the pistol duel, the rules for its conduct, its causes, and its typical participants. A popular 1838 dueling code by John Lyde Wilson, one-time governor of South Carolina, is also reprinted in this volume. Its practical advice on the etiquette of dueling and its justifications for the practice give a fascinating and sometimes amusing look into the mind of a more chivalrous age. For Southern history buffs and social historians, this excursion into a little-known way of life and death will make entertaining and informative fare.