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Review of *Cowboy Justice: Tale of a Texas Lawman* by Jim Gober

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Cowboy Justice: Tale of a Texas Lawman. By Jim Gober. Edited by James R. Gober and B. Byron Price. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1997. Photographs, illustrations, maps, notes, index. xxiii + 327 pp. \$28.95.

In 1980, James Gober inherited a discolored and aged bundle of papers that had once belonged to his grandfather, Jim Ransler Gober. To his surprise, he found they con-

tained a rough, unedited autobiographical account of his grandfather's life as a Great Plains cowboy, lawman, detective, gambler, and saloon-keeper. Although Jim Gober was a relatively unknown Great Plains figure, his grandson believed his life story contributed significantly to the history of this region; with the assistance of B. Byron Price, a historian and executive director of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, he edited and organized the narrative for publication.

Cowboy Justice provides a vivid firsthand account of one man's life and experiences on the Great Plains during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Born in Denton County, Texas, in 1865, Gober lived most of his adult life in the Panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma. He left home at sixteen, worked as a cowboy for six years, and in 1887, at the age of twenty-two, became the first sheriff of Potter County, Texas, the youngest sheriff in the United States. In recounting his brief career as a Texas lawman, Gober offers a rare insider's view of the nature of Great Plains law enforcement and the skills required of a nineteenth-century lawman. After leaving law enforcement, he drifted from job to job, working as a saloon-keeper, professional gambler, stock detective, homesteader, and private detective.

Although its title emphasizes Gober's brief law enforcement career, the book itself is much more than the tale of a Texas lawman. *Cowboy Justice* offers valuable insights into Great Plains family life, homesteading, community building, politics, and the struggles and hardships of ordinary people. It also affords a number of interesting anecdotes concerning such colorful frontier figures as Sam Bass, Pat Garrett, Temple Houston, and Charles Siringo.

Gober's memoirs are supported with maps, photographs, and dozens of pen-and-ink drawings by Panhandle artist Harold Dow Bugbee. Scholars will find the volume useful as the chronicle of an ordinary citizen of the Plains whose life coincided with the Euro-American settlement and development of the Texas and

Oklahoma Panhandles. Moreover, Jim Gober's life story will offer a wider audience sheer enjoyment.

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