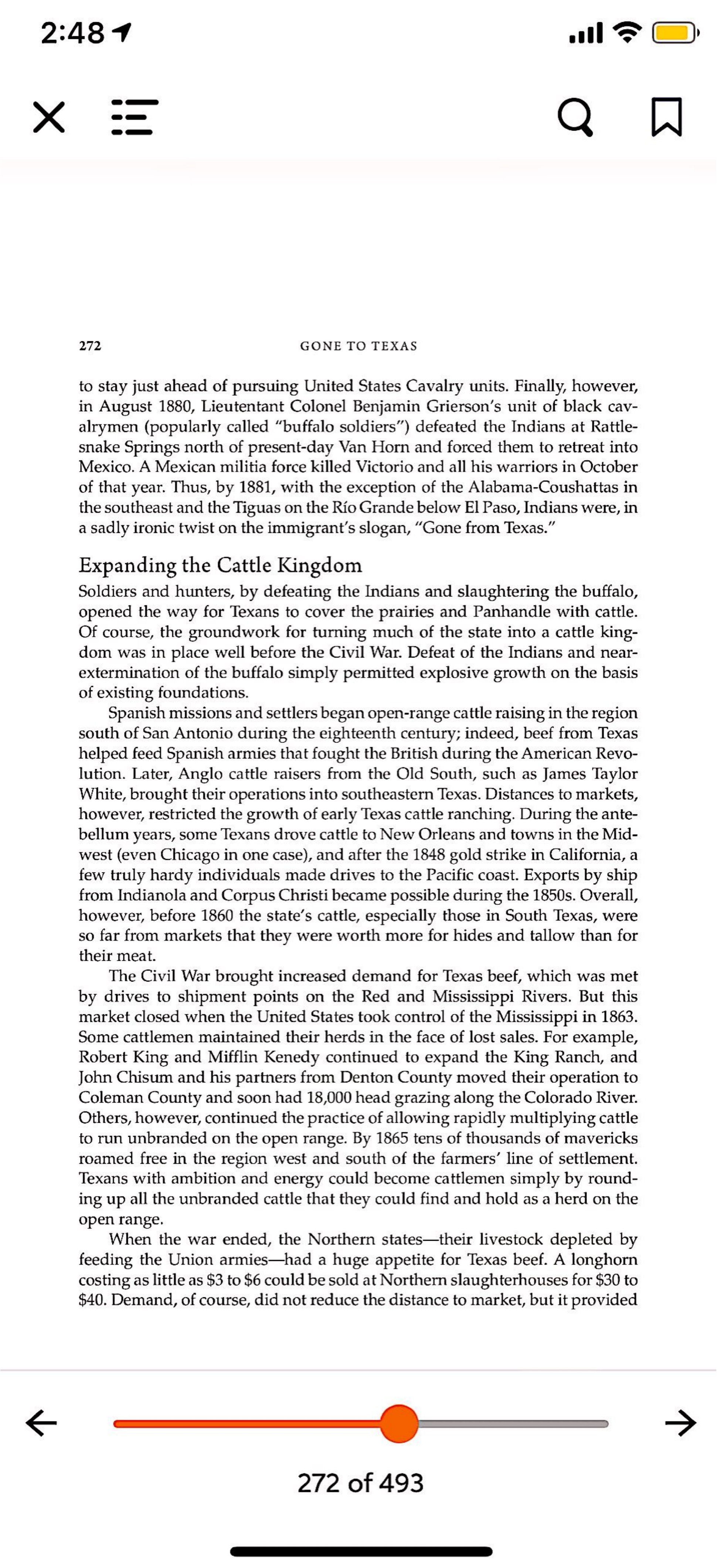


to stay just ahead of pursuing United States Cavalry units. Finally, however, in August 1880, Lieutentant Colonel Benjamin Grierson's unit of black cavalrymen (popularly called "buffalo soldiers") defeated the Indians at Rattlesnake Springs north of present-day Van Horn and forced them to retreat into Mexico. A Mexican militia force killed Victorio and all his warriors in October of that year. Thus, by 1881, with the exception of the Alabama-Coushattas in the southeast and the Tiguas on the Río Grande below El Paso, Indians were, in a sadly ironic twist on the immigrant's slogan, "Gone from Texas."

