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John B. Armstrong: Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman
(review)

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Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 111, Number 4, April 2008, pp.
450-451 (Review)

Published by Texas State Historical Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2008.0079>



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to organize the work in a manner that would afford the reader maximum return. Still, Moore has performed yeoman work in this area of research.

While Moore cannot be responsible for the actions and accounts of men who lived more than 150 years ago, his chronicles, nevertheless, present an attitude that was not only biased but also was cavalier.

Contemporary recorders and Moore dutifully report the name of every white settler killed, but Indians, Mexicans, and blacks usually remained unnamed. Moore reports that Indians "killed a settler named Varlan Richeson and *two black men*, and they captured *a black girl*" (p. 86, emphasis added). A few sentences later, he reports "Pinckney Coatsworth Caldwell, longtime quartermaster for the Texas Army, and a *Mexican man* were killed" (p. 86). Even the owners of slain slaves merited mention but not the slaves. In the next page, Moore writes, "The Indians killed a citizen named Joseph O'Neill and *two black servants* of Major Oran Watts" (p. 87). This practice is repeated throughout the book; the value of Indians, Mexicans, and blacks as human beings was clearly held in low esteem by white Texans.

Clearly, Moore loves his subject and has great admiration for the players in this historic play. It is not surprising that some of the chauvinistic language used by his subjects often creeps into Moore's writing. Indians raided, plundered, and committed depraved acts. The Texans led expeditions, conducted campaigns and enjoyed the spoils of war. When the Comanche attacked Victoria and other coastal towns, they killed several men and stole horses. This is lamented, but when the white Texans drove into Indian villages and killed and captured women and children, burned every home to the ground, and "moved out for home with all they could haul" (p. 226), it was considered justified retribution. The immoral equivalency seems to be lost on everyone.

One other account helps illustrate the callousness of the times and the prejudiced reporting of events by the victors. After George Heard was shot and killed in a battle with Indians, "Gilbert Love stood by the body of Heard to prevent the Indians *from scalping and otherwise mutilating* his fellow ranger" (p. 316, emphasis added). The mutilation of an Indian hardly raised an eyebrow. After an Indian's body was found the day after another clash, "Catharine Dugan took an axe and severed the head from the Indian's body . . . Catherine's mother used the skull as a quill gourd for her sewing supplies" (p. 332).

Perhaps it is not Moore's intent, but *Savage Frontier* provides a stunning view of the bestiality of both the Indian and the white man in their struggle for supremacy over a land called *friends*.

Pflugerville, Texas

ALFREDO E. CARDENAS

John B. Armstrong: Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman. By Chuck Parsons, afterword by Elmer Kelton. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007. Pp. 168. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-58544-553-3. \$20.00, cloth.)

Chuck Parsons has struck literary gold with his latest offering, *John B. Armstrong: Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman*. The book at once delivers, citing that Armstrong

was likely a descendant of an eleventh-century armor bearer to a Scottish king. That ancestor's bravery and quick thinking on the battlefield garnered him the nickname of "Strong Arm" or "Armstrong," a family trait not lost on John B. Armstrong. As Siward the Armstrong, who rescued his temporarily felled king in Scotland in those ancient times, rose in prominence to become Earl of Northumberland, so too John B. Armstrong rose among the highest echelon of Texas society. He did so with humility that is rarely characteristic of such men.

Parsons's study of Armstrong's relatively short career as a Texas Ranger, 1875–1878, is filled with exploits of hair-raising adventure, each one centered on his impending demise at the hands of scheming cattle rustlers, vengeful Indians, and other violent characters. One occasion for which Armstrong is most remembered is his capture of one of Texas's leading men outlaws, John Wesley Hardin, in 1877.

For fans of tales of cowboys, Indians, outlaws, and lawmen of the Old West, *John B. Armstrong: Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman* does not disappoint. Chapters with titles such as "Genesis of a Fighting Man," "Blood on the Palo Alto Prairie," and "Facing the Man Killer," promise and deliver action, trickery, and hot lead with the turn of each page. Where the book goes beyond expectations, in this reviewer's opinion, is its treatment of Armstrong the former Ranger as he transitions to become a successful family man, rancher, businessman, and civic leader. In later chapters of *John B. Armstrong* Parsons dutifully, yet with a sense of the familial, shows the Texas scion to be a man not satisfied with having his career in law enforcement as his only legacy, impressive as it was. Parsons writes that Armstrong was entrenched in the fabric that was the new Texas. He realized its potential as his own. This is where Parsons has gone beyond the biographical norm. All too many accounts of historical figures whose reputations rest on their services as lawmen, honorable as those were, provide the reader character analyses that leave the subject handcuffed to a rather one-dimensional representation. Parsons gives the reader John B. Armstrong, the Texas Ranger. But it is in the remaining chapters that the reader is introduced to the multi-faceted man many of his descendants undoubtedly knew. In the chapters "Pioneer Ranchman," and "Rancher Among the Rails," is found the John B. Armstrong that Parsons wishes the reader to know and understand.

For fans of the traditional Old West shoot-'em-up, and those interested in knowing what became of the men who outlived their violent pasts, Parsons brings the two together with this book. *John B. Armstrong: Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman* belongs not only in the Texas history section of libraries, but it probably could hold its place in the Humanities section as well.

Katy, Texas

DAN ANDERSON

Captain J. A. Brooks, Texas Ranger. By Paul N. Spellman. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2007. Pp. 288. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-57441-227-2. \$24.95, cloth.)

In the first book-length treatment of this notable figure in Ranger history, Paul Spellman (professor of Texas and American History at Wharton Junior College, Old Three Hundred descendant, and biographer of Capt. John H. Rogers) produces a