



Isham G. Harris of Tennessee (Southern Biography Series)

Sam Davis Elliott

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In 1931, when the Nashville Banner conducted a survey to determine the “Greatest Tennesseans” to date, the state’s Confederate “War Governor,” Isham G. Harris (1818–1897), ranked tenth on the list, behind such famous Tennesseans as Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, Andrew Johnson, and Nathan Bedford Forrest. In 1976, however, when the Banner once again conducted the survey, Harris did not appear in even the top twenty-five. The result of fading memories and the death of the generation that knew him, the glaring omission of Harris’s name still seemed striking and undeserved. In *Isham G. Harris of Tennessee*, Sam Davis Elliott offers the first published biography of this overlooked leader, establishing him as the most prominent Tennessean in the Confederacy and a dominating participant in nineteenth-century Tennessee politics. Harris grew up on the frontier in Middle Tennessee, the youngest in a large family. He left home as a teenager, and found and lost a fortune in the boom and bust times of the 1830s in Mississippi and West Tennessee. Admitted to the bar in 1841, he enjoyed almost immediate success as an attorney due to his quick intellect, aggressive nature, and native ability to influence people.

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