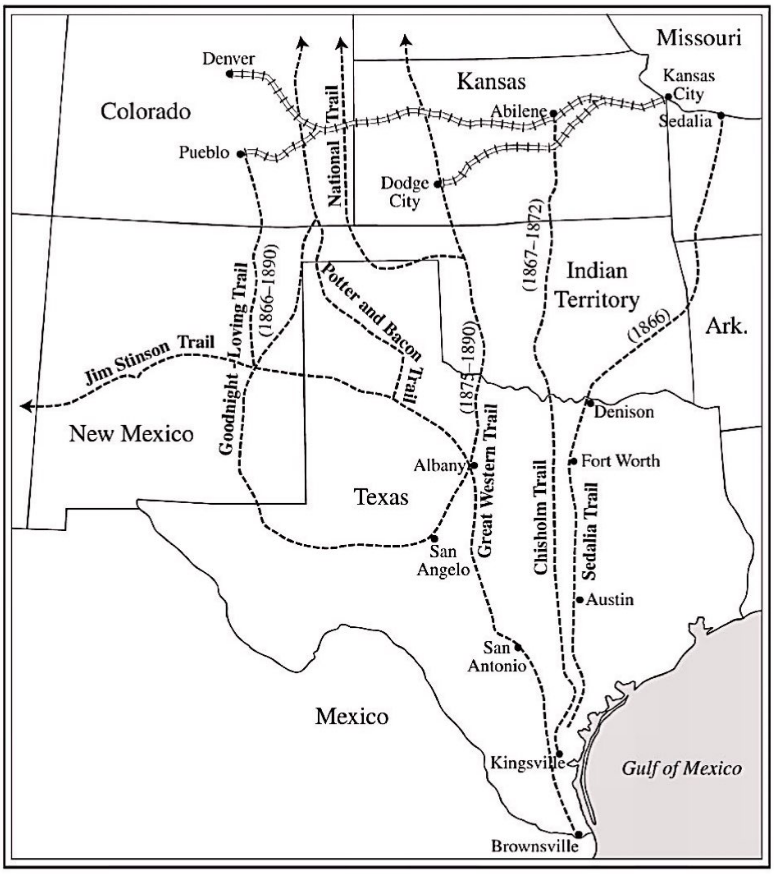
Expanding the Cattle Kingdom

Soldiers and hunters, by defeating the Indians and slaughtering the buffalo, opened the way for Texans to cover the prairies and Panhandle with cattle. Of course, the groundwork for turning much of the state into a cattle kingdom was in place well before the Civil War. Defeat of the Indians and near-extermination of the buffalo simply permitted explosive growth on the basis of existing foundations.

Spanish missions and settlers began open-range cattle raising in the region south of San Antonio during the eighteenth century; indeed, beef from Texas helped feed Spanish armies that fought the British during the American Revolution. Later, Anglo cattle raisers from the Old South, such as James Taylor White, brought their operations into southeastern Texas. Distances to markets, however, restricted the growth of early Texas cattle ranching. During the antebellum years, some Texans drove cattle to New Orleans and towns in the Midwest (even Chicago in one case), and after the 1848 gold strike in California, a few truly hardy individuals made drives to the Pacific coast. Exports by ship from Indianola and Corpus Christi became possible during the 1850s. Overall, however, before 1860 the state's cattle, especially those in South Texas, were so far from markets that they were worth more for hides and tallow than for their meat.

The Civil War brought increased demand for Texas beef, which was met by drives to shipment points on the Red and Mississippi Rivers. But this market closed when the United States took control of the Mississippi in 1863. Some cattlemen maintained their herds in the face of lost sales. For example, Robert King and Mifflin Kenedy continued to expand the King Ranch, and John Chisum and his partners from Denton County moved their operation to Coleman County and soon had 18,000 head grazing along the Colorado River. Others, however, continued the practice of allowing rapidly multiplying cattle to run unbranded on the open range. By 1865 tens of thousands of mavericks roamed free in the region west and south of the farmers' line of settlement. Texans with ambition and energy could become cattlemen simply by rounding up all the unbranded cattle that they could find and hold as a herd on the open range.

When the war ended, the Northern states—their livestock depleted by feeding the Union armies—had a huge appetite for Texas beef. A longhorn costing as little as $3 to $6 could be sold at Northern slaughterhouses for $30 to $40. Demand, of course, did not reduce the distance to market, but it provided all the incentive necessary for Texans to try almost anything to overcome the problem. In 1866, Texas drovers moved some 250,000 head of cattle north, most of them along a trail from South Texas past Austin, Fort Worth, and Denison to a railhead at Sedalia, Missouri. (See map: Cattle Trails from Texas.) This Sedalia Trail proved unsatisfactory, however, because drovers had problems handling cattle in the timbered country from Fort Worth north and because farmers along the route knew that the herds carried Texas Fever. Although no one knew its cause, this disease came with Texas cattle (that appeared to be immune to it) and spread rapidly among non-Texas livestock with nearly always fatal results. (Actually, ticks transmitted the disease. Texas calves inherited enough resistance to withstand a mild case of the fever shortly after


Missouri
Denver
Kansas
Kansas City
Colorado
Abilene
Sedalia
Pueblo
National Trail
Dodge City
(1867–1872)
Indian Territory
(1866–1890)
Goodnight–Loving Trail
Potter and Bacon Trail
(1866)
Ark.
Jim Stinson Trail
(1875–1890)
Denison
New Mexico
Fort Worth
Albany
Great Western Trail
Texas
Chisholm Trail
Sedalia Trail
San Angelo
Austin
San Antonio
Mexico
Kingsville
Gulf of Mexico
Brownsville

Cattle Trails From Texas

they were born and thereby built up enough immunity to survive it for the rest of their lives. However, they carried the disease in their blood, which allowed ticks to spread it from them to uninfected non-Texas animals.) Violent opposition by farmers to subsequent drives turned back whole herds at times and made the Sedalia trail unusable.

