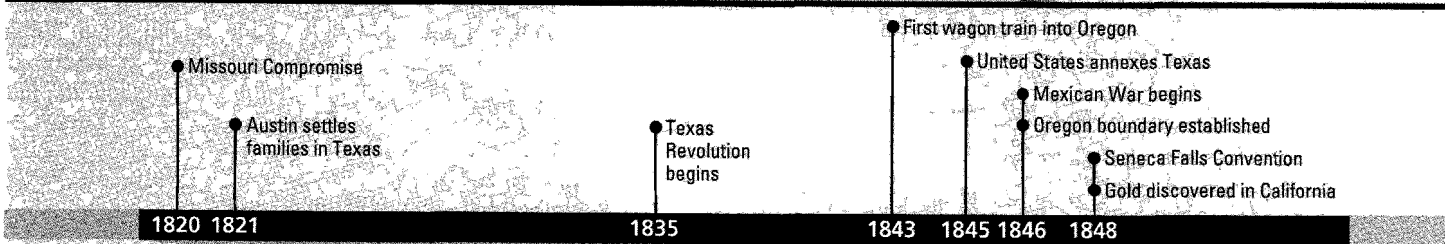


GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION AND POPULATION GROWTH During the 1840s, population growth and westward expansion were celebrated as never before in American history. This map shows the results. By 1850, population density was increasing in most of the settled portions of the country, and huge new regions were coming under American control.



Westward Expansion and

Manifest Destiny, 1841-1849

The Explosion Westward

- What expectations pulled Americans westward between 1820 and 1848?

The Social Fabric in the West

- To what extent did people in the West expect to

create new and different societies in that region?

- What sorts of cultures emerged in response to western constraints?
-

The Triumph of "Manifest Destiny"

- What expectations contributed to the idea of manifest destiny?
- Did choices by American settlers in Oregon and Texas reflect those expectations? Why or why not?

Expansion and Sectional Crisis

- How did expansionist and economic expectations shape Americans' positions on slavery in the 1840s?

(INTRODUCTION)

The election of frontier hero William Henry Harrison to the presidency in 1840 was but one milestone in a progressive westward tilt in the nation's political and cultural focus. As transportation systems extended the American frontier and as industrialization generated new capital, speculators invested in the newly opened West. Americans looking for economic opportunities, places to transplant particular religious or political beliefs, or simply adventure followed those entrepreneurs. They *expected* to find a wide-open land of opportunity.

But men and women moving into the West faced many *constraints*. The land itself was often not what they *expected*. Water was frequently in short supply, and wild animals were a constant threat to crops and livestock. In addition, most of the land in the West was already claimed by Indians, the Spanish, or the British.

Environmental and cultural *constraints* forced change on pioneers and led to the creation of new societies. Mormon farmers in the Utah deserts, for example, had to learn to cooperate with each other in building irrigation systems. Pioneers in the Southwest had to learn about the Spanish language and culture.

Westward expansion brought great pressure to bear on the nation's political and economic institutions. Easterners disagreed about what institutions should be planted in the new territories. Southerners *expected* to spread cotton agriculture. Northerners were equally convinced that a diversified entrepreneurial economy was the wave of the future. And each region had specific notions about tariffs, taxes, the money supply, and the role of the federal government in the economy.

Each section *chose* to push for its own vision of westward expansion, but each met *constraints*. The United States fought a war with Mexico and then faced a national crisis over what to do with newly acquired territories. The *outcome* was a political dispute that rocked the halls of Congress and moved some to call for outright civil disobedience.

At the core of the debate lay the issue of slavery. Although only a few Americans were disturbed

Expectations
Constraints
Choices
Outcomes

about its moral implications, slavery symbolized the cultural, economic, and political differences between northerners and southerners. Independent farmers and businessmen feared the *constraint* of competition from wealthy southern planters. Workers, too, wondered how they could compete successfully against slave laborers. While more and more people in the North and the Old Northwest *chose* to raise their voices against the expansion of slavery, southerners worked all the harder to ensure their freedom to take slaves anywhere they *chose*.

As the debate over slavery and expansion broadened, another group of Americans chafed under discrimination. Evangelical women had *chosen* to join a wide variety of reform movements, including abolitionism, but they found that their sex was a major *constraint* to their participation. Few men were willing to give them the political and economic voice they believed they needed to carry out their mission. Increasing frustration was the *outcome* for such women.

Expansion and Crisis

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1820 Missouri Compromise | 1843 First wagon train into Oregon
First Organic Laws adopted in Oregon |
| 1821 Stephen F. Austin settles Americans
in Texas | 1844 James K. Polk elected president
Murder of Joseph Smith |
| 1834 Mexican government begins seizure of
California mission lands | 1845 United States annexes Texas
Term "manifest destiny"
coined |
| 1835 Texas Revolution begins | 1846 Mexican War begins
Oregon boundary established; United
States and Britain end joint occupation
California declares itself a republic |
| 1836 Rebellion against Mexican rule in California | 1847 Whitman massacre
Mormons arrive in
Utah |
| 1838 John Quincy Adams filibusters
against annexation of Texas
Armed confrontation between Maine
and New Brunswick | 1848 Gold discovered in California
Zachary Taylor elected president
Seneca Falls Convention
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo |
| 1839 John Sutter founds New Helvetia | 1855 Indians in the Pacific Northwest settled
on reservations |
| 1840 William Henry Harrison elected president | |
| 1841 John Tyler becomes president
Congress passes preemption
bill | |
| 1842 Elijah White named federal Indian agent
for Oregon | |

The

Explosion Westward

Western pioneers seldom sought to create new and different lifestyles for themselves, but the physical and cultural environments in the West shaped their society in peculiar ways. Thus cultures that contrasted sharply with those in the industrializing North and the plantation South emerged in the new West.

The Complicated Worlds of the West

Two views of the West dominated the popular imagination in the 1840s. One, traceable to Zebu-

Ion Pike's expedition in 1806-1807, envisioned the West as a "great American desert" unsuitable for habitation by any but the hardiest Indians. The other, traceable to the Lewis and Clark expedition, imagined a verdant region rich in resources. Common to both was the notion that the West was a virgin land free for the taking.

Realities in the Far **West** were much more complex than the myths suggested. Indeed, vast areas of the region had extremely dry and fragile ecologies largely unsuitable for the sort of economic

Far West In North America, the lands west of the Mississippi River.

exploitation nineteenth-century Americans desired. At the other extreme, some regions were so wet that their rain forests were virtually impassable. But nowhere was there virgin land.

For thousands of years, various Indian groups had extracted a rich living from the many different environments in the Far West. By moving from place to place and trading, Indians had taken advantage of the West's diversity, receiving what each ecological zone had to offer. This flexible approach to the complicated and often fragile ecology of the Far West provided an excellent living and did minimal damage to natural resources. If the land appeared to expansionists in the United States to be unoccupied, it was only because they would not, or could not, recognize a system of land use with which they were unfamiliar.

