



Buffalo Days: Stories from J. Wright Mooar (Texas Heritage Series)

James Winford Hunt

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"Because he has been criticized as a destroyer, a ruthless killer, and wastrel of a great game resource of a Nation, the buffalo hunter appeals to the bar of history for his vindication. . . . Within four years we opened up a vast empire to settlement, and put the Indians forever out of Texas."

J. Wright Mooar tells the story of the buffalo hunter, from the hunter's perspective, in this first-person account published more than seventy years ago in several installments in Holland's, The Magazine of the South. Mooar was more than eighty years old when he sat down with Methodist minister/educator James Winford Hunt and recounted his years as a buffalo hunter.

He describes how buffalo hunting became a huge business that thrived for less than a decade in the 1870s and makes the case that the buffalo hunter, more than anyone else, opened the way for white settlement by eradicating the Indians' source of food.

"Buffalo hunting was a business and not a sport. It required capital, management, and a lot of hard work. Magazine writers and others who claim that the killing of the buffalo was a national calamity and was accomplished by vandals simply expose their ignorance, and I resent such an unjust judgment upon us.

"If it had not been for the work of the buffalo hunters, the wild bison would still graze where Amarillo now is, and the red man would still reign supreme over the pampas of the Panhandle of Texas.

"Any one of the families killed and homes destroyed by the Indians would have been worth more to Texas and to civilization than all the millions of buffalo that ever roamed from the Pecos River on the south to the Platte River on the north."

"Here is an odyssey of hairbreadth escapes from death with wild Indians, wilder white men, and thundering herds of wild buffalo," writes J. W. Hunt, founding president of Abilene's McMurry College (now University), in his introduction.

Illustrated by Texas folklore artist Granville Bruce, the stories of J. Wright Mooar make for lively reading and continuing debate.

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