

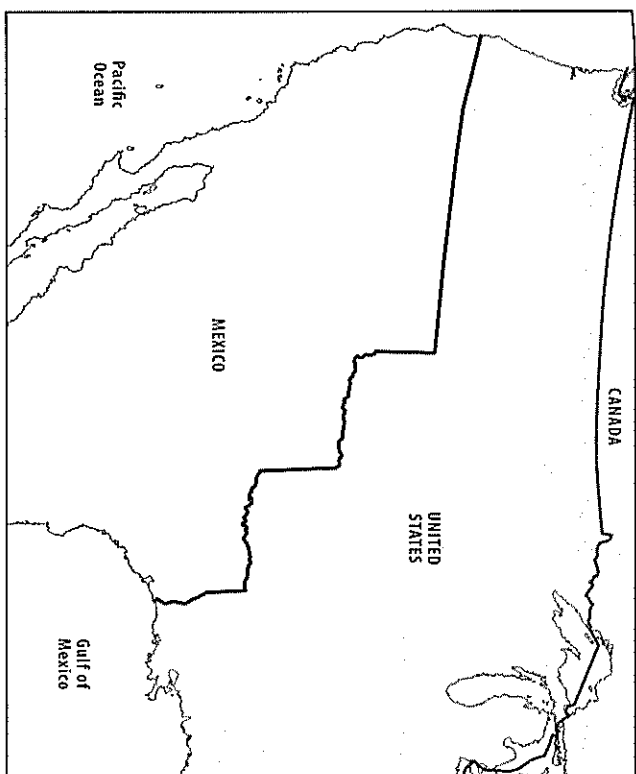
viduals with different national loyalties. French, German, and a mixed regional argot are spoken there. Right now, France controls the region. But regardless of who controls it at any given time, it is a borderland, with two cultures and an underlying tension. The world is filled with borderlands. Think of Northern Ireland as the borderland between the United Kingdom and Ireland. Kashmir is a borderland between India and Pakistan. Think of the Russian-Polish border, or of Kosovo, the borderland between Serbia and Albania. Think of the French-Canadian-U.S. border. These are all borderlands of varying degrees of tension.

There is a borderland between the United States and Mexico, with Mexicans and Americans sharing a mixed culture. The borderland is on both sides of the official border. The U.S. side is unlike the rest of the United States, and the Mexican side is unlike the rest of Mexico. Like other borderlands, this one is its own unique place, with one exception: Mexicans on both sides of the border have deep ties to Mexico, and Americans have deep ties to the United States. Underneath the economic and cultural mixture, there is always political tension. This is particularly true here because of the constant movement of Mexicans into the borderland, across the border, and throughout the United States. The same cannot be said of Americans migrating south into Mexico.

Most borderlands change hands many times. The U.S.-Mexican borderland has changed hands only once so far.

Northern Mexico was slowly absorbed by the United States beginning with the 1835-1836 revolution in Texas and culminating in the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. It constituted the southwestern part of today's United States. The border was set at the Rio Grande, and later adjusted in the west to include the south of Arizona. The indigenous Mexican population was not forcibly displaced. Mexicans continued to live in the area, which was later occupied by a much larger number of American settlers from the east. During the second half of the twentieth century, another population movement from Mexico into the borderland and beyond took place, further complicating the demographic picture.

We can draw a distinction between conventional immigration and population movements in a borderland. When other immigrant groups arrive in a country, they are physically separated from their homeland and sur-



Mexico Prior to Texas Rebellion

rounded by powerful forces that draw their children into the host culture and economy. A movement into a borderland is different. It is an extension of one's homeland, not a separation from it. The border represents a political boundary, not a cultural or economic boundary, and immigrants are not at a great distance from home. They remain physically connected, and their loyalties are complex and variable.

Mexicans who move into the borderland behave differently from Mexicans living in Chicago. Those in Chicago behave more like conventional immigrants. Mexicans in the borderland potentially can regard themselves as living in occupied territory rather than a foreign country. This is no different from the way American settlers in Texas viewed their position prior to the revolution. They were Mexican citizens, but they saw themselves primarily as Americans and created a secessionist movement that tore Texas away from Mexico.