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## Review of *The Texas Sheriff; Lord of the County Line* By Thad Sitton

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*The Texas Sheriff: Lord of the County Line.* By Thad Sitton. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. xiv + 253 pp. \$24.95.

Thad Sitton's *The Texas Sheriff*, an anecdotal collage of reminiscences about local law enforcement in Texas in the first half of the twentieth century, is based upon extensive interviews with more than thirty retired Texas county sheriffs as well as articles from the *Sheriffs' Association of Texas Magazine* and the *Texas Lawman*. Sitton also draws upon memoirs and newspaper columns written by former Texas county sheriffs and reportage in the popular press.

Unfortunately for this book, Texas is a large state with 254 counties. *The Texas Sheriff* focuses on only a few counties with colorful or communicative sheriffs. In addition, the work suffers from a lack of organization. The reader is taken on a confusing ramble from deep East Texas to South Texas and back. The four chapters are overly long and each lacks a coherent theme. There is little or no consideration of Texas political parties and political organizations. Although Texas sheriffs were politicians as well as lawmen, this study is largely silent about Texas politics and the political role of the county sheriff. The lack of maps will further confuse non-Texas readers. Coleman County or Wharton County mean little to an outsider. In fact, many of today's urban Texans would be hard-pressed to locate Angelina County or Kleberg County without a Texas county map.

There is little geographical balance in *The Texas Sheriff*. Only one representative from the Texas Panhandle appears in this study: B. Rufus Jordan of Gray County. Certainly Sher-

iff Rufe Jordan—a colorful figure in Pampa, Texas—was a “Lord of the County Line,” but there were equally colorful contemporaries elsewhere in the Panhandle, the High Plains, and West Texas, too. Their stories remain untold.

Readers wanting an exploration of the relationship between Texas county sheriffs and county commissioners or analysis of Texas local government will be disappointed by *The Texas Sheriff*. Readers wanting anecdotes and colorful stories about a few Texas county sheriffs will find the book to their liking. A balanced, scholarly study of Texas law enforcement at the county level remains to be written.

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