

1845
United States
annexes Texas

1846
Mexican
War begins

1846
Bear Flag
Revolt

1847
Mormons
migrate to Utah

1848
Treaty of
Guadalupe
Hidalgo

1849
California
Gold Rush

1845

1846

1847

1848

1849

4 From Sea to Sea

SECTION PREVIEW

Objectives

- 1 Explain how the United States annexed Texas.
- 2 Describe the war with Mexico and its effects.
- 3 Identify the causes and effects of migration to Utah, California, and other parts of the West, including the Native American reaction.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: manifest destiny; annex; Mexican War; Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; Gadsden Purchase; California Gold Rush; boom town; ghost town.

Main Idea

The Mexican War of 1846–1848 extended the boundaries of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and migration to the West increased.

Reading Strategy

Reading for Evidence As you read, find evidence to support the following statement: “In the 1840s, Americans believed that no other nation should be allowed to keep the United States from fulfilling its destiny.”

Migration from the United States into western territories surged in the 1830s and 1840s. That started some Americans dreaming of an empire stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. These Americans believed that the United States had a divine mission to spread liberty across the continent. A New York journalist named John L. O’Sullivan captured this sense of mission when he coined the phrase **manifest destiny**, meaning “obvious or undeniable fate.”

Writing in 1845, O’Sullivan claimed that it was the nation’s “manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.” In the 1840s, Americans believed that no other nation should be allowed to keep the United States from fulfilling its destiny.

Annexation of Texas

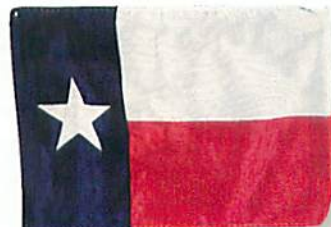
In 1836, after winning independence from Mexico, Texans voted to be **annexed** by the United States. To annex means to “join” or “attach.” Texans encouraged the United States

to absorb their new republic, partly to protect themselves from invasion by Mexico.

Americans, however, were far from united on the question of annexation. Most southerners and Democrats supported it. They looked forward to carving one or more slave states out of the Texas territory. Northerners and Whigs generally opposed it. They feared that the addition of even one slave state would shift the balance of power to the South.

Many people in both the North and the South worried that annexation would lead to war with Mexico. Their fear proved justified in August 1843, when Mexican leader Santa Anna warned that annexation would be “equivalent to a declaration of war against the Mexican Republic.” Despite this warning, President John Tyler signed a treaty of annexation with Texas in April 1844. Two months later the Whig-controlled Senate defeated the treaty.

Later that year Democrat James K. Polk won the presidency. The victory of Polk, a strong advocate of expansion, suggested that the



The Texas flag reflected the new republic’s informal name: the Lone Star Republic.

majority of Americans wanted to acquire more territory. Legislators' views on the Texas question began to shift. In February 1845, before Polk even took the oath of office, Congress approved annexation. In December 1845, after Texas voters added their approval, Texas became the twenty-eighth state in the Union.

War with Mexico

In March 1845, one month after Congress approved annexation, Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the United States. The Mexican government had taken the first step toward war. Even if the United States could persuade Mexico to accept the annexation, a dispute about the southern boundary of Texas remained an explosive issue. The United States

claimed that the Rio Grande was the official American-Mexican border. Mexico claimed that the Nueces River, located quite a few miles farther north, was the border.

