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The Texas Rangers: Wearing the Cinco Peso, 1821-1900
(review)

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Despite their reluctance to serve in the Department of New Mexico, all evidence indicates that Wallen and Evans carried out their duties competently. Indeed, both men produced detailed reports that provide an interesting portrait of life at frontier military outposts. Because of the nature of the inspectors' duties, the reports document the true conditions at the forts and obviously make no attempt to hide any problems. The documents note the inspectors' concerns with specific officers and soldiers, discipline, equipment and supplies, living conditions, payroll information, and include the inspectors' suggestions for improvements. The reports published in this volume pertain to Forts Marcy, Union, Craig, Sumner, West, McRae, and Stanton, and posts at Albuquerque, Los Pinos, and Mesilla in New Mexico Territory; Fort Garland in Colorado Territory; and Franklin, Texas.

The book is comprised of thirteen chapters, most of which include an inspector's report for one fort or post. Each chapter begins with a brief history of the installation in question, and illustrations include maps and several hand-drawn diagrams of the forts. Thompson's endnotes reflect extensive research in National Archives records and select published sources. The book will appeal to individuals interested in the Civil War period in the Trans-Mississippi West, particularly the Far West, and those interested in first-hand accounts of daily life at nineteenth-century frontier military posts.

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BRADLEY R. CLAMPITT

The Texas Rangers: Wearing the Cinco Peso, 1821-1900. By Mike Cox. (New York: Forge, 2008. Pp. 492. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780312873868, \$25.95 cloth.)

Mike Cox, storyteller and author of the entertaining and anecdotal *Texas Ranger Tales* and *Texas Ranger Tales II*, delivers a likewise readable but much more broadly historical perspective of the legendary frontier law enforcement agency from its beginnings and throughout the nineteenth century. While doing so, Cox considers the tangle of myth and fact—"as closely interwoven as a fine horsehair quilt" (15)—and concludes that it is difficult to separate the two strands from one another. He does confront the revisionist historians who have relentlessly attacked the Ranger lore of late, admitting that there were certainly acts committed above the law but that those instances were "rare and often exaggerated," and that in the final accounting the Rangers managed against great odds to keep the peace on a dangerous frontier.

Cox divides his treatise into two large sections, the early period (1821-1873) of the Rangers as Indian fighters, and the later period (1874-1900) as peace officers with increasing responsibilities to track and capture criminals and fugitives across Texas. The Rangers were the only agency given authority to cross county lines in their pursuits of the lawless and, as the Indian threat subsided following Reconstruction, their response to the needs of civil and state agencies increased.

During the formative period of Texas's history from Anglo colonization

through the era of the Republic, the Texas Rangers evolved through several stages of incubation. There is a contingent of early Texas historians who continue to debate exactly when and where and who the “first” Texas Rangers may have been—some suggest 1823, 1836, or 1846 or even 1874; here Cox is refreshingly able to include all of them in the narrative without having to decide on one or the other as the “real” date. And it is forgivable for Cox to quote extensively from Wilbarger’s old-fashioned *Indian Depredations in Texas* early on; Wilbarger’s book is, after all, good storytelling if not the best of accurate, objective history (where Indians and Mexicans were considered the intruders). In 1874 the Texas legislature created what became known as the Frontier Battalion of the Texas Rangers. Its broader responsibilities necessitated a larger force of men who were well organized and vested with nearly unimpeachable authority to enforce the law as they saw fit. A budget leveled at a remarkable (for that period) \$300,000 provided the material support for a more permanent agency than had existed heretofore.

Cox enthralls the reader with a dashing narrative through late nineteenth-century Texas expansion, as Major John B. Jones—who still does not have a biography worthy of his exploits—and the Frontier Battalion alternately chased Comanche and crook across the twenty-eighth state of the Union. In the 1890s, the Rangers and their growing reputation were threatened with possible extinction, not from bandits and the American Indian, but from a sense of their having outlived their usefulness, and their being tied to a fading, though glorious, past. As the legislature seriously considered shutting down the law enforcement agency, the blossoming leadership of Adjutant Generals W. H. Mabry and Thomas Scurry, and Ranger Captains Rogers, Brooks, McDonald, and Hughes rescued the battalion from a near-certain demise, positioning it instead for yet another rebirth as the Ranger Force at the dawning of the twentieth century.

Mike Cox spins a great yarn without succumbing to casual campfire chatter or the informal lingo that can often spoil a really good story, which this one is. Although he may not have blazed new ground with his *Cinco Peso* narrative, this version of the history of the Texas Rangers is eminently readable, nicely interwoven like that horsehair quilt, and worth having on an already crowded book shelf.

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PAUL N. SPELLMAN

Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. By Samuel Truett. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. Pp. 272. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780300143317, \$22.00 paper.)

In this welcome addition to borderlands history, Samuel Truett examines the history of the Arizona-Sonora border between the United States and Mexico from the colonial period to the first two decades of the twentieth century. Drawing upon what German geographer Alexander von Humboldt described as a “fugitive landscape,” Truett explains that his goal “is to understand how the best-laid plans of states, entrepreneurs, and corporations repeatedly ran aground