

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

10-1-2008

Review of *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* By  
Andrew R. Graybill

Michael Hogue

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Hogue, Michael, "Review of *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* By Andrew R. Graybill" (2008). *Great Plains Quarterly*. Paper 1308.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1308>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910.* By Andrew R. Graybill. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xiii + 277 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paper.

At opposite ends of the Great Plains, the North-West Mounted Police and the Texas

Rangers emerged in the mid-1870s as key instruments in the extension of state power over distant frontiers. *Policing the Great Plains* reveals how these famous rural constabularies implemented policies designed in Ottawa and Austin to promote the settlement and economic development of the Great Plains. Andrew Graybill argues that these shared political and economic goals ensured that Mounties and Rangers, despite their many differences, helped bring about strikingly similar transformations in Texas and the Canadian Prairies.

By placing Mounties and Rangers in this common history of state and market expansion, Graybill redirects well-worn stories of Mounties and Rangers into more fruitful avenues of inquiry. Each of his four core chapters focuses on a particular stage in the state's absorption of its frontier and the role the constabularies played in that process. The first two consider the efforts of Rangers and Mounties to confine or remove Indigenous peoples and to dispossess people of mixed ancestry in order to appropriate Aboriginal lands and resources for the use of white farmers, ranchers, and entrepreneurs. The final two chapters explore how the constabularies helped to consolidate that new order. By defending cattlemen and ranching syndicates from the protests of the rural poor and helping mining and railroad corporations to suppress labor unrest, he argues, Rangers and Mounties played critical roles in consolidating the nascent industrial economy in the Great Plains.

But these broad transformations should not mask the differences—both stark and subtle—in the specific policies that governments mandated and in the methods Rangers and Mounties used to effect them. After all, there is no Canadian counterpart to the overt violence the Rangers dispensed in their campaigns against Kiowas, Comanches, and Mexicans in South Texas. Graybill carefully untangles the complicated reasons for these differences. Rather than use them to tell parables of Mountie benevolence or Ranger savagery, he draws out more complicated les-

sons about the two forces and the societies that deployed them. By identifying the common threads that unite the histories of the Rangers and Mounties, as well as the disparate strands that set them apart, Graybill's study underscores the value of comparative history. With its careful analysis, extensive research, and broad synthesis, it is a most welcome addition to the burgeoning literature on the transborder history of the Great Plains.

MICHEL HOGUE  
Department of History  
University of Wisconsin-Madison