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*John Ringo: King of the Cowboys: His Life and Times from the
Hoo Doo War to Tombstone (review)*

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Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 113, Number 2, October 2009,
pp. 271-272 (Review)

Published by Texas State Historical Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2009.0086>



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analysis would expose, for example, the competition between Anglo and *Mexicano* freighting outfits and access to critical markets in addition to salt. In this instance, *Paseños* become more than just brave and indignant "salt warriors," but are also aggrieved entrepreneurs violently displaced by Anglo dominated business cliques. Disappointingly, Cool evokes the "Texas doctrine" as an uncontested explanatory device for the motivations of intrepid Anglo frontiersman, failing to expose readers to the critical debates about the frequency and prevalence as well as the racial and gendered dimensions of frontier conflict. Similarly, Cool's efforts to explain the conduct of the Frontier Battalion echoes earlier hagiographies of Texas Rangers, resembling standard interpretations of westward expansion that uncritically celebrate Anglos as enterprising, bold frontiersman and entrepreneurs. Not surprisingly, Cool's study overlooks the contributions of Chicano scholars critical of negative representations of *Mexicanos* as foils for Anglo agency, including my own study of *Mexicano* insurgencies and local *ranchero* contributions to a complex history of frontier defense.

In sum, *Salt Warriors* is a detailed study of a significant, if overlooked, event in Texas history. Readers will especially appreciate the number of maps and other useful research aids throughout the book. *Salt Warriors* successfully contributes to recent revisionists efforts that aim unflinchingly at the complex history of the Texas frontier.

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MANUEL CALLAHAN

John Ringo: King of the Cowboys: His Life and Times from the Hoo Doo War to Tombstone. 2nd ed. By David Johnson. Foreword by Chuck Parsons. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2008. Pp. 380. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781574412437, \$29.95 cloth.)

John Ringo (frequently rendered Ringgold) cut a swath across the Southwest. Just how wide and significant is the task of David Johnson, who first put Ringo between hard covers in 1996, and who now incorporates new information into a second, revised edition of that book. His effort to set the story straight will appeal to students of western law and disorder.

Ringo moved from his native Indiana to California, and at twenty-something gravitated to Texas in the early 1870s. Here he became involved in the Mason County, or "Hoodoo," War, was a party to two murders, and spent time in the Travis County lockup. In 1879 he headed for the milder, Rangerless climate of southern Arizona Territory bearing bona fide hardcase credentials. In and around Tombstone, the silver boomtown that offered cattle for rustling and stage coaches for waylaying, he fell in with the miscreant "cowboy" element that included Curly Bill Brocius, the McLaurys, and the Clantons, all of them Texas-seasoned. Arrayed against them were the equally shady Earp brothers and their tubercular dentist/shootist/card shark ally, Doc Holliday. Following the Earps' departure from Tombstone to avoid their murder trial, Ringo went into a deep depression, took prolonged refuge in the bottle, and, in July 1882, at age thirty-two, apparently committed suicide, although the circumstances of his death remain in doubt. Flawed

as he might have been, Ringo, contends Johnson, was more tragic than bad. His verdict draws from the Tombstone *Epitaph* that eulogized Ringo as “a strictly honorable man” whose “word was as good as his bond” (278).

In making his case, the author, highly regarded among the Western Writers of America, takes on the lingering image of Ringo that emerges from the sanctification of Wyatt Earp in the fictionalized writings of Walter Noble Burns (*Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest*, 1927) and Stuart Lake (*Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal*, 1931). He also differs with Jack Burrows (*John Ringo: The Gunfighter Who Never Was*, 1987) regarding Ringo’s early life, his role in the Hoodoo War, and his family’s view of him. Convinced that interest in Ringo has “blossomed” (268) over the past half century, Johnson undertook prodigious research, the basis of a remarkably detailed study that should constitute the last word on an individual whose place in southwestern history is both secure and minor. Burdensome, however, are incessant and overly long block quotes that carry the story and deaden an otherwise solid narrative. Another distraction is the repetition of “Earp apologists,” “supporters of Earp,” and “proponents of Earp” in the author’s successful attempt to demonize Wyatt Earp.

Nevertheless, Johnson has filled factual gaps regarding the Hoodoo War, offered a more balanced assessment of the Brocius-Clanton-McLaury cowboy element, and sharpened the debate over Ringo. His book should move briskly at the Rose Tree and other Tombstone bookstores during Helldorado Days.

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JAMES A. WILSON

The Fall of a Black Army Officer: Racism and the Myth of Henry O. Flipper. By Charles M. Robinson III. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. Pp. 216. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780806135212, \$29.95 cloth.)

This book examines the military trial in 1881–82 at Fort Davis, Texas, and subsequent dismissal from the U.S. Army of Second Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper, the first African American to graduate from the West Point military academy. Other than brief descriptions at the beginning and end of the book, respectively, of Flipper’s life before and after the court-martial, the bulk of the work—seven out of the total twelve chapters—is devoted to a narrative account of the trial proceedings, which resulted in the young African-American lieutenant being found not guilty of embezzlement but guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer. The author sets out to demonstrate that, despite subsequent claims that the defendant was the victim of institutional racism, Flipper was accorded a fair trial, handed a just sentence, and was largely the architect of his own downfall. At various points in the book, Robinson alludes to the irony of the fact that the black West Pointer’s belated rehabilitation, in the form of a presidential pardon in 1999, was achieved in no small part through the efforts of social activists representing an African-American community that Flipper himself generally held in disdain and shunned other than at times when he wanted its help. Although Flipper’s character flaws and his relationship with other African-Americans are essential elements in Robinson’s argument, they are not dealt with extensively in the book.