Many Americans imagine the U.S.–Mexico borderlands as a land that time forgot, a wild, unsettled place where “renegades” and “bandits” such as Geronimo and Pancho Villa have simply given way to newer barbarians: mercenary narcotraficantes, immigrant desperados, and camouflaged vigilantes. “What we call the border,” writes best-selling author Robert Kaplan, has always been a “wild, unstable swath of desert,” marked by a dearth of political, military, and social control. The border is the “21st century frontier,” agrees Susan Zakin, referring to clashes between the “hunters and the hunted”—that is, armed ranchers hunting undocumented immigrants—along the Arizona-Sonora border. Unlike Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier, these writers propose that the borderlands never closed. Instead, they remain haunted by the ghosts of frontiers past.¹

Such portrayals hardly seem surprising when we consider what the borderlands divide. The American West and the Mexican North are both famous in popular thought for their frontier legacies of danger and desire, lawlessness and liberation, violence and virtue. Even Robert Kaplan’s “unstable swath of desert” evokes the limits of culture and authority that we tend to associate with frontiers, whether in Zane Grey’s Southwest, the Mexican wastelands of The Wild Bunch, or even the distant plant of Tatooine. And from a linguistic point of view, at least, this is also unsurprising: The word desert derives from the Latin verb de-serere, or “to sever connection with,” and what, if not severed ties to the body politic, make the frontier what it is?² And yet frontiers are also about forging new ties and bringing order to disorder. On the frontier, the wild becomes tame, borderlands become bounded, and the story reaches a conclusion, usually ending with a finished nation. So how do we make sense of a history that appears to resist this closure? How do we tell the story of a space that seems chronically unmade?³

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No less important, how do we tell this story in a critical fashion—in a way that does not simply reaffirm fears, desires, and mythologies? After all, stories of borderland disorder and dislocation often orient larger national fables about the virtues of order and integration, telling us what we must strive to overcome as citizens. This was a powerful topos in many cinematic westerns, and it lives on in such recent border films as Stephen Soderberg’s *Traffic* (2000) and Ron Howard’s *The Missing* (2003). Yet if we peel back the skin of myth and rhetoric, what kind of connective tissue do we find below the surface? What, beyond ideology, links the U.S.–Mexico borderlands to the Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. frontier pasts? To what extent did frontier relations live on in the borderlands, even after U.S. and Mexican mapmakers tried to pin the frontier in place after 1854? Or to put it another way, what is the significance of the frontier to borderlands history?

In this essay, I would like to propose a few modest starting points for engaging these larger questions by looking at the transition from colonial frontier to transnational borderlands in Arizona and Sonora. Before the United States annexed northern Mexico in 1848 (and in 1854 with the Gadsden Purchase), this was a contested terrain of empires, nations, and native communities. It was a frontier in Silvio R. Duncan Baretta and John Markoff’s sense of the word: a land where nobody exercised “an enduring monopoly on violence.” It was also a meeting place of cultures, whose relationships could hardly be reduced to a single line, but what made it a frontier was its relationship to the colonial and early national state. It was the state’s effort to articulate its authority vis-à-vis what lay beyond its margins—and the tenuous, uneven, and incomplete nature of this colonial project—that made the frontier a unique locus of social struggle and identity formation. The inability of the nation-state and its citizens to fully incorporate and domesticate this space endured after it became a transnational crossroads in the mid-nineteenth century. It was their ongoing lack of control—their failure, in a sense, to bring closure to previous frontier relationships—that haunted newcomers most.

**Colonial Geographies**

Spanish adventurers had visited Sonora as early as the 1530s, but it was the Jesuit order that brought this land to the doorstep of empire. Crossing north along the Pacific coast from what is today Sinaloa, missionaries established their first missions among the Mayo Indians of
southern Sonora in 1614, then moved north to the Yaqui, Pima, and Opata settlements of the Yaqui and Sonora Rivers and their highland tributaries. By the 1650s, Jesuits had created a chain of mission cabeceras and visitas reaching to the northern edges of Opata territory, just south of the present Arizona border. These pioneers paved the way for migrations of mining entrepreneurs, merchants, and ranchers, who doubled as fighters when Indians defied their intrusions. As resistance to empire mounted over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the colonial state supplemented these local militias with presidios, or self-supporting frontier garrisons, which eventually formed a cordon along the frontier. Not unlike Jesuits, presidio soldiers and militiamen were at a demographic disadvantage, and relied on a mixture of persuasion, conversion, and limited force to maintain control of the Spanish periphery.6

All of these colonial actors—missionaries, miners, ranchers, and soldiers—took native spaces and attempted to transform them into places of their own. For Jesuits, the incorporation of human space was intimately bound to the incorporation of nature. In order to attract converts and maintain the mission economy, Jesuits sought to transform Sonora’s highland river valleys into a productive landscape of pastures and fields. Their success depended in large part on the animals and plants they brought with them. Old World diseases devastated native groups, making them vulnerable to military, religious, and economic conquest, whereas new crops and domestic animals provided a range of economic opportunities for survivors. To transform nature, however, missionaries also had to transform social relations—among other things imposing colonial labor discipline on converts who worked to support the mission community and produce surpluses for sale. From the value extracted from nature and labor, the missionaries purchased cotton and linen to clothe and pay the Indian converts, and acquired the vestments, candle wax, and utensils to sustain the mission church and its ceremonies.7

The distance between these religious landscapes and the administrative, military, and economic centers of empire—combined with a native propensity to pick and choose from the “new world” of Spanish America—limited the missionaries’ ability to transform natural and social space as they wished. Pima and Opata farmers incorporated Old World crops into their daily rounds, for instance, but not always in ways that the Jesuits judged fitting for Christian farmers. “No one knows how to plow a regular furrow,” grumbled one missionary. “Sonora could have a superabundance of . . . produce if the inhabitants would diligently engage in
agriculture. But they are much too lazy for such labor.” This complaint, which reflected an Enlightenment obsession with order, also betrayed a poor appreciation for local wisdom, which privileged diversity and flexibility over what most Jesuits saw as efficiency. From the native perspective, too much labor for farming might mean not enough for hunting and gathering, which were also important for staying alive from one season to the next. Native norms also reflected the incorporation of Old World animals. Some natives saw horses and cattle as threats to their fields, and took a while to accept them, whereas others—the Tohono O’odham and Apache, for instance—added them to the list of animals that might be hunted by traditional means.8

The missionaries’ efforts to transform frontier space not only were stymied by what they considered barbaric customs, but were also thwarted by nature. “When brooks dry up or are exhausted and the plantations can no longer be watered, everything wilts,” noted Jesuit Philipp Segesser, who also remembered the wet year when the Yaqui River rose so high that it “destroyed entire mission villages.” Sometimes natural disorder followed in the wake of social disorder. Not long after Pima rebels killed a colleague, Segesser took over his abandoned mission, which he found “reclaimed” by nature. Mesquite and wild shrubs had invaded the garden, the orchard had withered due to lack of irrigation, and “everything had been devastated by ants.” Jesuits were also forced to contend with that most fickle of colonial allies, Old World disease. The arrival of measles is the “harvest of Heaven,” claimed one frustrated father: “By it populated villages are suddenly reduced. Indians fear it very much and great effort is required to keep them together, for they flee and try to hide in the woods.”9

Like most environmental obstacles that the Jesuits described, this was ultimately a problem of spatial control. Beyond mission borders, insisted Father Ignaz Pfefferkorn, “the absence of both order and a civilized existence was the rule,” whereas those Indians who stayed on mission lands “were so improved in their customs that they retain almost nothing of their former aspect than their brown skin.” Missionaries usually saw mission boundaries as borderlands dividing the wild from the tame, the pure from the corrupt. Horses and cattle that wandered from the mission’s pastures “became wild and timid in the wilderness,” joining the same conceptual geography as “barbarous” Indians whose lives were, in Pfefferkorn’s words, “more like those of animals than of reasoning human beings.” There was also the constant danger of losing native converts to lay Spaniards—notably miners—who gave them “every freedom and
permitted them the most shameful excesses.” If it were not for the “evil examples of these godless men,” Pfefferkorn noted, “Christianity would have been just as flourishing in Sonora as it was in Paraguay and in all other places to which the Spaniards did not have free access.”

Spanish mining entrepreneurs seemed to have greater success in realizing their dreams of social and environmental control. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the search for mineral wealth had fueled migrations north along the Sierra Madre into what is now Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua. By the 1630s, miners were spilling into Sonora from the east and south, and by the end of the century, silver camps had sprung up all across the Pima and Opata homelands, offering a highland counterpart to the river-based Jesuit landscape. As Spaniards, Indians, and mestizos flocked to the camps to sell their labor, the demand for food, clothing, and housing placed a new economic value on nearby river valleys and grasslands. Lands previously tied to Opata and Pima seasonal rounds were incorporated into Spanish pastures and fields to feed the growing mining population, often with the assistance of native peones and vaqueros. Mining and satellite rural communities also pulled undomesticated spaces into colonial markets. All across Sonora, wild plants and animals supplemented agro-pastoral production, whereas oak, pine, and mesquite forests entered the expanding web of ranching, farming, and mining communities as building materials and fuel.

These networks of consumption were often small scale and local, linking mining reales to the nearby countryside. Livestock raisers who supplied the everyday staples of beef and butter also produced tallow for candles burned underground. “Herein lies the principal profit to be derived from cattle raising in Sonora,” explained Ignaz Pfefferkorn. Another ranching product was rawhide for the bags used to carry ore (and water, when mines flooded) to the surface. Woodcutters, for their part, hauled timber from nearby mountainsides to build the machinery for the stamp mills and to shore up large mines with timbers. By far the most important use of wood was to make charcoal for smelting, which in Sonora led to the denudation of the forests around the mines. Meanwhile, lead mines provided reagents for the reduction of silver; locally bred mules generated power for the arrastras, or ore-grinding mills; and salt and copper (gathered from the Sonora river deltas and mined in its highlands, respectively) were employed as additional reagents if ores required the additional step of amalgamation.

