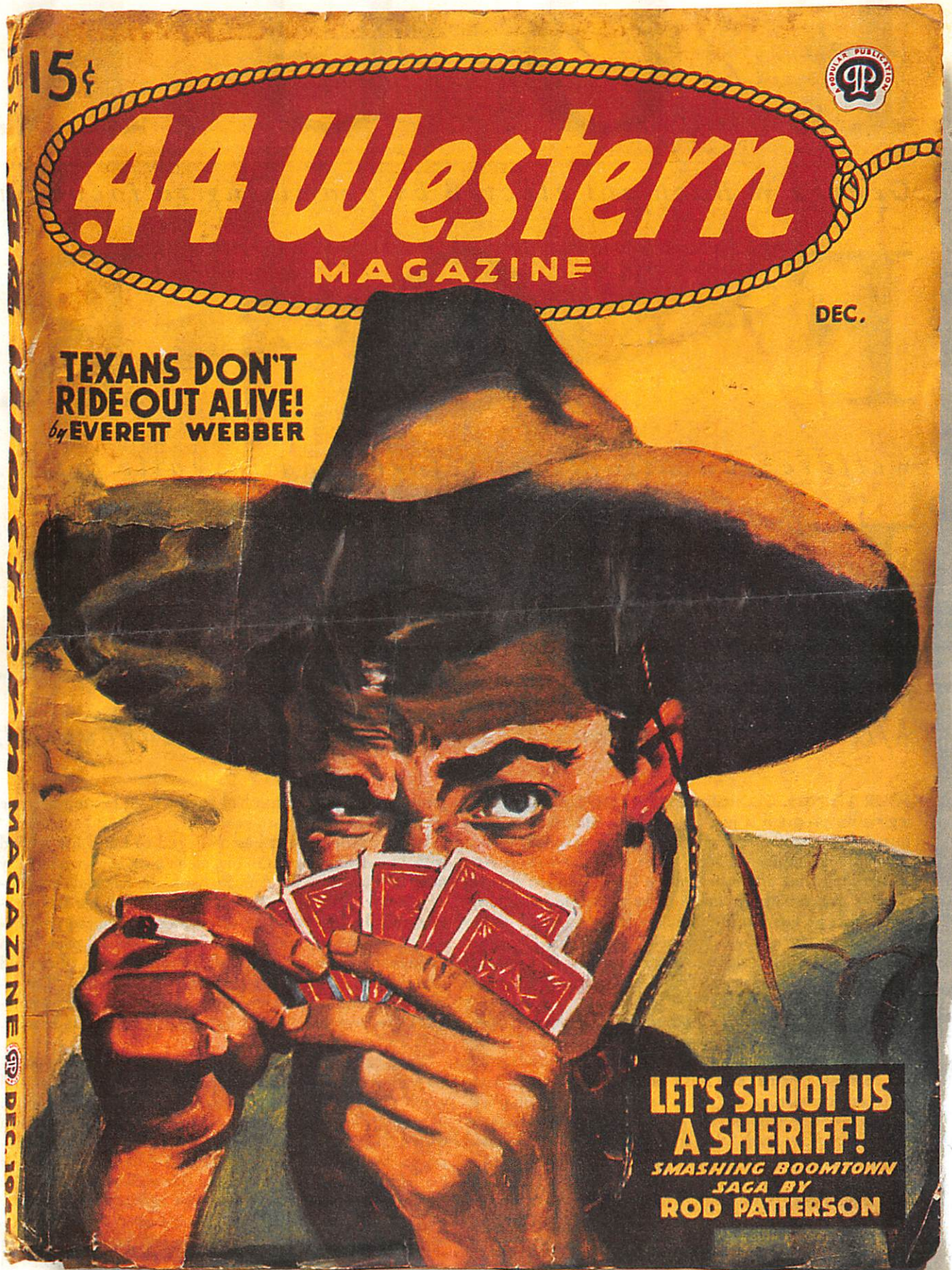
