



The

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Robert McAlpin Williamson



By James D. Gray

The Texas Revolution of 1836 conjures visions of the Alamo, Goliad and San Jacinto. It also brings to mind such heroes as Travis, Fannin and Sam Houston. The Texas Rangers conjure visions of brave and heroic figures such as Jack Hays, Rip Ford and others. Very little has been written about the combination of the Texas Rangers and in the Texas Revolution, but much is known about the Rangers' commanding officer during 1836, Robert McAlpin Williamson. A heroic figure, Williamson is best known by his nickname: "Three Legged Willie." To understand how this nickname came to be, one must look at his background. [1]

Robert McAlpin Williamson was born in 1804 into a well-to-do, distinguished and cultured home in Georgia. He was given every advantage money could buy, but at the age of fifteen he contracted what was probably polio which left him bedridden. He eventually recovered but was left with his right lower leg bent straight back at the knee. Out of school he was tutored and was well grounded in the classics and mathematics. He also had a working knowledge of Latin and several other languages. Williamson's handicap did not hold him back; he had a lust for life. Young Williamson threw away his crutches, had a peg leg attached at the knee, and always had his pants made with the trousers covering his artificial limb. Eventually he could walk, run, dance, ride and shoot. By age nineteen, he was a lawyer.

Williamson had it all with his family connections, money and profession. So why did he leave and go to Mexican Colonial Texas? It was because of a woman. She was a proud Georgia beauty for whom he killed a man in a duel and by whom he was then spurned. As a result of this rejection, he packed up and left for Texas in 1826.

In 1827 Williamson rode into San Felipe, Texas, and presented a letter of introduction to Empresario Stephen F. Austin. Williamson's education and zest for life soon brought him into the mainstream of the frontier people. Williamson was not a snob. He participated in the community and quickly adapted to the frontier lifestyle that matched his passion for life. He became an excellent horseman and rifleman and was just as adept in a barroom brawl as a legal debate. [2] The colonists, with typical frontier humor, gave him the nickname "Three-Legged Willie" and Williamson was accepted as one of their own.

While living in San Felipe, Williamson made friends with another lawyer, William B. Travis. Their friendship would cause them to be on the forefront of events leading up to the Texas Revolution. On July 4, 1835, Williamson published a speech that would eventually label him the "Patrick Henry of the Texas Revolution," [3] At the time, however, it made him unpopular with the colonists who wanted peace and with the Mexican government who wanted him arrested.

In mid-July, Williamson left San Felipe and moved to the outer edge of the frontier: Bastrop County and the town of Mina. It was here that he made his name as an Indian fighter and a leader of the "Ranging Corps." Bastrop County was on the outer edge of colonized Texas, and there Williamson learned the craft of being a Ranger from the best in Texas. He made friends and associates like Edward Burleson, John H. Moore, R. M. Coleman, John J. Tumlinson, Jesse Billingsly, Rueben Hornsby and many others. Here he would also learn the horrors of innocent families murdered by various Indian tribes. He knew Josiah Wilbarger, who was shot, scalped and left for dead but survived and lived with the terrible wound that would not heal till the day he died years later.

Shortly after July 1835, John H. Moore arrived and raised three companies of mounted militia for an expedition against some hostile Indians who had mauled Captain R. M. Coleman's company. In those days, companies elected their captains, and Williamson was elected to lead the Mina Company. They spent fifty days in the field [4] chasing Tonkawa and Waco Indians, living off the land, hunting their own food, and sleeping under the open sky. This kind of lifestyle made a frontiersman out of a man or he didn't last long in command. Captain Williamson, despite his peg leg, proved he was just as natural in buckskins as a suit and tie.

Not long after the company's return to Mina, word came of trouble in Gonzales, Texas. Texians in that town had refused to surrender an old cannon that the Mexican soldiers were sent to confiscate. The Texians had constructed a homemade flag with the inscription, "Come and Take It." The conflict resulted in a Texas victory and fueled the fire for a revolution.

By this time, Stephen Austin and others who had advocated peace realized that war was the only course left because it was Mexico's intention to put an end to the colonization of ex-United States citizens. Texian forces then moved on San Antonio to drive out the Mexican general Martín Perfecto de Cos and his soldiers. In reality, the revolution against Mexico had begun.

Realizing the magnitude of the task they were taking on, the Texians established a provisional government called the Consultation. With his law background, Williamson was selected as a member representing Mina and he played a leading role in drafting statements of the Consultation. [5] Texians had gained easy victories thus far, but the growing hostilities with the Indians was perceived as a very real threat. In haste and confusion several

documents concerning the formation of the Texas Rangers were produced. Finally the ordinance and degree establishing a corps of Rangers was finalized and the Texas Rangers become a government of the revolutionary Texas-sanctioned official force. [6]

The Consultation held an election of officers for the Ranging Corps and on November 28, 1835, Three-Legged Willie became a major and commanding officer of the Ranging Corps. The Ranger companies were to be First Company out of Mina, Second Company out of Gonzales, and Third Company out of Milam. Captains of the three companies that made the Battalion of Rangers were John J. Tumlinson, William Arrington and Isaac W. Burton. [7] All the while the provisional government squabbled, most Texian militia were involved in the siege of San Antonio. That was where Tumlinson was fighting as a first lieutenant in the militia when he was elected.

In late November 1835, Major Williamson was ordered to Mina by General Sam Houston to guard and protect the frontier. Most men from Mina, however, didn't return from the San Antonio campaign until mid-December when Christmas holidays were observed. In early January, Williamson began recruiting with his first company commander, John J. Tumlinson. No one in Mina contested the choice of the respected Indian fighters for the command positions, but recruitment was slow. Captain Tumlinson moved out to the frontier with eighteen or so Rangers. His second company from Milam started forming on January 17 under Captain Sterling C. Robertson.

Texas defense policy had not changed much from that of pioneer Tennessee and Kentucky in the 1790s. A series of interlinked outposts or forts were built with patrols of Rangers to "range" along the frontier. Captain Tumlinson, who was going to use his men to build outposts, stopped at Hornsby's farm and made camp. Shortly after, a half-naked, abused, bruised and heartbroken Sarah Hibbons stumbled into the farm of Jacob Harrell, a neighbor of Hornsby. Harrell brought her to the Rangers' attention. Mrs. Hibbons had escaped a Comanche raiding party that had killed her husband, brother and infant child. She had escaped at night, leaving behind her young son. Because she had walked and her trail was fresh and relatively close by, the Rangers knew that the Indians were near.

The Rangers immediately shifted their primary mission from fort building to protecting the settlers. The eighteen-odd Tumlinson Rangers mounted up and hit the trail. The next morning, in a lightning-strike raid, the Rangers caught the Comanches by surprise. Tumlinson's Rangers defeated the Comanche party and rescued the Hibbons boy. [8] This was a highly praised accomplishment among the Texians because, sadly, many kidnapped children were never rescued. Back at Hornsby's, more Ranger recruits arrived and Captain Tumlinson then went with his men into the frontier and built his blockhouse.

Major Williamson, having recruited approximately thirty-four out of fifty-six men for Captain Tumlinson's company, returned to San Felipe to directly voice his concern over the problems of the fledgling corps. The Consultation was already aware of the problems: low pay and disorganization. The Rangers traditionally elected their own captains, and in Gonzales there was a problem. The Consultation, on February 4, advised Governor Robertson of the situations in Gonzales and Milam, where the other companies were to be formed. [9] As a result, the Consultation, under Williamson's urging, wrote specific orders and duties for the Commander of the Ranging Corps (printed as written):

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO J. W. ROBINSON
Council Hall San Felipe de Austin Feb.14 1836**

The advisory committee to the Executive appointed by the General Council to act in the capacity in the absence of a quorum of said Council. Having learned with regret of Indian depredations and murders committed on our frontiers, and deeming it of the greatest importance that prompt and efficient measures should be taken to organized and put into active service the Ranging Corps, for this purpose the committee advise that the acting Governor issue the following orders to the Major of the Ranging Corps.

1st. That he continue his Head Quarters at Mina (present Bastrop), Stationing one of the Subaltern Officers at the place to act as aid or secretary.

2d. That he proceed to the frontier and make arrangements for the building blockhouses and fortifications and at such points as he deem best calculated for the protection of the frontiers and also adopt prompt measures for enlisting and organizing the full number of men contemplated by the law creating the Ranging Corps, Reporting to the Governor and Council any vacancies there may occur in officers of said Corps.

3d. That he appoint a contractor for supplying said Corps with provisions who shall be appointed from the subalterns of the line. The Paymaster & Commissary shall be subject to the same rules and regulations as are prescribed by law for same Officers in the Regular Army.

