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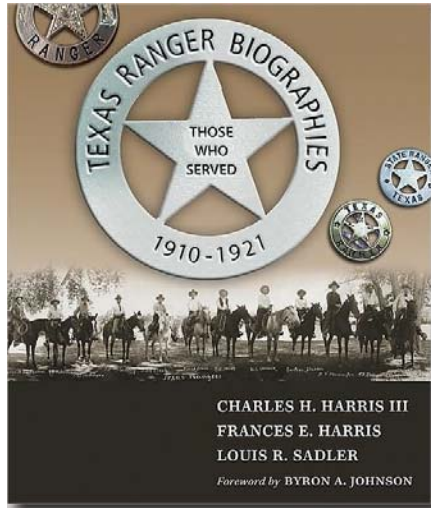


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Book Reviews



Texas Ranger Biographies: Those Who Served 1910- 1921

**Charles H. Harris III, Frances Harris and
Louis R. Sadler**

Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 55 photographs. 434
Pages. 5 genealogical charts. \$50.00. ISBN 978-0-8263-4748-0

Review by Chuck Parsons

This massive tome amounts to nothing less than a dream for Texas Ranger fans as well as genealogists. Nowhere else can one find so much important historical and ancestral information dealing with the early 20th century Texas Rangers. Even if your direct ancestor was not a Ranger during this decade of tumult on the Texas-Mexico border (and therefore not included in this work), there will be individuals profiled in this work that your family members knew or possibly worked with.

Byron A. Johnson, director of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, provides a foreword with a brief history of the Rangers as well as an explanation of the difficulty in defining a Ranger since the beginning of the service in the early 19th century. Further, for those who want to research Texas Ranger history, Johnson provides the best places for resources: the Texas State Library and Archives in Austin and the Texas Ranger Research Center in the Hall of Fame in Waco. Other locations such as Sul Ross State University in Alpine also contain some materials, of course, but Waco and Austin are the best starting points. Johnson also touches on the misconception that Texas Rangers were white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men. There have been Indians, Blacks, Hispanics, and in more recent times, women Texas Rangers.

The careers and lives of 1,782 Rangers are briefly related in encyclopedic format following Johnson's foreword and the authors' preface, which in itself is a must read. The authors relate both the ups and the downs of Texas Ranger history. When times were bad financially in Austin, the organization's size was cut drastically. On the other hand, when there was serious turmoil on the

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Texas-Mexico border, the legislature realized there was a real need and increased the numbers. During World War I, there were 1,000 Rangers, more than at any other time in their storied history.

The authors do not avoid the issue of what exactly defined a Texas Ranger. In the nearly three centuries of history, there have been Loyalty Rangers, Special Rangers, Railroad Rangers, Minute Men, Militia Rangers, and members of the Frontier Battalion—in other words, a confusing nomenclature to describe essentially what men called Rangers did. Were Leander McNelly, captain of the Washington County Volunteer Militia, and his successors J. L. Hall and Thomas Oglesby truly Texas Rangers even though the word *militia* was in their title? Were “specials” also Texas Rangers even though they received no pay for their services? The authors define a Ranger as simply anyone who has been issued a commission as such.

Just browsing through the pages, there is fascinating information to be found. Some men experienced excitement in the 1870s and later became Rangers in the early 20th century. Perhaps no better example is Christopher Taylor “Kit” Hunter, a deputy in DeWitt County. He led a group of men in a street battle that effectively ended the Sutton-Taylor Feud when they killed leader Jim Taylor and two of his associates on the streets of county seat Clinton.

Some families seem to have been blessed with the ability to produce Rangers or lawmen of other categories. The Carnes family of Wilson County and the Wright family of DeWitt County are prime illustrations. Nearly any group photograph of Texas Rangers from this period has at least one Ranger named Wright. For those who grew up watching motion pictures, the Hamer family is the best example. Mom and Dad Hamer had four sons who became Rangers: Dennis Estill, Frances Augustus, Harrison Lester, and Flavius. Of that quartet, the best known remains Frank, who ironically gained his notoriety in taking down Bonnie and Clyde during a time when he was not working as a Texas Ranger.

Another interesting entry in this book covers the career of Thomas M. Ross, a great-grandson of Colonel Jose Antonio Navarro. He was a Regular Ranger from 1905-1910 and then fired, a Special Ranger from 1929-1930 and then discharged, and finally a Special Ranger again from 1930-1932. Also included in the book is the case of Winfred Finis Bates, a Uvalde County native who, after serving as a Regular Ranger and then a Special Ranger, headed west and became an Arizona Ranger.

The thumbnail biographies include a good number of Hispanics as well as men born in other countries. Louis Guillemette was born in Calvados, France; Alexander M. Lochwitzky in Petrograd, Russia; and Manuel T. Gonzallus in Cadiz, Spain. Among those who came from Mexico to serve were Miguel de la Garza, Carlos de Mullos, Walto Leon Donalsano, and Juan Candelario Gonzales.

Every reader will find some interesting and fascinating material within the 400-plus pages of *Texas Ranger Biographies: Those Who Served 1910-1921*. It is not necessarily a book to read diligently from page one to the end. This reviewer found it best to begin with the “A” section and browse through, enjoying every page. Many names are familiar, but many—if not most—are totally new. All the entries are interesting, and we should consider ourselves blessed that this book is now available.