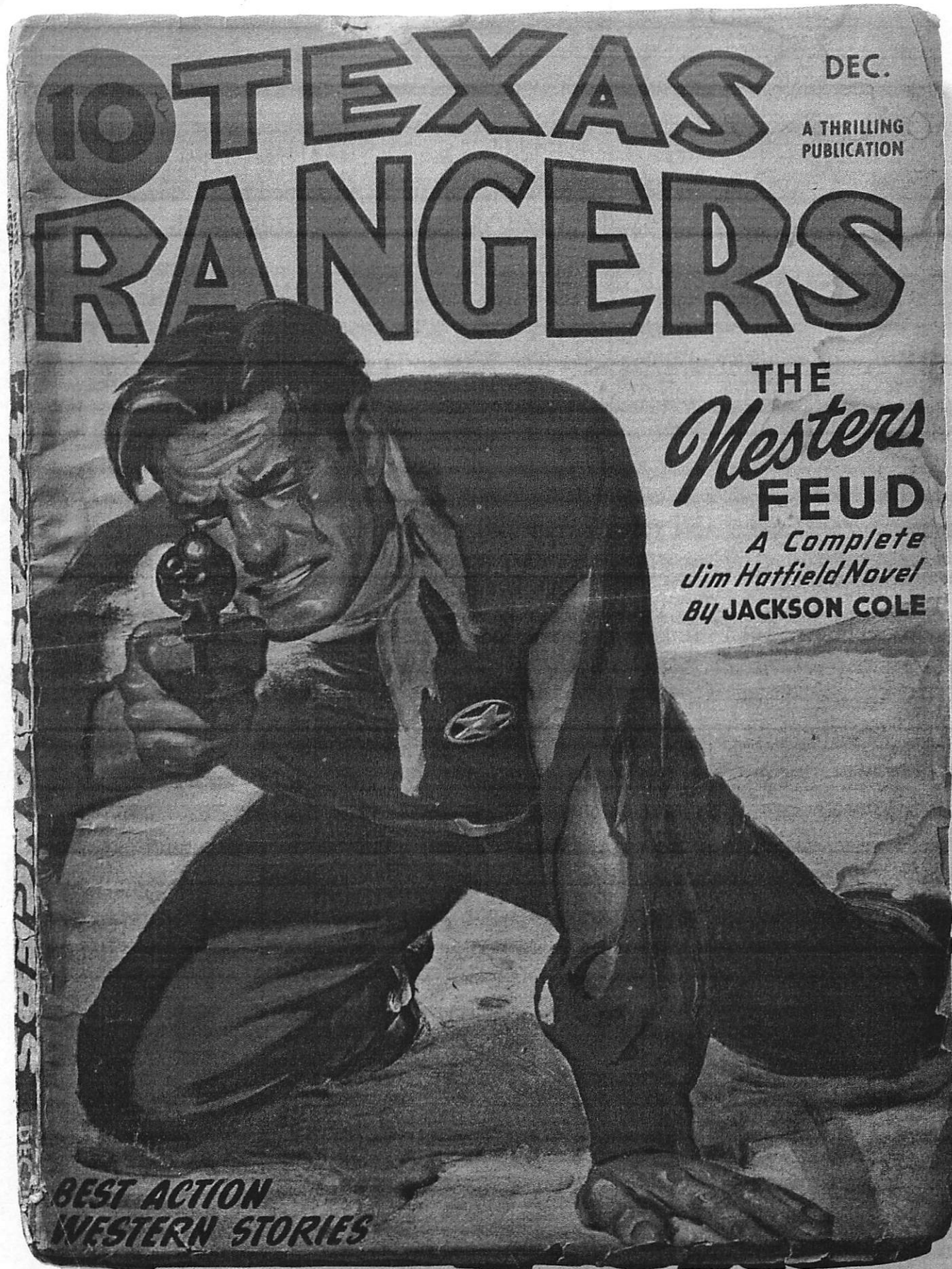


