The Territorial Expansion of the United States

1830s—1850s
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For thirteen days in February and March 1836, a force of 187 Texans held the mission fortress known as the Alamo against a siege by 5,000 Mexican troops under General Antonio López de Santa Anna, president of Mexico. Santa Anna had come north to subdue rebellious Texas, the northernmost part of the Mexican province of Coahuila y Tejas, and to place it under central authority. On March 6 he ordered a final assault, and in brutal fighting that claimed over 1,500 Mexican lives, his army took the mission. All the defenders were killed, including Commander William Travis and the well-known frontiersmen Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett, a crushing defeat for the Texans. But the cry “Remember the Alamo!” rallied their remaining forces, which, less than two months later, routed the Mexican army and forced Santa Anna to grant Texas independence from Mexico. Today, the Alamo, in San Antonio, is one of the most cherished historic shrines in the United States.

But memory is selective: within a generation of the uprising, few remembered that many Tejanos, Spanish-speaking people born in Texas, had joined with American settlers fighting for Texas independence. During the 1820s, the Mexican government had authorized several American colonies, concentrated in the central and eastern portions of the huge Texas territory and managed by empresarios (land agents) like Stephen F. Austin. These settler communities consisted mostly of farmers from the Mississippi Valley, who introduced slavery and cotton growing to the rich lands of coastal and upland Texas.

The Tejano community, descended from eighteenth-century Spanish and Mexican settlers, included wealthy rancheros who raised cattle on the shortgrass prairies of south Texas, as well as the cowboys known as vaqueros and the peones, or poor tenant farmers. Although there was relatively little contact between the Americans and Tejanos, their leaders interacted in San Antonio, the center of regional government. The Tejano elite, enthusiastic about American plans for the economic development of Texas, welcomed the American immigrants. Many Americans married into elite Tejano families, who hoped that by thus assimilating and sharing power with the Americans, they could not only maintain but strengthen their community.

The Mexican state, however, was politically and socially unstable during these first years after its successful revolt against Spain in 1821. Liberals favored a loose federal union, conservatives a strong central state. As a northern frontier province, Texas did not have the benefits of statehood; as a result most Tejanos found themselves taking the liberal side in the struggle, opting for more local control over government activities. When, in 1828, the conservative centralists came to power in Mexico City and decided the Americans had too much influence in Texas, many Tejanos rose up with the Americans in opposition. In 1832, the Tejano elite of San Antonio and many prominent rancheros favored provincial autonomy and a strong role for the Americans.

As Santa Anna’s army approached from the south, the wealthy ranchero Juan Nepomuceno Seguín, one of the leaders of the San Antonio community, recruited a company of Tejano volunteers and joined the American force inside the walls of the Alamo. During the siege, Commander Travis sent Seguín and some of his men for reinforcements. Stopped by Mexican troops on his way across the lines, Seguín called out, “¡Somos paisanos!” (We are countrymen!), confusing the guards just long enough for Seguín and his men to make their escape despite the hail of gunfire that quickly ensued. Seguín returned from his unsuccessful mission to find the burned bodies of the Alamo defenders, including seven San Antonio Tejanos. “Texas será libre!” (Texas shall be free!) Seguín called out as he directed the burial of the Alamo defenders. In April, Seguín led a regiment of Tejanos in the decisive battle of San Jacinto that won independence for Texas.

Pleased with independence, Tejanos played an important political role in the new Republic of Texas at first. The liberal
Lorenzo de Zavala was chosen vice president, and Seguín became the mayor of San Antonio. But soon things began to change, illustrating a recurring pattern in the American occupation of new lands—a striking shift in the relations between different cultures in frontier areas. Most commonly, in the initial stage newcomers blended with native peoples, creating a “frontier of inclusion.” The first hunters, trappers, and traders on every American frontier—west of the Appalachians, in the Southwest, and in the Far West—married into the local community and tried to learn native ways. Outnumbered Americans adapted to local societies as a matter of simple survival.

A second, unstable, stage occurred when the number of Americans increased and they began occupying more and more land or, as in California, “rushing” in great numbers to mine gold, overrunning native communities. This usually resulted in warfare and the rapid growth of hostility and racial prejudice—all of which was largely absent in earlier days.

A third stage—that of stable settlement—occurred when the native community had been completely “removed” or isolated. In this “frontier of exclusion,” racial mixing was rare. In Texas, American settlers—initially invited in by Mexicans and Tejanos—developed an anti-Mexican passion, regarding all Spanish-speakers as their Mexican enemies rather than their Tejano allies. Tejanos were attacked and forced from their homes; some of their villages were burned to the ground.

“On the pretext that they were Mexicans,” Seguín wrote, Americans treated Tejanos “worse than brutes. . . . My countrymen ran to me for protection against the assaults or exactions of these adventurers.” But even in his capacity as mayor, Seguín could do little, and in 1842, he and his family, like hundreds of other Tejano families, fled south to Mexico in fear for their lives.

Spanish-speaking communities in Texas, and later in New Mexico and California, like the communities of Indians throughout the West, became conquered peoples. “White folks and Mexicans were never made to live together,” a Texas woman told a traveler a few years after the revolution. “The Mexicans had no business here,” she said, and the Americans might “just have to get together and drive them all out of the country.” The descendants of the first European settlers of the American Southwest had become foreigners in the land their people had lived in for two centuries.
been trading for furs since the 1780s. By 1848, the United States had gained all of these coveted western lands. This chapter examines the way the United States became a continental nation, forming many frontier communities in the process. Exploring the vast continent of North America and gaining an understanding of its geography took several centuries and the efforts of many people.

**The Fur Trade**

The fur trade, which flourished from the 1670s to the 1840s, was an important spur to exploration on the North American continent. In the 1670s, the British Hudson’s Bay Company and its French Canadian rival, Montreal’s North West Company, began exploring beyond the Great Lakes in the Canadian West in search of beaver pelts. Traders and trappers for both companies depended on the goodwill and cooperation of the native peoples of the region, in particular the Assiniboins, Crees, Gros Ventres, and Blackfeet, all of whom moved freely across what later became the U.S.–Canadian border. From the marriages of European men with native women arose a distinctive mixed-race group, the “métis” (see Chapter 5). The British-dominated fur trade was an important aspect of international commerce. Americans had long coveted a part of it. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson had sent Lewis and Clark west in 1803 in part to challenge British dominance of the fur trade with western Indian peoples (see Chapter 9).

Not until the 1820s were American companies able to challenge British dominance of the trans-Mississippi fur trade. In 1824, William Henry Ashley of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company instituted the “rendezvous” system. This was a yearly trade fair, held deep in the Rocky Mountains (Green River and Jackson Hole were favored locations), to which trappers brought their catch of furs. These yearly fur rendezvous were modeled on traditional Indian trade gatherings, such as the one at the Mandan villages on the upper Missouri River and the huge gathering that took place every year at Celilo Falls on the Columbia River during the annual salmon run. Like its Indian model, the fur rendezvous was a boisterous, polyglot, many-day affair at which trappers of many nationalities—Americans and Indian peoples, French Canadians, and métis, as well as Mexicans from Santa Fé and Taos—gathered to trade, drink, and gamble.

For the “mountain men” employed by the American fur companies, the rendezvous was their only contact with American society. But most trappers, like the British and French before them, sought accommodation and friendship with Indian peoples: nearly half of them contracted long-lasting marriages with Indian women, who not only helped in the trapping and curing of furs but also acted as vital diplomatic links between the white and Indian worlds. One legendary trapper adapted so well that he became a Crow chief: the African American Jim Beckwourth, who married a Crow woman and was accepted into her tribe.

For all its adventure, the American fur trade was short-lived. By the 1840s, the population of beaver in western streams was virtually destroyed, and the day of the mountain man was
over. But with daring journeys like that of Jedediah Smith, the first American to enter California over the Sierra Nevada mountains, the mountain men had helped forge a clear picture of western geography. Soon, permanent settlers would follow the trails they had blazed.

**Government-Sponsored Exploration**

The federal government played a major role in the exploration and development of the West. The exploratory and scientific aspects of the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804–06 set a precedent for many government-financed quasi-military expeditions. In 1806 and 1807, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike led an expedition to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Major Stephen Long’s exploration and mapping of the Great Plains in the years 1819–20 was part of a show of force meant to frighten British fur trappers out of the West. Then, in 1843 and 1844, another military explorer, John C. Frémont, mapped the overland trails to Oregon and California. In the 1850s, the Pacific Railroad surveys explored possible transcontinental railroad routes. The tradition of government-sponsored western exploration continued after the Civil War in the famous geological surveys, the best known of which is the 1869 Grand Canyon exploration by Major John Wesley Powell (see Map 14-1).

Beginning with Long’s expedition, the results of these surveys were published by the government, complete with maps, illustrations, and, after the Civil War, photographs. These publications fed a strong popular appetite for pictures of the breathtaking scenery of the Far West and information about its inhabitants. Artists like Karl Bodmer, who accompanied a private expedition by the scientifically inclined German prince Maximilian in the years 1833–34, produced stunning portraits of American Indians. Over the next three decades, Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt, and other landscape artists traveled west with government expeditions and came home to paint grand (and sometimes fanciful) pictures of Yosemite Valley and the Yellowstone River region (later designated among the first national parks). All these images of the American West made a powerful contribution to the emerging American self-image. American pride in the land—the biggest of this, the longest of that, the most spectacular of something else—was founded on the images brought home by government surveyors and explorers.