With the arrival of Spanish, French, Russian, and other Europeans, the complex world of intergroup relations in the West became even more complicated. Indians on the Great Plains used the mobility provided by European horses to expand not just their hunting range but also their trading range. Goods from the Plains made their way regularly to Spanish settlements in New Mexico, and replacement horses, guns, and other European goods flooded northward in return. This was the world into which early western entrepreneurs like John Jacob Astor and Auguste Chouteau had entered earlier in the century. No unexploited land or great American desert could have supported their monumental visions of an inland fur empire. What both men did was to tap into an already complicated trading world.

The image of the solitary trapper braving a hostile environment and even more hostile Indians is the stuff of American adventure novels and movies. Although characters like Christopher ("Kit") Carson and Jeremiah ("Crow Killer") Johnson really did exist, these men were merely advance agents for an extractive industry geared to the efficient removal of animal pelts.

What drew men like Carson and Johnson into the Far West in the 1830s and 1840s was an innovation instigated by a former Astor employee and one-time partner of Chouteau, William Henry Ashley. Taking advantage of the presence of large numbers of underemployed young men seeking fortune and adventure in the West, Ashley in 1825

set up the highly successful rendezvous system for collecting pelts. Under this arrangement, individual trappers like Carson combed the upper Missouri for furs. Once each year, Ashley conducted a fur rendezvous in the mountains, where the trappers brought their furs and exchanged them for goods.

Ashley's, Chouteau's, and Astor's strategies for harvesting wealth from the Far West inadvertently led to the decline of the fur trade. Astor's Asian trade opened the way for vast silk imports. Soon silk hats became a fashion rage in both America and Europe, replacing beaver hats, which had sustained the fur trade. In addition, the efficiency of these enterprises virtually wiped out beaver populations in the Rocky Mountains. By the 1830s, the beaver business had slowed to a near standstill.

Many beaver hunters stayed in the West to become founding members of new communities. As early as 1840, fur trapper Robert ("Doc") Newell reportedly told his companion Joe Meek, "The fur trade is dead in the Rocky Mountains, and it is no place for us now, if ever it was." The two men then headed to the Willamette Valley in Oregon to become settlers.

Often the first to join the former fur trappers in the West were not rugged yeoman farmers but highly organized and well-financed land speculators. Liberalization of the land laws during the first half of the nineteenth century had put smaller tracts within reach of more citizens, but speculators continued to play a role in land distribution by offering even smaller tracts and more liberal credit.

A third group of expectant fortune hunters was lured into the Far West by the discovery of gold. Most fortune hunters did not find gold, but many stayed to establish trading businesses, banks, and

extractive industry An industry, such as fur trapping, logging, or mining, that removes natural resources from the environment.

rendezvous system A system in which trappers gathered furs independently in their own territories and met traders once a year to exchange the furs for goods.

farms. Others moved on, still seeking their fortunes. But usually they too eventually settled down to become shopkeepers, farmers, and entrepreneurs.

The Attraction of the West

The underlying cause for westward migration was the hope of economic opportunity. The promise of cheap land was especially enticing after the panics of 1819 and 1837.

Although the promise of economic opportunity pulled most people westward, some were pushed in that direction, particularly New Englanders. Two sources of land pressure combined to uproot these descendants of the Puritans. First, the New England tradition of dividing family holdings equally among adult children had created a shortage of workable farms in the region. Second, innovations in spinning and weaving wool had created a sheep-raising craze after 1824. Sheep required little labor but a lot of land. Between 1825 and 1840, sheep displaced people throughout much of the New England countryside as smaller, poorer farmers sold out.

Thus young people in New England faced a choice between moving into cities or heading west. Those who opted to migrate west sought an environment friendly to their moral and religious outlook in areas like upper New York, Michigan, and Oregon, where Protestant missionaries were establishing little New Englands in the wilderness.

The image of the independent farmer fleeing the restrictions of civilized life and hewing out a living on the frontier is a persistent myth in American history. Although a few antisocial sorts moved to the frontier to escape neighbors, most went west as part of a larger community.

Most migrants to Texas in the 1820s and 1830s came in large groups under the direction of men like **Stephen F. Austin**. Beginning in 1821, the Spanish government in Mexico gave these empresarios land grants and the right to assess fees in exchange for encouraging settlement in its northern colony. Spanish authorities stipulated that all the families had to be Roman Catholic or be willing to convert.

Austin offered families land for a filing fee of only 12% cents per acre and had no trouble find

ing willing settlers. He led his first overland party from Louisiana into Texas in 1821. After Mexico became independent of Spain in 1822, Austin convinced the Mexican government to extend his license.

The first permanent agricultural settlements in the Pacific Northwest were begun by Protestant missionaries to the Indians. These missionaries encouraged mass migration to the new territory. Their calls appealed to people eager for economic opportunity in familiar cultural surroundings. When the Methodist church issued a call for a "great reinforcement" for its mission in Oregon, it received a flood of applications. Three separate reinforcements arrived in Oregon by ship in 1840, but it was not until 1843 that large-scale migration began.

Beginning in the spring of 1843 and every spring thereafter for decades, families from all over the East gathered in Missouri to start the overland trek by wagon train. Although trail life was novel for most of the Oregon-bound migrants, the division in domestic labor remained much as it was at home. "Everybody was supposed to rise at daylight, and while the women were preparing breakfast, the men rounded up the cattle, took down the tents, yoked the oxen to the wagons and made everything ready for an immediate start after the morning meal was finished," one young pioneer woman remembered. Even social customs remained the same. "We were expected to visit our neighbors when we paused for rest," the same woman noted. "If we did not, we were designated as 'high-toned' or 'stuck-up.'"

And so life went on during the six months it took to cross the more than 2,000 miles to the **Oregon Country**. Families arriving in Oregon tended to settle in rings around the existing missions,

Stephen F. Austin American colonizer in Texas who was imprisoned by the Mexican government on suspicion of revolutionary sympathies and who later took part in the Texas Revolution.

empresario In the Spanish colonies, a person who organized and led a group of settlers in exchange for land grants and the right to assess fees.

Oregon Country The region to the north of Spanish California extending from the crest of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific coast.



◆ With two wives and several children to help share the burden of work, this Mormon settler was in a good position to do well, even in the harsh conditions that prevailed in the near-desert environment of Utah. Sensitive to disapproval from more traditional Christians, families like this tended to associate exclusively with other Mormons and pressured outsiders to leave as quickly as possible. *Denver Public Library.*

which soon became the hubs for transplanted New England—style villages.

The Mormons established another migration pattern into the **Great Basin**. Persecution continued to haunt Joseph Smith's followers after their move to Illinois and became much worse when the church leadership declared polygamy acceptable. In 1844, Smith was murdered by a mob in Carthage, Illinois, leading many Mormon leaders to conclude that the community would never be safe until they moved far from mainstream American civilization. **Brigham Young**, Smith's successor, led sixteen hundred Mormons beyond the Rocky Mountains in search of a refuge. On July 24, 1847, Young's advance party finally pushed into the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

Despite their differences, pioneers shared the fundamental problem of being short of hard cash. Western farmers barely made ends meet when conditions were good and fell into debt when weather or other hazards interrupted farming. Still, those who were lucky and exercised careful management could carve out an excellent living. Strongly centralized authority and a deeply felt sense of community helped the Mormons to prosper. Many people in other communities, however, had their land repossessed or had to sell out to pay off creditors.