Other demands of the mining landscape could not have been met without long-distance trade networks, south to Guadalajara and southeast
across the Sierra Madre to the regional entrepôt of Parral, Nueva Vizcaya. Along colonial roads, merchants shipped sheepskin bellows for the smelting furnaces, quicksilver to extract silver in the arrastra, and the various iron tools—picks, hammers, and crowbars—used in the mines. All had to be imported to Sonora at great cost. Paths leading from the outside world to Sonora’s mines were also conduits for such luxury items as wine, olive oil, tobacco, pottery, silks, and tailored clothing, goods that were generally produced thousands of miles from the frontier. Frontier merchants, most of them from the crossroads of Parral, controlled this overland traffic. They were responsible not only for purchasing and selling goods, but also for freighting silver south to Mexico City. Since Sonora, like most frontiers, was cash poor, these merchants also doubled as bankers, making loans to prospectors and other mining entrepreneurs. Their special access to outside markets and investment capital gave them a control over frontier space that their neighbors rarely matched.13

Yet as with missionaries, this control was anything but complete. Even the most prosperous reales could be abandoned in days if surface deposits ran out, shafts became flooded, or a bonanza elsewhere lured workers away. And the job of freighting goods, silver, and equipment across Sonora’s highlands was fraught with difficulty. “There are no freight wagons,” Philipp Segesser wrote. “Rivers are not navigable, and roads are so narrow, rough, and steep in many places that one dreads looking down the precipices.” Pack trains were under constant threat of Apache attack, who had begun to increase their raids and attacks during the seventeenth century. Like Spaniards, Apaches were expanding into Opata and Pima territory, and their incorporation of Spanish horses and weapons helped make them formidable adversaries in the contest for space. Moreover, as mining boomed, giving rise to new populations of domestic animals on the roads and in the pastures, Apaches found it increasingly profitable to raid their competitors for these sources of nourishment and power. In this way they wove colonial spaces of production and trade into their own subsistence rounds.14

Colonial ranchers encountered many of the same profits and pitfalls that miners faced. Jesuits were the first stock raisers, but soon lay ranchers and their herds began to claim lands between the missions, especially after mining took off in the late seventeenth century. Indeed, miners and mining-town merchants established many of these ranches, using proceeds from one source of natural wealth to generate another. By the
eighteenth century, herds of cattle, horses, and mules—some as large as twelve thousand head—ranged as far north as the present-day border. Yet natural abundance did not guarantee control over nature. "Wild mountain cats" often attacked livestock, Philipp Segesser noted, and since entrepreneurs preferred to use gunpowder to extract silver rather than to kill predators, "these harmful beasts of prey multiply unhindered." Ranchlands were often devastated by wildfires—some natural, others set by Pimas and Apaches to drive game. Domestic animals also wandered beyond their owners' control, a control that diminished spatially during times of Apache-Spanish conflict. In places, cattle "can no longer be rounded up, much less confined in a corral," wrote Ignaz Pfefferkorn; likewise, Spanish horses at the edges of Spanish settlement often became "so wild and timid in the wilderness that they immediately take flight when they but catch sight of a human being."\(^{15}\)

Indeed, as with missionaries, the failure of livestock raisers to domesticate nature was part of a greater problem of controlling colonial space. As time passed by, ranchers increasingly expressed this problem in terms of their powerlessness in the face of Apache raiding. This had become a particularly irksome issue, Pfefferkorn noted, by the 1760s. "Nothing is safe from these 'birds of prey,'" he noted, "except that which wanders around wild on the hills and in the bushes and does not let itself be run off." Horses were perhaps most at risk because they were taken both as mounts and for their meat, which by all accounts Apaches preferred to beef. As a result of Indian raids, ranching was increasingly limited to lands adjacent to the presidios, missions, and villages. Ranches that had extended for miles in the early eighteenth century became a distant memory by century's end. "Only those areas which are in sight of villages are tilled and planted," Pfefferkorn wrote. "So the largest and best part of this beautiful and extremely fertile country lies uncultivated and deserted because of the fear of the barbarians."\(^{16}\)

It was this threat of "barbarians" that most clearly motivated the Spanish crown to impose its formal authority over Sonora and to envision this northern province as an imperial frontier—that is, as a line dividing the state from the stateless "forces of nature" lurking at its northern gates.\(^{17}\) This effort gave rise to yet another colonial space, focused around military conquest and expressed most formally in the institution of the frontier presidio. Relative to other colonial spaces, this was a late bloomer. It was not until 1692, after the Pueblo Revolt sparked rebellions across northern Sonora, that the first presidio was
established at Fronteras, near the present-day border. Until the 1740s, fewer than fifty professional soldiers defended the state, and even in the presidios, the power of the state was tenuous. Presidio captains were often merchants, miners, or ranchers who took the position to increase their local power. This was true at Fronteras, where in 1718, settlers complained that Captain Alvarez Tuñón y Quiros used soldiers as his own private labor force, having them herd stock and mine silver rather than defend territory. Such abuses of power exposed the weakness of the state vis-à-vis local entrepreneurs. “The presidial captain was as much a patrón as a comandante,” writes historian Max Moorhead: He often saw his soldiers less as warrior citizens than as “personal vassals.”

By the 1750s, military power in northern Sonora began to shift, as Apaches began to step up their raids and new revolts broke out among Pimas, Yaquis, Mayos, and Seris. As colonial officials created new presidios, they also became more invested in increasing their bureaucratic hold over the region, to defend against not only Indians but also rival North American empires. A new generation of Bourbon leaders under Carlos III (1759–88) poured state subsidies into the north. They established a new cordon of presidios along the northern frontier, negotiated new treaties with native groups, made more aggressive campaigns into enemy terrain, and perhaps most important, provided rations and gifts to Apaches who sought peace. In addition to revamping old presidios and creating new ones, the state also formed companies of Opatas and Pimas to increase its armed frontier “citizenry”—though these native groups fought as much for their own homelands as for the interests of empire—and created compañías volantes, or cavalries, to police the frontier line between “civilized” and “barbarous” Sonora.

These efforts not only to consolidate, but also to effectively delineate the northern frontier gave rise to a generation of relative peace and colonial prosperity from the 1790s to the early 1830s. Due partly to a respite from Apache raids and partly to the expulsion of the Jesuit order in 1767, Spanish and mestizo ranchers began to move their herds into former mission lands along both sides of the current border. Such prominent families as the Elías González, Ortiz, Pérez, and Romero families—many of which had gained their positions of power within the close-knit military fraternity of presidio commanders and officers—began to obtain land grants and extend their cattle herds into the former buffer zone between Apache and Spanish. These families helped establish a trend toward the privatization and commodification of space. What had formerly been
common lands for mission Indians were now divided according to their respective resources—water, timber, wood, and pastures—and granted to individuals. These shifts in land tenure were all part of an official effort to promote settlement and thus incorporate the frontier more fully into the colonial state. By fueling the regional economy and defending against outsiders, frontier families would help regenerate the interior spaces of empire.20

Yet this vision faltered with the wars for Mexican independence, which depleted the colonial treasury, severed trade linkages to the frontier, and dried up state subsidies for Apache rations. Formerly peaceful Apaches faced starvation, disease, and renewed racial animosity (for now frontier elites had to subsidize peace from their own pockets), and soon returned to raiding and warfare to survive. If anything, a generation of peace had made Apaches stronger enemies: They better understood Mexican tactics, many had learned to use European weapons, and their population had grown. Moreover, new commercial networks with Americans and other Mexicans in New Mexico and Chihuahua increased their economic power. They had new outlets for plunder and greater access to arms and ammunition. By the 1830s, and increasing through the 1840s, Apaches began to reclaim a vast terrain—extending from present day Arizona deep into frontier Sonora—as their own. Meanwhile, as Apaches developed a more unified sense of their territorial power, Sonoran space only became further divided, as political factions (federalists, centralists, liberals, and conservatives) battled to determine who would have and who would have not, as former colonial subjects became Mexican citizens.21

Facing economic and political turmoil, and military threats from both within and without, many Sonorenses packed up and left for California, starting a wave of migration north that gathered strength after gold was discovered at Sutter’s Fort in 1848. The U.S.–Mexican War further weakened Mexican Sonora vis-à-vis its Apache neighbors.22 When the United States annexed northern Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Sonoran officials were concerned about the encroaching Yankee threat, but they were more anxious about the Apaches and their “unmaking” of frontier space. “None but those who have visited this State can form any adequate idea of the widespread devastation which has marked the inroads of the savage,” agreed U.S.–Mexican Boundary Commissioner John Russell Bartlett in the early 1850s:
Depopulated towns and villages, deserted haciendas and ranches, elegant and spacious churches falling to decay, neglected orchards teeming with fruit, and broad fields once highly cultivated, now overgrown with shrubbery and weeds show to what extent the country had been overrun.23

To those following nature's bounty west, this haunted land yielded only the heartbreak of failed dreams. It was abandoned, one newcomer wrote, to "droses of cattle, remnants of the beautiful herds of the last generation—ruined dwellings—ruined forts—ruined churches—and, hovering upon the borders of this desert, ruined men who tremble, and ruined women who mourn."24

