



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING

---

Gunpowder Justice: A Reassessment of the Texas Rangers by Julian Samora; Joe Bernal;  
Albert Peña

Review by: Francisco E. Balderrama

*Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Aug., 1981), pp. 362-363

Published by: [University of California Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3639615>

Accessed: 13/04/2014 23:49

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Pacific Historical Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

include the evolution of Chicano barrios, employment trends, political participation, social status, racial relations, and immigration. The author concludes that Mexican pueblos in southern California suffered a steady decline after the mid-nineteenth century. Victims of the American conquest, native Californios experienced destruction of their pastoral economy in the 1860s and 1870s, and were subsequently incorporated into the proletarian ranks in the new capitalist order. As Anglo Americans settled in the area in greater numbers, the Californios became segregated in their original pueblos, while newly arrived immigrants from Mexico established barrios wherever they could. Whether native or foreign-born, people of Mexican origin in southern California constituted a powerless, subordinated group with few opportunities for upward mobility. The patterns established in the nineteenth century continued well into the twentieth century.

Camarillo shows that early Chicano history is indeed retrievable by the use of traditional primary, secondary, and statistical sources. His use of census data and city directories to illustrate occupational patterns for Chicanos and non-Chicanos is commendable for the thoroughness and clarity of presentation. For the twentieth century, Camarillo skillfully incorporates excerpts from oral history interviews in his analysis of social and racial relations in Santa Barbara. Along with the twenty-five tables, the book is significantly enhanced by the inclusion of twenty-six well-placed illustrations, including many excellent photographs. An appendix on sources and methodology, a bibliography, and an index add to the value of the work.

The book is well organized and well written, but, as with most studies that rely heavily on quantitative data, the reading sometimes gets monotonous as the same format is presented several times to illustrate social mobility for the different periods. Statistically loaded chapters might perhaps be easier to digest if amply illustrated with detailed examples of real people who underwent the experiences revealed in the tables. It would have been particularly interesting to follow closely the evolution of a Californio family over the three generations covered by Camarillo, although the dearth of source materials does present basic problems in this respect.

In sum, Camarillo has written an outstanding regional and social history which will take its place as an important work in Chicano historiography.

OSCAR J. MARTÍNEZ

*University of Texas at El Paso*

*Gunpowder Justice: A Reassessment of the Texas Rangers.* By JULIAN SAMORA, JOE BERNAL, and ALBERT PEÑA. (South Bend, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. xvi + 179 pp. \$10.95)

Within the last few years Chicano historians have moved beyond surveying and criticizing earlier historical literature and begun to write history from their own perspectives. Numerous studies of urban communities and labor or-

ganizations have appeared, but the history of relations between Chicanos and law-enforcement authorities has been largely overlooked. *Gunpowder Justice: A Reassessment of the Texas Rangers* is an important contribution towards filling the gap.

This study is especially needed because popular writers and the mass media continue to mix myth and legend in their treatments of the Texas Rangers. But they are not alone, for professional historians—and especially the late Walter Prescott Webb in his *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense*—have also been guilty of distortion. Américo Paredes first questioned the romantic interpretation of the rangers in *His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Now Julian Samora, Joe Bernal, and Albert Peña have reexamined the full sweep of ranger history. Their story is one of corruption, political patronage, and brutality that stretches back to the days when the rangers were first organized as a paramilitary force to fight Mexicans and Indians on the expanding frontier of the Texas Republic. Since the rationale for the rangers appeared questionable by the 1880s when the frontier was largely secured, the force was transformed into a state police agency. But reorganization failed to stop acts of wrongdoing and impropriety. Instead, they became more widespread and resulted in the rangers' loss of police functions to the Texas Highway Patrol in 1935. Ranger misconduct still continues. Recently, rangers have violated the rights of Chicanos participating in farm labor strikes and seeking to vote in local elections. A reading of this account leaves little doubt as to why the rangers are known as the hated *rinches* in the Chicano community. The reader will also find convincing the authors' recommendation that the rangers be abolished or at least limited to ceremonial duties.

*Gunpowder Justice* is a solid reassessment of the Texas Rangers but the work would have benefited from attention to the changing composition and structure of the Chicano community and the place of that community in the larger American society of Texas. Development of this perspective would have lent a stronger context for assessing the infamous *rinches*.

FRANCISCO E. BALDERRAMA

*Texas Tech University*

*The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888–1912*. By FRANCIS PAUL PRUCHA. (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1979. xii + 278 pp. \$16.50)

In this compact, well researched volume Francis Paul Prucha has undertaken to sort out the controversial story of the turn-of-the-century struggle that developed between Catholic and Protestant organizations over Indian education. By the 1800s education was viewed by most reformers as the most productive method of assimilating the Indian population and ending the reservation system. As this idea became more dominant in national thinking, the federal government began taking over operation of Indian schools, which