

Riding for the Lone Star: Frontier Cavalry and the Texas Way of War, 188-1865

Nathan A. Jennings

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This Wild West military history pays homage to those who settled an embattled land.

The United States' expansion into Texas in the early nineteenth century was fraught with challenges. The pioneers who made the bold move to leave the relative safety and security of the East and push westward had to deal with a hostile indigenous population as well as the forces of Mexico who had already established themselves in the region.

Jennings, a US Army captain who teaches history at the United States Military Academy at West Point and who holds an MA in American history from the University of Texas at Austin, tells this story capably, in an exhaustively researched yet thrilling manner. He uses first-person accounts to add a dramatic sense of the life-and-death struggles that the "immigrants" faced when battling tribes of Native Americans, who held strategic advantages since they were much more familiar with the geography. "There were no battle lines or fortified boundaries," he writes, "and the colony remained vulnerable at any given point from any direction."

Even weapons technology conspired against the "Texians," as the settlers were called. They might have amounted to more devastating capabilities in the aggregate, but personal sidearms were single-shot in the early years; reloading took precious seconds. During the time it took to prepare another charge, the Native Americans—more accustomed to fighting while on horseback—could shoot arrows with an impressive accuracy that could not be matched by their more inexperienced counterparts. The author also reports on the mundane aspects of building, organizing, and maintaining a fighting force essentially made up of citizen soldiers. Such details are illuminating.

To be sure, a book like *Riding for the Lone Star* is written with serious students of military history in mind. Casual readers may be familiar with names like Sam Houston and the Mexican general Santa Anna from movies, but Jennings correctly pays homage to those who are less renowned, but who were indispensable to the hard-won success, establishment, and defense of Texas as an independent entity.

RON KAPLAN (Spring 2016)

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