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Review of *The U.S. Army and the Texas Frontier Economy, 1845-1900* by Thomas T. Smith

Andres Tijerina
Austin Community College

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The U.S. Army and the Texas Frontier Economy, 1845-1900. Thomas T. Smith. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999. xi+307 pp. Illustrations, notes, references, index. \$34.95 cloth (ISBN 0890968829).

While historians have richly documented Texas's economic growth through its cattle industry and the petrochemical industry, they have paid scarce attention to the US government's major role in that growth as a result of its infusion of capital through the US Army in Texas. According to Thomas T. Smith, the Army channeled its budget from the US Treasury through quartermaster contracts into the hands of civilian vendors, creating an "exponential benefit" for the rest of the frontier community as a consequence of the multiplier effect of the market. Thus, the US Army decisively supported and conditioned the civilian frontier economy of Texas in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The author's specific purpose is "to determine a solid estimate of the bottom line" of total monies contributed to the Texas economy by the US Army in the latter half of that century. Smith's main thesis, however, holds that the Army was a major collaborator in the struggle to build a community on the Texas frontier. "The sword plants the banner," US Army Quartermaster Capt. Samuel G. French observed, "and a city is built around it."

Other historians have alluded to the importance of the US military's role in the economy. Smith's book informs peripheral areas, but his is the only monograph dedicated exclusively to Texas military expenditures from 1848 to 1900. A prolific researcher, Smith uses diaries, private letters, military correspondence, statistical reports, and government publications that might frighten all but the resolute scholar. The endnotes and bibliography offer readers an archival trove of federal government records. Smith manages to highlight some of the most significant facts hidden beneath the reams of those uninviting quantitative records. While the book's interpretation is modest, its theme is singular.

Though the author avoids clothing his thesis in dramatic anecdotes or prosaic narrative, he does provide a few truly quotable facts. The Army in Texas brought together, for example, "America's largest corporate body" with the largest state organization in the nation. Throughout the book, he displays an unadorned statistical style accentuated by strong comparisons, stating, for example, that the US Army logistical routes across Texas were longer than "Napoleon's supply line from Poland to Moscow in the 1812 campaign," and that the \$70 million expenditure of the Army's Quartermaster and Paymaster was double the total value of real and personal property in nineteenth-century Texas. Such facts are presented in a highly structured exposition that adheres to the study's theme.

The volume of archival records left by the US Army, according to Smith, overwhelms civilian records of Texas's nascent frontier towns. Indeed, even the book's extensive bibliography struggles against a challenging classification of archival and microfilm documents. In one entry, for instance, the bibliography refers to the actual records of the National Archives and Records Service in Washington, DC, as the "Descriptive Book of the District of Texas" for 1 July 1868, citing it as Microfilm no. M253. A hands-on review of the actual records in Washington, DC, reveals that Microfilm no. M253 is in fact the "Index to the Records of Confederate Soldiers." This discrepancy is, no doubt, more an indication of the records' prodigiousness than a lack of thorough research.

Not for the casual reader, this book is essential for any scholar who seeks the "bottom line" of the US Army's contributions to the nineteenth-century Texas economy and a valid interpretation of the Army's supportive role on that civilian frontier. **Andrés Tijerina**, *Department of History, Austin Community College*.