

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Spring 1985

Review of *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870*

By Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa

Ralph H. Vigil

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Vigil, Ralph H., "Review of *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* By Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa" (1985). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1844.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1844>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870. By Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1983. Photographs, appendix, glossary, bibliography, index. xviii + 148 pp. \$10.95.

This study of Laredo shows how larger events such as Indian raids, war, occupation, and changes of sovereignty affected population growth, decline, and change from the founding of this border town to the period of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Utilizing primary and secondary sources for his demographic findings, Hinojosa's story of a border community tells us a good deal about average annual rates of population change, family and class structure, ethnicity, age composition, literacy, property ownership, occupations, intermarriage, race relations, and other subjects. Moreover, his comparison with other borderlands communities in this period gives the study perspective. The author correctly observes that because Anglo newcomers came in limited numbers to Laredo, in contrast to other towns, Mexican Americans still retained about three-fourths of the land and personal property in 1870.

Hinojosa's book is informative and most of his conclusions appear valid, but the work has some stylistic faults and would have benefited from good proofreading. It also appears that more could have been said about various ethnic groups making up the town's population. Hinojosa's comments on the 111 Carrizo Indians settled in Laredo are interesting, but we learn nothing about their origins, their religious instruction, their rate of acculturation, nor their

numbers and status after 1810. Since the author notes that the unofficial drafts of the 1835 census distinguished townspeople by race and class, an analysis of this information would have shed more light on the Indian population and other ethnic groups.

In another instance, the author tells us that Laredo, which supported the Loyalist cause, apparently gave some assistance against the rebel José Barnardo Gutiérrez de Lara in 1813. Two pages later we are told that "possibly reacting to a lack of compliance on the part of Laredoans to a *prestamo forzoso* (forced loan) levied to meet the province's war obligations, the governor ordered Laredoans to repay the debts owed the estate of Gutiérrez de Lara" (p. 31). In sum, analysis interrupts the flow of the narrative, and why loyal subjects of the crown were ordered to repay debts to the estate of an insurgent is left unanswered.

The book could also have benefited from a good map placing Laredo in what the author calls "El Seno Mexicano (the Mexican Gulf Coast)" (pp. 3-4). Also, Santa Barbara's bandit leader was not called Pío Pico (p. 106).

Despite these qualifications, this is a definite contribution and has many insights.

RALPH H. VIGIL
Department of History
University of Nebraska-Lincoln