In 1867, an Illinois cattle buyer named Joseph G. McCoy solved the problem of reaching markets for Texas cattlemen by making Abilene, a Kansas town on the Union Pacific Railroad, into a shipping center. He built the facilities for transporting cattle and marked a trail from the Red River to Kansas, following a path originally blazed in 1865 by an Indian trader named Jesse Chisholm. Soon known as the Chisholm Trail, this most famous of all the cattle-drive routes ran through largely treeless plains and prairies and was far enough west to avoid areas settled by farmers. In the Indian Territory, agreements were reached to allow the cattle through. Shipping the cattle by rail directly from Abilene to slaughterhouses in the East greatly reduced problems with Texas Fever. An estimated 35,000 cattle reached Abilene in 1867, and the number doubled each year until 1871, when it reached approximately 600,000.

During the mid-1870s, Texas drovers began to find farms in the way of the Chisholm Trail, and a quarantine against herds possibly carrying Texas Fever kept them out of Abilene, forcing them farther west to Hays, Kansas. Fortunately for Texas cattlemen the removal of Indians and buffalo at about this time made it possible to open a new route that became known as the Great Western Trail. Beginning in the region south of San Antonio, this trail ran through the Hill Country, past Fort Griffin, across the Red River at Doan's Crossing, and on to a new railhead at Dodge City, Kansas. Within ten years, it was the route north for at least 3 million Texas cattle.

Not all Texas cattlemen sought connections to markets in the north and east; instead, some looked west and sold beef to feed Indians on reservations in New Mexico, soldiers at army posts, and miners in Colorado. In 1866 Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving pioneered the first cattle drive to these western markets, taking a herd southwest from Fort Griffin to San Angelo and the Pecos River and then north along the river to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. The Goodnight-Loving Trail, as it became known, soon extended northward to Denver, and a few Texans even made drives to Cheyenne, Wyoming. Loving died in a fight with Indians in 1867, but Goodnight continued driving cattle along their namesake trail for another ten years.

Texas drovers created numerous feeder trails and cutoffs, but the Chisholm, Great Western, and Goodnight-Loving Trails remained the best known and most used in the expanding cattle kingdom. Typically, the herds that moved along these routes consisted of about 3,000 head handled by a trail boss and ten cowboys. A cook drove the wagon carrying food and supplies, and a wrangler tended the *remuda* of extra horses. The trail boss rode ahead of the herd while cowboys worked on all sides to keep the cattle together and moving. The youngest and least experienced cowboys drew the unenviable task of riding "drag" behind the herd, which grazed along at a leisurely pace of 10 to 15 miles a day, taking six weeks or so to reach market.

Cowboys, especially those who rode the cattle trails, soon became mythic folk heroes in Texas and across the United States. The reality of their lives, however, did not fit the image. Most were under the age of twenty; two-thirds of them Anglo whites and the others Mexican or black. They received lower pay than the trail boss, cook, or wrangler—$40 a month or less—and for the most part simply plodded along with the herd. Violent weather, stampedes, and river crossings brought excitement, of course, but with a high price in terms of danger. Contrary to the popular image, most did not carry pistols because trail bosses, fearing that gunshots would cause stampedes, did not permit it. When one trail ride ended, there was little to show for it except the experience and no certainty of employment on another. One cowboy summarized his career by saying "All . . . I got out of cowpunching is the experience. I paid a good price for that. I wouldn't take anything for what I have saw but I wouldn't care to travel the same road again, and my advice to any young man or boy is to stay at home and not be a rambler, as it won't buy you anything." These were the words of an old man, of course, and in all likelihood he would have paid no attention to them himself when he was young. The life of a cowboy, regardless of the reality, had mythic appeal even then.

Establishing Large Ranches and Making Cattle-Raising a Business

By the mid-1870s, the growing profitability of trailing cattle to market, combined with the elimination of Indians and buffalo from northwestern Texas, encouraged the establishment of ever-larger ranches and fencing. Whereas many of the early cattlemen rounded up and herded mavericks and relied on the open range without locating in a particular place or buying land, ranchers in the seventies set up headquarters where water was available and planned to stay. Generally they ran their stock on public land at first, but when the state opened those lands to sale they acquired title to as many sections as possible around their headquarters. At times, they built corrals or dugouts on unsold sections in order to discourage claims by would-be settlers. Charles Goodnight established the first large ranch in the Panhandle in 1876 by moving 1,600 longhorns into the Palo Duro Canyon. The following year he formed a partnership with an English investor named John G. Adair and began purchasing land in and around the canyon. In 1878, the JA Ranch sent its first trail herd northward to Dodge City. At one point in the late 1880s, the ranch had 1,325,000 acres in parts of six counties and ran a herd of more than 100,000 head.

