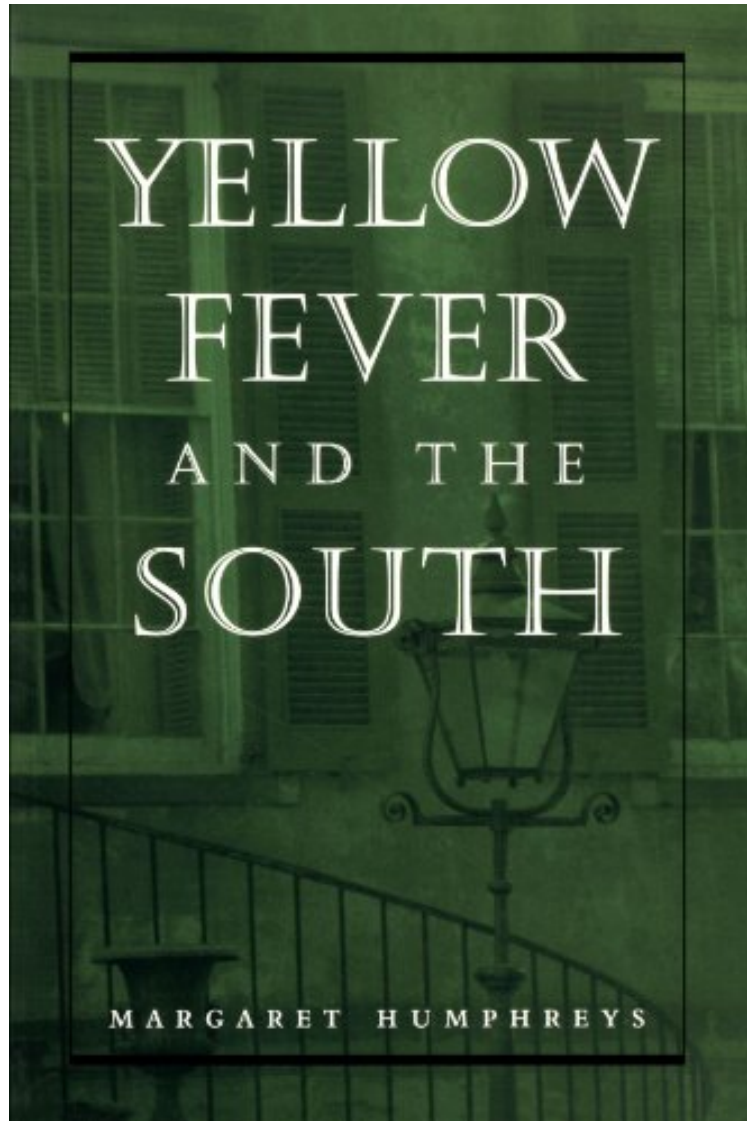


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Yellow Fever and the South

Margaret Humphreys

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Margaret Humphreys : Yellow Fever and the South before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Yellow Fever and the South:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book was a disappointment. I wanted to learn history of how southern ...By Dora A. Smith This book was a disappointment. I wanted to learn history of how southern public health agencies today dysfunctionally handle yellow fever's cousins zika and dengue. I really didn't. The historical details present were a very different time and context and had no clear bearing on the present. There is a fair amount of detail, very repetitively presented, on the evolution of southern public health systems, for academics interested enough to

plow through this book. It is hard to see anyone else having the interest to plow through it. 11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. The lessons of *Yellow Jack* by Harry Eagar "Yellow Fever and the South" is not about the suffering and death from the repeated visits of this terrifying disease, although it is about the panic. The suffering and death can be found in other histories. Humphreys, a medical doctor, wrote this dissertation for a history degree, and it traces the evolution of public health organization in the South from the Civil War to and a little beyond the last yellow fever epidemic in the United States in 1905. It is full of surprises. Yellow fever was not the greatest killer in the South. TB, typhoid, malaria, and the debilitations of pellagra, hunger, hookworm etc. killed more people. But those deaths were background and people took them as they came. Yellow fever visited sometimes every summer, sometimes not once in a decade. When it did, though, it spread panic. Business was almost shut down. It is Humphreys' contention, no doubt correct, that it was the interruption of business, not suffering and death, that inspired or forced local and state governments to found departments of public health. That was a sword that cut two ways. Since the true vector for the fever was unknown until 1901, cities would invoke quarantine against other cities, which may not have had the disease, for commercial advantage. In the countryside, "shotgun quarantines" of panicked citizens overrode the attempts -- when they were made -- to coordinate the official measures. Because the southerners could not trust each other, by the 1890s they were ready to turn public health over to the national government. This from men who had, in many cases, carried arms for state's rights in the '60s! This makes for pretty dry reading, but the repayment for the effort is understanding how people, as individuals, towns, provinces and nations, react to terrifying epidemics, whether they think they have prophylactics or not. In the 21st century, this lesson has obvious import. Unfortunately, if the time comes, the people who will be loudest and most insistent will be those who are least worth listening to. We've already had an epidemic of that with Tamiflu. Serious people will want to know what's in this book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By Peter Worthy Great book

In the last half of the nineteenth century, yellow fever plagued the American South. It stalked the region's steaming cities, killing its victims with overwhelming hepatitis and hemorrhage. Margaret Humphreys explores the ways in which this tropical disease hampered commerce, frustrated the scientific community, and eventually galvanized local and federal authorities into forming public health boards. She pays particular attention to the various theories for containing the disease and the constant tension between state and federal officials over how public funds should be spent. Her research recovers the specific concerns of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South, broadening our understanding of the evolution of preventive medicine in the United States.

"Humphreys covers not only the disease's effects on its victims and their families, but also its impact on commerce, government and the scientific community." (Family Tree Magazine) "Humphreys is to be commended for a job well done. This superior study exhibits the canons of historical scholarship at their finest. The thesis is clearly stated and convincingly explicated. The research is exhaustive. The writing is felicitous and compelling. There is no hint of bias. The work will appeal to a wide audience, including historians of the South, historians of science and medicine, and social historians. It will prove to be an enduring, perhaps path-setting, contribution to the literature of the South and of science and medicine." (Bulletin of the History of Medicine) "Humphreys excels by the sheer power of her analysis... to argue convincingly that the imperative to control fever directed the development of Southern and Federal health institutions; that the objectives, attitudes and achievements of Southern public health officials were strikingly different from those of their Northern counterparts; and that the problem of yellow fever was essential in bringing about the U.S. Public Health Service... at her best Humphreys is able to cogently examine and illuminate the meaning of specific events, situations, and social processes." (Norman Gevitz Journal of the American Medical Association) "In working her way through the bureaucratic infighting, intraregional rivalries, muddled scientific debates, medical uncertainties, professional power plays, business pressures, and personal jealousies that characterized this relationship in the South, Humphreys throws new light on such shadowy subjects as quarantine politics, the role of the federal government in public health, and the economic implications of epidemic disease... this is an excellent and heuristic piece of work." (James C. Mohr, University of Oregon) About the Author Margaret Humphreys holds joint appointments at Duke University as assistant professor of history and assistant professor of medicine.