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# THE MEETING OF TWO BORDER WORLDS: HOW THE MAINE-CANADA AND TEXAS-MEXICO BORDERS MET IN 1920

BY CARLA MENDIOLA

*This study follows two families living on the Maine and Texas borders in order to explore how seemingly different border communities shared much in common as they developed in the broader context of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. A brief background history of the two border areas and families is followed by a more detailed look, beginning with a comparison of the conflicts that finalized the borderlines of each state, and ending with a description of the key factors involved in hybrid-culture formation on these borders. The family vignettes offer a window onto examples of how community members were affected by, reacted to, or participated in some of these broader events. There were similarities and differences between both areas – in terms of the border dynamics, the development of the two communities, and their distinct hybrid cultures – and both border areas evolved in a similar way. The author is a History doctoral candidate at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.*

**A** YOUNG MAN, Sandy, slowly rode down the small neighborhood street on his cavalry horse. His brain nervously fumbled with how to put the words in the right order for what he was going to say. The South Texas sun pierced his blue eyes, and warmed his ruddy complexion. It was February 10, 1920, and winter, but not the kind of winter he was used to as a child. He flashed back to his hometown in Maine that seemed so distant and so much colder. Sandy was three months shy of his twentieth birthday and about to take one of the most important steps of his life. He dismounted from his horse, smoothed back his closely-cropped brown hair, straightened his five-foot-six and three-quarter frame to its fullest height, and walked toward the door of the house.

Inside, a young woman in a floral print dress, Elodia, had been ex-



Despite coming from two different border regions of the United States, Sandy Leveck and Elodia McDonald were married in 1920. Although there were major differences between the northern Maine and South Texas border regions, there were also many similarities, a fact that must have helped Sandy and Elodia relate to each other. Courtesy of the author.

pectantly watching for him. As she saw him approach the house, she quickly moved away from the window, tidied her short, dark brown hair, and tried to stay calm as she waited. Although she would not celebrate her fifteenth birthday for another two months, she was already becoming a woman and had a mind of her own. Her mother, Delfina, a strong-willed and imposing woman, also saw Sandy coming and knew his intentions. She was not pleased to see him.

Sandy knocked on the door, and Delfina politely motioned him into the house. He took a few steps into the living room and prepared himself to ask for Elodia's hand in marriage. He did not speak Spanish, and Delfina did not speak English, but he thought she would understand. Delfina knew what was coming and ordered her daughter out of the room,

"Elodia, vete pa' el otro cuarto."<sup>1</sup>

She had no intention of letting this young man marry her daughter.

Elodia knew this and responded, "No me voy."

Her mother insisted, "Vete pa' el otro cuarto, Elodia."

Again Elodia refused. She knew her mother planned to reject Sandy's request and refused to accept the outcome quietly. Delfina insisted a third time,

"Elodia, vete!"

Elodia responded with equal vehemence, "No!"

Delfina realized Elodia was not going to budge and rejected Sandy's proposal outright. Because it was obvious that her mother would not change her mind, Elodia finally decided to leave. She eloped with Sandy and the pair rode away on his horse.<sup>2</sup>

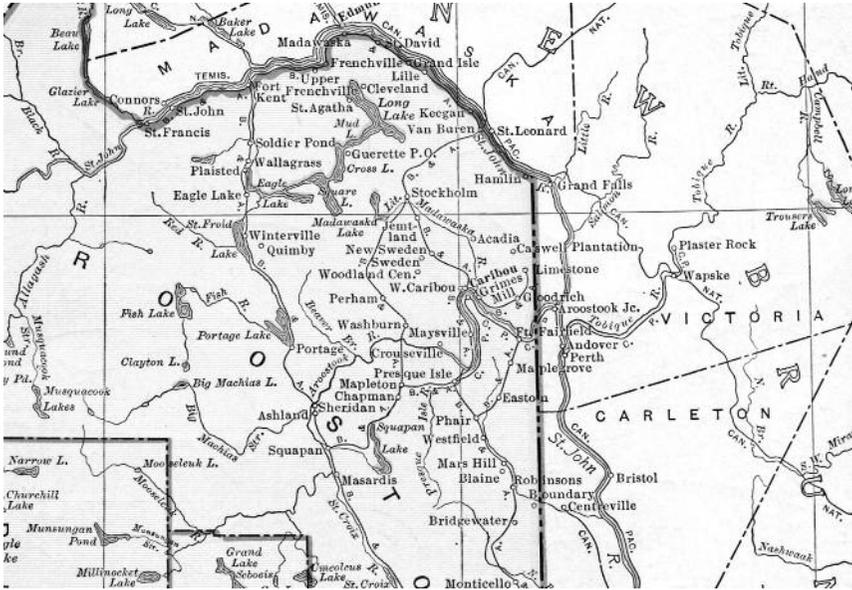
This may sound like a scene from a movie or a novel, but these people were real, and the event actually happened. Sandy and Elodia were two young people from very different worlds, and they still decided to marry. They were products of two distinct, culturally-mixed border regions that also shared many common characteristics, even if the couple was not fully aware of them. Sandy Leveck was born in Caribou, Maine, a town near the U.S.-Canadian border, was part of northern Maine's large Franco-American community, and had ancestral roots in Canada. Elodia McDonald was of Mexican-American descent and, like her husband, hailed from a border town, Hidalgo, Texas, which was located on the U.S.-Mexico border. Growing up in these two, different, small, border towns connected them to each other and to transnational historical events.

This study follows two families living on two different borders, one in the U.S. Northeast and the other in the Southwest, to explore how two

seemingly different border communities shared much in common as they developed in the broader context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sandy and Elodia came from transnational communities, where political boundaries became clearer but cultural ones remained in flux. The two border towns from which the newlyweds hailed were each affected by broader events that included nation formation, immigration, interethnic tensions, transborder community formation, and *mestizaje/métissage* (the Spanish and French terms, respectively, for biological and cultural mixing that dated back to the European colonial periods in each region). In the mid-nineteenth century, both the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borders experienced conflicts that finalized the boundary lines of northern Maine and South Texas. In the twentieth century there were increased efforts to enforce those boundaries, especially the U.S.-Mexico border.

Both areas also saw significant waves of immigrants in spite of stricter immigration policies, due to changing economic and political winds, and new technology that enhanced mobility. The resulting shift in demographics contributed to interethnic tensions, which sometimes erupted in violence. Nonetheless, transborder community development continued and contributed to the ongoing evolution of hybrid ethnic groups (Franco-American and Mexican-American) through the process of *mestizaje/métissage*. There were similarities and differences between the development of the northern Maine and South Texas border areas – regarding border dynamics, the two communities, and their distinct cultures – however, overall, the key border dynamics evolved in a similar fashion on both borders.<sup>3</sup>

An overview of the early history of the cities, their surrounding areas, local cultures, and the individual families is necessary to better understand the environment that shaped Elodia and Sandy's lives. In the early nineteenth century, each of these border areas was a nebulous frontier zone where empires made claims and settlers made homes. Each region then passed through a painful growth period of conflict during which boundary lines were more clearly defined, both on maps and at the ground level. By the early twentieth century each region had reached a stage in which nations tried to enforce those lines and dictate what it meant to be a member of society on one side of the border or the other. However, the border reality at the local level was often more complex and permeable than national authorities would have wished. And the towns that developed along those borders often existed in a transnational border zone where borderlanders (people who lived in these bor-



Map of northern Maine and St. John River Valley region. Sandy Leveck's hometown of Caribou is located on the Aroostook River, near the border with New Brunswick (center of the map). From *Rand McNally World Atlas, Premier Edition* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1932), p. 39. Courtesy of Rand McNally. Map © Rand McNally, License: R.L. 12-S-009

der communities) maintained daily connections and created a sense of community with their international neighbors.<sup>4</sup>

The presence and significance of the border for borderlanders varied. In some instances, the border mattered, such as when Tejano families sought refuge south of the border from racial persecution in Texas, or Mexicans fled north from political revolution in Mexico. However, at other times, the border did not matter significantly to transborder community development, as locals traveled back and forth across the border on a regular basis for economic and social reasons. In the late nineteenth century, Maine merchants, for example, crossed the border to ship goods using the Canadian railroad lines.