If changing relations of power unsettled the colonial countryside, reducing once-fruitful landscapes to ruins, they had a similar impact on the region's more subterranean geographies. Newcomers to Sonora frequently encountered what they considered to be ghosts of a lost golden age of mining. The "crumbled walls of their reduction haciendas, immense heaps of scoria from their furnaces, and decayed towns," observed one mining engineer in the 1860s, spoke to "a higher grade of civilization than has since visited this unfortunate country." Most attributed the decline of mining to a flight of foreign capital after 1821. "The first suicidal act of the Mexican government," wrote U.S. entrepreneur Sylvester Mowry, was the expulsion of the Spanish after 1824, which dealt a "fatal blow" to mining by removing most of the "capital and well-directed industry which, until then, had sustained it in splendor." No less critical, added Sonora resident John Hall, was the decay of royal ordinances prohibiting the destruction of deserted mines by gambusinos, or independent, small-scale miners. Without authorities to enforce mining laws during the years of political strife following Mexican independence, Hall wrote, these "reckless men," who earned their livelihood by "working in the rubbish thrown out of the mines," hastened the process of "spoliation and destruction."25

Gambusinos often literally unmade mines by attacking the underground pillars required by law to prevent the mines from caving in. These contained the best and most accessible ore, and since these trespassers were "fearful of being caught in flagranti," John Hall claimed, they "took the easiest first." In this way, many mines were "caved in" and "lost." By linking gambusinos to criminal acts, Hall obscured the fact that they had also generated much of Sonora's wealth, their small-scale operations being well suited to the unstable climate of the frontier. In
many areas, they were simply farmers who launched scavenging raids into Apache-controlled lands between farming cycles, weaving them—much as Apache raiders did with Mexican pastures—into a larger, diversified economy. In both cases, what outsiders perceived as a reckless unmaking of space was more often a highly skilled business. The same entrepreneurs who criticized *gambusinos* frequently used them as guides, relying on their knowledge of abandoned mines. So expertly had they picked clean one such mine, admitted a U.S. mining engineer, “that I could scarcely find a sufficient vestige of the ores to determine their character.” The only thing that set this new expert apart from his *gambusino* predecessors, in the end, was the conceit that he could somehow achieve the same success on a larger scale.26

**Remaking the Borderlands**

With visions of ruin and decay trickling east from Sonora, it is hardly surprising that early U.S. immigrants saw it as a barren wasteland.27 Most had their sights on gold-rush California, a destination that seemed blessed by comparison. If newcomers viewed Sonora as a forsaken land, they held its residents in equally low esteem. Although many Anglo migrants were destitute by the time they reached northern Sonora and depended on merchants in towns like Tucson to provide them with bread, meat, flour, and other goods, they rarely treated these hosts with respect. In 1849, Americans sacked the town of Cieneguilla in northwestern Sonora, and a Texas mob ran roughshod over Santa Cruz, a town on the overland trail south of Tucson. These encounters reinforced the U.S. view of Sonora as a land of little value. But after the flush years of the gold rush passed, some began to think differently. Rumors of mineral wealth along the Arizona-Sonora border, together with the sense that Apaches prevented Mexicans from enjoying these riches for themselves, fueled new U.S. visions of opportunity in the region.28

Among those dissatisfied fortune-seekers who began to shift their gaze to Sonora in the early 1850s were a Kentuckian named Charles DeBrille Poston and a German-born mining engineer named Herman Ehrenberg. Ehrenberg had migrated from Germany to Mexican Texas in the 1830s, where he participated in the battle for Texas independence and inspired later waves of German immigration to the region with his popular account, *Texas und Sein Revolution*. The 1840s found him on
the road, from Texas to Oregon, the Sandwich Islands, Polynesia, and finally, California. Poston, for his part, left Kentucky in 1851 to take a position as a clerk in the San Francisco customshouse, only to find the state in an economic depression. As impoverished and restless gold-seekers began to fill the streets in the 1850s, Poston joined Ehrenberg and other entrepreneurs who sought to invest their limited funds and dreams elsewhere.29

The search for new frontiers began on the corner of Stockton and Washington, in the so-called Government Boarding House, home to an eclectic mixture of government officials, entrepreneurs, and other "gentlemen" with shared interests in mining and land speculation. After the negotiation of the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, "the discussion of the subject grew interesting at the Government Boarding House," Poston later recalled, "and a new California was hoped for on the southern boundary." Of particular interest were stories of abandoned mines—or of mines soon to be abandoned when Mexico gave up the territory. "Old Spanish history was ransacked for information, from the voyages of Cortez in the Gulf of California to the latest dates, and maps of the country were in great demand," Poston wrote. This terra incognita, he proposed, was home to the fabled province of Arizunea, a region said to be "full of minerals, with fertile valleys washed by numerous rivers, and covered by forests primeval." After convincing some local French bankers to support an exploratory journey, the bright-eyed Kentuckian prepared to sail for Sonora, to find out if this "new California" lived up to the dream.30

In early February 1854, the British bark Zoraida pulled out of San Francisco with Poston and Ehrenberg on board, their heads filled with visions of El Dorado. According to Poston's somewhat colorful version of events, the ship was ill prepared for travel, and after rounding the tip of Baja California, it wrecked off the Sinaloa coast. Unshaken, the adventurers rowed ashore and made their way up the coast to Sonora, striking inland at that point to assess the state's abandoned colonial mines. Enterprising Mexicans seemed anxious to regenerate these haunted spaces. Local elites offered partnerships in deserted mines, Poston claimed, "in consideration of furnishing machinery and means." With the right infusions of U.S. technology and investment, he observed, mining could be "more permanent and regular in yield than the mines of California." Surveyors for the Texas Western Railroad Company, seeking an overland route to the Pacific, were said to be in the northern
part of the state, looking for a port on the Gulf of California. The promise of railroad ties to Wall Street encouraged Poston, increasing his hopes that a new Pacific empire would soon emerge from the ashes of this embattled frontier.31

Armed with great expectations, Poston returned to San Francisco, then sailed for the East Coast to secure financial backing and supplies. With the help of Samuel Peter Heintzelman, a mining developer and commanding officer at Fort Yuma, California, he organized the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company in Cincinnati in early 1856. Among the company’s backers was Robert J. Walker, a New York capitalist and politician who had served as secretary of the treasury under President James K. Polk and now headed the Texas Western Railroad. Where Poston saw silver mines, Walker no doubt imagined railroad traffic. Both supported the company’s central goal: “to send an armed party of sufficient strength to protect itself against the Indian tribes, to explore this territory and recover and hold possession of old Spanish mines” wherever they might be found in the newly established Gadsden Purchase. As company agent and military commander of its exploring party, Poston was entrusted with the local business of selecting the abandoned mines and putting them in working order.32

Poston departed for the borderlands that spring. He stopped in San Antonio to outfit the expedition and obtain recruits, many of them German immigrants who moved west after reading Herman Ehrenberg’s glowing account of Texas during the late 1830s. “There were plenty of educated German miners about New Bramfels [sic] working on farms and selling lager beer, and they enlisted joyfully,” Poston wrote. He made up the balance with Texas “frontiersmen” who “were not afraid of the devil.” After securing arms, ammunition, and letters of reference from the U.S. War Department—in case they required military assistance in Arizona—they continued to Tucson, which they reached in August. Here they rested and regrouped before moving on to the recently abandoned presidio of Tubac, forty-five miles to the south, where they set up their headquarters and began to explore the surrounding countryside.33

Tubac presented Sonora’s embattled past in microcosm. Founded as a presidio at the far northern edge of Spanish settlement in 1752, it provided an important bulwark against Apache expansion south. Among the places it defended was a string of Spanish and Pima settlements in the San Luis Valley, south of Tubac where the Santa Cruz River dipped into what is today Sonora. In such places as Santa María Soamca, a Pima
village that later became the Spanish-Indian town of Santa Cruz, settlers had farmed the valley, run cattle, and prospected in the neighboring highlands since 1680. The larger ranchers had produced hides, tallow, and meat for mining reales to the south, as well as for export to Chihuahua. Yet by the mid-eighteenth century, Apache raiders began to incorporate the San Luis Valley into their own expanding territory. During the late 1760s, Pima and Spanish refugees began spilling into Tubac, increasing the population and consolidating its ties to communities south of the present-day border.34

Tubac withstood these early military pressures, but its position was anything but secure. In 1776, as Apache power began to increase all across New Spain’s northwestern frontier, royal administrators decided to move Tubac’s troops north to the Pima village of Tucson. By 1783, Apaches forced the remaining residents of Tubac to leave, turning the former presidio into a ghost town. Yet frontier warfare could remake as well as unmake space. In 1787 a company of Pima Indians—augmented by Opata fighters from the south—was ordered back to Tubac, and as these native troops gained control, former residents of the presidio and the San Luis Valley returned. With the Spanish-Apache peace of the 1790s, local ranchers and miners began to spread out once again into the nearby highlands, and by the time of Mexican independence, a brisk land market had opened in recent Apache territory. Tubac elites Tomás and Ignacio Ortiz won titles to the Arivaca and Canoa land grants north and west of town in 1821 and 1833, respectively; their neighbor León Herreras obtained former mission lands on Sonoita Creek east of Tubac in 1825; and other enterprising Mexicans similarly claimed previous mission and Indian territories along the Santa Cruz and San Pedro rivers and the grasslands in between.35

This new era of peace and prosperity lasted a generation, but like its precursors it was built on precarious foundations. With the collapse of colonial peace subsidies to the presidios after Mexican independence, the armistice with Apaches came to an end. As Apaches renewed their raids and reclaimed territory, the Mexican control over space shrunk. By 1840, Sonoita, Canoa, and other neighboring ranches had been abandoned, and around Tubac only the Pima community of Tumacacori remained settled. Northern Sonora was again a battlefield, and the military prowess of the Apaches—armed with weapons from U.S. and Mexican traders to the east—was greater than ever before. In 1848, Chiricahua Apaches swept down on Tubac and Tumacacori, forcing their
abandonment. Although Mexican authorities would establish a new military colony in Tubac in 1851, they found it almost impossible to convince residents to return, and by the time the Gadsden Treaty was ratified in 1854, Apaches had all but severed the presidio’s ties to the outside world. Weeks before Charles Poston and his party arrived, the demoralized troops packed their belongings and crossed the new international boundary to Santa Cruz, Sonora.36