In the wake of the pathfinders came hundreds of government geologists and botanists as well as the surveyors who mapped and plotted the West for settlement according to the Land Ordinance of 1785. The basic pattern of land survey and sale established by these measures (see Chapter 7) was followed all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The federal government sold the western public lands at low prices and, to veterans of the War of 1812, gave away land in the Old Northwest. And following policies established in the Old Northwest (see Chapter 9), the federal government also shouldered the expense of Indian removal, paying the soldiers or the officials who fought or talked Indian peoples into giving up their lands. In addition, the federal government made long-term commitments to compensate the Indian people themselves, and supported the forts and soldiers whose task was to maintain peace between settlers and Indian peoples in newly opened areas.

**Expansion and Indian Policy**

While American artists were painting the way of life of western Indian peoples, eastern Indian tribes were being removed from their homelands to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska), a region west of Arkansas, Missouri, and Iowa on the eastern edge of the Great Plains, widely regarded as unfarmable and popularly known as the Great American Desert. The justification for this western removal, as
Exploration of the Continent, 1804–30

Lewis and Clark’s “voyage of discovery” of 1804–06 was the first of many government-sponsored western military expeditions. Crossing the Great Plains in 1806, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike was captured by the Spanish in their territory and taken to Mexico, but returned in 1807 via Texas. Major Stephen Long, who crossed the Plains in 1819–20, found them “arid and forbidding.” Meanwhile, fur trappers, among them the much-traveled Jedediah Smith, became well acquainted with the West as they hunted beaver for their pelts.

**WHAT ROLE** did the routes taken by major expeditions westward between 1804 and 1830 play in shaping United States policy in the West?
Thomas Jefferson had explained early in the century, was the creation of a space where Indian people could live undisturbed by white people while they slowly adjusted to “civilized” ways. But the government officials who negotiated the removals failed to predict the tremendous speed at which white people would settle the West (see Map 14-2).

As a result, encroachment on Indian Territory was not long in coming. The territory was crossed by the Santa Fé Trail, established in 1821; in the 1840s, the northern part was crossed by the heavily traveled Overland Trails to California, Oregon, and the Mormon community in Utah. In 1854, the government abolished the northern half of Indian Territory, establishing the Kansas and Nebraska Territories in its place and opening them to immediate white settlement. The tribes of the area—the Potawatomis, Wyandots, Kickapoos, Sauks, Foxes, Delawares, Shawnees, Kaskaskias, Peorias, Piankashaws, Weas, Miamis, Omahas, Otos, and Missouris—signed treaties accepting either vastly reduced reservations or allotments. Those who accepted allotments—sections of private land—often sold them, under pressure, to white people. Thus, many of the Indian people who had hoped for independence and escape from white pressures in Indian Territory lost both their autonomy and their tribal identity.

The people in the southern part of Indian Territory, in what is now Oklahoma, fared somewhat better. Those members of the southern tribes—the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles—who had survived the trauma of forcible removal from the Southeast in the 1830s, quickly created impressive new communities. The five tribes divided up the territory and established self-governing nations with their own schools and churches. The societies they created were not so different from the American societies from which they had been expelled. The five tribes even carried slavery west with them: an elite economic group established plantations and shipped their cotton to New Orleans like other southerners. Until after the Civil War, these southern tribes were able to withstand outside pressures and remain the self-governing communities that treaties had assured them they would be.

The removal of the eastern tribes did not solve “the Indian Problem,” the term many Americans used to describe their relationship with the first occupants of the land. West of Indian Territory were the nomadic and warlike Indians of the Great

Santa Fé Trail  The 900-mile trail opened by American merchants for trading purposes following Mexico’s liberalization of the formerly restrictive trading policies of Spain.
Plains: the Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Comanches, and Kiowas. Beyond them were the seminomadic tribes of the Rocky Mountains—the Blackfeet, Crows, Utes, Shoshonis, Nez Percé, and Salish peoples—and, in the Southwest, the farming cultures of the Pueblos, Hopis, Acomas, Zunis, Fimas, and Papagos and the migratory Apaches and Navajos. Even farther west were hundreds of small tribes in California and the Pacific Northwest. Clearly, all of these people could not be “removed,” for where could they go? The first western pioneers ignored the issue. Beginning in the 1840s, they simply passed through the far western tribal lands on their way to establish new frontiers of settlement in California and Oregon. Later, after the Civil War, the government would undertake a series of Indian wars that ultimately left the remaining Indian peoples penned up on small reservations.

**THE POLITICS OF EXPANSION**

America’s rapid expansion had many consequences, but perhaps the most significant was that it reinforced Americans’ sense of themselves as pioneering people. In the 1890s, Frederick Jackson Turner, America’s most famous historian, observed that the repeated experience of settling new frontiers across the continent had shaped Americans into a uniquely adventurous, optimistic, and democratic people. Other historians have disagreed with Turner, but there is no question that his view of the frontier long ago won the battle for popular opinion. Ever since the time of Daniel Boone, venturing into the wilderness has held a special place in the American imagination, seen almost as an American right.

**Manifest Destiny, an Expansionist Ideology**

How did Americans justify their restless expansionism? After all, the United States was already a very large country with much undeveloped land. To push beyond existing boundaries was to risk war with Great Britain, which claimed the Pacific Northwest, and with Mexico, which held what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California, and part of Colorado. If the United States prevailed, it would be reducing 75,000 Spanish-speaking people and 150,000 Indian people to subject status. Undertaking such a conquest required a rationale.

In 1845, newspaperman John O’Sullivan provided it. It was, he wrote, “our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” Sullivan argued that Americans had a God-given right to bring the benefits of American democracy to other, more backward peoples—meaning Mexicans and Indians—by force, if necessary. The notion of manifest destiny summed up the powerful combination of pride in what America had achieved and missionary zeal and racist attitudes toward other peoples that lay behind the thinking of many expansionists. Americans were proud of their rapid development: the surge in population, the remarkable canals and railroads, the grand scale of the American enterprise. Why shouldn’t it be even bigger? Almost swaggering, Americans dared other countries—Great Britain in particular—to stop them.

Behind the bravado was some new international thinking about the economic future of the United States. After the devastating Panic of 1837 (see Chapter 11), many politicians became convinced that the nation’s prosperity depended on vastly expanded trade with Asia. The China trade had accustomed many New Englanders to trade across the Pacific, and greater markets beckoned (see Chapter 9). Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri had been advocating trade with India by way of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers since the 1820s (not the easiest of routes, as Lewis
and Clark had shown). Soon Benton and others were pointing out how much Pacific trade would increase if the United States held the magnificent harbors of the west coast, among them Puget Sound in the Oregon Country, held jointly with Britain, and the bays of San Francisco and San Diego, both in Mexican-held California.

Expansionism was deeply tied to national politics. O’Sullivan, whose “manifest destiny” became the expansionist watchword, was not a neutral observer: he was the editor of the Democratic Review, a party newspaper. Most Democrats were wholehearted supporters of expansion, whereas many Whigs (especially in the North) opposed it. Whigs welcomed most of the changes wrought by industrialization, but advocated strong government policies that would guide growth and development within the country’s existing boundaries; they feared (correctly) that expansion would raise the contentious issue of the extension of slavery to new territories.

On the other hand, many Democrats feared the industrialization that the Whigs welcomed. Where the Whigs saw economic progress, Democrats saw economic depression (the Panic of 1837 was the worst the nation had experienced), uncontrolled urban growth, and growing social unrest. For many Democrats, the answer to the nation’s social ills was to continue to follow Thomas Jefferson’s vision of establishing agriculture in the new territories in order to counterbalance industrialization (see Chapter 9). Another factor in the political struggle over expansion in the 1840s was that many Democrats were southerners, for whom the continual expansion of cotton-growing lands was a matter of social faith as well as economic necessity.

These were politicians’ reasons. The average farmer moved west for many other reasons: land hunger, national pride, plain and simple curiosity, and a sense of adventure.

THE OVERLAND TRAILS

The 2,000-mile trip on the Overland Trails from the banks of the Missouri River to Oregon and California usually took seven months, sometimes more. Travel was slow, dangerous, tedious, and exhausting. Forced to lighten their loads as animals died and winter weather threatened, pioneers often arrived at their destinations with little food and few belongings. Uprooted from family and familiar surroundings, pioneers faced the prospect of being, in the poignant and much-used biblical phrase, “strangers in a strange land.” Yet despite the risks, settlers streamed west: 5,000 to Oregon by 1845 and about 3,000 to California by 1848 (before the discovery of gold) (see Map 14-3).

Pioneers had many motives for making the trip. Glowing reports from Oregon’s Willamette Valley, for example, seemed to promise economic opportunity and healthy surroundings, an alluring combination to farmers in the malaria-prone Midwest who had been hard hit by the Panic of 1837. But rational motives do not tell the whole story. Many men were motivated by curiosity, and a sense of adventure.
by a sense of adventure, by a desire to experience the unknown, or, as they put it, to “see the elephant.” Women were more likely to think of the trip as *A Pioneer’s Search for an Ideal Home*, the title that Phoebe Judson chose for her account of her family’s 1852 trip to Oregon.

Few pioneers traveled alone, partly because they feared Indian attack (which was rare), but largely because they needed help fording rivers or crossing mountains with heavy wagons. Most Oregon pioneers traveled with their families but usually also joined a larger group, forming a “train.” In the earliest years, when the route was still uncertain, trains hired “pilots,” generally former fur trappers. Often the men of the wagon train drew up semimilitary constitutions, electing a leader. Democratic as this process appeared, not everyone was willing to obey the leader, and many trains experienced dissension and breakups along the trail. But in essence, all pioneers—men, women, and children—were part of a new, westward-moving community in which they had to accept both the advantages and disadvantages of community membership.

