

A comprehensive life of a towering Texas figure

A Man Absolutely Sure of Himself

Texan George Washington Littlefield

By David B. Gracy II

This is the first full biography of George Washington Littlefield, the Texas and New Mexico rancher, Austin banker and businessman, University of Texas regent, and philanthropist. In just two decades, Littlefield's business acumen vaulted him from debt to inclusion in 1892 on the first list of American millionaires. *A Man Absolutely Sure of Himself* is a grand retelling of the life of a highly successful entrepreneur and Austin civic leader, whose work affected spheres from ranching and banking to civic development and academia.

Littlefield's cattle operations during the open range and early ranching periods spanned a domain in New Mexico and Texas larger than the states of Delaware and Connecticut combined. In a unique contribution to ranching art, Littlefield commissioned murals and bronze doors depicting scenes from his ranches to decorate Austin's American National Bank, which he led for its first twenty-eight years.

Gracy provides new information about Littlefield's term as University of Texas regent and the necessity of choosing between friendship and duty during the university's confrontation with Gov. James E. Ferguson. Proud of his Civil War service in Terry's Texas Rangers, Littlefield funded the university's and nation's first center for Southern history studies. He also underwrote the school's purchase of its first rare book library and its training programs preparing troops for World War I's new combat roles.

Littlefield played a central role in advancing Austin from a cattleman's town into the business center it wanted to become. His Littlefield Building, the tallest office building between New Orleans and San Francisco when it was built, served for a generation as the prime location of the town's business community.

Author David B. Gracy II, a relative of Littlefield, grounds his vivid prose in a lifetime of research into archival and family sources. His comprehensive biography illuminates an exceptional figure, whose life singularly illustrates the evolution of Texas from Southern to Western to American.

David B. Gracy II is the Governor Bill Daniel Professor Emeritus in Archival Enterprise, School of Information, University of Texas at Austin and author of *Littlefield Lands: Colonization on the Texas Plains, 1912–1920*, *Sunrise! Governor Bill Daniel and the Second Liberation of Guam*, and *Moses Austin: His Life*.

NOVEMBER 2019

\$34.95 CLOTH 978-0-8061-6433-5

504 PAGES, 6 X 9

56 COLOR ILLUS., 8 MAPS

BIOGRAPHY/U.S. HISTORY

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