4th. In cases of emergency, or prospect of general engagement, he shall have the power to call on the mounted volunteers, to call out the militia of the county, and to concentrate his command at such points as may be necessary for the protection of the frontier.

5th. The Major shall report his proceeding to the Governor and Council for the present, as often as may be convenient

D. C. Barret Chairman
Alexr Thomson
G. A. Pattillo
J. D. Clements

With these orders in hand, Major Williamson traveled to Gonzales to form his Third Company and to gather intelligence that had been filtering in for weeks about a Mexican Army coming north. The first portion of the Gonzales Ranging Company consisted of twenty-eight men with Lieutenant George C. Kimble in command and was officially formed on February 24, 1836. [10] William Arrington was not elected as captain of the company and therefore would not serve in the Rangers. On February 25, 1836, messengers arrived from Bexar reporting that the Mexican Army vanguard had arrived and Willie's old friend "Buck" Travis and one hundred fifty men had "forted" up in the Alamo. Travis asked for help. Williamson wrote a plea to all Texians to come to the aid of Travis. He also wrote to the Council and the Governor of his intentions. Major Williamson ordered Captain J. J. Tumlinson to leave the frontier and come to reinforce the Alamo. [11] Copies of the order were sent

with messengers to San Felipe and to Mina. On February 27, Williamson dispatched the Gonzales Ranging Company to reinforce the Alamo. He could not have known at the time that this group would be the last Texian unit to arrive at the Alamo and would be doomed to share the same fate of the defenders already there. On March 1, 1836, Williamson passed a personal letter to James Butler Bonham to give to Travis at the Alamo. Bonham arrived at the Alamo and told Travis that reinforcements were on the way and to "Hold out for God's sake."

Williamson continued to organize the Gonzales relief forces and gather supplies. Colonel Edward Burleson arrived with Captain Jesse Billingsly's Mina Militia and relieved Williamson by order of General Houston. Captain Tumlinson's Ranger company was to remain in Mina and Major Williamson was to carry out his original orders: protect the frontier.

Williamson had now lost his entire Second Command and his friend Travis. On March 10, he arrived back in Mina and took command of the Rangers. In Bastrop County, the Runaway Scrape began when news of the Alamo's fall reached the area. Families fled the anticipated Mexican invasion, fearing the savage attack of General Santa Anna. Williamson ordered his First and Third Companies to protect the families remaining in Mina. He then broke up Tumlinson's Rangers into detachments. Some would go to protect the fleeing families, others were sent to gather cattle to keep food out of the Mexican Army's hands. Other Rangers would be assigned as spies (scouts) and as a rear guard to monitor Mexican movements. [12]

Without the Rangers, fleeing families were at the mercy of the hazards of the Texas frontier. There was a fear of attacks from Indians and from Tejanos, who were Texans of Mexican descent. The Tejanos sided with the Mexican army and spied and raided for Mexican general Genoa, who was in charge of the northern flank of the Mexican invasion force. In addition, there were the settlers' own Texian outlaws who robbed and raped throughout the frontier. Families fled in different directions and the Rangers scattered. Upon completion of moving the families to safety, the Rangers returned to Williamson or to General Houston's army.

In early April 1836, Williamson set up headquarters in Washington, Houston was at Groce's Plantation, and Santa Anna encamped in San Felipe. Williamson was in communication with General Houston and discussed the spies out on assignments. [13] Williamson again followed his original orders and organized a company called the Washington Guards under Captain J. B. Chance and sent them to Houston's army. In Washington, he dealt with looters and hung two Mexican Army deserters. On April 13, Williamson was recalled to Houston's Army but ordered to keep his spies out. Williamson served as a messenger until the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, where he served in the cavalry. Having completed their tasks on detachment, other Rangers returned to the Army, integrated into various Army companies, and also fought in the famous battle.

After the Battle of San Jacinto, more Rangers filtered back to Houston's army. Among these were Noah Smithwick and some Rangers who came back with the families they escorted. Major Williamson was once again in charge of the Ranging Corps mission and began a reorganization of the Corps while his Rangers followed the retreating Mexican Army. He formed a Fourth Company under command of Captain Isaac W. Burton, who had fought as a private in Deaf Smith's Spy Company. [14] Burton was supposed to be the Third Company's commander according to the Consultation election in 1835.

On May 19, 1836, the massacre and kidnapping at Fort Parker by the Comanches occurred. News of the long-expected Indian raid reached the Army and a new Ranger command was formed consisting of three companies under Colonel Edward Burleson. The unit was mainly comprised of men from Bastrop, Robertson and Milam Counties and it was made up of militiamen and Rangers. Captain Calvin Boales now commanded the Milam Company (Third Company). Many Tumlinson Rangers joined these companies and in essence, Tumlinson's Rangers were disbanded.

While Colonel Burleson marched north for another four months of campaigning in the field, Captain Burton's command moved south along the coast and scored a major victory in early June. Using guile, the Rangers captured three ships bringing Mexican Army supplies and earned the title of "Horse Marines." On June 24, 1836, Williamson turned over command of the Ranging Corps to Major Isaac Watts Burton. Williamson went on to help organize the government of the newly won Republic of Texas. [15]

Upon reflection of the original organization and orders, "Three-Legged Willie" accomplished his mission the best he could in the middle of the Revolution. Robert McAlpin Williamson later became a famous judge and congressman of Texas. He married Mary Jane Edwards and they had seven children. He died on November 20, 1859. John S. "Rip" Ford said, "Robert McAlpin Williamson did more than any one man to nerve our people to strike for Liberty". [16]



James D. Gray

James D. Gray has co-authored the book *Maritime Terror* with Gary Stubblefield and Mark Monday, and published numerous articles in *Navy Special Warfare's Full Mission Profile* journal and in *Combat Craft*, the professional journal of waterborne operations. He retired in 1999 as a Master Chief Gunner's Mate from the

Naval Special Warfare Combatant Craft Community of the Navy.

Gray was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, and is a descendant of a member of Captain John J. Tumlinson's "ranging company" of 1836. His family came to Texas in 1831. Though he now lives in Covina, California he claims he has never stopped being a Texan.

He is a member of the Alamo Society and is currently working on a book on "Three-Legged Willie" and the Rangers of the Texas Revolution.

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Notes

[1] Duncan W. Robinson, *Judge Robert McAlpin Williamson* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1948).

[2] R. Henderson Shuffler, *Three-Legged Willie* (Bastrop Historical Society March 20, 1964).

[3] Duncan W. Robinson, *Judge Robert McAlpin Williamson* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1948).

[4] Audited Republic Claims, Texas State Archives, Austin.

[5] R. Henderson Shuffer, *Three-Legged Willy* (Bastrop Historical Society, March 20, 1964).

[6] *Ordinance Establishing a Corps of Rangers* (Austin: Texas State Archives, November 24, 1835).

[7] Fredrick Wilkins, *The Legend Begins: The Texas Rangers, 1823-1845* (Austin: State House Press, 1996).

[8] Noah Smithwick, *Evolution of a State: or Recollections of Old Texas Days* (Austin: Gammel, 1900. rpt., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

[9] John Jenkins, ed., *Papers of the Texas Revolution 1835-1836*, vol. 4 (10 volumes. Austin: Presidial Press, 1973).

[10] *Republic Audited Claims* (Texas State Archives).

[11] John Jenkins, ed., *Papers of the Texas Revolution 1835-1836*, vol. 4 (10 volumes. Austin: Presidial Press, 1973).

[12] Noah Smithwick, *Evolution of a State: or Recollections of Old Texas Days* (Austin: Gammel, 1900. rpt., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

[13] John Jenkins, ed., *Papers of the Texas Revolution 1835-1836*, vol. 4 (10 volumes. Austin: Presidial Press, 1973).

[14] Sam Houston Dixon and Louis Wiltz Kemp, *The Heroes of San Jacinto* (Houston: Anson Jones, 1932).

[15] Audited Republic Claims, Texas State Archives, Austin.

[16] Duncan W. Robinson, *Judge Robert McAlpin Williamson* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1948)

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Capt. Sam Walker

Sam Walker

by Allen G. Hatley

*War was his element, the bivouac his delight
and the battlefield his playground,
his perfection and inspiration" [1]*

It is sad but true that the life stories of many Texas heroes often contain a host of exaggerations and myths distorting their actual accomplishments. Some excuse this by referring to those men and their lives as "legendary." If that is true, then outside of the heroes of the Alamo, there are few Texans whose life stories are as legendary as that of Samuel Hamilton

Walker.