Goodnight's wife, Mary Ann, or Molly as everyone except her husband called her, became the unofficial first lady of the Panhandle. A native of Tennessee who had moved with her family to Fort Belknap at the age of fourteen, she married Goodnight in 1870 and moved to the JA Ranch in 1877. The couple's first home was a dugout topped with cottonwood logs, but within a few years they moved into a small home built of cedar logs and eventually into a nineteen-room ranch house. For a time, she was the only woman on the ranch, and her nearest female neighbor was Molly Bugbee, the wife of Thomas S. Bugbee, owner of the Quarter Circle T Ranch in Hutchinson County. They did not see each other or anyone off their own ranches for more than six months at a time, but both claimed not to mind. Of course Molly Goodnight, even though she had no children, had her hands full serving as, in the words of one historian, "doctor, nurse, homemaker, spiritual comforter, sister, and mother to the hands who worked for her husband."

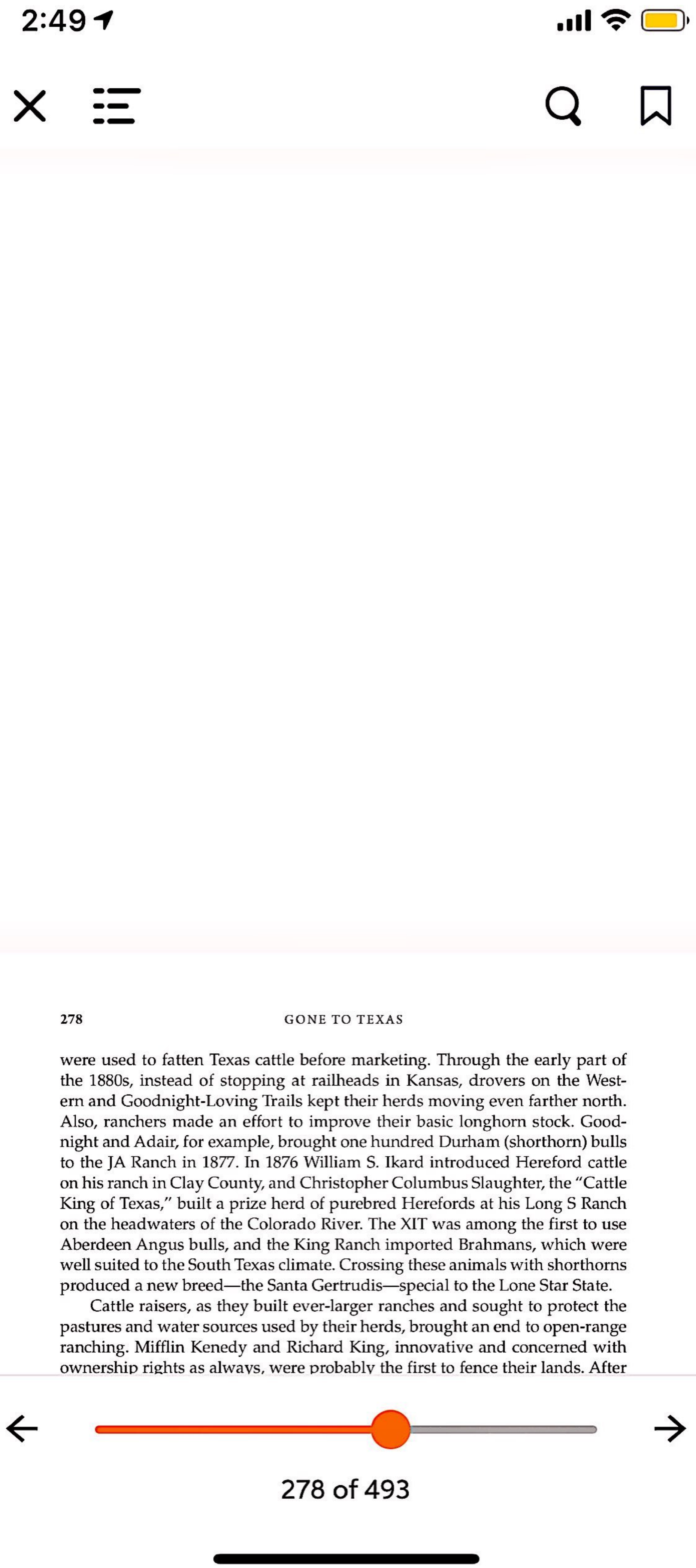
Elizabeth (Lizzie) Johnson Williams demonstrated that the role of women in the cattle business was not necessarily limited to that of a helpmate. The daughter of a teacher and a teacher herself in Austin, Johnson learned about the money to be made in cattle by keeping books for several prominent ranchers. In 1871, at the age of thirty-one, she registered her own brand and began to acquire land and longhorns. She married Hezekiah Williams in 1879, but only after signing a prenuptial agreement that allowed her to retain control of her own financial affairs. When she and her husband drove cattle north on the Chisholm Trail, beginning in 1879, her herd remained separate from his, making her the first Texas woman to drive her own cattle to Abilene. Lizzie Johnson Williams, as a shrewd judge of cattle and investment opportunities, built a personal fortune that amounted to $250,000 at her death in 1924. A tall, striking woman, she was an interesting combination of the Southern lady and Western cattle queen, wearing silks, satins, laces, and diamonds for social occasions and switching to calicos, cottons, and a bonnet while on trail or at the Hays County ranch she shared with her husband.