Many pioneers had no legal claim to their farms. People often settled wherever they could find unoccupied land. Thousands of squatters living on unsold federal land were a problem for the national government when the time came to sell off the public domain. Western politicians frequently advocated bills guaranteeing "squatter rights." They finally maneuvered the passage of a **preemption** bill in 1841 that gave squatters the right to settle on unsurveyed federal land.

Squatters still had to buy the land once it came up for sale.

The Social Fabric in the West

Migrants to Texas, Oregon, and Utah seldom intended to create a new social order in the West. Rather, they intended to re-create the society they

Great Basin A desert region including most of present-day Nevada and parts of Utah, California, Idaho, Wyoming, and Oregon.

Brigham Young Mormon leader who took over in 1844 after Joseph Smith's death and guided the Mormons from Illinois to Utah, where they established a permanent home for the church.

Great Salt Lake A shallow, salty lake in the Great Basin, about 83 miles long and 51 miles wide; the Mormons established a permanent settlement near it in 1847.

preemption bill A temporary law that gave squatters the right to buy land they had settled on before it was offered for sale at public auction.

were leaving behind. The physical and cultural environments into which they moved, however, forced change on them. Pioneers had to accommodate themselves to the geography and people they found there. Thus some significant differences in the culture and society of the Far West emerged.

The New Cotton Country

Migrants to cotton country in Texas and Arkansas often started out as landless herders. These families carved out claims beyond the **frontier line** and worked as herders until they could put the land into production. Frequently, they did not have to clear land because Indians had already done so.

Although some areas were cleared and extremely fertile, others were swampy, rocky, and unproductive. Differences in the quality of land helped recreate the southern class system in the new areas. Those fortunate enough to get profitable land might become great planters; those less fortunate had to settle for lesser prosperity.

Southern pioneers devoted most of their time to the tasks necessary for survival. Even their social and recreational life tended to center on practical tasks. House building, planting, and harvesting were often done in cooperation with neighbors. On such occasions, plenty of food and homemade whiskey were consumed. Women gathered together separately for large-scale projects like group quilting. Another community event for southwestern settlers was the periodic religious revival, which might last for days. Here they could make new acquaintances, court sweethearts, and discuss the common failings in their souls and on their farms.

Westering Yankees

The frontier experience for migrants to Michigan and Oregon differed from that of southwesterners. In the Old Northwest, as Indians such as the Winnebagos were pushed out, pioneers snatched up their deserted farms. Settlers quickly established villages like those left behind in New England. Law courts, churches, and schools were likely to be the first institutions set up in northwestern towns. These institutions and the similarity of this region

to New England helped prevent the growth of class distinctions that had developed so quickly along the southern frontier.

Conditions in the Oregon Country resembled those farther east in most respects, but some significant differences did exist. Most important, the Indians in the Oregon Country had never practiced agriculture. Their environment was so rich in fish, meat, and wild vegetables that farming was unnecessary. Large, open prairies flanking the Columbia, Willamette, and other rivers provided fertile farmland.

Much like the Indians in colonial New England, the Nez Perces, Cayuses, and Kalapuyas of the Oregon Country made whites welcome. In 1831, the Nez Perces and the Flatheads even issued an appeal for whites to come live among them. Although occasional tensions arose between white settlers and Indians, no serious conflict took place until 1847, when a disillusioned group of Cayuse Indians killed missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. The so-called Whitman massacre triggered the Cayuse War and a concerted effort by white Americans to confine all the northwestern tribes to reservations. By 1855, this effort had succeeded.

The Hispanic Southwest

Frontier life in California was unique in many ways. One major reason was that the Spanish left a lasting cultural imprint on California. Spanish exploration into what is now California did not begin until 1769. Prompted by Russian expansion into North America, the Spanish established garrisons at San Diego and Monterey. Eventually, Franciscan monks established twenty-one missions, each placed one day's travel from the next, extending from San Diego to the town of Sonoma, north of San Francisco.

The mission system provided a skeleton for Spanish settlement in California. The missions were soon surrounded by groves, vineyards, and lush farms, all tended by California Indians, who

frontier line The outer limit of agricultural settlement bordering on the wilderness.



◆ Using Indian labor, Franciscan missionaries transformed the dry California coastal plain into a blooming garden and built beautiful missions in which to celebrate their religion. This early nineteenth-century painting by Oriana Day shows the Carmel Mission at the peak of its prosperity. *"Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo"* by Oriana Day, oil on canvas 20"x 30". The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. Gift of Mrs. Eleanor Martin.

often became virtual slaves. California's coastal plain became a vast and productive garden at the cost of thousands of Indian lives.

The Franciscans continued to control these missions after Mexico won its independence from Spain. Between 1834 and 1840, however, the Mexican government seized the California missions and sold them off to private citizens. An elite class of Spanish-speaking Californians snatched up the rich lands. Never numbering more than about a thousand people, this Hispanic elite eventually owned some 15 million acres of California's richest land. In 1836, the **Californios** and non-Hispanic newcomers rebelled against Mexico to place Californio Juan Bautista Alvarado in the governorship of California. The landholding elite never ended California's official relationship with Mexico but nevertheless ran the region's government.

At first, the Californios welcomed outsiders as neighbors and trading partners. Ships from the United States called regularly at California ports,

picking up cargoes of beef tallow and cowhides. The settlers they brought were given generous grants and assistance to open up new lands and businesses. **John Sutter**, for example, a Swiss immigrant, was given a grant of land in the Sacramento valley, where he established a colony called New Helvetia in 1839. This settlement drew trappers, traders, Indians, and other settlers like a magnet.

Californios Spanish colonists in California in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

tallow Hard fat obtained from the bodies of cattle and other animals and used to make candles and soap.

John Sutter Swiss immigrant who founded a colony in California; in 1848 the discovery of gold on his property attracted hordes of miners who seized his land and left him financially ruined.

In New Helvetia, San Francisco, and other centers in northern California, a cosmopolitan society developed. Farther south, however, in the heartland of Spanish California, the Hispanic landholding elite resented intrusions by lower-class Mexicans and other newcomers. Governor Alvarado had a number of American and British citizens arrested on the suspicion that they were plotting to overthrow his government.

A more harmonious pattern of interracial cooperation existed in Santa Fe, where an elite class emerged from the intermingled fortunes and intermarriages among Indian, European, and American populations. Thus the Hispanic leaders of New Mexico, unlike those of California, consistently worked with their kinsmen.

In Texas, the economic desperation of impoverished southern frontiersmen combined with cultural insensitivity and misunderstanding to create the sort of tensions that were rare in New Mexico. **Texians** (non-Hispanic settlers) tended to cling to their own ways, and **Tejanos** (migrants from Mexico) did the same.