Wagon trains started westward as soon as the prairies were green (thus ensuring feed for the livestock). The daily routine was soon established. Men took care of the moving equipment and the animals, while the women cooked and kept track of the children. Slowly, at a rate of about fifteen miles a day, the wagon trains moved west along the Platte River, crossing the Continental Divide at South Pass in present-day Wyoming. West of the Rockies the climate was much drier. The long, dusty stretch along the Snake River in present-day southern Idaho finally gave way to Oregon’s steep and difficult Blue Mountains and to the dangerous rafting down the Columbia River, in which many drowned and all were drenched by the cold winter rains of the Pacific Northwest. California-bound migrants faced even worse hazards: the complete lack of water in the Humbolt Sink region of northern Nevada and the looming Sierra Nevadas, which had to be crossed before the winter snows came. (Some members of the ill-fated Donner party, snowbound on the Nevada side of that range in 1846–47, resorted to cannibalism before they were rescued.)

In addition to the ever-present tedium and exhaustion, wagon trains were beset by such trail hazards as illness and accident. Danger from Indian attack, which all pioneers feared, was actually very small. It appears that unprovoked white attacks on Indians were more common than the reverse.

In contrast, cholera killed at least a thousand people a year in 1849, and in the early 1850s, when it was common along sections of the trail along the Platte River. Spread by contaminated water, cholera caused vomiting and diarrhea, which in turn led to extreme dehydration and death, often in one night. In the afflicted regions, trailside graves were a frequent and grim sight. Drownings were not uncommon, nor were accidental ax wounds or shootings, and children sometimes fell out of wagons and were run over. The members of the wagon train community did what they could to arrange decent burials, and they provided support for survivors: men helped widows drive their wagons onward, women nursed and tended babies whose mothers were dead, and at least one parentless family, the seven Sager children, were brought to Oregon in safety.

By 1860, almost 300,000 people had traveled the Overland Trails to Oregon or California. Ruts from the wagon wheels can be seen in a number of places along the
route even today. In 1869, the completion of the transcontinental rail-
road marked the end of the wagon train era (see Figure 14-1).

OREGON

The American settlement of Oregon provides a capsule example of the
stages of frontier development. The first contacts between the region’s
Indian peoples and Europeans were commercial. Spanish, British,
Russian, and American ships traded for sea otter skins from the 1780s
to about 1810. Subsequently, land-based groups scoured the region for
beaver skins as well. In this first “frontier of inclusion” there were fre-
quent, often sexual contacts between Indians and Europeans.

Both Great Britain and the United States claimed the Oregon
Country by right of discovery, but in the Convention of 1818, the two
nations agreed to occupy it jointly, postponing a final decision on its dis-
position. In reality, the British clearly dominated the region. In 1824,
the Hudson’s Bay Company consolidated Britain’s position by establish-
ing a major fur trading post at Fort Vancouver, on the banks of the
Columbia River. Like all fur-trading ventures, the post exemplified the
racial mixing of a “frontier of inclusion.” Fort Vancouver housed a poly-
glot population of eastern Indians (Delawares and Iroquois), local
Chinook Indians, French and métis from Canada, British traders, and
Hawaiians. But the effect of the fur trade on native tribes in Oregon was
catastrophic; suffering the fate of all Indian peoples after their initial
contact with Europeans, they were decimated by European diseases.

The first permanent European settlers in Oregon were retired fur trappers
and their Indian wives and families. They favored a spot in the lush and temperate
Willamette Valley that became known as French Prairie, although the inhabitants
were a mixed group of Americans, British, French Canadians, Indian peoples, and
métis. The next to arrive were Protestant and Catholic missionaries, among them
Methodist Jason Lee in 1834, Congregationalists Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in
1836, Franciscan priests Frances Blanchet and Modeste Demers in 1838, and Jesuit
Pierre-Jean De Smet in 1840. None of these missionaries was very successful. Epidemics
had taken the lives of many of the region’s peoples, and those who were left were dis-
inclined to give up their nomadic life and settle down as the missionaries wanted
them to do.

Finally, in the 1840s, came the Midwest farmers who would make up the
majority of Oregon’s permanent settlers, carried on the wave of enthusiasm known
as “Oregon fever” and lured by free land and patriotism. By 1845, Oregon boasted
5,000 American settlers, most of them living in the Willamette Valley and laying
claim to lands to which they had as yet no legal right, because neither Britain nor
the United States had concluded land treaties with Oregon’s Indian peoples.
Their arrival signaled Oregon’s shift from a “frontier of inclusion” to a “frontier
of exclusion.”

For these early settlers, life was at first very difficult. Most arrived in late autumn,
exhausted from the strenuous overland journey. They could not begin to farm until
the spring, and so they depended on the earlier settlers for their survival over the
winter. In the earliest years, American settlers got vital help from the Hudson’s Bay
Company, even though its director, Dr. John McLoughlin, had been ordered by the
British government not to encourage American settlement. McLoughlin disregarded
his orders, motivated both by sympathy for the plight of the newcomers and by a
keen sense of the dangers his enterprise would face if he were outnumbered by
angry Americans.
The handful of American settlers in Oregon found themselves in possession of a remote frontier. One of the first things they did was to draw up their own constitution, modeled on that of the State of Iowa, which one settler had brought with him. The influx of American settlers, and their efforts to establish their own government, created strains between the United States and Britain. In 1845, President James K. Polk, who was deeply anti-British, coined the belligerent slogan “Fifty-four Forty or Fight,” suggesting that the United States would go to war if it didn’t get control of all the territory south of 54°40’ north latitude, the border between Russian Alaska and British Canada. In office, however, Polk was willing to compromise. In June 1846, Britain and the United States concluded a treaty establishing the 49th parallel as the U.S.–Canada border, but leaving the island of Vancouver in British hands. The British then quietly wound up their declining fur trade in the region. In 1849, the Hudson’s Bay Company closed Fort Vancouver and moved its operations to Victoria, thus ending the Pacific Northwest’s largely successful experience with joint occupancy. Oregon’s Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 codified the practice of giving 320 acres to each white male age eighteen or over and 640 acres to each married couple to settle in the territory (African Americans, Hawaiians, and American Indians were excluded).

The white settlers realized that they had to forge strong community bonds if they hoped to survive on their distant frontier. Cooperation and mutual aid were the rule. Until well into the 1850s, residents organized yearly parties that traveled back along the last stretches of the Oregon Trail to help straggling parties making their way to the territory. Kinship networks were strong and vital: many pioneers came to join family
who had migrated before them. Food sharing and mutual labor were essential in the early years, when crop and livestock loss to weather or natural predators was common. Help, even to total strangers, was customary in times of illness or death.

Although this community feeling did not extend to Indian groups as a whole, relations with the small and unthreatening disease-thinned local Indian tribes were generally peaceful until 1847, when Cayuse Indians killed the missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. Their deaths triggered a series of “wars” against the remaining native people. A “frontier of exclusion” had been achieved. Nonetheless, the process by which Oregon became part of the United States (it was admitted as a state in 1859) was relatively peaceful, especially when compared with American expansion into the Spanish provinces of New Mexico and Texas.

The Santa Fé Trade

Commerce with Santa Fé, first settled by colonists from Mexico in 1609, and the center of the Spanish frontier province of New Mexico, had long been desired by American traders. But Spain had forcefully resisted American penetration. For example, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike’s Great Plains and Rocky Mountain exploration of 1806–07 ended ignominiously with his capture by Spanish soldiers.

When Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, this exclusionary policy changed. American traders were now welcome in Santa Fé, but the trip over the legendary Santa Fé Trail from Independence, Missouri, was a forbidding 900 miles of arid plains, deserts, and mountains. On the Santa Fé trail, unlike the Oregon Trail, there was serious danger of Indian attack, for neither the Comanches nor the Apaches of the southern high plains tolerated trespassers. In 1825, at the urging of Senator Benton and others, Congress voted federal protection for the Santa Fé Trail, even though much of it lay in Mexican territory. The number of people venturing west in the trading caravans increased yearly because the profits were so great (the first American trader to reach Santa Fé, William Becknell, realized a thousand percent profit). By the 1840s, a few hundred American trappers and traders (called extranjeros, or “foreigners”) lived permanently in New Mexico. In Santa Fé, some American merchants married daughters of important local families, suggesting the start of the inclusive stage of frontier contact.

Settlements and trading posts soon grew up along the long Santa Fé Trail. One of the most famous was Bent’s Fort, on the Arkansas River in what is now eastern Colorado, which did a brisk trade in beaver skins and buffalo robes. Like most trading posts, it had a multiracial population. In the 1840s, the occupants included housekeeper Josefina Tafaya of Taos, whose husband was a carpenter from Pennsylvania; an African American cook; a French tailor from New Orleans; Mexican muleteers; and a number of Indian women, including the two Cheyenne women who were the (successive) wives of William Bent, cofounder of the fort. The three small communities of Pueblo, Hardscrabble, and Greenhorn, spinoffs of Bent’s Fort, were populated by men of all nationalities and their Mexican and Indian wives. All three

Narcissa Whitman, a missionary traveling a grueling cross-country trip to Oregon, comments on her unexpected encounter with civilization in the west.

We are now in Vancouver, the New York of the Pacific Ocean. . . . What a delightful place this is; what a contrast to the rough, barren sand plains, through which we had so recently passed. Here we find fruit of every description . . . and every kind of vegetable too numerous to be mentioned.
communities lived by trapping, hunting, and a little farming. This racially and economically mixed existence was characteristic of all early trading frontiers, but another western frontier, the American agricultural settlement in Texas, was different from the start.

**Texas**

In 1821, when Mexico gained its independence from Spain, there were 2,240 Tejano (Spanish-speaking) residents of Texas. Established in 1716 as a buffer against possible French attack on New Spain, the main Texas settlements of Nacogdoches, Goliad, and San Antonio remained small, far-flung frontier outposts (see Chapter 5). As was customary throughout New Spain, communities were organized around three centers: missions and presidios (forts), which formed the nuclei of towns, and the large cattle-raisin ranchos on which rural living depended. As elsewhere in New Spain, society was divided into two classes: the ricos (rich), who claimed Spanish descent, and the mixed-blood pobres (poor). The most colorful figures were mestizo (mixed-blood) vaqueros, renowned for their horsemanship; Americanization of their name made “buckaroos” of the American cowboys to whom they later taught their skills. Most Tejanos were neither ricos nor vaqueros but small farmers or common laborers who led hardscrabble frontier lives. But all Tejanos, rich and poor, faced the constant threat of raids by Comanche Indians.

