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# TEXAS RANGER DISPATCH Magazine

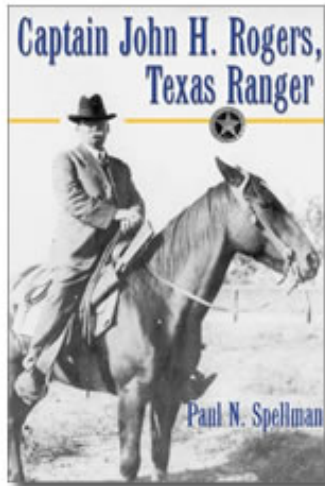
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## Captain John H. Rogers, Texas Ranger by Paul N. Spellman

(Denton, TX: The University of North Texas Press, March 2003). ISBN 1-57441-159-4. 225 pages. \$29.95.

*F*inally, a book on Captain John Rogers. Along with John Brooks, John Hughes, and Bill McDonald, Rogers was one of the fabled “Four Captains” that served around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At possibly no other time have the Texas Rangers had so many great captains commanding simultaneously. All Ranger historians agree that Rogers’ place in the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame is well deserved even though he is not as known as some of his contemporaries.

Rogers, a Texan by birth, spent his entire adult life serving the Lone Star state. He had not meant to be a lawman; he intended to be the best farmer in his home county of Guadalupe. To receive training for that vocation, he entered nearby DeWitt County’s Concrete College in 1880. There he came under the influence of the institution’s president, Presbyterian Reverend John Van Epps Covey. Rogers spent the rest of his days as a devout Christian and was proud of a title he shared with fellow Rangers Thalys Cook and Augie Old —“The Christian Rangers.”

During Christmas break in January 1881, DeWitt was financially strapped and was forced to cease operation. It was just as well because Rogers was getting ready to embark on a career that would make his name legendary in Ranger history.

The Texas and Pacific Railroad was pushing ever westward. By the mid-1880s, the tracks had reached Colorado City, Texas. With this new mode of travel came people. Unfortunately, many would never be confused for pillars of society.

To help manage all these citizens, Captain S. A. McMurry, the commander of Ranger Company F, was in need of recruits. On September 5, 1882, John Harris Rogers became a one of those recruits. The rest, as they say, is history.

In the years between 1881 and 1883, Rogers packed in enough adventures and excitement to have lasted five lifetimes. I suspect that when most people think of the Rangers and of shootouts, they picture the desert and plains of West Texas. However, one of the deadliest and bloodiest shootouts in Ranger history, the Connor fight, happened in the pine thickets of East Texas near Hemphill. By the time the shooting stopped, one Ranger and a Connor lay dead. Most of the other Connors and all but one of the Rangers were injured.

Rogers was one of the desperately wounded.

Rogers healed and, during the ensuing ten years, his reputation for fearlessness, bravery, and Christian belief spread. By 1891, he was a Ranger captain. In that same year, he joined the other three members of the "Four Captains" and their companies to stop a prizefight in El Paso. It was here that one of the most famous Ranger photos in history was made. It shows almost every Ranger in the state, and it is the only picture of Brooks, Hughes, McDonald, and Rogers together.

On June 12, 1901, Gregorio Cortez killed Karnes County Sheriff Brack Morris when Morris and his deputies attempted to arrest Cortez and his brother Romaldo. Words and some possibly incorrect translations had passed among the men, and then there was gunfire. When the smoke cleared, six of the deputies lay wounded, and Sheriff Morris and Deputies Dick Glover and Henry Schnabel were dead. Cortez escaped unwounded, but his brother was killed.

The greatest manhunt in the history of Texas then started. For the next ten days, every lawman in Texas combed South Texas in search of the evasive Cortez. It ended on June 22 only a few miles from the Rio Grande. Jesus Gonzales, no doubt inspired by the sizeable reward being offered, informed the Rangers that he had seen a man he suspected of being Cortez in a nearby goat camp. Rogers and a couple of his men approached the shack, where they found the exhausted Cortez. He was sleeping so soundly that Rogers had to wake him up.

Until his death on October 19, 1930, Rogers would never take off the badge of a law officer. During almost fifty years, he served all over Texas as a Ranger, a deputy U. S. marshal, a United States marshal, and Austin chief of police. At the time of his death, he was once again wearing the badge of a Texas Ranger.

As shown by the extensive endnotes and bibliography, Spellman has done an excellent job of researching and documenting this book. If there is anything at all negative to point out, it is the lack of picture identifications. Having said this, no Texas Ranger library would be complete without this important book.

Spellman has filled a great need in Ranger history. Books already exist about John Hughes and Bill McDonald, and a work on John Brooks will hopefully be written in the near future.

-Reviewed by Robert Nieman

Texas Ranger

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