Sam Walker, a veteran of the Somervell and Mier Expeditions, a Texas Ranger, a hero of the Mexican War and co-developer of the Walker Colt Revolver, was just thirty years old when he was killed in battle. As a result, some myths were probably to be expected, especially since he left no heirs to help set the record straight. But no one's life should be defined by fables no matter how fascinating they may be.

It is not only the host of popular magazines that have added to the myths surrounding Sam Walker's life, for misinformation and fiction seem to oftentimes find their way even into books written by recognized historians. Walker's life has been so corrupted that it is difficult to always separate fact from fiction. This story will, however, not be burdened with the following most popular myths which are corrected as follows:

Sam Walker was never imprisoned at Perote Castle in Mexico, for he escaped prison on July 30, 1843, some six weeks before the Texas prisoners were moved to that location.

He never placed a coin at the base of any flagpole in Mexico.

The Walker Colt was developed as a result of a private agreement reached between Colt and Walker in 1847 while Sam Walker was recruiting in New York for his new command in the First United States Mounted Rifles. His command was to receive the first shipment of those revolvers when they arrived in Mexico. [2]

Even without those myths, most will agree that Sam Walker's impact on the Ranger image and legend has far exceeded that of several other Rangers, even those whose exploits clearly rival Walker's when he was a Texas Ranger.

A Life to Remember

Samuel Hamilton Walker was born in the town of Toaping Castle, Prince George's County, Maryland, on February 24, 1817. He was the son of Nathan and Elizabeth Walker, the fifth of seven children. When just nineteen years of age and working as a carpenter's apprentice in the nation's capitol, Walker began a military career by enlisting as a private in a militia company raised to fight in the Seminole and Creek Indian Wars in Florida and Alabama. [3]

Walker apparently saw only limited combat during that service. He did, however, remain in Florida after being mustered out of the volunteer company in 1838 and worked for a time for a railroad. In late 1841 Walker traveled to Texas, arriving in Galveston in January of 1842. In another month he would be twenty-five years old. [4]

Off to War in Texas

Eight months later, in September of 1842, Sam Walker joined Captain Jesse Billingsley's company of Mounted Volunteers, a hastily recruited Bastrop County militia command of some seventy-five men. This was the same Jesse Billingsley who had been wounded at the Battle of San Jacinto while commanding Company B in Colonel Edward Burleson's regiment in the Texas Army. [5] Billingsley's men went to the defense of San Antonio when it was attacked by a strong force of some one thousand Mexican Army troops led by General Adrian Woll.

Billingsley's company of Mounted Volunteers was not the only Texas militia group racing toward San Antonio to help repulse the invading Mexican Army. An estimated two hundred Texas volunteers and a small band of Texas Rangers under Captain John C. Hays would, on September 18th, engage elements of Woll's army during the Battle at Salado Creek. This battle and the approach of more Texas militia convinced General Woll that it was time to retreat toward the Rio Grande. That night he abandoned San Antonio. [6]

Two months later, in November of 1842, Brigadier General Alexander Somervell, operating under broad discretionary powers from President Sam Houston, set about organizing his First Brigade of the Texas Militia. The mission was to undertake a punitive expedition against Mexican Army commands said to be operating in South Texas. Muster rolls indicate that Samuel H. Walker was the first of 77 privates who enlisted in Captain Ewen Cameron's Company A. Somervell's army would eventually consist of some 750 officers and men. On November 3, the first elements of the Texas Army marched out of San Antonio. [7]

When the Somervell Expedition arrived at the Rio Grande, it first captured Laredo and then moved down river toward the town of Mier. During the march there was a general lack of discipline shown within the army. Many soldiers refused to carry out orders from their officers and as a result the safety and usefulness of the army was in question. When reports of larger concentrations of the Mexican Army were said to be approaching from the south, Alexander Somervell elected to take the Texas Army back to San Antonio as Governor Sam Houston had allowed. [8]

Many of the officers with the army agreed it was time to end the operation. However, led by Colonel William S. Fisher and including Samuel Walker, almost three hundred men-about forty percent of the army-crossed the Rio Grande and invaded Mexico near the town of Mier. On December 25, 1842, while on patrol just before the battle, Samuel Walker and Patrick H. Lusk were

captured by Mexican troops. [9]

Of the estimated 261 men in the Texas Army who finally crossed into Mexico and then fought at Mier, 10 were killed in the battle and 6 later died of wounds. The remainder surrendered after being surrounded and began a period of great personal trial. The Mexican government refused to recognize the Texans as prisoners of war although the surrender document made that promise. The men were herded on foot from the Rio Grande toward prisons near Mexico City by way of Matamoros, Monterrey, and then Saltillo. Some would wear chains for over 6 months, while all would receive poor rations, end up wearing rags for clothes, and suffer from a lack of medical treatment. [10]

During the almost two years of captivity, although over 100 attempted to escape, only 26 prisoners were successful. One of those was Samuel Walker. Eighty-two of the Texans died while being held captive: seventeen of them were shot when they drew a black bean when Santa Anna commanded that the prisoners be punished for an attempted escape and the other sixty-five died from various causes while in captivity. Among those was Captain Ewen Cameron, Walker's company commander, who was also ordered shot by Santa Anna. On September 16, 1844, some 137 prisoners were finally released. [11]

Sam Walker spent seven months in captivity. He avoided the firing squad when he drew a white bean at Hacienda Salado and then escaped from prison on July 30, 1843. For those who escaped, like Walker and the two companions who went with him, personal bravery, luck and persistence was needed. The three men would finally reach Tampico weeks later and Walker arrived in New Orleans by ship in late September 1843. He soon booked passage to Galveston and was back in Texas about the time the prisoners still in Mexico were moved to Perote. [12]

The Texas Rangers

The defense of Texas against Indian and Mexican deprivations during the remaining years of the Republic fell largely to the various local militia commands and to small groups of Texas Rangers. About the time Sam Walker arrived back in Texas, the Rangers were reduced to a single small company commanded by Captain John Coffee Hays with only twenty-five men. By year's end, even those men were disbanded for lack of funds.

When the last Ranger command was disbanded in late 1843, Hays visited the Republic's capital at Washington-on-the-Brazos. While there he was treated to an example of what has been called "Texas luck." Hays was told about some unissued revolvers that had originally been purchased for the Texas Navy. Some had been issued but the rest sat packed in a government storehouse near the capital. [13]

Those revolvers were among the first Paterson Colts, a .36 caliber five-shot repeating revolver made by Samuel Colt in New Jersey. Colt's weapons were unwanted by the United States military and almost everyone else except the Texas Navy, who got a great deal from Colt when they purchased a reported 180 of those revolvers in 1839. But even the Texas Navy and the few other Texas fighting men who tried out the Paterson Colts were reluctant to carry the rather delicate weapon to war. The reasons? It lacked a trigger guard and its trigger only dropped down when the hammer was cocked. Furthermore, the weapon had to be disassembled to reload and few had wanted to trust their lives to such a weapon. [14]

But when Captain Hays returned to duty in the new Texas Ranger company in early 1844, he apparently had a better opinion of the Colt revolver than did others. Hays saw the advantage that it would give his command fighting from horseback with each man carrying a repeating pistol or two. As a result, after Hays returned to Ranger service the Paterson Colt was introduced for use in that company. No records have been found, however, giving the exact time or the number of weapons issued. [15]

In Mexico, Sam Walker had experienced mistreatment and had seen his companions abused and murdered while prisoners. His company commander had also been singled out and shot. This apparently convinced him that he would use every opportunity in the future to take revenge on the Mexican Army. He thought that the best chance for doing this was to join the Texas Rangers. Walker enlisted as a private in the new Ranger company being organized in February. Captain Hays did not wait until the entire company was enlisted, but took to the field by late February. He left Ben McCulloch in San Antonio. Hays wanted McCulloch, who had been elected lieutenant, to enlist the full complement of men.

