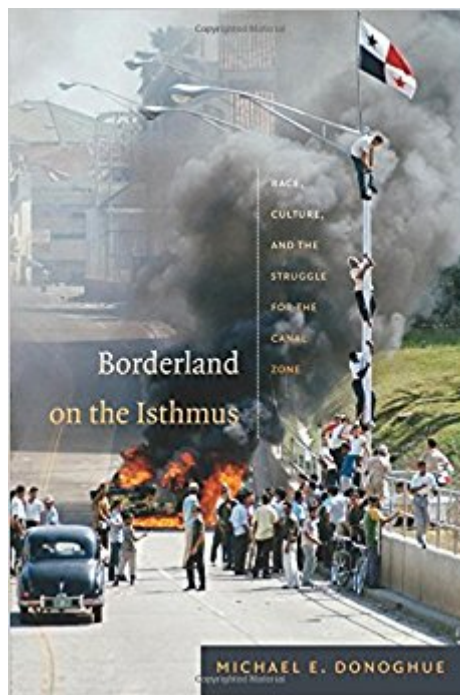


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# Borderland On The Isthmus: Race, Culture, And The Struggle For The Canal Zone (American Encounters/Global Interactions)



## Synopsis

The construction, maintenance, and defense of the Panama Canal brought Panamanians, U.S. soldiers and civilians, West Indians, Asians, and Latin Americans into close, even intimate, contact. In this lively and provocative social history, Michael E. Donoghue positions the Panama Canal Zone as an imperial borderland where U.S. power, culture, and ideology were projected and contested. Highlighting race as both an overt and underlying force that shaped life in and beyond the Zone, Donoghue details how local traditions and colonial policies interacted and frequently clashed. Panamanians responded to U.S. occupation with proclamations, protests, and everyday forms of resistance and acquiescence. Although U.S. "Zonians" and military personnel stigmatized Panamanians as racial inferiors, they also sought them out for service labor, contraband, sexual pleasure, and marriage. The Canal Zone, he concludes, reproduced classic colonial hierarchies of race, national identity, and gender, establishing a model for other U.S. bases and imperial outposts around the globe.

## Book Information

Series: American Encounters/Global Interactions

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (May 9, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822356783

ISBN-13: 978-0822356783

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 14 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #960,951 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in Books > History >

Americas > Central America > Panama #1267 in Books > History > Americas > Mexico #42507 in Books > History > Americas > United States

## Customer Reviews

"In this fascinating social history, Michael E. Donoghue breaks new ground by exploring not just a single group in the Panama Canal Zone, but all of the diverse and conflicted resident populations and the relationships between them, particularly in the years after World War II. He shows how societies in conflict also collaborated, and he locates these interactions in relation to the broader U.S. imperial project in the Canal Zone." —John Lindsay-Poland, author of *Emperors in the Jungle*:

The Hidden History of the U.S. in Panama" In this fascinating social history, Michael E. Donoghue breaks new ground by exploring not just a single group in the Panama Canal Zone, but all of the diverse and conflicted resident populations and the relationships between them, particularly in the years after World War II. He shows how societies in conflict also collaborated, and he locates these interactions in relation to the broader U.S. imperial project in the Canal Zone." (John Lindsay-Poland, author of *Emperors in the Jungle: The Hidden History of the U.S. in Panama*) "As the newly expanded Panama Canal opens to pose historic challenges to U.S. trade and diplomacy, Michael E. Donoghue's timely, superbly written, and remarkably researched book is unsurpassed in giving us a social history of the century-long American empire in Panamaâ with welcome emphases on the post-1945 years, the multiethnic Panamanian perspectives, the long-lasting U.S. imperial experiences, and their legacies for the twenty-first century." (Walter LaFeber, Andrew and James Tisch University Professor Emeritus, Cornell University) "Donoghue's social history of the Canal Zone is an indispensable source for our understanding of the good, bad, and ugly of this experiment in a (perhaps) American empire." (Russel Crandall *American Historical Review* 2015-10-01) "The book should be required reading for anyone seeking to get a sense of life around the Panama Canal, especially in World War II and the postwar decades." (Noel Maurer *Journal of American History* 2016-06-01) "Borderland on the Isthmus is the most thorough and best depiction of day-to-day reality in the post-war Canal Zone to date.... The theoretical questions that linger here... make this anthro-historical study all the more important to read for historians interested in Latin America and the US empire." (Ezer Vierba *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2016-08-01) "Borderland on the Isthmus is an outstanding achievement, highly recommended for scholars of empires in general and the US empire in particular, borderland studies, US diplomatic history, Latin American studies, gender studies, cultural studies, and social history." (Atalia Shragai *Canadian Journal of History* 2016-11-07)

Michael E. Donoghue is Associate Professor of History at Marquette University.