This embattled frontier past haunted Charles Poston and his men as they entered Tubac. “There was not a soul in the old presidio,” Poston wrote. “It was like entering the ruins of Pompeii.” Yet the newcomers felt confident that with their access to investment capital from the eastern United States, they could finally put Tubac’s troubled ghosts to rest. They refurbished the officers’ quarters and vacant houses; repaired broken corrals; and hauled timber from the neighboring mountains to replace the doors, windows, and furniture that former residents had carted with them to Mexico. That December, Poston purchased the nearby 8,677-acre Arivaca land grant from former Tubac elites Tomás and Ignacio Ortiz in the name of Samuel P. Heintzelman, and within a year the company had converted its desert grasslands into pastures for the company stock. But their main goal, of course, was to rediscover Tubac’s abandoned silver mines. And to this end, the men combed the surrounding countryside for signs of its former wealth; ruins of arrastras and smelters showed where ores had been reduced, and hidden openings—often overgrown with rank vegetation—led them to the abandoned mine shafts.37

If connections to Wall Street empowered Poston and his colleagues to restore the mining landscape around Tubac, their success was also due to local arrangements with Apaches. The United States had not yet established a comprehensive policy for dealing with Apaches, and to survive as a minority population, American entrepreneurs had to negotiate their own treaties on an ad hoc basis with local leaders. These so-called calico treaties, noted border resident John Hall, offered newcomers immunity from raids as long as they left the Indians the “privilege of entering Sonora and despoiling its inhabitants.” Poston made such a bargain with Chiricahua Apache leader Mangas Coloradas in 1856, on his way to Arizona. Owners of the nearby Patagonia mine made a similar treaty—offering Apaches gifts of beef, salt, and flour in return for peace—and Indian agents did the same in 1858 to protect overland traffic. Apaches had much to gain from these local agreements. Know-
ing Mexicans could not pursue them across the border, and counting on'treaties, gifts, and markets for plunder in Arizona, Hall wrote, they "committed their depredations [into Mexico] with impunity." 38

As Apache raiding around Tubac declined, former residents began to trickle back to their abandoned homes, fields, and pastures along the Santa Cruz River. Although a new international boundary divided the region, this hardly seemed to bother Mexicans in Sonora and "adjacent states" who traveled north "in great numbers to work." Poston attributed this to the magic of Yankee enterprise, but this was the selective memory of a man who liked to remember himself as the Daniel Boone of Arizona. In reality, the power of the state, more than pioneering spirit, attracted Mexican workers. In November 1856, well before the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company began full-scale operations, U.S. troops established a new post at the nearby Calabasas Ranch, south of Tubac. According to correspondents in Sonora, Mexicans gained fresh confidence in the borderlands and began to migrate in large numbers toward Arizona. With "protection from Indians, and market for their produce" at Calabasas, explained U.S. traveler John Reid that following February, the border towns of Imuris, Magdalena, and San Ignacio, Sonora, found "new life" as supply posts for the military community north of the line. 39

The post at Calabasas pulled migrants from the north as well, many coming from Tucson to supply the new markets for food, forage, and other supplies. Prices at Tubac were as high as "the California prices of 1849," and cattle would soon fetch "more here than at any place in the west," predicted former Tucsonan William B. Roods to a friend. For this former presidio, the economic benefits of war were nothing new—and nowhere were they more visible than along Sonoita Creek, which flowed into the Santa Cruz near Calabasas. Felix Grundy Ake, one of the first to settle along the Sonoita, had gone ahead of the troops with orders from the quartermaster to "put up forage for the dragoons." He later supplied the Calabasas post with food and lumber. His neighbor, William Wordsworth, satisfied a military contract for beef, while Thomas Thompson, Ake's son-in-law, raised vegetables for the troops. Farther downstream, Elias Green Pennington and his sons cut hay for the army's horses and mules, and his daughters sewed for the officers' wives. In 1857, when the army moved from Calabasas to Fort Buchanan—at the headwaters of the Sonoita—these well-positioned farmers simply drove their supply wagons north instead of south. By this time, they were also supplying new mining contracts. 40
If mining took longer than soldiering to transform the economy, it was because getting a mining camp up and running took longer. By early 1857, the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company was cleaning old shafts and digging new ones in the abandoned Salero mine, but a year later they struck water and had to suspend operations until they could get machinery from the coast to pump the water out. By early 1858, managers had selected a site on the Arivaca Ranch for smelting facilities, but machinery for the furnaces and amalgamation works—ordered months earlier from San Francisco’s foundries—had not yet arrived. Around $100,000 of ore from the Heintzelman mine lay near the mouth of the mine, waiting to be smelted. When the machinery arrived several months later, there were new delays. “The rainy season had set in, the material on the mine, adobes, etc., had been destroyed, the contracts to deliver the timber broken, and the workmen employed in building the works . . . had left,” wrote one mining engineer. “We had no goods in the tienda, and those ordered and bought in San Francisco did not arrive; we could not pay the Mexican peons regularly, and they were unwilling to work.” To top this off, the staves for the amalgamation barrels had dried out and did not fit. “All these unforeseen obstacles,” he noted, “delayed the erection of the amalgamation works,” and postponed the production of silver for more than two years.41

By this time, other companies had begun to join the field. In 1858, officers of the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company organized the Santa Rita Mining Company to exploit mines in the Santa Rita Mountains, east of Tubac, and sent agents out to map out and settle the new townsite of Santa Rita. Among the managers of this new corporation were two Cincinnati engravers, H. C. Grosvenor and Phocion Way, and mining engineer Raphael Pumpelly, who later recorded his adventures in the 1870 memoir Across America and Asia. Another important local enterprise was the Patagonia mine, which—like many other mines in the area—had already been exploited years before. Not unlike earlier Mexican entrepreneurs, those who “relocated” the Patagonia mine in 1858 were military officers, from nearby Fort Buchanan. These army entrepreneurs enthusiastically sank shafts, but according to later reports, they were “badly opened and badly worked.” Eventually the mine passed in 1860 to retired army officer Sylvester Mowry, who had greater access to eastern capital. He invested $200,000 in the mines and reduction facilities, houses for the workers, and everything else required “for an extensive and permanent establishment, including steam-engine and mill.” Within
months the Patagonia mine—now the Mowry mine—joined the ranks of the top regional producers.42

By the late 1850s, mining camps and military posts had not only transformed the Arizona countryside; they had also generated new trade linkages to Sonora. Magdalena, Sonora, became a supply center for Tubac, wheat from nearby Cucurpe fed the troops at Fort Buchanan, and the town of Santa Cruz sustained the Mowry mines, just miles to the north. Were it not for these transnational connections, argued journalist J. Ross Browne in 1864, “Santa Cruz would be at this time entirely deserted.” These ties were often local and small scale. Samuel P. Heintzelman reported how merchants from northern Mexico freighted wagonloads of flour, beans, fruit, and panoche (brown sugar cakes) across the line, which they often exchanged for bullion. From these, the Mexican miners made their traditional fare of tortillas, frijoles, and pinole. Such transactions were often modest, but they anchored far-reaching connections. In Sonora, noted Sylvester Mowry “almost every shopkeeper knew the value of the ore” from the Heintzelman mine, which passed from hand to hand across a vast transnational network of exchange that reached even to the merchant ships along Mexico’s west coast. Likewise, so many products from Mexico fed Tubac, Fort Buchanan, and nearby mining camps, argued Col. B. L. E. Bonneville, that one had to consider the region “a dependency of Sonora.”43

Mining enterprises in southern Arizona also came to rely heavily on the working populations of Sonora. More than 80 percent of the men in the Santa Rita and Heintzelman mining camps in 1860 were from Mexico (86 percent if one counts those Mexicans born in Arizona), and 94 percent of those at the Mowry mine in 1864 were of Mexican origin. Some were mestizos, whereas others were Opata, Yaquis, and Tohono O’odham. Their migration into this region was nothing new. In addition to close affiliations with Santa Cruz and the San Luis Valley of northern Sonora, Tubac residents had also maintained relations throughout the colonial era with the frontier towns of Cucurpe, Magdalena, Cocóspera, Onavas, and Altar, Sonora, through genetic and ritual kinship ties, trade, and ceremonial networks (often oriented around festivals in such towns as Tucson and Magdalena). Pima and Opata troops in Tubac had maintained similar ties to their home villages in highland Sonora and the Pimería Alta, and many were, in turn, connected to Spanish and mestizo networks through ritual ties of compadrazco, or godparentage. When Mexicans migrated north to work in the mines of Tubac after 1854,
they retraced lifelines of an enduring regional community—invisible on most maps—that extended deep into transnational space.44

What made these migratory circuits particularly appealing to U.S. entrepreneurs was the cost of Mexican labor. Mexicans worked for lower wages than workers in the U.S. would tolerate—and this, wrote Sylvester Mowry, was the advantage that the border region held over such areas as California and Nevada. Americans further imagined that Sonorans were accustomed to debt peonage and thus tolerated exploitation. “The lower class of Mexicans, with the Opata and Yaqui Indians, are docile,” Mowry wrote. “They have always been ‘peons’ (servants) for generations. They will always remain so, as it is their natural condition.” Following this racist thinking, the Santa Rita Mining Company paid Mexicans from $12 to $15 monthly, versus $30 to $70 a month plus board for Anglos and Europeans. It further lowered these costs by paying Mexicans with cotton and other marked-up items from the company store. The Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, for its part, paid Mexicans in boletas, or coupons, which were—Charles Poston recalled—“currency at the stores and among the merchants in the country and in Mexico.” Nearly 32 percent of these so-called wages, added U.S. mining engineer Frederick Brunckow, returned to the corporation as profits at the company store.45

