



## Postcards from the Río Bravo Border: Picturing the Place, Placing the Picture, 1900s-1950s

Daniel D. Arreola

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Between 1900 and the late 1950s, Mexican border towns came of age both as tourist destinations and as emerging cities. Commercial photographers produced thousands of images of their streets, plazas, historic architecture, and tourist attractions, which were reproduced as photo postcards. Daniel Arreola has amassed one of the largest collections of these border town postcards, and in this book, he uses this amazing visual archive to offer a new way of understanding how the border towns grew and transformed themselves in the first half of the twentieth century, as well as how they were pictured to attract American tourists.

Postcards from the Río Bravo Border presents nearly two hundred images of five significant towns on the lower Río Bravo—Matamoros, Reynosa, Nuevo Laredo, Piedras Negras, and Villa Acuña. Using multiple images of sites within each city, Arreola tracks changes both within the cities as places and in the ways in which the cities have been pictured for tourist consumption. He makes a strong case that visual imagery has a shaping influence on how we negotiate and think about places, creating a serial scripting or narrating of the place. Arreola also shows how postcard images, when systematically and chronologically arranged, can tell us a great deal about how Mexican border towns have been viewed over time. This innovative visual approach demonstrates that historical imagery, no less than text or maps, can be assembled to tell a compelling geographical story about place and time.



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