Introduction

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One of the many ironies in southwestern history relates to the changing position of Texas in the region's history and scholarship. A poorly explored backwater during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Texas long remained terra incognita to Spain—until, that is, the French showed a strong interest in the area by the mid-1680s. And yet, compared to the dearth of interest in Texas in centuries past, the scholarship about the area has flourished in the last half century. Today Texas takes a very strong—some might say passionate—interest in the history of the entire Southwest, as evidenced by the many academic institutions in the state hosting programs on the region and publications about it. Texas is the home of a distinguished journal about the region—the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*—and has no fewer than three university-sponsored southwestern studies centers.

Among these institutions is the University of Texas at Arlington. In the early 1970s, UTA Libraries set out to develop a Special Collections Division pertaining to the Southwest. By the early 1990s, UTA had created its Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and, in conjunction with Special Collections, had begun hosting symposia on the region's history. Although conferences have been held on many subjects, one in particular—cartographic history—has become UTA's strong suit. If, as one UTA professor once quipped, "Maps R Us," then one person, longtime UTA friend Virginia Garrett, deserves credit for helping the university develop its internationally known collection of maps of the Southwest. An active supporter for many years, Mrs. Garrett donated nine hundred historic maps to UTA in 1997, bringing to about six thousand the number of maps in the university's collection. That same year, the Garrett family helped the university initiate a biannual lecture series called, appropriately, the Virginia Garrett

Lectures on the History of Cartography. The UTA-sponsored series began in 1998 with “Mapping and Empire: Soldier-Engineers on the Southwest Frontier.” Like UTA’s program generally, these lectures employed a broad geographic definition of the Southwest, namely, the huge geographic area extending from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific coast. This region, of course, was not “the Southwest” to Spain, but rather *el norte*. It would become the Southwest later, under European-American expansion. As suggested by the title “Mapping and Empire,” the five presentations in the first set of Virginia Garrett lectures focused on the relationship between cartography and expansion into the region.

The essays in this volume are based on those presentations and serve as a lasting record of them. Although the series’ sponsors recognized that expansion occurred through both church and state, it was the military role in initiating the process that concerned the presenters. The presenters agreed that traditional military history (battles, logistics, conquests) would not be the focus, but rather the speakers would deliberately concentrate on the *processes* by which the military mapped the region and helped various countries establish a presence in it. Those hoping for recountings of spectacular military engagements would be disappointed, but it was felt that the long-overlooked intellectual role of the military would be revealed through this conference.

One thing was clear from the outset: the military’s encounter with the region had major consequences for the region’s native peoples. The Native Americans often bore the brunt of expansion and suffered in at least two ways—militarily, as they encountered the superior weapons, and culturally, as they experienced aggressive policies aimed at either dominating or removing them from the land. And yet, through it all, one must marvel that the native peoples persisted in many areas; their presence is still palpable in places like northern Sonora, northern Arizona, and the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico. We now know that Native Americans not only survived, but in many cases they actually assisted in the process of European expansion by serving as guides to exploration and suppliers of information in mapmaking. If today the word “scout” signifies a turncoat to militant Native Americans, one must nevertheless recognize the debt owed them in creating the Southwest as we know—and generally appreciate—it.

Although it is tempting to think of the Southwest as landlocked, this volume’s first essay, by W. Michael Mathes, reminds us that the region faces the sea on two sides—the Atlantic through its juxtaposition to the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific by its proximity to both the Gulf of California (or Sea of Cortés, as it is sometimes called) and the Pacific shores

of both Californias—Baja and Alta. In his essay, titled “Spanish Maritime Charting of the Gulf of Mexico and the California Coast,” Mathes underscores the importance of Spain’s military in exploring and mapping the coasts. Using a group of remarkable nautical charts and atlases of the period from about 1500 to 1800, Mathes reminds us that Spain had a strong interest in, and used considerable skill in delineating the configuration of, its shorelines. As Mathes also shows, Spain was not alone in its desire to understand, and ultimately control, this coastline. Rather, he beautifully connects developments in Europe with Spain’s fortunes, and misfortunes, in guarding her shores.

This book’s second essay sheds considerable light on the process by which Spain gained a foothold on the shore. It is written by David Buisseret, holder of the Jenkins and Virginia Garrett Endowed Chair in Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography at UTA. Professor Buisseret begins “Spanish Military Engineers in the New World before 1750” by citing two new landmark books on the subject by Mexican and Spanish scholars—voices that join the dialogue here through Professor Buisseret’s skillful translation. By first consulting these interpretations and then consulting other original documents, Buisseret shares an exciting discovery, namely, that the designers of the earliest and most effective Spanish forts were not Spanish at all, but Italian. This seems reasonable enough when one recalls that Columbus himself was not Spanish but rather an Italian in the service of Spain; it also makes sense when one recalls the skill and training of early Italian Renaissance architects and urban planners. Skillfully investigating original sources, Buisseret breathes life into these original forts as he interprets both the lives and the accomplishments of the Italian designers such as Baustista Antonelli. Buisseret also presents the many Spanish engineers who planned and oversaw the construction of the forts.

One is struck by the sense of order conveyed in the beautiful plans of the forts; these maps confirm Spain’s seriousness in protecting its interests here. As is typical of Spain and other European powers, the forts were established using both ordinances and guidelines. Because the forts were strategic to a huge area, many described by Buisseret are outside the Southwest as defined by many scholars. Yet they were essential in ensuring that Spain would maintain a presence unmolested in the New World.

