



The Reckoning: The Triumph of Order on the Texas Outlaw Frontier (American Liberty and Justice)

Peter Rose

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Isolated by geology and passed over by development, the vast, waterless tablelands of the Edwards Plateau of Texas became the stage for one of the great nineteenth-century dramas of western justice. In 1873, opportunistic Anglo-Celtic cattlemen and homesteaders, protected by little other than personal firearms and their own bravado, began settling the stream-laced rangelands east of the plateau. An insidious criminal element soon followed: a family-based tribal confederation of frontier outlaws took root in the canyonlands around the forks of the Llano River, in unorganized and lawless Kimble County. Sometimes disguised as Indians, they preyed on neighbors, northbound trail herds, and stockmen in adjacent counties. They robbed stagecoaches repeatedly. They traded in border markets alongside Mexican Indian raiders, and may have participated in the brutal Dowdy massacre of 1878. Outnumbering and intimidating law-abiding settlers, the confederation took over the nascent Kimble County government in 1876. Only dogged persistence by Texas Rangers, with increasing support from citizens and local law officers, would stem the tide. Meticulously researched and documented, *The Reckoning* examines all the players. Rose shows frontier West Texas as it really was: a raw, lawless, unforgiving place and time that yielded only stubbornly to Order and its handmaiden, the Rule of Law.

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