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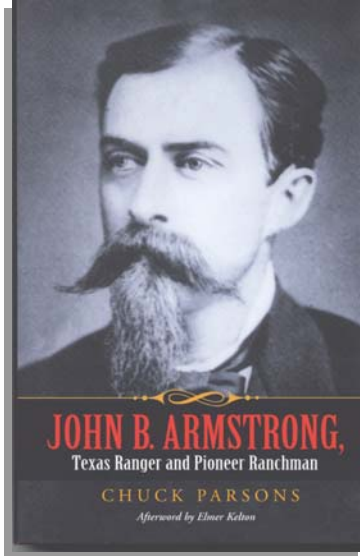
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John B. Armstrong

Texas Ranger and Pioneer Rancher

by **Chuck Parsons**

Foreword by **Tobin Armstrong**

Afterword by **Elmer Keaton**

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Of the hundreds who have served as Texas Rangers, only thirty are enshrined in the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame. One, John Armstrong, is the subject of this biography. Incredibly, no major work has been written on this great Ranger until now. (This is also true of the majority of the Rangers in the Hall of Fame.)

John Wesley Hardin was the deadliest gunfighter in the history of the Old West. "Texas, by God!" he cried when he saw a Texan standing in the doorway of the railroad coach. He was carrying what was clearly the weapon of choice for a Texas Ranger: a Colt 45, with a seven-inch barrel. That Texan at the door was Ranger John Armstrong. When the dust settled, Hardin lay unconscious from a blow to his head from Armstrong's 45, and one of his companions lay dead with a bullet through his heart.

Though Armstrong will always be best known for capturing Hardin, that was only one event in his amazing life. He first became a Ranger in 1875 under one of the greatest, Captain Leander McNelly. He was with McNelly when they destroyed bandit gangs at Palo Alto, Texas, and Las Cuevas, Mexico. (The Rio Grande did not mean a lot to a Ranger in pursuit of outlaws, doubly so in the case of Captain McNelly.) Armstrong was again with McNelly in the capture of the feared Texas outlaw King Fisher. Later, he was at Round Rock when Sam Bass was found dying after trying to rob the local bank. After tangling with Major John Jones and his Rangers, however, Bass ended up dead.

In 1882, Armstrong's regular Ranging days were behind him. He and his wife built the magnificent 50,000-acre Armstrong Ranch in South Texas, which is still going today. Armstrong ran the operation until his death in 1913.

Armstrong was as industrious as a rancher as he had been a Ranger. He was a leader in advancing modern cattle breeding and was one of the spearheads in bringing the railroad from Corpus Christi to South Texas.



But Armstrong could never entirely get away from the call of the lawman's badge. First, he was appointed a United States Marshal. Later in the 1890s, he joined a special Ranger division to augment regular Rangers in hunting down outlaws in South Texas.

Dispatch regular Chuck Parsons has done his superb research on this book, as expected. Whether your interest is the Texas Rangers, Western history, or both, this book is a must.

Review by Robert Nieman