



Rebellious Ranger: Rip Ford and the Old Southwest

W. J. Hughes

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The Texas of John Salmon Ford's day demanded men of courage and versatility. Ford was such a man. He came to Texas in 1836, quickly became active in Texas affairs, and remained so until his death in 1897. During his long life, Ford was a practicing physician, adjutant in Colonel Hays's regiment of Texas Rangers during the Mexican War, newspaper editor, explorer and surveyor, state senator, mayor and city marshal of Austin, Ranger captain and Indian fighter, Mexican revolutionary general, Sunday-school teacher, Confederate colonel, mayor of Brownsville, superintendent of the state Deaf and Dumb School, and a charter member, of the state historical society.

Ford was instrumental in getting Texas into the Union and, fifteen years later, in getting her out. After the Civil War he helped frame the new state constitution and place Texas once again in the roster of states. He defended her frontiers in the west against Comanches and in the south against Mexican raiders. The story of his life is one of service to his state. He loved Texas as only an old "Texian" could and stood ready to serve her in any capacity. Texas called on him to serve primarily as a trouble shooter, and he served well.

Although the hero of several dime novels, "Old Rip" has never before been the subject of a complete biography based on historical research. His colorful and adventurous life reflects the growing pains of Texas during the formative years. Ford's life was never dull; neither is his biography.

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