Given the cheapness of Mexican labor and the abundance of abandoned colonial mines in Sonora, one might imagine that these mining entrepreneurs leapt at the chance to expand their investments south of the border. In fact, few did—at least not during the 1850s. One of the exceptions was English immigrant John Hall, who like Charles Poston and Herman Ehrenberg had met with “indifferent success” in the California goldfields. In 1850, Hall fell in with some Mexican and Opata miners from Cucurpe, Sonora, who—perhaps disillusioned by the rising racism in the diggings—had decided to return home. Hall followed his friends to Sonora, where he spent the next fifteen years as a doctor and mining entrepreneur, often in partnership with local Mexicans. When mining took off in southern Arizona in the 1850s, Hall participated in ventures north of the line as well, but few of his U.S. colleagues followed him when he returned to Sonora. It was not until the 1860s that Americans—mostly Californians who had cut their teeth on large-scale silver mining investments on the Comstock Lode—set their bearings for Mexico. In the 1850s, Arizona was enough: The job of regenerating Sonora’s abandoned mines was left mostly to those who lived south of the border.46
Sonora’s entrepreneurs, by contrast, more quickly embraced the opportunities of mining within a transnational context. Magdalena merchant Francisco Padrés operated the Cahuabi and Fresnal mines west of Arivaca during the early 1860s, in addition to hauling freight across the border for the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company and Fort Buchanan. Other merchants—much as their counterparts had in colonial Sonora—bankrolled Mexican mining ventures, some of which crossed the border. This was true in the early 1860s, when the discovery of gold on the Gila River caused a rush of miners north from Cucurpe. Merchants, wrote John Hall, “advanced money to the adventurers at 200 per cent, to be paid on their return from the new El Dorado.” If some invested in Arizona’s mines, others sought to connect Sonora’s mines to Arizona markets. In 1860, Sonora mining engineer Robert L. D’Aumaile argued that the mines of Cananea, owned by Governor Ignacio Pesqueira, might be revived by a connection north to Fort Buchanan and Tubac, via Santa Cruz. Not only would these ties link Cananea more efficiently to markets than would those leading south, but connections to military posts at Fort Buchanan and Fort Breckinridge, Arizona, could “render feasible a project of united action against the Apaches.” This was, in many ways, a quintessentially Sonoran aspiration. Through “united action” with Arizona, these dreamers proposed, Sonora might complete its colonial conquest of space and thereby liberate the ghosts of frontiers past.47

Unfinished Conquests

Such dreams, like the relationships on which they were based, were profoundly unstable. By the early 1860s, entrepreneurs and their military cohort had transformed a land that earlier newcomers saw as barren and worthless into what some now described as a pastoral-industrial paradise. Traveler Samuel Woodworth Cozzens contrasted the “green bottom-lands” of Tubac to overgrown landscapes of ruins that still haunted other parts of the borderlands, praising its “beautiful groves of acacias, its peach-orchards and its pomegranates,” whereas journalist J. Ross Browne enthusiastically depicted the “life and industry” of the Mowry mine, where “the sound of the axe reverberated from hill to hill” and “the smoke of many charcoal pits filled the air.” “It may very literally be said,” Browne wrote, “that the wilderness blossomed as the rose.” But there was more
to this scene than met the eye, warned Raphael Pumpelly. “Seen through its wonderfully clear atmosphere, with a bright sun and an azure sky, or with every detail brought out by the intense light of the moon, this [place] has seemed a paradise,” he agreed, and yet “again, under circumstances of intense anxiety, it has been a very prison of hell.”

Among the more unsettling aspects of the Arizona borderlands was its enduring isolation from metropolitan markets and state power. J. Ross Browne marveled that one could find “a spot so completely isolated from the civilized world” within U.S. borders. “At this moment Arizona is, practically, more distant from San Francisco and New York than either of those cities is from China or Norway,” he insisted. “I made the trip from Germany to Iceland and back much more easily, and with much less expense and loss of time, than from San Francisco to Sonora and back.” The distance from centers of supply and manufacturing was especially taxing on large-scale operations requiring specialized industrial components; on this frontier, the depletion of a single item could be crippling. When workers ran out of safety fuse at the Santa Rita mines, they had to shut down until more could be freighted in. When an engineer at the Heintzelman mine asked for nails and glass, he learned that none could be had “short of Hermosillo if there.” The sutler at Fort Buchanan had nails, but none of the correct size. “Such neglects are unpardonable,” wrote Samuel P. Heintzelman. In the end, the only options left were to order them from San Francisco and wait months for them to arrive, or make their own.

This problem of isolation was also reflected in the uneven quantity and quality of food. Farmers and merchants scrambled to supply miners, but labor was scarce, supply depended on local seasonal cycles, roads were poor (impassable in the rainy season and always vulnerable to raids), and demand was unprecedented. It was a wonder everyone got fed. “We have been out of flour and coffee for two days,” wrote Phocion Way in his diary. The following month he added, “We have had nothing to eat for some time but flour and beans, no fat or grease of any kind.” Perhaps out of grumpiness, many viewed the uneven food supply as evidence of human incompetence. “The store keeper don’t know flour is wanted until he sells the last pound,” complained Samuel P. Heintzelman to his diary. Later he wrote, “Our men have had no meat for three days and we have none to-day, from the neglect of our worthless storekeeper.” When meat arrived, he complained about its quality. He complained the oranges he purchased from a merchant were “not quite ripe enough and a little sour.”
Whether due to poor supply or too much demand, one thing was certain: Isolation from markets limited Heintzelman's ability to have what he considered a "civilized" meal. From a culinary perspective, he possibly agreed that this frontier had become "a very prison of hell."  

U.S. mining entrepreneurs experienced a similar lack of control over the working spaces of the mines and smelters. A chronic scarcity of labor meant that otherwise rich silver and gold veins went untouched, and ore often piled up in anticipation of workers to smelt it. And available workers were often not what managers expected. Many were competent as miners but had limited metallurgical experience—partly because the ores in Arizona were different from those in Sonora. A lack of metallurgical expertise could be costly. The roasting of ores at Arivaca "is performed too hurriedly," wrote Sylvester Mowry, and "the roving character of the Mexicans renders it very difficult to make them good workmen at the furnace, where so delicate a process, requiring long practice, is to be well executed." Yet more often than not, the largest problem facing mining engineers was the complexity of the ores—that is, the way the silver compound was bound chemically to the rest of the rock—and Mexican expertise was often equal to imported knowledge in the liberation of nature's bounty. Mowry noted how efforts to use an imported barrel amalgamation process from Freiberg, Saxony, resulted in the loss of as much as 30 percent of the silver smelted at Arivaca. Had they used the traditional Mexican patio process, he went on to admit, the outcome would have been the same.

If entrepreneurs found their visions of technological progress hard to implement, they were also frustrated by a lack of industrial discipline among workers. After payday at the Mowry mine, explained J. Ross Browne, "work is out of the question, so far as the peons are concerned." Friends and relatives from Santa Cruz joined the miners, and the industrial order dissolved into endless games of *monte.* Managers viewed such visits in much the same way that Jesuits had viewed "wild" Indians and "godless" Spaniards: as corrupting influences. They felt the same way about religious festivals, which weakened industrial control by emptying the mines and smelters. When the fiesta of San Francisco was held in Magdalena in October, even Americans joined in the fun. Poston and others left to "attend the 'fiesta,' like a pack of children," grumbled Samuel P. Heintzelman in early October 1858; as a result, "our operations are suspended." Nearby bonanzas also disrupted efforts to maintain a steady rhythm of production. When miners discovered gold on the
Gila River in 1858, workers abandoned the mines and smelting works of the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company to seek better profits elsewhere. With so many options for Mexican workers, there was little U.S. entrepreneurs could do but work around a schedule that was as much Mexican as it was American.52

U.S. mining entrepreneurs were even more concerned by the volatile mixture of ethnic relations that marked the region. Conflicts between Mexicans and Anglos were a constant concern to mining elites whose business it was not only to transform space, but also to assure investors that this would happen in an orderly and efficient way. Nothing set ethnic tensions more on edge and unsettled production more than the persistent U.S. rhetoric of annexation. Even capitalists predicted the eventual annexation of Sonora, but it was one thing to imagine such a future and quite another to carry these visions to the streets. Things grew particularly unsettled in 1857, when Californian Henry Crabb and a civilian army of Americans invaded Caborca, Sonora, just south of the border. After a brief battle, Mexican soldiers captured Crabb and his men and executed them. Distrust and resentment lingered on both sides of the line for months afterwards, with profound consequences for mining development. Responding to the invasion, Governor Ignacio Pesqueira banned exports into Arizona, and U.S. merchants were forbidden from doing business south of the line. “Americans were not safe over the Mexican boundary, and Mexicans were in danger in the boundaries of the United States,” Poston wrote, adding that for months, “the country was paralyzed.”53

The racial tensions that had been provoked by the Crabb filibuster and its violent aftermath went underground in 1858, only to emerge in new form in May 1859, with the so-called Sonoita massacre. In late April 1859, word spread that Mexican workers on the Reventon Ranch, north of Tubac, were planning to rise up, murder the local Americans, and plunder the ranch. Anglo foreman George Mercer and others went after the leaders of the rumored rebellion, who fled toward Sonora. Soon they came across the Mexicans, who they caught, tied up, and whipped. Then one of the Anglos, “an old Indian hunter, and half drunk, acted as a barber,” wrote John Hall, who was visiting Tubac at the time. He “dressed their hair in a barbarous fashion,” cutting one of the men’s scalp and ear in the process. A few days later, one of the men present at the whipping, a squatter named Greenbury Byrd, was brutally murdered in his cabin near Tumacacori. The killers—said to be the “shaved Mexicans”—subsequently “made their escape into Sonora.”54
News of the murder caused enormous excitement among the settlers, Anglo and Mexican alike. On May 9, 1859, a mob of armed Anglos calling themselves "regulators" rode through the Sonoita Valley, driving Mexican workers and their families away from the ranches. One of the leaders of the mob was a local hell-raiser named William Ake, a nephew of rancher Felix Grundy Ake, who had come to Arizona with Henry Crabb. As Ake and his fellow regulators approached a local mescal distillery, Mexican and Yaqui workers began to run. The attackers opened fire and a skirmish ensued. When the dust cleared, three Mexicans and a Yaqui lay dead, and a fourth Mexican was mortally wounded. That evening, sitting down to dinner at the nearby Patagonia mine, John Hall heard a man outside shouting "Mataron a todos! Mataron a todos!" It was his friend José Gandara, one of the proprietors of the distillery, who gave Hall the complete story. Hall rode to the distillery. It was "destroyed and deserted," he wrote, "the botas overturned and the peons' shanties gutted—their contents strewn in all directions, showed that the hand of violence had been there." One victim lay on the ground; "he had been killed by the cut of a bowie knife, which disemboweled him."55

