The Surveyors' Fight

19 The Jesse Evans Gang & the Death of Texas Ranger George Bingham

29 The Lone Ranger Rides Again!

12 The Manhattan Revolver of Major John B. Jones

32 Ranger News
This issue of the Texas Ranger Dispatch is funded in part by a grant from the Texas Ranger Association Foundation. Their generosity makes this publication possible.

http://www.thetexasrangers.org/

Founded in 1964, the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum is a nonprofit historical center owned by the people of Texas. It is hosted and professionally operated by the city of Waco, Texas. It is sanctioned by the Texas Rangers, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and the legislature of the State of Texas.

http://www.texasranger.org/index.htm

Texas Ranger Dispatch
Production Team

Robert Nieman - Managing Editor (Volunteer, Museum Board)
Pam S. Baird - Technical Editor, Layout, and Web Design
Byron A. Johnson - Director, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame
Sharon P. Johnson, Volunteer Web Designer, Baylor University
Christina Stopka, Archivist, Texas Ranger Research Center
## Table of Contents

*Click on title to go directly to article.*

*Click on Texas Ranger emblem at the top of any article page to return to Contents page.*

### Articles:
- **4** The Surveyors’ Fight................................................Stephen L. Moore
- **12** Manhattan Revolver of Major John. B. Jones.............David V. Stroud
- **19** Jesse Evans Gang & Death of George Bingham......Chuck Parsons
- **29** The Lone Ranger Rides Again! (Navigatin’ with Nancy & Eddie).....Nancy Ray
- **32** Ranger News

### Book Reviews
- **34** Eleven Days in Hell: 1974 Carrasco Prison Siege at Huntsville, Texas
  
  by William T. Harpe......................Review by Captain Kirby Dendy
- **36** Lawmen on the Texas Frontier: Rangers and Sheriffs
  
  by Candice DuCoin.......................Review by Donaly E. Brice
- **38** Texas Devils: Rangers and Regulars on the Lower Rio Grande, 1846-61
  
  by Michael L. Collins....................Review by Linda S. Hudson
- **39** More Zeal than Discretion: Westward Adventures of Walter P. Lane
  
  by Jimmy L. Bryan Jr. .................Review by Stephen L. Moore
- **41** Kilgore Rangerettes
  
  by O. Rufus Lovett............................Review by David Stroud

### Graphics credits:
- Cover, p19: Desperado; p4: www.theknow.com; p33: www.clker.com
The Texas Rangers were in danger of disappearing altogether by the spring of 1838. The service had boasted some four hundred and fifty men in four battalions as of mid-September 1836, which was the peak of Ranger strength during the early years of Texas. After President Sam Houston disbanded the last of the Ranger companies in April 1836, Major General Thomas Rusk of the Texas Militia kept the service alive by allowing small battalions of mounted Rangers to operate in between periods of crisis within his militia brigades.

Frontier violence was prevalent during 1838, and those who ventured out beyond the settlements were particularly vulnerable to Indian attacks. The duties of a land surveyor, therefore, were particularly dangerous during this period. The deadly Surveyors’ Fight of October 8, 1838, in Navarro County was one grim reminder of such hazards.

The Surveyors’ Fight

Stephen L. Moore

During the fall of 1838, the northernmost town between the Brazos and Trinity Rivers was a settlement known as Old Franklin, located between the present towns of Calvert and Bryan. It included a blockhouse to protect the settlers and had become the rendezvous site of choice for surveying parties of this area of Texas.¹

Surveying the lands near present Dallas was extremely dangerous in 1838. Several surveyors working the areas north of Fort Parker had been killed in April. The next major surveying expedition organized into this area was one led by William Fenner Henderson. Twenty-one years of age, he had arrived in Texas in 1835 and served in the Texas Army in Lieutenant James T. Sprowl’s infantry company.² Originally settling in the Nacogdoches area, Henderson had also participated in Major General Rusk’s August 1838 Indian campaign.

In late September, Henderson organized his surveying party of about twenty-five men at Old Franklin (also called Fort Franklin). Various sources give the total number of men as being between twenty-two and twenty-seven. At least two of the men, Samuel Allen and Joseph Jones, had served as Rangers in 1836.

The surveyors departed for what is now the southeastern part of Navarro County. After camping at the site of old Fort Parker, they passed Tehuacana Springs and proceeded up to the Richland Creek area. En route, the men passed a number of Indians in small groups and others in larger clusters. In their immediate area, there were about three hundred Kickapoo Indians engaged in supplementing their buffalo meat supply. After arriving at the desired location, Henderson’s men began running survey lines without incident on the first day.³

On the second day, October 8, 1838, a compass was found to be defective and Henderson sent William Jackson and William M. Love back to Parker’s Fort to secure a magnet to correct the needle. While the surveyors continued their work during the morning hours, they carelessly noted Indians moving to and fro in their vicinity, some apparently in consultation. Around 11:00 a.m., the men stopped to take a breakfast break. While they were eating, a group of about fifty Kickapoo Indians warned them that a party of about seventeen Ioni Indians was planning on attacking the whites that day. Knowing that Ionis only armed themselves with bows and arrows, Henderson’s men remarked that they were not afraid of such a threat.

---


After breakfast, the men returned to running their survey lines across a stretch of prairie that paralleled a ravine. During this time, some more Indians moved close enough to them to mutter comments at them, and one even begged a piece of tobacco from San Jacinto veteran Walter P. Lane. After this Indian crossed back over the gulch, the surveyor party was immediately fired upon by forty or more Indians who had been lying concealed in the bushes growing on the banks of the ravine. Thus began the fight that became known as the Surveyors’ Fight, or the Battle Creek Fight.

According to the *History of Navarro County*, command of the surveying party was given to Captain James Neil Sr., a surveyor who had settled in the present Grimes County area. As events shaped up, he would not survive to live on the land he claimed. However, his son James Neil Jr. later came to claim land that his father had surveyed in Grimes County and was involved in organizing the county seat of Corsicana. Of the accounts that were left of this fight, Lane claimed that Neil was in command of the men from the start of the expedition. Henderson later stated that the men elected Neil as commander when the Indians made their attack.

According to Lane, the Texans made an initial charge against their attackers until another one hundred Indians “showed themselves in the timber behind them.”\(^4\) The surveyors collected their instruments and fell back in formation to the nearest woods, about a mile distant. Captain Neil’s men found Indians already occupying the timber. The Indians immediately surrounded them and fired bullets and arrows from all sides.

The surveyors then retreated to a ravine in the prairie and took up a defensive position. A lone cottonwood tree stood at the juncture of two ravines. With four- and five-foot banks dotted with small bushes along the top, the gully offered the men a chance of holding their ground. The heavy firing by this point had already wounded or killed most of the Texan horses.\(^5\)

According to Henderson, Captain Neil was wounded soon after reaching the ravine, and he appointed Euclid M. Cox as captain of the men. Of the twenty-three Texans, many were injured at this point. Entrenched in the small ravine on the open prairie, the surveyors were heavily surrounded by upwards of three hundred Kickapoos, Tawakonis, Ionis, Wacos, and Caddos. The Indians obviously viewed these surveyors as breaking up territory that had traditionally been theirs. Their intent, therefore, was to kill all of their enemy.

Captain Cox’s men had little chance in their predicament. The resourceful Indians climbed trees and fired down over the lip of the ravine. Little by little, more of the Texans fell wounded or

---

4. Walter P. Lane to DeShields in DeShields, *Border Wars*, 226.
6. DeShields, 226. Henderson, 29. The pistol later made its way into the possession of the San...
dead. Seeing the necessity to remove the Indian snipers from the trees, Cox took up a position behind the lone cottonwood tree. In the course of the next hour, he reportedly killed about ten Indians on his own. While exposing himself for another shot, however, he was shot through the spine and fell back from the tree. “I ran up the bank, took him by the shoulder, and, under heavy fire dragged him to the ravine,” wrote Walter Lane. Cox begged J. Button, one of his employees who was part of the party, to give his wife one of his pistols. Within two hours of being wounded, he then died. Button later honored this request and, as of 1885, the weapon was in the possession of the son of Captain Cox, Hill County Sheriff John P. Cox of Hillsboro, Texas.6

Without a leader once again, the surviving Texans decided to remain together and use discretion in their defense. Upon seeing Cox fall, the Indians sent up shouts of joy and proceeded to charge the ravine. Only a deadly fire from the surveyors’ pistols and rifles kept them from being totally overrun.

At this same time, about fifty mounted Indians appeared on a ridge about two hundred and fifty yards away. They called to the surveyors, “Kickapoos good Indians, come to Kickapoos.” Mr. Spikes, an old man of eighty-two years, decided to test the Kickapoos’ loyalty. He mounted one of the remaining horses and rode out toward them, only to be killed by the Indians. Another wounded Texan, Richard Davis of San Augustine, mounted his horse and attempted to run the gauntlet of fire. He, too, was shot dead within sight of the other surveyors.

The Indians kept the survivors surrounded and pinned down even after dark. Finally, between 11:00 p.m. and midnight and more than twelve hours of fighting, those left decided to use the cover of darkness to make a break for the timber bordering Richland Creek. Unfortunately, there was a full moon up this night, which made the prairie very bright. According to the reports of Lane and Henderson, there were only two or three horses left alive by this time. Some time about midnight, those still alive made ready to go.

The four most seriously wounded were loaded on the horses. The ten survivors at this point were Henderson, Neil, McLaughlin, Button, Lane, Elijah Ingram, Joseph Jones, John Violet, William Smith, and Tom Barton, the latter five all being wounded. As the surveyors rose from the ravine to leave, the Indians let out a yell and charged in a half circle toward them. The Texans fired back during their slow retreat toward the timber. The Indians proceeded to shoot man after man from the horses.

Walter Paye Lane, who escaped with a shattered leg bone, later served as a brigadier general for the Confederacy. (Image originally published in James DeShields’s Border Wars of Texas.)

