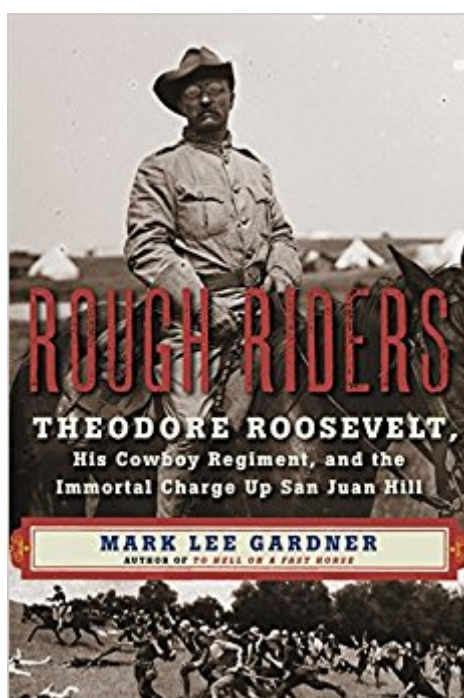


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# Rough Riders: Theodore Roosevelt, His Cowboy Regiment, And The Immortal Charge Up San Juan Hill



## Synopsis

The first definitive account of this legendary fighting force and its extraordinary leader, Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Lee Gardner's *Rough Riders* is narrative nonfiction at its most invigorating and compulsively readable. Its dramatic unfolding of a familiar, yet not-fully-known story will remind readers of James Swanson's *Manhunt*. Two months after the sinking of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor in February 1898, Congress authorized President McKinley to recruit a volunteer army to drive the Spaniards from Cuba. From this army emerged the legendary "Rough Riders," a mounted regiment drawn from America's western territories and led by the indomitable Theodore Roosevelt. Its ranks included not only cowboys and other westerners, but several Ivy Leaguers and clubmen, many of them friends of "TR." Roosevelt and his men quickly came to symbolize American ruggedness, daring, and individualism. He led them to victory in the famed Battle at San Juan Hill, which made TR a national hero and cemented the Rough Riders' place in history. Now, Mark Lee Gardner synthesizes previously unknown primary accounts as well as period newspaper articles, letters, and diaries from public and private archives in Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Boston, and Washington, DC, to produce this authoritative chronicle. He breathes fresh life into the Rough Riders and pays tribute to their daring feats and indomitable leader. Gardner also explores lesser-known aspects of the story, including their relationship with the African-American "Buffalo Soldiers," with whom they fought side by side at San Juan Hill. Rich with action, violence, camaraderie, and courage, *Rough Riders* sheds new light on the Theodore Roosevelt saga and on one of the most thrilling chapters in American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Mark Lee Gardner's excellent book blends history, biography, and well-detailed combat narrative as it shows how Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders became national heroes." (Dallas Morning News) "Thrilling. ... Timeless. ... A classic, inspiring biography of a true American hero." (True West) "Rough Riders is excellent. It's not just first-rate history but a ripping yarn that shines new light on Theodore Roosevelt's extraordinary life." (Ron Hansen, author of *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*) "A thrill ride for history buffs. ... A must read for Roosevelt aficionados and those who appreciate compelling stories of military history." (USA Today) "Few episodes from our past have done more to capture, and shape, central themes of the American character (real and imagined) than Teddy Roosevelt's exploits with the Rough Riders. In Mark Gardner's expert hands, a great American foundation story has been brought to vivid life." (Hampton Sides, New York Times bestselling author of *In the Kingdom of Ice* and *Blood and Thunder*) "As Hollywood's resident expert on Theodore Roosevelt, I found Mark Lee Gardner's *Rough Riders* to be a finely-honed and fresh look at this country's only cowboy regiment to ever see combat." (John Milius, co-screenwriter of *Apocalypse Now* and director of *The Wind and the Lion* and *Rough Riders* (1997 TV film), both about Roosevelt) "Fast-paced and thoroughly researched. ... A rousing and robust story." (Kirkus) "Gardner brings the Rough Riders to life with clear, vivid prose and keen insights. You can almost smell the saddle leather and gunsmoke, hear the bugles calling to a glorious adventure second to none. Gardner leads this literary charge -- and it's indeed a grand one." (Paul Andrew Hutton, author of *The Apache Wars*) "Gardner delivers rousing blow-by-blow accounts of the various battles and showcases Roosevelt's hypermasculine panache." (Library Journal) "Gardner provides some terrifying, exhilarating stories of battle... and celebrates Roosevelt." (Publishers Weekly) "Rich in action and telling details." (Albuquerque Journal) "Overflowing with intelligently packaged information about Roosevelt and his regiment, it's massaged into an appealing action-narrative style as instructive alike to enthusiast and newcomer as it is enjoyable to read." (Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal) "[Gardner's] fast pace and comprehensive research... carry readers into a brief and memorable period of history." (New Mexico Magazine) "Gardner's

