

### WILLIAMS' GANG

William H. Williams operated a slave pen in Washington, D.C., known as the Yellow House, and actively trafficked in enslaved men, women, and children for more than twenty years. His slave-trading activities took an extraordinary turn in 1840 when he purchased twenty-seven enslaved convicts out of the Virginia State Penitentiary in Richmond with the understanding that he carry them outside the United States for sale. When Williams conveyed his captives illegally into New Orleans, allegedly while en route to the foreign country of Texas, he prompted a series of courtroom dramas that would last for almost three decades. Based on court records, newspapers, governors' files, slave manifests, slave narratives, travelers' accounts, and penitentiary data, *Williams' Gang* examines slave criminality, the coastwise domestic slave trade, and southern jurisprudence as it supplies a compelling portrait of the economy, society, and politics of the Old South.

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