



Texas Ranger: The Epic Life of Frank Hamer, the Man Who Killed Bonnie and Clyde

John Boessenecker

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The New York Times Best Seller!

“Frank Hamer, last of the old breed of Texas Rangers, has not fared well in history or popular culture. John Boessenecker now restores this incredible Ranger to his proper place alongside such fabled lawmen as Wyatt Earp and Eliot Ness. Here is a grand adventure story, told with grace and authority by a master historian of American law enforcement. Frank Hamer can rest easy as readers will finally learn the truth behind his amazing career, spanning the end of the Wild West through the bloody days of the gangsters.”

--Paul Andrew Hutton, author of *The Apache Wars*

To most Americans, Frank Hamer is known only as the “villain” of the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*. Now, in *Texas Ranger*, historian John Boessenecker sets out to restore Hamer’s good name and prove that he was, in fact, a classic American hero.

From the horseback days of the Old West through the gangster days of the 1930s, Hamer stood on the frontlines of some of the most important and exciting periods in American history. He participated in the Bandit War of 1915, survived the climactic gunfight in the last blood feud of the Old West, battled the Mexican Revolution’s spillover across the border, protected African Americans from lynch mobs and the Ku Klux Klan, and ran down gangsters, bootleggers, and Communists. When at last his career came to an end, it was only when he ran up against another legendary Texan: Lyndon B. Johnson.

Written by one of the most acclaimed historians of the Old West, *Texas Ranger* is the first biography to tell the full story of this near-mythic lawman.

Texas Ranger: The Epic Life of Frank Hamer, the Man Who Killed Bonnie and Clyde Details

Date : Published April 26th 2016 by Thomas Dunne Books

ISBN : 9781250069986

Author : John Boessenecker

Format : Hardcover 528 pages

Genre : Biography, Nonfiction, History, Mystery, Crime, True Crime



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From Reader Review Texas Ranger: The Epic Life of Frank Hamer, the Man Who Killed Bonnie and Clyde for online ebook

Chuck says

This is a history of the life and times of Frank Hamer; the most acclaimed Texas Ranger in history. He had a long and distinguished career as a Ranger but is probably best known for his heading up the team that tracked down and killed the notorious Bonnie & Clyde. This is a very interesting read.

Susan says

A biography of a man who was a Texas Ranger in the rough and ready days to the 1940's, this book was researched with careful detail and written as great adventure. Frank Hamer was truly the epitome of "one riot, one Ranger." He had a sixth sense for finding bad guys and catching them red handed.

Bonnie and Clyde may have been his most famous case, but he had many before them from the Rio Grande to the Red River. He wasn't perfect and made enemies along the way, but he was always honest and upright in his career.

He fought the King Klux Klan during lynchings in Sherman, turned a windmill into a jail during a barn dance when none existed, fought Prohibition and Ma and Pa Ferguson. The stories in this book are fascinating especially because they are true. You have to like a Ranger whose wife shoots her way out of a touchy situation sitting in the car with him when they are newly married. What's coming. Ext?

doowopocalypse says

This book is fun. Lots of fairly well written anecdotes. But. The author mentions a few times how he wants to restore Hamer's name to its proper place in history, and the thing that keeps holding him back is...Hamer. Good gun fighter, maybe not such a good cop. Not when you shoot first and ask questions later. Or get personally involved in a blood feud that you were assigned to stop. I get it was a different time, but there are things Hamer did that were not even ok in a sly wink sort of way. Like assault reporters. Or "accidentally" join, however briefly, the KKK. The author also makes some VERY tenuous suggestions-notably that Hamer's trying to stop LBJ getting elected in Texas on behalf of a friend somehow led to the Civil Rights Act. But I could read the gun fights all day.

Dan says

This was a very detailed account of Frank Hamer's life. I think the author tried to reflect too much personal opinion into it.

Jason Boehle says

Fascinating book on Texas history. Frank truly lived an epic life the right way. I was enthralled by Frank's character and his fearlessness in the face of danger. Truly a Texas hero!

Don says

I very much enjoyed the biography about Frank Hamer. It was a good thing that the fact that Hamer was involved in killing Bonnie and Clyde in the title, otherwise I probably would not have picked it up. Like most of us, my knowledge of B & C and the times was limited to watching Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway in "Bonnie & Clyde" and a quick visit to the Texas Ranger Museum in San Antonio.

