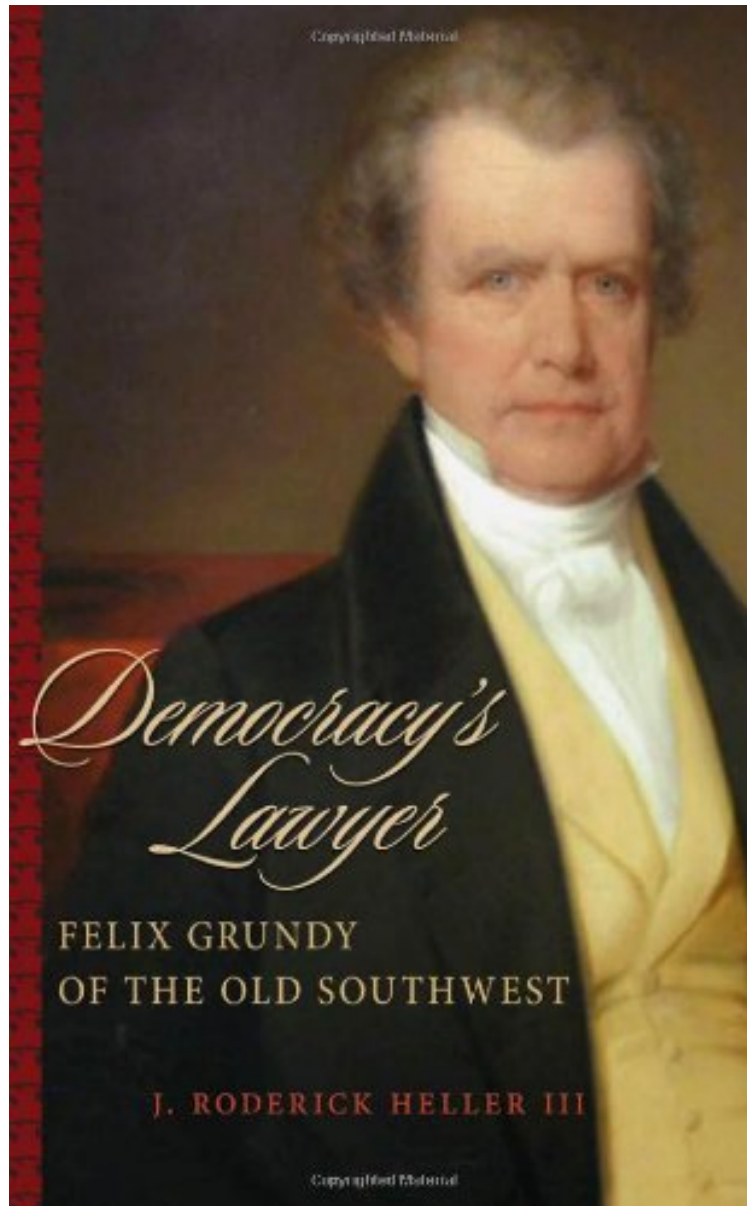


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## Democracy's Lawyer: Felix Grundy of the Old Southwest (Southern Biography Series)

