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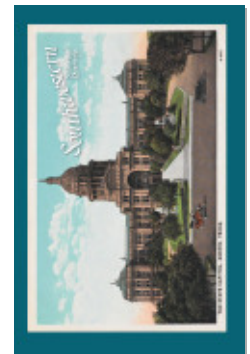
*Two Armies on the Rio Grande: The First Campaign of the
US-Mexican War* by Douglas A. Murphy (review)

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failed or were never carried out. For example, Spain promoted immigration from Acadia and the Canary Islands, offered land incentives to political exiles, and even tried to convert Americans into Catholic, tax-paying Spanish citizens who would be physical deterrents to their former countrymen. Although these efforts failed to supplement Louisiana's population in the late eighteenth century, Texas historians will recognize that this would not deter Spain from pursuing similar colonization plans in Texas from 1801 to 1821.

The remaining five essays feature either a specific plan to populate the barrera or focus on an important individual in the region. Each of these essays is astute and well-researched, but Din's take on Esteban Miró stands above the rest. Governor of Louisiana and West Florida from 1785 to 1791, Miró had to populate Louisiana while dealing with a bloated, unreceptive Spanish bureaucracy and colonists whose self-interest superseded loyalty to any nation. Of particular concern to Miró was the infamous James Wilkinson. In his analysis of the relationship between the two men, Din concludes that Wilkinson proposed the so-called "Spanish Conspiracy," not Spain. Indeed, Miró sought to settle Kentucky families in Louisiana, but Wilkinson's jealousies and apathy for this more reasonable approach derailed the governor's plans.

The essays in *Populating the Barrera* first appeared as articles in scholarly journals, meaning that some of the material is now common knowledge to borderlands historians. In addition, as Din readily admits in the introduction to the collection, the standalone nature of the article format leads to repetition of material, chronological dissonance, and a disjointed narrative when trying to read *Populating the Barrera* from beginning to end. In spite of these minor faults, scholars of Texas and Louisiana history should not ignore Din's book, because these articles contain valuable insights and exquisite research from the preeminent scholar of Spanish Louisiana history.

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Two Armies on the Rio Grande: The First Campaign of the US-Mexican War. By Douglas A. Murphy. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014. Pp. 356. Photographs, maps, bibliography, index.)

Recent scholarship on the U.S.-Mexican War has tended to focus on peripheral aspects rather than the fighting itself. Douglas Murphy shifts back to a more traditional military history of the war. However, he has notably expanded the field with his emphasis on Mexican sources to portray both sides on the opening days of the U.S.-Mexican War. Murphy's book discusses the origin and execution of the Rio Grande Campaign,

providing a detailed narrative of the events starting with General Zachary Taylor's march to Corpus Christi through his capture of Matamoros.

The most pronounced aspect of this book is Murphy's effort to discuss the Battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and Matamoros from both sides of the conflict. This is an important advance in the literature, because few books, Mexican or American, convey the Mexican military perspective. Mexican works have tended to focus on the politics surrounding the conflict rather than the military operations of their forces. In this, Murphy excels. He effectively recounts the movement of both armies and the problems their commanders confronted. The voices of officers on both sides are clear, while the reader can sense the struggles the Mexican generals faced when dealing with their own, unstable government.

Murphy is able to convey many voices due to his extensive use of letters, diaries, and government documents from both Mexico and the United States. His research includes some new sources not previously used and new interpretations of older sources. In particular, Murphy uses quotes from common soldiers in the United States Army, which allows the reader to understand army life not just from a top-down, operational level, but from the perspective of an American in the ranks. He superbly brought American soldiers to life, but this reader is left wanting more of the same for Mexican soldiers. Although there are issues that limit Murphy's ability to expand in this area, it would have added a layer of depth to the Mexican narrative he provided.

While this book is a more traditional military narrative, Murphy also provides glimpses into the significance that South Texas and the Rio Grande had in American history. Within his narrative of the war, he describes the Rio Grande as a catalyst for economic growth and a source of political conflict for the region. Though this book focuses on the movements of armies, it also places the borderlands between Texas and Mexico as a crucial setting for events that changed the course of both Mexico and the United States. Throughout his book, he subtly hints at the greater significance of the actions taken by the generals on both sides of the river.

This book greatly expands the scholarship on the U.S.-Mexico War by providing readers with a far better look at the Mexican side of the conflict. Murphy's balanced approach to the narrative gives new insights into why the first campaign of the war followed the course that it did. This book is important for anyone wanting to learn more about South Texas or the border relationship between the United States and Mexico.