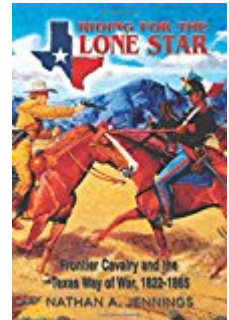


Nathan A. Jennings. *Riding for the Lone Star: Frontier Cavalry and the Texas Way of War, 1822-1865.* Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2016. 464 pp. \$32.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-57441-635-0.



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Nathan Jennings's book on the Texas way of war discusses how Texans waged war in the early and mid-nineteenth century. He argues that Texans consciously responded to their military needs by relying on "cavalry-centric organization, amateur volunteerism, and event-specific mobilization" (p. 335). In setting up his argument, Jennings attempts to use multiple analytical frameworks to explain his position. Some of these frameworks include Russell Weigley's dichotomy of wars of attrition and annihilation, borderlands and frontier studies such as John Grenier's analysis of American frontier warfare, and the continual reliance of Texans on cavalry-centric warfare. Beyond the multiple frameworks he also mentions several themes that his book will address, including masculinity, borderlands studies, civil-military relations, tactical and strategic analysis, colonization, guerilla warfare, and Texas militarism. Jennings's introduction included virtually every buzzword and framework that could possibly relate to the topic of his book, which set out an almost insurmountable task for him to address each compo-

nent thoroughly and integrate them together in a coherent manner.

The book is divided into six topical sections made up of eight chronologically organized chapters. Jennings describes these six sections as Texas's six stages of martial development. The first stage looks at the period of Mexican colonization of Texas, 1822-35. The second stage is the Texas Revolution, 1835-36, which Jennings argues established much of the mounted tradition, with the need for ranging units and traditional Napoleonic-style cavalry. The third, fourth, and fifth stages divide up the years of the Texas Republic, including increased ethnic wars, Anglo colonization, and a series of invasions and counterinvasions with Mexico. The sixth stage begins with the Mexican War and progresses through the American Civil War, during which Texan martial development culminated in several types of mounted volunteers called irregular, auxiliary, or partisan cavalry.

Jennings's ambitious efforts result in some useful results, particularly in looking at the early development of Texas through a military lens. This detailed study admirably analyzes Texas's martial development during the first half of the nineteenth century. Work such as this is crucial for integrating the narrative of Texas's military and social history. War and society are intertwined and Jennings takes a step toward this effort by providing a foundation for future historians to build on improving this integration. This book also provides a thorough discussion on the Texan preference for mounted warfare, although he does neglect the geographical necessity of mounted military units. Jennings includes historical context for the origins of some cavalry traditions and how Texans either followed or differed from these earlier methods.

Despite these important contributions, there were several important weaknesses. The primary flaw in the book is the organization; although the chapters are organized chronologically, within each chapter, Jennings chose to use thematic sections within that only haphazardly follow the proposed chronology. Furthermore, he includes stream-of-consciousness paragraphs and sections that sporadically interject ideas, events, and cavalry units that differ widely, chronologically and geographically, from the topic of the section or chapter. The information itself is useful, but the presentation inhibits readers' ability to understand the points Jennings tries to make. The second weakness is that Jennings fails to effectively address all of the themes and frameworks proposed in his audacious introduction. This is significant because he spends time on too many small aspects, trying to touch on popular topics in the larger historiography. Essentially, by trying to do too much, he hinders his effort to effectively prove his thesis. The book is excellently researched, with several archives and many primary sources, so the book will be a useful resource. However, as a scholarly text that stands on its own merits, the book needed structural revisions

and streamlining to effectively convey his argument.

Jennings appears to have set out to be Texas's Russell Weigley and define the Texan way of war. However, unlike Weigley, Grenier, or Guy Chet, Jennings did not focus his discussion strictly on the Texan way of war. Instead, he followed rabbit trails by attempting to include popular topics, which only distracted from his thesis. The work is certainly beneficial for the historiography of Texas and will be a useful resource for future historians, but it falls short of what Jennings seems to have striven for. With a few more revisions, this book might have reached the heights that Jennings proposed. As it is, the book is an important contribution to the field, but not executed as well as it could have been.

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