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John B. Denton: The Bigger-Than-Life Story of the Fighting Parson and Texas Ranger. By Mike Cochran. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021. Pp. 256. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

At first glance, John B. Denton seems an odd choice for a full-length biographical treatment. He hardly looms large in the history of the Republic of Texas; indeed, all but the most devoted of Texas history buffs are largely unaware of him. Yet he has a county and city named for him, and more notable historical figures, such as rancher John Chisum, considered him a hero. Much of the late nineteenth-century fascination with Denton came from the search for his remains and subsequent reburials. Denton County historian Mike Cochran is clear in his purpose for writing this book: "people are part of movements and by singling out one person to study in detail, you gain a larger understanding of the movement of which they were a part" (vi).

Denton's story is similar to those of thousands of other Americans during the early nineteenth century. He was born in Tennessee in 1806, but shortly thereafter moved with his family to Indiana and then to Arkansas Territory. Like so many others, the Dentons were drawn west in search of land and opportunity. By 1833, Denton was married with several children and beginning his career as a circuit-riding Methodist preacher in southwest Arkansas. After Texas's independence from Mexico, he began to preach a circuit in northeast Texas, settling in Clarksville in 1838. Shortly thereafter, needing a better salary to support a growing family, Denton left the ministry and studied law with Clarksville lawyer John B. Craig. He also began serving in Texas Ranger and militia units, serving during the Cherokee War of 1839. In 1841, Denton joined the Tarrant Expedition, a punitive raid in response to Indian attacks in northeast Texas. On May 24, at about age thirty-five, he was killed in a battle with Anadarko Indians at Village Creek near modern-day Fort Worth.

Most biographies end with the death of their subject, but Cochran is only halfway through at this point. The rest of the book examines the way Denton's death was commemorated over the next century and a half, in part because many veterans of the Battle of Village Creek became leaders in their communities. Much of Cochran's book deals with the search for Denton's original burial site, which was close to where he was killed. However, in the 1850s and 1860s, when veterans of the battle tried to find his grave, the country had been settled and landmarks were gone. Two competing views on the location developed. During the 1860s, John Chisum, whose father, Clabe, had been Denton's friend, claimed to have located the grave and exhumed bones that were reburied on the Denton courthouse square in 1901. Cochran speculates that these remains likely are not Denton's. The rest of the book involves debunking Denton myths,

most of which were spawned by pulp western writer Alfred Arrington.

Although records are relatively sparse, Cochran does an excellent job of separating facts from the legends that arose after his Denton's death. Despite the fact that he died young, his story is representative of thousands of early settlers of northeast Texas, about whose lives we know little. Cochran's historical detective work unraveling myths is admirable. In doing so he shows that Denton's greatest legacy, the bestowing of his name on a county and city, is a testament to the countless unnamed pioneers who helped settle the area with him.

University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley William C. Yancey

Identified with Texas: The Lives of Governor Elisha Marshall Pease and Lucadia Niles Pease. By Elizabeth Whitlow. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2022. Pp. 432. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

Elisha Marshall Pease is one of the least-known governors of Texas, especially within the context of general historical knowledge popularly held by many Texans. Nevertheless, Pease's relative obscurity is surprising because his accomplishments rank him among the more effective occupants to have held that office. It is even more surprising that this volume constitutes the first published biography of Pease, supplanting Roger A. Griffin's 1973 doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin. This timely book goes a step further by skillfully blending the story of his wife, Lucadia Niles Pease, into the progression of the governor's life, examining the personal aspects of their companionate marriage along with her impact on his political career. As such, this volume constitutes a welcome addition to the historical literature dealing with nineteenth-century Texas women.

The political story of Pease's career spans from 1835, at the start of the Texas Revolution, to his passing in 1883. A lawyer by training, he fought at the Battle of Gonzales, thereafter securing appointment as general secretary of the 1836 provisional government along with holding other administrative posts during the Republic before representing Brazoria County in the state legislature after statehood. He served two terms as governor from 1853 until 1857. During that time, he put the state on a firm financial footing, created the economic strategies to pay for public education, organized state-funded reservations for Native Americans, began construction of the governor's mansion in Austin, and worked to establish schools for both the blind and the hearing impaired. A Unionist during the Civil War, he sat on the sidelines during the conflict and thereafter emerged as a founder of the Republican Party in Texas. During Reconstruction, military authorities appointed him governor, and his tenure