Excellent book. It taught me a lot of the history that I didn't understand when I was growing up in what was known as the Canal Zone in Gamboa; later renamed Santa Cruz for whatever reason. A vivid account of events that I now come to understand after all these years. A must read!

Very much in touch with reality. There could be some adjustments. However, this depends on which side of the border you are.

And now I know. I was stationed in the Panama Canal Area at Fort Kobbe in 1982 -1984 and married my wife (who didn't like Americans) who is from Panama City. My father in law grew up in the CZ Town of Red Tank. It took this book for me to put it all together as to why there was so much hostility towards us Americans. Not mentioned in the book was during the Panama Canal Area time the Police in Panama were very hostile to Americans in some cases. This include planting drugs on people which a simple Urinalysis test proved a soldiers innocents. This book opens many doors that those of us with a romantic view of the Canal Zone are stunned to learn. Everything the author writes about is and was evident if one only took the time to look. My wife told me how she felt when she had to enter the Zone to take her English classes at the YMCA. Suddenly without leaving her country she was treated like a third rate person and under another country's laws and control. As for the Canal under Panama's control it has never been in better shape. True the towns and military installations in the old Canal Area are not dress right dress any more. But this is because they are now just a part of Panama and no longer are maintained on the backs of the US Tax payers. Perhaps my biggest surprise in the canal area was seeing a gas station just off the bridge exit between Balboa and Amador. With the canal expansion just about completed, I think this will ultimately make the Panama Canal, Panama's Canal. Great read but it will humble you.

As a Borderlands historian and the son of a second-generation Zonian, I was very excited about this book's publication. The history of Panama has long been dominated by the construction and operation of the canal as a piece of infrastructure. The fact that it looms so large is natural given its disproportionate importance to Panama's identity and economy. Yet, at the same time, it warps the narrative fabric of Panama's history, making it much harder to locate the country's social, racial, and gendered pasts within an everyday context. Compared to other historiographies of Central American and Caribbean countries, Panama's English-language literature still has much work that must be done. Michael Donoghue's book is a scholarly tour de force that serves as an opening salvo in a new trend of social history about the country. This is not to say that other great works that came before it are lacking, but rather that *Borderland on the Isthmus* elevates the entire historical literature on Panama. It delves deeply into the dynamics of life in, along, and outside the Canal Zone while also making powerful connections with postcolonial and border scholarship that are deeply compelling. This book needs to be used in every graduate readings course on Borderlands, U.S. foreign relations, or postcolonial history. It is truly a stunningly well researched, well written work and frankly, although it's light often uncovers ugly memories Zonians should raise a rum &

coke to toast Dr. Donoghue, for his is a work that will preserve CZ history for generations.

good read

As a Panamanian scholar, I want to thank Michael E. Donoghue for taking his time to bring critical readers such an amazing topic. I personally experienced crossing this borderland in my own country while studying English. I was the outsider who always felt the American bases were like the Secret Garden for most of us. I cannot put this book down and even though some of facts mentioned in here might be painful to some folks, I can say that I witnessed some of them. Excellent job!

I will admit that I am writing this review with a bias, I had Professor Donoghue for 3 courses while attending University. That being said, Professor Donoghue does a excellent job engaging his readers while being informative and entertaining. He adds a deep level of detail and packs his book full of vignettes and stories from the Canal Zone. This book does a great job of exploring the issues it raises from all perspectives involved (Zonians, US Military Personnel, Panamanians, and Third Country Nationals) This is a great detailed look at an often forgotten or overlooked segment of American History.

This was exactly what I was in search for my next reading on Panamanian historical development. I am in great debt to and Mr. Donoghue. The author has contributed so much in historical information that I cannot thank him enough. , I also thank you.

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