As usual during those years, as long as the state provided the funds, a Ranging company could be raised to serve and to patrol the frontier. In early June, Captain Hays led a fifteen-man patrol, which included Sam Walker, north out of San Antonio toward the Llano River. They were to confirm stories regarding a possible concentration of hostile Indian tribes in the area. The patrol saw signs, but no actual Indians were sighted until they had turned back south and recrossed the Pedernales River. Somewhere between the Pedernales and the Guadalupe Rivers, the Rangers detected a large group of Comanche warriors moving in their direction. [16]

Near Walker's Creek, one of the numerous spring-fed creeks in that area, the Comanches attempted to bait the Rangers. Hays' men were now armed with one or more likely two revolvers. At the least they carried a loaded extra cylinder of the five-shot repeating Colt revolvers. Hays decided to find out just what the weapon was capable of in combat. With only fifteen men, he led an attack against an estimated sixty to seventy Comanche braves. Hays wrote that the fight, which was a moving one, continued for about three miles and was desperately contested by both parties. The Rangers had one man killed and four wounded, with Comanche casualties estimated up to fifty killed or wounded, including their chief Yellow Wolf. [17]

In his report, Hays credits the "five-shot repeating pistols" with the victory. He further states, "Had it not been for them, I doubt what the consequences would have been. Cannot recommend these arms too highly." During the fight, Sam Walker and his good friend R. A. Gillespie were separated from the other Rangers and both suffered wounds from an Indian lance. According to Hays' report, both were "wounded badly." Upon the Ranger command's return to San Antonio, the injured Sam Walker was left in the care of Mrs. W. H. Jacques, who nursed him back to good health. About this time, as a result of his capture at Mier and imprisonment in Mexico and the later wounds he received fighting Indians, the Rangers gave Walker a nickname: "Unlucky Walker." [18]

In February of 1845, more appropriations were voted and the Ranger command expanded. It included not only Captain John C. Hays' company but also smaller Ranger companies raised and stationed in Travis, Bexar, Roberts, Milam, Goliad and Refugio Counties. Each company was led by a Lieutenant. On August 12, Captain Hays resigned from the Rangers and was succeeded by R. A. Gillespie as captain. Captain Gillespie and his last forty-

three-man Texas Ranger company, including Private Sam Walker, were discharged on September 28, 1845, some three months before Texas became the twenty-eighth state. There would be no more Texas Rangers enlisted during the Republic.

The day of his discharge from the Texas Rangers, R.A. Gillespie formed a new company of mounted volunteers. They were called the Texas Mounted Rangers and were mustered into federal service that same day. These men were mostly composed of personnel recruited in San Antonio and were used to range the northern and western frontiers. This command watched for expected raids by hostile Indians while U. S. Army troops were all occupied guarding Texas along the Rio Grande. Sam Walker was twenty-eight years old when he joined that company, again as a private. [19]

War in Mexico

There were few hostile Indians sighted over the next several months. As the end of Sam Walker's term of enlistment in the Texas Mounted Rangers approached, he arranged a meeting with General Zachary Taylor, who was stationed at Corpus Christi, Texas. Walker offered his services to the United States Army, which was about to fight a war in an unknown land against an army whose military tactics and language they did not understand. [20]

That Sam Walker had previously served with the United States Army in a militia command in Florida and in Alabama did not hurt his chances. That he had known Lieutenant George Meade in Florida, now attached to Taylor's command, also did not hurt his chances. But certainly of more interest to General Taylor was that Walker knew the ground over which the coming first battles of the war would be fought from his service in the Somervell Expedition. He also had learned a great deal about northern Mexico and the Mexican Army while he was a prisoner and then an escapee.

Samuel Walker was authorized on April 21, 1846, to raise the first volunteer company of scouts-sometimes called spies-for Zachary Taylor's army. Walker named his company the Texas Mounted Rangers, but they were not Texas Rangers. They were a Texas volunteer command in federal service and a part of the United States Army. The unit would initially serve just under ninety days, until July 16, 1846. This unit was commanded by Captain Samuel Walker, with the total complement of ninety-three officers and men. To his command, Walker attracted a number of veterans of the Somervell and Mier Expeditions, along with several former Texas Rangers. {21}

During the first months of hostilities in the Mexican War, Samuel H. Walker would become a national hero and a living legend as a result of his exploits. At the time, this national recognition far exceeded that attained by his peers back in the Texas Rangers. After his reported death and then his success in a daring mission to Fort Brown behind enemy lines in early 1846, he was held in such high esteem that the city of New Orleans presented Walker with a "magnificent horse" named Tornado and sent it to him in Matamoros, Mexico, on the steamer Alabama. [22]

Following American victories at Palo Alto and Resaca de Palma in early May, the Mexican Army retreated across the Rio Grande. On the West Coast and in New Mexico, Mexican troops met with more defeats. Although the United States had initially expected the Mexican Army to sue for peace at that time, the war continued. As a result, the U.S. Army broadened its efforts and the war began its second phase with preparations for the invasion Of Mexico. [23]

More U.S. troops were recruited and moved into South Texas. It was also at that time that four regiments of volunteers were raised in Texas for the advance into Mexico: three mounted regiments and one on foot. Colonel John C. Hays, George T. Wood, and William C. Young each commanded a mounted regiment and many who had initially served with Samuel Walker's former company of scouts were absorbed into those groups. [24]

On June 24, Samuel Walker was elected a brevet lieutenant colonel by the troops of the First Regiment, Texas Mounted Riflemen, and was made second-in-command to Colonel John Hays. Walker would join this organization when his own term of enlistment ran out two weeks later, on July 6. About that same time, Walker also accepted a regular army appointment as a captain in the First United States Mounted Rifles. He delayed this appointment until the First Regiment Texas Mounted Riflemen was mustered out of Federal service less than three months later on October 2, 1846. [25]

Colt and the First United States Mounted Rifles

After Walker's enlistment expired in the Texas Mounted Riflemen, he visited the Northeastern United States to personally recruit his complement of men for Company C, First United States Mounted Rifles. Because of Walker's personal notoriety, Samuel Colt found out that he was in the area and wrote him in New York. They met in late November of 1846. Walker was interested in acquiring weapons for his new command while Colt, whose company had failed following his experience with the Paterson and other weapons, asked Walker to convince the U.S. Army to buy his new weapons.

Sam Walker and Samuel Colt entered into an agreement in January of 1847 that would satisfy both of their desires. During their meetings, Walker suggested several alterations to the original Colt Paterson revolvers and convinced Colt that these would make the gun a better weapon to be carried into battle. The principal changes were the additions of a trigger guard and a loading lever. Four pounds of weight and several inches were also added to the barrel of the new six-shot .44-caliber Colt revolver. [26]



**The Walker Colt
Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum**

Within a month, Walker persuaded the U.S. Government to purchase 1000 of the new .44 caliber six-shot Colt revolvers. He then proceeded to Newport Barracks to recruit and train his new Army command. In April of 1847, Captain Walker and Company C of the First United States Mounted Rifles shipped out for Vera Cruz, Mexico, without receiving the shipment of what was now called the Walker Colt or the Model 1847 Army Pistol. Finally on June 26, the Army took delivery of the Walker Colts and shipped them to Walker in Mexico. Unfortunately, the guns just sat packed in boxes in Vera Cruz. [27]

Captain Samuel Walker was now fighting in the army of General Winfield Scott. They were in a much more savage and destructive war than Zachary Taylor had fought on the arid plains and mountains of South Texas and northern Mexico. General Scott was fighting his way uphill from Vera Cruz-

much of it in heavy cover and concealment-toward the capitol in Mexico City. It was a tough, bloody campaign. It fell to Captain Walker's command, consisting of some 250 men, to help keep the vital supply road open.

On October 5, 1847, Company C still had not received the new Colt revolvers, but Walker that day received a pair of those pistols as a gift from Samuel Colt. Four days later, during action against guerillas in Huamantla, Mexico, Captain Samuel H. Walker was shot and killed in action. His body was brought back and buried in his adopted state of Texas, in the city of San Antonio. [28]

Walker was no hell-raiser while serving gallantly in several volunteer commands during the Mexican War. From the publicity he received and from his exploits, he obviously impressed the U.S. Army command enough that he was offered a Regular Army commission of captain and command of Company C in the First United States Mounted Rifles. This was no small accomplishment in an army that already contained Captains Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant along with lieutenants like George C. Meade, George B. McClellan and William Tecumseh Sherman. None of those officers had yet made his mark, but all had earned their ranks by graduation from West Point. It is worth speculating on what Samuel H. Walker might have achieved in such an army if he had not been killed in Mexico.

Walker spent his entire adult life pursuing one war after another. He went to war voluntarily in Alabama, Florida, Mexico, and more than once in Texas. He finished his life on the battlefield, commanding his own company in the United States Army and attacking Mexican troops directly commanded by Texas' greatest enemy: General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. I doubt that Sam Walker would have wanted to do it any other way.



Allen G. Hatley is a freelance writer who was born in San Antonio, Texas. He served in the U. S. Army and was in Korea from 1951-1952. Hatley holds a Bachelor and a Master of Science Degree in Geology. He now lives in La Grange, Texas, and holds a certification as an Advanced Peace Officer in the State of Texas and is commissioned with the Fayette County Sheriff's Department.

His latest book, *Texas Constables: A Frontier Heritage*, is the first definitive book written on the history of either Texas or American constables and was published by Texas Tech University Press in October of 1999. Eakin Press will publish his next book in February of 2001. It is entitled *The Indian Wars in Stephen F. Austin's Texas Colony, 1822-1835*.