Jacinto Museum of History.
Joseph Jones and Elijah Ingram were both shot from a horse during the early moments of the escape. Lane and a companion helped Captain Neil onto the slain men’s mount, but he advanced fewer than ten steps before the Kickapoo shot him down, along with his horse. William Smith, favoring a wounded arm, raised Thomas Barton up behind him on one of the other horses. They raced only fifty yards before this final steed was shot out from under them. Smith survived, but Barton jumped up just before dying and cried out, “Lord, have Mercy on me!”7

Barton and Smith managed to escape through the timber together, eluding the Indians and ultimately reaching the Falls of the Brazos on their own. Another surveyor, a young man named McLaughlin, did not leave the ravine when the other nine made their break. He instead took up hiding in the bushes growing on the bank until the Indians departed. When the Indians pursued the main party of Texans, McLaughlin fled down the ravine and ultimately reached the settlements on the Trinity River.

In addition to Barton, Smith, and McLaughlin, four others from the main party of Texans survived after fleeing from the ravine: Henderson, Lane, Violet, and Button. Of these seven, Button, Smith, Violet, and Lane were injured, with John Violet’s injury being the most severe.

Walter Lane was shot through the leg during this escape, the bullet shattering his leg bone. However, he managed to hobble on his heel and keep going. He reached the thicket with Henderson and Button, who had both escaped being wounded.

We got into a deep ravine that led to the creek. I called to Henderson to stop and tie up my leg as I was bleeding to death. He did so promptly. We went down some distance and heard the Indians following us. We climbed on the bank and lay down with our guns cocked. Twelve of them passed so close I could have touched them. We got on the creek an hour before day, and followed down till we found some muddy water. We left the creek and went on the bank till we found a log reaching to a brushy island. We crossed over it and lay hidden all day. We could hear the Indians on the bank looking for us.8

According to Henderson’s account, he and his party included the badly injured John Violet. Violet suffered from a broken thigh, which prevented him from crawling any further. He was left near Richland Creek with the promise that the other three would send him help. After hiding out from passing Indians searching for survivors, the trio started for Tehuacana Hill, which was twenty-five miles distant. Three days after the fight, on October 11, Henderson, Lane, and Button ran across six Kickapoo Indians, and they told them that they had been fighting Ionis. Henderson offered one of them his Bowie knife if they would take them to water, which they did.9

After quenching their thirst, the trio was taken to the Indian camp, where they were fed. After spending a night, the Texans were anxious to leave the next morning, fearing that one of the Kickapoos from the battle would alert these Indians that these were their enemy. Henderson then offered one of the Indians his rifle to lead them to Parker’s Fort and allow the wounded Walter Lane to ride a pony. Lane was forced to walk, but the Kickapoos did lead the men to Parker’s Fort by the next day, October 12.

The surveyors then followed the Navasota River for a mile and proceeded on foot on toward Old Franklin. On October 14, they were discovered by Love and Jackson, who had been sent to repair the compass days before. These men took the wounded on their horses on to Old Franklin, about fifteen miles away. Thereafter, a company of about fifty men was organized at Old Franklin by William Love. They went back to the scene of the battle to bury the dead. En route, they stopped at Tehuacana Springs, where they found poor John Violet with his broken thigh. He had gone six days with little food or water and had crawled more than twenty-five miles from where he had originally been left on Richland Creek.

Love’s party found and buried the surveyors’ bodies, which had been badly savaged by wolves in the past week. They also found considerable blood from the firing points of the Indians, evidence that the Texans had taken their share of lives.

The slain Texans were buried beneath the spreading branches of the lone tree on the embankment under which they had so desperately fought. A memorial to the Battle Creek Fight victims was erected in 1881 by Captain Euclid Cox’s sons, John P. Cox and Reverend J. Fred Cox, at the site of the battle in which their father was killed. Inscribed on it are the names of the seventeen killed and five who escaped, a list now considered incomplete.

The exact number of surveyors involved in the fight varies by whose account one relies on. The number of those killed also varies between fourteen and twenty. By best count from all sources, sixteen men were killed, with a seventeenth man (Rodney Wheeler) likely. The Cox marker also lists a “James Jones” as one of those who perished.
One of the survivors, Walter Lane, went on to serve with the Texas Rangers during the Mexican War of the 1840s, and he rose to the rank of major. During the Civil War, Lane served as lieutenant colonel of the Third Texas Cavalry. He led his men into battle in Arkansas, Missouri, and Mississippi. In 1864, he was severely wounded at the battle of Mansfield, in Louisiana, but went on to be promoted to the rank of brigadier general in 1865.

Standing one mile west of Dawson on State Highway 31 in Navarro County is a Texas historical marker that identifies the Battle Creek Burial Ground. Also standing as of this writing is the massive tree which provided cover for the besieged surveyors in 1838.

Those killed in the battle were buried in a common grave. Captain Euclid Cox’s sons later erected this marble shaft in honor of the fallen men.

**East Face**
(left) Inscription on the top portion begins: “Sacred to the Memory of Our Beloved Dead . . .”

(right) Bottom portion is titled “Rest in Peace” and is followed by the names of ten of the victims. At the base: “Erected by John P. & J. Fred Cox.”

**North Face**
(right) Names of the victims continue.

**South Face**
(left) The heading “Those Who Escaped” is followed by the names of five of the seven survivors.

*Photos courtesy of Robert Nieman*
The Manhattan Revolver of Major John B. Jones

David V. Stroud

Many of the 20th century weapons displayed in the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco have the name of the Texas Ranger or his initials engraved somewhere on the firearms, documenting the owner’s affiliation. George W. Chapman’s Model 1907 Winchester, Glenn Elliott’s Colt .38 Super, and Sergeant Rudy Flores’s Chief Special have been featured in previous Dispatches,¹ and Elliott’s gun is displayed in the museum. However, most of the articles for the Guns of the Texas Rangers series have featured 19th century weapons with no known Texas

Ranger association other than being the types of guns available during the production period of that firearm. The assumption that some Rangers used those particular models is illustrated by the outstanding collection of weapons displayed in the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame Museum.

There is a rule that “the older the weapon, the less likely is the known owner.” Exceptions are few and far between, but there are some. Major John B. Jones’s Manhattan Revolver is one of them.

In May 1874, Governor Richard Coke appointed Jones to command the legislature-created Frontier Battalion in northwest Texas and gave him the rank of major. The exact date of Jones’s appointment may have been May 9, as that is the date he listed on his copy of the enlistment oath. To celebrate his appointment and commission, Jones’s friends may have presented him the featured Manhattan Revolver, which is inscribed “Maj. J. B. JONES Texas Rangers” on the silver-plated backstrap.

Over the past forty years, I have attended gun shows and picked up (after asking the owner’s permission) what appeared to be a Colt Navy, Belt, or Pocket Revolver, only to learn it was a Manhattan or Bacon. Those three types of Colt firearms are so similar in appearance that many collectors have mistaken them. Often, they have also believed the old patent infringement stories in which Sam Colt was the winner against Manhattan, and Manhattan won against Bacon. Another explanation of the similarities is that “The .31 Caliber Manhattans were probably made by Bacon.” None of these stories is correct. They are the result of patents protecting similar-appearing Bacon, Colt, Nepperhan, and Manhattan .31 caliber revolvers. After examining the patent infringements evidence, Waldo Nutter, the author of Manhattan Firearms, concludes, “. . . as regards the aspects of infringement, imitation and copying, Manhattan was considerably more sinned against than sinning.”

The Colt Manufacturing Company has monopolized multi-firing revolvers ever since Sam Colt received an 1836 patent to protect his production of that line of handguns. And he protected it with vigor. He took the Massachusetts Arms Company to court in 1851 and won the verdict handed down on June 30. The important judgment sounded a clear warning to any would-be infringers.

4. Jewelers were the professional non-factory inscribers during the 19th century.
8. Flayderman, 75. Pages 47-80 in chapter III detail the patent infringements as well as the Manhattan patents. Thomas K. Bacon was associated with Manhattan before beginning the Bacon Manufacturing Company in November 1858.
9. Flayderman, 2
However, with Colt’s patent protection ending in 1857, competitors anticipated that date with the enthusiasm of true capitalists. This group included a new kid on the block: the Manhattan Fire Arms Manufacturing Company.¹⁰

Manhattan Fire Arms Company was formed in New York City on May 26, 1855, and there are several New York City directory editions (1855-1858) that list the business in that municipality. In actuality, those addresses were office locations only.¹¹ The firm began production in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1856 with a single-shot Bar Hammer and three-, four-, and five-shot, double-action, Pepperbox pistols. Later, there were also five-shot, single-action, .31 caliber revolvers. In 1859, the manufactory relocated to Newark, New Jersey, and began production of their single-action, five- and six-shot, .36 caliber Navy Type revolvers. These were made in five slightly different sequences from 1859-1868 and proved to be Colt’s best seller. By 1868, sales of revolvers ultimately reached 78,000 in spite of never receiving a government contract during the Civil War.¹²

¹⁰. Nutter, 1. Author’s note: The name of Manhattan Fire Arms Company is often misspelled. According to company records, “Fire Arms” should be two separate words, not combined into “Firearms”. According to Mike Meuwly on manhattanfirearms.com, “There are two things that are a challenge in searching the Internet for information on Manhattan Fire Arms. The actual name of the company according to company records is Manhattan Fire Arms Manufacturing Company. If you look closely at the barrel addresses, you will see that “Fire Arms” is two words. I believe the title to Nutter’s book which shows “Firearms” as one word was meant to describe the guns themselves not the company name. But Nutter’s use of the one word in the title adds to the confusion of today.”

¹¹. Nutter, 6.

