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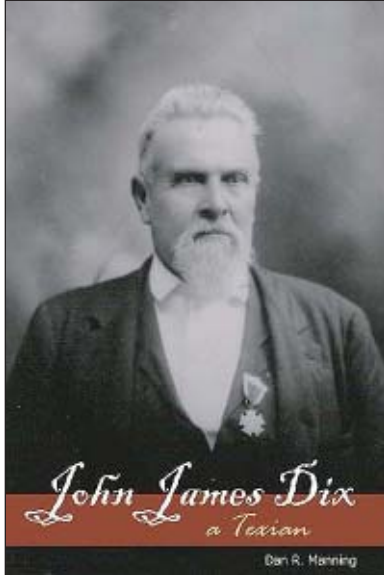
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John James Dix: A Texian

By Dan R. Manning

Goldminds Publishing, LLC. P.O. Box 11109, Springfield, Missouri 65808-1109. Chapter endnotes. bibliography. 14 illustrations. Soft cover, \$24.95.

www.goldmindspub.com

Book review by Chuck Parsons

With this first full-length biography of Texian John James Dix, Dan R. Manning proves that his years of research into the life of his wife's great-great grandfather were well spent. This is a highly readable and accurate account of a man whose life was crowded with adventures that others may have merely dreamed of.

Manning has had previous success in writing articles for highly respected historical publications. Perhaps the best examples are his works published in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* and *Military History of the West*. The name of his subject in this biography is not a household word, even among Texans, but perhaps J.J. Dix will become better known with this publication. (The word *Texian* generally was used throughout the period of the Texas Revolution and Texas Republic.)

John James Dix, who landed in Texas with his family at the age of seven, heard the gallant stories about his grandfather, a minuteman at Concord in 1775 at the beginning of the American Revolution. Perhaps he even consciously determined that he wanted to experience adventure himself. John's father brought the growing family to Austin's Colony, and this is where John James grew up. When author Manning discovered his wife's relationship to this historic Texas figure, he began his three-decade study of available documents, which now form the biography.

John James Dix participated in some of the great events in Texas history. No doubt his early training as a surveyor, probably learned alongside his father, placed him among



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important individuals, and he developed a reputation for his meticulous work. Having located in Corpus Christi, he was hired in 1845 to survey land for the United States in the Nueces County area. This placed him in a position for other work with the army, and he had to put his managerial skills to the test when he was in charge of an army freight train bringing goods from Matamoros at the end of the Mexican War. He was in command of a large train of wagons; Juan N. Cortina was second in command. At their destination in Fayette County, Texas, a dispute arose between Cortina, his freighters, and some Americans. This confrontation could have ended with bloodshed, but Dix managed to quiet all the hot tempers and the situation was settled peaceably.

In the Civil War, Dix served under Colonel John S. "Rip" Ford. During Reconstruction in Duval County, he was a deputy sheriff, county commissioner, and county surveyor. All these positions were of great responsibility, trust, and honor. These accomplishments worked in his favor politically, as he became representative of the 83rd District in the 22nd Texas Legislature.

For the Texas Ranger aficionado, the greatest appeal of this biography will be in Dix's service as Ford conducted a foray into Mexico, ignoring the Rio Grande as a legal barrier between the two countries. Dix, Lt. William Howard and Pvt. George Morris all had Cortina in their gun sights on at least one occasion. Due to poor light and perhaps poor aim, however, Cortina lived to fight another day, much to the dismay of Capt. Richard King and many other South Texas Ranchers.

Dan R. Manning has produced a well-documented biography of a Texas hero who is not familiar to most Texans. This work will aid in his getting the attention he deserves.