The Comanches exemplified the revolutionary changes brought about in the lives of Plains Indians by the reintroduction of horses into the American continent (see Chapter 5). “A Comanche on his feet is out of his element . . . but the moment he lays his hands upon his horse,” said artist George Catlin, “I doubt very much whether any people in the world can surpass [him].” Legendary warriors, the Comanches raided the small Texas settlements at will and even struck deep into Mexico itself. Once they raided so far south that they saw brightly plumed birds (parrots) and “tiny men with tails” (monkeys); apparently they had reached the tropical Yucatán. The nomadic Comanches followed the immense buffalo herds on which they depended for food and clothing. Their relentless raids on the Texas settlements rose from a determination to hold onto this rich buffalo territory, for the buffalo provided all that they wanted. They had no interest in being converted by mission priests or incorporated into mixed-race trading communities.

**Americans in Texas**

In 1821, seeking to increase the strength of its buffer zone between the heart of Mexico and the marauding Comanches, the Mexican government granted Moses Austin of Missouri an area of 18,000 square miles within the territory of Texas. Moses died shortly thereafter, and the grant was taken up by his son Stephen F. Austin, who became the first American empresario (land agent). From the beginning, the American settlement of Texas differed markedly from that of other frontiers. Elsewhere, Americans frequently settled on land to which Indian peoples still held title, or, as in the case of Oregon, they occupied lands to which other countries also made claim. In contrast, the Texas settlement was fully legal: Austin and other empresarios owned their lands as a result of formal contracts with the Mexican government. In exchange,
Austin agreed that he and his colonists would become Mexican citizens and would adopt the Catholic religion. It is difficult to say which of these two provisions was the more remarkable, for most nineteenth-century Americans defined their Americanness in terms of citizenship and the Protestant religion.

Additionally, in startling contrast with the usual frontier free-for-all, Austin’s community was populated with handpicked settlers, Austin insisting that “no frontiersman who has no other occupation than that of hunter will be received—no drunkard, no gambler, no profane swearer, no idler.” Austin chose instead prosperous southern slaveowners eager to expand the lands devoted to cotton. Soon, Americans (including African American slaves, to whose presence the Mexican government turned a blind eye) outnumbered Tejanos by nearly two to one: in 1830, there were an estimated 7,000 Americans and 4,000 Tejanos living in Texas.

The Austin settlement of 1821 was followed by others, twenty-six in all, concentrating in the fertile river bottoms of east Texas (along the Sabine River) and south central Texas (the Brazos and the Colorado Rivers). These large settlements were highly organized farming enterprises whose principal crop was cotton, grown by African American slave labor and sold in the international market. By the early 1830s, Americans in Texas, ignoring the border between Mexican Texas and the United States, were sending an estimated $500,000 worth of goods (mostly cotton) yearly to New Orleans for export.

Austin’s colonists and those who settled later were predominantly southerners who viewed Texas as a natural extension of the cotton frontier in Mississippi and Louisiana (see Chapter 11). These settlers created “enclaves” (self-contained communities) that had little contact with Tejanos or Indian peoples. In fact, although they lived in Mexican territory, most Americans never bothered to learn Spanish. Nor, in spite of Austin’s promises, did they become Mexican citizens or adopt the Catholic religion. Yet, because of the nature of agreements made by the empresarios, the Americans could not set up local American-style governments like the one created by settlers in Oregon. Like the immigrants who flooded into east coast cities (see Chapter 13), the Americans in Texas were immigrants to another country—but one they did not intend to adapt to.

The one exception to American exclusiveness occurred in San Antonio, the provincial government center. There, just as in Santa Fé, a handful of wealthy Americans married into the Tejano elite with ease. One such marriage in San Antonio linked wealthy Louisianan James Bowie, the legendary fighter for whom the Bowie knife is named, and Ursula Veramendi, daughter of the vice governor of Texas. With the marriage, Bowie became an honored and well-connected Mexican merchant. Only after the death of his wife and children in a cholera epidemic in 1833, did Bowie support the cause of Anglo-Texan independence, going on to fight—and die—at the Alamo.

For a brief period, Texas was big enough to hold three communities: Comanche, Tejano, and American. The nomadic Comanches rode the high plains of northern and western Texas, raiding settlements primarily for horses. The Tejanos maintained their ranchos and missions mostly in the South, while American farmers occupied the eastern and south central sections. Each group would fight to hold its land: the Comanches, their rich hunting grounds; the Mexicans, their towns and ranchos; and the newcomers, the Americans, their rich land grants.

The balance among the three communities in Texas was broken in 1828, when centrist gained control of the government in Mexico City and, in a dramatic shift of policy, decided to exercise firm control over the northern province. As the Mexican government restricted American immigration, outlawed slavery, levied customs duties
and taxes, and planned other measures, Americans seethed and talked of rebellion. Bolstering their cause were as many as 20,000 additional Americans, many of them openly expansionist, who flooded into Texas after 1830. These most recent settlers did not intend to become Mexican citizens. Instead, they planned to take over Texas.

Many of the post–1830 immigrants were vehemently anti-Mexican. Statements of racial superiority were commonplace, and even Stephen Austin wrote in 1836 that he saw the Texas conflict as one of barbarism on the part of “a mongrel Spanish-Indian and negro race, against civilization and the Anglo-American race.” Most recent American migrants to Texas had come from the South, and racist statements of this sort made political compromise with the Mexican government, a step favored by many of the older American settlers, impossible.

Between 1830 and 1836, in spite of the mediation efforts of Austin (who was imprisoned for eighteen months by the Mexican government for his pains), the mood on both the Mexican and the American–Texan sides became more belligerent. In the fall of 1835, war finally broke out, and a volunteer American and Tejano army assembled. After the disastrous defeat at the Alamo described in the chapter opener, Mexican general and president Antonio López de Santa Anna led his army in pursuit of the remaining army of American and Tejano volunteers commanded by General Sam Houston. On April 21, 1836, at the San Jacinto River in eastern Texas, Santa Anna thought he had Houston trapped at last. Confident of victory against the exhausted Texans, Santa Anna’s army rested in the afternoon, failing even to post sentries. Although Houston advised against it, Houston’s men voted to attack immediately rather than wait till the next morning. Shouting “Remember the Alamo!” for the first time, the Texans completely surprised their opponents and won an overwhelming victory. On May 14, 1836, Santa Anna signed a treaty fixing the southern boundary of the newly independent Republic of Texas at the Rio Grande. The Mexican Congress, however, repudiated the treaty and refused to recognize Texan independence. It also rejected the offer by President Andrew Jackson to solve the matter through purchase. In the eyes of the Mexicans, the American insistence on the Rio Grande boundary was little more than a blatant effort to stake a claim to New Mexico, an older and completely separate Spanish settlement. An effort by the Republic of Texas in 1841 to capture Santa Fé was easily repulsed (see Map 14-4).

**Texas and the Election of 1844**

The Republic of Texas was unexpectedly rebuffed in another quarter as well. The U.S. Congress refused to grant it statehood when, in 1837, Texas applied for admission to the Union. Petitions opposing the admission of a fourteenth slave state (there were then thirteen free states) poured into Congress. Congressman (and former president) John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts led the opposition to the admission of Texas. Congress debated and ultimately dropped the Texas application. President Jackson did manage to extend diplomatic recognition to the Republic of Texas, on March 3, 1837, less than twenty-four hours before he left office.

The unresolved conflict with Mexico put heavy stress on American–Tejano relations. Immediately after the revolt, San Antonio, the most important city of Mexican Texas, saw an accommodation between the old elite and the new American authorities. Although they slowly lost political power, members of the Tejano elite were not immediately dispossessed of their property. As before, ambitious Anglos married into the Tejano elite. The intermarriages made it easier for the Tejano elite to adjust to the changes in law and commerce that the Americans quickly enacted. But following a temporary recapture of San Antonio by Mexican forces in 1842, positions hardened. Many more of the Tejano elite fled to Mexico, and Americans discussed banishing or imprisoning all Tejanos until the border issue was settled. This was, of
course, impossible. Culturally, San Antonio remained a Mexican city long after the Americans had declared independence. The Americans in the Republic of Texas were struggling to reconcile American ideals of democracy with the reality of subordinating those with a prior claim, the Tejanos, to the status of a conquered people.

Ethnocentric attitudes quickly triumphed. Tejanos and other Mexicans were soon being blamed by Americans for their own subordination. Senator Edward Hannegan of Indiana was one of the most outspoken: “Mexico and the United States are peopled by two distinct and utterly unhomogeneous races,” he announced in 1847. “In no reasonable period could we amalgamate.”
American control over the other Texas residents, the Indians, was also slow in coming. Although the coastal Indian peoples were soon killed or removed, the Comanches still rode the high plains of northern and western Texas. West of the Rio Grande, equally fierce Apache bands were in control. Both groups soon learned to distrust American promises to stay out of their territory, and they did not hesitate to raid settlements and to kill trespassers. Not until after the Civil War and major campaigns by the U.S. Army were these fierce Indian tribes conquered.