¹². Flayderman, 110-111; John D. McAulay, Civil War Pistols (Lincoln, RI: Andrew Mowbray Inc., 1992), 114, 143. The .36 Caliber was extremely popular as a secondary martial revolver, purchased by officers, enlisted men, and civilians—but not by the US government. A secondary Confederate weapon is one that was not produced by a Confederate state manufactory but was imported from overseas and purchased by the Confederate government or was US-manufactured and captured from or surrendered by a federal officer or enlisted man.
Manhattan Revolver of Major John B. Jones

As with all Manhattan firearms, the five .36 caliber series are blued and equipped with varnished walnut grips. Factory engraving, inscribed backstraps, and fancy grips of either burled walnut or ivory (plain or carved) were available at additional cost.\(^{13}\) The guns in the series are also identified by the following characteristics:

- **Series 1:** Five-shot cylinder: “MANHATTAN FIRE ARMS MFG. CO. NEW YORK” on top of the barrel; no 1859 patent date on the cylinder; available with 6 1/2", 6", 5", or 4" barrel; estimated number produced: 4,200 between January 1860-1868; serial numbers 1-4200.

- **Series 2:** Five-shot cylinder: “MANHATTAN FIRE ARMS MFG. CO. NEW YORK” on top of the barrel; “DEC 27, 1859” patent date on the cylinder; available with 6 1/2", 5", or 4" barrel; estimated number produced from January 30, 1860-September 1, 1861: 4,200; serial numbers 4201-14,500.

- **Series 3:** Five-shot cylinder: “MANHATTAN FIRE ARMS MFG. CO. NEWARK N.J.” on top of the barrel; 1859 patent date on the cylinder; 6 1/2", 5" or 4" barrel; estimated number produced between September 1, 1861, and April 1, 1864: 30,000; serial numbers 14,501-45,200.

- **Series 4:** Five-shot cylinder: “MANHATTAN FIRE ARMS CO. NEWARK N.J./ PATENTED MARCH 8, 1864” in two lines on top of the barrel; 1859 patent date on the cylinder; 6 1/2", 5", or 4" barrel; estimated number produced between April 1, 1864, and January 30, 1867: 24,000; serial numbers 45,201 to 69,200.

- **Series 5:** Six-shot cylinder: “MANHATTAN FIRE ARMS MFG. CO. NEWARK N.J./ PATENTED MARCH 8, 1864” in two lines on top of the barrel cylinder; stamped with the 1859 patent date, 6 1/2" barrel; estimated number produced between June 30, 1867 and December 1, 1868: 9,000; serial numbers 1-9,000.\(^{14}\)

The .36 caliber Manhattan cylinders were roll-engraved with the following five scenes, each enclosed in an oval frame:

- Three ships in full sail and a rowboat containing six men
- Three men with pistols firing at a man with a sword and two soldiers with muskets and bayonets
- A wounded soldier seated on the ground firing at a cavalryman with a sword
- Two men standing in a rowboat shooting at men on shore
- A cavalry charge against infantry\(^{15}\)

Through the years, the Manhattan Fire Arms Company produced Pepperboxes, Bar Hammer single-shot pistols, and also small .22 caliber, single-action revolvers. The company manufactured fewer than one thousand .31 caliber Manhattan clones with “LONDON PISTOL COMPANY” on the

---

13. Nutter, 158.

14. Flayderman, 111-112; Nutter, 148, 154, 157, 167, 175. Nutter listed the first serial numbers of each series as 0 (175). Because these are estimated numbers, I changed the 0 to 1 to avoid questions as to why the same number appears in different series. Manhattan must have considered their Series 5 a new model because the serial numbers begin over, starting with 1. Also, Mr. Nutter believes the Series 5 to have been the best Manhattan firearms the company produced (187).

15. Nutter, 148-149.
Manhattan Revolver of Major John B. Jones

Manhattan Revolver of Major John B. Jones

barrel top and “PATENT DEC. 27, 1859” stamped on the frame below the cylinder. It is believed that the reason for the clones was because they were sub-quality .31 caliber Manhattans. The firm wanted to sell them with a name that would prevent the public from knowing their true origin and not damage the manufactory’s reputation in an extremely competitive market.16

On November 23, 1868, Manhattan Fire Arms incorporated as American Standard Tool Company, and production priority shifted from firearms to tools and machines. With the decline of firearms production, Manhattan produced its last two revolvers. One was a Saturday Night Special type of .22 caliber cartridge single-shot marked “HERO / M.F.A. CO.”, and the last was another .22 caliber cartridge revolver with the barrel marked “AMERICAN STANDARD TOOL CO.”17

During the Panic of 1873, the American Tool Company ceased operation. From April 1869 to February 1873, it had manufactured about 30,000 Heroes and 40,000 .22 caliber, cartridge, single-action revolvers identical to the Manhattans.18

Major John B. Jones, the Ranger whose Manhattan Revolver is displayed in the Texas Ranger Museum, was the man chosen by Texas Governor Coke to lead the Frontier Battalion. He was considered by his contemporaries as handsome enough to turn women’s heads. A neighbor once portrayed him as the perfection of neatness, dressed in a dark, well-kept suit and wearing a white shirt with a black bow tie. The neighbor also described a heavy black moustache and dark hair, smooth olive skin, and penetrating black or dark brown eyes that were piercing, twinkling, sparkling, and sympathetic, seeming to see through your very soul.19 But looks can be deceiving. As far as criminals were concerned, the Frontier Battalion’s commander was altogether one of the most dangerous men who ever lived.20

16 Nutter, 85.
17 Nutter, 185; Flayderman, 113.
18 Nutter, 199; Flayderman, 113.
20 Fehrenbach, 587.
Manhattan Revolver of Major John B. Jones

Readers of the Dispatch may wonder why I have provided such little information on the Major Jones. That's because Chuck Parsons did an outstanding Shining Star article in the Dispatch #16, Spring 2005 issue. Therefore, there is no need to retell Jones's story. I will instead concentrate on his revolver.

Major Jones's Manhattan is a five-shot, Series 4 revolver, serial number 66072, with a 6½” barrel stamped “MANHATTAN FIRE ARMS CO. NEWARK N. J.” in one line and “PATENTED MARCH 8, 1864” below. The revolver's condition indicates use, but not abuse, with a light brown patina covering the metal, and the five-panel cylinder scenes worn but still visible enough to recognize them if one knows what to look for. The walnut grips still contain a generous amount their original varnish. Unlike the case at Colt's Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company, there is no known chronological record of serial numbers for Manhattan Fire Arms Company. However, the Series 4 revolver did not go into production until April 1, 1864, and the high serial number of Major Jones's revolver suggests post-Civil War manufacture during the historical period of old west Texas Rangers, gunslingers, and Indian fights.21 Solely because of the inscription on the backstrap, I believe Major Jones received the Manhattan on the day of or soon after his commission and appointment as commander of the Frontier Battalion on May 9, 1874.22

The date 1874 is approximately one year after the introduction of the Colt Peacemaker and six years after the beginning of percussion revolvers converted by Colt and others to fire metallic cartridges. Many gunmen did not immediately abandon their percussion cap and ball revolvers to acquire the new metallic cartridge models. This was due to expense and lack of availability of the weapons and ammunition required. Many were also reluctant to give up tried and true firearms. Their trusty weapons had been used in many life-threatening instances such as the Civil War, and many were hesitant to gamble their lives on new and yet unproven weapons. Therefore, stating that Major Jones received and used a percussion revolver several years after the introduction of metallic cartridge handguns is a historical fact rather than a writer’s wish.23

The detail that Major Jones's Manhattan's backstrap is inscribed "Major J. B. JONES Texas Rangers" is enough historical evidence to indicate the revolver was a presentation to him. It is not a gun that he purchased before his assignment/commission and then had inscribed to commemorate the event. Of the thousands of 19th century handguns displayed in museums and offered for sell by scrupulous dealers, only a fraction of a percent are professionally inscribed. More than 99% were owned by men who never paid to have their handguns engraved with their initials, name, and/or

21 John D. McAulay, Civil War Pistols: A survey of the Handguns of the American Civil War (Lincoln: Andrew Mowbray Inc., 1992), 118; Bill O’Neal, Encyclopedia of Western Gunfighters, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983),10-14; Robert M. Utley, Lone Star Justice: The First Century of the Texas Rangers (New York: Berkley Books, 2002). A revolver serial normally indicates date of manufacture (if the records are available, such as Colt’s is) but not date of shipment. Also, some serial numbers were in batches rather than chronological order.

22 Even if the assumption is incorrect, that in no way lessons the historical significance Jones’s revolver.

organization. I believe the same is true for gun owners today. However, presentations seem to demand a professional inscription to document the event. Therefore, the featured Manhattan revolver inscribed on the backstrap “Maj. J.P. JONES Texas Rangers” seems more likely than not to indicate a presentation.24

I believe friends of Major Jones purchased the Manhattan from a local gun dealer such as J.C. Petmecky at 507 Congress Avenue in Austin and then paid a jeweler to hand-inscribe the backstrap. As a token of their respect and admiration, they presented the handgun to the recently commissioned Texas Ranger major and Frontier Battalion commander.25 Nineteenth century Texas Ranger-documented weapons are extremely rare, and the Manhattan used by Major John P. Jones is one of the rarest.26

24. David V. Stroud, Inscribed Union Swords: 1861-1865 (Kilgore, TX: Pinecrest Pub. Co., 1983), 18. An 1864 Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper ad mentions the engraving of soldiers’ identification pins at 3 cents per letter, which would have been about 75 cents ($20.00 in 2008) for that of Major Jones. As with all historically inscribed weapons, one should be aware of modern-day fake inscriptions.


26. The inscription reads as a presentation rather than something Major Jones would have had inscribed to document ownership simply because of the S included after Ranger.