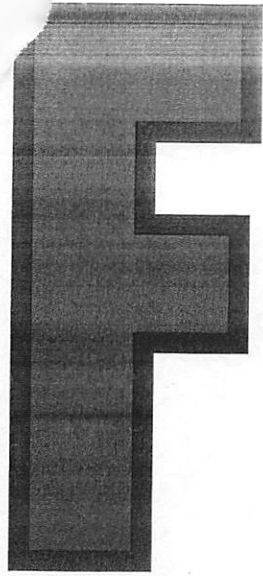
CHEAP THRILLS ONCE THEIR LURID TALL TALES WERE DEVoured BY READERS:



VINTAGE WESTERN MAGAZINES ARE HOTLY COLLECTED. HERE ARE 16 COLORFUL

COVERS THAT RECALL THE DAYS WHEN SIX-GUNS ROARED AND TIN STARS GLEAMED. BY ANNE DINGUS





FOR THREE BREATHLESS DECADES, readers of the purple page devoured pulp fiction. Successors to the dime novels, which last appeared in 1919, the pulps were cheaply printed magazines that featured covers as sensational as the pages were shoddy. Crime and science-fiction versions flourished, but the longest-lived pulps were westerns. They inevitably depicted valorous men battling black-hats or rescuing ranchers' daughters in tales such as "Land of Violent Men," "Sworn Enemies—in Love!," and "Lone Star Doom." A magazine usually contained half a dozen long stories, hyperbolically termed "novelettes." One, "Riders of the Shadows," is feverishly subtitled, "Colts Blaze Along the Trail of the Hooded Hellions That Spray the Sun-Baked Town of Largos with Lead, While Men Turn Pale at the Hoarse Voice of the Whispering Lobo, Kinsman and Cohort of Death." The majority of pulps about the West sprung from the East: New York City, where Warner Publications alone whipped out nine different western rags.

From the mid-twenties till the early fifties—when television westerns lured fans from the printed page—pulp magazines such as *Thrilling Western*, *Texas Rangers*, *Frontier Stories*, and *Lariat* riveted thousands with monthly doses of drama by the likes of Max Brand. After his first novel, *The Untamed*, was made into a successful silent movie starring Tom Mix, Brand was wooed by various western magazines, eventually earning the then-staggering sum of five cents a word. His best-known story, *Destry Rides Again*, was filmed three times. By 1930, Brand had churned out 13 million such words and was known as King of the Pulps. Venerable Texas writers such as J. Frank Dobie and Elmer Kelton contributed steadily to the pulps. The first story Kelton ever published, in fact, appeared in *Ranch Romances* in April 1948.

Bylines by Brand, Kelton, and their fellows are part of the reason that vintage copies of western pulps are once again in demand. But for other Western collectors, the immediate draw is the eye-catching cover, which generally features a pistol-packing cowpoke, evocative typefaces, and bold colors. Most pulp illustrators are unknown today, but some, like Nick Eggenhofer (who also produced many sketches for the inside pages), went on to make their names as Western artists. According to Walt Reed, a New York auctioneer whose Illustration House limits itself to book and magazine artwork, "Illustrators for the western pulps couldn't fake it. Eggenhofer was highly esteemed for including authentic touches that would only be noted by people in the know." Reed estimates that an original western pulp cover by Eggenhofer might fetch \$7,500 today.

Most of the magazine covers on these six pages belong to Jack DeVere, a San Antonio collector of Texana whose extensive assortment includes dozens of pulps that his father once read to him at bedtime. Not only is DeVere fascinated with the vivid cover art, he's also a fan of the stories inside. "The writing is totally formulaic," he says. "In any of these stories, towns were dusty and prairies were lonely. Six-guns roared or blazed, and rifles barked or cracked. You've got to love the style." Here's a look back at the thrilling days of yesteryear, when all was pulpy on the western front.