The Mormon Community

Physical conditions in the Great Basin led to a completely different social and cultural order in that area. Utah is a high desert plateau where water is scarce and survival depends on its careful management. The tightly knit community of Mormons was perfectly suited to that hostile environment.

Mormons followed the principle that "land belongs to the Lord, and his Saints are to use so much as they can work profitably." The church measured off plots of up to 40 acres and assigned them to settlers on the basis of need. Thus a man with several wives, many children, and enough wealth to hire help might receive a grant of 40 acres, but a man with one wife, few children, and little capital might receive only 10. Community work parties among the Mormons were more rigidly controlled and formal than in other settlements. Men had to supply labor in direct proportion to the amount of land they were granted. A man who had been granted 40 acres had to provide four times the amount of labor as one who had been granted 10.

Because of their bad experiences in Missouri and Illinois, the Mormons were unaccepting of strangers. The **General Authorities** of the church made every effort to keep Utah an exclusively Mormon society. The one exception was American Indians. Because Indians occupied a central place in Mormon sacred literature, the Mormons practiced an accepting and gentle Indian policy. The Mormon hierarchy used its enormous power in Utah to prevent private violence against Indians whenever possible.

The Triumph of "Manifest Destiny"

Economic opportunity was the primary reason for westward movement before the Civil War erupted in 1861, but it was not the only reason people ventured west. Cultural and religious issues also pushed people west. So did the idea of **manifest destiny**.

The Rise of Manifest Destiny

To some extent, manifest destiny was as old as the Puritan idea of a "wilderness Zion" (see pages 54-56). Like John Winthrop, many early nineteenth-century Americans believed they had a mission to go into new lands. During the antebellum period, romantic nationalism, land hunger, and the Second Great Awakening shaped this sense of divine mission into a powerful incentive to expand westward.

Evangelical Protestants came to believe that the westward movement was part of a divine plan for

Texians Non-Hispanic settlers in Texas in the nineteenth century.

Tejanos Mexican settlers in Texas in the nineteenth century.

General Authorities Leaders in the Mormon church hierarchy; the prophet, his two assistants, twelve apostles, and several full-time administrators.

manifest destiny Term first used in the 1840s to describe the inevitability of the continued westward expansion of the United States.

North America and the rest of the world. The earliest and most aggressive proponents of expansion were Christian missionary organizations, whose many magazines, newsletters, and reports were the first to give it formal voice. Politicians were not far behind. Democrat Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri quickly adopted the missionary rhetoric in promoting liberal land policies, territorial acquisition, and overseas expansion. By 1845, when journalist John L. O'Sullivan coined the expression "manifest destiny," the idea that the United States should occupy all of North America was already an established one.

Expansion to the North and West

One major obstacle to manifest destiny was that Spain, Britain, Russia, and other countries already owned large parts of North America. The continued presence of the British proved to be a constant irritation.

The disputed border between Maine and Canada threatened to lead to a major confrontation in 1838, when Canadian loggers moved into the disputed region and began cutting trees. Fighting broke out when American lumberjacks attempted to drive them away. The Canadian province of New Brunswick and the state of Maine then mobilized their militias; Congress called up fifty thousand men; and President Van Buren ordered General Winfield Scott to the scene. Scott arranged a truce, but tensions continued to run high.

Another source of conflict with Britain was the **Oregon Question**. At the close of the War of 1812, the two countries had been unable to settle their claims and had agreed to joint occupation of Oregon for ten years. This arrangement was extended indefinitely in 1827.

Joint occupation began to be undermined when American settlers in the Willamette Valley held a series of meetings in 1843 to create a civil government. A constitutional convention was called for May 2. Although the British tried to prevent the convention, the assembly passed the First Organic Laws of Oregon on July 5, 1843, making Oregon an independent republic in all but name. Independence, however, was not the settlers' long-term

goal. They desired **annexation** by the United States of America.

Revolution in Texas

Unlike the situation in Maine and the Oregon Country, the ownership of the Southwest was fairly clear. Present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, and portions of Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming belonged to Spain prior to Mexico's successful revolution in 1821. After that revolution, title presumably passed to Mexico. But owning this vast region and controlling it were two different matters. The distance between the capital in Mexico City and the northern provinces made governing the region difficult.

Anglo-American settlers in the Southwest generally ignored Mexican customs, including their pledge to practice Roman Catholicism. The distant and politically unstable Mexican government could do little to enforce laws and customs. In addition, many Tejanos desired greater autonomy from Mexico City as much as their American counterparts did.

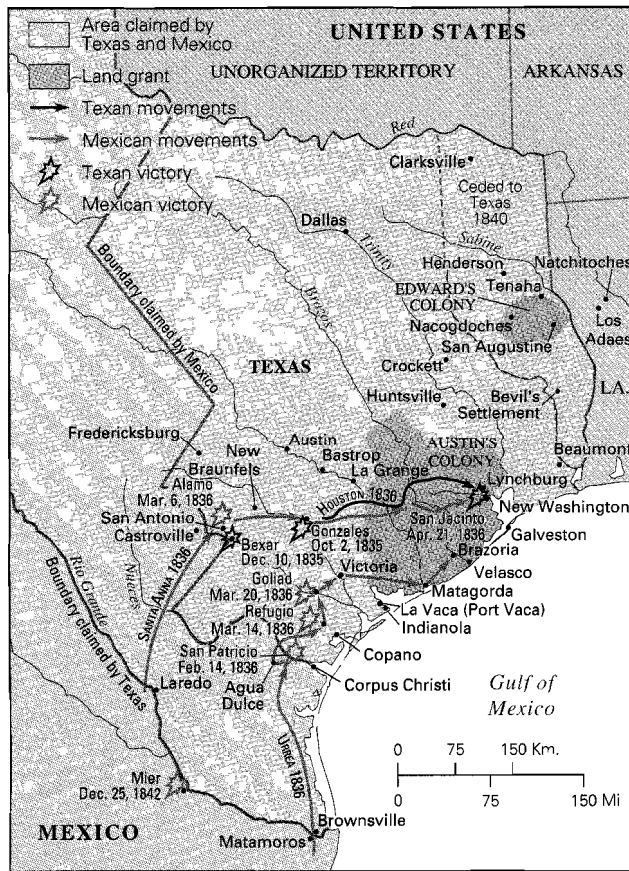
In an effort to forge a peaceful settlement with the Mexican government, Stephen F. Austin went to Mexico City in 1833. While Austin was there, **Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna** seized power. A key figure in the adoption of a republican constitution in 1824, Santa Anna had come to the conclusion that Mexico was not ready for democracy. He suspended the constitution, dismissed congress, and declared himself the "Napoleon of the West."

Austin pressed several petitions advocating reforms and greater self-government in Texas upon

Oregon Question The question of the national ownership of the Pacific Northwest; the United States and Great Britain renegotiated the boundary in 1846, establishing it at 49° north latitude.

annexation The incorporation of a territory into an existing political unit such as a neighboring country.

Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna Mexican general who was president of Mexico when he led an attack on the Alamo in 1836.



