THESIS PROSPECTUS
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
Submitted to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences
for the MA Degree in History

Candidate
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Proposed Project
Martial Law in Reconstruction Texas

During 1871, radical Republican Governor Edmund J. Davis suspended habeas corpus and declared martial law in Texas on three occasions. This study will provide a new perspective of the events, paying particular interest to recreating the events as they actually occurred. While many historians have addressed and covered Governor Davis’s declarations, they have all focused far too heavily on prejudicial source material and preexisting secondary accounts. This thesis will cover martial law in Hill County and Walker County, as well as the Groesbeck Riot of 1871, which led to a joint martial law declaration in both Freestone and Limestone counties. In addition to providing a clear history of the events surrounding each individual declaration of martial law, this thesis will investigate Governor Davis’s justifications and application of force to quell these county-wide uprisings.

The historiography of Reconstruction Texas is, generally, an under-researched area. While there are several monographs available to help begin this study, including Reconstruction in Texas (1910) by Charles Ramsdell, Texas Under the Carpetbaggers (1962) by William Curtis Nunn, The Texas Rangers; A Century of Frontier Defense (1935) by Walter Prescott Webb, and Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas (1980) by Carl Moneyhon, there has been very little recent scholarship on the broad scope of
Reconstruction in Texas. In taking on this project I intend to, first, produce an updated historiography of the era; second, incorporate the most recent scholarly research available in journals, dissertations, and theses; and third, step back from all existing studies and rebuild the events from primary source material.

The research is taken, to the extent possible, from original documents located at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and The Center for American History in Austin. Wherever possible, I seek out original source material to attempt to account for the vast discrepancies found in all preexisting studies of these events. There are also limited materials available in the Thomason Collection at Sam Houston State University, The University of Houston libraries, and the University of Texas libraries. To facilitate my research, I visited all of these facilities and have begun working with my thesis director, Dr. Cashion, and Donaly Brice, archive historian and expert on the history of the state police during Texas Reconstruction.

There are two existing studies of Davis's declarations of martial law: "A Slow Civil War: Resistance to the Davis Administration in Hill and Walker Counties" (M.A. Thesis, Baylor University, 1989) by Ricky Floyd Dobbs and "A Study of the State Police During the E.J. Davis Administration" (M.A. Thesis, University of Texas, 1931) by William Curtis Nunn. The former study only provides a partial image of the events because it neglected to consider the Groesbeck Riot, and the latter was based, almost completely, on questionable source material. Upon completion, my thesis will be the only in-depth study of Governor Davis's declarations of martial law in 1871 grounded by primary source materials.
Provisional Bibliography

Primary Source Collections

Records of the Adjutant General’s Office. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Austin.

Records of Governor Edmund J. Davis. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Austin.

Records of the Secretary of State. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Austin.

Records of the State Police. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Austin.

Records of the Texas Legislature. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Austin.

Published Primary Source Collections


Monographs


Articles


Theses and Dissertations

