



# Public Executions in Richmond, Virginia: A History, 1782-1907

*Harry M. Ward*

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Virginia's capital city knew poverty, injustice, slavery, vagrancy, substandard working conditions, street crimes, brutality, unsanitary conditions, and pandemics. One of the biggest stains in the city's past was the spectacle of public executions, attended by throngs. Thousands, including the old and the very young, reveled in a carnival-like atmosphere. This book narrates the history of the executions--hangings, and during the Civil War also firing squads--that formed a large part of Richmond's entertainment picture. Revulsion slowly mounted until the introduction of the electric chair. The history has a cast of unusual characters--the condemned, the crime victims, family members, the executioners, and not least an 182 pound "gallows" dog.

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