



PROJECT MUSE®

---

*They Slept upon Their Rifles* (review)

Jody Edward Ginn

Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 112, Number 4, April 2009, pp. 446-447 (Review)

Published by Texas State Historical Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2009.0009>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/408499/summary>

authors' point that Natchitoches remained a predominantly French and African creole community where the few outsiders allowed inside became culturally "Gallic" in a slave society that resembled the Eastern Seaboard, if not the Caribbean, more than the backcountry at the turn of the nineteenth century.

*Our Lady of the Lake University*

FRANCIS X. GALAN

*They Slept upon Their Rifles.* By Marshall E. Kuykendall. (Austin: Nortex Press, 2005. Pp. 416. Illustrations, notes, index. ISBN 9781571689931, \$50.00 cloth.)

Marshall Kuykendall, a self-described amateur writer and historian, offers a well-documented look at the trek of his ancestors across the North American continent that began in 1645. In addition to his own research, the author has compiled an impressive amount of data from genealogists and family historians around the nation.

He begins with a discussion of the family surname, which researchers have concluded was manufactured by an American ancestor around 1700 and has no provable Old World ties. He then provides a broad overview of the various paths taken by different ancestors. Next, he explores his own paternal lineage. His ancestors left the original Dutch colony of New Amsterdam and traveled southwest; following long-established American Indian trails along the Appalachian Mountains into eastern Pennsylvania, eastern West Virginia, western North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee. From there, they followed the trails through the Cumberland Gap and Tennessee, into Kentucky. Robert H. Kuykendall, the author's great-great-great-great grandfather, left Kentucky to join Stephen F. Austin's first group of three hundred Anglos to settle in the Mexican state of Texas y Coahuila.

The next (and most detailed) section is a collection of biographies, beginning with that of Robert Kuykendall and concluding with the author's autobiography. The narratives are drawn from official records, personal letters, and family anecdotes passed down through the generations, and records and stories concerning the family's involvement in the colonization, revolution, and statehood of Texas predominate. One of the most intriguing anecdotes alleges a conspiracy between then-Congressman Lyndon Baines Johnson and San Marcos city officials in the late 1930s to condemn privately held property in Hays County for use as a massive military base. The author's involvement in the 1990s property rights movement known as "Take Back Texas" is also of interest. There are an additional ten biographies of the author's non-linear ancestors, several of whom were also Old Three Hundred members. The entire book is peppered with images of drawings, maps, photos, and letters, along with transcriptions of official land titles, military service records, letters, and family vital statistics. The final section includes family death records in Texas for the twentieth century and a record of all family members from Texas who served in the Civil War.

The author's stated goal was to gather a vast array of family records into an

accessible format and place them in the public domain for easy access by future generations whom he believes should not be forced to search for those records "under the bed of some old lady." The author's desire to impart unbiased and uncensored family history is evidenced in his lamentation of the deliberate destruction of presumably "embarrassing" family records by a deceased aunt and the machinations of another relative who purposefully changed the names of various family members recorded in an old diary, presumably to protect their reputations. In addition, Kuykendall does not shy away from sharing his ancestor's personal foibles and peccadilloes. On the contrary, he embraces their character flaws and failings as essential to understanding his family's history. His enthusiasm for genealogical and historical research is evident throughout, most notably in the almost ubiquitous parenthetical asides expressing personal reactions or commentary.

*They Slept upon Their Rifles* is a compelling genealogical tale of the Kuykendall family, which historian William Goetzmann compares to Louis Lamour's fictional Sackett family. Goetzmann's endorsement, along with that of Ron Tyler, Al Lowman, and Mike Cox, confirm this as a worthwhile read for Texas history enthusiasts. Academic historians will also find great value in the footnotes which point to substantial amounts of primary source material, much of which is to be found in the Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin.

Texas State University—San Marcos

JODY EDWARD GINN

*Voices from the Goliad Frontier*. Edited by John R. McLean. Translated by Malcolm D. McLean. Illustrations by Jack Jackson. Foreword by David J. Weber. (Dallas: William P. Clements Center for Southwestern Studies, Southern Methodist University, 2008. Pp. 720. Illustrations, glossary, CD-ROM. ISBN 9781929531080. \$75.00 paper.)

Malcolm McLean, best known for his nineteen-volume *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*, has once again provided scholars and laymen alike with another powerful research tool. This time joined by his son, John R. McLean, the duo has produced a translation of the minutes of the Goliad *Ayuntamiento*, or municipal council, from 1821 to 1835, with a calendar and page numbers for easier accessibility. David Weber's introduction provides an excellent overview and, as always, Malcolm McLean has produced an impeccable translation, clearing up sometimes confusing terms and archaic phrases while still remaining true to the written documents. In addition, the father and son have added materials relating to the missing year of 1829, a critical time when the small town changed its name from La Bahía del Espíritu Santo to Goliad. Of equal interest are the five appendices which take up almost half of the book and include, for the first time, the many documents relating to the James Long invasion of Goliad in 1821 (Appendix E, p. 567). The extensive appendices are preceded by an easy to search calendar with page numbers and cover general correspondence about Goliad, petitions for land, land grants, as well as all laws relat-