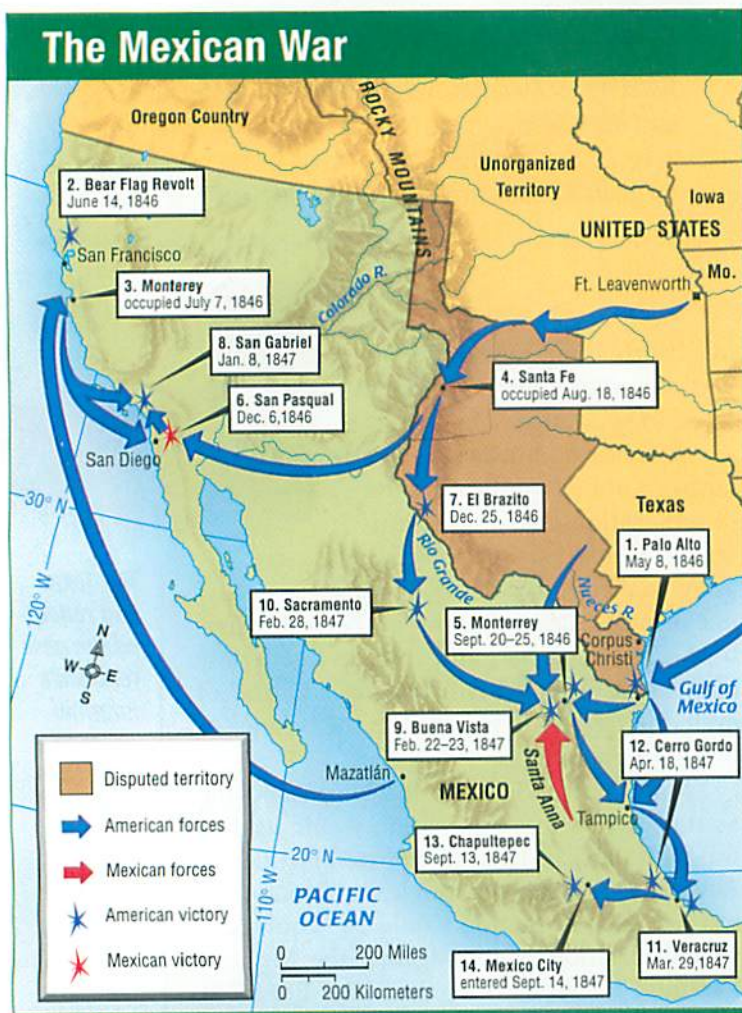
President Polk and other southern Democrats wanted much more from Mexico than just Texas. Polk had dreams of acquiring the entire territory stretching from Texas to the Pacific. In a final attempt to avoid war, he sent Ambassador John Slidell to Mexico City in November 1845 with an offer to buy New Mexico and California for \$30 million. But the Mexican government refused even to receive Slidell, let alone consider his offer.

Determined to have his way, Polk sent more than 3,000 American troops under General Zachary Taylor into the disputed area of southern Texas. Taylor crossed the Nueces in March 1846 and set up camp near the Rio Grande. Mexico considered Taylor's advance an invasion of Mexican territory and prepared to take action.

Mexican troops engaged in a skirmish with Taylor's forces in late April 1846. Several Americans were killed. This was the excuse Polk had been waiting for. Expressing outrage at the loss of "American blood on American soil," the President pushed for a declaration of war. Despite some opposition, Congress gave it to him on May 13, 1846, and the **Mexican War** was declared. Meanwhile, an American expedition under the command of Captain John C. Frémont moved into California, probably under orders from President Polk.[†]

Bear Flag Revolt Before news of the war with Mexico even reached California, a group of American settlers took matters into their own hands. Led by William B. Ide, these settlers launched a surprise attack on the town of Sonoma on June 14 and proclaimed the Republic of California. The settlers' flag pictured a grizzly bear and a single star, so the uprising became known as the Bear Flag Revolt. Frémont quickly assumed control of the rebel forces and then drove the Mexican army out of northern California.

In July 1846, United States troops under General Stephen Kearny crossed into New Mexico. Meeting little resistance, American forces occupied Santa Fe by mid-August. Kearny then took part of his army and marched west to California to join Frémont. Together



Many Americans, including President Polk, viewed the Mexican War as an opportunity for the United States to expand its boundaries across the continent.

Movement Looking at this map, what information can you use to make a judgment about who probably won the war?

[†] Frémont was a mapmaker and explorer prior to the war. In 1843 he surveyed the Columbia River with mountainmen Kit Carson and Thomas Fitzpatrick.

they defeated the Mexican army. By January 1847 the United States had taken control of the territories of New Mexico and California.

Fighting in Mexico While Frémont and Kearny were securing Mexico's northern territories, General Taylor had taken the war into Mexico. After crossing the Rio Grande, Taylor won a series of victories, leading finally to the Battle of Buena Vista in February 1847.

Here he met Santa Anna, who had brought an army of 20,000 Mexican troops north from Mexico City. Taylor's army won the hard-fought battle, which left hundreds killed and wounded on both sides. When it was over, Santa Anna chose to declare victory and return to Mexico City rather than continue the struggle.