Thanks to Kevin Hoffman of Civil War Preservations http://www.civilwarpreservations.com for allowing me to write an article featuring Major John P. Jones’s revolver.
Thanks to Ruth for providing the outstanding photographs.
Some Texas Rangers have gained national recognition for their contributions to the establishment of law and order. In the rush to tell their stories, it is often forgotten that relatively unknown privates also contributed, acting bravely, following orders, and engaging outlaws in life-threatening situations. Private George R. Bingham of Frontier Battalion’s Company D, a virtually unknown Texas Ranger, died in the line of duty while engaged in a gunfight against outlaws in West Texas. His life before the tragedy remains obscure; his origins are uncertain. It was only when he joined the Rangers that his actions were recorded:

The other three desperadoes were captured and lodged in jail at Fort Davis. Among those captured is Jesse Evans, one of the most notorious highwaymen now living. He operated in Colorado and New Mexico, and was known by all as a brave, daring robber, who defied the officers and took possession of whole towns when it suited his purpose. This was his first trip to Texas, and to be gobbled up by Gen. Jones’ men, has no doubt disgusted him with Texas in general and the alert wide-awake Texas rangers in general.¹

¹ Daily Democratic Statesman (Austin, Texas), 9 July 1880.
Western buffs readily recognize Jesse Evans, the desperado whose name will be forever linked with that of Billy the Kid. Virtually every book dealing with the Kid devotes some space to Evans. We are concerned here not only with the Texas crimes of Jesse Evans, but also the man whose death placed him behind the unforgiving walls of Huntsville State Prison: George R. Bingham, a Texas Ranger of Company D, Frontier Battalion, who was killed in action.

Although the printed material about the Kid is voluminous, our factual knowledge of Jesse Evans is limited. Two book-length biographies give recognition to the man. The first, Jesse Evans: A Texas Hide-Burner, was written and published by the late Texas historian Ed Bartholomew. The second, Jesse Evans: Lincoln County Badman, by Grady E. McCright and James H. Powell, focuses principally on his involvement in the Lincoln County War of New Mexico Territory. Even with these two biographies and numerous articles dealing with Evans, he remains "one of the many enigmas relating to the Wild West." Almost as if to prove that the outlaws attract much more attention than the lawmen, not even a single periodical article has been devoted to George R. Bingham.

Two descriptive lists in the Texas Adjutant General’s Records provide scant information about Texas Ranger George R. Bingham. One identifies him as G. R. Bingham and a native of Missouri. His occupation prior to joining the service is given as a stock raiser. He was described as five feet nine inches tall, had a florid complexion, red hair, and blue eyes. His ranger companions knew him as “Red.” He was born about the year 1852. This early list shows he was enlisted on 1 September 1878. A second descriptive list in the same grouping of records provides the same information, but adds that he was enlisted by Capt. D. W. Roberts in Company D in Kimble County, Texas.

Ann L. Bingham, head of household, thirty-two, in the 5th Ward of St. Louis, is recorded by the Missouri census as living with three children: Laura, aged twelve; George, aged ten; and Charles, aged six years. All claimed Missouri as their place of birth. The family has not been found on a census return of 1870.

What George R. Bingham did from his early years in Missouri until he entered Texas is a mystery. One published report stated he was in Denison, Grayson County, Texas, for a while prior to moving further west to locate in Menard County. The item, based on a special telegram from Austin, described Bingham as “a young man, a zealous and active officer and a lively and popular comrade. He came from Denison to Menard where he joined the rangers.”

His name first appears on the Frontier Battalion Company D Muster Rolls in August 1878. Captain Daniel Webster Roberts, an experienced frontiersman, recorded that he was enlisted on 6 August as a private. Bingham’s service records reveal that he first enlisted on 6 August 1878. The pay period ended on 31 August and he received thirty-four dollars for that service. In an apparent

---

3 Grady E. McCright and James H. Powell, Jesse Evans: Lincoln County Badman (College Station: Early West Series, 1983).
5 Adjutant General Files, Texas State Archives. Hereafter cited as AGF, TSA.
6 Federal Census, St. Louis County, Missouri, 5th Ward, 19.
7 Galveston Daily News, 9 July 1880.
8 Company D Muster Rolls, Austin, AGF, TSA.
contradiction, the first descriptive list which accompanied the Muster Rolls states he was enlisted by Captain Roberts in Kimble County on 1 September 1878.9

Under Roberts were two sergeants: Warren Wesley Worcester and Lamartine Pemberton Sieker; two corporals: John W. Lawhon and Edward A. Sieker; and two dozen privates. Of this aggregate of twenty-nine men, only Roberts had earned fame fighting Indians. Sergeant L. P. Sieker later rose in the ranks to become Adjutant General and Quartermaster of the Frontier Battalion. His brother Ed served less time in the service but gained recognition as a dependable servant of the state. The privates, who remain little more than names on the muster roll, were A. E. Alexander, H. T. Ashburn, Victor Barry, Bingham, J. S. Brown, S. D. Coalson, L. H. Cook, M. G. Coyle, Frank DeJarnett, William Garrett, D. W. Gourley, W. T. Harris, John Hetherly, J. H. Moore, Jerry Roberts, S. E. Shannon, John Stengel, W. F. Sheffield, C. F. Wall, T. A. Weed, C. M. Wilkes, J. C. Webb, S. A. Henry and H. W. Merrill.10

The Monthly Returns prepared by the captains provide only a brief summary of the scouts made, arrests made and attempts to arrest during a given month. The summary only identifies the ranger who was in charge of the scout. It provides his name, how many men were with him, and the number of miles marched. Bingham was certainly on numerous scouts, but with few exceptions, his name rarely appeared in the monthly returns.

Bingham recognized the danger involved in hunting for fugitives. He had never drawn his pistol at another human being to force a surrender—until his last day. On 30 April 1880, Privates Bingham and J. W. Miller left Camp San Saba to travel to Fort McKavett, where they arrested William Beavers, Ben Ellis, John Shaw, and A. Handy. The men were charged with disturbing the peace, but after their arrest and delivery to authorities, the charges could not be sustained and they had to be released. This scout took but one day and only ten miles on horseback.11

Perhaps unknown to Captain Roberts and the rangers was that a reign of terror was beginning in the far off Pecos and Presidio Counties area of West Texas. On 26 January 1880, Pecos County Sheriff Harry Ryan had sent a lengthy telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones expressing his fears:

In a few days an attempt will be made to forcibly seize a heard [sic] of cattle in this county and take them to New Mexico & the result will be a cow war[.] Should the New Mexican party succeed it will be a precedent for band[s] of Lawless men to come from New Mexico and Rob cattle in Texas[.] When the fight begins life & property will be very insecure in the vicinity & in view of these circumstances I request that Capt [Junius] Peak be ordered to the Pecos where I will meet him. Answer so that I may know if I can depend on the Rangers.12

A “cow war” did not commence as Sheriff Ryan feared, but troubles escalated for the honest people of Presidio and Pecos Counties. In June 1879, burglars broke into the home of rancher George Crosson. They were captured but then escaped jail, and only one was re-captured and sent to Huntsville. The others were at large until May 1880. About the same time, George Claxson

---

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Monthly Record of Scouts, 30 April 1880, AGF, TSA.
12 Monthly Record of Scouts, AGF, TSA.
was murdered and robbed by unknown parties. Early settler Diedrick Dutchover lost fourteen head of horses to raiding Indians within a mile and a half from town. Juan Gutieres was slain by Indians only a few miles from Fort Davis. Adolo Reiqis was murdered in late July 1879. His murderer was captured but then escaped jail and fled to Mexico. Perhaps most terrifying of all was the murder of W. H. Banks, the assistant jailer, who was murdered inside the jail on 23 November 1879. The murderers and prisoners who escaped also left Jailer A. McAfee near death, but he recovered from his wounds. There were numerous other examples of horses, cattle and sheep being stolen, as well as burglaries and murders—by both Indians and white outlaws. One county official recorded outrages he was aware of and mailed the list to the adjutant general’s office in Austin.\textsuperscript{13}

It was indeed a “deplorable state of affairs” in that section. To the good citizens of Pecos and Presidio Counties the governor could not act quickly enough. The \textit{Statesman} of Austin reported that the rangers were requested. “It seems” reported the \textit{Statesman}, “that large numbers of lawless men congregate around the cattle camps in New Mexico, and from there raid into the state [of Texas] and commit depredations.”\textsuperscript{14}

Governor Oran M. Roberts and Adjutant General John B. Jones were acting upon the requests for Texas Ranger assistance. If there had been doubt before, there wasn’t after the most outrageous blow from the lawless; the general merchandise store of Joseph Sender and Charles Siebenborn in Fort Davis was robbed in broad daylight on 19 May 1880 by a trio of thieves. The men were recognized as Jesse Evans of New Mexico, and brothers Bud Graham alias Ace Carr, and Charles Graham, alias Charles Gross. How many district courts wanted Jesse Evans is undetermined, but the two Graham boys had been indicted for murder in Williamson County, Texas. While Evans and the Graham brothers were doing their work in Sender & Siebenborn’s store two others—John Gunter and another Graham brother—acted as lookouts. Anyone who rode up was invited to take a drink with them to divert attention from the actual robbery. The trio of thieves got away with a thousand dollars, plus merchandise valued at one hundred dollars. They also robbed Edgar G. Glime and F. W. Ruoff, two men who happened to be in the store at the time. The next day August Diamond’s house was burglarized “by unknown parties.”\textsuperscript{15}

The daring robbery of the Sender & Siebenborn store caused concern as far away as El Paso. Two days following the robbery, several merchants feared the robbers were headed their way to continue their depredations. On 21 May, men representing the firms of Kettesen & Dayton, S. & W. Schutz, Ynocente Ochoa, and B. Schuster & Co. telegraphed Adjutant General Jones that “a band of outlaws headed by one Jesse Evans of Lincoln Co. fame have robbed stores at Fort Davis in broad daylight yesterday & that they are on their way up here to commit probably the same outrage[.]” It was understood by this message that they wanted the rangers to come to their assistance.\textsuperscript{16}

Pecos County Judge George Milton Frazer wanted ranger assistance as well. He telegraphed Governor O. M. Roberts on 24 May about the band of robbers camped near on the Pecos River. He

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{13} “Outrages and Indian Raids in Presidio Co. from June 1, 1879 to June 1, 1880” [1–2], AGF, TSA. This seven page document hereafter cited as “Outrages.”
\item\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Colorado Citizen} (Columbus, Texas), 10 June 1880, reprinting an item from an undated \textit{Statesman}.
\item\textsuperscript{15} “Outrages”; Federal Census of Presidio County, 12 June 1880, 87.
\item\textsuperscript{16} Telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 21 May 1880, AGF, TSA.
\end{footnotes}
Company D, Frontier Battalion, Texas Rangers

Top: Doug Coalson, Ed Wallace, Lewis Cook, George Hughes
Row 3: Ed Sieker, L.P. Sieker, Captain D.W. Roberts, Henry Ashburn, Doc Gourley
Row 4: Tom Sparks, Bob Roberts, William “Slick” Clements, J.L. Rogers, George R. Bingham, Jim Renick
Bottom: Jim Moore, Sam Henry, E.J. Pound, Henry Thomas
explained that this was the same gang that had robbed Sender & Siebenborn’s store and that the gang was committing more thefts. Attempting to make the Texas administrator act out of a sense of guilt, he stated he wanted ten rangers “to assist us to capture them” but if “you can’t it will be useless to ever ask any assistance again.”