The profitability of cattle ranching in Texas even attracted the interest of Northern and foreign investors. One famously successful venture began in 1878 when a Texas cattleman, Henry H. Campbell, formed a partnership with a Chicago banker, A. M. Britton, and bought a small herd and grazing rights from Joe Browning, a free-range rancher in central Motley County about 60 miles to the northeast of present-day Lubbock. Within a year the partners brought in several other investors, including Spottswood W. Lomax of Fort Worth, and incorporated as the Matador Cattle Company. Lomax, a lover of Spanish literature, named the operation. The ranching enterprise prospered, and the investors decided to cash in on their success by attracting venture capital from Great Britain. Britton traveled to Dundee, Scotland, in 1882 and sold the entire property for $1,250,000 to the Matador Land and Cattle Company, a new Scottish corporation. The Matador Ranch, which eventually controlled well over a million acres, began to pay dividends in 1885 and successfully withstood all the ups and downs of the cattle business for more than fifty years before finally being sold to another company in 1951. A second ranching venture organized by Britton and Lomax, the Espuela Cattle Company, enjoyed far less success. Incorporated in 1883 to operate in the region southeast of Lubbock, the Spur Ranch, as it became known, had more than 500,000 acres. Two years later Britton convinced investors in London to create the Espuela Land and Cattle Company and buy out the original organizers. The Spur Ranch, however, struggled financially to the point that the British investors sold out shortly after the turn of the century.

The largest ranch in Texas, the famous XIT, also originated in the early 1880s, although in a notably different way than any other. In 1879, when the state legislature looked for ways to finance a new capitol building in Austin, it turned to the public domain (in yet another example of how the state benefited from owning its public lands) and used 3,025,000 acres to pay the contractor, Mathias Schnell of Rock Island, Illinois. Schnell soon transferred the land to a group of businessmen known as the Chicago Syndicate, who decided to use it for ranching until they could sell it to farm settlers. The Syndicate raised $5 million from British investors and hired B. H. Campbell of Wichita, Kansas, to manage buying cattle and opening ranching operations on the land, which extended 220 miles north to south along the Texas Panhandle border with New Mexico. Eventually, the legend grew that XIT stood for "ten in Texas," because the ranch covered all or part of ten counties, but it is more likely that Abner P. Blocker, who drove the first herd of longhorns from Central Texas to the new ranch, sketched out the mark in the dust when Campbell asked for a brand that could not easily be altered. Within a few years the ranch had more than 100,000 cattle, and at its peak during the 1890s employed 150 cowboys who branded 35,000 calves in a single year. By the end of that decade, however, investors, especially those in Britain, wanted to sell and take their capital elsewhere, so the Syndicate began to make large portions available to other ranchers. The last parcel of the XIT sold in 1963, but memories of the largest ranch in Texas history remain alive to this day in Panhandle towns such as Dalhart.