Much as the violence of the Crabb filibuster had done, the Sonoita massacre unsettled the mining landscape of southern Arizona. News of the massacre "spread like a prairie fire over the country," wrote one reporter. Mexicans began to leave Tubac and surrounding areas in large numbers: Between seventy and eighty left the Heintzelman mine and the smelting works at Arivaca, and others deserted the Santa Rita camp and the farms along the Santa Cruz. "Every farm on the Sonoita is deserted by its laborers," added a reporter. Across the border, "intense excitement prevailed along the frontier towns." In Santa Cruz, "the entire male population got under arms and prepared to resist an invasion," while "every fugitive from the American side [had] some horrid version of the murderous intention of the Americans, who it was declared intended to invade Sonora and exterminate the people." In Sonora, "great excitement existed all over the country," and authorities were having a hard time keeping Mexicans from exacting revenge on Americans who lived in the state, noted John Hall. He was preparing to return home to Cucurpe at the time, but after the massacre changed his mind, "as I did not consider it very healthy in Sonora for white men for some time."56

A group of infuriated mine owners, ranchers, and merchants met and drew up a resolution to condemn the "gang of lawless men" who
had instigated the massacre. The resolution was printed in both Span-
ish and English and promised those who had fled a safe passage back
to the mines, along with "their friends in Sonora" and "all Mexicans
who desire work." These "respectable men" also worried about the
unmaking of crucial economic linkages to Sonora. "To those Sonora-
rians who have been furnishing us with supplies and carrying on
trade," they wrote, "we assure them of a desire to continue our busi-
ness relations, and assure them that their trains and property shall be
safe from . . . had Americans or Mexicans." They also assured their
neighbors that the commanding officer at Fort Buchanan would take
the lead in "ridding the country of the outlaws," not surprising since
Captain R. S. Ewell was at the time an owner of the Patagonia mine.
In late May, the fallout of the Sonoita massacre was still being felt. The
corn planting was delayed, and hopes of attracting labor back to finish
this job seemed slim after haciendas in Sonora began to pick up the
workers for themselves.57

Mexicans eventually trickled back, but the feelings of hostility and
suspicion that had begun with the Crabb filibuster only grew. Despite
the initial public outcry against those "lawless men" who had carried
out the massacre, traditional fault lines began to creep slowly back into
place. "It happened shortly after the Sonoita affair that public opinion
took a decided turn against Mexicans," John Hall would later write.
"An excellent man and a friend of the community at large was mur-
dered by his peons, and a few days later another met a similar fate."
Horse stealing, presumably by "lawless" Mexicans, became so common
that it was not possible to keep an animal." The Sonoita murderers—
those who were caught—were tried and released, and only one
returned to southern Arizona. After a while, Hall got the word from
Sonora "that the excitement had abated, and that the Mexicans were
on their return to the lines on the look out for work." Taking his cue,
he decided to leave the tense racial climate of Arizona behind and
return to his home in Cucurpe, "well knowing that although some
hard feelings should remain against 'white men'. . . . I was safe."58

As tense as border relations between Anglos and Mexicans could be,
even more unsettling to southern Arizona's mining landscape in the
long run was the decay of the fragile peace between Americans and
Apaches. For a few years, the treaties that Poston had arranged with
Apache leaders held: Although raiding parties were often seen riding
into Mexico, they usually skirted Tubac's mining settlements. Prob-
lems emerged when new settlers began to disregard the treaty. In 1858,
a company of lumberjacks working on the nearby Canoa Ranch helped Mexican ranchers recover three hundred horses and mules that Apaches had driven away. A month later Apaches swept through the ranch, killing its residents, burning its buildings, and running off its stock. A year later, when a band of Apaches stopped at the Mowry mine to obtain their customary rations of flour and tobacco, an armed miner ordered them to leave. In the subsequent flare of tempers, two men (an Apache and an Anglo-American) were killed. In his report on the encounter, Lieutenant J. V. D. Reeve of Fort Buchanan admitted that the Apaches had not broken any treaties—they were “on their way into Sonora on a marauding expedition”—and that much of the blame lay with the miner. Yet the event also suggested that tolerance between Apaches and Americans was wearing thin.59

The solution, Reeve proposed, was to send soldiers into the field to “chastise” the Apaches, but he noted that his poorly staffed forces at Fort Buchanan—like the fledgling mining enterprises they defended—were in no position to carry out such measures. Not only did he lack manpower, knowledge of Apache land, and authority to defeat the Apaches in their transnational terrain, but he also knew that such a move would ensure retaliation against mines, ranches, farms, and the overland mail route, that essential link between Arizona enterprises and eastern capital. His fears proved well founded. A little more than a year later, Lieutenant George N. Bascom rashly took Chiricahua Apache hostages to force the recovery of cattle and a boy taken by another Apache group. When Bascom refused to back down, Apaches under local leader Cochise attacked a wagon train on the overland mail route, killed its Mexican drivers, and took three Americans hostage. They eventually tortured and killed the hostages, and Bascom responded by hanging his own hostages. From that point forward, notes historian Dan Thrapp, “no traveler, no settler, no miner, no small party of soldiers, no small community was safe from the avenging warriors.” By 1861, southern Arizona was becoming a mirror image of Sonora, as farms, ranches, mines, and homes faced a new era of frontier warfare.60

Adding fuel to the fire were external forces that had little to do with the region’s unsettled ethnic relations. Two years earlier, the nationwide Panic of 1857 had begun to fray the already tenuous cords of finance that sustained the mines of Tubac. As banks failed, speculative ventures across the United States lost financial backing, and the search by border mining companies for investors became desperate, silver mining entre-
preneurs found themselves able to mine little else than optimistic rhetoric in southern Arizona. No less unsettling was the rise of sectional tensions in the East. In response to the southern states' secession in February 1861, Congress discontinued the southern overland mail. Weeks later, the Civil War broke out and the U.S. government began to recall troops from Arizona. Military superiors wired the commanding officer at Fort Buchanan to abandon the post, burn its buildings, and destroy "anything that will feed an enemy." Apaches attacked the fort in June 1861, killing several soldiers and chasing its horse and mule herds into Mexico, but the fort's fate was already sealed by that time. Weeks later, the commanding officer tied up loose ends, set fire to the fort, and left with his troops for Santa Fe.61

Without the military, mining entrepreneurs held out little hope for continuing their enterprises. "The wisest said we could not hold the country after the troops abandoned it," Poston recalled, "that the Apaches would come down upon us by the hundreds, and the Mexicans would cut our throats." By this time, many mines were already in dire straits due to indebtedness and Apache raids. Raphael Pumpelly described their prospects in the following way: "We were entirely out of money, owing a considerable force of Mexican workmen and two or three Americans, and needing means for paying the transportation of the property, and for getting ourselves out of the country." Since his mines and works had been paralyzed due to Apache raids, Pumpelly could not produce silver to serve as money. "Our main hope lay in the possibility of collecting debts to the company," he noted. He rode to the nearby Heintzelman mine, one of his company's debtors, only to find his neighbors in a similar bind. Unable to get money, "for no one could afford to part with bullion, even to pay debts," he agreed to take a load of ore in payment, along with some flour and calico. He distributed the latter to his workers, then took the ore to Tubac where he and several remaining workers spent nine weeks—surrounded by Apaches—smelting the ore to pay the rest of the employees, "who without it could not escape."62

After the troops left Arizona, wrote Poston, bands of Mexicans began to cross the border, "declaring that the American government was broken up, and they had come to take their country back again." U.S. mining managers redoubled their guard over their Mexican workers, an undertaking that was complicated by the fact that they had to arm these men to help guard against Apaches. After Americans left Tubac, Mexicans stripped the town of its doors and windows—much as they had when they
left Arizona in 1856—and carted smelting machinery and abandoned piles of silver ore south of the border. The local economy of nearby Saric, Sonora, boomed due to a new transnational trade in scavenged silver ore. Visiting the Heintzelman mine in 1864, journalist J. Ross Browne found the impact of this gambusino enterprise deeply etched on the landscape. “I saw scattered about the premises piles of ore, which had just been broken up ready for packing away,” he wrote, “and the fresh tracks of mule-trains and wagon-wheels, on the well beaten road to Saric, showed just how profitable this sort of enterprise must be to the Sonoranians.”

For Browne, the depopulated American communities of southern Arizona were not much different from the haunted frontiers of Spanish and Mexican Sonora that early western immigrants had observed a decade earlier. Tubac’s main plaza, formerly a rich, vibrant center of U.S. enterprise, was now “knee-deep with weeds and grass,” whereas the Heintzelman mine, “three years ago . . . the most striking scene of life and energy,” was now “silent and desolate—a picture of utter abandonment.” Buildings were “fast falling into ruin,” he noted,

The engines were no longer at work; the rich piles of ore lying in front of the shafts had been sacked and robbed by marauding Mexicans; nothing was to be seen but wreck and ruin, and the few solitary graves on a neighboring hill, which tell the story of violence and sacrifice by which the pathway to civilization has been marked in Arizona.