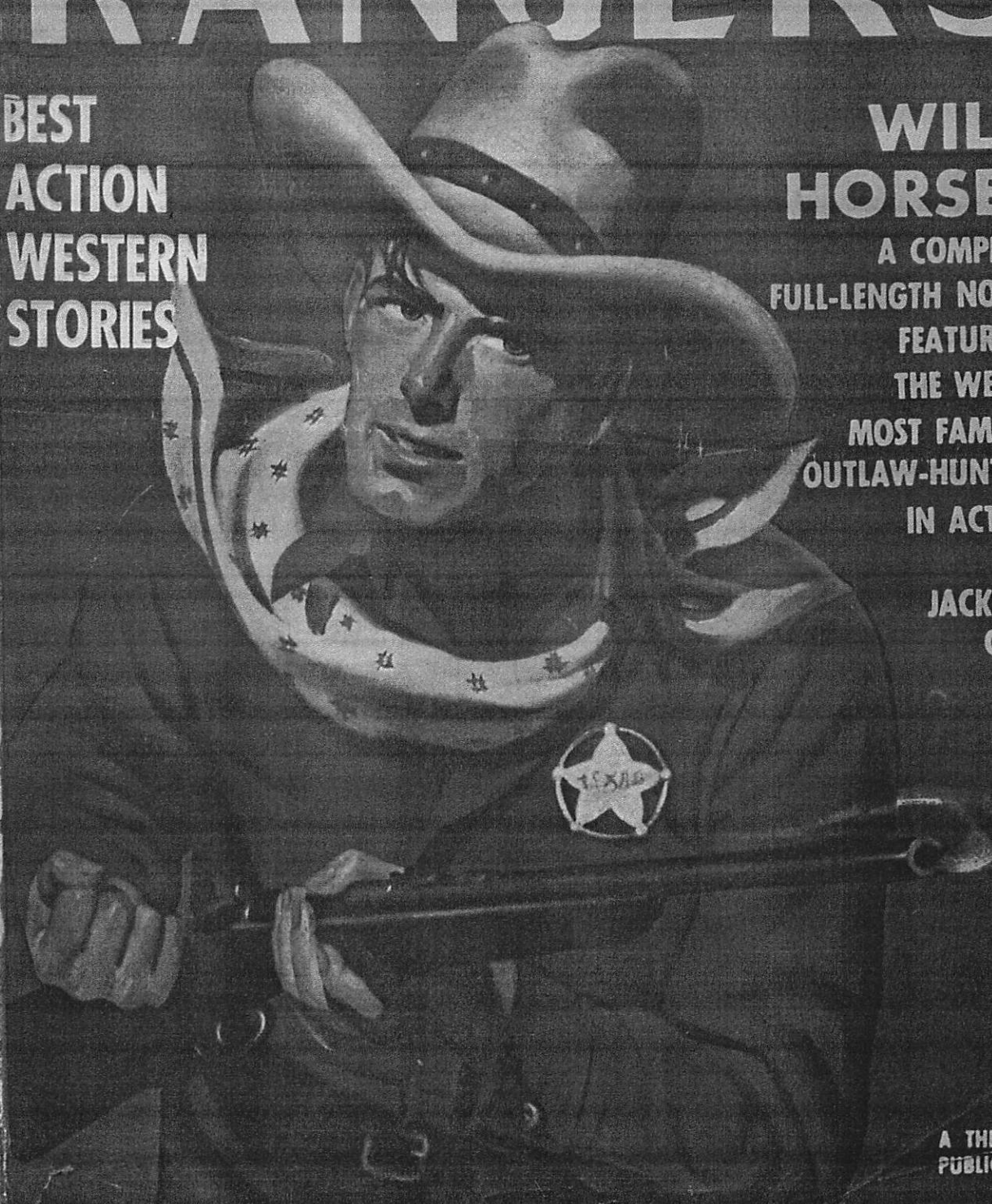
10¢ TEXAS
RANGERS

DEC.