John Boessenecker's biography gives a balanced view of Frank Hamer including pointing out actions which Hamer took which were illegal (or at least bordered on illegality) both in his time and certainly by today's standards. He goes in (sometimes) too much detail in Hamer's early exploits, but the facts he reports are well researched and ring true. No reason to doubt them.

Boessenecker gave enough background into the times in which Hamer operated to give context to his actions, and to provide a mini slice of American culture and history. I found this one of the high points of the book. His depiction of the corrupt nature of Texas politics (hello LBJ) and the disgusting racism and brutality against blacks brought back once again to me how far we have come (but unfortunately still how far we have to go in that area.)

What rings true throughout the book is Hamer preoccupation with "doing what is right - and respect for the law. He was a true believer in the law - and deserves the respect and admiration which is showered on him in this book.

This book gives you a glimpse of what the wild west was really right. John Wayne in his movies was a pale comparison to the real thing. And Frank Hamer was "the real thing."

Russ Whitney says

I really enjoyed this book although it wasn't quite what I expected. It is more of a documentary than a story which disappointed me when I started but I grew to enjoy it more and more as it went along. Although the lawman's perspective of Bonnie and Clyde originally drew me to the book, I found I was even more interested in the Texas politics and the descriptions of what life was like between 1915 and 1930. It was a brutal time particularly well suited to a man like Frank Hamer.

Alexw says

A very well researched book about a true lawman hero who survived over 50 gunfights. In the movie, Bonnie and Clyde, he was said to have been captured by the Barrow Gang and put in a rowboat in handcuffs but that never occurred and his widow successfully sued the studio for that slanderous lie.

Another fascinating part was when he sued Lyndon Baines Johnson when he ran for US Senator for stuffing the ballot box. While Frank lost that case in court, in 1970 a coconspirator confessed to cheating on enough ballots for LBJ to win the election !!

James says

Ponderous and full of detailed minutiae about the famed Texas ranger who was involved the bullet ridden disposal of Bonnie and Clyde. But before you get to that hunt and final bloody roadside end, you get chapter after chapter of all the cases, incidents, arrests, gun battles, and frankly, boring life of Frank Hamer. There are hundreds of names hurled at you in the reading that you can't keep track. The author, to his credit, obviously did his research, but it just isn't attention grabbing. Personally found a lot of Ranger Hamer's attitudes (he believed in the superiority of whites, though he defended African Americans and Mexicans against racial mobs because he believed in the law) and his involvement in the feud between his future wife (who loved to shoot people when she got angry) and her ex-husband's family to be a bit disconcerting.

Massanutten Regional Library says

Angela, Central patron, June 2018, 5 stars:

Thoroughly researched, this book takes the reader into the world of the West in the late 19th century and early 20th. Tells the story of one of the most famous Texas Rangers, detailing everything from the lasting impact of his life to the random, entertaining anecdotes recorded about him.

Debbie says

This book is a biography of Frank Hamer. Despite the title, he was not a Texas Ranger his entire life, but he certainly spent much of his time as one. He first joined the Texas Rangers in 1906 as a young man, and most of the book is about his adventures in keeping the peace and enforcing the law. These adventures range from protecting blacks from lynching mobs, catching horse or cattle thieves, stopping illegal goods from coming over the boarder from Mexico, fighting in the Bandit War, getting involved in a blood feud, helping protect Texan oil interests, investigating election fraud, and more. I was surprised by how many details still exist since Frank Hamer "left behind scant correspondence and no diaries or journals." But his story "lives on in moldering court records, yellowed newspapers, obscure archives, and forgotten memoirs of his fellow lawmen."

The author carefully researched Hamer's life. He made an effort to help us understand Frank Hamer in his historical context and tried to give readers a balanced view of the man. Hamer's temper got him in trouble at times, and his methods were sometimes rough but were what got the job done when one man was expected to do the job of fifteen. But he wasn't corrupt. It's surprising what some of his bosses got away with before the corruption started to be curbed. The author included some pictures of Frank Hamer throughout his life.

Through Frank Hamer's life, we get glimpses at how the Texas Rangers changed from 1906 to the 1940s--like from using horses to increasingly using automobiles, and changes in the types of jobs they did, what they were paid, and who qualified to be one. Overall, the book was a easy read and fairly exciting. I'd

recommend it to those interested in Frank Hamer or this period of Texas Ranger history.