◆ **MAP 12.1 The Texas Revolution** This map shows troop movements and the major battles in the Texas Revolution, as well as the conflicting boundary claims made by Texans and the Mexican government. The Battle of San Jacinto and the Treaty of Velasco ended the war, but the conflicting land claims continued when Mexico repudiated the treaty.

the Mexican president. Believing that Santa Anna agreed with him, Austin departed for home, only to be arrested and dragged back to Mexico City in chains on charges of advocating revolution in Texas. Though finally cleared of all charges in 1835, Austin had decided by the time he arrived back in Texas that "war is our only recourse." In early September, he called for a convention of delegates from all over Texas to discuss what should be done.

By the time this convention met in November 1835, the first shots of the **Texas Revolution** had al

ready been fired. The convention formed itself into a provisional government but refrained from declaring its independence from Mexico.

The first major confrontation of the rebellion occurred at San Antonio (see Map 12.1). Santa Anna personally led the Mexican army against that city, which had been captured by the rebels. Knowing that Santa Anna was on his way, Texas commander William Travis moved his troops into a former mission called the **Alamo**. On March 6, 1836, Santa Anna ordered an all-out assault on the Alamo. Storming the walls, the Mexican army sustained staggering casualties but captured it nevertheless. Most of the post's defenders were killed in the assault. Santa Anna executed those who survived the battle, including former congressman and frontier celebrity Davy Crockett.

Texas rebels elsewhere were consolidating the revolution. On March 2, a convention met at Washington-on-the-Brazos and issued a declaration of independence. The convention also ratified a constitution, based largely on the Constitution of the United States, on March 16. It elected David G. Burnet president of the new republic and Lorenzo de Zavala, one of the many Tejanos who had joined the rebellion, as vice president (see Individual Choices: Lorenzo de Zavala). **Sam Houston** had earlier been named commander of the army.

Despite the loss at the Alamo, Texans continued to underestimate Santa Anna's strength. On March 18, a large Mexican detachment under General Jose Urrea captured the town of Goliad and its defenders. Over the next several days, Urrea scoured the countryside for additional prisoners. On Palm

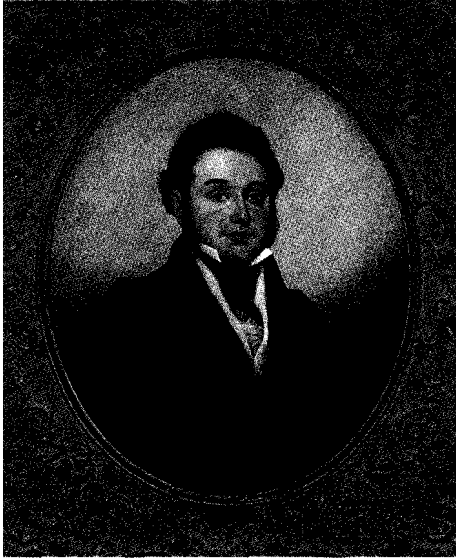
Texas Revolution A revolt by American colonists in Texas against Mexican rule; it began in 1835 and ended with the establishment of the Republic of Texas in 1836.

Alamo A Franciscan mission that the Mexican commander at San Antonio fortified; rebellious Texas colonists were besieged there by Santa Anna's forces in 1836.

Sam Houston American general and politician who fought in the struggle for Texas's independence from Mexico and became president of the Republic of Texas.

INDIVIDUAL CHOICES

Choosing Texas and Independence



Lorenzo de Zavala

Lorenzo de Zavala fought against tyranny in his native Mexico. When the government he helped establish after a successful revolution against Spain refused to create a democracy, de Zavala moved to Texas. In 1835, he chose to join the Texas Revolution against Mexico and was elected vice president of the Republic of Texas. "Lorenzo de Zavala" by E. E. Proctor. Archives Division, Texas State Library. Photo by Eric Beggs.

Although Lorenzo de Zavala was a physician by training, his heart persistently pulled him into politics. An ardent liberal and federalist, he was elected to the Merida city council in his native Yucatan, in southern Mexico, when he was only 23 years old. Then, in 1814, he was elected a delegate to the Spanish parliament, though he never assumed his seat. The young liberal was imprisoned by Spain's King Ferdinand VII for antimonarchical sentiments. Gaining his release in 1817, de Zavala returned to Yucatan.

De Zavala chafed at Spanish rule, and as revolutionary movements broke out in all parts of Mexico in 1820, he again entered politics, winning election as the secretary of the Yucatan assembly. From this position, he assisted the Mexican independence movement. Shortly after it succeeded in 1821, he was elected to the Mexican constituent congress, serving there and in the national senate until 1827, when he was made governor of the province of Mexico.

By 1829, de Zavala was having doubts about how things were going in Mexico. The independent government had proved far from stable, and the ruling authorities seemed just as reactionary as the Spaniards. The liberals' demand to allocate farmland to peasants, for example, was continually refused by the government. Seeking some way to help the peasants, de Zavala resigned his governorship and secured an empresario grant to settle five hundred poor Mexican families in Texas.

For the next several years, de Zavala traveled and wrote a history of the revolutionary movement in Mexico, which he published in 1831. Then, finding himself in Paris, de Zavala

accepted a post as Mexico's ambassador to France in 1833, returning to public service and politics. In 1834, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna pushed his way into power, suspending the constitution, dissolving the national congress, and assuming dictatorial control. Watching events unfold from his post in Paris, de Zavala became increasingly disaffected with Santa Anna. In 1835, he resigned as ambassador and sailed for Texas, where, he believed, he might join with others to oppose Santa Anna and restore the constitution. When Stephen F. Austin called for a "general consultation of the people" in the fall of 1835, de Zavala sought and won a seat.

Like many settlers in Texas—whether they were originally from the United States, Europe, or Mexico—de Zavala wanted reform, but not necessarily independence. Thus he agreed with the consultation's decision in November 1835 to form a provisional government using the Mexican constitution of 1824—a document he had helped write—as a legal foundation. But when Santa Anna declared all members of the consultation traitors and ordered troops into Texas, de Zavala gave up hope of a peaceful settlement. On March 2, 1836, he chose to join his colleagues in signing a declaration of independence and then threw himself into the task of writing a constitution for Texas. The resulting document was an interesting hybrid: a mixture of de Zavala's and James Madison's views concerning liberal federalism.

The Texas consultation ratified the new constitution on March 16, 1836. Then, in recognition of de Zavala's strong political voice and the significant role he had played in helping to launch the revolution, the consultation unanimously elected him vice president of the Republic of Texas.

The revolution and the establishment of the Texas republic represented a victory for views that de Zavala and many Mexican-born Texans had held for a lifetime. Throughout his political career, de Zavala had fought for reform in Mex

ico, helping to win independence from Spain and pushing for liberal federalism. His expectations had been dashed by the harsh constraints imposed by self-interested political factions, which had created such instability that Santa Anna had bullied his way to the top and ended liberal government. For de Zavala and many others, the choice was clear: if Mexico could not be reformed, they would throw their lot in with a new state where their views might be brought into reality. The Republic of Texas became the seat for their dreams.