Martin Van Buren, who succeeded Andrew Jackson as president in 1837, was too cautious to raise the Texas issue during his term of office. But Texans themselves continued to press for annexation to the United States, while at the same time seeking recognition and support from Great Britain. The idea of an independent and expansionist republic on its southern border that might gain the support of America’s traditional enemy alarmed many Americans. Annexation thus became an urgent matter of national politics. This issue also added to the troubles of a governing Whig Party that was already deeply divided by the policies of John Tyler, who had become president by default when William Harrison died in office (see Chapter 11). Tyler raised the issue of annexation in 1844, hoping thereby to ensure his reelection, but the strategy backfired. Presenting the annexation treaty to Congress, Secretary of State John Calhoun awakened sectional fears by connecting Texas with the urgent need of southern slave owners to extend slavery.

In a storm of antislavery protest, Whigs rejected the treaty proposed by their own president and ejected Tyler himself from the party. In his place, they chose Henry Clay, the party’s longtime standard-bearer, as their presidential candidate. Clay took a noncommittal stance on Texas, favoring annexation, but only if Mexico approved. Since Mexico’s emphatic disapproval was well known, Clay’s position was widely interpreted as a politician’s effort not to alienate voters on either side of the fence.

In contrast, in the Democratic Party, wholehearted and outspoken expansionists seized control. Sweeping aside their own senior politician, Van Buren, who like Clay tried to remain uncommitted, the Democrats nominated their first “dark horse” candidate, James K. Polk of Tennessee. Democrats enthusiastically endorsed Polk’s platform, which called for “the re-occupation of Oregon and the re-annexation of Texas at the earliest practicable period.” Polk won the 1844 election by the narrow margin of 40,000 popular votes (although he gained 170 electoral votes to Clay’s 105). An ominous portent for the Whigs was the showing of James G. Birney of the Liberty Party, who polled 62,000 votes, largely from northern antislavery Whigs. Birney’s third-party campaign was the first political sign of the growing strength of antislavery opinion. Nevertheless, the 1844 election was widely interpreted as a mandate for expansion. Thereupon, John Tyler, in one of his last actions as president, pushed through Congress a joint resolution (which did not require the two-thirds approval by the Senate necessary for treaties) for the annexation of Texas. When Texas entered the Union in December 1845, it was the twenty-eighth state and the fifteenth slave state.

**WHAT WERE the most important consequences of the Mexican-American War?**

*AP* Guideline 9.4

James K. Polk lived up to his campaign promises. In 1846, he peacefully added Oregon south of the 49th parallel to the United States; in 1848, following the Mexican-American War, he acquired Mexico’s northern provinces of California and New Mexico as well. Thus, with the annexation of Texas, the United States, in the short space of three years, had added 1.5 million square miles of territory, an increase of nearly 70 percent. Polk was indeed the “manifest destiny” president.
Origins of the War

In the spring of 1846, just as the controversy over Oregon was drawing to a peaceful conclusion, tensions with Mexico grew more serious. As soon as Texas was granted statehood in 1845, the Mexican government broke diplomatic relations with the United States. In addition, because the United States supported the Texas claim of all land north of the Rio Grande, it provoked a border dispute with Mexico. In June 1845, Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to Texas, and by October, a force of 3,500 Americans were on the Nueces River with orders to defend Texas in the event of a Mexican invasion.

Polk had something bigger than border protection in mind. He coveted the continent clear to the Pacific Ocean. At the same time that he sent Taylor to Texas, Polk secretly instructed the Pacific naval squadron to seize the California ports if Mexico declared war. He also wrote the American consul in Monterey, Thomas Larkin, that a peaceful takeover of California by its residents—Spanish Mexicans and Americans alike—would not be unwelcome. When, in addition, the federally commissioned explorer John C. Frémont and a band of armed men appeared in California in the winter of 1845–46, Mexican authorities became alarmed, and ordered him to leave. After withdrawing briefly to Oregon, Frémont returned to California and was on hand in Sonoma in June to assist in the Bear Flag Revolt, in which a handful of American settlers, declaring that they were playing “the Texas game,” announced California’s independence from Mexico.

Meanwhile, in November 1845, Polk sent a secret envoy, John Slidell, to Mexico with an offer of $30 million or more for the Rio Grande border in Texas and Mexico’s provinces of New Mexico and California. When the Mexican government refused even to receive Slidell, an angry Polk ordered General Taylor and his forces south to...
the Rio Grande, into the territory that Mexicans claimed as their soil. In April 1846, a brief skirmish between American and Mexican soldiers broke out in the disputed zone. Polk seized on the event, sending a war message to Congress: “Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil. . . . War exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself.” This claim of President Polk’s was, of course, contrary to fact. On May 13, 1846, Congress declared war on Mexico (see Map 14-5).

**Mr. Polk’s War**

From the beginning, the Mexican-American War was politically divisive. Whig critics in Congress, among them a gawky young congressman from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln, questioned Polk’s account of the border incident. They accused the president of misleading Congress and of maneuvering the country into an unnecessary war. The history of congressional concern over the way presidents have exercised their war powers begins here. The issue would again be prominent,
for example, during the Vietnam War, in the Reagan years, and in the questions about the reasons for war with Iraq in 2003. As the Mexican-American War dragged on and casualties and costs mounted—13,000 Americans and 50,000 Mexicans died and the United States spent $97 million—opposition increased, especially among northern antislavery Whigs. More and more people came to the opinion that the war was nothing more than a plot by southerners to expand slavery. Many northerners asked why Polk had been willing to settle for only a part of Oregon, but was so eager to pursue a war for slave territory. Thus expansionist dreams served to fuel sectional antagonisms.

The northern states witnessed both mass and individual protests against the war. In Massachusetts, the legislature passed a resolution condemning Polk’s declaration of war as unconstitutional, and philosopher-writer Henry David Thoreau went to jail rather than pay the taxes he believed would support the war effort. Thoreau’s dramatic gesture was undercut by his aunt, who paid his fine after he had spent only one night in jail. Thoreau then returned to his cabin on Walden Pond, where he wrote his classic essay “Civil Disobedience,” justifying the individual’s moral duty to oppose an immoral government. In the early twentieth century, the Indian nationalist Mohandas Gandhi used Thoreau’s essay to justify his campaign of “passive resistance” against British imperial rule in India. In turn, Martin Luther King and others used Gandhi’s model of civil disobedience as a basis for their activities in the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Whigs termed the war with Mexico “Mr. Polk’s War,” but the charge was not just a Whig jibe. Although he lacked a military background, Polk assumed the overall planning of the war’s strategy (a practice that the critical Mr. Lincoln was to follow in the Civil War). By his personal attention to the coordination of civilian political goals and military requirements, Polk gave a new and expanded definition to the role of the president as commander-in-chief during wartime. In 1846, Polk sent General Taylor south into northeastern Mexico and Colonel Stephen Kearny to New Mexico and California. Taylor captured the northern Mexico cities of Palo Alto in May and Monterey in September 1846. Meanwhile, Kearny marched his men 900 miles to Santa Fé, which surrendered peacefully. Another march of roughly the same distance brought him by fall to southern California, which he took with the help of naval forces and Frémont’s irregular troops.

By the end of 1846, the northern provinces that Polk had coveted were now secured, but contrary to his expectations, Mexico refused to negotiate. In February 1847, General Santa Anna of Alamo fame attacked the American troops led by General Taylor at Buena Vista, but was repulsed by Taylor’s small force. A month later, in March 1847, General Winfield Scott launched an amphibious attack on the coastal city of Veracruz and rapidly captured it. Americans celebrated these twin victories joyously, but they were to be the last easy victories of the war. It took Scott six months of brutal fighting against stubborn Mexican resistance on the battlefield and harassing guerrilla raids to force his way to Mexico City. American troops reacted bitterly to their high casualty rates, retaliating against Mexican citizens with acts of murder, robbery, and rape. Even General Scott himself admitted that his troops had “committed atrocities to make Heaven weep and every American of Christian morals blush for his country.” In September, Scott took Mexico City, and Mexican resistance came to an end.

With the American army went a special envoy, Nicholas Trist, who delivered Polk’s terms for peace. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,
signed February 2, 1848, Mexico ceded its northern provinces of California and New Mexico (which included present-day Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and part of Colorado) and accepted the Rio Grande as the boundary of Texas. The United States agreed to pay Mexico $15 million and assume about $2 million in individual claims against that nation.

When Trist returned to Washington with the treaty, however, Polk was furious. He had actually recalled Trist after Scott’s sweeping victory, intending to send a new envoy with greater demands, but Trist had ignored the recall order. “All Mexico!” had become the phrase widely used by those in favor of further expansion, Polk among them. But two very different groups opposed further expansion. The first group, composed of northern Whigs, included such notables as Ralph Waldo Emerson, who grimly warned, “The United States will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man swallows arsenic, which brings him down in turn. Mexico will poison us.” The second group was composed of southerners who realized that Mexicans could not be kept as conquered people, but would have to be offered territorial government as Louisiana had been offered in 1804. Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, leading the opposition, warned against admitting “colored and mixed-breed” Mexicans “on an equality with people of the United States.” “We make a great mistake, sir,” he argued on the floor of the Senate, “when we suppose that all people are capable of self-government.” Bowing to these political protests, Polk reluctantly accepted the treaty. A later addition, the $10 million Gadsden Purchase of parts of present-day New Mexico and Arizona, added another 30,000 square miles to the United States in 1853. This purchase, made to facilitate a southern transcontinental railroad route through arid borderland, was a far cry from the rich heartland of Mexico that Polk had hoped to annex (see Map 14-6).

**The Press and Popular War Enthusiasm**

The Mexican-American War was the first war in which regular, on-the-scene reporting by representatives of the press caught the mass of ordinary citizens up in the war’s daily events. Thanks to the recently invented telegraph, newspapers could get the latest news from their reporters, who were among the world’s first war correspondents. The “penny press,” with more than a decade’s experience of reporting urban crime and scandals, was quick to realize that the public’s appetite for sensational war news was apparently insatiable. For the first time in American history, accounts by journalists, and not the opinions of politicians, became the major shapers of popular attitudes toward a war. From beginning to end, news of the war stirred unprecedented popular excitement.