Allen Hatley has had a number of articles published on Western history and law enforcement in the *Texas Police Journal* and *True West Magazine*, while several other articles are awaiting publication in *Military History* and *Wild West* magazines. He is currently researching another Western history book.

Having spent over thirty years working in the petroleum industry, seventeen of which were spent living outside of North America, Hatley has written extensively on petroleum exploration subjects. This writing included collecting the stories and editing the popular book, *The Oil Finders: A Collection of Stories About Exploration*, which was first published by the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and has been republished by

Centex Press.

In 1988, Hatley graduated from the Middle Rio Grande Law Enforcement Academy in Uvalde, Texas and also received a Basic Peace Officer Proficiency Certificate from the state of Texas. He has worked as a criminal investigator for a district attorney's office and as a narcotics agent in the federally-funded Southwest Texas Narcotics Task Force. In 1993 he was elected Constable, Precinct #4, Bandera County, and was re-elected in 1997. In August 1998, Hatley retired and moved to Fayette County.

§

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[22] "Samuel Walker," New Texas Handbook, 6, 797-798; Spurlin, "Texas Volunteers," 8-17,

[23] Spurlin, "Texas Volunteers," 18-19

[24] Spurlin, "Texas Volunteers," 141-180.

[25] Spurlin, "Texas Volunteers," 54, 150; Sibley, "Samuel Walker's Account," 13-14.

[26] "Samuel Walker," New Texas Handbook, 1, 233-234.

[27] Sibley, "Samuel Walker's Account," 14-15.

[28] Sibley, "Samuel Walker's Account," 16.

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Senior Texas Ranger Captain, Retired Bruce Casteel

Senior Texas Ranger Captain Bruce Casteel was born in Rossville, Georgia, but lived there only two weeks before his family moved to Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, where he grew up.

Bruce eventually landed in Texas and began his law enforcement career in 1964 as a city police officer in Killeen, Texas. Approximately two years later he became a Bell County deputy sheriff. Eight months after taking that position, he was appointed as Chief Deputy Sheriff of Bell County serving under then Sheriff Lester Gunn.

Casteel joined the Department of Public Safety as a recruit in March 1967 and graduated from the Training Academy in June 1967. He served as a Highway Patrol trooper in Bryan and Killeen and as a polygraph examiner in Austin and Waco before becoming a Texas Ranger in September 1973.

As a Ranger, Bruce was assigned to Company D and was stationed in Harlingen. After being promoted to ranger sergeant in 1985, he was transferred to Company D's headquarters in San Antonio. In 1988 he was promoted to captain in command of Company C in Lubbock. He continued his rise through the ranks, and in July 1992 he was named assistant commander of the Rangers and transferred to the Department of Public Safety's headquarters in Austin.

On August 1, 1996, Bruce was appointed Senior Captain, Chief of the Texas Rangers. He is now commander of one hundred and seven Rangers assigned to six companies across the state. The Ranger Division has twenty-one non-commissioned support personnel.

Captain Bruce Casteel certainly epitomizes the strongest and best qualities of the Texas Rangers. He has earned his place beside Rip Ford and Jim Ray,

Texas Ranger
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and together they form three of the brightest stars in the glorious history of the Texas Rangers.

by Robert Nieman

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Now You Know:

The Dieppe Raid:

by Robert Nieman

Die TexasRangers Sind Gelandet!

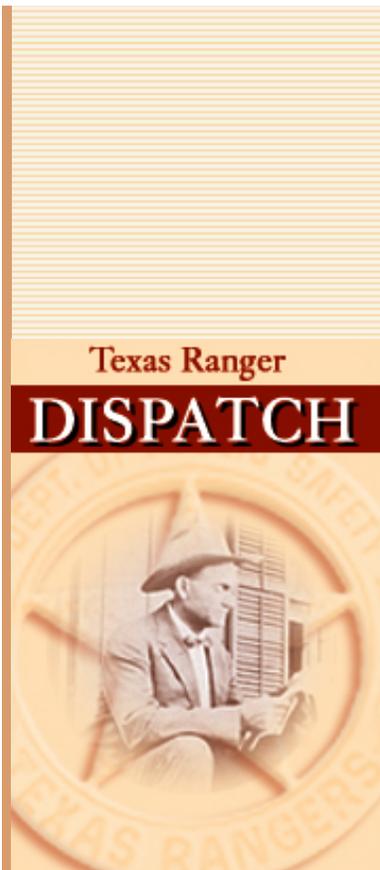
Such is the worldwide fame of the Texas Rangers that the very name "Rangers" is synonymous with the Texas Rangers. Never was this clearer than during the Second World War. A staff writer on the *Houston Tribune* wrote an article in the December 13, 1973 issue about Rangers landing on the shores of Dieppe, France.

On August 19, 1942, three Commando units of the British 2nd Canadian Division landed in occupied France at the seaport and summer resort town of Dieppe. A city located on the English Channel about a hundred miles northwest of Paris, the ravages of the war had seemed to pass it by. The peace would soon be shattered.

The two-fold objective of the Dieppe raid was to test tactics to be used for the future invasion of Europe and to create the illusion that a major invasion was soon to follow. The purpose was to force Hitler to hold troops that were bound for the Russian front in reserve in France.

But somehow, when the report got out about the invasion, the British Commandos became Texas Rangers . . .

The confusion was probably due to leaks about the creation of special American combat units, the legendary U.S. Army Rangers, modeled after the successful British Commandos. American movies about the Texas Rangers played theaters throughout Europe in the 1920s and '30s. Even Hitler was rumored to have watched *Amerikanische westliche Filme* (American westerns). As a result, the only American "Rangers" known to Europeans were heroic men in white hats, who single-handedly cleaned up entire towns with guns blazing.



Word spread like a raging wildfire throughout occupied France and Nazi Germany that the Texas Rangers had landed to liberate France and were preparing to march to the Rhineland. This created so much excitement throughout the Third Reich that Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister, made a special radio broadcast to deny the reports.

Goebbels assured the nervous German population that it was not Texas Rangers but British Commandos who had landed and that the invaders had been pushed into the sea. Unfortunately, the Reich minister was correct. No Texas Rangers were involved and, from a casualty standpoint, the Dieppe raid was a disaster.

Of the 6,000-strong force involved in the Dieppe Raid, the Allies suffered almost 3,700 casualties. However, for a short time, the Legend of the Texas Rangers offered hope to the residents of occupied France. Less than two years later Allies *would* successfully land on the beaches of Normandy. Among them were Texans who exacted a measure of "frontier justice" on the Wehrmacht and in so doing returned freedom to the land of the French Revolution.

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Jim Ray



No Texas Ranger has reached a higher rank in the Texas Department of Public Service-Chief of Criminal Law Enforcement-than Jim Ray.

Jim was born on December 15, 1914, in Bullard, Texas. His full name is Jim Ray-not James- even though he signs his name *James M. Ray*. He does not really have a middle name or initial; he simply got tired of people always asking for them, so he gave himself the initial "M". It is an interesting story how he came to use "M". There was a wealthy, influential man named Morgan in Tyler who believed that no law officer would confront, let alone arrest him for anything. He did not know Jim Ray. A friend of Jim's, Jimmie Staton, knew both Jim and Morgan and thereafter whenever he saw Jim he would say, "Here comes James Morgan." Jim liked the name and he started signing his name, James M.

After graduating from Bullard High School in 1933, Jim started his college work at Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches and finished at East Texas State in Commerce. Earning a degree in business administration in 1940, he got a job-not in business-but as a teacher at Lindale (Texas) High School. Teaching was not his calling in life, however. For as long as he could remember he had wanted to be in law enforcement. Jim applied for admission into the Department of Safety and was accepted. On November 1, 1941, he entered the Texas Highway Patrol School at Camp Mabry in Austin. He completed his training on December 26 and was assigned to McKinney as a motorcycle patrolman.

He did not stay there long. The United States was in the middle of World War II and he entered the Army Air Corps in 1942 and was assigned to the 1128th Military Police. By early 1943, he found himself in New Guinea helping guard one of the few air bases still in American hands. Three weeks later he was reassigned to Brisbane, Australia, and OTS (Officers Training School).

Except for the two hitches in the Army during World War II and Korea, Jim served in the Department of Public Safety until his retirement in 1978. On VJ Day (Victory Over Japan) Jim was in the hospital in Hot Springs, Arkansas, suffering from pneumonia, dysentery, malaria-and to top it off-a cancer on his lip. He was discharged from the Army on November 24, 1945, at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Jim was not one to stay down. Before the end of the year he was back on his motorcycle in the Highway Patrol, this time stationed in Houston. The next four years would find him patrolling at duty stations in Livingston and Conroe. In 1949 he was stationed in Athens, Texas, where he stayed until his acceptance into the Rangers in 1956.