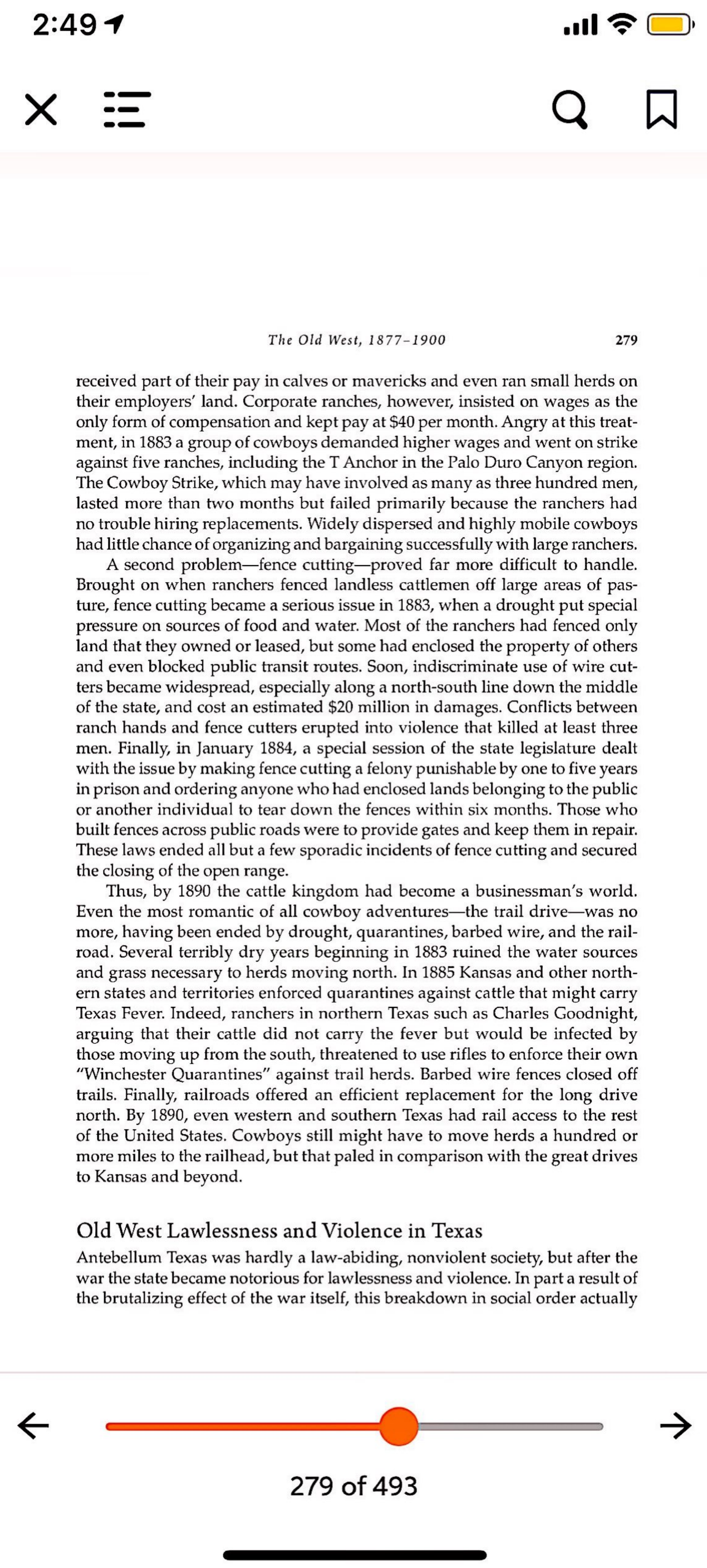
While ranching boomed in northwestern Texas after 1875, the state's most famous ranch, the King Ranch in South Texas, continued to expand. Created during the 1850s, the ranch was owned jointly by Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy from 1860 until 1868, when the partnership dissolved with King retaining control of the 53,136 acre Santa Gertrudis Grant. During the next ten years, King added more than 100,000 acres in southern Nueces County and, at his death in 1885, employed some 300 men on approximately 640,000 acres. More than half of the land he bought between 1875 and 1885 belonged originally to Mexicans, an indication of their continuing displacement by Anglos as landowners in South Texas. The King Ranch operated much like a Spanish or Mexican hacienda, with King as the *patrón* and those who worked the ranch as *peóns*. King provided housing, food and water, and small wages that *kineños* spent at the ranch store on their other needs. In return his workers practiced a Mexican style of ranching and made it pay. Upon King's death in 1885, his widow, Henrietta Chamberlain King, the Missouri-born daughter of a Presbyterian missionary to Texas, took over ownership and management of the King Ranch. She personally supervised its affairs, and with the assistance of her son-in-law Robert J. Kleberg, paid off some $500,000 in debt while adding additional land. By the time of Henrietta King's death in 1925, the ranch had reached 1,173,000 acres, and she had also played a major role in promoting the economic and cultural growth of the entire region from Corpus Christi to Brownsville.

The development of these huge ranches made cattle raising into more of a business than the adventure it once tended to be. Large ranchers began to acquire rights to pasture lands in Wyoming, Montana, and even Canada that



were used to fatten Texas cattle before marketing. Through the early part of the 1880s, instead of stopping at railheads in Kansas, drovers on the Western and Goodnight-Loving Trails kept their herds moving even farther north. Also, ranchers made an effort to improve their basic longhorn stock. Goodnight and Adair, for example, brought one hundred Durham (shorthorn) bulls to the JA Ranch in 1877. In 1876 William S. Ikard introduced Hereford cattle on his ranch in Clay County, and Christopher Columbus Slaughter, the "Cattle King of Texas," built a prize herd of purebred Herefords at his Long S Ranch on the headwaters of the Colorado River. The XIT was among the first to use Aberdeen Angus bulls, and the King Ranch imported Brahmans, which were well suited to the South Texas climate. Crossing these animals with shorthorns produced a new breed—the Santa Gertrudis—special to the Lone Star State.

Cattle raisers, as they built ever-larger ranches and sought to protect the pastures and water sources used by their herds, brought an end to open-range ranching. Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King, innovative and concerned with ownership rights as always, were probably the first to fence their lands. After