Spain’s desire to dominate this part of the world did not go unchallenged. Although other powers eyed its possessions with envy from the very beginning, Spain was especially beleaguered after about 1750. In “Spanish Military Mapping of the Northern Borderlands after 1750,”

UTA history professor Dennis Reinhartz describes how Spain met the challenges of English, French, Russian, and finally United States expansion. Two points raised by Reinhartz demand special attention. First, note the many decrees and ordinances used by Spain to establish, and then protect, its territorial interests. These empowered and yet ultimately strangled Spain through their elaborate administration. Second, note the emphasis on cartography—especially Spain’s considerable cartographic prowess, which was seldom understood by other countries. Reinhartz suggests a reason: although Spain sought to protect its geographic knowledge, this desire for protection through secrecy was ultimately counterproductive. Maps are essential tools of empire, and if Spain would not release such geographic information, others would. Thus it was that other countries prepared and used their own (sometimes inferior) maps to lay claims to the lands that were held by Spain.

These maps of Spanish territories were done in seeming defiance of Spain and must have caused considerable concern and consternation. This situation reminds us that the Spanish presence in the New World is filled with ironies. Despite the Spanish military’s excellent mapping of the region, Spain ultimately lost much of its northern borderlands and then lost its grip on the New World.

This process of attrition was fueled by political, economic, and military efforts in the United States. In “U.S. Army Military Mapping of the American Southwest during the Nineteenth Century,” Ralph E. Ehrenberg presents a wealth of information from the Library of Congress—including that institution’s fabulous Division of Maps and Geography. Ehrenberg notes how Thomas Jefferson’s Louisiana Purchase (1803) precipitated the westward expansion of the United States into territory formerly held by—and still actively claimed by—Spain in the early nineteenth century. We now know that Spain sent a military expedition to stop Lewis and Clark but the expedition just missed the Americans by a few days. Although more successful in stopping early intruders from gaining a foothold in New Mexico, Spain ultimately yielded to the unceasing pressure of U.S. expansion—an expansion that was aided by a wide range of surveys and cartographers. Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, but soon faced the same problem of United States expansion. Ehrenberg’s essay concludes in the early 1850s, by which time the United States had acquired much of the present Southwest through war with Mexico (1846–1848) and the subsequent Gadsden Purchase (1853–1854).

The story of the fabled U.S.–Mexican War has been told many times, and many of those tellings are based on the holdings of materials in UTA’s

Special Collections. In fact, this collection is recognized as among the finest in the nation—at least equal to Yale’s magnificent collection. However, whereas most of these tellings paint a broad picture of events, or focus on military leaders such as Zachary Taylor or Winfield Scott, we still need answers to two questions: How did other officers fare during the war, and how did they use maps and other documents in the process? To answer these questions, UTA’s Gerald Saxon conducted original research into newly acquired records to write “Henry Washington Benham: A U.S. Army Engineer’s View of the U.S.-Mexican War.” As interpreted by Saxon, Benham emerges as a career soldier whose geographic knowledge and cartographic skills helped General Taylor win one of the war’s crucial battles—the Battle of Buena Vista. Analyzing previously unpublished maps of the battle, Saxon shows us how Benham’s technical cartographic skill helped the American generals better understand both the topography and the movements of the enemy. Saxon’s essay reminds us that maps are essential tools in understanding historical events, including battles.

Maps also play an important role in establishing the peace. With the conclusion of the U.S.-Mexican War in 1848, both countries faced the challenge of mapping their new boundary. As interpreted by Paula Rebert in “*Trabajos Desconocidos, Ingenieros Olvidados*: Unknown Works and Forgotten Engineers of the Mexican Boundary Commission,” the challenge was formidable. Although determining the boundary along the Rio Grande (or Río Bravo del Norte, as it is called in Mexico) was relatively easy, things became more difficult west of El Paso. This difficulty resulted in part from inaccurate maps, such as Disturnell’s flawed map, that were originally used to define the boundary in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that the country west of El Paso for nearly 800 miles to San Diego was rugged, extremely arid, and topographically similar on both sides of the imaginary line that had to be drawn on maps. Rebert notes that the important work of the Mexican Boundary Survey has been overlooked by historians who tend to be much more familiar with the surveys of Bartlett and, later, Emory. But it takes two sides to set, and agree upon, a border. Using a wealth of Mexican reports and maps, Rebert tells the fascinating story of the Mexican Boundary Commission, which was reorganized no fewer than three times but persevered in delineating the border. As suggested by Rebert, the ultimate surveying of the border was a truly *international* effort that greatly benefited from the work of the dedicated members of the Mexican Boundary Commission. She urges us to remember that the bor-

der surveys worked best when both sides worked cooperatively—a subtle reminder that international cooperation is infinitely more productive and efficient than international strife.

To further help place these essays in context, we invited John Hébert to summarize how they relate to events in both the Americas and Europe. In his “Soldier-Engineers in the Geographic Understanding of the Southwestern Frontier—An Afterthought,” Hébert confirms the volume’s broader themes and sheds new light on each essay’s connections to geopolitical history.

Collectively, the essays in this book cover a vast area—nearly a million square miles—and a long period of time—about four hundred years (1500–1900). They represent contributions by both academic and nonacademic historians who have made fruitful use of collections from Spain, Mexico, and the United States. The University of Texas at Arlington is proud of the tradition of bringing together scholars of diverse backgrounds, as evidenced by the contributors of the following essays. We are also proud that our campus will permanently serve as the venue for the Virginia Garrett Lectures on the History of Cartography, and as the permanent home of the Virginia Garrett Cartographic History Library.