It seemed Jim was unable to stay anywhere for long. He was barely settled in Athens when he found himself back in the Army. America was involved in the Korean War and Jim was called back to active duty in 1950. He spent his entire time stationed at Smoky Hill Air Force Base in Salina, Kansas, until his discharge for the last time in 1952.

While Jim had been gone, things had improved in the Highway Patrol. Returning to active duty, he no longer had to ride a motorcycle; he was assigned a patrol car. By 1954, he was becoming bored with stopping speedsters and drunks and wanted to join the Rangers.

On April 15, 1957, he transferred from the Highway Patrol to the Texas Rangers and was stationed in Tyler. Jim and Red Arnold, who was the Ranger stationed in Mount Pleasant, were responsible for thirty counties. These ranged from the Trinity River on the west to the Oklahoma line on the north, then eastward all the way to the Louisiana line. With such a vast area to cover, they were involved in countless cases.

In the ensuing years Jim was involved in many exciting investigations. It was Jim who was in the second chase car behind Captains Jay Banks and Johnny Klevenhagen when Banks put an end to the murderous careers of Gene Paul Norris and his partner Carl Humphries. Norris was one of most vicious killers in Texas history.

In 1957 Jim, Red Arnold, and a couple of Special Rangers from the Highway Patrol found themselves facing hundreds of angry wildcat strikers at the Lone Star Steel Strike in Lone Star, Texas. Jim remarked, "That was hairy." But unlike the more deadly strike in the 1960s, this one ended with no one dead.

Jim's territory included the huge East Texas Oil Field centered in Kilgore. With so much money on the table, it is not surprising that less scrupulous operators were trying to steal some of this massive wealth. One of the ways to do this was to use the process of "slant-holing." Oil thieves developed a procedure of supposedly "working over" an unprofitable well by squeezing a few more barrels of oil out of the tired well. What they were actually doing was drilling a hole at an angle-slanted-into a nearby lease and stealing oil out of it.

In 1962, hundreds of slant-holes had been discovered and the Rangers were ordered in to put a stop to it. By the time they finished in 1963, nearly every Ranger in the state had been in Kilgore at one time or another. And the Rangers accomplished their job: the slant-hole operators were put out of business. For his tireless work on this major case, Jim was named Peace Officer of the Year in 1963 by the East Texas Peace Officers Association.

Texas Ranger
DISPATCH



On December 1, 1967, Jim was promoted to sergeant and transferred to Company E in Midland. From then on his rise was meteoric. A few months later, September 16, 1968, he moved to Lubbock as the captain of Company C. He remained a captain for only a short time. On June 21, 1969, he assumed the duties of Chief of the CLE (Criminal Law Enforcement) division of the Department of Public Safety in Austin. He was named the number two law-enforcement officer in the state, answerable to the Director of Department of Public Safety. He was able to keep a hand in his beloved Rangers because at that time the Rangers were a division under the CLE.

Jim remained in this office until his retirement on May 31, 1978. When he retired, Jim and his wife Kathleen moved back to Bullard. Kathleen passed away in 1984. Today Jim still lives in Bullard on the family farm just a few miles from where he was born.

by Robert Nieman

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John Salmon "Rip" Ford



Certainly few Texas Rangers can claim such a varied career as Hall of Fame Senior Ranger Captain John Salmon Ford. "Rip" Ford was born on May 26, 1815, near Greenville, South Carolina, but like many early Texans he was raised in Tennessee. When he was only two years old, Ford's father moved his family to Lincoln County, Tennessee. Unlike many Americans at that time, Ford's father was financially able to provide his son with an education. At age nineteen, young Ford moved to nearby Bedford County [1] (Shelbyville) to study medicine under a local doctor, James Barksdale.

Like many Tennesseans when the Texas War of Independence started in 1835, Ford began recruiting a company of volunteers to aid Texas in her fight against Santa Anna. By the spring of 1836 he had recruited about forty men, but by then news had reached Tennessee that Texas had won her freedom at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21. That made no difference to Ford; Texas Fever had infected him. Shortly thereafter he, like hundred of others, would tack "GTT" (Gone To Texas) on his front door. Arriving in Texas, he settled near San Augustine.

In Texas Ford found that the services of a doctor were in great demand, but his interests-as they would throughout his amazing life-ventured beyond the field of medicine. It was not long before he found himself working as a surveyor's assistant helping survey what is now Harrison County.

In retrospect, it was inevitable that he would soon become involved in community affairs and politics. All during his life he was instrumental in helping develop many organizations and activities that would help better not only his local community, but also the whole state. He helped organize or served in one capacity or other in Sunday schools; a thespian troop and several newspapers, including being the editor of the *Texas National Register*. He was also superintendent of the Deaf and Dumb Institution in Austin, Superintendent of Conscripts for the Confederacy's Department of Texas, and was instrumental in the creation the State Historical Society.

His political record in various offices would be enviable to many modern politicians. A short list would include being elected in 1844 as a

representative to the 9th Congress of the Republic of Texas and in 1852 as a state senator to fill the vacancy created by the death of former Ranger Ed Burleson. In 1874 he served as the mayor of Brownsville. In 1875, he also served as a delegate of the State Constitutional Convention.

But for all these accomplishments, it is as a Texas Ranger that Rip Ford is most famous. The future first Senior Ranger Captain did not start out the Mexican War as a combatant. Instead he found himself once again serving in the medical field under the immortal Captain Jack Hays. Though largely forgotten today, the Mexican War in terms of soldiers involved was the most deadly war in American history. John Eisenhower writes in his book on the Mexican War, *So Far From God*, that thirteen percent of all soldiers involved died. Like most wars before the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority died from disease—mainly the black vomit, or vomito (yellow fever). Being a doctor, it was Ford's unpleasant duty to write to the deceased soldier's loved ones that he had died. Ford soon found the volume of letters he was having to write so vast that he shortened the closing to "Rest In Peace," which he later shortened even more to "RIP." Forever after Ford would no longer be John Ford—he would be known as Rip Ford and in later life, Old Rip.

Space does not permit us to even begin to cover Ford's activities during his remarkable service as a Ranger during the Mexican and Indian Wars; his election into the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame speaks to that. But two dates do deserve special mention: February 25, 1848, and May 13, 1865. Both are ironic dates in Ford's history. On February 25, 1848, Ford and his fellow Texas Rangers under the command of General Joe Lane defeated Mexican guerrillas at the Battle of Sequaltepan, the last battle of the Mexican War. On May 13, 1865, Confederate forces under the command of Rip Ford defeated Union forces at the Battle of Palmito Ranch, the last battle of the Civil War.

On November 3, 1897, John Salmon "Rip" Ford, died. Gone was not only one of the greatest Texas Rangers in its glorious history, but also a truly great Texan.

NOTES

[1] Bedford County was also the home of Nathan Bedford Forrest, the great Confederate Civil War general.

For further reading on Rip Ford we recommend Ford's memories Rip Ford's Texas, edited by Stephen B. Oates; W. J. Hughes' *Rebellious Ranger: Rip Ford and the Old Southwest*; and Frederick Wilkins' *The Highly Irregular Regulars: Texas Rangers in the Mexican War*.

by Robert Nieman

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Reel Rangers:

Films of the Texas Centennial

by Bill O'Neal

Throughout 1936, Texans conducted a lengthy Centennial celebration. Capitalizing on the publicity generated by the Texas Centennial, Hollywood set more than the usual number of films on the Lone Star frontier, including several which involved Texas Rangers.

Texas-born Gene Autry, vaulting to stardom in 1936 as a singing cowboy, filmed *The Big Show* at the State Fairgrounds in Dallas. It was the first of many Autry movies to benefit from a special location, and Centennial parade scenes included various celebrations and mounted Texas Rangers.

Columbia Pictures decided in 1936 to make a western star of Bob Allen, a former college athlete whose real name was Irving Theodore Baehr. Columbia planned to showcase Allen with a Texas Ranger series: six B westerns that would be released in 1936 and 1937. The first Bob Allen movie was *The Unknown Ranger*, in which the hero works undercover to thwart a gang of cattle rustlers. Before the year ended *Rio Grande Ranger* was released. The remaining four films—*Ranger Courage*, *Law of the Ranger*, *Reckless Ranger*, and *The Rangers Step In*—opened in theaters in 1937. There was little response to Allen, however, and his contract was not renewed.

The most ambitious Ranger movie of 1936 was produced by Paramount and directed by King Vidor, a noted filmmaker from Texas. Paramount hoped to star Gary Cooper in *The Texas Rangers*, but the lanky star was unavailable. The leading role was then assigned to Fred MacMurray. An excellent cast also included Jack Oakie, Lloyd Nolan, Gabby Hayes, Jean Parker, and veteran villain Fred Kohler.