In terms of place, both the northern Maine and southern Texas borders had a major river that served as a demarcation line. Both areas were rural, had economies that relied heavily on cash crops, and were located at the periphery of the largest U.S. state in their region. As expected, the states differed in terms of environment. Northern Maine had a much colder climate, had large roaming wild mammals, such as moose, and

included the northern tip of the Appalachian range, with the impressive Mt. Katahdin as a focal point. The economy of the Upper St. John River Valley, or “the Valley,” of the northern tip of Maine was based on cash crops, particularly potatoes, and on extracting lumber - for ship building, railroad construction, and paper mills – which continued throughout the twentieth century, if on a more limited scale. South Texas, on the other hand, had a warmer climate that felt almost tropical at times. The area was flatter and known as the Lower Rio Grande Valley, or “the Valley,” because of the river that sustained it. This Valley had fertile land that was good for growing a variety of crops, especially citrus fruit, and the previously dominant cattle ranching culture still survived on a smaller scale into the twentieth century.

In terms of culture, Elodia and Sandy were both from international border areas with two mixed North American cultures – Mexican-American and Franco-American – that had predominantly Catholic, non-Anglo historical roots. These two distant border communities had complex multi-national histories that stretched across centuries – through native, colonial, early national, and civil war periods in North American history. Both border communities included Indian ancestry that contributed to the process of *mestizaje* or *métissage*. Although African ancestry was also common throughout many parts of the Americas due to the spread of slavery, it was less pronounced or visible in these two border regions, especially the northern one.<sup>5</sup> Still both borders had much in common, as both South Texas and northern Maine had colonial roots in non-English, Catholic European cultures. As more European and Euroamerican settlements developed, intermarriage or intermixing with Native Americans occurred to varying degrees. Given the frequency of this *métissage*, it was highly likely that a large number of local Franco-Americans had Native American ancestors, including Sandy. This mixing, or *mestizaje*, was also definitely common and visible in South Texas.<sup>6</sup>

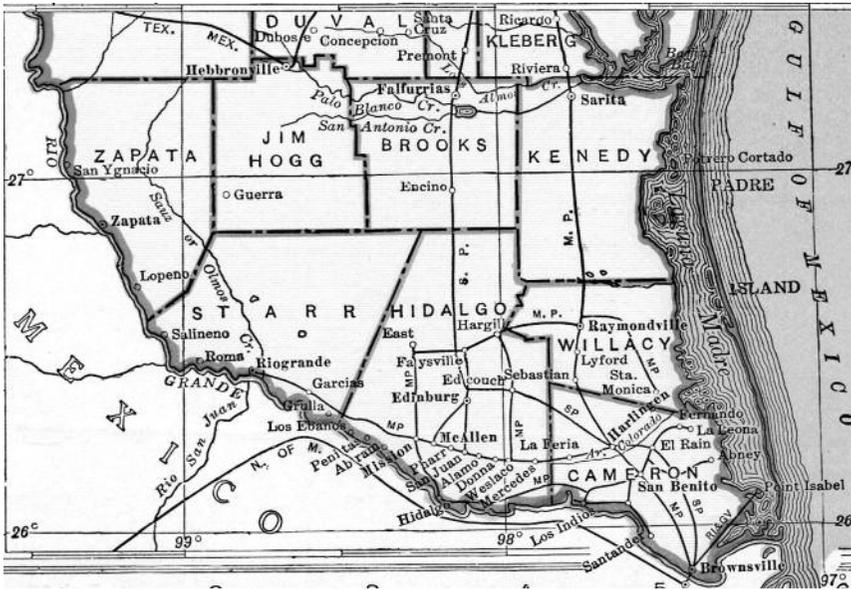
The Mexican-American experience in South Texas was filled with conflict and accommodation. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Mexicans in Texas endured a dramatic shift from being politically and economically dominant to being subjugated in their own homeland. It is important to note that Mexican-American culture and history varied across the length of the U.S.-Mexico border, reflecting differences from Tejano to Hispano to Californio identities. A similar variation of cultures can be seen along the northern Maine border. Franco-American cultural influences along the Maine-Canada border encompassed varied

combinations of Acadian, Quebecois, British, and Native American identities. Like Mexican-Americans, Franco-Americans suffered persecution, as both groups were considered “other” in U.S. states whose power structure was dominated by English-speakers. How each group, Mexican-American and Franco-American, viewed itself and how it was viewed by Anglo-Americans was often very different. Both groups had to organize to effectively implement policies to meet their needs or address their grievances within an Anglo-dominated society.<sup>7</sup>

Both Mexican-Americans and Franco-Americans had to navigate within overlapping Anglo and non-Anglo worlds, and individuals had to decide how much of each they would incorporate, or omit, from the border worlds they were creating and that were shaping them. In South Texas, human emotion was a strong motivator behind Sandy and Elodia’s marriage. However, other factors were also at work. Their lives reflected their individual personal experiences, shared border cultural characteristics, issues faced in their respective border regions, and events in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Sandy and Elodia’s lives and families provide windows onto the human story within these broader events.

Sandy Leveck was born on May 20, 1900, in Caribou, Maine. He was the son of Coleman Levesque and Hannah Maskell and was one of two children.<sup>8</sup> Both of his parents were Canadian – Coleman was born in New Brunswick and Hannah probably was as well, although her exact birthplace is unclear. Sandy’s maternal grandparents – William Maskell and Sally Lord – were both born in New Brunswick.<sup>9</sup> Sandy’s paternal grandparents – John Peter Levesque and Susan Little – were born in Riviere-du-Loup, Quebec, and New Brunswick, respectively. That would make Sandy’s cultural background a mix of predominantly Quebecois and English ancestry. His religious upbringing was apparently Methodist, but may have included some Catholic traditions. Sandy grew up in a farming family and learned to speak both French and English.<sup>10</sup>

Just as *métissage* occurred along the northern border, *mestizaje* occurred along the southern one. Elodia McDonald was born on May 5, 1905, in Hidalgo, Texas, to Delfina Pérez and Severo McDonald, both of whom were born in Texas. Elodia was the fifth of six children in the McDonald family.<sup>11</sup> Elodia’s maternal grandmother was Dolores Pérez, and her maternal grandfather was Rafael Pérez. Her paternal grandmother was “Mama” Dolia, a Mexican national, and her paternal grandfather was an Irishman named John McDonald, who moved to Texas from Tennessee, yet another example of *mestizaje*.<sup>12</sup> Elodia’s mother, Delfina,



Map of South Texas and Lower Rio Grande River Valley region. Elodia McDonald's hometown of Hidalgo, in Hidalgo County, is located along the Rio Grande River, which separates Texas and Mexico. From *Rand McNally World Atlas, Premier Edition* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1932), p. 66-67. Courtesy of Rand McNally. Map © Rand McNally, License: R.L. 12-S-009.

reportedly had Indian ancestry and was very sensitive about it; she preferred to emphasize her McDonald ties. Elodia's cultural background was predominantly Mexican-American, her religious background was Catholic, and her father was a farmer. She was bilingual because Spanish was the dominant language of daily life in the Valley and English was learned primarily in school.<sup>13</sup> Elodia was born and raised in Hidalgo, but later moved to nearby McAllen after she married.

Communities thrived in Sandy's northern Maine and Elodia's South Texas border worlds long before the fixed national boundaries existed. The boundaries in both areas were finalized in the same decade and through crises that reached international levels. Maine's northern border was called into question during the bloodless Aroostook War in 1839 and was finalized through the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. This border controversy dated to the Treaty of Paris of 1783, after the American Revolutionary War, and manifested in the nineteenth century through conflicting claims to timber rights in disputed territory along the St. John River by lumbermen from both Maine and New Brunswick. This local matter was exacerbated by the political maneuvering of

Maine's Whigs and Democrats, and became an international crisis that required intervention by both the British and U.S. governments. Notably, the boundary line finally resolved an old issue, but also cut some communities in half, such as a single community that would later be known by two names: Madawaska, Maine, and Edmundston, New Brunswick. In addition, the final treaty allowed free access for transportation on the St. John River to inhabitants of both Maine and New Brunswick, thus keeping the door open to the further development of this northern border area.<sup>14</sup>

The South Texas border was called into question in 1846 by U.S. President James K. Polk, who stationed federal troops in disputed territory along the Lower Rio Grande River. The location of Texas's border and its status as a U.S. state had been rejected by the Mexican government since Texas claimed independence in 1836, and later U.S. annexation in 1845. When U.S. troops arrived on what Mexico perceived to be its territory, Mexican troops were sent to respond to this invasion, and skirmishes followed on both sides of the river. Polk argued that Mexico had invaded U.S. soil and convinced the U.S. Congress to declare war. The U.S.-Mexican War ensued, spanning vast distances and costing countless lives and resources. The war was finally ended with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which established the modern Texas-Mexico boundary.<sup>15</sup>

The northern border conflict involved negotiations with a well-established, powerful British government, while to the south, the United States was dealing with a newly independent Mexico, which was still recovering from its eleven-year struggle for independence from Spain. Most importantly, for those living along the border, both British and Mexican treaty authorities made efforts to protect the rights of former citizens who were now living on U.S. soil. The Webster-Ashburton Treaty stipulated recognition of British land grants, and the distribution of land titles to settlers who had lived on their property for six years prior to the treaty. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo originally included the protection of the civil and property rights of former Mexican citizens, including the recognition of Mexican land grants in Texas, where many Anglo-Texans had forcefully taken land from Mexican landowners after Texas independence. The U.S. president and Senate revised the treaty to remove the article restoring Mexican land grants to their former Mexican owners in Texas. They also removed any explicit protection of Mexican land ownership where legal proof of ownership was not in order, because U.S. leaders knew missing paperwork was common

among many landowners in northern Mexico due to geographic distance from the capital and a slow bureaucracy in a new country. Whereas violent individual conflicts over claims to land in northern Maine were uncommon before or after the treaty, it was a well-known problem in South Texas that only became worse under the terms of the new treaty, and with new waves of predominantly Anglo immigrants, many of whom had racist attitudes towards the inhabitants of Mexican descent.