Jones sent ten rangers from Fort Mckavett in Menard County to the Fort Davis area. They had thirty days’ rations and funds to purchase forage and were ordered to report to Judge Frazer and “operate against out-laws.” Jones advised Frazer of the orders given the rangers and that they would “come as rapidly as possible” and that he had no men any nearer than Fort Mckavett.

The rangers were from Captain Daniel W. Roberts’ Company D of the Frontier Battalion with Sergeant Ed A. Sieker in charge. The men were George R. Bingham, Samuel A. Henry, Richard R. “Dick” Russell, and D. T. Carson. Later Sergeant L. B. Caruthers from Company E arrived to join in the work, but the names of the others are not recorded. They reached Fort Stockton on 6 June. Ten days later, Judge Frazer communicated to Governor Roberts that they had as yet “not been able to apprehend any of the robbers but will get them if he [Sergeant Sieker] is allowed to remain.”

The outlaws then boldly rode to Fort Stockton and remained there for several days. On 1 June, a little before sundown, Sheriff Harry Ryan and a posse surrounded Silverstein’s Saloon. Carr was arrested, “suspected of being one of the party that robbed a store at Fort Davis a few days ago. He is also believed to be one of the Peg Leg stage robbers, and a very dangerous character. A number of shots were fired during the progress of the arrest, but none took effect.” Carr’s friends made their escape.

Judge Frazer, feeling anxious as the rangers had not yet arrived, telegraphed Jones on 3 June that “they should be here now” and advised that once they got there, there would be “plenty of work for them.” Missing the irony of the situation that the citizens had already captured one of the robbers without the presence of the rangers, Frazer proudly announced that they had captured Carr and in addition left the other robbers afoot—as their horses had been captured. He believed they were “probably good to capture them if they do not get fresh horses before the rangers arrive.” Nevertheless they captured no one but Carr and remained “in great fear and on the alert.” Whoever wrote the report to the Galveston Daily News optimistically believed that the other gang members “w[ould] probably be captured soon.” Carr was identified as one of the robbers by Joseph Sender and placed in jail “and a guard is on the lookout to prevent his escape or recapture by his friends.”

Once at Fort Davis, Sergeant Sieker had the responsibility of guarding Carr in the insecure Fort Davis jail. Since it was common knowledge that the rest of the gang was still in the area and would attempt to liberate Carr, Sergeant Caruthers ordered Sieker to take the prisoner to Fort Stockton, where the jail was more secure. Sieker and his detachment jailed Carr there on 18 June. Somehow the gang learned of the removal of the prisoner and made a plan to ambush the rangers in Limpia Canyon. Sieker suspected that might happen and took Carr by a different route to durance

17 Judge G. M. Frazer, telegram to Governor O. M. Roberts, 24 May 1880, AGF, TSA.
18 Adjutant General John B. Jones, telegram to Judge G. M. Frazer, 25 May 1880, AGF, TSA.
19 Judge G. M. Frazer, telegram to Governor O. M. Roberts, 16 June 1880, AGF, TSA.
20 Galveston Daily News, 3 June 1880.
21 Ibid.; Captain Neal Coldwell, telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 10 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
Now the rest of the gang, identified as Evans, August Gross alias John Gunter, and Jesse and Charles Graham, “continued to skulk through the mountains near this place, . . . watching [for] an opportunity to release the prisoner.”

Sergeant Caruthers, who had arrived at Fort Davis the night of Sunday, 6 June, found everything “quiet now” but the people still wary and “always on the look out for the outlaws from Mexico and the Pecos.” He had learned there were “a great many outlaws congregated on the Pecos, from Lancaster up to Seven Rivers, a good many of them are between the New Mexico line and Horsehead Crossing and have been compelled to leave New Mexico.” By then, the citizens of Forts Davis and Stockton had offered a reward of $1,100 for the others who had robbed Sender & Siebenborn’s store. He also reported the arrest of Carr, but pointed out that there had been a gunfight with the citizens, “who only captured Bud, and let the other two escape—in fact was badly managed by the aforesaid parties." Believing the Graham brothers were wanted in Williamson County he had wired for *capiases* to arrest them.

Caruthers learned the gang planned to rob the stores of Abbott and Davis and O. M. Keesey, but the attack was delayed because of Ace Carr’s arrest. Caruthers also attempted to identify the gang members. Bud Graham, alias Carr, was a brother of Charles Graham, alias Charles Gross. Another brother was “Dolly” Graham alias George Davis. Graham, alias Davis, “being in town with a commorade [sic] by the name of John Gunter, but I find he passed in New Mexico, under the name of John Gross, but I think his real name is August Gross of Fort Griffin, the third party in the robbery here, one Jesse Evans, has several indictments against him in New Mexico.” Further, Caruthers wrote, “the band [consisted of] some twenty men last year, and that they have their agents here and in Stockton, their agent here is Capt. Tyson, his real name is John Selman, who I find is Indicted in Shackelford Co. I think from what I can learn that he is Chief of the gang and as he was getting very scarry [sic], I had him appointed Deputy Sheriff and Jailer as the Jailer had just resigned.”

Caruthers apparently could not appreciate the irony of the situation of making John Selman a jailer, unless he believed Selman would do his “duty” to prevent prisoners from escaping. Caruthers had additional concerns. The outlaws constantly changed the location of their camps in the mountains. He had thought of a plan by which, he believed, the outlaws would make an effort to escape jail “and think it would have worked out all right, if the Sheriff (Captain Wilson) had not let all out on a drunk.”

Although at this point Caruthers would not arrest Selman, “because I know, that I could not hold him here,” a week later he had him in custody. Apparently the arrest was made by Sergeant Sieker, although the details are unknown. Here Sieker complained of the small number of rangers he had, too few to guard the jail or do any effective scouting. Selman offered to identify the members of

---

22 Captain Neal Coldwell, telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 10 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
23 Sergeant Caruthers, telegram to Lieutenant C. L. Nevill, 8 June 1880, AGF, TSA.
24 Sergeant Caruthers, telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 28 June 1880, AGF, TSA.
27 Semi-monthly return of Capt. D. W. Roberts, 1 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
the Shackelford mob which had murdered his partner John M. Larn back in 1878, apparently in exchange for his freedom. Caruthers refused of course, and managed to keep Selman in custody even though a jail release was almost successful.\textsuperscript{28} Carr “came very near making good his escape through the kindness of the jailer at Fort Davis, who has since been recognized as belonging to the same gang. He is known on the Pecos river as Jno. Smith, at Fort Davis as Jno. Liesen and in Shackelford County, where indictments are against him, as John Sellman [sic].”\textsuperscript{29}

To reduce some of the pressure on his rangers, Sergeant Sieker wanted Selman to be delivered to Shackelford County and notified Georgia-born Sheriff William R. Cruger to that effect. Cruger wrote that he “would not answer for John Selman’s life if I brought him here, and also that the charges against him could not be sustained by law.” Thus, Selman was not wanted back in Shackelford County—and if he were delivered to county seat Albany, “nine chances to one that the mob will hang him.”\textsuperscript{30} To give Sieker and the authorities there some satisfaction, Adjutant General Jones ordered him to deliver Selman to Fort Concho, Tom Green County, and turn him over to the county sheriff there.\textsuperscript{31}

Sergeants Sieker and Caruthers certainly had their work well defined: guard the jail, deliver Selman, watch suspected county officials for malfeasance, and scout the mountains for members of the Jesse Evans gang. The break they needed soon came.

On 29 June, someone informed them that some of the gang had been seen in the mountains in the vicinity of Presidio del Norte, almost one hundred miles south of Fort Davis. On the night of 1 July with Sergeant Sieker in charge, a scout was ready to begin the hunt for the Evans gang. Sieker selected Privates George R. Bingham, D. T. Carson, Samuel A. Henry, Richard R. Russell, and Sgt. Caruthers; they took Clato Herridio along as their guide. By the afternoon of the third, they were between fifteen and eighteen miles from Presidio del Norte, almost on the Rio Grande. Sergeant Sieker provided the best account of what happened then:

When within 18 miles of that place, we discovered four men, with pack horse, going towards the rough mountains. We advanced on them, they commenced running & drew their guns & fired on us. We shot at them & a running fight lasted for 1-½ miles. When they run up a large mountain, we followed. As soon as we were on top of the mtn. we soon discovered they were concealed behind a ledge of rocks, as a solid volley was fired at our little band. As there were but three of us at that time, before we dismounted, a shot cut Carson’s hat brim, and another passed under his leg, cutting his stirrup leather & wounding his horse in the side. They shot volley after volley at us, at forty yards range in open view & they behind the rocks. Carson shot one of the party in the side, but he was determined to ‘sell out,’ and kept firing, around our heads, very closely. When I saw him stick his head out to shoot, I shot him between the eyes, [the bullet] coming out at the back of his head. Bingham was to my left, and about 35 yards to the rear, when he was shot through the heart. We charged the party and took their stronghold. Then we had the advantage for the first time, and then they surrendered. Had I known Bingham was killed at that time, I should have killed them all. But we had disarmed them before we knew it. Then they prayed for mercy.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{28} Sergeant Caruthers, telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 14 June 1880, AGF, TSA.