During this brief moment, Americans may have come closer than they ever had to understanding what this land had meant to their Mexican precursors. Gone were glowing prophecies of opportunity rooted in the ashes of former empires. For the first time, Americans were obliged to read into these ghostly spaces the disturbing specter of their own unfinished conquest of space. “It was sad to leave the country that had cost so much money and blood in ruins,” Poston would lament, “but the greatest blow was the destruction of our hopes—not so much of making money as of making a country.” “Of all the lonesome sounds that I can remember,” he added, “most distinctive is the crowing of cocks on the deserted ranches. The very chickens seemed to know that they were abandoned.”

It would be only a few years before the Union would be reunited and Americans would begin to spill into the borderlands in unprecedented numbers, following renewed frontier dreams. Browne’s account was, in
fact, not so much a melancholy tribute to abandoned hopes as a challenge to the postwar United States to complete the transformation of its Southwestern borderlands. “Tubac is now a city of ruins,” he acknowledged, “yet I can not but believe that the spirit of American enterprise will revisit this delightful region, and re-establish, on a more permanent footing, all that has been lost. The mines are proverbially rich; and rich mines will sooner or later secure the necessary protection for working them.” Even in 1861, when mining elites were first jolted from their dreams of profits and progress, few had doubts that the borderlands would eventually yield to the twin forces of capital and modernity. “That the region in question has a future that is both bright and near,” wrote Raphael Pumpelly, “there can, I think, be little doubt.”

Yet if this future promised the eventual incorporation of the borderlands into the reconstructed body politic, it would also pull this former frontier in other directions as well. Mining in Arizona would continue to be oriented toward Sonora by transnational connections of trade and labor, ties that were amplified in 1882 with the completion of a new transnational railroad between Guaymas, Sonora, and Benson, Arizona. These links would be further strengthened by the discovery of new deposits of copper on both sides of the border, which in the post-railroad era attracted capital in ways that mining elites in the 1850s only dreamed of. By the early twentieth century, a vast transnational copper-mining landscape would emerge in the Arizona Sonora borderlands, pulling this former frontier toward not one nation but two.

If this new landscape defied dreams of national assimilation, it would also resist state control in other ways as well. The new century would usher in new forms of class and ethnic resistance, as workers—and later, Mexican revolutionaries—began to contest the domination of the new capitalist order. Corporate and entrepreneurial elites would continue to view such contests primarily in terms of their potential to unmake space, just as their precursors had done in Tubac in the early 1860s. For their part, workers and revolutionaries, not unlike their Mexican and Apache counterparts decades earlier, would view working-class protest and rural rebellion as attempts to reclaim their own space and power in the borderlands. Most important, perhaps, these struggles would distinguish the border region as an enduring frontier between nations, a place where control over land and life would remain tenuous, uneven, and incomplete.
NOTES


2. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), vol. 1: 489. I wish to thank Robert Pogue Harrison for this insight. The linkages between depictions of deserts and frontiers in popular culture deserve further study; I do not wish to deny the fact that other natural spaces (jungles, for instance) are also tied in the popular mind to frontiers.


4. In this essay, I use the term borderlands to describe the post-1848/1854 border region, and I refer to the northern edge of New Spain, as seen from the colonial center, as the Spanish frontier—and to northern Mexico before 1848/1854 as the Mexican frontier—unless I am speaking of transnational relations between the United States and Mexico at this time. When speaking of local relationships, I may also use the word borderlands generally for fields of distinction and interaction between groups. For recent efforts to reclaim borderlands as a term to refer to region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not just the Spanish colonial era, see Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, eds., Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.—Mexico Borderlands History (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).


12. Pfefferkorn, Sonora, 100; West, Sonora, 51; West, Mining Community of Northern New Spain, 23, 39–42.


16. Pfeflerkorn, Sonora, 97, 44–45.

17. I should note that it is precisely this ideological force affiliated with the idea of the frontier that has discouraged many historians from using the term today. Let me clarify that when I use the term, I use it to refer to a space that was generated, in part, by states and “citizens” with precisely these ideologies of conquest and domination in mind, but I also attempt to take a critical distance from this colonial context. In a sense, I employ the concept in two different ways. Here I evoke colonial meanings, situating the concept in another time. Elsewhere I use frontier to describe the same physical space but from a twenty-first-century perspective that deconstructs its colonial meanings and maps this, as a new critical layer, back on to the term.


20. For land grants, see Ray H. Mattison, “Early Spanish and Mexican Settlements in Arizona,” New Mexico Historical Review 21 (October 1946), 285–86. For a suggestive discussion of how larger Bourbon ideologies played out on the ground in the Mexican North, inflecting Mexican frontier identities and “citizenship,” see Daniel Nugent, Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An


22. This was partly due to the fact that the Mexican army was now distracted by the U.S. invasion and had to be deployed elsewhere, but it was also because Mangas Coloradas pledged friendship to U.S. commander Stephen Watts Kearny near Santa Rita, New Mexico, formally extending U.S. tolerance (and implicit support) of Apache raids closer to the Sonora frontier.

23. John Russell Bartlett, Report of the Secretary of the Interior ... Certain Papers in Relation to the Mexican Boundary Commission (Senate Doc. No. 6, Special Session, 33rd Congress, 1852), 95. For a Mexican perspective from this time, see José de Aguilar, Gobernador de Sonora, Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de Sonora, da cuenta de los ramos de su administración al congreso del mismo estado, con arreglo a lo dispuesto en el artículo 27 de La Constitución (Ures: Imprenta del Gobierno del Estado, a cargo de Jesús P. Siquieros, 1850).


26. Hall, *Travels and Adventures*, 45; Cherry, *Geological Report*, 31. Also see Mowry, *Arizona and Sonora*, 129–30; Cherry, *Geological Report*, 24, 26, 29, 38, and Hall, *Travels and Adventures*, 157, 160, 172. When Apaches made it unsafe for Mexicans to travel the countryside alone, *gambusinos* gathered in small groups to work mines that had been abandoned by their former owners, noted Sylvester Mowry. At a local level, the influence of *gambusinos* and Apache raiders could ebb and flow over a given space, as was the case with the San Juan del Río mining area north of Oputo (today Villa Hidalgo). Many *gambusinos* worked from safe headquarters within the line of Mexican settlement, penetrating north into Apache territory and returning with ore to smelt in Oputo. Miners from Cumpas had a similar relationship to the abandoned mines of La Plomosa.

27. Among those who viewed at least part of the new U.S. Southwest in this way was U.S.–Mexican Boundary Commissioner John Russell Bartlett. “Is this the land which we have purchased, and are to survey and keep at such a cost?” he wrote in his widely read account of the region: “As far as the eye can reach stretches one unbroken waste, barren, wild, and worthless.” John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton, 1854), 1:247.


30. Charles D. Poston, *Building a State in Apache Land: The Story of Arizona’s Founding Told by Arizona’s Founder*, ed. John Myers (Tempe, AZ: Aztec press, 1963), 41–46. By “Arizunea,” Poston was likely referring to Arizonac, location of a famous (and rather curious) 1736 discovery of pure chunks (or *planchas*) of silver, in lands south of the present-day town of Nogales, Sonora. Francisco R. Almada, *Diccionario de historia, geografía y biografía sonorenses* (Hermosillo: Gobierno del Estado, 1983), 65–67. Among the accounts that Poston and his colleagues read were British accounts of Sonora (and Mexico in general) generated in the 1820s, when British investors were similarly drawn overseas after reading Alexander von Humboldt’s glowing accounts of Spanish mineral wealth at the beginning of the century. Two of the most widely read British accounts of Sonora in the 1820s were that of Col. Simon Bourne’s


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35. Dobyns, Tubac through Four Centuries, 410–533; Officer, Hispanic Arizona, 50–114; and Hadley and Sheridan, Land Use History, 21–22.

36. Dobyns, Tubac through Four Centuries, 533–643; and Officer, Hispanic Arizona, 134–283.

37. Poston, Building a State, 71–72, 83–84; Granger, “Southwest Chronicle,” 255; and Raphael Pumpelly, Across America and Asia: Notes of a Five Years’ Journey around the World and of Residence in Arizona, Japan, and China (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marson, 1870), 15. For the Arivaca Land Grant, see Mattison, “Early Spanish and Mexican Settlements,” 306–9. Many, including Poston himself, exaggerated the size of this grant, claiming it was as high as 20,000 acres. The grant was only two sitios, or around 8,677 acres, and any additional acreage would have been used—but never legally titled—as overplus lands.

38. Poston, Building a State, 66–67; Hall, Travels and Adventures, 144–45, 201; Sweeney, Mangas Coloradas, 331–32; and Joseph F. Park, “The Apaches in Mexican-Indian Relations, 1848–1861: A Footnote to the Gadsden Treaty,” Arizona and the West 3, no. 2 (Summer 1961), 139–41.

39. Poston, Building a State, 73; Bernard L. Fontana, “Calabazas of the Rio Rico,” Smoke Signal 24 (Fall 1971), 80–84; Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, First Annual Report, 1; Rasey Biven, “Letter from Hermosillo,” Daily Alta Californian, May 2, 1857; and John Coleman Reid, Reid’s Tramp, or a Journal of the Incidents of Ten Months Travel through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Sonora, and California (Selma, John Hary & Co., 1858), 194. Poston was later called the “Father of Arizona” and was a founder of the Arizona Pioneers’ Historical Society; it is through this lens that he saw much of his early time in Arizona. His Building a State in Apache Land, which came out in 1894, has much in common with Turner’s frontier narrative, presented the previous year.


41. Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, First Annual Report, 1; Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, Second Annual Report of the Sonora Exploring and Mining Co., Made to the Stockholders, March 29, 1858 (Cincinnati: Railroad Record Print, 1858), 4–6; Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, Possessions and Prospects, 6, 10–11; and Sonora Exploring and Mining
Company, Report of Frederick Brunckow, Geologist, Mineralogist, and Mining Engineer, to a Committee of the Stockholders of the Sonora Exploring and Mining Co. upon the History, Resources, and Prospects of the Company in Arizona (Cincinnati: Railroad Record Print, 1859), 12–13. For the important role of San Francisco foundries in supplying mines and smelters in the western United States (and Mexico) during this time, see Lynn R. Bailey, Supplying the Mining World: The Mining Equipment Manufacturers of San Francisco, 1850–1900 (Tucson: Westernlore Press, 1996).


44. Manuscript census data collected by Joseph Park, Joe Park Collection, Box 1, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona. For colonial connections, see Dobyns, Tubac through Four Centuries. For Opatas in the Heintzelman and Mowry mines, see North, Samuel Peter Heintzelman, 160; and Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 94. The cook at the Heintzelman and his assistant were Opatas from Opodepe, and they regularly traveled back and forth to their village. When Raphael Pumpelly came to Tubac in 1860, he found that a camp of a hundred or more Tohono O’odham had raised a temporary camp near town, and 2nd Lt. R. S. C. Lord of Fort Buchanan noted that many of these were formerly from the town of Santa Rosa in Sonora. Pumpelly, Across America and Asia, 7; and 2nd Lt. R. S. C. Lord to Capt. R. S. Ewell, February 17, 1859, in 36th Cong., 1st Sess., House of Representatives, Ex. Doc., Message

45. Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 65, 94; Pumpelly, Across America and Asia, 32; Poston, Making a State, 81–82; and Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, Report of Frederick Brunckow, 17. Also see Cherry, Geological Report, 49; and Way, “Overland Via Jackass Mail,” 280–81, for depictions of cheap and docile Mexican and Indian labor. Poston justified the boleta system on the basis that it was traditional in Mexico, a claim that might be true. See discussion of the mining camp of La Colorada, Sonora, and the use of boletas in the 1890s in Miguel Tinker Salas, In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato (Berkley: University of California Press, 1997), 187. Debt peonage existed in northern Mexico but was weakened by the abundant opportunities for free wage labor in the nearby mines (and later by transnational labor markets). → Friedrich Katz, “Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Somc Trends and Tendencies,” Hispanic American Historical Review 54 (February 1974), 1–47; but also see Hall, Travels and Adventures, 269–72. Hall distinguished between workers in Sonora’s countryside and those in its mining camps. On haciendas, one often found “a species of forced servitude,” he wrote. It was rare that wages were paid entirely in cash; it was customary to take part in money and the rest in dry goods. A worker had to buy salt, mealt, beans, and so forth from his master, “who keeps a running account against him.” At times, when peones refused to work, the justice of the peace punished them, and if they ran away, as they did at times, they were “pursued and treated as a criminal.” By contrast, in the mines a “more liberal system” was pursued. Especially in “well-regulated establishments,” cash was plentiful and “even should the peon be indebted to the concern, the half of what he earns weekly is paid over to him in cash on Saturday.” Unlike peones on the haciendas, who tended to be drawn from the local Indian tribes, the mine operatives tended to be Mexicans, with some Yaquis and Opatas.

46. For Hall’s journey to Sonora, see Travels and Adventures, 9–35; for his participation in mining ventures in the borderlands, see, for instance, 93–109, 120–21, 157–58. For California investment in Sonora in the 1860s, see Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 96–97, 102, 144; Hall, Travels and Adventures, 46, 81–82, 99, 231–36; W. G. Moody, A Comparison of the Northern and Southern Mines in Mexico: With a Description of Two of the Mining Districts in North-Eastern Sonora (San Francisco: Town & Bacon, 1863); Cherry, Geological Report; Vice-Consul Farrelly Alden, U.S. Department of State, Commercial Relations of the United States with Foreign Countries (Washington: GPO, 1864), 719–20; and Consul Alexander Willard, U.S. Department of State, Commercial Relations of the United States with Foreign Countries (Washington:
GPO, 1868), 647. Much of this development also had to do with the fact that Ignacio Pesqueira took over the reins of the Sonoran government in the late 1850s and began to open the door to U.S. investment. For U.S. and Mexican mining investment in the borderlands in the 1850s and 1860s, also refer to Gregorio Mora Torres, "Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth Century Sonora, Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 1987), 146–93.

47. On Padrés, see Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 60; North, Samuel Peter Heintzelman, 129; and Roberts, With Their Own Blood, 44–45. For merchants at Cucurpe and the Gila gold rush, see Hall, Travels and Adventures, 209. Hall also notes how Mexican merchants who were supplying the New York Compadre Silver Mining Company, one of the smaller mining companies of southern Arizona, also extended credit to this company, in a sense bankrolling this enterprise much as they might more directly bankroll mining entrepreneurs. Hall, Travels and Adventures, 208. For the report on Cananea, see Report of Robert L. D’Aumale, Mining Engineer and Assayer for the State of Sonora, in Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 109. By the time Pesqueira finally began to mine ore in the Cananea mines in the early 1880s, his supply routes did indeed lead to the north, but to the new mining camp of Tombstone, Arizona (which also supplied the troops that defended the venture against Apache raids). See Tombstone Daily Epitaph, September 29, 1881.


49. Browne, Tour through Arizona, 258; Santa Rita Silver Mining Company, Second Annual Report of the Santa Rita Silver Mining Company, Made to the Stockholders, March 18, 1860 (Cincinnati: Railroad Record Print, 1860), 11; and North, Samuel Peter Heintzelman, 90.


51. Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, Third Annual Report, 7–8, 20; North, Samuel Peter Heintzelman, 58; and Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 166.

52. See Browne, Tour through Arizona, 205; North, Samuel Peter Heintzelman, 62–68, 92–93, 155, 151; and Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 38–39. By seeing the fiesta at Magdalena largely as an event that disrupted industrial discipline, Heintzelman failed to realize how important the event was for enter prise. "Parties are met with from all parts of [Sonora]" at this annual event, noted John Hall, and "a great deal of business" took place. Hall, Travels and Adventures, 43. For the Magdalena fiesta and mining at Tubac also see Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, Third Annual Report; and Samuel Robinson, "Arizona in 1861: A Contemporary Account by Samuel Robinson," intro., annot., and ed. Constance Wynn Altshuler, Journal of Arizona History 25, no. 1 (Spring 1984), 37. The two fiestas that were most important in southern Arizona were the fiesta of San Francisco, in Magdalena, and the fiesta of San Agustín, in Tucson. For a discussion of the cultural significance of these two

53. North, Samuel Peter Heintzelman, 33; Robert H. Forbes, Crabb’s Filibustering Expedition into Sonora, 1857 (Tucson: Arizona Silhouettes, 1952); Rodolfo Acuña, Sonoran Strongman: Ignacio Pesqueira and His Times (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 29–37; Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, Report of Frederick Brunckow, 7; and Poston, Building a State, 91. For examples of expansionist rhetoric at this time, see Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 16–17, 35, 53; Robert Anderson Wilson, Mexico: Its Peasants and Its Priests; or Adventures and Historical Researches in Mexico and Its Silver Mines during Part of the Years 1851–52–53–54 (New York: Harper, 1856), 389; and Warren, Dust and Foam, 202, 216. “If it is the ‘manifest destiny’ of this favored region [Sonora] to become a portion of the great American Republic,” insisted Tubac’s Weekly Arizonian on March 24, 1859, “we hope the day is not far distant when the annexation will be consummated. Once opened to the energy of Anglo Saxon labor, a new era will dawn upon Sonora, more brilliant than anything in her past history.

54. Hall, Travels and Adventures, 185–87; Weekly Arizonian, May 12, 1859; Weekly Alta Californian, May 28, 1859. Also see treatments in Roberts, With Their Own Blood, 66–67; and Joseph F. Park, “The History of Mexican Labor in Arizona during the Territorial Period” (M.A. Thesis, University of Arizona, 1961), 74–75. I draw heavily here on Hall’s account, in part because historians have virtually ignored it in their telling of this event. Writing about the motivations behind the chase and capture of the Mexicans in late April and early May 1859, Hall writes, “There are always two sides to a question.” Although he does not have direct evidence of the connection, he notes that money in southern Arizona was scarce at this time; it was hard to pay men their wages on time, “and many were the plans laid in order to avoid giving the Mexicans their just dues.” With regard to the motivations for Byrd’s death, one reporter wrote, almost as an aside, that Byrd had owed Mexicans money for their work.

55. Weekly Arizonian, May 16, 1859; Hall, Travels and Adventures, 187–89; Park, “History of Mexican Labor,” 75; and Roberts, With Their Own Blood, 68–69. If the Sonora massacre stemmed from tense relations between Anglos and Mexicans in southern Arizona, it was also linked to events taking place in Sonora. In explaining the behavior of the so-called regulators, reporters pointed not only to Byrd’s murder, but also to the fact that Americans were being driven out of Sonora due to anti-American sentiment following an ill-starred surveying expedition of Charles P. Stone, which led to new worries about filibusters in Sonora, along with President John Buchanan’s proposal to assume a protectorate over the state. Weekly Arizonian, May 12, 1859 and May 19, 1859; Park, “History of Mexican Labor,” 74; and Acuña, Sonoran Strongman, 58. For Stone’s survey in Sonora, see Mowry, Arizona and Sonora, 98–99; Hall, Travels and Adventures, 59–62; Acuña, Sonoran Strongman, 54–64; and

56. *New York Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1859; *Weekly Arizonian*, May 19, 1859; and Hall, *Travels and Adventures*, 189–91. Due to Hall’s Mexican connections, he was in a better situation than most. In a few days, when he came north of the line to assess the damage, José Gandara told Hall he had “made public my conduct,” to ensure his safe return home. He also offered to serve as an escort any time Hall wished to return south.


64. Browne, *Tour through Arizona*, 147, 266.