Both Maine and Texas faced international boundary definition crises just a few years apart, and experienced treaty resolutions that satisfied the U.S. government's broader goals. However, the two treaties had unforeseen consequences for the French and Mexican cultural communities that now found themselves indisputably located in the United States. To adapt the saying from the twentieth-century U.S. Chicano Movement, "they didn't cross the border, the border crossed them." The United States was now their home and where they were located, but they were not necessarily made to feel welcomed. Nor was the U.S. side of the border their sole living space as they maintained contact with their international neighbors. These border community members would face future hardships, including attempts at forced assimilation, while maintaining ties to their "other" culture and to their international neighboring communities.

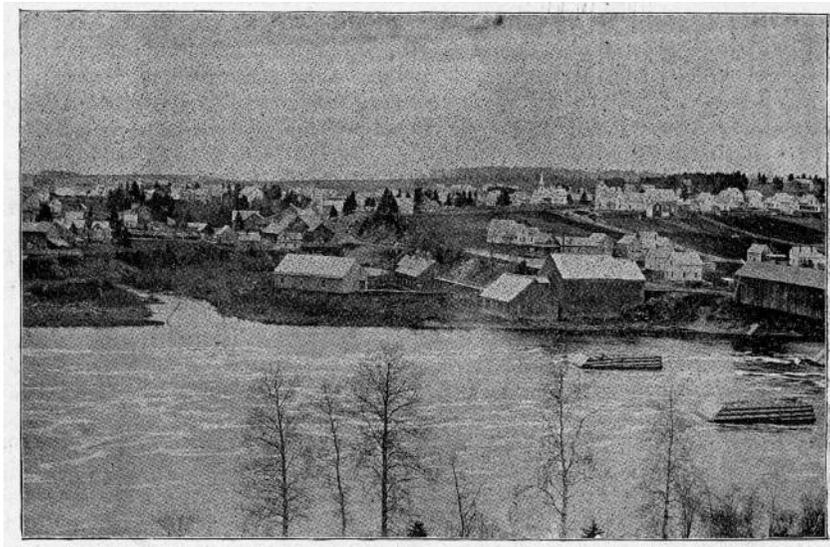
There was considerable change in Texas, Maine, and beyond in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. United States nation formation efforts were seen through the creation of stricter border and immigration policies and enforcement, as well as Americanization efforts through education.<sup>16</sup> The 1860s were tumultuous, crucially important, and formative years in the development of the nations of North America, with the U.S. Civil War, Mexico's wars for liberal reform and against French intervention, and the movement for confederation in Canada. In addition, factors such as economic downturns in Canada, ongoing political unrest in Mexico, and expansion of the railroad in all three countries, had a direct impact on the Maine and Texas borderlands. Sandy and Elodia's families lived through and were undoubtedly affected by these events.

Looking first to the north, Maine's economy boomed in the years following the U.S. Civil War and Canadian immigration followed suit. Canadian economic recessions that started in 1873, 1896, and 1913 prompted emigration from Maine's neighboring Canadian provinces in such high numbers that Canadian leaders encouraged repatriation to Quebec and other parts of Canada starting in 1875. They offered inex-

pensive or free land and railroad fares, and supported lectures by visiting clergy or other speakers from Canada.<sup>17</sup> Many of the new arrivals to Maine found work helping to establish and construct new cities, worked in the emerging lumber and textile industries, or joined agricultural communities. French Canadians made up a large portion of the cotton textile mill workers, but were also found in the lumber and agricultural industries, among others. Along the Maine border, men worked primarily in lumber or agriculture, and women did domestic or office work. Although a variety of ethnic groups immigrated to Maine, francophone culture predominated along the northern border, especially in the Upper St. John River Valley.<sup>18</sup>

Many of these immigrants arrived by train, or were attracted to the opportunities linked by it, such as the lumber and agriculture industries. Crossing the border once for a new job, or back-and-forth for seasonal work or a daily job, was common along the Maine border for many Canadians. In fact, crossing the border was common for both Canadians and Mainers. The railroad along the Canadian side of the border was completed first, and prompted Maine merchants to cross and ship their goods using the Canadian railroad down to the Atlantic coast.<sup>19</sup> By 1878, Sandy's hometown of Caribou had a railroad station that contributed to its growth and integrated it into the potato industry, the leading cash crop of Maine. Most of southern and central Maine had rail lines by the 1880s. In 1891, work began on the Bangor and Aroostook line, which integrated that region into state and long-distance commercial networks when it was finished in 1894.<sup>20</sup> By the 1930s, Caribou became "the potato-shipping center of northern Aroostook County, send[ing] out thousands of carloads [of potato barrels] for seed and consumption."<sup>21</sup> Some of the potatoes even reached Texas.<sup>22</sup> Potatoes were usually picked by seasonal workers. By the late 1930s, pickers were paid ten cents per barrel, and an especially efficient picker could average one hundred barrels a day.<sup>23</sup> Cash-crop agriculture and the need for field laborers were characteristics shared with South Texas.

Growing industry and jobs offered positive opportunities, but also potential for tension between economic classes, or different ethnic groups. In northern Maine, schools helped promote pride in francophone culture, but eventually assimilationist and Americanization messages dominated, particularly after World War I when state laws required instruction in English. Anti-Catholic and anti-foreigner sentiments were expressed overtly, particularly with the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan in Maine in the 1920s. Mixed marriages were initially frowned upon by



Sandy Leveck was born and raised in Caribou, pictured here in the 1890s. All of Sandy's grandparents and both of his parents were born in Canada, in either New Brunswick or Quebec. At the end of the nineteenth century Sandy's parents immigrated to northern Maine and made a new home in Caribou. From George F. Bacon, *Northern Maine: Its Points of Interest and Its Representative Business Men* (Newark, NJ: Glenwood Publishing Co., 1891), p. 29.

ethnic communities, and only gradually grew in number.<sup>24</sup> Despite these potential deterrents, Canadian men and women moved to Maine in significant numbers throughout this period. Marriages of neighbors across the border reinforced the transborder sense of community by having family and friends on both sides of the border. Although most immigrants moved to industrial centers in urban areas in southern Maine, Aroostook County had the largest increase in its aggregate population, from 29,609 in 1870 to 87,764 in 1930, a 196% increase. The sharpest increase occurred between 1890 and 1910, the period when Sandy was born and came of age, when the county's population increased by fifty percent.<sup>25</sup> The combination of easy mobility thanks to the railroads, economic downturns in Canada, and Maine jobs attracted many immigrants to Maine, including Sandy's ancestors.

All four of Sandy's grandparents were born in Canada, in provinces that bordered Maine.<sup>26</sup> Sandy's father, Coleman "Colby" Levesque, was born in 1871 in Kent Parish, Carleton County, New Brunswick. Colby's father, John Peter Levesque, was born around 1803 in Quebec, and was probably originally named Jean-Pierre.<sup>27</sup> Colby's mother, Susan Little,



Sandy's mother, Hannah Maskell, was born in the 1860s in Carleton County, New Brunswick. She married Coleman Levesque in 1891. The couple lived in Caribou and raised two children there – Sandy and his sister Ethel. Courtesy of the author.

was born around 1836 in New Brunswick; both of her parents, John Little and Mary Maskell, emigrated from England.