\textsuperscript{29} Galveston Daily News, 8 July 1880.

\textsuperscript{30} William R. Cruger, telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 1 and 2 July 1880, AGF, TSA.

\textsuperscript{31} Adjutant General John B. Jones, telegram to Sergeant Sieker, 12 July 1880, AGF, TSA.

\textsuperscript{32} Sergeant Sieker, telegram to Governor O. M. Roberts, 21 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
Although initially the rangers outnumbered the outlaws, when the shooting started it was an even numbered affair—four outlaws and four rangers. Sergeant Caruthers was too far behind the rest of the group to participate. Private Henry was with the pack animal, riding a mule, as his horse had gone lame. Bingham had been shot and killed in the first volley from the outlaws’ guns, leaving Sieker, Carson, and Russell to carry on the fight against the outlaw quartet.33

Carson had nearly been shot in the head and his horse was wounded, yet he continued to fight. Sieker maintained the presence of mind to get off a careful shot—under fire—and placed his bullet between the eyes of Jesse Graham. This demoralized the remaining three and with the odds even, they surrendered. The outlaws captured were identified as Charles Gross Graham, alias Charles Groves or Graves; August Gross, alias John Gunter; and Jesse Evans, “the noted New Mexico desperado.” As soon as the fight was over and the prisoners secured—and Bingham’s body discovered—Sieker sent guide Herridio to Presidio del Norte to request the services of a coroner.34

The next day Herridio and the coroner arrived, it was determined that “G.R. Bingham came to his death in the discharge of his duty—and that Jesse Graham came to his death by resisting arrest.”35

The excitement of the fight gradually ebbed away, with two dead men, Carson’s wounded horse, and two dead horses before them. They were all a mile and a half from the Presidio road, on top of a mountain, a mile above sea level. After the coroner finished with his examination, Bingham—and perhaps Graham—was provided with a temporary burial. “We buried him on the side of the road, and our little squad showed him all the respect we could. We formed and fired three volleys, over his grave, and with saddened hearts, we wound through mountain passes, to [Fort] Davis, arriving safely with our prisoners. The people are happy over our success, & will have Bingham’s remains buried here.”36

Sergeant Sieker kept his promise. On 11 February 1881, he and four men left camp in Musquiz Canyon to bury Bingham. He wrote in his monthly report they “disinterred him on 17th and sent him to Fort Davis where he was reinterred on 20th in town cemetery by Sergt Caruthers.”37 Today, George R. Bingham’s remains still rest in the Pioneer Cemetery at the foot of Dolores Mountain in Fort Davis. This cemetery probably originated in the early to mid-1870s, and although not officially

33 Sergeant Sieker, telegram to Captain D. W. Roberts, 12 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
34 Captain Neal Coldwell, telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 10 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
35 Ibid.
36 Sergeant Sieker, telegram to Governor O.M. Roberts, 11 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
37 Sergeant Sieker, telegram to John B. Jones, 28 February 1881, AGF, TSA.
designated as a cemetery, it was used by people of all races and beliefs. Only a few stone markers remain there today.

Jesse Evans and the others paid for their crime of resisting the rangers. Not knowing that Bingham was killed at first fire, Sieker accepted their surrender. Had he known, the other three would have been shot as well, but instead of executing them, the prisoners were delivered to the jail in Fort Davis. On 7 July, Captain Neil Coldwell telegraphed Jones that the trio had had a “preliminary examination before Judge Duke on charge of murder of private Bingham & committed without bail.” He further explained what his men would have to do, that it was “necessary that we guard jail until these men are tried in October[,] the arrest of these men will put a quietus on the trouble heretofore existing here except horse stealing by Mexican thieves which is likely to continue until broken up by Rangers.” He estimated that if there were fifteen men stationed there, the country could be entirely free of thieves and fugitives from justice within three months. Five men would be needed to guard the jail and the others assigned to scout. Although the local populace could not produce enough dependable men to guard the jail, “citizens [were] much elated by [the] success of rangers & [said] that by their gallantry have broken the reign of terror here.”

By late September, Captain J. W. Graham of Georgetown had arrived in Fort Davis to see to his sons’ defense. By the time court began on 4 October Mr. Graham had found an attorney who secured bond for them. Once out of their irons, the boys jumped bail and disappeared; their final demise is unknown. Jesse Evans was found guilty of participating in the robbery of Sender & Siebenborn’s store, and was also found guilty of the murder of Bingham. He was sentenced to ten years on each count and was received at Huntsville on 1 December 1880 as prisoner number 9078. On 23 May 1882, Evans escaped from a work crew—what happened to him after that date is unknown.

Captain Roberts may have had nothing more to say about the whole affair, but what Adjutant General John B. Jones wrote in 1880 is perhaps the finest eulogy that could be given to Bingham:

The death of poor Bingham is much regretted but of course his fate is that which all take the chance of when they enter such service as we are engaged in.

---

38 Captain Neil Coldwell, telegram to Adjutant General John B. Jones, 7 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
40 Adjutant General John B. Jones, telegram to Captain Roberts, 14 July 1880, AGF, TSA.
In years past, many of us listened to the radio or watched television and heard these words: “A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty Hi-yo, Silver! The Lone Ranger!” Does that bring back memories for you? Well, it does for me! I watched those reruns on television until they were no longer available—evidently, some of you did too.

For those of you who don’t know about the Lone Ranger, the legend started with a gang of outlaws led by Bruce Cavendish, who chased six Texas Rangers. Only one Ranger survived, and that is how the name “Lone Ranger” originated. To learn more about the legend and many other facts about the Lone Ranger, read Bill O’Neal’s article, “Who Was that Masked Man?” in the Texas Ranger Dispatch. The website address for this edition is listed at the end of this article.

Eddie and I are still interviewing for the Texas Ranger Oral History Project. During a trip in April through the Hill Country, we talked with nine more retired Rangers, bringing our total to thirty-three.
since September 2008. Several times, we have heard some of them say that the Lone Ranger was their first inspiration for becoming a Texas Ranger.

On our way back to Longview, we decided to stop in Rusk, Texas, for a few days at the Texas State Railroad (formerly Rusk State Park). Imagine my joy when I heard that the theme of train rides that weekend was “The Lone Ranger Rides Again!”

After setting up the motor home in the campground, we hurried to the depot to await the arrival of the last train of the day. We heard the whistle signaling its arrival and then saw the train emerge from the wooded area bordering the track. After moving to the platform to watch the faces of people exiting the vintage train cars, we saw many young children wearing their very own black masks, just like the Lone Ranger. Some were dressed in western clothes including boots, hats, and spurs, and all wore smiles. As the Lone Ranger and Tonto emerged from the baggage car, people rushed toward them. One “child at heart” (probably in her mid 60s) obviously had a great time, loudly proclaiming her joy.

On Sunday morning, we returned to the depot to watch the activities before the first train departed. After the passengers boarded, a few “good guys” got on with what appeared to be loot. When the whistle blew two times, the train roared away from the depot at a speed similar to that of a turtle. At some point during the ride, a robbery occurred, and of course you know the rest—the Lone Ranger and Tonto appeared on the scene and saved the day. Although they didn’t appear on horses, they did show up in time to foil the robbery attempts. Since there were three trains each day, the Lone Ranger and Tonto actually had to save the day three times on Saturday and three more times on Sunday. That’s just like today’s Rangers: they keep on and keep on until the job is done.

If you want to share your childhood memories of the Lone Ranger with grandchildren or maybe want to relive them yourself, find out when the Lone Ranger and Tonto will ride again and enjoy the trip. The website for the Texas State Railroad is listed at the end of this article. I had fun that weekend reliving some of my childhood memories as well as thinking about the Texas Rangers.

According to Wikipedia, the opening narration for some of the later Lone Ranger episodes ended with this statement:

With his faithful Indian companion, Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early western
United States. Nowhere in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. From out of the past come the thundering hoof beats of the great horse Silver! The Lone Ranger rides again!

Although our modern-day Texas Rangers don’t have sidekicks named Tonto, wear masks, or often ride horses, they are still fighting for law and order, and they are still champions of justice.

There are other similarities between Texas Rangers and the Lone Ranger. When I watched the series each Saturday morning, I saw Clayton Moore portray the Lone Ranger and Jay Silverheels in the role of Tonto. They were positive role models, and the Lone Ranger was a hero to those of us watching. Today’s Rangers are also role models, and although they deny it, they are also heroes. Any job in law enforcement is dangerous, and that is certainly true for a Texas Ranger.

Eddie and I are honored to be interviewing retired Texas Rangers for the Oral History Project. Its purpose is to preserve the history—the times gone by—of the legendary Texas Ranger Service and the Texas Rangers. Without each individual Ranger, there would be no Ranger Service and no history to record; that is why the project is so important. This project will communicate to future generations what the Ranger Service faced during our time. Without this information, the accomplishments, hardships, and sacrifices of our modern-day Rangers would be lost.

As we talk with the Rangers, we try to capture a portion of the life and service of each one, and we find humble law enforcement officers who are hesitant to talk about themselves. Like the Lone Ranger of my childhood, officers in the Ranger Service follow a strict moral code, and they are respected and admired.