The reports from the battlefield united Americans in a new way: they became part of a temporary but highly emotional community linked by newsprint and buttressed by public gatherings. In the spring of 1846, news of Zachary Taylor’s victory at Palo Alto prompted the largest meeting ever held in the cotton textile town of Lowell, Massachusetts. In May 1847, New York City celebrated the twin victories at Veracruz and Buena Vista with fireworks, illuminations, and a “grand procession” estimated at 400,000 people. Generals Taylor and Scott became overnight heroes, and in time, both became presidential candidates. Exciting, sobering, and terrible, war news had a deep hold on the popular imagination. It was a lesson newspaper publishers never forgot.
California and the Gold Rush

In the early 1840s, California was inhabited by many seminomadic Indian tribes whose people numbered approximately 50,000. There were also some 7,000 Californios, descendants of the Spanish Mexican pioneers who had begun to settle in 1769. The American presence in California at first consisted of a few traders and settlers who often intermarried with Californios. Even American annexation at the end of the Mexican-American War changed little for the handful of Americans on this remote frontier. But then came the Gold Rush of 1849, which changed California permanently.

Russian-Californio Trade

The first outsiders to penetrate the isolation of Spanish California were not Americans, but Russians. Because the distance between California and Mexico City was so great, the Spanish had found it difficult to maintain the elaborate system of twenty-one missions first established in the eighteenth century (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, Spanish officials in Mexico insisted on isolation, forbidding the colonists to trade with other nations. Evading Spanish regulations, Californios conducted a small illegal trade in cattle hides with American merchant ships (for the shoes made in the workshops of Massachusetts), and a much larger trade with the Russian American Fur Company in Sitka, Alaska. A mutually beneficial barter of California food for iron tools and woven cloth from Russia was established in 1806. This arrangement became even brisker after the Russians settled Fort Ross (near present-day Mendocino) in 1812, and led in time to regular trade with Mission San Rafael and Mission Sonoma. That the Russians in Alaska, so far from their own capital, were better supplied with manufactured goods than the Californios is an index of the latter’s isolation.

When Mexico became independent in 1821, the California trade was thrown open to ships of all nations. Nevertheless, Californios continued their special relationship with the Russians, exempting them from the taxes and inspections that they required of Americans. However, agricultural productivity declined after 1832, when the Mexican government ordered the secularization of the California missions, and the Russians regretfully turned to the rich farms of the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Pacific Northwest for their food supply. In 1841, they sold Fort Ross, and the Russian-Californio connection came to an end.

Early American Settlement

It was Johann Augustus Sutter, a Swiss who had settled in California in 1839, becoming a Mexican citizen, who served as a focal point for American settlement in the 1840s. Sutter held a magnificent land grant in the Sacramento Valley. At the center of his holdings was Sutter’s Fort, a walled compound that was part living quarters and part supply shop for his vast cattle ranch, which was run largely on forced Indian labor. In the 1840s, Sutter offered valuable support to the handful of American overlanders who chose California over Oregon, the destination preferred by most pioneers. Most of these Americans, keenly aware that they were interlopers in Mexican territory, settled near Sutter in California’s Central Valley, away from the Californios clustered along the coast.
The 1840s immigrants made no effort to intermarry with the Californios or to conform to Spanish ways. They were bent on taking over the territory. In June 1846, these Americans banded together at Sonoma in the Bear Flag Revolt (so called because their flag bore a bear emblem), declaring independence from Mexico. The American takeover of California was not confirmed until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. In the meantime, California was regarded by most Americans merely as a remote, sparsely populated frontier, albeit one with splendid potential. Polk and other expansionists coveted the magnificent harbors in San Diego and San Francisco as the basis for Pacific trade with Asia, but in 1848 this prospect was still only a dream.

Gold!

In January 1848, carpenter James Marshall noticed small flakes of gold in the millrace at Sutter’s Mill (present-day Coloma). Soon he and all the rest of John Sutter’s employees were panning for gold in California’s streams. But not until the autumn of 1848 did the east coast hear the first rumors about the discovery of gold in California. The reports were confirmed in mid-November when an army courier arrived in Washington carrying a tea caddy full of gold dust and nuggets. The spirit of excitement and adventure so recently aroused by the Mexican-American War was now directed toward California, the new El Dorado. Thousands left farms and jobs and headed west, by land and by sea, to make their fortune. Later known as “forty-niners” for the year the gold rush began in earnest, these people came from all parts of the United States—and indeed, from all over the world. They transformed what had been a quiet ranching paradise into a teeming and tumultuous community in search of wealth in California’s rivers and streams.

Eighty percent of the forty-niners were Americans. They came from every state. The Gold Rush was an eye-opening expansion of their horizons for the many who had known only their hometown folks before. The second largest group of migrants were from nearby Mexico and the west coast of Latin America (13 percent). The remainder came from Europe and Asia (see Figure 14-2).

The presence of Chinese miners surprised many Americans. Several hundred Chinese arrived in California in 1849 and 1850, and in 1852 more than 20,000 landed in San Francisco hoping to share in the wealth of “Gum Sam” (Golden Mountain). Most came, like the Americans, as temporary sojourners, intending to return home as soon as they made some money. Again, like most of the American miners, the majority of Chinese were men who left their wives at home. Dressed in their distinctive blue cotton shirts, baggy pants, and broad-brimmed hats, and with long queues hanging down their backs, hardworking Chinese miners soon became a familiar sight in the gold fields, as did the presence of “Chinatowns.” The distinctive appearance of the Chinese, added to the threat of economic competition that they posed, quickly aroused American hostility. A special tax was imposed on foreign miners in 1852, and in the 1870s, Chinese immigration was sharply curtailed.
In 1849, as the gold rush began in earnest, San Francisco, the major entry port and supply point, sprang to life. From a settlement of 1,000 in 1848, it grew to a city of 35,000 in 1850. This surge suggested that the real money to be made in California was not in panning for gold, but in feeding, clothing, housing, provisioning, and entertaining the miners. Among the first to learn that lesson was the German Jewish immigrant Levi Strauss, who sold so many tough work pants to miners that his name became synonymous with his product. And Jerusha Marshall, who opened a twenty-room boardinghouse in the city, candidly wrote to her eastern relatives: “Never was there a better field for making money than now presents itself in this place. . . . We are satisfied to dig our gold in San Francisco.” From these “instant” beginnings, San Francisco stabilized to become a major American city. Meanwhile, the white population of California had jumped from an estimated pre-Gold Rush figure of 11,000 to more than 100,000 by 1852. California was admitted into the Union as a state in 1850.

**MINING CAMPS**

As had occurred in San Francisco, most mining camps boomed almost instantly to life, but unlike San Francisco, they were empty again within a few years. In spite of the aura of glamour that surrounds the names of the famous camps—Poker Flat, Angels Camp, Whiskey Bar, Placerville, Mariposa—they were generally dirty and dreary places. Most miners lived in tents or hovels, unwilling to take time from mining to build themselves decent quarters. They cooked monotonous meals of beans, bread, and bacon, or, if they had money, bought meals at expensive restaurants and boardinghouses (where the table might be no more than a plank over two flour barrels). They led a cheerless, uncomfortable, and unhealthy existence, especially during the long, rainy winter months, with few distractions apart from the saloon, the gambling hall, and the prostitute’s crib (see Map 14-7).

Most miners were young, unmarried, and unsuccessful. Only a small percentage ever struck it rich in California. Gold deposits that were accessible with pick and shovel were soon exhausted, and the deeper deposits required capital and machinery. Some of the workings at the Comstock Lode in Virginia City, Nevada, a later mining center, were half a mile deep. Increasingly, those who stayed on in California had to give up the status of independent miners and become wage earners for large mining concerns.

As in San Francisco, a more reliable way to earn money in the camps was to supply the miners. Every mining community had its saloonkeepers, gamblers, prostitutes, merchants, and restauranteurs. Like the miners themselves, these people were transients, always ready to pick up and move at the word of a new gold strike. The majority of women in the early mining camps were prostitutes. Some grew rich or married respectably, but most died young of drugs, venereal disease, or violence. Most of the other women were hardworking wives of miners, and in this predominantly male society, they made good money doing domestic work: keeping boardinghouses, cooking, doing laundry. Even the wives of professional men who in the East might have been restrained by propriety succumbed to the monetary opportunities and kept boardinghouses.

Partly because few people put any effort into building communities—they were too busy seeking gold—violence was endemic in mining areas, and much of it was racial. Discrimination, especially against Chinese, Mexicans, and African Americans, was common. Frequently miners’ claims were “jumped”: thieves would rob them of
the gold they had accumulated, kill them, or chase them away, and then file their own claim for the victims’ strike. Or unscrupulous miners might use the law to their advantage to secure the claims of others without violence—for example by taking advantage of the prohibitively high mining tax on foreigners.

In the end, most mining camps were at best temporary communities. The gold “played out” and people moved on, leaving ghost towns behind. By the mid-1850s, the immediate effects of the Gold Rush had passed. California had a booming population, a thriving agriculture, and a corporate mining industry. The Gold Rush also left California with a population that was larger, more affluent, and (in urban San Francisco) more culturally sophisticated than that in other newly settled territories. And it was significantly more multicultural than the rest of the nation, for many of the Chinese and Mexicans, as well as immigrants from many European countries, remained in California after the Gold Rush subsided. But the rough equality of the early days was gone, and peoples of what were considered “lesser races” were kept in subordination.

The Gold Rush left some permanent scars, and not just on the foothills landscape: the virtual extermination of the California Indian peoples, the dispossession of many Californios who were legally deprived of their land grants, and the growth of racial animosity toward the Chinese in particular. The major characteristics of the mining frontier, evident first in the California Gold Rush and repeated many times thereafter in similar “rushes” in Colorado, Montana, Idaho, South Dakota, Arizona, and Alaska were a lack of stable communities and a worsening of racial tensions.

