



# Sir William Berkeley and the Forging of Colonial Virginia (Southern Biography)

*Warren M. Billings*

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Sir William Berkeley (1605--1677) influenced colonial Virginia more than any other man of his era, diversifying Virginia's trade with international markets, serving as a model for the planter aristocracy, and helping to establish American self-rule. An Oxford-educated playwright, soldier, and diplomat, Berkeley won appointment as governor of Virginia in 1641 after a decade in the court of King Charles I. Between his arrival in Jamestown and his death, Berkeley became Virginia's leading politician and planter, indelibly stamping his ambitions, accomplishments, and, ultimately, his failures upon the colony. In this masterly biography, Warren M. Billings offers the first full-scale treatment of Berkeley's life, revealing the extent to which Berkeley shaped early Virginia and linking his career to the wider context of seventeenth-century Anglo-American history.

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