John Peter and Susan Levesque were married around 1853 and lived in the Kent Parish area in Carleton County, New Brunswick, until they immigrated to Maine in 1889. They lived in a log cabin on Moose Mountain in the 1850s. They moved from Florenceville to Holmesville by 1871, and then were listed as members of the Methodist Church at Upper Kent, in East Florenceville, where six of their ten children were baptized. The six children were born between 1864 and 1875.<sup>28</sup> Considering John Peter's Quebecois roots, it is highly likely that he was Catholic. However, census records reveal that Susan was Protestant, and their listed religious affiliations changed over time. John Peter and Susan were listed first as Catholic and Baptist in 1871, respectively, then both as Methodist in 1881.

Considering the mother's traditional role in raising children, it is likely that Susan's English background strongly influenced the cultural upbringing of her children, including Colby. Undoubtedly, John Peter's Quebecois cultural heritage played a role in their children's upbringing as well. However, the fact that his name changed to John Peter and the family eventually joined a Methodist church showed that strong English influences overrode expected French and Catholic Quebecois cultural practices. In addition, the family's apparent conversion to Protestantism may have been due to a lack of an available Catholic church, or could

have been an attempt to adapt to their English-dominant surroundings and escape potential discrimination. Therefore, it is understandable if Coleman was raised as an English speaker (or bilingual) and as a Protestant rather than a Catholic.

Sandy's grandfather, John Peter, worked primarily as a farmer, but was also listed as a shingle-maker at one point. Sandy's grandmother, Susan, likely devoted her energies to being a homemaker. In 1889, John Peter and Susan moved their family to Maine, where they quickly made themselves at home and known to their neighbors, as described by the October 4, 1900, edition of the *Aroostook Republican*. "Peter Levitt [Leveck], of Limestone, is a regular visitor to town, and when it is considered he is 93 years old and walks both ways from his home to Caribou, in his bare feet, with his wife, Susan, 90, by his side, the distance being 10 miles, making 20 all told, it is easily seen he is a smart old man.<sup>29</sup> It appears they moved first to Fort Fairfield, then Limestone, and later to Caribou. Both John Peter and Susan died in Maine and were buried in Grimes Mill Cemetery near Caribou.<sup>30</sup>

John Peter and Susan's son, Coleman Levesque, married Hannah Maskell in Caribou in 1891; Hannah eventually gave birth to a son, Sandy.<sup>31</sup> Hannah was born circa 1862 in Kent Parish in Carlton County, New Brunswick, and Coleman was her second husband. Hannah's parents, William Maskell and Sally Lord (or Sarah Lloyd) moved to Maine from New Brunswick between 1876 and 1880. Apparently, Hannah stayed behind in Canada to earn a living. In 1881 she was working as a live-in servant in Chatham, Northumberland County, New Brunswick, when she was approximately eighteen years old. Hannah moved to Maine in 1888. She may have met her first husband, Murdoch Rogers, while working in New Brunswick, because the Rogers family lived near her employers. He reportedly was a U.S. sea captain who died three years after their daughter, Bertha Mae, was born in 1888. Hannah's mobility and relationships reflected the connections between New Brunswick and Maine.<sup>32</sup>

Coleman was twenty and Hannah was approximately thirty when they married. Frontier individuals often remarried if a spouse died, because life in this region was still very demanding. Hannah and Coleman lived in Fort Fairfield, Maine, but were married in a religious ceremony at a reverend's home in Caribou.<sup>33</sup> Coleman and Hannah remained in Caribou and were both buried in Grimes Cemetery. They had two children, Ethel and Sandy.<sup>34</sup> Sandy Levesque is a bit of a mystery and was apparently a rather quiet person. He was born on May 20, 1900, grew up

on the family farm, and was continuing the family tradition until he joined the military as Sandy “Leveck” in 1919. Like his predecessors, he may have consciously changed his name or, perhaps, it was changed by the enlisting agent. In any case, he embarked on an adventure that would take him to South Texas and do more than alter his name; it would dramatically change his life.

Unlike the northern Maine border, events in the Texas-Mexico borderlands often had violent manifestations. People in South Texas, like people in the Maine borderlands, often had to make difficult decisions about which side to support and what to call themselves. They shifted political and cultural designations from Spanish to Mexican to Tejano. These changes in identity terminology reflected broader political, economic, technological, cultural, and social changes. In the second half of the nineteenth century there were Civil War skirmishes (in 1864) and a few small-scale rebellions against oppressive local authorities. In terms of land use and economic growth, telegraph lines were run in 1871, longhorn ranching enjoyed an upsurge starting in 1876, and irrigation projects in 1898 and 1905 made commercial crop growth more feasible.<sup>35</sup> During the Civil War and the Indian wars that followed, several forts were built in the Lower Rio Grande Valley – Fort Ringgold near Rio Grande City and Fort Brown near Brownsville.<sup>36</sup> Although intended to keep the peace and protect the locals, these forts were also causes for controversy, especially in the early twentieth century.

The location of Elodia’s hometown, Hidalgo, made it an attractive point to station U.S. troops along the border in the early twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> The city and county of Hidalgo were centrally located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Other cities, like McAllen, would eventually grow larger, but Hidalgo remained the county seat until 1908, after which the seat was moved to Edinburg. Hidalgo’s long-term interaction with its Mexican sister city, Reynosa, and the arrival of the railroad in 1905 ensured that Hidalgo’s prominence would continue for several years to come.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, ethnic Mexicans made up a majority of the population. They lived largely by ranching and farming. However, a dramatic demographic shift started in the late 1850s and culminated in the early 1900s, as Anglos moved in and began buying or taking land from the Tejano landowners.<sup>38</sup> A similar process occurred with the railroad. In the early years of the twentieth century, especially after the railroad arrived, land speculators began to promote the Valley as a fertile alternative to the harsher environment of northern farming areas,



Elodia's mother, Delfina Pérez McDonald, was of Mexican ancestry, but was born in Texas. She and her husband, Severo McDonald, raised six children in Hidalgo, Texas. Delfina initially rejected Sandy's request to marry her daughter, but eventually accepted the relationship. She is pictured here on her front porch in the 1950s. Courtesy of the author.

and worked to recruit settlers from other parts of the United States. Paralleling the transformative effect of the railroad, irrigation innovations directly affected agricultural development in the area, and led to local disputes over water rights that required federal attention.<sup>39</sup>

Developers promoted a Magic Valley, where farmers could grow any crop and the seasons were mild all year.<sup>40</sup> This led to a population boom and a change in leaders and landowners, from Mexicans to Anglos, as well as the founding of several new towns along the railroad line. The unjust land-grabbing practices and dramatic demographic shift significantly increased interethnic tensions as the Valley continued to undergo change. Still, local ethnic Mexicans maintained regular contact with their international neighbors. As in Maine, transborder community formation continued thanks to both economic and social reasons. By 1905, the Hidalgo to Brownsville branch of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad reached Mission, a town near Hidalgo and McAllen. The railroad affected the economic lives of locals, including Elodia's family, on many levels, from large-scale cash crop shipments to small-scale sales to an increase in travelers. The railroad connected many of the small towns along the border, providing a cost effective way to transport people and ship cash crops to market.

Elodia's parents, Delfina Pérez and Severo McDonald, were both born in Texas and were a farming family. Whether they owned the land or worked someone else's, farmers found the railroad to be indispensable to the agricultural economy of the Valley. However, according to family oral history, Delfina lost land to the railroad and was never com-



Elodia's father, Severo McDonald, was born in Texas and worked as a farmer. Severo's father, John McDonald, moved to Texas from Tennessee in the antebellum period, participating in America's "manifest destiny" to spread westward. Courtesy of the author.

pensated. At one time she also owned cattle with her own mark and brand, but may have lost these at the same time.<sup>41</sup> To supplement the family income, Delfina taught her daughters to crochet. When the whistle sounded the arrival of a train, Delfina sent Elodia and her sisters to sell these handmade goods at the train station to the tourists. Elodia grew up in Hildago and stayed there until she married and moved to McAllen.<sup>42</sup>

The reputation of local citrus crops spread as growers shipped fruit to cities beyond the Valley. In 1921, the *Lower Rio Grande Valley News* boasted of the area's citrus popularity across the state:

Among the big eating houses asking for quotations and shipments of Valley grown grape fruit [sic] is the Harvey Eating Houses, who supply practically every railroad eating establishment in Texas. The St. Anthony Hotel as well as the management of the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio and the management of the Rice Hotel in Houston are also asking for quantity shipments.<sup>43</sup>

As a local promotional program noted, the South Texas Valley's economy continued to be based primarily on "cotton, vegetables, oil and gas, citrus and tourists. McAllen is rated as one of the most important gateways to Mexico on the U.S. border."<sup>44</sup> Although Valley promoters often painted a placid scene of the area, trouble was common.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century South Texas experienced dramatic and violent changes. Hidalgo County's growing pains included South Texas border conflicts that resulted in federal

troops being stationed there. At the national and international levels, the Brownsville Raid at Fort Brownsville in 1906, the Mexican Revolution of 1910, reports of raids from Mexico, and the Plan de San Diego violence of 1915, all contributed to the mobilization of U.S. troops in this period.<sup>45</sup> Although Pancho Villa's activity centered more in northern Mexico, reports of raids by Villa and his men were heard across South Texas and made locals very anxious. However, Villa was only sighted near Texas during a skirmish in Mexico across from El Paso, and only crossed the border into Columbus, New Mexico.<sup>46</sup> Tensions surrounding the raids and General J.J. Pershing's expedition are a perfect example of the connections between the local and the international levels of border issues. Local raids prompted federal responses, and vice versa, from both the United States and Mexico. Increased tensions between ethnic Mexicans and ethnic Anglos in South Texas resulted from an influx of immigrants – Mexicans fleeing the Mexican Revolution and Anglos attracted by the railroad and expanding agribusiness opportunities – in combination with Anglo racist attitudes, discriminatory practices, and unscrupulous land-grabbing techniques.

