



The Red River Bridge War: A Texas-Oklahoma Border Battle (Red River Valley Books, sponsored by Texas A&M University-Texarkana)

Rusty Williams

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At the beginning of America's Great Depression, Texas and Oklahoma armed up and went to war over a 75-cent toll bridge that connected their states across the Red River. It was a two-week affair marked by the presence of National Guardsmen with field artillery, Texas Rangers with itchy trigger fingers, angry mobs, Model T blockade runners, and even a costumed Native American peace delegation. Traffic backed up for miles, cutting off travel between the states.

This conflict entertained newspaper readers nationwide during the summer of 1931, but the Red River Bridge War was a deadly serious affair for many rural Americans at a time when free bridges and passable roads could mean the difference between survival and starvation. The confrontation had national consequences, too: it marked an end to public acceptance of the privately owned ferries, toll bridges, and turnpikes that threatened to strangle American transportation in the automobile age.

The Red River Bridge War: A Texas-Oklahoma Border Battle documents the day-to-day skirmishes of this unlikely conflict between two sovereign states, each struggling to help citizens get goods to market at a time of reduced tax revenue and little federal assistance. It also serves as a cautionary tale, providing historical context to the current trend of re-privatizing our nation's highway infrastructure.



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