MacMurray and Oakie play train robbers who try to elude capture by joining the Texas Rangers. Action sequences involve Native Americans, and MacMurray and Oakie become respected Rangers. But they encounter Lloyd Nolan, who once had been an outlaw friend. Nolan now becomes a notorious bandit, and MacMurray and Oakie are assigned to pursue him. MacMurray refuses to go after his old pal, but Oakie obeys and is shot by Nolan. MacMurray then hunts down Nolan, managing also to win the hand of Jean

Parker.

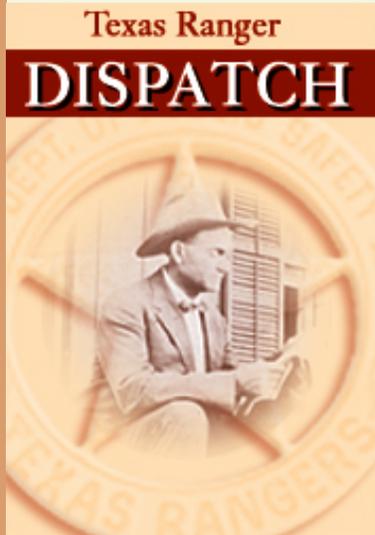
The screenwriter claimed that his script was based on official records of the Rangers, but the storyline seems to draw more on Hollywood conventions than Ranger archives. Filled with action, *The Texas Rangers* was a solid hit with audiences around the Lone Star State and everywhere else that fast-paced Westerns were appreciated.

In 1940 Paramount released a sequel, *Texas Rangers Ride Again*. A tale about "modern" (ca. 1940) cattle rustlers, the movie mixes automobiles and radios with the traditional horses and six-guns. Broderick Crawford plays a Texas Ranger and a youthful Anthony Quinn is a ranch foreman. But the rest of the cast is undistinguished and *Texas Rangers Rides Again* had a lackluster reception.

Even though the sequel was unsuccessful, the original script of *The Texas Rangers* was good enough to rate a remake. Paramount released the new version in 1949 as *Streets of Laredo* starring handsome William Holden and beefy William Bendix as the outlaws who are transformed into Texas Rangers. Their old bandit pal is played with murderous wickedness by MacDonald Carey, who is clad in black. Pretty Mona Freeman is Holden's sweetheart, while bad guy Alfonso Bedoya is cheerfully wicked. Although the Native Americans are removed from this version, the storyline otherwise remains the same. A chilling moment involves Bendix and Carey, seated across a table from each other. Carey cold-bloodedly shoots his former comrade beneath the table. But Holden, aided by his rifle-wielding sweetheart, takes revenge on the evil Carey.

Filmed in color with a haunting musical score, *Streets of Laredo* is filled with action and Ranger camaraderie, and remains an enjoyable movie. The *Texas Rangers* was the best Ranger film of the Texas Centennial year, and *Streets of Laredo* brought this Ranger tale to a later generation of moviegoers.

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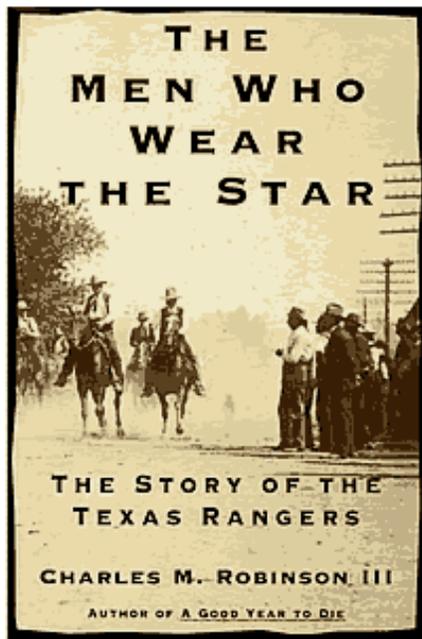
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Book Review:

*The Men Who Wear the Star:
The Story of the Texas Rangers*

by **Chuck Parsons**

Random House, New York. 352 pages. 31 illustrations. 4 maps. Acknowledgments, introduction, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0-679-45649-X hardcover. \$29.95.

This is the first comprehensive single-volume work on the history of the Texas Rangers since Walter Prescott Webb's *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense*, first published in 1935. Although both histories of the Ranger organization - now entering its third century -

discuss the major incidents of Ranger history, *The Men Who Wear the Star* is not a mirror image of Webb's work.

Robinson begins his study with a discussion of the concept of the Ranger, an idea that originated with the British colonists in the eastern United States when a battalion served under Major Robert Rogers during the French and Indian War. This tradition of "ranging" was continued when English-speaking people settled in Texas in the 1820s. Although there are various claims regarding exactly how the Texas Rangers originated, Robinson supports the theory that backs Moses Morrisson, a leader who commanded a handful of volunteers. This modest beginning of a small number of settlers ready to fight Indians and thieves and any other marauders became the organization of the Texas Rangers.

Robinson discusses in subsequent chapters how Jack Hays and the new revolving weapon altered warfare and how the Rangers contributed during the Mexican War and the American Civil War. A significant portion of the book deals with McNelly's Washington County Volunteer Militia Company and the Frontier Battalion under Major John B. Jones. Jones influenced the Ranger force until the end of the frontier and the rise of the "modern" Ranger.

In treating the twentieth century Rangers, Robinson focuses on the tarnishing of the star, recounting such incidents as the massacre at Porvenir in January 1918. He concludes by touching on the "Bonnie and Clyde affair" and discussing the myth making of the Texas Ranger. Included is the most famous myth of all, the fictional "Lone Ranger," and other Rangers who have appeared in motion pictures and television programs such as "Walker, Texas Ranger."

Certainly the Texas Ranger force deserved an updating of the 1935 classic by Webb. Robinson provides such an update with *The Men Who Wear the Star*. If there is a significant weakness, it is that Robinson ends his history virtually where Webb ended his. Certainly the Rangers have accomplished much in the last fifty years or so that is worthy of discussion, but none of it is presented. A few chapters covering the Rangers' contribution during the World Wars and also the social changes that forced the alteration of the face of the traditional white male Ranger would have added greatly to this work. In spite of this omission, the book deserves to be in the library of every person who appreciates Texas history.

Other books by Charles Robinson :

The Frontier World of Fort Griffin: The Life and Death of a Western Town (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1992).

Bad Hand: A Biography of General Ranald S. Mackenzie (Austin: State House Press, 1993).

The Buffalo Hunters (Austin: State House Press, 1995).

A Good Year to Die: The Story of the Great Sioux War (New York: Random House, 1995).

The Indian Trial: The Complete Story of the Warren Wagon Train Massacre (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1997).

Satanta: The Life and Death of a War Chief (Austin: State House Press, 1997).

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In Their Own Words:

The Case of the Deadly Milkshake

Introduction

On October 18, 1997, retired Texas Ranger Captain Jim Ray and I sat down in his home in Bullard, Texas, to review his career. Captain Jim, as he is fondly called, had one of the most distinguished careers in history of the Texas Rangers. He is the only Texas Ranger to ever achieve the rank of Chief of Criminal Law Enforcement in the Texas Department of Public Safety.



Jim Ray was born on December 15, 1914, in Bullard, Texas, just a few miles from where he now lives. His full name is Jim Ray, not James. Nor does he have a middle name or initial, even though he signs his name Jim M. Ray. He told me that he simply got tired of people always asking for a middle name or initial so he gave himself the same initial that had been his father's: "M". In his father's case, the "M" stood for Monroe.

Graduating from Bullard High School in 1933, Jim attended Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches before transferring to East Texas State in Commerce. He graduated from East Texas State in 1940 and taught briefly at Lindale (Texas) High School.

He did not teach long. On November 1, 1941, Jim entered the Texas Highway Patrol School at Camp Mabry in Austin. Except for two hitches in the Army during World War II and Korea, Captain Jim served in the Department of Public Safety until his retirement in 1978.

His wife, Kathleen, passed away in 1984.

Captain Jim had many cases in his distinguished career. One we talked about, though deadly, did have a humorous side to it. It started in 1958 and involved a man and his wife: Charles and Evie Denny. I call it "The Case of the

Deadly Milkshake."

§

JIM RAY: A doctor at the veteran's hospital in McKinney (Texas) had called the sheriff in Tyler (Smith County), telling him she had a patient that had been poisoned by strychnine, and she thought somebody ought to come up talk to this old boy.