Tensions reached a boiling point in 1915 with the Plan de San Diego. This plan referred to documents calling for an uprising in Texas and across the U.S. Southwest by blacks, Mexicans, Indians, Asians, and all oppressed peoples. The Plan de San Diego voiced common complaints of Tejanos living in poverty and suffering violent abuse at the hands of racist Anglos – many of whom were recent arrivals from other parts of the United States. Although no large-scale uprising developed, group skirmishes occurred, and the document solidified fears of Anglos that a major assault was coming. In the ensuing weeks, Anglos, particularly the Texas Rangers, mercilessly attacked Tejanos and Mexicans, shooting, lynching, and killing hundreds without due process of law. Although racism played a role in the killings, economic and political ambitions were also motivators for eliminating any potential opposition to Anglo dominance in the region. The history of conflict between Tejano communities and Anglo authorities led many South Texas Mexicans to distrust local "peace" officers and to call for federal protection against local Texas Rangers and militias. In 1916, U.S. federal troops were sent to the border. The violence finally subsided in July, due in large part to the loss of momentum as well as the presence of troops.<sup>47</sup>

By the mid-1910s, South Texas had undergone dramatic and violent economic, social, and political change for over a decade. Mexico had, as well, on a national scale. Ideas about reforming the existing power and

social structures were exchanged across the border. Political power plays between U.S. and Mexican presidents influenced the timing of border raids. Racial and class tensions continued, and influenced the development of the Tejano community far beyond the border, and well into the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup> Elodia lived during a very dramatic and turbulent period in South Texas history. Indeed, the troops that were sent to the border would dramatically change her life

Troops were stationed all along the U.S.-Mexico border, including Fort Brown and Fort Ringgold in the Valley. Despite the presence of U.S. troops to maintain order, tension continued to mount in South Texas. In response to these crises, the U.S. government sent 12,000 soldiers to McAllen, and they arrived on July 4, 1916. The troops assigned to the border in this period included the First Cavalry, whose name was later changed to the Fourth Cavalry – Sandy’s future unit. This cavalry unit had fought in the Philippines, and then returned to the United States before being assigned to protect the border. In September 1916, the *Rio Grande Rattler* reported the campsite of the First Cavalry as looking like “the start of a new city during the gold rush of ’49.”<sup>49</sup> Some of the troops would eventually leave when tensions calmed, but would return at the end of World War I.<sup>50</sup>

The Fourth Cavalry unit, sent back in 1919 to help patrol the border, was assigned to a camp near Hidalgo. Sandy joined the Fourth Cavalry, Troop I, on April 25, 1919, as a private when he was “18 11/12 years of age and by occupation a farmer.” He had enlisted to serve from May 18, 1919, until July 20, 1921. His unit passed through Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio in 1920 for medical exams. He was described as having a “very good” character. He must have impressed the higher-ranking officers because he was temporarily promoted to the rank of corporal from November 4, 1920, to January 30, 1921, to assist with the unit’s trip to Fort Sam Houston. Sandy was designated a “2<sup>nd</sup> class rifleman on April 6, 1921,” and his horsemanship was “good.” He “completed 2 years, 2 months, 15 days service for longevity pay.” He was discharged in McAllen and paid \$138.25 to pay for travel expenses to “Caribau.”<sup>51</sup> By all family accounts, he stayed in Texas and never returned to Maine. Sandy completed his service, was a hard worker, and kept a low profile both during and after his service in the military.<sup>52</sup> Not drawing attention to himself was his personal preference.

In addition to the armed conflict, South Texas was undergoing a dramatic economic and social shift from ranching to agriculture. This shift relegated many Tejanos to manual field labor for Anglo landowners and

reinforced discriminatory attitudes and practices. Railroad tracks often delineated the segregated sections of town where Anglos and Texas Mexicans developed their own religious, business, and recreational spaces. Property values, quality of home construction, and investment in infrastructure development were usually higher in the Anglo neighborhoods.<sup>53</sup> Although their residential areas and schools were usually separate, different ethnic groups crossed paths through work and the necessities of everyday life. Elodia was fourteen when Sandy's Fourth Cavalry unit was stationed in Hidalgo in 1919. She would pass by the camp of horses and men on her way to school or to run errands. She caught Sandy's eye, and he tried to catch hers, but she initially ignored him.

Both Sandy and Elodia grew up in border communities in which they felt the sting of being treated as "other" in an Anglo-dominated society. Both communities developed hybrid cultures that held proudly to their distinctive cultural practices and identities. In the South Texas context, Sandy could have identified with the local "other" hybrid culture. As a Franco-American, he was identified as an "other" within Maine. Yet, in South Texas, he was probably simply perceived as being "white." The perception of him as being "white" was a potential obstacle to his courtship of Elodia. As for Elodia, there were several personal and external factors that contributed to her distance and later change of heart.

Societal factors that influenced intermarriage included the size of an ethnic group's population, the gender balance in the area's original ethnic community, the level of interaction between different ethnic group members, the higher tendency for women to marry outside their group, and potential for upward social mobility through intermarriage. Sandy's decision to marry outside of his Franco-American ethnic group is understandable. The chances of him meeting a Franco-American woman, or even a woman from Maine, were highly unlikely in this South Texas community. He apparently preferred to stay in Texas and court Elodia, instead of returning to Maine to find a wife. Elodia's decision to marry Sandy cannot be explained solely by the fact that Hispanic women tended to marry outside their group more than men did. The community included several eligible men from her own ethnic group who she could have married.<sup>54</sup>

Ethnic Mexicans still comprised a large portion of the population in the Valley. If pressure to avoid marriage with non-Mexicans had been strong enough within that community, then fewer Mexicans would have married Anglos.<sup>55</sup> Considering tensions between these groups in this pe-



The courthouse in Hidalgo in the early twentieth century. From the Robert Runyon Photograph Collection, image 03013, courtesy of the Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

riod, social interaction between them would have been limited and discouraged. However, in Hidalgo between 1860 and 1905, intermarriage between Hispanics, whites, blacks, and mixed-race individuals continued, despite ongoing ethnic tensions.<sup>56</sup>

Continued intermarriage between Anglos and Mexicans pointed to an acceptance of this practice, and continued a tradition of intermarriage that dated back generations, albeit on a small scale.<sup>57</sup> Intermarriage between different classes and ethnic groups was a common practice in South Texas dating back to when Texas was still part of Mexico. This practice was typified by marriages between upper-class Hispanic women and early male Anglo arrivals. This allowed both parties access to the power structure of the marital partner's ethnic group.<sup>58</sup> Sandy and Elo-dia were from different ethnic groups and different border regions, but both were also from similar classes in terms of their farming backgrounds. His status as a soldier and veteran did not guarantee, but offered the possibility of, upward social mobility. His status, coupled with their regular exposure to each other, plus her gender, helps explain their potential openness to a relationship, even if social pressure opposed it. So, although there were tensions between Anglos and Mexicans in the

larger community, other factors worked in favor of Sandy and Elodia to override them.

There were also strong personal factors at work. Elodia did not respond to Sandy at first because her heart was set on a local boy, Anselmo (nicknamed “Chemo”), even though her mother preferred a Mexican dignitary’s son who had given her his ring – a clear opportunity for upward class mobility and security. Elodia used to keep notes to or from Chemo in her shoe, so her mother would not find them. To her painful surprise, Elodia discovered that she was not the only one exchanging notes with Chemo. She found a note between Chemo and her own sister, Altagracia. Elodia broke off relations with both Chemo and the Mexican suitor. And, as described earlier, she eloped with Sandy – a young man she hardly knew, from a distant land, and apparently foreign culture.

