



# **The Army in Texas during Reconstruction, 1865-1870 (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)**

*William L. Richter*

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One Texan called them "blue-coated dogs of despotism." They were the federal army, and in Texas after the Civil War they were an army of occupation. Their role in carrying out Reconstruction in Texas was especially difficult because the state had a large voting majority of white former Confederates. The army was essential to the enforcement of loyalist policies and, more controversially, to the electoral success of the Republican party.

How the military tried to achieve these ends varied over three major periods corresponding to the tenure of three chief officers: Generals Philip H. Sheridan, Charles Griffin, and Joseph J. Reynolds. Internal rivalries, the ability (or inability) to work with citizens, relations with state political leaders, and Texan hostility toward central authority all figured into the army's performance of its task.

William Richter has mined much unused material in developing this uniquely thorough study of the military in Texas. Moving beyond the good-guy, bad-guy stereotypes, he demonstrates that the army was more competent and important than traditional Reconstruction history has taught. In spite of minimal numbers, the army exercised great political influence and left a legacy--and a reaction to that legacy--that largely shaped the post-Reconstruction constitution and party structure of the state and that "provided a convenient excuse for the denial of justice and equality to blacks without forcing whites to face up to the racism which made these goals unpalatable."

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