MAP 14.7
California in the Gold Rush. This map shows the major gold camps along the Mother Lode in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Gold seekers reached the camps by crossing the Sierra Nevadas near Placerville on the Overland Trail or by sea via San Francisco. The main area of Spanish-Mexican settlement, the coastal region between Monterey and Los Angeles, was remote from the gold fields.

WHAT KEY factors explain the outcome of the election of 1848?

AP* Guideline 10.1

Class Discussion Question 14.6

In three short years, from 1845 to 1848, the territory of the United States grew an incredible 70 percent, and a continental nation took shape. This expansion, pushed by economic desires and feelings of American cultural superiority, led directly to the emergence of the divisive issue of slavery as the dominant issue in national politics.

The Wilmot Proviso

In 1846, almost all the northern members of the Whig Party opposed Democratic president James Polk’s belligerent expansionism on antislavery grounds. Northern Whigs correctly feared that expansion would reopen the issue of slavery in the territories. “We appear . . . to be rushing upon perils headlong, and with our eyes all open,” Daniel Webster warned in 1847. His remedy? “We want no extension of territory; we want no accession of new states. The country is already large enough.” But the outpouring of popular enthusiasm for the Mexican-American War drowned Webster’s words and convinced most Whig congressmen that they needed to vote military appropriations for the war in spite of their misgivings.

Ironically, it was not the Whigs, but a freshman Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania, David Wilmot, who opened the door to sectional controversy over expansion. In August 1846, only a few short months after the beginning of the Mexican-American War, Wilmot proposed, in an amendment to a military appropriations bill, that slavery be banned in all the territories acquired from Mexico.
wilmot said, to “sustain the institutions of the South as they exist. But sir, the issue now presented is not whether slavery shall exist unmolested where it is now, but whether it shall be carried to new and distant regions, now free, where the footprint of a slave cannot be found.” In the debate and voting that followed, something new and ominous occurred: southern Whigs joined southern Democrats to vote against the measure, while northerners of both parties supported it. Sectional interest had triumphed over party loyalty. Wilmot’s Proviso triggered the first breakdown of the national party system and reopened the debate about the place of slavery in the future of the nation.

The Wilmot Proviso was so controversial that it was deleted from the necessary military appropriations bills during the Mexican-American War. But in 1848, following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the question of the expansion of slavery could no longer be avoided or postponed. Antislavery advocates from the North argued with proslavery southerners in a debate that was much more prolonged and bitter than in the Missouri Crisis debate of 1819. Civility quickly wore thin; threats were uttered and fistfights broke out on the floor of the House of Representatives. The Wilmot Proviso posed a fundamental challenge to both parties. Neither the Democrats nor the Whigs could take a strong stand on the amendment, because neither party could get its northern and southern wings to agree. Decisive action, for or against, was a serious threat to party unity. Webster’s fear that expansion would lead to sectional conflict had become a reality.

The Free-Soil Movement

Why did David Wilmot propose this controversial measure? Wilmot, a northern Democrat, was propelled not by ideology but by the pressure of practical politics. The dramatic rise of the Liberty Party, founded in 1840 by abolitionists, threatened to take votes away from both the Whig and the Democratic parties. The Liberty Party won 62,000 votes in the 1844 presidential election, all in the North. This was more than enough to deny victory to the Whig candidate, Henry Clay. Neither party could afford to ignore the strength of this third party.

The Liberty Party took an uncompromising stance against slavery. As articulated by Ohio’s Salmon P. Chase, the party platform called for the “divorce of the federal government from slavery.” The party proposed to prohibit the admission of slave states to the Union, end slavery in the District of Columbia, and abolish the interstate slave trade that was vital to the expansion of cotton growing into the Old Southwest.

The Wilmot Proviso

The amendment offered by Pennsylvania Democrat David Wilmot in 1846 which stipulated that “as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico . . . neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory.”
Liberty Party members also favored denying office to all slaveholders (a proposal that would have robbed all the southern states of their senators) and forbidding the use of slave labor on federal construction projects. In short, the party proposed to quickly strangle slavery. The popularity of this radical program among northern voters in 1844 was an indication of the moral fervor of abolitionism (see Chapter 13).

But Liberty Party doctrine was too uncompromising for the mass of northern voters, who immediately realized that the southern states would leave the Union before accepting it. Still, as the 1844 vote indicated, many northerners opposed slavery. From this sentiment, the Free-Soil Party was born. The free-soil argument was a calculated adjustment of abolitionist principles to practical politics. It shifted the focus from the question of the morality of slavery, to the ways in which slavery posed a threat to northern expansion. The free-soil doctrine thus established a direct link between expansion, which most Americans supported, and sectional politics.

Free-soilers were willing to allow slavery to continue in the existing slave states because they supported the Union, not because they approved of slavery. They were unwilling, however, to allow the extension of slavery to new and unorganized territory. If the South were successful in extending slavery, they argued, northern farmers who moved west would find themselves competing at an economic disadvantage with large planters using slave labor. Free-soilers also insisted that the northern values of freedom and individualism would be destroyed if the slave-based southern labor system were allowed to spread.

Many free-soilers really meant “antiblack” when they said “antislavery.” They proposed to ban all African American people from the new territories (a step that four states—Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Oregon—took, but did not always enforce). William Lloyd Garrison promptly denounced the free-soil doctrine as “whitemanism,” a racist effort to make the territories white. There was much truth to his charge, but there was no denying that the free-soil doctrine was popular. Although abolitionists were making headway in their claim for moral equality regardless of skin color, most northerners were unwilling to consider social equality for African Americans, free or slave. Banning all black people from the western territories seemed a simple solution.

**The Election of 1848**

A swirl of emotions—pride, expansionism, sectionalism, abolitionism, free-soil sentiment—surrounded the election of 1848. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had been signed earlier in the year, and the vast northern Mexican provinces of New Mexico and California and the former Republic of Texas had been incorporated into the United States. But the issues raised by the Wilmot Proviso remained to be resolved, and every candidate had to have an answer to the question of whether slavery should be admitted in the new territories.

Lewis Cass of Michigan, the Democratic nominee for president (Polk, in poor health, declined to run for a second term), proposed to apply the doctrine of
popular sovereignty to the crucial slave–free issue. This democratic-sounding notion of leaving the decision to the citizens of each territory was based on the Jeffersonian faith in the common man’s ability to vote both his own self-interest and the common good. Popular sovereignty was based on the accepted constitutional principle that decisions about slavery (like, for example, rules about suffrage) should be made at the state rather than the national level. In reality, popular sovereignty was an admission of the nation’s failure to resolve sectional differences. It simply shifted decision making on the crucial issue of the expansion of slavery from national politicians to the members of territorial and state legislatures, who, belonging to different parties, were in as much disagreement as members of Congress and just as unable to resolve it.

As Cass stated it, the doctrine of popular sovereignty was deliberately vague about when a territory would choose its status. Would it do so during the territorial stage? at the point of applying for statehood? Clearly, this question was crucial, for no slave owner would invest in new land if the territory could later be declared free, and no abolitionist would move to a territory that was destined to become a slave state. Cass hoped his ambiguity on this point would win him votes in both North and South.

For their part, the Whigs passed over perennial candidate Henry Clay and turned to a war hero, General Zachary Taylor. Taylor, a Louisiana slaveholder, refused to take a position on the Wilmot Proviso, allowing both northern and southern voters to hope that he agreed with them. Privately, Taylor opposed the expansion of slavery. In public, he evaded the issue by running as a war hero and a national leader who was above sectional politics.

The deliberate vagueness of the two major candidates displeased many northern voters. An uneasy mixture of disaffected Democrats (among them David Wilmot) and Whigs joined former Liberty Party voters to support the candidate of the Free-Soil Party, former president Martin Van Buren. Van Buren, angry at the Democratic Party for passing him over in 1844 and displeased with the growing southern dominance of the Democratic Party, ran as a spoiler. He knew he could not win the election, but he could divide the Democrats. In the end, Van Buren garnered 10 percent of the vote (all in the North). The vote for the Free-Soil Party cost Cass the electoral votes of New York and Pennsylvania, and General Zachary Taylor won the election with only 47 percent of the popular vote. This was the second election after 1840 that the Whigs had won by running a war hero who could duck hard questions by claiming to be above politics. Uncannily, history was to repeat itself: Taylor, like William Henry Harrison, died before his term was completed, and the chance he offered to maintain national unity—if ever it existed—was lost.

**Conclusion**

In the decade of the 1840s, westward expansion took many forms, from relatively peaceful settlement in Oregon, to war with Mexico over Texas, to the overwhelming numbers of gold rushers who changed California forever. Most of these frontiers—in Oregon, New Mexico, and California—began as frontiers of inclusion, in which a small number of Americans were eager for trade, accommodation, and intermarriage with the original inhabitants. Texas, with its agricultural enclaves, was the exception to this pattern. Yet on every frontier, as the number of American settlers increased, so did the sentiment for exclusion, so that by 1850,
War News from Mexico

The unprecedented immediacy of the news reporting from the battlefields of the Mexican-American War, transmitted for the first time by telegraph, is captured in this painting by the American artist Richard Caton Woodville, painted in 1848 (the year the war ended). Woodville was one of a number of genre painters who enlivened their depictions of everyday life and ordinary people by focusing on political debates or dramatic moments like the one shown here.