Elodia’s and Sandy’s worlds were not as different as they might have first appeared. Along with shared characteristics noted earlier, intriguing aspects of border culture dynamics can be seen through marriage and language practices and cultural perpetuation efforts. For example, the process of *métissage* or *mestizaje* was common to both areas, although the variety of intermixing was more visible in Texas. In the Spanish colonial period in Texas, given the close proximity and limited social pool, relationships developed between the Spanish and their Indian neighbors. These marriages and relationships – sometimes voluntary, sometimes forced – between different groups gave birth to *mestizo* or mixed-blood children.<sup>59</sup> This process of *mestizaje* gave birth to the first ethnic Mexicans who would later give rise to Mexican-American culture in the twentieth century. In Maine, the process of *métissage*, the mixing of Indian and French, or other European groups, gave rise to *metis* children.<sup>60</sup> However, the numbers of Indians were much smaller and they moved out of the area very early.<sup>61</sup> Like many mixed-blood children in other cultures, they were often not fully accepted into either parental group. Due to the proximity of English settlers, intercultural mixing of Euroamerican families also occurred. Some French-descent settlers, both Quebecois and Acadian, clung tenaciously to their cultural roots, whether they were based in their cultural homeland or elsewhere. For example, many Acadians were forced from their homes in Nova Scotia and made strong efforts to maintain their cultural traditions in their new homes, including Maine. Although the intermixing of bloods and cultures often became harder to trace as time passed, intermarriage between individuals of different ethnic groups and nationalities continued to occur along both borders, albeit to differing degrees.

Cultural maintenance was a common practice in Mexican- and French-descent communities that felt threatened by Anglo domination. Border residents had to adjust as national authorities imposed stricter border laws between them and their international neighbors, and had to negotiate cross-cultural boundaries between Anglo and non-Anglo worlds. Cultural maintenance efforts included transmitting the French or Spanish language, food traditions, local history, religion, and cultural pride. The continued use of the Spanish language by Mexican-Americans in South Texas, and French by Franco-Americans in northern Maine, was a defining characteristic of these regions. This was especially notable considering efforts made to stamp out this linguistic and cultural practice. South Texas reflected national efforts, especially in the decades after World War I, to use schools to Americanize its citizens and acculturate inhabitants perceived as foreign. For example, children in McAllen were punished for speaking Spanish in school. One of Elodia's daughters, Bertha, remembered when her elementary school classmate was made to stand with her nose to the school's exterior wall during recess as punishment for speaking Spanish.<sup>62</sup> The habit of speaking Spanish at home and English in school was practiced even during Elodia's childhood; however, the institutionalized effort to discourage the use of Spanish through punishment was a later development. Hidalgo County's proximity to Mexico and the fact that it remained a Mexican "stronghold" where the Mexican-descent population maintained a majority was largely responsible for the perpetuation of the Spanish language. "Nowhere in the Hispanic American borderland is the Spanish language as geographically resilient as it is along the borderland."<sup>63</sup>

Efforts were also made to use Maine's public schools to assimilate students by discouraging the speaking of French. In 1895, for example, nativists attempted to pass a state bill forbidding instruction in public schools in any language other than English. The local state representative from Fort Kent and the governor successfully defeated the bill and allowed continued instruction in French.<sup>64</sup> Like Mexican-Americans in Texas, most Franco-Americans in Maine spoke the Romance language at home and English in school. Non-Anglos in both border communities were concerned that succeeding generations were losing their ability to speak French or Spanish, but the threat seemed stronger in the St. John River Valley than in the Rio Grande Valley. Perpetuation of a language other than English relied heavily on geographic isolation, high population count, and support networks that encouraged the use of the non-English language. In fact, given geographic isolation and the long-term



Throughout the 1910s, the U.S. government sent troops to the South Texas border region to respond to several “crises” along the U.S.-Mexican boundary line. Sandy Leveck’s unit, the Fourth Cavalry, was sent to the border in 1919. After being discharged in 1921, Sandy decided to remain in Texas. From *Greater Texas: the Lower Coast Country and the Lower Rio Grande Valley* (St. Louis: Joint Texas Immigration Bureau, 1910).

intermixing of cultures, distinctive dialects developed on both borders that combined English and non-English languages – Tex-Mex or Spanglish in Texas and Franglais in Maine. Perpetuation of language was especially important to preserving a sense of community, and both areas saw a resurgence of cultural pride and French or Spanish language programs in the later twentieth century.<sup>65</sup>

In both cases, Maine and Texas, the communities along the U.S. border often had stronger connections and more frequent interactions with neighbors across the border than with people within their same state. Northern Maine, like South Texas, is an area where a distinct population has maintained its identity through the perpetuation of a Romance language, adherence to Catholicism, and ongoing interaction with their international neighbor cities. The formation of regional identity occurs when people living in a specific place adapt that space to their needs. Regional identity also forms in response to external factors, such as neighboring communities or national government policies.<sup>66</sup> A community on the border is a complex interplay among all of these factors at the social, political, economic, religious, and cultural levels.

This borderland complexity is also reflected at the personal level. Elodia barely knew Sandy when they eloped and got married on February 10, 1921. She did not love him at first. However, as she learned what a good man and a caring husband and father he was after the birth of their first child Edith, she grew to love him. They had six children and probably would have had more had it not been for Sandy's unexpected death at the age of thirty-eight in 1938. He had finished his regular day of work and agreed to do a night job for one dollar's pay. He and three other men were working in a gravel pit in La Joya, Texas, when "a forty ton avalanche of rock and earth" buried them in the pit. Rescue efforts began immediately, but their dead bodies were finally recovered at 2:30 a.m. on the morning of September 16, 1938.<sup>67</sup>

Elodia became a young widow with six children. At the time of Sandy's death, the oldest child, Edith, had already married and left home. The ages of the remaining children ranged from two to thirteen years old, including a pair of seven-year-old, fraternal twins – Edith, Frederico (Fred), Jimmy, Bertha (twin), Gilberto (Gil, twin), and Pedro (Pete). Elodia's mother, Delfina, who lived down the street by this time, helped Elodia by taking care of the twin son, Gilberto, as a baby, and eventually ended up raising him. Sandy's boss helped Elodia find a job working for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) sewing army tents to support her family. Doña Elodia, as her close friends called her, was a hard-working, well-respected woman who was very protective of her family. As an example, in the mid-1940s, one of her teenage sons, Jim, ran off with the circus as the Thin Man. She tracked him all the way to Dallas and brought him back home by bus.

Despite the distance, tenuous contact was maintained with the Levesque side of the family after Sandy's death. Ethel, Sandy's sister, called once in a great while and occasionally sent what she called petrified potatoes from Maine. Elodia's son, Jim, met Ethel when he was stationed in New England, and he unknowingly almost dated a cousin. Unfortunately, the connection to Maine was broken when Ethel died, although no one in Texas knew exactly when until years later. Although Sandy died when most of his children were still very young, the memory of him, and the awareness of his French Mainer roots remained alive. Sandy and Elodia grew up in a period when transborder travel and intercultural interaction was common, albeit not always peaceful. Fortunately, the connection between the family's branches from the two border worlds, Maine and Texas, continues today.

There are clear differences between northern Maine and South

Texas, including distance, language, climate, and historical timeline. Texas had a more violent history and more intense racial tensions. In the early twentieth century, there was often a significant federal troop presence along the Texas border in order to restore and maintain peace, in response to violence instigated by ethnic Anglos against ethnic Mexicans (both often U.S. citizens), as well as to protect the border against reports of raids from across the border in Mexico. However, there were powerful similarities between these two border regions. Both areas shared European origins that were non-English, and both remained bilingual long after being fully incorporated into the United States. The climate may have been different, but both areas were highly suitable for agriculture. The dates may have not coincided, but both areas also had border conflicts and disputes with their neighbors, as well as regular transborder interaction.

Stricter early twentieth century immigration and border policies appear to have had only a slight impact on local border life. Locals on both sides of the border crossed freely for work, shopping, entertainment, and visiting family and friends. Only now do locals on both borders observe that early twenty-first century border policies, particularly requiring a passport to cross, appear to be having a noticeable influence on transborder travel. It will be interesting to see whether this decrease in border crossings will continue, and how that might impact transborder marriages and a sense of transborder community. During Sandy and Elodia's time, it appears the similarities frequently outweighed the differences and local tensions, at both personal and regional levels. Understanding the personal- to international-level dynamics along our borders helps us to see that, although there are important and often wonderful differences, we share much in common with our international neighbors. Understanding the place of the United States in an international context is vital in our increasingly globally-integrated world. And, appreciating the complexity of hybrid border cultures helps us redefine our sense of identity of the United States and our neighbors in this new century.