Santa Anna abandoned northeastern Mexico to Taylor in part because of a serious threat to his capital. Pressing for complete victory, Polk had dispatched forces under General Winfield Scott to take Mexico City. In March 1847 Scott captured the port city of Vera Cruz. Then he marched his army of 10,000 men toward Mexico City along the route once taken by Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. After fierce fighting, Scott defeated Santa Anna's forces and captured the Mexican capital on September 14, bringing the war to an end.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo With the defeat of its troops and the fall of the country's capital, the Mexican government sought peace. The terms of the **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**, signed on February 2, 1848, reflected Mexico's weak bargaining position:

(1) Mexico gave up its claim to Texas and recognized the Rio Grande as the southern border of Texas.

(2) Mexico gave New Mexico and California, which together made up more than two fifths of its territory, to the United States.

(3) The United States paid Mexico \$15 million.

(4) The United States agreed to pay claims made by American citizens against Mexico, which would amount to more than \$3 million.

Five years later, in 1853, the Mexican government sold 30,000 square miles of what is now southern New Mexico and Arizona to the United States for \$10 million. Known as the **Gadsden Purchase**, this land eventually provided a route for the southern transcontinental railroad.

Although the Mexican War is often seen as just a footnote in the history of the United

COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES

EXPANDING INTO MEXICAN TERRITORY

Strained relations between North and South intensified after the United States annexed vast Mexican territories in 1848.

Pro-Annexation

"The pretense that the annexation has been unrightful and unrighteous is wholly untrue and unjust to ourselves. If Texas became peopled with an American population, it was on the express invitation of Mexico herself. . . . What, then, can be more preposterous than all this clamor by Mexico against annexation as a violation of any rights of hers, any duties of ours?"

—John L. O'Sullivan, *editorial in United States Magazine and Democratic Review, 1845*

Anti-Annexation

"They [who favor the Mexican War] have succeeded in robbing Mexico of her territory. And they are rejoicing over their success under the hypocritical pretense of a regard for peace. Had they not succeeded in robbing Mexico of the most important and most valuable part of her territory, many of those now loudest in their cries of favor for peace would be loudest and wildest for war. . . . We are not the people to rejoice. We ought rather blush and hang our heads for shame."

—Frederick Douglass, *editorial in North Star, March 17, 1848*

ANALYZING VIEWPOINTS Which writer do you think uses facts most effectively? Explain.

States, the American victory over Mexico had important effects. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, together with the 1846 division of Oregon and the Gadsden Purchase, established the boundaries of the continental United States as we now know them. Referred to by Mexicans as the North American Invasion, the war also left many Mexicans deeply bitter toward the United States and led to decades of poor relations and misunderstandings. Finally, the acquisition of a vast expanse of territory in the West opened the doors for an even larger wave of western migration.

The Wilmot Proviso Possibly the most important effect of the Mexican War was helping to bring the question of slavery to the forefront of American politics. Politicians had long avoided dealing with the question of slavery within existing states. But they had to confront the slavery issue directly when they created new territories or states.

A central issue facing Congress in the 1840s and 1850s was whether or not to allow

CAUSE AND EFFECT: The Mexican War

CAUSES

- United States annexes Texas.
- United States and Mexico disagree about the southern border of Texas.
- Mexico refuses to sell California and New Mexico to the United States.
- Polk sends troops to establish the Rio Grande as the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Polk sends troops to California.

THE MEXICAN WAR

EFFECTS

- Rio Grande is established as the U.S.-Mexico border.
- United States acquires California and New Mexico.
- Debate over the expansion of slavery intensifies.



Interpreting Charts The Mexican War was the result of Polk's desire to expand the United States. **Government** In what way was the Mexican War a success? What new problems did it cause the United States?

slavery in the territories acquired by the United States from Mexico. Any states carved out of slave territories would, one day, probably become slave states. Likewise, free territories would become free states.

Depending on what Congress did, the balance of political power between North and South (or between free and slave states) could shift. The Senate, where each state had equal representation, would feel the greatest shock as a result of such a power shift. Northerners also feared that adding slave states could cause an economic shift to the South. They did not want to compete with plantation owners, whose use of slavery drove wages down.