book is well-researched, and his narrative is absorbing. (San Antonio Express-News) "Gardner's account of the famous charge up San Juan Hill pulses with the kinetic confusion of men under fire. ... Gardner ably defends Roosevelt's accomplishments on the battlefield. (Newsday) "Breathes new life into [the Rough Riders tale] through detailed research, close attention to detail, and gripping narrative. ... A worthy addition to the body of work surrounding this iconic tale of American history. (Military Heritage) "An engaging and up-to-date chronicle of the Rough Riders saga. (The Journal of America's Military Past) "Absorbing. ... [Gardner's] ability to recreate those weeks, in all their glory... is impressive. (Bookreporter.com) "There have been countless books written about various facets of Theodore Roosevelt's life, but it's unlikely that any offer the masterful mix of rousing storytelling and historical accuracy in Mark Gardner's book. (Roundup Magazine) "Compelling reading. ... Gardner renders an especially authentic portrait. (HistoryNet) "Gardner is one of this nation's premier historians of the American West. (Col. Cole C. Kingseed, USA Ret., Ph.D., Army Magazine)

The author of the critically acclaimed *To Hell on a Fast Horse* and *Shot All to Hell* tells the rousing, action-packed story of the Rough Riders and their extraordinary leader, Theodore Roosevelt. The explosion of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor in February 1898 stunned the world and triggered a war between the United States and Spain. Congress authorized President McKinley to recruit a volunteer force to help drive the Spaniards out of Cuba, and from these men emerged the legendary Rough Riders, a mounted regiment drawn from America's western territories and led by the irrepressible Theodore Roosevelt. Its ranks included not only cowboys and other Westerners, but also several Ivy Leaguers and clubmen, many of them friends of TR. TR and his men quickly came to symbolize American ruggedness, daring, and individualism. He led them to victory in the famed Battle of San Juan Hill, which made TR a national hero and cemented the Rough Riders' place in history. Now Mark Lee Gardner synthesizes previously unknown primary accounts—private letters, diaries, and period newspaper reports from public and private archives in Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Massachusetts, New York, and Washington, D.C.—to breathe fresh life into the Rough Riders and pays tribute to their daring feats and indomitable leader. Gardner also explores lesser-known aspects of the story, including the Rough Riders' relationship with the African American Buffalo Soldiers, with whom they fought side by side at San Juan Hill. Rich with action, violence, camaraderie, and courage, *Rough*

Riders sheds new light on the Theodore Roosevelt saga—and on one of the most thrilling chapters in American history. Praise for *Rough Riders*: “Few episodes from our past have done more to capture, and shape, central themes of the American character (real and imagined) than Teddy Roosevelt’s exploits with the Rough Riders. In Mark Gardner’s expert hands, a great American foundation story has been brought to vivid life. In his deft reappraisal, we can see anew how these almost mythic events continue to flow, like deep wellsprings, through our national life.” —Hampton Sides, *New York Times* bestselling author of *In the Kingdom of Ice and Blood and Thunder* “*Rough Riders* is excellent! It’s not just first-rate history, it’s also a ripping yarn that shines new light on Theodore Roosevelt’s extraordinary life.” —Ron Hansen, author of *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* “As Hollywood’s resident expert on Theodore Roosevelt, I found Mark Lee Gardner’s *Rough Riders* to be a finely honed and fresh look at this country’s only cowboy regiment to ever see combat. A true tribute to those Children of the Dragon’s Blood who charged with Roosevelt up Kettle and San Juan Hills that fateful day in 1898.” —John Milius, co-screenwriter of *Apocalypse Now* and director of *The Wind and the Lion* and *Rough Riders* (1997 TV film), both about Roosevelt “Gardner brings it all to life with clear, vivid prose and keen insights. You can almost smell the saddle leather and gunsmoke, hear the guidons snapping in the wind, and the bugles calling to a glorious adventure second to none. Gardner leads this literary charge—and it’s indeed a grand one.” —Paul Andrew Hutton, author of *The Apache Wars*

This is a terrific story of the founding of the Rough Riders and then their deployment and combat experience. And the aftermath. Teddy Roosevelt was a bundle of energy--and sometimes that might not have been so good, in general. In this case, his energy had positive effects--although perhaps not so much at the outset of the Spanish-American War. The sinking of the *Maine* in Cuban waters (under the control of Spain) fed a lust for war with Spain. The assumption was that that nation had taken action to sink the *Maine*. History suggests that that was an inaccurate explanation. Nonetheless, many prominent Americans--including TR--urged that the US avenge the sinking of the *Maine*. This is not Roosevelt at his best. A part of him wanted "action," to take part in military action. The book chronicles the process by which the Rough Riders (a cavalry regiment) were recruited and trained. Roosevelt wanted cowboys, sharpshooters, and others from the West (including native Americans). Also participating--gentlemen from the East Coast, including athletes,

