

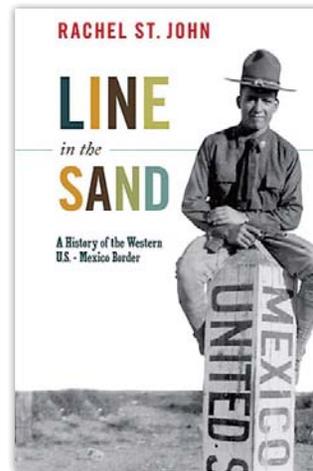
## Drawing a Line in the Sand

by Teresa A. Statler 

Rachel St. John, an associate professor of history at New York University, has written about the dramatic creation of the U.S.-Mexican border after the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 to its emergence as the modern border line we know today. In *A Line In The Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border*, she focuses on the geography and history of this part of North America. We learn of the Americans and Mexicans who created “the line.” We also learn how “an undistinguished strip of land” became the many things it is today: an immigration checkpoint, a legal divide, a “site of transborder exchange and community formation, and a place that people call home.”

### A Land Contested

St. John tells us that the history of the border began in the early 19th century with a “collective act of imagination” in the minds of Americans and



 **BOOK**  
**Line in the Sand:**  
**A History of the**  
**Western U.S.-**  
**Mexico Border**

Princeton  
University Press,  
2012, 296 pages

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Mexicans who looked to maps of North America “to think about what their republics were and what they might someday become.” After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, the joint Mexican-American Boundary Commission began its work to demarcate the border west of the Rio Grande, in what one American member of the commission called “a sterile waste.” The land, however, had been and continued to be contested not only by the two governments, but also by the Apaches, who had

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always lived in the borderlands, and also by private armies of adventurers called “filibusters.” Apache raiders moved back and forth across the border line, cleverly playing U.S. and Mexican forces against each other, straining relations between them and “underscoring the limits of either country’s ability to control its national space.”

St. John goes on to explain how capitalism was cultivated across the borderline, starting with the development of railroads. This allowed for the integration of both countries and facilitated their ability to ship copper and other mineral ores from the mines on both sides of the border to the port of Guaymas on the Gulf of California. The borderlands’ labor market was segregated by race, with Mexican workers—especially those in Arizona’s copper mines—paid less than their white counterparts. This resulted in labor violence and strikes in the early 20th century. The emergence of transborder ranches “was as much about land as cattle,” St. John tells us,

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## WHAT'S HAPPENING!

AILA mourns the passing of MI Chapter Member **WILLIAM H. DANCE**. He is remembered fondly as a World War II veteran, a father, grandfather, a husband, a friend, a law professor, and a worthy adversary.

AILA grieves over the loss of **CORNELIUS D. SCULLY III**, known to many as “Dick Scully,” who passed away on Nov. 30. He worked for the Department of State from 1962 until his retirement in 1997.

TX Chapter Member **DANIEL M. KOWALSKI** will serve on the board of directors of the National Immigration Law Center.

Southern Calif. Chapter Member **MAHSA ALIASKARI** and Washington, D.C. Chapter Member **DAWN M. LURIE** joined Polsinelli as shareholders on January 13, 2014.

Ten months after establishing the Davis Law Firm, TX Chapter Member **ANNE OHLRICH** has reopened the Ohlrich Law Firm. She'll handle cases involving family- and employment-based immigration, as well as pro bono cases.

**PEDERSON IMMIGRATION LAW GROUP** and **MAGGIO + KATTAR, P.C.**, two boutique immigration law firms in Washington, D.C., have merged.

Northern Calif. Chapter Member **DOMINIC E. CAPECI** has relocated his office to Kearny Street in San Francisco.

with wealthy Mexican and American families integrating their land on both sides of the border into “a landscape of private property and a market in real estate.” Both governments believed that putting land into private hands would help promote economic development and create policies to facilitate it. This, of course, negatively affected native peoples.

A positive result of this transborder capitalism allowed for the formation of binational associations and transborder social networks in border towns. For example, many Mexican and American children in the late 19th and early 20th centuries grew up playing and going to school together on both sides of the border. Also, some border towns, such as Tijuana, became quite popular during the 1920s when, due to Prohibition in the United States, alcohol was available there in unlimited quantities.

### A Transborder Separation

With the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, the first “unofficial wave” of Mexican immigration to the United States occurred. This fact, coupled with the U.S. security concerns that rose during World War I, caused transborder ties to rupture and border

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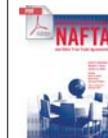
*“A Line in the Sand is an interesting read, and I would recommend it as important background material to any immigration attorney who practices removal defense on behalf of Mexican clients.”*

towns to become temporary battlefields. Both countries enacted new crossing restrictions, dispatched soldiers to patrol the line, and built fences—sometimes down the main streets of border towns, such as Nogales and Douglas/Agua Prieta.

*A Line in the Sand is an interesting read, and I would recommend it as important background material to any immigration attorney who practices removal defense on behalf of Mexican clients. It also features many fascinating, old photographs, including the “monuments” marking the line, several maps, and a detailed bibliography for additional reading.*

**TERESA A. STATLER** practices deportation/removal defense, asylum, and family-based immigration law in Portland, OR.

### BOOK



**NAFTA Handbook**

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