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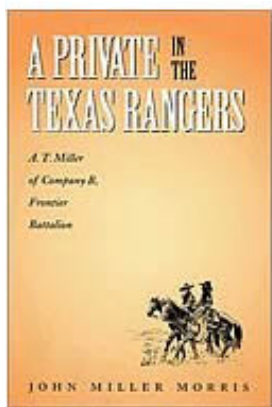

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## Book Review:

### A Private in the Texas Rangers

by John Miller Morris  
Review by Chuck Parsons

Published by Texas A&M University Press, Lewis St. Lindsey Bldg., 4354 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-4354. xii + 334 pages, 26 photographs, 4 maps by Jack Jackson. Appendices, notes, bibliography, index.

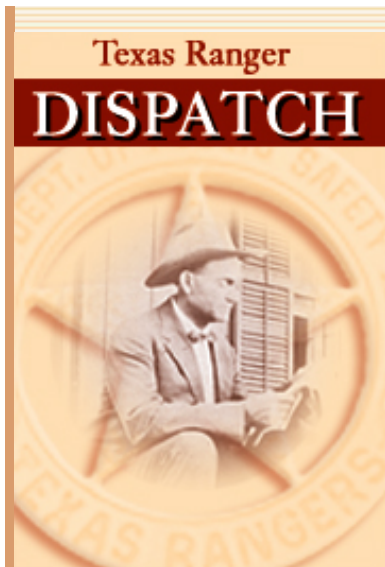
Most previous writings on the Texas Rangers of the Frontier Battalion period stress the violence of the frontier, the battles with Indians, and gunfights with American or Mexican outlaws and fugitives. Although such actions were always distinct possibilities, most Rangers' days were spent with minor camp chores and long rides, often resulting in nothing being accomplished. In this book, we have a clear picture of real Ranger life in the 1880s: social, personal, and professional. Abner Theophilus Miller joined Company B of the Frontier Battalion on February 12, 1887, at Quanah and served until August 31, 1888. During that period of service, Miller kept three diaries that were preserved by his descendants and is now annotated by his great-grandson, John Miller Morris.

Diaries kept by a Texas Ranger are virtually unknown. Alonzo Von Oden of Company D kept what might best be called a scrapbook, but not a daily recording of events. T. C. Robinson of McNelly's Washington County Militia wrote letters describing his activities but here again, they were not a daily record of his experiences. What A. T. Miller provided for posterity is unique.

From the diaries and various other sources, we glimpse what Ranger camp life was like. This understanding is assisted greatly by the reminiscences of Mrs. Dan Roberts and the photographs of M. C. Ragsdale, taken in 1878 in Menard County. But Miller's daily record is even more real. On Christmas Day 1887, he wrote:

One more Christmas has come and still I am in no better circumstance than ever. Tis a cloudy morning and looks as we may have some falling weather. The boys has all gon[e] up Town to get a free drink this morning and I will get breakfast myself I reckon. Tom Platt got full and came to camp last night, and got hot and killed both dogs.

This is certainly a different view of camp life than what is presented in Mrs. Roberts' *Reminiscences*. We see a Texas Ranger inebriated to the extent that he loses his temper and kills the camp dogs! But this is what makes these diaries so valuable: they present a realistic picture of Ranger life without embellishment and without any effort to glamorize.



Besides the fascinating detail that Ranger Miller recorded, the extensive annotations by John Miller Morris make the work even more valuable. In addition, there is biographical material about the Rangers with whom Miller served, such as the Platt brothers, Thomas O'Hare, J. M. Bradbury, and others. These mini-biographies are presented in the epilogue.

*A Private in the Texas Rangers* is a true contribution to Ranger history and is highly recommended for all Western history and Texas Ranger fans.

- Chuck Parsons

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