

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1859, Juan Cortina rode into Brownsville and seized control of the town. Cortina had established himself as a champion of Mexicans living along the border in the years after the Mexican War. The incident that ignited the first so-called Cortina War occurred on July 13, 1859, when Cortina saw Brownsville City Marshal Robert Shears brutally arrest an Hispanic man who had once been employed by Cortina.

Cortina shot the marshal in the impending confrontation and rode out of town with the prisoner. Early on the morning of Sept. 28, 1859, he rode into Brownsville again, this time at the head of some 40 to 80 men, and seized control of the town.

Five men, including the city jailer, were shot during the raid, as Cortina and his men raced through the streets shouting "Death to the Americans" and "Viva Mexico."

Over the next several years Cortina fought Texas Rangers and U.S. regulars. His band threatened the stability of the Valley until 1861, when he was finally defeated. Thereafter he confined his activities to Mexico, where he died in 1894.