*J. Roderick Heller III*

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**J. Roderick Heller III : Democracy's Lawyer: Felix Grundy of the Old Southwest (Southern Biography Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Democracy's Lawyer: Felix Grundy of the Old Southwest (Southern Biography Series):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Brings Tocqueville's America to life By William Lilley III This excellent biography provides a living, breathing, real-time individual--a so-called "New American" in the flesh to the more theoretical, albeit brilliant, studies of the first decades of the early United States. Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America and Gordon Wood's The Radicalism of the American Revolution wrote beautifully how the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War capped an evolving social ferment in the colonies, pushing aside the gentlemen who wrote the Constitution and bringing to the fore a new, fiercely egalitarian, money-hungry American. Felix Grundy, the greatest criminal lawyer of "the old Southwest," is a perfect study--famous lawyer, famous politician, persistent entrepreneur and even more persistent land speculator--is precisely the person Tocqueville and Wood talked about--and about whom elites like Jefferson and Madison lamented. Great biography. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Filled with typos and bad grammar By TG This book is filled with so many typos and grammatical errors that I thought it must have downloaded improperly. I was unfortunately wrong. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Hero In the Midst of Heroes By Tim Swain The reader will enjoy learning about the rough and tumble ways and raucous democracy of Tennessee law and politics in the early 1800s through the eyes of a very competent jury lawyer and politician, Felix Grundy. His credentials are more than impressive (Kentucky Chief Justice, Tennessee U.S. Senator, United States Attorney General, to name but a few of his titles and achievements). The author capably takes the reader on a wild historical ride, and while in detail and with in-depth insightful discussion, manages to keep things moving so that the reader yearns for the next page, the next chapter. Political correctness is ignored when the subject at hand is discussed, whether slavery or the Indian Wars or delicate North-South issues, which are discussed with integrity and completeness for those times. Prominent Tennessean Andrew Jackson and the 12th Congresses War Hawks (for the most part Southerners, including Tennessee's popular speaking congressman Grundy) receive much credit for obtaining the US declaration of the War of 1812 against Great Britain (a popular slogan attributed the war to Madison, Grundy and the Devil). In fact, Grundy urged that those not supporting the war were guilty of moral treason. Parenthetically, this little studied war of America had most significant results for the young nation in that it solidified the nation west of the Mississippi River as part of the United States, it stopped Great Britain from kidnapping and impressing American sailors for service to its navy, and through Jackson's victory at New Orleans, it put an end to any grandiose British plans to sever America in half by commandeering the Mississippi River for command and control by England. Felix Grundy lived his life cheek to cheek with so many of the historical figures of America, including: Adams, Benton, Bibb (you [Grundy] once said on the floor of representatives of this state [Kentucky], that, you saw the tall figure of Aristocracy, with opened mouth wide extended, hollow eyes and lantern jaws, stalking over the principles of the Constitution and trampling under foot equal rights, cheating the people of their birth right, maintaining the doctrine of exclusive privileges and establishing dangerous precedents.), Boone, Breckinridge (the indefatigable Felix will oppose you) Calhoun (good friend), Clay (praised for resisting that unprincipled demagogue Grundy.), Jackson, Jefferson (recommended for appointment as a Lawyer of a high standing as any in this state [Kentucky], and a man of profound education.) Houston, Madison, Monroe, Polk (his protg), Randolph, Russell (in writing his defense he was at great loss for the want of Grundy and his talents.), Van Buren, Webster (sparring partners in the Senate in 1813 and 1814) and a host of others. The first sentence to the Introduction to Democracy's Lawyer best describes the book's subject: Felix Grundy could stand on a street corner and talk the cobblestones into life. This same fellow traveled north to Edwardsville, Illinois in 1825 to obtain an acquittal in a murder case of a fellow Tennessean, but only after meticulously picking a jury made up entirely of transplants from Tennessee. Buy this book. You will both enjoy it and learn from it.

A central political figure in the first post-Revolutionary generation, Felix Grundy (1775-1840) epitomized the "American democrat" who so famously fascinated Alexis de Tocqueville. Born and reared on the isolated frontier, Grundy rose largely by his own ability to become the Old Southwest's greatest criminal lawyer and one of the first radical political reformers in the fledgling United States. In Democracy's Lawyer, the first comprehensive biography of Grundy since 1940, J. Roderick Heller reveals how Grundy's life typifies the archetypal, post-founding fathers generation that forged America's culture and institutions. After his birth in Virginia, Grundy moved west at age five to the region that would become Kentucky, where he lost three brothers in Indian wars. He earned a law degree, joined the legislature, and quickly became Henry Clay's main rival. At age thirty-one, after rising to become chief justice of Kentucky, Grundy moved to Tennessee, where voters soon elected him to Congress. In Washington, Grundy proved so voracious a proponent of the War of 1812 that a popular slogan of the day blamed the war on "Madison, Grundy, and the Devil." A pivotal U.S. senator during the presidency of Andrew Jackson, Grundy also served as Martin Van Buren's attorney general and developed a close association with his law student and political protg James K. Polk. Grundy championed the ideals of the American West, and as Heller demonstrates, his dominating belief--equality in access to power--motivated many of his political battles. Aristocratic federalism threatened the principles of the Revolution, Grundy asserted, and he opposed fetters on freedom of opportunity, whether from government or entrenched economic elites. Although widely known as a politician, Grundy achieved even greater fame as a criminal lawyer. Of the purported 185 murder defendants that he represented, only one was hanged. At a time when criminal

trials served as popular entertainment, Grundy's mere appearance in a courtroom drew spectators from miles around, and his legal reputation soon spread nationwide. One nineteenth-century Nashvillian declared that Grundy "could stand on a street corner and talk the cobblestones into life." Shifting seamlessly within the worlds of law, entrepreneurship, and politics, Felix Grundy exemplified the questing, mobile society of early nineteenth-century America. With *Democracy's Lawyer*, Heller firmly establishes Grundy as a powerful player and personality in early American law and politics.

"Heller has produced a valuable study for scholars of the Old Southwest and his work is a welcome update on Grundy. . . . Any student of American history would benefit by consulting both the model and content of this biographical work." --The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society  
"If you are interested in accurate American history and want to read a well-written story about a fascinating lawyer and public servant in the early days of our Republic, I recommend *Democracy's Lawyer*." --Richard M. Mosk, Los Angeles Daily Journal  
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About the Author  
J. Roderick Heller III, chairman and CEO of a Washington, D.C., investment firm, is co-editor of *The Confederacy Is on Her Way up the Spout: Letters to South Carolina, 1861-1864*.