In 1846 a bill came before Congress to provide funds for negotiating with Mexico. Pennsylvania Democrat David Wilmot attached a proviso, or amendment, to the bill. The Wilmot Proviso stated that slavery would not be permitted in any of the territory acquired from Mexico. Congress defeated the amendment.

Northerners continued to attach this proviso to bills related to the new territories, but it never became law. Each time it came up for discussion, however, the Wilmot Proviso revealed the growing gap between the North and the South over slavery.

Mormons Settle Utah

At the time of the Mexican War, the Mormons, one of the largest groups of migrants to head west in the 1840s, were finding a new home in present-day Utah. Mormons, or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had been looking for a permanent home ever since Joseph Smith founded the religion in western New York in 1830. Harassed by neighbors who were suspicious of their beliefs, the Mormons moved to Ohio and then to Missouri before finding a home in Nauvoo, Illinois.

For a while, the Mormons prospered in Illinois. Relations with neighbors broke down, however, after Smith revealed in 1843 that the Mormons allowed men to have more than one wife at the same time. After a hostile mob killed Smith and his brother in 1844, the Mormons were forced to move on once again.

The religion's new leader, Brigham Young, decided that the Mormons' only hope was to live beyond the borders of the United States. He and other leaders chose the Great Salt Lake Basin as the Mormons' new home, largely because it was located nearly a thousand miles from other Americans.

Starting in 1847, hundreds of Mormons left their temporary camps in Iowa for new homes near the Great Salt Lake. Within three years, more than 11,000 Mormons had settled in the region. By 1860, about 30,000 Mormons lived in Salt Lake City and more than 90 other towns in present-day Utah.

Despite many difficulties, these settlements were orderly and prosperous. The Mormons skillfully irrigated their desert region and devoted themselves primarily to farming. They also made money from trade with the wagon trains traveling to California and Oregon.

At first the leaders of the Mormon church established their own system of government. With the end of the Mexican War, however, Utah became an official territory of the United States and Brigham Young its first governor. Utah eventually entered the Union in 1896 as the forty-fifth state.

The Gold Rush in California

In January 1848 a carpenter who was building a sawmill for John Sutter, a Swiss immigrant living in California, discovered gold on Sutter's land. The Mexican governor of California had granted

Sutter the land to build a colony for settlers. By August of that year, some 4,000 gold-crazed prospectors swarmed over the property, destroying the colony and bankrupting Sutter. The **California Gold Rush** had begun. No event was more important in attracting settlers to the West than the gold strike at Sutter's Mill.

The news filled the papers in the eastern United States, and Americans touched by gold fever rushed west by the thousands. California had 14,000 residents in 1848. A year later the population exploded to 100,000 and it reached 200,000 by 1852. Some traveled by ship around the tip of South America or by a combination of ship, rail, and foot via Central America. Most, however, took the direct route, west across the overland trails.

A majority of the new immigrants were unmarried men. In fact, only 5 percent of the "forty-niners" who went to California in the 1849 gold rush were women or children. African Americans, both slave and free, also took part in the gold rush. Slaves worked as servants or searched for gold on their owners' work crews. Some free African Americans became independent miners. The gold rush brought settlers not only from the United States but also from Europe and Asia. By 1852 about 10 percent of Californians were Chinese. Chinese immigrants mainly labored in mines and as servants.

The gold rush had a tremendous impact on life in California. For Native Americans, the flood of immigrants was a disaster. The tens of thousands of miners forced Indian men to work in the mines and the women to work in their households.

The gold rush shattered Native American societies, but it brought commercial prosperity to cities along the Pacific Coast. The growth of San Francisco was the most impressive. Richard Henry Dana first visited San Francisco in 1835, and he wrote of the port's potential in his book *Two Years Before the Mast*. Yet when he returned to San Francisco in 1859, Dana was stunned by its transformation into a center of trade:



"We bore round the point toward the old anchoring-ground of the hide-ships, and there, covering the sand-hills and the valleys, stretching from the water's edge to the base of the great hills, and from the old Presidio to the Mission, flickering all over with the lamps of its streets and houses, lay a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants."

—Richard Henry Dana

The Mining Frontier

In the wake of the California Gold Rush came news of more gold strikes. Miners rushed to Cripple Creek in Colorado in the late 1850s, to the Fraser River in western Canada in 1858, to the Comstock Lode in Nevada in 1859, and to smaller strikes in Montana and Idaho in the early 1860s.