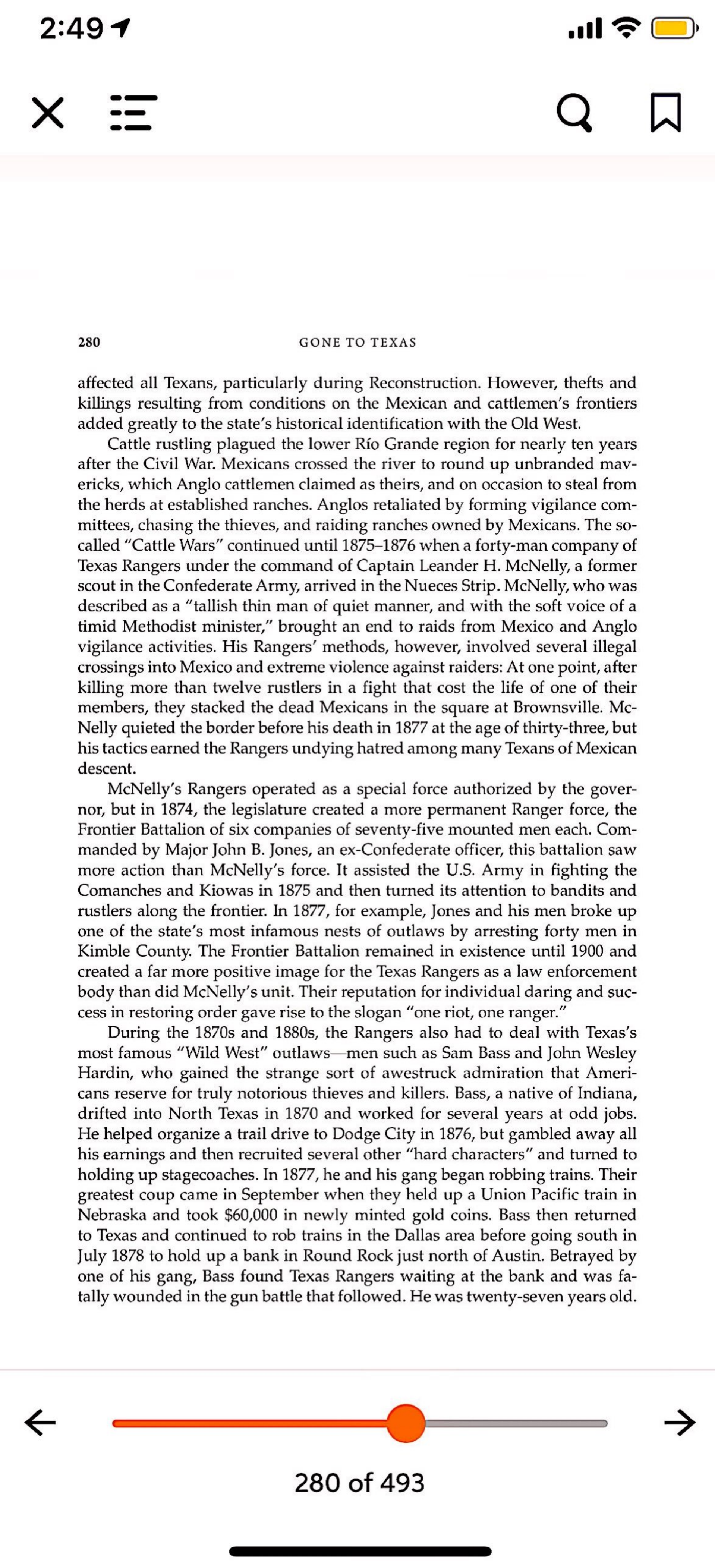
received part of their pay in calves or mavericks and even ran small herds on their employers' land. Corporate ranches, however, insisted on wages as the only form of compensation and kept pay at $40 per month. Angry at this treatment, in 1883 a group of cowboys demanded higher wages and went on strike against five ranches, including the T Anchor in the Palo Duro Canyon region. The Cowboy Strike, which may have involved as many as three hundred men, lasted more than two months but failed primarily because the ranchers had no trouble hiring replacements. Widely dispersed and highly mobile cowboys had little chance of organizing and bargaining successfully with large ranchers.

A second problem—fence cutting—proved far more difficult to handle. Brought on when ranchers fenced landless cattlemen off large areas of pasture, fence cutting became a serious issue in 1883, when a drought put special pressure on sources of food and water. Most of the ranchers had fenced only land that they owned or leased, but some had enclosed the property of others and even blocked public transit routes. Soon, indiscriminate use of wire cutters became widespread, especially along a north-south line down the middle of the state, and cost an estimated $20 million in damages. Conflicts between ranch hands and fence cutters erupted into violence that killed at least three men. Finally, in January 1884, a special session of the state legislature dealt with the issue by making fence cutting a felony punishable by one to five years in prison and ordering anyone who had enclosed lands belonging to the public or another individual to tear down the fences within six months. Those who built fences across public roads were to provide gates and keep them in repair. These laws ended all but a few sporadic incidents of fence cutting and secured the closing of the open range.

Thus, by 1890 the cattle kingdom had become a businessman's world. Even the most romantic of all cowboy adventures—the trail drive—was no more, having been ended by drought, quarantines, barbed wire, and the railroad. Several terribly dry years beginning in 1883 ruined the water sources and grass necessary to herds moving north. In 1885 Kansas and other northern states and territories enforced quarantines against cattle that might carry Texas Fever. Indeed, ranchers in northern Texas such as Charles Goodnight, arguing that their cattle did not carry the fever but would be infected by those moving up from the south, threatened to use rifles to enforce their own "Winchester Quarantines" against trail herds. Barbed wire fences closed off trails. Finally, railroads offered an efficient replacement for the long drive north. By 1890, even western and southern Texas had rail access to the rest of the United States. Cowboys still might have to move herds a hundred or more miles to the railhead, but that paled in comparison with the great drives to Kansas and beyond.

