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Cowboy Life on the Texas Plains: The Photographs of Ray Rector. Edited by Margaret Rector. Introduction by John Graves. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1982. Photographs. 119 pp. \$19.95.

This slim volume is a happy combination of photographs from the Texas ranching country and a breezy but thoughtful essay about cowboys.

The introduction by John Graves dissociates itself from the specific time and place of the photos but maintains its Texas connection in its regional values and the color of its language. Graves gives broad consideration to economic change, technological development, the persistence of tradition and myth, and the impact of ecological change upon cowboy life. The cowboys he portrays came from rural places, participated in a legend they had already absorbed, and performed their jobs for fun and gain, with a deft flair born of pride and joy.

Ray Rector's photographs, the book's main section, are filled with authentic detail from Texas cattle ranches in the first three decades of this century. Subtle differences, and some not so subtle, pace passing time and harken back to an earlier day: horseshoe pegs, school marms, Model A Fords, and sawed-board corrals.

In an era when photos of the old West abound, the chief value of this collection is its usefulness as a benchmark midway along the course of ranching history. The photographs impress the viewer with how much of the old persisted in 1930 as well as with how much has given way.

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