Sunday, Urrea ordered all 445 able-bodied prisoners to be marched out of town, where their guards shot and killed them.

The Texans had their vengeance on April 21 after Santa Anna ordered his troops to pause at the San Jacinto River. Arriving in the vicinity undetected, Houston's force of just over nine hundred formed up quietly. Shouting "Remember the Alamo" and "Remember Goliad," the Texans stormed the Mexican camp. In just eighteen minutes, 630 Mexican soldiers lay dead. Santa Anna attempted to escape but was captured. In exchange for his release, the Mexican president signed the **Treaty of Velasco**, in which he agreed to withdraw his troops south of the Rio Grande.

Many leaders in Texas hoped for annexation by the United States. In 1838, Houston, by then president of the Republic of Texas, invited the United States to annex Texas. He was forced to withdraw the invitation when John Quincy Adams, elected to Congress after his loss in the presidential election of 1828, filibustered in the House of Representatives for three weeks against the acquisition of such a big bloc of potentially slave territory.

The Politics of Manifest Destiny

Adams certainly did not speak for the majority of Whigs on the topic of national expansion. The party of manufacturing, revivalism, and social reform inclined naturally toward manifest destiny. William Henry Harrison, the party's first national candidate, had been a prominent War Hawk and Indian fighter, and his political campaign in 1840 had celebrated the virtues of frontier life. When Harrison died only a month after taking office in 1841, his vice president, John Tyler, picked up the torch of American expansionism.

Tyler was an atypical Whig. A Virginian and a states' rights advocate, he had been a staunch Democrat until the nullification crisis. Although he had objected to Jackson's use of presidential power, Tyler as president was as unyielding as Old Hickory where political principles were concerned. He vetoed high protective tariffs, internal improvements bills, and attempts to revive the Second Bank of the United States. Tyler's refusal to

promote Whig economic policies led to a general crisis in government in 1843, when his entire cabinet resigned over his veto of a bank bill.

Tyler did share his party's desire for expansion. He assigned Secretary of State Daniel Webster to settle the Maine border dispute with Britain. The resulting **Webster-Ashburton Treaty** (1842) gave over half of the disputed territory to the United States and finally established the nation's northeastern border with Canada. Tyler adopted an aggressive stance on the Oregon Question by appointing Elijah White as the federal Indian agent for the region in 1842. This action flew in the face of the mutual occupation agreement between the United States and Great Britain. Historians have speculated that Tyler also encouraged migration to Oregon to strengthen the U.S. claim to the region.

Tyler similarly pushed a forceful policy toward Texas and the Southwest. He opened negotiations with Sam Houston that led to a proposed treaty of annexation in 1844. Proslavery and antislavery forces in the Senate fiercely debated the treaty, however, and failed to ratify it. The issue of Texas's annexation then joined the Oregon Question as a major campaign issue in the presidential election of 1844.

The issue of expansion put the two leading presidential contenders, Democrat Martin Van Buren and Whig Henry Clay, in an uncomfortable position. Van Buren had opposed the extension of slavery and was therefore against the annexation of Texas. Clay, a slaveholder, was opposed to any form of expansion that would fan sectional ten-

Treaty of Velasco Treaty signed by Santa Anna in May 1836 after his capture at the San Jacinto River; it granted recognition to the Republic of Texas but was later rejected by the Mexican congress.

filibuster To use obstructionist tactics, especially prolonged speechmaking, to delay legislative action.

Webster-Ashburton Treaty Treaty negotiated by Secretary of State Daniel Webster and British minister Lord Ashburton in 1842 that established the present border between Canada and northeastern Maine.

sions. Both candidates stated that they favored annexation only if Mexico agreed.

President Tyler's constant refusal to support the larger Whig political agenda led the party to nominate Clay as its candidate in 1844. Van Buren was not so lucky. The strong southern wing of the Democratic party was so put off by Van Buren's position on slavery that it nominated Tennessee congressman **James K. Polk**.

The Democrats proclaimed in their platform that they stood for "the re-occupation of Oregon and the re-annexation of Texas at the earliest practicable period." Polk vowed to stand up to the British by claiming the entire Oregon Country up to 54°40' north latitude and to defend the territorial claims of Texas. The Democrats appealed to the expansionist sentiments of northerners and southerners. Clay ignored expansionism, emphasizing economic policies instead.

The temper of the people was evident in the election's *outcome*. Clay was a national figure, well respected and regarded as one of the nation's leading statesmen. Polk was barely known outside Tennessee. Even so, Polk captured the presidency by sixty-five electoral votes.

Outgoing president Tyler accomplished one of the Democrats' platform goals before Polk assumed the presidency. In a special message to Congress in December 1844, Tyler proposed a **joint resolution** annexing Texas. Congressmen who had opposed annexation could not ignore the clear mandate given to manifest destiny in the presidential election. The bill to annex Texas passed in February 1845, just as Tyler was about to leave the White House.

Often called "Young Hickory" because of his political resemblance to Andrew Jackson, Polk promoted expansion by asking Congress to end the joint occupation of Oregon and by negotiating with Mexico to purchase much of the Southwest. The president urged Congress to pursue exclusive control over the Oregon Country and to obtain the Southwest even if doing so meant war.

Neither the United States nor Britain intended to go to war over Oregon. The only issue was where the border would be. Polk insisted on 54°40'. The British lobbied for the Columbia River, but their position softened quickly. The fur trade

along the Columbia had become unprofitable by the early 1840s. As a result, in the spring of 1846, the British foreign secretary offered Polk a compromise boundary at the 49th parallel. The Senate recommended that Polk accept the offer, and a treaty settling the Oregon issue was ratified on June 15, 1846.

Expa

nsion and Sectional Crisis

Significant political controversy accompanied the extension of the nation's borders. At the heart of the matter lay slavery. Although only a few radicals were totally opposed to southern slavery, many people in the North and West were strongly opposed to its expansion. For them this was less a moral than an economic issue. The expansion of slavery meant economic competition with slaves or slaveholders for jobs and profits. Southerners, by contrast, demanded that slavery be allowed to expand as far as economic opportunity permitted. Not surprisingly, southerners believed that the nation should expand into areas where cotton would grow and slavery would be profitable. Given these strong economic motives, the debate over expansion turned into a debate over slavery.

The Texas Crisis and Sectional Conflict

In annexing Texas, the United States had offended Mexico, which immediately severed diplomatic relations and threatened war. The Mexican government held that Texas was still a province of Mexico, not an independent republic, and that Texas's southern boundary was the Nueces River, not the Rio Grande. Polk responded by blustering that the entire Southwest should be annexed.

James K. Polk Tennessee congressman who was a leader of the Democratic party and the dark-horse winner of the presidential campaign in 1844.

joint resolution A special resolution adopted by both houses of Congress and subject to approval by the president; if approved, it has the force of law.

Polk sought his objectives peacefully but was prepared to use force. Late in 1845, he dispatched John Slidell to Mexico City to negotiate the boundary dispute, authorizing Slidell to purchase New Mexico and California. He also sent American troops to Louisiana, ready to strike if Mexico resisted Slidell's offers. And he notified the American consul in California that American naval ships had orders to seize California ports if war broke out with Mexico.