I went up there and talked to the doctor and she told me that her patient, Cecil Denny, had been brought up there from a hospital in Kilgore and that she had diagnosed his condition as being poisoned with strychnine. All of his hair had come out and the soles of his feet were so sore he couldn't walk on 'em.

ROBERT NIEMAN: This was an indication of strychnine?

JIM RAY: Yes. He was in pretty bad condition. Anyway, after she got him off the poison he got better and finally was released-discharged. But during my investigation I found that his wife, Eva Denny, had been poisoning him with this strychnine. Matter of fact, I served a search warrant on her place between Tyler and Kilgore. She lived on a farm out there, and I found a sack of strychnine that had been opened hanging in one of the old sheds out there. You could tell it had been used because it was fresh. Of course she denied all this.

However, I found out that old Cecil Denny loved strawberry milkshakes and Evie had taken those strawberry milkshakes, fed 'em to him there at the house and also there in the hospital. You know strychnine has a pinkish color, and of course the milkshake being strawberry, you couldn't detect it being in there.

ROBERT NIEMAN: She was just giving him a little bit more and more until it would have finally killed him?

JIM RAY: Yeah, just enough to make him sick, but keep him alive. Old Cecil would go off hunting and fishing and stay gone two or three days and drinking beer and she would get mad at him about that. And every time he went on one of these fishing trips, he'd come back home and she'd feed him some more strychnine. So that went on for a while until he got in the hospital.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And what was his age?

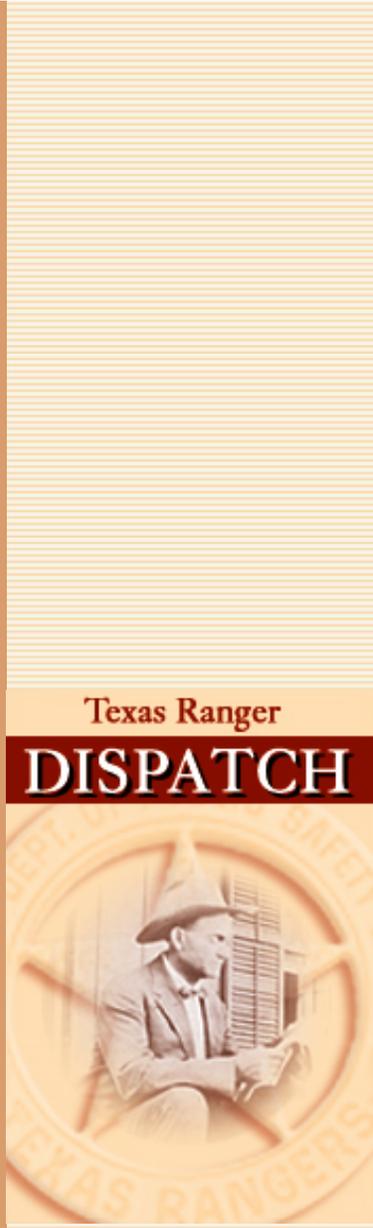
JIM RAY: He was about 40 years old.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And her?

JIM RAY: She was about 65. She had old thin, red, curly hair and was ugly as sin. A man had to be drunk, you know, to stay with her.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did she ever kill him?

JIM RAY: No, didn't kill him. He came back down to East Texas after he got out of the hospital. Of course I had my case pretty well investigated and I talked to the District Attorney, who at that time was Bill Colston. I asked Bill, "I know we probably need him to sign a complaint, but can I file on her if he won't sign?" He said, "Well, we wouldn't have much of a case if you did, but let's get him in here and see what he says".



ROBERT NIEMAN: Why wouldn't you have a strong case?

JIM RAY: You need the complaint from somebody that had first-hand prior knowledge to it. If the person who was harmed refuses to complain, that pretty well takes the wind of your sails with the District Attorney.

Anyway, I got old Cecil up there in the District Attorney's office and Bill and I started talking to him. Bill asked him to sign a complaint against his wife for poisoning him. Old Cecil kind of hung his head and he said that well, he didn't think he would. He didn't want to. And that was the end of that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And did they end up living happily ever after?

JIM RAY: Yeah, he went back to her and in about six months he was off again on a fishing trip, got drunk, and run his old pickup into a tree and killed himself.

ROBERT NIEMAN: I wonder if she was still making him strawberry milkshakes?

JIM RAY: Probably was, and he was probably still liking 'em.

She finally passed away a while after that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: She never did any time?

JIM RAY: Never did.

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Guns of the Texas Rangers: The Walker Colt

by David Stroud

The greatest prize for Colt collectors is the renowned Walker, the legendary revolver that got Sam Colt back into the gun business and also provided a powerful weapon for Texas Rangers and U.S. Dragoons

during the Mexican War.

Colt's Patent Arms Manufacturing Company in Paterson, New Jersey, suffered bankruptcy in 1842 because the firm was unable to secure a government contract for Colt's Paterson five-shot revolver. But Sam never gave up, and though he was not manufacturing weapons in 1846, he had several improvements in mind for his revolver. All he needed was the treasured government order, and the war with Mexico could open the door to the wealth he believed he would someday enjoy. With that in mind, he wrote to former Texas Ranger Samuel H. Walker, who was recently commissioned a captain in the United States Mounted Rifles and was in his home state of Maryland recruiting his company.

In the summer of 1846 Colt, the would-be arms maker, wrote Walker that he had several improvements in mind for a new revolver and requested the former Texas Ranger's help in winning a government contract.

Captain Walker wanted his men equipped with Colt's revolvers. He had used them in Florida against the Seminoles and in Texas against Comanches, and he wanted Colts when he rode against the Mexicans. He returned a letter to Colt telling of the "Hays Fight" in 1844 when fifteen Rangers defeated a Comanche war party of 80 warriors, "killing & wounding about half of them." Walker added, "With improvements I think they (the revolvers) can be rendered the most perfect weapon in the world. . . ."

The two men got together on December 2, 1846, and designed a pistol based on the Paterson, but greatly improved. The new weapon proved to be more powerful than most modern-day revolvers.

The Whitneyville Walker, also known as the "Model of 1847 Army Pistol," measured 15 1/2 inches in length with a 9-inch barrel that was part round, and part octagonal. The square-backed trigger guard was brass and the ramrod had a hinged lever held in place by a spring clamp. The grips were one-piece walnut with an iron backstrap; the sights consisted of one located on a blade near the end of the barrel and one notched in the hammer.

Colt hired W. L. Ormsby, a renowned New York engraver, to design the cylinder scene suggested by Captain Walker: the famous "Hays fight." Because Ormsby had never seen a Texas Ranger, he placed them in the uniforms of the United States Dragoons. The cylinder was additionally marked "COLT'S PATENT U.S.M.R.," and the flat top of the breech was marked "ADDRESS. SAM^L COLT NEW-YORK CITY."

Additional markings consisted of a company letter (A, B, C, D, or E) paired with a number (1-47). Walker instructed Colt that the first revolvers were to be marked C, which was his company, and the others were to be stamped alphabetically.

The weight of the hand cannon was a massive 4 pounds, 9 ounces, and the .44 caliber cylinders held 50 grains of black powder that fired a conical bullet of 220 grains. The pistol in 1846 was "as effective as a common rifle at one hundred yards, and superior to a musket even at two hundred."

Colt received a contract for 1,000 revolvers on January 4, 1847, and would be paid \$25 for each arm. He would also receive an additional \$3 for powder flasks and spare parts.

Colt had everything he needed except an armory. He called on Eli Whitney, Jr., son of the inventor of the cotton gin, who was producing rifles for the government in Whitneyville, Connecticut. Whitney agreed to cooperate with Colt on the manufacturing of the Walkers "for certain considerations."

Colt not only fulfilled his contract but also built another 100 pistols for presentation to important people and for sale to civilians.

The Whitneyville-Walker revolver (U.S. Model 1847) was the first repeating pistol purchased by the Army Ordnance Department. Other contracts followed and Sam Colt continued to improve his product as the Walker evolved into the Dragoon, and then that arm gave way to the 1860 Army weapon.

Nevertheless, the massive Walker, used by Texas Rangers and regular soldiers, shall forever stand alone as a Colt treasure. Today only 168 are known to exist and their value can exceed \$100,000. Collectors, therefore, must heed the warning Sam Colt repeated until his death in 1862: "BEWARE OF COUNTERFEITS."

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David Stroud was born in Tyler, Texas, and graduated from Henderson (Texas) High School in 1963. He then enlisted in the Marines and in the following years served a tour in Vietnam and two years as a drill instructor at Parris Island, South Carolina. He earned his B.S. and M.A. degrees in history at Stephen F. Austin State University and is now a history instructor at Kilgore (Texas) College. He has written seven books along with fifteen articles and book reviews.