I received this review copy from the publisher through Amazon Vine.

Laura Jean says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The author took a very neutral stance; discussing both Hamer's strengths and weaknesses as a Texas lawman between 1906 and his death in 1955. It's full of action and is quite fast paced for such a thick tome. Full of fascinating facts, it covers an era in Texas history when the old west was slowly dying off and the new years of civil rights and forensic science were just beginning.

Robert says

Most of us are familiar with the academy award winning movie "Bonnie And Clyde" from the 1960's. If you have not seen it, I highly recommend it. At one point in the movie, the glamorized Bonnie and Clyde capture a Texas Ranger and humiliate him. That Ranger is Frank Hamer (pronounced Hay-mer) who is near the end of his career. This current book gives an account of the career of Frank Hamer.

Personally, I do not generally enjoy non-fiction as much as fiction but sometimes I come across a winner such as Undaunted Courage, Crazy Horse And Custer, Blood And Thunder, or Ghost Soldiers. This book is in that class and in October 2018 will be the partial basis of a Netflix film "The Highwaymen", starring Kevin Costner as Frank Hamer and Woody Harrelson as his fellow Ranger.

The 3-page prologue caught my interest immediately. The author, John Boessenecker, then proceeds to give an unvarnished look at the good, the bad, and the ugly of Hamer's career. Early on, Hamer is referred to as the greatest lawman of the 20th century . . . and the book goes on to show He was unrivaled. While Hamer may have been most famous for his killing of Bonnie and Clyde, his life prior to that episode was very danger-filled. By the time the book reaches Bonnie and Clyde, Hamer has already achieved a stellar career. Fortunately, the book does not make Hamer the bad guy and Bonnie and Clyde into the good guys. It paints both Bonnie and Clyde as low-life, scum . . . killers of innocent people. And this episode with them is relegated to a couple of chapters near the end of your read.

Near the end of the book, Hamer is again referred to as possibly the greatest lawman of the 20th century. When you finish with this one, I feel you will agree he could not possibly have had a rival to that title.

Thom Pantazi says

This book started a binge of reading about heroes of the south. Frank Hamer was made out to be the bad guy in the movie "Bonnie and Clyde". However it turns out he was the kind of man I wish all of us could aim to be. Frankly it seems to me that anyone who is given the honor of serving as a peace officer ought to be a man of impeccable integrity and character. After reading this book I believe Frank Hamer thought so as well.

Consider that Frank Hamer personally prevented so many lynchings that the practice all but disappeared during his tenure. In a time and place where the KKK was in its heyday and racial attitudes were terrible Mr.

Hamer fought for the black man. He wasn't overly progressive or forward thinking, he simply understood the responsibility of being able to protect people. He hated bullies and was big and tough enough to back down anyone. John Wayne could have taken some pointers from him. In fact, Tom Mix did get pointers from him!

As a former Yankee I grew up in New York and learning about the evil men of the south. Why great and honorable men like Frank Hamer aren't household names is a stain on the NEA.

A Reader's Heaven says

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

*To most Americans, Frank Hamer is known only as the “villain” of the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*. Now, in *Texas Ranger*, historian John Boessenecker sets out to restore Hamer’s good name and prove that he was, in fact, a classic American hero.*

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Like another reviewer said, I am glad the publishers decided to add the Bonnie & Clyde reference to the title cos otherwise I would have missed a great book.

While the story of Frank Hamer did hit a high point with his part in the death of Bonnie & Clyde, he was involved in a lot of other things throughout his life in the Rangers. He protected African Americans from lynch mobs, stopped illegal shipments from crossing the Mexican border, caught horse and cattle hustlers, investigated election fraud, and protected the oil interests of Texas. He wasn't always perceived as a good guy - he made his fair share of enemies and his temper was sometimes getting him in trouble - but he wasn't a bad guy, if you get my meaning...

While the man himself didn't leave behind much in the way of a journal or anything of that sort, there is plenty of information found in old court documents, newspapers, archives and the like. I have to say I was impressed with the research involved in this story, as well as the easy style of writing. This could have easily become a "textbook-style" book but the author kept me engaged throughout.

Well worth a read - recommended!

Paul
ARH