#### NOTES

1. Translation: "Elodia, go to the other room."

2. Bertha Leveck Mendiola, interview by Carla Leveck Mendiola, Dallas, Texas, March 1, 2008; Honorable Discharge from the United States Army on July 20, 1921 of Sandy Leveck #6001468 from the Troop of the 4th Cavalry, United States Army, Hidalgo County Clerk, recorded October 23, 1954; Marriage License for Sandy Leveck and Elodia McDonald, February 10, 1921, Hidalgo County, State of Texas. Bertha is the daughter of

Sandy and Elodia Leveck, and the mother of the author, Carla Mendiola. Elodia told Bertha this story. Some introductory details have been added for transitional smoothness and to establish the setting. Elodia's description was based on a photo from the time period. Sandy's physical description was gathered from his military record.

3. Identity terms are complex, multilayered, and often change over time and across space. The following are very general definitions. *Tejano* (male) or *Tejana* (female) refers to a Texan of Mexican ancestry. Many Tejano families lived in South Texas since the days when it was part of Mexico (and when Mexico was controlled by Spain). Depending on context in South Texas, *Mexican* or *Mexicano* could be used to refer to Mexican citizens, or to both U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry and Mexican citizens. In the early twentieth century, the term *Mexican-American* began to be used to refer to U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry, who lived in Texas and throughout the United States. *Ethnic Mexican* refers to all members of this ethnic group, both U.S. and Mexican citizens. *Anglo-American*, in this context, refers to U.S. citizens of predominantly British ancestry. In South Texas, *Anglo* often included all white groups that were not of Spanish or Mexican descent, and included both U.S. citizens and immigrants. I also use *ethnic Anglo* to refer to both U.S. citizens and immigrants. *Franco-American* refers to a U.S. citizen of Canadian Francophone descent. *Native American* and *Indian* refer to indigenous groups in the United States, while *First Nations* is the term used in Canada. *Francophone*, *Anglophone*, and *Hispanophone* refer to the dominant language and cultural background of a person – French, English, or Spanish, respectively.

4. The study of U.S. borderlands history focused initially on what would become the U.S. Southwest during the Spanish exploratory and colonial periods. It has since broadened in scope to include other time periods, regions, and varied definitions of borderlands. See James A. Sandos "From 'Boltonlands' to 'Weberlands': The Borderlands Enter American History," *American Quarterly* 46.4 (Dec. 1994): 595-604; David J. Weber "Conflicts and Accommodations: Hispanic and Anglo-American Borders in Historical Perspective, 1670-1853," *Journal of the Southwest* 39.1 (Spring 1997): 1-32; Victoria H. Cummins and Light T. Cummins "Building on Bolton: The Spanish Borderlands Seventy-Five Years Later," *Latin American Research Review* 35.2 (2000): 230-243; David J. Weber "The Spanish Borderlands, Historiography Redux," *The History Teacher* 39.1 (Nov. 2005): 43-56; Pekka Hämmäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 98.2 (Sept. 2011): 338-361; Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104. 3 (June 1999): 814-841 and the responses in the succeeding issue; Michael Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8.2 (Fall 1997): 211-242; Robert H. Jackson, *New Views of Borderlands History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); John R. Chávez, *Beyond Nations: Evolving Homelands in the North Atlantic World, 1400-2000* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History: Collected papers 1928-1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). For a Maine example of borderlands history, see Alan Taylor, "Center and Peripheries: Locating Maine's History," *Maine History* 39.1 (Spring 2000): 2-15.

5. For information on Africans and African Americans in Mexico, see Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall, eds. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); and Laura A. Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour: History, Race, and Place in the Making of "Black" Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). For information on early New England, see William Pierson, *Black Yankees: The Development of*

an Afro-American Sub-Culture in Eighteenth-Century New England (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review* 83 (February 1980): 44-78.

6. For details on Franco-American identity formation and life along the Maine border, respectively, see Mark Paul Richard, *Loyal but French: The Negotiation of Identity by French-Canadian Descendants in the United States* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2008); Jacques Poitras, *Imaginary Line: Life on an Unfinished Border* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 2011); Frank H. Sleeper et al., *Images of America: The Upper St. John Valley* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998). For discussions of cultural mixing and identity formation in South Texas see David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) and *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Andrés Tijerina, *Tejanos & Texas: Under the Mexican Flag, 1821-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994); Arnaldo De León, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Daniel Arreola, *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987); Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

7. Richard W. Judd, Edwin A. Churchill, and Joel W. Eastman, eds., *Maine: The Pine Tree State* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 2011), pp. 448-49, 467-470; Richard, *Loyal but French*, pp. 1-5; Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 82-84, 106-112; David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of South Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), pp. 103-105.

8. Birth Certificate of Sandy Levesque on May 20, 1900, Caribou City Clerk Office, State of Maine (copy issued January 14, 1969); Ms. Judy Corrow to Bertha Mendiola, June 10, 1999, in the possession of the author.

9. Her name may actually be Sarah Elizabeth Lloyd, according to a letter from Helen Leitch.

10. Birth Certificate of Sandy Levesque. The farming occupation was noted on Sandy's birth certificate. Sandy's English proficiency is noted in his military record.

11. Emilia "Emma" Reeves to Bertha Leveck Mendiola, ca.1998; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Hidalgo County, Texas, 1880*, Government Printing Office, Washington; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Hidalgo County, Texas, 1900*, Government Printing Office, Washington. Conflicting records of Delfina's place of birth suggest that she was born in Texas, then crossed the border to Mexico, perhaps spent time with family, and then returned to Texas when she was nineteen. Family oral history states that she was born on a Texas ranch, Rancho de las Flores near San Benito, Texas, or Rancho Las Palomas near Brownsville, Texas. The 1880 U.S. census states Delfina was born in Texas and was living as a servant at the age of eleven. However, the 1900 census states Delfina was born in Mexico and immigrated in 1888.

12. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Hidalgo County, Texas, 1900*, Government Printing Office, Washington. This record shows Severo McDonald as head of household, which included his wife Delfina and two children, Edelmira and Adolfo. Severo's father is listed as being from Tennessee and his mother from Mexico. Elodia's extended family exemplifies the potential for *mestizaje*. Her father, Severo McDonald had a German-descent half-

brother, Adrian Franz, and a Mexican-descent half-brother, Jose Uresti, all born from the same mother.

13. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Hidalgo County, Texas, 1900*, Government Printing Office, Washington; Bertha Leveck Mendiola to Carla Mendiola, ca.1992. See the 1900 census for Severo's occupation. Acceptance of Delfina's Indian ancestry was passed down as family knowledge. Bertha Leveck Mendiola, Elodia's daughter, attests to Elodia's bilingual proficiency.

14. For descriptions of the Aroostook War and its resolution see: Beatrice Craig and Maxine Dagenais, *The Land in Between* (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 2009), pp. 116-128; Richard W. Judd, "The Aroostook War, 1828-1842," in Judd et al, eds., *Maine: The Pine Tree State*, pp. 345-353.

15. For U.S. and Mexican scholarly perspectives on the U.S.-Mexican War, see Richard V. Francaviglia and Douglas W. Richmond, eds., *Dueling Eagles: Reinterpreting the U.S.-Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2000); and Paul Foss, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001). For a discussion of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and a transcription of the original document, see Oscar J. Martinez, *U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1996), pp. 2-9, 20-37; Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). The Gadsden Purchase of 1854 later finalized the border of New Mexico and Arizona.

16. For information on the U.S. border patrol, border enforcement, and immigration policy, see respectively, Andrew Graybill, *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Alexandra Minna Stern, "Nationalism on the Line: Masculinity, Race, and the Creation of the U.S. Border Patrol, 1910-1940," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed., Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 299-323; Patrick Ettinger, "We Sometimes Wonder What They Will Spring On Us Next': Immigrants and Border Enforcement in the American West, 1882-1930," *Western Historical Quarterly* 37.2 (Summer 2006): 159-81; Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

17. Gerard J. Brault, *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), p. 82.

18. Craig, *Land in Between*, pp. 255-287; Robert H. Babcock, Yves Frenette, Charles A. Scontras, and Eileen Eagen, "Work and Workers in the Industrial Age, 1865-1930," in Judd, *Maine*, pp. 448-453, 460-461, 465-466. For a broader discussion of immigration and labor from Canada, see Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991); and *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

19. Craig, *Land in Between*, pp. 230-245, 255, 268, 283, 287-88, 292-294.

20. Joel W. Eastman, "Transportation Systems in Maine, 1820-80," in Judd et al, *Maine*, pp. 314-19; Craig, *Land in Between*, p. 232.

21. Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, American Guide Series, *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1937), pp. 245-246.

22. Craig, *Land in Between*, p. 274.

23. *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'*, pp. 245-246.
24. Yves Frenette, "Ethnic Enclaves," in Judd et al, *Maine*, pp. 467-470.
25. Robert Babcock, "Industrial Growth and Worker Uncertainty," in Judd et al, *Maine*, p. 453.
26. For the early history of John Peter Levesque, Susan Little, and their children, see Dale L. Wilcox, *Notes on the Ancestry of Gail Vertaline (Sullivan) Wilcox* (Borden, IN: Dale Wilcox, 1998), pp. 191-200. A copy is located in the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB). See item MC80/2377, PANB, Fredericton, NB.
27. Wilcox, *Notes*, p. 200. There are conflicting possible dates of birth for John Peter Levesque. This 1803 date is based on his death certificate as noted in Wilcox.
28. Avis Armstrong to Bertha Leveck Mendiola, August 2004. This letter included a copy of baptismal data (of the former Methodist Church at Upper Kent, NB, no longer existing) sent by Pastor J. Milton Frasee (pastor of United Church of Canada, Woodstock Presbytery, East Florenceville, NB, home of former Upper Kent church records) to Avis Armstrong. The baptisms of six children were listed as Isaac, Francis, Mirinda, Coleman, Charles, and Morris LeBeck [*sic*], but no information was available for the other children (Jacob, John, Silas, or Rose), including where they were born.
29. Wilcox, *Notes*, p. 195.
30. Wilcox, *Notes*, p. 197. Avis McDougal Armstrong, "A History of the Madawaska Stream Area," *Gleanings* 3 (1983, revised 2003): 37. Wilcox, in *Notes*, states John Peter and Susan are buried in unmarked graves in Grimes Mill Cemetery. Armstrong, *Gleanings*, also lists both as buried in Grimes Mill Cemetery.
31. Marriage record of Coleman Levesque and Hannah Maskell, November 3, 1891, City Clerk of Caribou, State of Maine.
32. Helen LeBlanc Leitch to Bertha Leveck Mendiola, September 7 and 19, 2004. Helen is the granddaughter of Sandy's half-sister, Bertha Mae Rogers (born 1888), who was an older daughter of Hannah Maskell. Details about Hannah Maskell's life and this branch of the family were provided in e-mail letters.
33. Marriage record of Coleman Levesque and Hannah Maskell. The letter includes a copy of the 1891 official Caribou record that notes both Hannah and Coleman were "of Fort Fairfield."
34. Ethel Levesque was apparently a strong-minded woman who was willing to make difficult choices and engage in the world around her. She married her first husband, Eddie, around the start of World War I, but shortly thereafter moved to Vermont to work in a shoe factory. While at the shoe factory, Ethel met and married her second husband, Rolla Henry, in 1927, using the name of Ethel Bishop. Ethel returned to Maine, where she met her long-time friend, Harold, and together they ran a state welfare home for women, before they separated. Details about Ethel Levesque's life are from the letter from Helen Leitch.
35. *Hidalgo County Centennial, 1852-1952*, Official Historical Program, December 1952, p.6.
36. For details about, or images of, Fort Ringgold, see Thomas E. Simmons, *Fort Ringgold: A Brief Tour* (Edinburg: University of Texas Pan American Press, 1991); Oneida B. Saenz, *Historical Sites of Fort Ringgold and Rio Grande City* (MA thesis, Pan American University, 1981).
37. Frank C. Pierce, *A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Co., 1917), pp. 132-33.
38. For an example of how one Tejano family responded and adapted to changes from

1750 through 1880, see Carolina Castillo Crimm, *De Leon: A Tejano Family History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003). For a broader approach that carries the story into the twentieth century, see David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

39. For details on the development of irrigation in South Texas, see Jerry Edward Holbert, "Rural/Urban Conflict Over Water Control in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas" (Ph.D. diss., Texas A&M University, 1984).

40. For images and descriptions of the Valley, see Karen Gerhardt and Rod Santa Ana III, *Images of America: Hidalgo County, Texas* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2000); Margaret McAllen, *The Heritage Sampler* (Hidalgo, TX: Hidalgo County Historical Museum, 1991); *Progreso Haciendas: Citrus Fruit and Farm Lands in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas* (Weslaco, TX: Progreso Development, 1930).

41. "Delfina Perez de McDonough" (Delfina Perez), *Hidalgo County (Cattle) Marks and Brands Record*, vol. A, C: 100, September 25, 1897, Special Collections, University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas.

42. The sale of crochet items at the train station would have taken place in the 1910s. Elodia married Sandy and moved to McAllen between 1920 and 1921.

43. For the railroad information see *Hidalgo County Centennial Program*, p.6. For the produce quotation, see "Valley Citrus Fruit is in Demand," *Lower Rio Grande Valley News* (McAllen, TX), October 15, 1921.

44. *Hidalgo County Centennial Program*, pp. 21-28, 80.

45. The Brownsville Incident refers to a 1906 gun fight at a bar that allegedly involved black soldiers stationed at Fort Brownsville. It created a nationwide controversy when President Theodore Roosevelt dishonorably discharged 167 soldiers for their reported involvement, without due process of law.

46. For details, see Friedrich Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); David Dorado Romo, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juarez: 1893-1923* (El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005).

47. On the Plan de San Diego (Plan of San Diego), see Ben Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 71-143; Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), pp. 117-128.

48. On border tensions in this period, see Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*.

49. "News Sent in by our Division Units," *Rio Grande Rattler* (Hidalgo, TX), September 6, 1916.

50. *The History of the Fourth United States Cavalry: Prepared and Loyal* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 16.

51. Honorable Discharge from the United States Army, July 20, 1921, of Sandy Leveck, #6001468 from the Troop of the 4th Cavalry, Hidalgo County Clerk, recorded October 23, 1954; Certificate of promotion to corporal of Sandy Leveck #6001468 in the cavalry, November 4, 1920, United States Army, Fort Brown, Texas, Form No.152-AGO. It appears this promotion was temporary because his discharge paper lists him as a private.

52. Harold Fischer, interview by Bertha Leveck Mendiola and the author, McAllen, Texas, ca.1995. He was in the same cavalry unit as Sandy.

53. Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, pp. 167-178, and Arreola, *Tejano South Texas*, pp. 63-93.

54. Ana Cristina Downing de De Juana, "Intermarriage in Hidalgo County, 1860-1900" (MA thesis, University of Texas-Pan American, 1998), p. 87.
55. Downing de De Juana, "Intermarriage," p. 87.
56. Downing de De Juana, "Intermarriage," p. 87; Gonzales, *Mexicanos*, pp. 108-109.
57. Hidalgo County Courthouse, Civil Marriage Records, 1900 to 1930. An analysis by the author of intermarriages based on last names shows a fairly steady number of intermarriages that ranged between six to twelve percent of the total marriages in the community.
58. Downing de De Juana, "Intermarriage," p. 87.
59. In the strict Spanish definitions of social castas (castes), *mestizo* usually referred to people with one Spanish and one Indian parent, and *mulatto* to someone with one Spanish and one African parent.
60. *Metis* is often associated with First Nations living on the western plains in Canada, however this process of *métissage* occurred across the country, and across North America.
61. Craig, *Land in Between*, pp. 59-61.
62. This would have been in the late 1930s or early 1940s.
63. For details on "strongholds," mapped population changes over time, and the quotation, see Arreola, *Tejano South Texas*, pp. 46, 44-55, 198. For language and education in Texas, see Carlos Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).
64. Craig, *Land in Between*, pp. 312-314.
65. For details on Maine French language practices and settlement history, see Doris Metz, "French Language Revitalization in Northern Maine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Denver, 2006), pp. 1-34; Phyllis L. Jacobson, "The Social Context of Franco-American Schooling in New England," *The French Review* 57.5 (April 1984): 641-656; Glenn A. Martinez, *Mexican Americans and Language: Del Dicho al Hecho* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006).
66. For an overview of scholarship on place and space in cultural geography research, see Arreola, *Tejano South Texas*, pp. 1-8. For a Canadian perspective on identity formation, see Fernand Harvey, "Identity and Scales of Regionalism in Canada and Quebec: A Historical Approach" *Norteamérica Hoy: Temas Relevantes/North America Today: Outstanding issues* 2 (July – December 2006): 77-98.
67. Sandy and Elodia had seven children, but only six survived to adulthood. For details on the accident, see "Workers are Trapped at La Joya Pit," *Valley Evening Monitor* (McAllen, TX), September 16, 1938.