⭐ Big Wonderful Thing: A History of Texas

Stephen Harrigan
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Ablaze in infamy and otherworldly as any heavenly planet, Texas is mythology come alive. This singular place is what happens when fiercely independent, prone-to-violence people are assimilated into a fledgling nation whose capital is so remote in distance and ideology as to exert little influence. Indeed, in seeking to understand our twenty-eighth state, perhaps it is most important to keep in mind that Texas is attached by a lengthy, porous border and centuries of history with sovereign Mexico.

Henry David Thoreau's maxim that "most events recorded in history are more remarkable than important" offers a prescient introduction to Stephen Harrigan's 944-page *Big Wonderful Thing: A History of Texas*, in that none and all of the events he retells define Texas perfectly. A longtime writer for *Texas Monthly* and the author of two historical novels based in Texas, Harrigan uses his stupendous storytelling skills to great effect. He covers the state's major historical events from inventive angles, introduces newly discovered archaeological and archival research, and excels at puffing up many of Texas's larger-than-life personalities, including Santa Anna, Jane Long, Stephen Austin, Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Georgia O'Keefe, Pancho Villa, Lyndon Johnson, Dorie Miller, Barbara Jordan, Larry McMurtry, George W. Bush, and Lizzie Davis, as well as buffalo soldiers, Comanches and Apaches, and a motley mess of others.

MATT SUTHERLAND (September / October 2019)