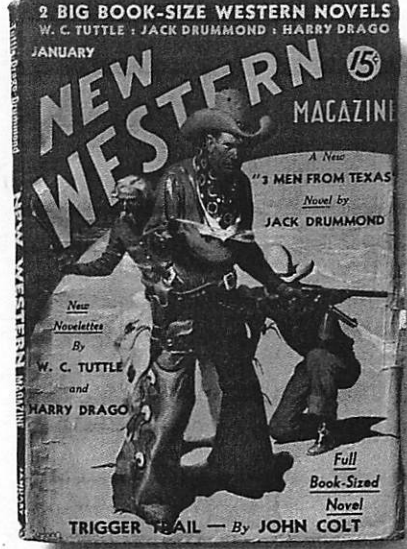
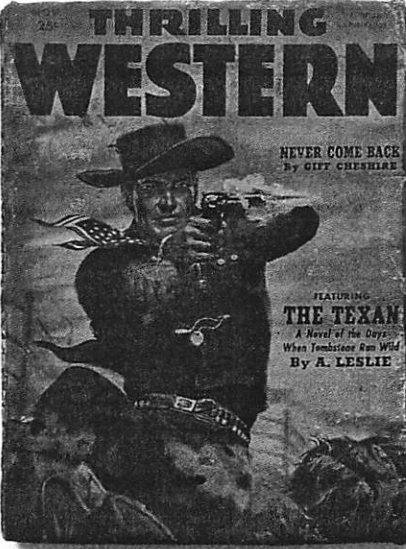
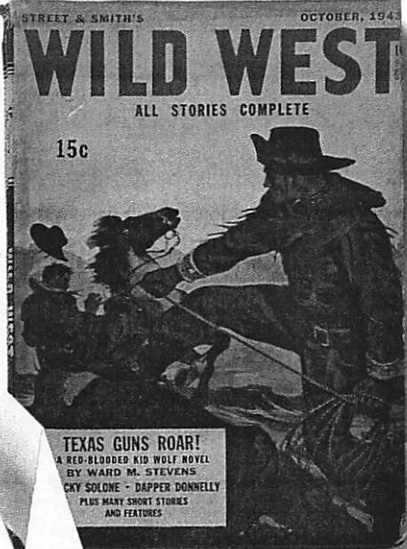
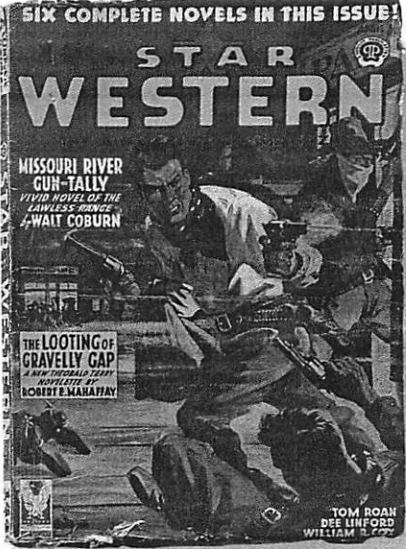
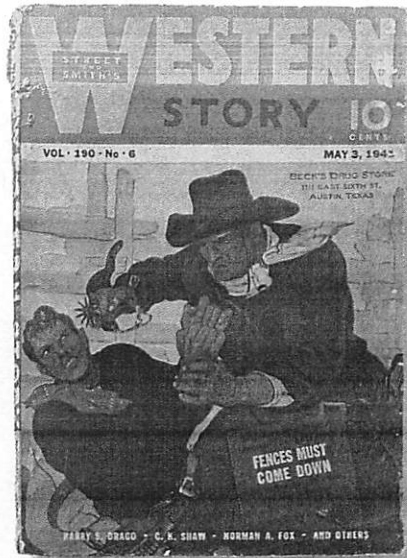
BEST
ACTION
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WILD
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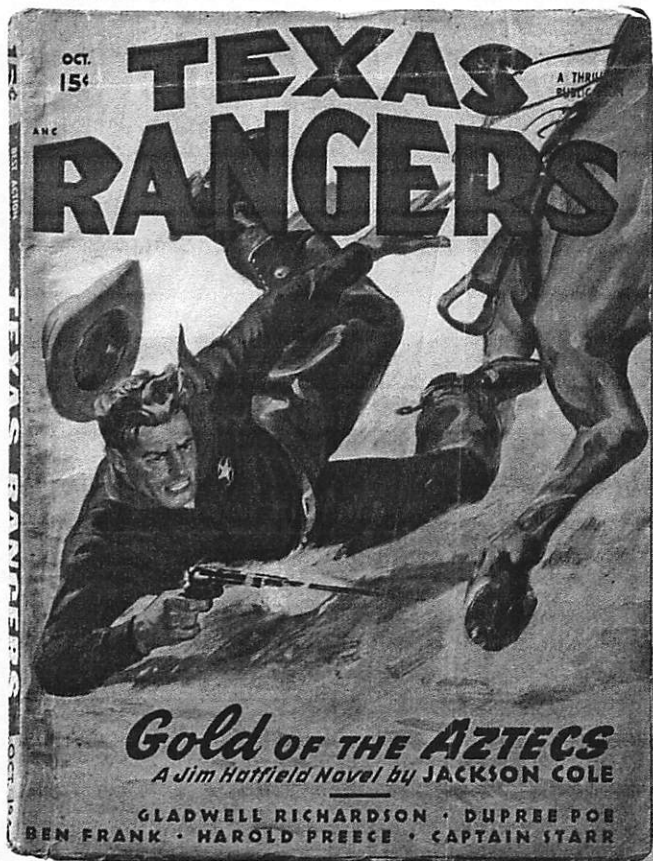
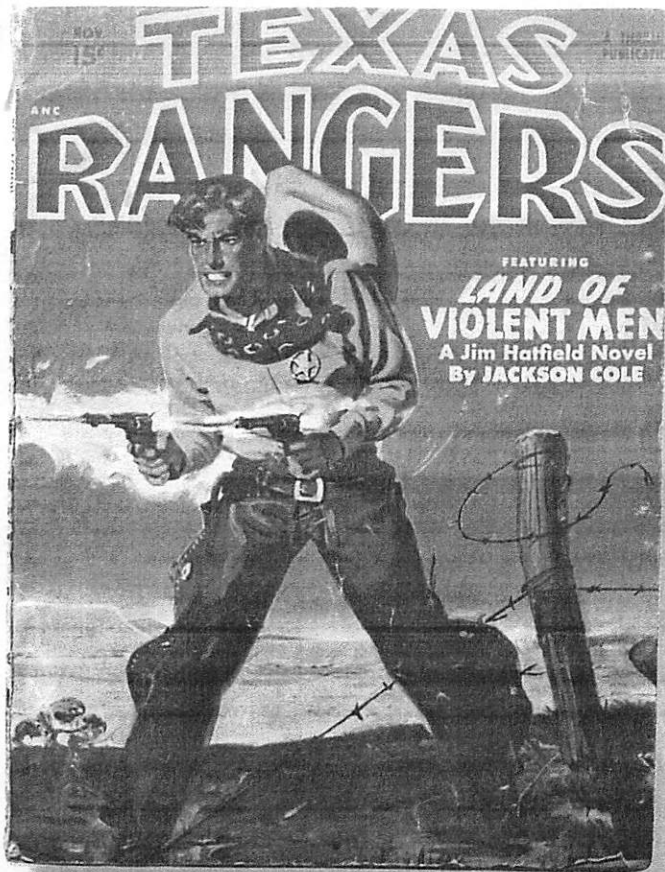
A COMPLETE
FULL-LENGTH NOVEL
FEATURING
THE WEST'S
MOST FAMOUS
OUTLAW-HUNTERS
IN ACTION
By
JACKSON
COLE



A THRILLING
PUBLICATION



ulp genre split between male and female readers, who demanded, respectively, gory action and improbable romance. On most shoot-'em-up covers, like the examples here, the randishes a weapon; even a spur would do (top right), if it managed to convey deadly danger. Publishers of magazines that were aimed at women dispensed with violence, over. On one (top center), the serene cowgirl grasps her pistol as if it were a teacup. Women occasionally graced the covers of more macho pulps—but only as damsels in principle, *Leading Western* (center right) features a terrorized blonde (and wholly implausible shadows). Stories with Texas themes (bottom row) were popular with all readers.



Melodramatic tales of the vaunted Texas Rangers added to the mystique of that rarefied group of lawmen, whose lively exploits always invoked the "one riot, one Ranger" rule. In a series that spun out over a decade, the fictional Ranger Jim Hatfield represented "the steady unflinching law of the Lone Star State." According to collector Jack DeVere, the prolific author Jackson Cole was in fact whatever western writer the publisher used to pound out an episode. Thanks to Texas' size and diversity, Hatfield and other pulp protagonists battled Mexicans, gunslingers, bank robbers, evil land barons, and such. Lest the pace falter, an author could throw in a rattlesnake, stampede, flash flood, stagecoach accident, or more. ➔