upper strata individuals, and so on. A strange mix indeed! But the troops got along pretty well, given their differing backgrounds. Roosevelt was neatly terrified by the possibility that his regiment would not be sent into battle. He used his many connections to make sure that his troops got into the fight. In the end, of course, a large proportion (but not all) of his troops boarded transports (without their horses) and steamed toward Cuba. The work does a nice job of describing the difficult conditions in Cuba--inadequate supplies, heat, disease. There is a solid depiction of the battles that involved the Rough Riders. The deaths and injuries suffered and the accomplishments. The regiment did well--but suffered heavily from battle casualties and disease. Afterwards the Rough Riders became favorites of the American people. The troops went back to their homes and life went on. Some did well--others poorly. There was such esprit, that meetings of surviving troops took place. TR's arrival at such meetings was responded to well. The book also provides a good picture of TR--his pluses (intelligence, energy, imagination, a concern for the people) and some minuses (a lust for battle and a willingness to push the nation toward war). All in all, a fine volume and very readable.

I bet a lot of readers out there are in the position I was when I started this book: knowing more or less that Roosevelt and his Rough Riders charged up San Juan Hill and it was a big deal during the Spanish American War and afterwards. I admit it, that was pretty much what I knew. So I was happy to see that Mark Gardner (whose "To Hell on a Fast Horse" and "Shot All To Hell" are thoroughly researched, well written and very enjoyable) had a new book out on this very topic. It lines up straight with his others: well researched and written, and an enjoyable and instructive read. The Spanish American War is barely a blip on many American History screens, but it has its place in the story--the first defeat of a vested European power by the upstart United States, the cutting edge of the Monroe Doctrine. I had supposed it was not much of a war, and I guess you could add things up and say that it wasn't, but it had some battles that provided as much action and danger as anyone could want. Roosevelt and his Rough Riders, a fascinating mix of cowboys and rich boys, all got into the spirit of the thing and were willing to "ride to the sound of the guns." All they had to do was be recruited and vetted and trained and collected and transported to Tampa, and equipped and then shipped to Cuba. Roosevelt and Leonard Wood, both of whom went on to big things, got the men together and all the way to Tampa and then saw that there was an excellent possibility that they would not get to Cuba and in on a fight that probably was not going to last all that long. A little finagling and a few shenanigans, and the Rough Riders (only about 2/3 of the entire contingent were cleared to go in) were loaded up on a ship and sent south. Once there, they were sent into action and completed their military education under fire. So there were a lot of long odds and

happenstance and all that to get them into the fight. Once there, they fought with elan and courage. Roosevelt led them from the front, daring the Spanish to hit him while they hit things and people all around him, and at one point was ready to advance them on his own command, thus overriding the dilatory General Shafter, back in a tent in the rear. One wonders how his post-bellum political career might have fared had he been court-martialed. Well, probably well: Americans loved him and his spirit, and an advance was exactly what conditions demanded. As it was, he and his men (those who survived) came back covered in glory and media acclaim. It is a hell of a story. Maybe the most amazing thing in this long list of long shots and near-misses, is Roosevelt himself. He spent his own money on his men when the Army did not equip them properly, he stayed with the men in the field, sleeping and eating just like them, he led from the front. After the hostilities, when the Army dragged its feet in returning the volunteers to America, Roosevelt wrote and published a letter chastising the Army for dragging its feet, leaving these men underfed in Cuba as the disease season approached. It caused a huge controversy but got them home. There is much to admire in this story. Turn from the Big Picture and think of just this one thing: Roosevelt was politically ambitious. He knew that his actions, if admirable, would help his political fortunes. Read this book and see how he thought, what he did, how much he sacrificed, how well he comported himself, how genuinely and deeply he cared for those under his command. This was only 115 years ago. Looking around at today's crop of homo politicus, you will not believe that the political animal could have devolved that far that fast.

Mark Lee Gardner and I share an interest in Wild West figures and Theodore Roosevelt. Gardner has written previous books that concern Pat Garrett, Billy the Kid and Jesse James. Gardner's latest work details Theodore Roosevelt's brief career as a Rough Rider - and I can speak with some authority when I tell you that Gardner's work is one of the best of the many books devoted to Theodore Roosevelt. Like Gardner, I have written books devoted to famous Wild West figures. Three of my seven books were devoted to men (Bat Masterson, Pat Garrett and Ben Daniels) who had all received appointments from President Roosevelt and were known, collectively, as the "White House Gunfighters." One of those men, Ben Daniels, had actually served in Cuba as a Rough Rider with Roosevelt and was remembered by T.R. in his 1899 book *The Rough Riders*. Gardner's book now occupies a place on one of my bookshelves immediately next to Roosevelt's 1899 *The Rough Riders*. These two volumes - the original by Roosevelt, and this impressive study by Gardner - really compliment each other and I recommend both volumes for your bookshelf. - Jack DeMattos, author of *Masterson and Roosevelt* (1984), *Garrett and Roosevelt* (1988) and *A Rough Ride to Redemption: The Ben Daniels Story* (co-authored with Robert K. DeArment, 2010).

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