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Review of Cortina: Defending the Mexican Name in Texas. By Jerry Thompson. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007. Pp. 344. Introduction, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-58544-592-4. \$32.50)

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history and a knowledge of place are important.

900 Miles on the Butterfield Trail offers much to readers of varied interests and backgrounds. For the historian of the West, the book is so rich with details it makes a good source for understanding not only the Butterfield Trail and early transportation systems, but also life in the more remote regions of the West. For the casual reader, there is enough excitement, humor, historical narrative, and detail to keep the pages turning. Finally, this is a book that many Texans will enjoy. Green's clear writing, effective storytelling and love of Texas animates this history and therefore makes it a must read for Texans and Western historians alike.

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Cortina: Defending the Mexican Name in Texas. By Jerry Thompson. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007. Pp. 344. Introduction, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-58544-592-4. \$32.50)

Juan Nepomuceno Cortina is a famous and infamous Mexican Texan whose historical importance to Mexico, Texas, and Rio Grande Valley lore has not been properly magnified or honored. Cortina's conflicted image as either a border villain or border hero has caused great debate among historians who have studied and written about the legendary *caudillo*. Jerry Thompson, who has dedicated more than two decades to researching his story, has come up with the ultimate biography of Cortina.

Thompson begins his study with a historiography on Cortina the border bandit and Cortina the social bandit. The historiography shows that early scholarly works about Cortina, written by Anglo authors such as J. Frank Dobie and Walter Prescott Webb, portrayed the Mexican Texan in a negative light, employing such references as "*great bandido*," "*black sheep*," and "*merciless Robin Hood*." Later historical studies, some written by Chicano historians like Arnolando Leon and David Montejano, interpreted Cortina as a defender of Mexican and *Tejano* rights during a time when Anglo Americans used forcible relocations, mass executions, and political and economic oppression of Cortina's brown comrades to build the American nation that exists today. Interestingly enough, the last pages of the historiography include references to Cortina in fictional novels, such as Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* and James A. Michener's *Texas*.

Each chapter, including the introduction and conclusion, begins with an opening quotation. The majority of these are from Cortina and are written in English or Spanish. The quotation, along with the chapter title, gives the reader an idea of what to expect. For example, the first chapter is titled "*The Making of*

a Revolutionary,” and the accompanying quotation is by Cortina: “*I never signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.*” Judging from the chapter title and opening quotation, the first chapter will detail events from Juan Cortina’s early years that led to his becoming a historical presence. Each chapter also contains illustrations, maps, and pictures. What makes this book great is its use of quotations from various primary sources, such as letters, newspapers, books, and court documents, to flesh out Cortina’s life and his contributions to Texas history.

Thompson uses the second, third, and fourth chapters to discuss the genesis and aftermath of the First Cortina War (1859), where Cortina and his *Cortinistas* confronted the Texas Rangers under Robert “Rip” Ford, the United States military, and the local militias of Brownsville (TX) and Matamoros (MX). The fifth chapter details the Second Cortina War (1861) in Zapata County, Cortina’s developing involvement in Mexican affairs, and his cooperation with the Union during the US Civil War. The book’s sixth and seventh chapters deal with Cortina’s changing allegiances during the French occupation of Mexico under Emperor Maximilian and with the Imperialists and Liberals under Benito Juarez. The eighth chapter recalls the efforts of American and Mexican commissions to analyze the violence, strife, cattle raids, and other terrors on the border to determine whether Cortina should be charged with any crimes. In the final chapter, Thompson examines Cortina’s changing fortune during the last twenty years of his life. From political figure to prisoner to possible international threat to the mythical heroic and dangerous man, Cortina ended up getting respect from his former enemies.

There are a few items in Thompson’s work that could be recommended for further research. Thompson notes that African Americans enlisted with Cortina’s army (p. 152), yet not much was written about their importance to Cortina throughout the rest of the biography. Important to Cortina’s struggles against his adversaries were women, but they are rarely mentioned. More about Cortina’s family, such as his older brothers and his daughter Faustina, would have been good, if sources exist. Finally, information regarding Faustina and Cortina’s heirs, if any, would have been excellent for the conclusion.

Despite the minor recommendations, Thompson’s *Cortina* is a grand contribution to Mexican-American, Chicano, Texas, Borderlands, Latin American, and American history. This book will help give historians a better understanding of the ongoing debate about Juan Nepomucena Cortina, the hero bandit. “*Ese general Cortina es muy libre y soberano han subido sus honores porque salvo a un mexicano. Viva el general Cortina que de su prision salio, vino a ver a sus amigos que en Tamaulipas dejo. Los americanos hacian huelga, borracheras en cantinas, de gusto que habia muerto ese general Cortina*” – El Corrido de Juan Cortina (The Ballad of Juan Cortina).

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