



Painting Texas History to 1900 (American Studies Series)

Sam DeShong Ratcliffe

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Dramatic historical events have frequently provided subject matter for artists, particularly in pre-twentieth-century Texas, where works portraying historical, often legendary, events and individuals predominated. Until now, however, these paintings of Texas history have never received the kind of study given to historical, fictional, and film versions of the same events. *Painting Texas History to 1900* fills this gap with an interdisciplinary approach that explores these paintings both as works of art and as historical documents.

The author examines the works of more than forty artists, including Henry McArdle, Theodore Gentilz, Robert Onderdonk, William Huddle, Frederic Remington, Friedrich Richard Petri, Arthur T. Lee, Seth Eastman, Sarah Hardinge, Frank Reaugh, W. G. M. Samuel, Carl G. von Iwonski, and Julius Stockfleth. He places each work within its historical and cultural context to show why such subject matter was chosen, why it was depicted in a particular way, and why such a depiction gained popular acceptance. For example, paintings of heroic events of the Texas Revolution were especially popular in the years following the Civil War, when, in Ratcliffe's view, Texans needed such images to assuage the loss of the war and the humiliation of Reconstruction.

Though the paintings cut across traditional art history categories—from the pictographs of early historic Indians to European-inspired oil paintings—they are bound together by their artists' intent for them to function as historically evocative documents. With their visual narratives of events that characterized all of America's westward expansion—Indian encounters, military battles, farming, ranching, surveying, and the closing of the frontier—these works add an important chapter to the story of the American West.

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