

Carpenter, Kyle B. *Globalizing the Lower Rio Grande: European Entrepreneurs in the Borderlands, 1749-1881*. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2024. pp. 246. Hard Cover. ISBN 978-1-57441-945-0).

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Can we learn about failures? Yes. *Globalizing the Lower Rio Grande: European Entrepreneurs in the Borderlands, 1749-1881* by Kyle B. Carpenter offers a fascinating study on both the successes and failures faced by European entrepreneurs who sought to transform the Lower Rio Grande Valley borderlands into their own hub for the Atlantic trade throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through a regional study of the borderlands, Carpenter untangles the complex and nuanced web of individual entrepreneurs to state objectives, colonial ventures, and social, political, and economic networks. Although the primary audience is academic, Carpenter presents its themes, arguments, and methodologies clearly and concisely, making it accessible to all readers interested in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Borderlands, and U.S. History.

Carpenter organizes the monograph chronologically from 1749-1881, while also using case studies to detail how European entrepreneurs established businesses and settlements that connected the Lower Rio Grande borderlands to global markets. In Part 1, *Searching for Profit in Settler Colonialism*, which includes chapters one through three, Carpenter investigates the colonization projects initiated by Spanish, French, and English entrepreneurs during the Spanish empire and Mexican and Texas eras. For example, Jose de Escandon aimed to find a reliable port and establish solid roads for trade routes within the colony. His efforts came to a halt when tensions among settlers, religious leaders, and competing individuals led to his removal from office. Similarly, British empresario Charles Beales envisioned the region as the next great waterway in the Americas, (p. 45) and sought to cash in on the dream. His expectations compared to the reality of the borderlands led to failures in the recruitment process, transportation, and maintaining his empresario contract under the Mexican government, leading to his failure. Meanwhile, French and English entrepreneurs in the Republic of Texas believed in the region's potential and often acted as state agents who navigated both Texan and European politics. Many of their objectives failed to solidify, and Carpenter demonstrates how Europeans viewed the region as a prime location for economic growth and success that Europeans controlled.

Part 2, titled *Networks, Modernity, and Economic Expansion*, includes chapters 4 to 6, which examine the role of European individuals in integrating into borderland societies, establishing economic networks amid political turmoil, and the resulting race and conflict between Anglo-Americans and Europeans concerning the construction of railroads in the region. Many Europeans, such as Jose San Roman, a Spanish-born merchant, and John Z. Leyendecker, a German-speaking merchant, integrated themselves into already established networks by marrying women from local prominent families. They capitalized on established trade networks and markets that extended into Mexico, the U.S., and Europe. By the Civil War, European business owners shifted their loyalties and identities to profit from the transportation and smuggling of cotton to Mexico for export to Europe's textile industry. They relied on and expanded the trade networks they had already developed. Ultimately, the drive to establish the railroad to connect to global markets and modernization projects led Europeans to gain state support. This push prompted Anglo-Americans to construct a railway to undermine and eliminate European competition

in the Lower Rio Grande region.

Carpenter uses a multi-level geographic approach, from local, state, and global perspectives, using European-born entrepreneurs, as individuals and state agents, to understand the diversity and connections amongst borderland peoples over a century in the Lower Rio Grande borderlands. By focusing on Europeans, Carpenter illuminates how their business ventures, ideals, and expectations of the region often competed against the realities of borderlands. The author argues that while Europeans were distinct, their shared European mindset and entrepreneurial spirit, make them an ideal slice of the borderlands society to investigate. (p. 6) The author aptly integrates case studies of Spaniards, French, English, German, and other European entrepreneurs, which does not make the monograph feel disjointed. On the other hand, it allows the reader to see the similarities in their objectives and motivations. In his methodology, Carpenter examines an extensive collection of sources and allows the sources to tell themselves as to how they are a distinct group to determine in the borderlands. (p. 6)

The monograph has significant strengths and some weaknesses. The book is well researched, with diverse archival sources and an extensive list of published primary and secondary sources from American, Mexican, and European perspectives. Moreover, it is also a well-written monograph without being too technical. It makes it great for general audiences to understand. The chronology makes it ideal to study the shifts over time. Carpenter thoroughly explores the role of entrepreneurs, from their role as distributors, sellers, merchants, amongst others, and the term borderland entrepreneurialism, referring to entrepreneurs who aim to integrate frontiers into Atlantic markets, is carried well throughout the monograph. Some of the weaknesses stem from the technological terms used by the author, especially in the introduction. There is no emphasis or mention of settler colonialism in the introduction, yet it is unclear how this term plays out in the first part of the monograph outside the title. Overall, this book contributes to the borderland and the region's history.

While Carpenter focuses on economic markets, Carpenter interweaves individual motivations, empires, state desires, and the unique dynamics that emerged along distinct borderland societies and spaces. A gendered lens would have added more to this work, especially concerning the intermarriages amongst Europeans and borderland women; it is still a nuanced and dynamic monograph. This work is an excellent addition to the historiography of the region, such as the work of David Montejano, Omar Valerio Jimenez, and Maria Raquel Casas, who examine the Lower Rio Grande Valley that explore the Lower Rio Grande Borderlands that explore race, gender, citizenship, assimilation, and conflict along the borderlands.

Overall, this is an excellent book that I recommend reading for anyone interested in the history of the Rio Grande Valley. Carpenter brings to life all the connections and highly complex networks amongst Europeans, the borderlands, and the Atlantic markets. The monograph was easy to follow and read, and an enjoyable read overall. In seeing both the successes and failures, Carpenter shows us how the borderlands were where expectations did not always translate to reality. It was a place of fluid ideas of loyalty, business, networks, and connections. So, yes, we can learn so much about failures in these spaces.