



The Man from the Rio Grande: A Biography of Harry Love, Leader of the California Rangers who tracked down Joaquin Murrieta (Western Frontiersmen Series)

William B. Secrest

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Like some mysterious Paladin, Harry Love seemed to suddenly appear on the California landscape at a time when he was particularly needed. As captain of the California Rangers, Love pursued Joaquin Murrieta and his bandits, and the outlaw was captured and killed. Then, his job done, he again faded into obscurity. Where did he come from? What was his life before, and after, the Murrieta affair?

From Texas to California, this enigmatic and shadowy figure has been a figure of myth. Those who wrote of Murrieta, including John Rollin Ridge, knew little about Love. He has been fair game for those who sought to sensationalize his career, or create it out of whole cloth.

For the first time the story of Harry Love is now told. Based upon years of research, digging deep into archives and contemporaneous accounts, tracking down obscure legends and lore, California historian Bill Secrest recounts with vitality and long-needed honesty the tale of Love, Murrieta, and the world in which they lived. As an army courier and express rider in Texas, Mexico, and New Mexico during and after the Mexican War, Love was a popular and well-known figure. His 1850 exploration of the Rio Grande and its possibilities for navigation were important and covered in newspapers throughout the U.S. and Mexico.

First visiting California by sea in 1839, Love returned in 1850 during the Gold Rush. A vivid picture of the lawlessness of the land and the animosity between Mexicans and Americans is drawn by the author, highlighting the events in which Murrieta and his associates were involved. A detailed history of the Rangers and the bandits they pursued is given.

Murrieta looms large in this tale. Without Murrieta, there would not have been a Harry Love as we know him. It was both the high point and the turning point of his life. Thus this biography includes a complete account of California's most famous outlaw, who met his fate in 1853 at the hands of Love and his Rangers.

Following the killing of Murrieta, Love settled near Santa Cruz. As a pioneer sawmill operator and farmer, his life became more prosaic. His marriage floundered, his mill was destroyed, his plans came to naught. But the account of his years in the mountains above Santa Cruz offers a unique glimpse into pioneer life after the Gold Rush.

The book includes an introduction, notes, epilogue, bibliography and index. Printed on acid-free paper and bound in red linen cloth with foil-stamped spine and printed dust jacket. Issued in an edition of 750 copies.

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