The Mexican government refused to receive Slidell. In January 1846, Slidell reported that his mission was a failure. Polk then ordered Zachary Taylor to lead troops into the disputed area between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande. Shortly thereafter, an American military exploration party led by **John C. Frémont** violated Mexican territory by crossing the mountains into California's Salinas Valley.

On April 22, Mexico responded by declaring war. Two days later, Mexican troops engaged a detachment of Taylor's army at Matamoros on the Rio Grande, killing eleven and capturing the rest. When news of this action reached Washington on May 9, Polk asked Congress for a declaration of war, charging that Mexico had "invaded our territory, and shed American blood upon American soil." Although the nation was far from united, Congress declared war on May 13, 1846 (see Map 12.2).

The outbreak of war disturbed many Americans. In New England, protest ran high. Henry David Thoreau chose to be jailed rather than pay taxes that would support the war. The United States had lost its reputation as a "refuge of liberty," he wrote, when it held a sixth of its population as slaves and engaged in an unjust war with Mexico. Other protesters also made the connection between the war with Mexico and slavery.

The annexation of Texas brought slavery to the attention of the American people like nothing before. To southerners, this land represented economic and political power. Proslavery constitutions in these newly acquired territories would ensure the immigration of friendly voters and the strengthening of the South's interests in Congress. Northerners saw something much more alarming in the southern expansion movement. Since the Missouri Compromise in 1820, some

northerners had come to believe that a slaveholding **oligarchy** controlled life and politics in the South. Abolitionists warned that this "Slave Power" sought to expand its reach until it controlled every aspect of American life. Many viewed Congress's adoption of the gag rule in 1836 and the drive to annex Texas as evidence of the Slave Power's influence. Thus debates over Texas pitted two regions of the country against each other in what champions of both sides viewed as mortal combat.

The contenders joined battle in earnest over appropriations for the war effort. In August 1846, David Wilmot, a Democratic representative from Pennsylvania, proposed an amendment to a military appropriations bill specifying that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist" in any territory gained in the Mexican War. The **Wilmot Proviso** passed in the House of Representatives but failed in the Senate. The vote on the proviso was an ominous one, for it followed sectional and not party lines. After several more efforts to pass the proviso, the House finally decided in April 1847 to appropriate money for the war without stipulating whether slavery would be permitted in territories acquired from Mexico.

War with Mexico

Americans quickly took control of the Southwest from Mexico. In California, American settlers in

Zachary Taylor American general whose defeat of Santa Anna at Buena Vista in 1847 made him a national hero and the Whig choice for president in 1848.

John C. Fremont Explorer, soldier, and politician who explored and mapped much of the American West and Northwest; he later ran unsuccessfully for president.

oligarchy Government by a small group of people or families.

Wilmot Proviso Amendment to an appropriations bill in 1846 proposing that any territory acquired from Mexico be closed to slavery; it was defeated in the Senate.



◆ **MAP 12.2 The Southwest and the Mexican War** When the United States acquired Texas, it inherited the Texans' boundary disputes with Mexico. This map shows the outcome: war with Mexico in 1846 and the acquisition of the disputed territories in Texas as well as most of Arizona, New Mexico, and California through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

the Sacramento Valley captured the town of Sonoma in June 1846 and declared themselves independent. They crafted a flag depicting a grizzly bear and announced the birth of the Republic of California, also called the Bear Flag Republic. Frémont's force joined the Bear Flag rebels and marched south toward Monterey. There they found that the American navy had already seized the city. The Mexican forces were in full flight southward.

Polk had also ordered Colonel Stephen Kearny to invade New Mexico on May 15. After leading his men across 800 miles of desert to Santa Fe, Kearny found a less-than-hostile enemy force facing him. The interracial upper class of Santa Fe, which had already expressed interest in joining the United States, surrendered without

firing a shot. Within a short time, all of New Mexico and California were securely in the hands of U.S. forces.

Zachary Taylor faced more serious opposition in Mexico. After marching across the Rio Grande, Taylor captured the Mexican city of Monterey in September 1846, but then allowed the enemy garrison to retreat through his lines. From Monterey,

Taylor planned to turn southward toward Mexico City, but politics intervened.

After Taylor's victory at Monterrey, Polk feared that Taylor might use his military success to challenge him for the presidency. That Taylor had allowed the Mexican garrison to escape also convinced the president that Taylor was not aggressive enough to win the war quickly. Thus Polk ordered General **Winfield Scott** to lead American troops in the assault against Mexico City.

Polk complicated the military situation by plotting with deposed Mexican president Santa Anna, who had been exiled to Cuba after his defeat at San Jacinto. Santa Anna promised that he would help end the war in America's favor if Polk would help him return to Mexico. The American president agreed, and Santa Anna soon resumed the presidency of Mexico. To Polk's dismay, however, Santa Anna vowed to resist American expansion. Thus Mexico's most able general was back in command.

Santa Anna and his numerically superior army encountered Taylor at Buena Vista in February 1847. Tired from marching across the desert, the Mexican army was in no shape to fight, but Santa Anna ordered an attack anyway. Although the **Battle of Buena Vista** was a draw, Santa Anna was compelled to withdraw into the interior of Mexico.

Scott's forces captured the port of Veracruz on March 9 and then moved relentlessly toward Mexico City. An ambush at Cerro Gordo turned into a disaster for Santa Anna. Scott's forces captured three thousand Mexican troops, most of Santa Anna's equipment and provisions, and even the president's personal effects. By May 15, however, Scott had run into trouble. Nearly a third of his army went home when their twelvemonth enlistments expired on that date. Three months later, Scott received reinforcements and resumed his march on Mexico City. Leading a brilliant assault, Scott captured the city on September 13, 1847.

Scott's enormous success caused Santa Anna's government to collapse, leaving no one to negotiate with American peace commissioner Nicholas Trist. After a month had passed with no settlement, Polk concluded that Trist was not pressing

hard enough and removed him as peace commissioner. But by the time Polk's orders arrived, the Mexican government had elected a new president and told Trist that Mexico was ready to begin negotiations. Trist ignored Polk's orders and pressed on with negotiations. On February 2, 1848, Trist and the Mexican delegation signed the **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**, granting the United States all the territory between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande and all the territory between there and the Pacific. In exchange, the United States would pay Mexico \$15 million and all claims made by Texans for war damages.

Polk was very angry when he heard the terms of the treaty. He felt that Scott's sweeping victory at Mexico City should have gained the United States more territory for less money. Political realities in Washington, however, prevented Polk from trying to get a more aggressive treaty ratified by the Senate. Although the president had strong support for annexing all of Mexico, antislavery voices loudly protested the acquisition of so much land south of the Missouri Compromise line. Others opposed the annexation of Mexico because they feared that the largely Roman Catholic population of Mexico might threaten Protestant institutions in the United States. Still others had moral objections to taking any territory by force. Congress was also unwilling to appropriate more money for war if peace was within reach. Thus Polk submitted the treaty Trist had negotiated, and the Senate approved it by a vote of 38 to 14.