When Eddie and I go to a home or an office for an interview, the standard comment from a retiree is, “This will only take about 15 minutes.” That is definitely not the case! Each interview is distinct; the cases, the stories, the accomplishments, and the personalities—all are different. But one thing is for sure, each Ranger has a story to tell. Often included in the narrative is the excitement of a case as well as the detailed, sometimes tedious, work required to solve a crime. In any event, it is always about the job of a Ranger.

Eddie and I plan to start interviews again in the fall, so if you retired Rangers haven’t been called on yet, don’t be surprised when you hear from me! For now, however, we have decided to escape the Texas heat at a cattle ranch in Montana. We hope to enjoy cooler weather and to experience some new adventures.

So until next time . . . “Hi-yo Silver! Hi-yo Silver, away!”

Texas State Railroad: www.texasstaterr.com Phone: 888-987-2461.

SPECIAL OPERATION IN THE BIG BEND AREA

News and photos courtesy of Captain Jerry Byrne

---

Co. E Rangers, including Capt. Jerry Byrne (E), Lt. Brooks Long, Jess Malone, Brian Burney, Dave Duncan, Steve Rayburn, Steve Boyd, Danny Crawford, Aaron Grigsby, and Rangers Matt Cawthon (F), Joe Harrelson (A), Tom Davis (A), Tony Deluna (D), AJ Miller (G), and Lt. Brian Burney (C), all worked a special operation in the Big Bend area over Easter 2009 weekend, assisting Big Bend law enforcement agencies.

Rangers Jerry Byrne, Matt Cawthon, David Duncan, Tony Deluna, and Brooks Long went to the Brite Ranch, located in Presidio County south of Valentine, and searched the area for smuggling routes. The Brite Ranch, where the last bandit raid occurred in 1918, is where Rangers, soldiers, and ranchers got into a prolonged gun battle with Mexican bandits. The old John Wayne movie *Big Jake* was partly based on this event. The Brite Ranch Store and post office, where the bandits hung a hostage and cut his throat. Blood from the scene is still there. The safe they tried to burglarize is still in the post office.
Captain Jerry Byrne (E) (right) and Sergeant Matt Cawthon (F) share April 11 birthdays. Rangers are notorious practical jokers, and this day was a perfect opportunity. The always thoughtful Joe Harelson of Co. A brought a birthday cake. Joe observed that the cake was originally for someone else—since the name written in icing was “Fred!” But as Captain Byrne said, “It’s the thought that counts . . .”
Eleven Days in Hell

The 1974 Carrasco Prison Siege at Huntsville, Texas

William T. Harper


Review by Captain Kirby W. Dendy
Co. F Texas Rangers, Waco, Texas

Throughout the fall semester of 1973, Lt. Dave Flores of the San Antonio Police Homicide Department kept the total attention of his criminal investigation class at Southwest Texas State University with tales of his pursuit of South Texas dope dealer and murderer Federico (Fred) Gomez Carrasco. Lt. Flores painted a picture of a violent yet intelligent individual who was credited by many with over a hundred murders in Mexico as well as many in Texas. Carrasco’s successful drug operation and his ability to stay one step in front of the law were attributed in large part to his ruthless application of violence, which made him both respected and feared. On numerous occasions, Carrasco had escaped just minutes prior to the arrival of Flores and a squad of officers, who were intent on arresting him. Flores speculated to his class on the possibility of a leak within his own department.

Since I was a twenty-year-old criminal justice student, Lt. Flores’s war stories, especially those relating to Carrasco, were much more entertaining and exciting to me than any fiction in the library or any show on television. Attendance in Flores’s class was virtually always 100% because, like a good action/drama series with a continuing story line, the students felt compelled to show up just to see what happened next. Being young and impressionable, I believed that Dave Flores represented everything good and honorable about law enforcement.

Federico Gomez Carrasco was at the absolute opposite end of the spectrum.

The eleven-day siege at the Walls Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections in Huntsville was orchestrated by Carrasco and occurred barely one month after my graduation from the Texas DPS Highway Patrol Academy. Even though my sergeant area was several hundred miles away in West Texas, rumors circulated almost daily that we might be sent to relieve the Troopers in Huntsville.
to do perimeter duty. As a result, we paid close attention to what was going on in anticipation of possibly becoming involved.

*Eleven Days in Hell* is a very well researched and documented book. It illustrates to me how accurate some of the information we were receiving actually was and how wrong the rest of it turned out to be.

William T. Harper obviously spent a tremendous amount of time and effort researching a wide variety of sources for the information presented in his book. This includes official reports, numerous personal interviews with participants, transcripts of court proceedings, audio tapes of the actual negotiations, and many more. The author has done an excellent job in weaving all the information together from these varied places to present a very thorough, clear picture of the entire ordeal. The story is covered primarily from the perspectives of the hostages and their families, the prison administration/law enforcement, and the hostage-taking convicts.

Also depicted is the impact upon the local community. The inability to interview the perpetrators (two were killed at the scene and the other was executed in 1991) made it impossible for Mr. Harper to definitively answer many questions:

- What was going through their minds at various stages of the siege?
- What was their ultimate goal beyond the immediate escape?
- Did Carrasco believe someone abandoned him after he initiated the siege? and, if so, who?

Because of his exhaustive research, however, Harper provides the reader with the ability to make presumably accurate suppositions to these issues.

The action begins with the blast of a .357 Magnum on the first page and ends within moments of the final shot being fired on the last page. There is very little background material covering events or participants prior to or after the actual siege.

A very refreshing aspect of the book is the fact that Mr. Harper allows the reader to form opinions of the characters and behaviors of the principal participants. He does not succumb to the tendency of many authors to editorialize or manufacture heroes and villains, and there are many of both in this story that are quite evident. Character flaws and strengths of others are less obvious, allowing the reader to fill in the blanks and coming to their own conclusions. Without providing opinion or comment, the author documents numerous examples of strength and weakness displayed by the hostages in their interaction with the convicts and TDC officials. He also provides similar insight into the immeasurable pressure and drama generated in the command post established in the Director of the Texas Department of Corrections Office.

For those not familiar with this incident, the details of the ending will not be revealed here. Suffice it to say that it concluded on the eleventh day with deaths and injuries inflicted upon hostages and hostage takers. I share the author’s surprise that this siege has not previously been documented in detail in the media, print, or movies. The impacts of this event upon corrections and law enforcement are tremendous and are still being felt today. The heroes, who are dedicated employees of the State of Texas, deserve to have their stories told. Fortunately for them, William T. Harper has done an excellent job relating this event.
Seldom in the history of Texas has there been a case where so many individuals of one particular family contributed so much to the state’s long and illustrious history of law enforcement. After reading this book, one finds that “keeping up with the Joneses” would indeed be a challenge.

The story of this Jones family began in 1835 when Augustus Harris Jones arrived in the future Republic of Texas to help secure its independence from Mexican rule. After participating in several battles of the revolution, he later returned to Georgia to bring his extended family of brothers and sisters and his new bride back to Texas.

One brother, Isham, enlisted with the early Rangers under Captain John C. Hays. He helped repel the Mexican attacks on San Antonio in 1842.

Another sibling, William Early Jones, entered Texas politics, ranched in the Texas Hill Country, and joined McCord’s Texas Frontier Regiment during the Civil War. After the war, he became the first editor of the San Antonio Express and later served as a district judge during Reconstruction. More importantly, he raised seven sons to manhood, all of whom became Texas Rangers:

Willis, the eldest son, enlisted in 1855 and served in Captain William R. Henry’s Texas Mounted Volunteers under James H. Callahan.

James Russell served in Captain John Sansom’s Company C of the Kendall County Minute Men until the formation of the Frontier Battalion in 1874.
William Kenner was with Company F, Frontier Battalion, under Captain Neal Coldwell. His short autobiography, included in the book, provides an interesting firsthand account of his Ranger years and other life experiences.

Brothers Gerry and Pinckney served under Captain Neal Coldwell in Company F, Frontier Battalion, and Gerry participated in the events relating to the Rangers’ involvement in the Mason County “Hoodoo” War between American settlers and German cattlemen.

Emmett was with Company D under Captain Dan Roberts in 1881, rounding up cattle thieves and fence cutters.

The most famous of the Texas Ranger Jones brothers was Frank, who joined several units until his enlistment in Company D under Captain Dan Roberts. He eventually rose to the rank of captain of the company and was tragically killed in 1893 by Mexican bandits at Pirate Island in the Rio Grande, downriver from Ysleta and San Elizario.

A number of other sons, grandsons, and nephews of Augustus H. Jones also held sheriff and Ranger posts over the years and are discussed in the book. In all, the Jones family produced two judges, one mayor, twelve Rangers, four sheriffs, and one deputy sheriff.

Readers will find the story of this particular Jones family to be quite amazing. There are a considerable number of wonderful photographs of many of the Joneses and other early Rangers of note. The family stories that are related in the book are exciting and will be of special interest to any of the descendants.

However, as is the case with many self-published books, a good professional editor would have made the book much more enjoyable. An excess of anecdotal stories disrupt the narrative. Although the book does not flow smoothly, the author has done a tremendous job extracting facts from many primary and secondary sources, and she is meticulous in citing her sources. Anyone interested in the Texas Rangers will want to read about this fascinating family.
This book is a must for anyone interested in Texas Rangers. Here, the Rangers of myth and the wild land they roamed come alive in the mind’s eye through Collins’s realistic and picturesque descriptiveness. It is well documented and almost entirely based on primary documents, some utilized for the first time. Texas Devils reads more like an adventure story than an academic work that makes a significant contribution to Texas and Ranger history.

