

Synopsis

Reconsidering the myth of good guys in white hats. The Texas Rangers have been the source of tall tales and the stuff of legend as well as a growing darker reputation. But the story of the Rangers along the Mexican border between Texas statehood and the onset of the Civil War has been largely overlooked - until now. This engaging history pulls listeners back to a chaotic time along the lower Rio Grande in the mid-19th century. *Texas Devils* challenges the time-honored image of "good guys in white hats" to reveal the more complicated and sobering reality behind the Ranger Myth. Michael L. Collins demonstrates that, rather than bringing peace to the region, the Texas Rangers contributed to the violence and were often brutal in their injustices against Spanish-speaking inhabitants, who dubbed them *los diablos Tejanos* - the Texas devils. Collins goes beyond other, more laudatory Ranger histories to focus on the origins of the legend, casting Ranger immortals such as John Coffee "Jack" Hays, Ben McCulloch, and John S. "Rip" Ford in a new and not always flattering light. In revealing a barbaric code of conduct on the Rio Grande frontier, Collins shows that much of the Ranger Myth doesn't hold up to close historical scrutiny. *Texas Devils* offers exciting true stories of the Rangers for anyone captivated by their legend, even as it provides a corrective to that legend. The book is published by University of Oklahoma Press.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Texas Devils is aptly titled. As to the book's subtitle, not so much. Dr. Collins, Regents Professor of History at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas, has written a far wider-ranging examination of the violence whipped up and perpetrated by Anglo Texans against Tejanos and

Mexican nationals in what U.S.-Mexico borderlands scholar Dr. Manuel Callahan calls a "social war." Although the book's description, found on the jacket and in the Introduction, point to Ranger activities and atrocities along the lower Rio Grande, *Texas Devils* provides a much broader context. Collins' text sweeps the reader along on a mad-dash ride from deep inside Mexico during the Mexican-American War, north to the Nueces Strip of south Texas ("a harsh and desolate country" located, Collins writes, somewhere "between heaven and hell"), surprisingly far south to William Walker's short-lived kingdom in Nicaragua, to the sites of various Indian battlefields, and back, always back, to the lands lying on either side of the Rio Bravo. Collins gives the Texas Rangers their heroic due, but his focus is on their "darker reputation," particularly as practiced by a hodge-podge of irregulars, county militia units, vigilante posses, and other assorted ranger wannabe's. Texas-sized characters such as captains John Coffee Hays, Ben McCulloch, and, most notably, John S. "Rip" Ford are here. A host of forgotten military incompetents also drive the story of ethnic disdain, hatred, and violence. To be fair, Collins gives examples of brutal violence administered by Tejanos and Mexicans, including the will-o-the-wisp Juan Cortina, against those they considered oppressors.

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