Winfield Scott Virginia soldier and statesman who led troops in the War of 1812 and the war with Mexico; he was still serving as a general at the start of the Civil War.

Battle of Buena Vista Battle in February 1847 during which U.S. troops led by Zachary Taylor forced Santa Anna's forces to withdraw into the interior of Mexico.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty signed in 1848 under which Mexico gave up Texas above the Rio Grande and ceded New Mexico and California to the United States in return for \$15 million.

The Antislavery Crusade and Women's Rights

As the debates over the Mexican War indicate, abolitionist voices were getting louder in the 1840s. Despite sometimes violent opposition, the abolition movement had continued to grow, especially among the privileged and educated classes in the Northeast. Throughout the 1830s, evangelicals increasingly stressed the sinful nature of slavery and broke away from the gradualism of the American Colonization Society. Men and women steeped in evangelical zeal joined with William Lloyd Garrison and Angelina Grimké in urging the immediate, uncompensated liberation of slaves.

Garrison, however, consistently alienated his followers. Calling the Constitution "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell," Garrison burned a copy of it, and he urged his followers to have no dealings with a government that permitted so great an evil as slavery. Citing the reluctance of most organized churches to condemn slavery outright, Garrison urged his followers to break with them as well. He also alienated many of his white, evangelical supporters by associating with and supporting free black advocates of violent abolition. In 1840, moderates in the American Anti-Slavery Society withdrew from Garrison's organization to found the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

Garrison's persistent insistence that women should play a key role in the abolition effort also fragmented the movement. Having assumed the burden of eliminating sin from the world, many evangelical women rallied around Garrison and the antislavery cause. Their growing prominence in the movement led Garrison to insist that they play a more equal role. In 1841, women were members of Garrison's delegation to the first World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London. British antislavery advocates, like their American counterparts, considered the presence of women inappropriate and refused to seat them. Garrison's group walked out in protest. Increasingly in the 1840s, slights like that made women in the abolition movement feel there was a similarity between their condition and that of the slaves they were seeking to free.

Angelina Grimké was one of the first to make a public proclamation of the frustration women

were feeling. In her speech before the Massachusetts state assembly in 1838, she had asked, "Have women *no* country—no interests staked in public weal—no liabilities in the common peril—no partnership in a nation's guilt and shame?" That same year, her sister Sarah wrote a powerful indictment against the treatment of women in America. In *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman*, Sarah proclaimed, "The page of history teems with woman's wrongs . . . and it is wet with woman's tears."

Many women began backing away from the male-dominated abolitionist cause and instead advanced their own cause. In 1848, two women who had been excluded from the World's Anti-Slavery Convention, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, called women to a convention at Seneca Falls, New York, to discuss their common problems. At Seneca Falls, they presented the Declaration of Sentiments based on the Declaration of Independence, citing "the history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her." The convention adopted eleven resolutions relating to equality under the law, rights to control property, and other prominent issues. A twelfth resolution, calling for the right to vote, failed to receive unanimous endorsement.

Issues in the Election of 1848

The presidential election of 1848 came along at the peak of national tension. Sectional differences

gradualism The belief that slavery in the United States should be abolished gradually by methods such as placing territorial limits on slavery or settling free blacks in Africa.

Lucretia Mott Quaker minister who founded the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (1833) and co-organized the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pioneering woman-suffrage leader and co-organizer of the first Women's Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848.

were reaching crisis proportions. Rather than offering solutions, however, both major parties continued to practice the politics of avoidance.

In poor health, Polk declined to run for a second term. The Democrats chose Lewis Cass of Michigan, a long-time moderate on slavery issues, as their candidate. The Whigs hoped to ride a wave of nationalism following the Mexican War by running military hero Zachary Taylor, a Louisianan and a slaveholder, for president. During the campaign, Cass tried to avoid offending anyone by advocating the policy of popular sovereignty. Under this policy, territories would choose for themselves whether to admit slavery. Taylor echoed Calhoun's opinion that Congress did not have the authority to control slavery in the territories.

A third party cut to the heart of the slavery issue. A number of northern Democrats and northern Whigs joined forces with members of the former Liberty party to form the Free-Soil party. The party acquired this name because it wanted to exclude slavery from the territories. It named Martin Van Buren as its candidate.

Although the Free-Soilers won 10 percent of the votes cast in the election, Taylor emerged as the victor. Congress remained split between Whigs and Democrats. Sectional issues had not yet fragmented the political system, but large cracks were showing.

These fissures widened noticeably when the question of admitting California to the Union arose. During the winter of 1847-1848, workmen had discovered gold while digging a ditch for John Sutter. Word soon reached San Francisco that huge gold deposits had been discovered at New Helvetia. By mid-May 1848, prospectors were swarming into the Sacramento Valley from all over California and Oregon. By September, the news had reached the East. Over a hundred thousand forty-niners took up residence in California the next year.

The twin issues of expansion and slavery were raised once again. Southerners wanted California to be open for slavery. But northerners were not about to turn the richest source of gold yet discovered over to the Slave Power. Thus although the discovery of gold in California seemed to announce God's approval of American expansionism, it drove an enormous wedge into an already cracking political system.

popular sovereignty The doctrine that the people of a territory had the right to determine whether slavery would exist within their territory.

Liberty party The first antislavery political party; it was formed in Albany, New York, in 1840.

Free-Soil party A political party that opposed the extension of slavery into any of the territories newly acquired from Mexico.

forty-niners Prospectors who streamed into California in 1849 after the discovery of gold at New Helvetia in 1848.

SUMMARY

Expectations
Constraints
Choices
Outcomes

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the westward movement of Americans steadily gained momentum. Successful fur traders like William Henry Ashley made enormous profits from their *choice* to move west. Land speculators and gold seekers also helped open areas to settlement.

Communities in Texas, Oregon, California, Utah, and elsewhere in the West sprang up like weeds. One *outcome* was the development of a variety of cultures and economies, which evolved from the interplay of old habits, new ideals, and environmental *constraints*.

Conflicting *expectations* about the country's manifest destiny promoted an air of crisis in the nation at large. Northerners wanted a West that

would be free for diversified economic development. Southerners wanted the West to be open to slavery and staple crops. And people from each region *chose* to use expansion to add to their power in Congress.

Slavery began to eclipse all other issues in symbolizing the differing demands made by North and South. For northerners, the idea of going to war to win Oregon was acceptable because the Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery there, but the idea of going to war to acquire Texas was quite another matter. The possibility of many new southern senators and representatives filled northerners with dread. Nevertheless, the nation *chose* to fight a war with Mexico between 1846 and 1848. It

thereby gained California and vast territories in the Southwest. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 made that region a new bone of contention in the sectional debate.

Meanwhile, radical abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison still labored for acceptance. What made Garrison's message hard for many to accept was his insistence on an equal role for women. But severely discriminatory conditions *constrained* the many women who participated in abolition and other reform movements. One *outcome* was the Seneca Falls conference in 1848, where politically active women called for greater equality with men.

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