Whenever reports of a strike went out, new towns appeared almost overnight. Men and women came to mine, to open stores, or to run saloons. Some stories have exaggerated the number of fights and murders that took place in these **boom towns**, but many of the towns were truly wild and violent places.

Mining towns usually had short lives. During the boom, hundreds of new residents arrived and built scores of houses and businesses with amazing speed. Then, when the mines stopped producing, the towns went bust and people moved on. Many mining communities slowly decayed and died, turning into abandoned **ghost towns**. A few of the luckier mining towns were reborn in the late 1900s as tourist and skiing centers.

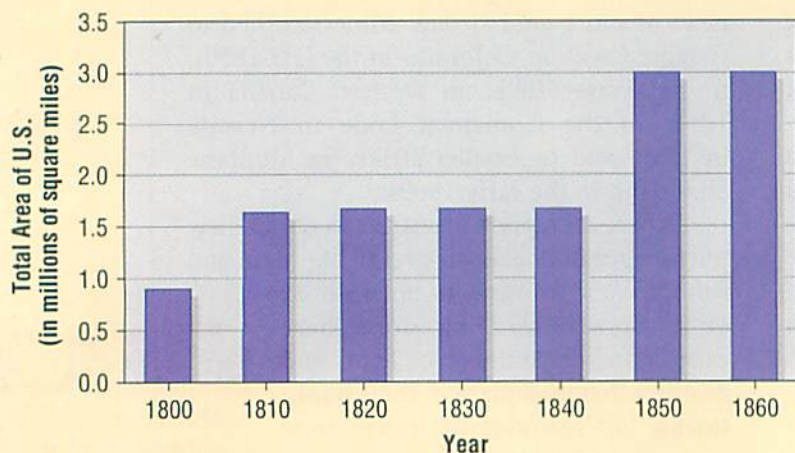
Main Idea CONNECTIONS

What was the impact of the Gold Rush on California?



This gold miner was one of thousands who traveled to California to find his fortune. **Culture** Describe the typical "forty-niner."

Expansion of the United States, 1800–1860



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*



Interpreting Graphs The United States more than tripled in size between 1800 and 1860. **Diversity** How did expansion of the United States affect Native Americans?

Indians and Western Migration

Until the Mexican War, the United States had proclaimed all land west of the 95th meridian, or line of longitude, to be Indian Country. Along this “permanent Indian frontier,” running from Minnesota to Louisiana, the United States Army built a series of forts. As growing

numbers of Americans migrated west, however, the United States built new military posts farther and farther west.

The government established the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or BIA, in 1824. It became part of the newly created Department of the Interior in 1849. The Bureau attempted to “extinguish” Indian land claims through treaties and annuities, or yearly payments. In the 1850s the government increasingly championed the idea of reservations as the ultimate solution to the “Indian problem.”

Indians in Oregon and Washington refused to be herded onto reservations. In 1855, led by the Yakima chief Kamiakin, they fought to preserve their way of life. Still, through treaties, thousands of Indians ended up confined to reservations. In California, eight reservations were in place by 1858.

Nomadic Indians proved to be the most successful at resisting government efforts to control them. Despite peace treaties signed in the early 1850s, tension grew with every group of settlers that crossed the Mississippi. Increasing numbers of Americans wanted to carve farms out of the rugged lands beyond the Mississippi River. Indians wanted to follow the buffalo on the wide-open plains as they had for decades. With neither side willing to yield or compromise, violence was the only possible outcome.

SECTION 4 REVIEW

Comprehension

- Key Terms** Define: (a) manifest destiny; (b) annex; (c) Mexican War; (d) Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; (e) Gadsden Purchase; (f) California Gold Rush; (g) boom town; (h) ghost town.
- Summarizing the Main Idea** How did the war against Mexico help the United States achieve its “manifest destiny”?
- Organizing Information** Prepare a flowchart to show the sequence of key events before, during, and after the Mexican War.

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. Which two events were not directly related to the Mexican War? Might either of those events have turned out differently if there had been no Mexican War? Explain.
- Identifying Alternatives** Do you think that it would have been possible for Texas or Utah to have remained separate from the United States? Why?

Writing Activity

- Writing a Persuasive Essay** Write an essay that might have appeared in a Mormon newspaper in the 1850s urging Mormons to come to Utah.