

Clayton E. Jewett. *Texas in the Confederacy: An Experiment in Nation Building.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. v + 310 pp. \$37.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8262-1390-7.



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Texas Goes It Alone

How united was the Confederacy during the American Civil War? How much support and loyalty was given to the C.S.A. by the various Southern states? These questions are central to Clayton E. Jewett's *Texas in the Confederacy: An Experiment in Nation Building*. Jewett has examined, in great detail, the situation in the Lone Star state by asking "how Texas, during the Civil War, defined, established, secured, and implemented an identity separate from that of the other Southern states" (p. 3).

There is little question that Texas did support secession—but the state's position in the new government remained ambiguous. According to Jewett, Texas possessed its own goals and was much more concerned with a "desire to safeguard their own economic well-being" (p. 4). This led to a variety of problems between Texas and the Confederate government in Richmond. Jewett investigates these problems by looking at the words and deeds of the Texas legislature and state political leaders. He concludes that Texas did indeed forge its own identity during the Civil War.

Even at the beginning of the sectional crisis, Texas believed that the Republican Party would be a disaster for the state. Texans saw power gravitating to an oppressive central authority, individual rights being trampled upon, and slavery being abolished. So while Texas supported secession, Jewett takes particular issue with the historiography over the reasons why. The author maintains that Texas's motives were not as simple as slavery and plantation protection. Looking at speeches delivered during the secession winter, Jewett posits the theory that Texas, the fastest-growing Southern state, was more worried about their nascent commercial interests. Jewett does not try to advance a sleight-of-hand justification of slavery. What he does, instead, is to truly broaden the motivation for secession from a pure, racial defense of the peculiar institution to a more inclusive concept of safeguarding the overall commercial interests that were helping Texas to develop at the time.

Much of the strength of Jewett's argument comes from his research on Texas's agricultural interests—which included much more than planta-

tion slavery. Texas had a booming state business in cattle, horses, sheep, and ranching. In addition, the state was a major corn and wheat producer. And here is where Jewett uses legislative records and statistical regression analysis to reveal the capitalistic nature of the non-slaveowning Texans. By looking at specific districts in the state, Jewett is able to demonstrate that slavery and the plantation economy was not the sole issue in the Texas secession debates.

There was another important aspect in Texas's march toward a separate identity--the issue of Indian raids along the frontier. Jewett proves that the situation was critical to Texans, but as one might guess, not an important cause for the Confederate government in Richmond. This led to numerous problems between the state and the central authority. Constant Indian raids proved to be a major economic annoyance, especially to ranchers. And with Federal forces leaving the area, the Indian problems would surely increase. That meant Texas would have to police their own amorphous frontier. And as Jewett concludes, "the offensive posture undertaken against the Indians to protect economic interests contributed to the establishment of a separate identity from that of other Southern states" (p. 81).

What was the policy of Richmond to these Indian problems in Texas? In order to secure some help from these Western tribes, the C.S.A. attempted to negotiate treaties with the various nations. These deals promised to protect the Indians from aggression by other tribes as well as from Union invasion. How would these agreements affect relations between Texas and the Indian tribes? Obviously the conflicts continued. And Texans had little faith in Richmond to help ameliorate the problems. Jewett writes that by late 1861, "the Indian problems emerged foremost in the minds of Texas politicians" (p. 99). The tribes, under the "protection" of the Confederate government, continued to raid Texas ranches, stealing livestock and terrorizing frontier citizens. In effect, the

Confederacy never really understood the Texas-Indian situation. Richmond's intervention did not placate either side--it simply made things worse. The frontier situation with the Indians helped perpetuate a split between Texas and Richmond. Counties and localities could not rely on Richmond to protect them or aid them in fighting the Indians. So Texans began raising their own money and troops for this frontier defense. Because this was such a critical issue to the people of Texas, it led to considerable distrust and animosity with Richmond.

Those animosities were strengthened when the C.S.A. began drafting Texans. Jewett finds evidence that Texans were more concerned about their own commercial world than the Confederate cause. So over the course of the war, "Texans generally enlisted in the state militia rather than the Confederate army" (p. 116). This only helped to solidify the separate identity that was already brewing in Texas. Jewett's research shows that Texans, more concerned about their own commercial interests and frontier defense, did not heed the call of the new government in Richmond. And as Texas's officials and politicians began to assert more authority over their own troops and militia, the state-federal rift widened.

That rift continued when it came to supplying the Confederacy. Jewett suggests that after Vicksburg, Texans were asking themselves whether they should try to secure the interests of the state or provide for the faltering Confederacy. By now, one should know what the Texans decided: in order of importance, first, the interests of their own citizenry; second, the state's financial plight; and third, the C.S.A. As Jewett concludes, "Texas politicians cast their loyalty to the citizens of Texas over the Confederacy. By doing so, they worked to secure a separate identity from that of other Southern states" (p. 144). In addition, Texans were not happy that Richmond seemed to be neglecting the West. In order to bolster the state, Texas actually solidified its supplies at the state level--mak-

ing a nearly total commitment to the state and not the C.S.A.

By the middle of the Civil War, Jewett concludes that the state of Texas was busy securing its own economic position, protecting its own citizens, and concerning itself with its own institutions and organizations. There is scant evidence that Texans were interested in sacrificing their own interests to that of the C.S.A. Jewett makes the case that Texas was practicing its own nation-building and implementing a separate identity from Richmond and the other Southern states. The author is quick to point out, however, that Texas's problems differed somewhat from the other states of the Confederacy. Indian problems, Texas's geographic position, and its unique economic interests made it an atypical state in the new government.

I enjoyed *Texas in the Confederacy* for several reasons. First, the book is a good primer on the economic and political interests in Texas at the start of the Civil War. If a reader only wanted to understand the state and its economic situation, this would be an excellent book to examine. Second, Jewett does an extremely credible job examining broader economic interests without slighting the importance of slavery to the overall Texan economy. This could have been disastrous--readers easily might have concluded that Jewett was simply trying to downplay slavery at the expense of other abstract issues that were connected to the peculiar institution anyway. But the author balances the explanations well, demonstrating the relationship of slavery to these overall economic interests. Third, Jewett does a fine job using regression analysis to describe legislative votes without making those statistics tedious and boring. We learn about the economic interests in the different districts and how they voted on various secession issues. Finally, Jewett's resources, both primary and secondary, are impeccable.

I recommend this book without reservation. Dr. Jewett has written an important scholarly

work about Texas and the Confederacy. He has demonstrated that at least in Texas, state problems and interests trumped national concerns. And that nation-building was taking place in Texas even during the Civil War. We anxiously await studies like this about other states.

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