Almost every aspect of this painting is political commentary. The central figure in the painting is standing on the porch of the American Hotel reading the latest war news to the crowd of men gathered around him from a cheap “penny paper” full of sensational stories, war news, and lithographs of battle scenes from the war. Although the audience seems deeply engaged, the range of expressions reminds the viewer that the war was very divisive, with many antislavery northerners in outright opposition. The placement of the African American man at a lower level on the step is a clear statement of his exclusion from political participation. Don’t overlook the woman leaning out of the window on the right side of the painting. She too is excluded from politics but is obviously just as interested and concerned as the men. Woodville’s inclusion of the black child in a white smock seems to be an ambiguous statement about the impact of the Mexican-American War on slavery.

ARE YOU surprised at the extent of political commentary in this painting? Are paintings an appropriate media for political opinion?
whatever their origins, the far-flung American continental settlements were more similar than different, and the success of manifest destiny seemed overwhelming.

The election of 1848, virtually a referendum on manifest destiny, yielded ironic results. James K. Polk, who presided over the unprecedented expansion, did not run for a second term, and thus the Democratic Party gained no electoral victory to match the military one. The electorate that had been so thrilled by the war news voted for a war hero—who led the antiexpansionist Whig Party. The election was decided by Martin Van Buren, the Free-Soil candidate who voiced the sentiments of the abolitionists, a reform group that had been insignificant just a few years before. The amazing expansion achieved by the Mexican-American War—America’s manifest destiny—made the United States a continental nation, but stirred up the issue that was to tear it apart. Sectional rivalries and fears now dominated every aspect of politics. Expansion, once a force for unity, now divided the nation into northerners and southerners, who could not agree on the community they shared—the federal Union.
**AP* DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION**

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

Assess and identify the ways that the success of Manifest Destiny and expansion of the United States would lead to a resurrection of issues that would eventually divide the nation.

**DOCUMENT A**

*Provided.* That, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico by the United States, by virtue of any treaty which may be negotiated between them, and to the use by the Executive of the moneys herein appropriated, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.


Wilmot was a Pennsylvania congressman ardently opposed to slavery. Later he would be a leader in the Free-Soil Party and then the Republican Party. In 1846 he introduced this amendment to a house appropriations bill forbidding slavery in the territory acquired from Mexico. Look at the map on page 476 of the Mexican Cession. This is the territory in which Wilmot proposed to ban slavery.

* Wilmot was a Pennsylvania congressman ardently opposed to slavery. Later he would be a leader in the Free-Soil Party and then the Republican Party. In 1846 he introduced this amendment to a house appropriations bill forbidding slavery in the territory acquired from Mexico. Look at the map on page 476 of the Mexican Cession. This is the territory in which Wilmot proposed to ban slavery.

* What did Emerson mean when he referred to the Mexican Cession as poison? How did the acquisition of the Mexican Cession affect the nation?

* What passions were raised by the acquisition of the Mexican Cession?*

**DOCUMENT B**

Look at the chart on page 479 of the national background of immigrants into California during the 1849 Gold Rush. Now look at the map of California (page 480), the drawing of the gambling saloon in San Francisco in 1855 (page 477), and the photo of the miners in the gold fields (page 478).

* What was happening to the population of California between 1848 and 1855?*

Turn to page 496 and the discussion on the Compromise of 1850.

* How did the issue of California statehood force the negotiation of this compromise?*

* What other issues became wrapped in the overall compromise package? Which compromises did each side on the slavery issue accept?*

* Was the Philadelphia Pennsylvanian correct that “peace and tranquility” had been restored or was Samuel Chase the better prophet?*
● What was this issue of popular sovereignty by which slavery would be settled within each territory? Why was it popular as a solution?

● How did the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 lead directly to even greater division within the nation over the slavery issue?

**Document C**

Aix-La-Chapelle: October 18, 1854

SIR.—The undersigned, in compliance with the wish expressed by the President in the several confidential dispatches you have addressed to us, respectively, to that effect, have met in conference, first at Ostend, in Belgium... and then at Aix la Chapelle in Prussia...

There has been a full and unresolved interchange of views and sentiments between us, which we are most happy to inform you has resulted in a cordial coincidence of opinion on the grave and important subjects submitted to our consideration.

We have arrived at the conclusion, and are thoroughly convinced, that an immediate and earnest effort ought to be made by the government of the United States to purchase Cuba from Spain at any price for which it can be obtained...

Yours, very respectfully,

BUCHANAN, MASON, SOULÉ


Turn to page 504 and examine the discussion of the Ostend Manifesto, part of which appears above.

● Why did Pierce attempt to obtain Mexico?

● What prevented the president from successfully completing this expansion of the nation?

● Why did southerners want expansion into Cuba?

● How did the sectional forces of the nation react?

● What do these things reveal about the unity of the nation and the issue of slavery?

**Document D**

Examine the photo on page 334 (Chapter 10) very carefully. Contrary to the claim of slaveholders that their “peculiar institution” was benign, slavery could be a cruel and horrible institution. The whip has scarred this man’s back. Whether he refused to work, was rebellious, or attempted to escape we cannot know, but his punishment shows clearly. Abolitionist groups began to use drawings and photos like this one to convince the northern public that slavery was an evil. Increasingly, the people of the North, unwilling to do anything about the institution of slavery in the South, were opposed to the expansion of slavery into the western territories. Search the book for information which would tell you how effective the abolitionists were in controlling the direction of the slavery debate in regard to the expansion of slavery into those territories gained from Mexico.

Note: This photo was made in 1863, the Grimké sisters (see Chapter 13) and others provided accurate descriptions of similar situations.
1. The Battle of the Alamo is significant because it:
   a. marked one of the greatest victories in American military history.
   b. led directly to the end of the war between Mexico and America.
   c. shaped events associated with the expansion of the United States.
   d. is the only major battle the U.S. military has ever lost.
   e. indicated the superiority of the American army and technology.

2. The exploration and development of the American West:
   a. came about primarily through the efforts of rugged American individualists.
   b. occurred only after the influx of immigrants which necessitated the need for land.
   c. took place only after a transcontinental railroad made the area accessible.
   d. relied for the most part on the efforts of the various state governments.
   e. depended to a great degree on the policies of the national government.

3. The “manifest destiny” of the United States was:
   a. to spread democracy and freedom to all the American people.
   b. to treat all countries as equals in the community of nations.
   c. to show mercy and compassion to people of all races and ethnicity.
   d. God’s desire for the nation to dominate all of North America.
   e. to spread Christianity to all the American people.

4. The joint occupation of Oregon was an agreement between the United States and:
   a. France.
   b. Great Britain.
   c. Mexico.
   d. Russia.
   e. Spain.

5. In 1821, the government of Mexico allowed Americans to settle in Texas:
   a. to help ensure the spread of republican principles.
   b. if the settlers agreed to develop textile factories.
   c. to provide a buffer against hostile Indian tribes.
   d. because there were no Mexicans in the area.
   e. to learn the American agricultural traditions.

6. A primary proposal by the Democrats in the 1844 presidential election was:
   a. buying Texas, California, and New Mexico from Mexico.
   b. the acquisition of territory, modern Arizona and New Mexico.
   c. expanding to the South to acquire Cuba and Santo Domingo.
   d. that all territorial expansion should come to an end.
   e. the re-occupation of Oregon and the re-annexation of Texas.

7. The war against Mexico:
   a. had the patriotic support of all the American people.
   b. had the support of northerners but not southerners.
   c. generated significant opposition in the United States.
   d. was the first undeclared conflict in American history.
   e. was supported by the wealthy but not the working-class.

8. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo:
   a. initially gave the United States most of Mexico, but the U.S. Senate refused to take all the territory.
   b. gave the United States all of the territory west of the boundary established by the Adams-Oniz Treaty.
   c. marked the first time that the United States acquired new territory without having to pay anything for it.
   d. set the Texas border at the Rio Grande and ceded California and New Mexico to the United States.
   e. allowed the United States to take control and officially annex all territory north of the 30th parallel.

9. President James K. Polk and other expansionists wanted to obtain California:
   a. as an important step to expanding American commerce into Asia.
   b. because of all the gold that the Mexicans had discovered there.
   c. to ensure that Russians would be forced to abandon their colonies.
   d. to make sure that Great Britain’s efforts to purchase the territory failed.
   e. to spread Christianity to the west, marking a Christian world from sea to sea.
10. During the California Gold Rush:
   a. most prospectors struck it rich because of the abundant surface gold.
   b. large-scale companies came to dominate most of the mining activities.
   c. the city of Los Angeles quickly became the largest community in the territory.
   d. most folks found that there were few good economic opportunities available.
   e. most people found wealth that trickled over into a rich community development.

11. The Wilmot Proviso:
   a. made it illegal for American settlers to take slaves into new territories.
   b. prevented the national government from fully funding the Mexican War.
   c. proposed prohibiting slavery in any territory that might be acquired from Mexico.
   d. failed to go into force since Congress could not override President Polk’s veto.
   e. allowed slavery into newly acquired territories based upon popular sovereignty.

12. The “free-soil” movement:
   a. was an effort to provide equality for African Americans.
   b. wanted slavery abolished throughout the United States.
   c. proposed giving former slaves land to support themselves.
   d. called for dissolution of slavery within a gradual ten-year span.
   e. advocated outlawing the further extension of slavery.

13. A significant issue in the election of 1848 was:
   a. how to deal with the issue of the expansion of slavery in the newly acquired territories.
   b. whether or not the U.S. Senate should accept the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
   c. obtaining Oregon from Great Britain without having to fight another war with the English.
   d. determining the status of slavery in the unorganized areas of the Louisiana Territory.
   e. how to force the removal of the Native Americans from the newly acquired territories.

14. As Americans approached the 1850s:
   a. they were all united in their support for the way the nation was expanding.
   b. the nation faced few real concerns once the war against Mexico had ended.
   c. most southerners felt that the time had come to withdraw from the Union.
   d. most northerners called for military action to remove slave states from the Union.
   e. questions arising from national expansion began to threaten national unity.