Old West Lawlessness and Violence in Texas

Antebellum Texas was hardly a law-abiding, nonviolent society, but after the war the state became notorious for lawlessness and violence. In part a result of the brutalizing effect of the war itself, this breakdown in social order actually



affected all Texans, particularly during Reconstruction. However, thefts and killings resulting from conditions on the Mexican and cattlemen's frontiers added greatly to the state's historical identification with the Old West.

Cattle rustling plagued the lower Río Grande region for nearly ten years after the Civil War. Mexicans crossed the river to round up unbranded mavericks, which Anglo cattlemen claimed as theirs, and on occasion to steal from the herds at established ranches. Anglos retaliated by forming vigilance committees, chasing the thieves, and raiding ranches owned by Mexicans. The so-called "Cattle Wars" continued until 1875–1876 when a forty-man company of Texas Rangers under the command of Captain Leander H. McNelly, a former scout in the Confederate Army, arrived in the Nueces Strip. McNelly, who was described as a "tallish thin man of quiet manner, and with the soft voice of a timid Methodist minister," brought an end to raids from Mexico and Anglo vigilance activities. His Rangers' methods, however, involved several illegal crossings into Mexico and extreme violence against raiders: At one point, after killing more than twelve rustlers in a fight that cost the life of one of their members, they stacked the dead Mexicans in the square at Brownsville. McNelly quieted the border before his death in 1877 at the age of thirty-three, but his tactics earned the Rangers undying hatred among many Texans of Mexican descent.

McNelly's Rangers operated as a special force authorized by the governor, but in 1874, the legislature created a more permanent Ranger force, the Frontier Battalion of six companies of seventy-five mounted men each. Commanded by Major John B. Jones, an ex-Confederate officer, this battalion saw more action than McNelly's force. It assisted the U.S. Army in fighting the Comanches and Kiowas in 1875 and then turned its attention to bandits and rustlers along the frontier. In 1877, for example, Jones and his men broke up one of the state's most infamous nests of outlaws by arresting forty men in Kimble County. The Frontier Battalion remained in existence until 1900 and created a far more positive image for the Texas Rangers as a law enforcement body than did McNelly's unit. Their reputation for individual daring and success in restoring order gave rise to the slogan "one riot, one ranger."

During the 1870s and 1880s, the Rangers also had to deal with Texas's most famous "Wild West" outlaws—men such as Sam Bass and John Wesley Hardin, who gained the strange sort of awestruck admiration that Americans reserve for truly notorious thieves and killers. Bass, a native of Indiana, drifted into North Texas in 1870 and worked for several years at odd jobs. He helped organize a trail drive to Dodge City in 1876, but gambled away all his earnings and then recruited several other "hard characters" and turned to holding up stagecoaches. In 1877, he and his gang began robbing trains. Their greatest coup came in September when they held up a Union Pacific train in Nebraska and took $60,000 in newly minted gold coins. Bass then returned to Texas and continued to rob trains in the Dallas area before going south in July 1878 to hold up a bank in Round Rock just north of Austin. Betrayed by one of his gang, Bass found Texas Rangers waiting at the bank and was fatally wounded in the gun battle that followed. He was twenty-seven years old.

Texans immortalized Bass in poems and songs as a sort of Robin Hood "of the type you scarcely ever see."

John Wesley Hardin, born in Bonham in 1853, began his career as a killer at age fifteen by shooting a freedman in East Texas and continued it on an 1871 drive on the Chisholm Trail, killing seven men en route and three more in Abilene. Back in Texas, he killed another four men, surrendered to lawmen in Cherokee County in 1872, but broke out of jail and shot a former state police officer and a deputy sheriff. Hardin then left the state, but Texas Rangers arrested him in Florida. Convicted of murder in 1878, he received a twenty-five-year sentence, which he put to good use (when not trying to escape) by directing the prison Sunday school and reading law. He received a pardon in 1894, was admitted to the bar (surely one of those lawyer jokes), and moved to El Paso. The next year, after having an affair with the wife of a client, he was murdered by a man whom he had hired to kill the husband/client and then refused to pay. Hardin insisted that he always fought in self-defense and that he "never killed a man who didn't need killing." Somehow, a good many people were willing to overlook the more than thirty notches on his gun and believe him.

Post Civil War Texas thus quickly earned a central place in the lore and legend of the Old West. The state's experiences with Indians, soldiers, ranchers, cowboys, outlaws, and lawmen fascinated contemporaries and provided entertainment to literally millions of readers and moviegoers in the future. This romantic Western heritage, however, in spite of the hold it gained on the popular imagination, never involved a majority of the state's people. They remained far more Southern than Western in every respect.