One can visualize the lay of the land, the faces, and dress of Rangers Ben McCulloch, Jack Hayes, Rip Ford, and others, as well as the horses they rode. At home under the open sky, these men roamed the chaparral and weathered the heat, insects, cold, rain, and drought. They were as hard and unforgiving as the brush country they traversed in pursuit of Indians, Mexican outlaws, or dreams of territorial expansion and grandeur. Whether during the Mexican War or the forays of Mexicans and Texans across the Rio Grande, Collins examines atrocities committed by Mexicans and Rangers in the name of revenge, prejudice, and justice. Texas Devils challenges the myths of Rangers bringing law and order. Instead, it gives a balanced view of them as individuals who drifted in and out of groups such as frontier militias, Nicaraguan mercenaries, Knights of the Golden Circle filibusters, and supporters of secession.

Dr. Michael L. Collins, Regents Professor and Hardin Distinguished Professor of American History, is the author or editor of five other books. These include That Damned Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and the American West, 1883-1898; Tales of Texoma: Episodes in the History of the Red River Border; and Profiles in Power: Twentieth Century Texans in Washington.
More Zeal than Discretion
The Westward Adventures of Walter P. Lane

Jimmy L. Bryan Jr.

College Station: Texas A&M University Press. 256 pp., 11 b&w photos, bibliography, index. $35.00 cloth.

Review by Stephen L. Moore

The Battle of San Jacinto, in which Texas wrestled its independence from Mexico, was the defining moment of the military careers of many immigrants who had moved to Texas to make a name for themselves. For Walter Paye Lane, a youth who had immigrated to the United States from Ireland at age four, San Jacinto was but the start of his westward adventures. Author Jimmy L. Bryan Jr., an assistant professor of history at Lamar University in Beaumont, previously edited for publication the 1887 memoirs of Walter Lane. In More Zeal than Discretion, he makes a more thorough examination of the lifestyle of this Texas Ranger leader.

The involvement of Lane through three wars is tracked as he rises from a young cavalry private in the Texas Revolution to the commander of a brigade of Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. This new Lane biography offers a view of Texas in transition from Mexican colonial area to independent republic to statehood. Lane fought at San Jacinto as a buck private, and he narrowly escaped death in the cavalry while riding a horse that possessed “more zeal than integrity.” (p. 19)

Two days after the battle of San Jacinto, Lane was elected second lieutenant of his cavalry company. This young man’s sense of adventure compelled him to join the crew of an armed schooner, on which he had a rank of lieutenant. He served aboard this privateer until October 1837, his ship sailing the Gulf of Mexico against Mexican intruders. Lane next traveled to San Augustine and served in the Texas Militia during the summer of 1838 to help quell a Mexican and Indian rebellion.

After this brief tour, Lane joined an East Texas surveying expedition that endured a largely one-sided battle with Kickapoo Indians in October 1838. He was severely wounded in the leg, and sixteen others were killed. Lane spent some time in recovery before July 1839, when he joined another mounted company that served during the Cherokee War.

Driven by a spirit of adventure that defined his career, Walter Lane chose the life of a bachelor in order to be forever free to pursue his latest endeavor. He set out west in 1849 during the California Gold Rush and again in 1856 on a prospecting expedition into Arizona. In between his military stints, he operated various merchant operations in California and Texas, but he was always free-
spirited enough to leave his endeavors behind when duty called. The author suggests that aggressive adventurists such as Lane helped with U.S. expansionism.

Lane’s next call to duty came with the U.S. and Texas during the Mexican War. He joined Major Jack Hays’s Texas Ranger battalion in May 1846 and was elected first lieutenant of Captain Christopher “Kit” Acklin’s company. When his captain soon fell ill, Lane took acting command for six weeks.

After General Zachary Taylor agreed to an armistice, Lane returned to Texas in October 1846 and immediately began raising his own company of Texas Rangers. In 1847, he returned to the Mexican War, where his bravery was noted during the storming of Monterrey. During November of that year, Lane also received attention for his zeal in fighting a band of Comanches in the Sierra Madre foothills.

Bryan shows Lane to be a tough leader who was always at the head of a charge. He does not, however, try to conceal Lane’s attitude toward Mexicans during the Mexican War, when he did little to restrain his Rangers from stealing from or killing non-combatants. Lane clashed with superiors such as General Taylor when he defended one of his Rangers for killing an armed Mexican who would not halt when ordered to do so. He defied Taylor’s orders to have the Ranger arrested and instead encouraged his man to flee back to Texas. Prior to departing on one special scouting mission within Mexico, Lane was cautioned by General John E. Wool (p. 68), “Be careful not to confound the innocent with the guilty.”

Lane had some involvement with the men who exhumed the remains of the Mier Expedition victims who had been executed after the “black bean” drawing while in prison. He would later claim to have personally led this effort, a fact that the author shows to be false. Bryan, however, asserts that Lane used the Mier exaggeration to give validation to his own efforts to serve Texas: “The exhumation of the Mier prisoners offered Lane the renown that could validate his adventurous career.” (p. 178)

Lane settled in the Harrison County town of Marshall, where he joined the Civil War movement in 1861. On July 2, he was elected lieutenant colonel of the South Kansas Texas Regiment. He and his men fought valiantly, and his performance while making a stand at Farmington was commended. During the early Civil War years, he served as a colonel while fighting in Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana. His companions declared that there was none braver in combat. Of particular interest is the detail that Bryan uncovers on the politicking that took place to earn commissions during the Civil War. Lane finally rose to the rank of brigadier general, but only in the war’s closing months of 1865.

Lane penned his memoirs in 1887 with the aid of his niece Mary Jane Lane. The title: *The Adventures and Recollections of General Walter P. Lane, a San Jacinto Veteran, Containing Sketches of the Texian, Mexican and Late Wars with Several Indian Fights Thrown In*. More than one hundred and twenty years would pass before the first biography of this leader would be published to tell the whole story. Every significant Texas Ranger leader should have a biographer whose sleuthing is as able as that of Jimmy Bryan. His primary sources are extensive, and his well-detailed notes will certainly benefit future Rangers researchers. This long-overdue volume on the contributions of an early Ranger who helped define the American West is a worthy addition to any historian’s library.
For decades, the Texas Rangers have served and protected the Lone Star State. Their dedication, ability, and bravery have not only influenced law and order but also inspired many and diverse groups to adopt the “Ranger” name. Several of these affiliations are well known, among them the Texas Rangers professional baseball team and the Kilgore Rangerettes dance drill team, who represent Texas’s Kilgore College Rangers. The young ladies are known throughout the country for their precision, showmanship, and professionalism. This book, *The Kilgore Rangerettes*, presents a close look into the life and history of this unique group through the photographic lens of Kilgore professor O. Rufus Lovett.

O. Rufus Lovett is a master photographer, and the Kilgore (College) Rangerettes are the best female precision dance drill team there is. Combine the two in a book, and the result is a black-and-white photographic study of the world-famous Rangerettes at practice, in the bleachers, dancing during half-time of Kilgore College Rangers’ football games (Kilgore also has a baseball team), and high-kicking in front of Macy’s during the Thanksgiving Day Parade as only Rangerettes can. Each exceptional photograph is titled and dated, often as a series: New York, 1989; Cotton Bowl 2007; Revels 2003; and Shadows 2005-2006, etc.

I began teaching at Kilgore College more than thirty years ago and met O. Rufus Lovett as another incoming instructor during the meetings required of all new KC personal. After a few years, I signed up for his introduction to black-and-white photography. The first night of that class, he showed some of Ansel Adams's (1902-1989) black-and-white photographs. Lovett had enjoyed the great fortune of studying under the legend.
“There is more to a black and white image than black and white: the shades, the contrasts.” “Think before you take the picture.” “If you can walk around the person or tree or statue or whatever, do it. Look at it from different angles.” “Don’t just take the same photograph everyone else is.” I cannot count how many times Mr. Lovett repeated those mantras as if he were saying them for the first time. He would often use them as he inspected our latest mounted black-and-white photographs displayed on the chalk tray, with the old chalk board serving as background.

Our photos were the completion of a process that had only begun with the snapping of the shutter. The negatives had to be developed by the student and then printed in the darkroom, where we worked on shading and contrasting the blacks and whites. That was when I was often reminded that if something looks easy (Mr. Lovett’s black and white photography), most often, it’s not. Needless to say, I learned volumes in that class, and Kilgore College is very lucky to have their own Ansel Adams to teach young shutterbugs the art he has mastered. As result of that class, my snapshots have been much improved—but not perfect.

Through the years, as I taught history at Kilgore, I also learned about the young freshmen and sophomore ladies who, for only two years, are the Kilgore Rangerettes. I’ve seldom taught a semester without several of them being in my classes. Instead of the red, white, and blue uniforms in which they performed during halftime at Kilgore College Ranger football games, I saw them sitting at their desks in jeans and T-shirts. (The Rangerettes wear red, white, and blue uniforms in honor of the USA; Kilgore’s colors are silver and grey.)

The Rangerettes are outstanding students, never late to class, and always paying attention and asking good questions. They are polite in the old-fashioned sense of the word, saying “Yes sir,” “No sir,” and “Thank you sir.” They miss class only for required Rangerette trips all over Texas and as far away as Washington DC, New York City, and often overseas.

To become a Rangerette, a girl must try out on the eve of her first fall semester. There are about a hundred others also competing for the honor, most averaging four years of dance classes. After the two-week competition, about thirty girls are chosen to fill the vacancies created by graduating sophomores. Needless to say, there are many more young broken hearts than happy ones that Saturday morning when the Freshman Rangerettes are announced.

Being selected is only the beginning. Rangerettes are required to take a minimum of twelve hours a semester, maintain no lower than 2.5 GPA, and practice Monday through Friday from 1:30 p.m. till 3:30 p.m. (or later), regardless of heat or cold. Once football season ends, they move from the field to Dodson Auditorium and begin practice for Spring Revels, which could compete with any Broadway production.

The Kilgore Rangerettes earn their hats and boots every day they are in the group, and they maintain the pride of being one forever. In fact, former Rettes have their own organization, Rangerettes Forever, and a few of them are featured in Mr. Lovett’s book. The Rangerettes are simply the best, as are Mr. Lovett’s photographic tribute to them.