



Official State Historical Center of the Texas
Rangers law enforcement agency.

**The Following Article was Originally Published in the
*Texas Ranger Dispatch Magazine***

The *Texas Ranger Dispatch* was published by the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum from 2000 to 2011. It has been superseded by this online archive of Texas Ranger history.

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Funded in part by grants from
the Texas Ranger Association Foundation

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TEXAS RANGER DISPATCH Magazine

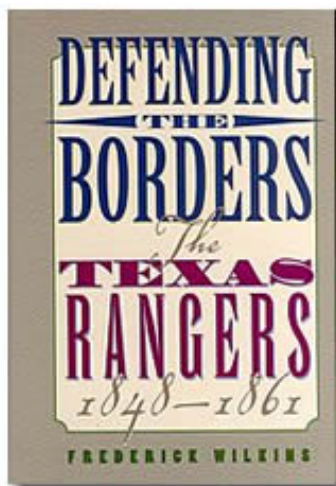
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Defending the Borders: The Texas Rangers, 1848-1861

by Frederick Wilkins

State House Press, PO Box 15247, Austin, Texas. ISBN 1-880510-76-6. xiv + 194 pages. Endnotes, bibliography, index. 14 illustrations. Hard cover only \$27.95.

With this fourth and final volume of his series on the history of the Texas Rangers, Frederick Wilkins has established himself as the current authority on this famed law enforcement body. Previous volumes in the

series are *The Highly Irregular Irregulars: Texas Rangers in the Mexican War* (Eakin Press, Austin, 1990); *The Legend Begins: The Texas Rangers, 1823-1845* (State House Press, 1996) and *The Law Comes to Texas: The Texas Rangers, 1870-1901* (State House Press, 1999). Now one can study the origin, development, and glory years of the Rangers from 1823 to 1901 in their entirety.

The history of the Rangers between the Mexican War and the Civil War is perhaps the least-known period of their existence. During this time, the Rangers were called to defend the frontier against Comanches and other Indian tribes. In addition, the turmoil with Mexican marauders was ever present. Indians and Mexicans have become ingrained in the popular mind as traditional enemies of the white man's advancing civilization westward into Texas. An additional problem, however, was the continued inability of the state to make payment to those men who risked their lives to defend it. Wilkins treats these various issues with sound research and balanced treatment.

During this period between wars, several events have become famous. The capture of Cynthia Ann Parker and the defeat of Peta Nacona's band of Comanches are well known. The conflict in the Brownsville area between Americans and Juan Cortina is not as familiar, but Wilkins devotes an entire chapter to the "Cortina Troubles." The Mexican leader continued to plague Texans until the latter 1870s.

Wilkins provides an excellent treatment of the turmoil in Texas between the two wars and gives two of the state's best-known leaders, John S. "Rip" Ford and Sam Houston, proper attention. But others are mentioned as well, such as Ed Burleson and Lawrence S. "Sul" Ross. The bonus is that lesser-known Rangers whose names are nearly forgotten are also studied.

For those who have patiently waited for a balanced and non-biased treatment of the Texas Rangers from the origins to the end of the 19th century, this is a must read.

§

Chuck Parsons is currently completing a biography of Texas Ranger N.O. Reynolds and has just completed a biography of Texas Ranger Leander H. McNelly. Previous books include biographies of Clay Allison (1977, 1984), *The Capture of John Wesley Hardin* (1978), *Phil Coe: Texas Gambler*(1984), *Bowen & Hardin* (1991), *James Madison Brown: Texas Sheriff, Texas Turfman* (1993), *Captain C.B. McKinney: The Law in South Texas* (with Gary P. Fitterer, 1993), as well as several hundred periodical articles and book reviews.

From January 1983-2000 he conducted "The Answer Man" column for *True West* magazine. In addition he is editor of the *Quarterly* and the *Newsletter* of the National Association for Outlaw and Lawman History (NOLA). Parsons is a member of NOLA, The English Westerners Society, The Brazos Corral Westerners, and a board member of The James-Younger Gang. He is currently retired from the field of education, having been a high school principal for eighteen years in Wisconsin and Minnesota schools and a classroom teacher for eight years in Wisconsin.

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