



# William Alexander Percy: The Curious Life of a Mississippi Planter and Sexual Freethinker

*Benjamin E. Wise*

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In this evocative biography, Benjamin E. Wise presents the singular life of William Alexander Percy (1885-1942), a queer plantation owner, poet, and memoirist from Mississippi. Though Percy is best known as a conservative apologist of the southern racial order, in this telling Wise creates a complex and surprising portrait of a cultural relativist, sexual liberationist, and white supremacist.

We follow Percy as he travels from Mississippi around the globe and, always, back again to the Delta. Wise's exploration brings depth and new meaning to Percy's already compelling life story--his prominent family's troubled history, his elite education and subsequent soldiering in World War I, his civic leadership during the Mississippi River flood of 1927, his mentoring of writers Walker Percy and Shelby Foote, and the writing and publication of his classic autobiography, *Lanterns on the Levee*. This biography sets Percy's life and search for meaning in the context of his history in the Deep South and his experiences in the gay male world of the early twentieth century. In Wise's hands, these seemingly disparate worlds become one.

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