but at the same time ended plans to distribute federal revenues to the states. Tyler not only managed to make himself unpopular, but by forcing concessions, he also eliminated the few bones that the Whigs had hoped to throw to southern interests. In response, the South abandoned the Whigs in the midterm elections, giving the House back to the Democrats. Tyler's bullheadedness in vetoing the bank bill sparked a rebellion in which his entire cabinet resigned.

The resulting gridlock proved problematic for American foreign policy. Tyler had navigated one rocky strait when Daniel Webster, prior to his resignation as secretary of state, negotiated a treaty with the British in 1842 called the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. It settled the disputed Maine boundary with Canada, producing an agreement that gave 50 percent of the territory in question to the United States. He also literally dodged a bullet in early 1844, when, with Webster's replacement, Abel Upshur, and Senator Thomas Hart Benton, the president visited a new warship, the *Princeton,* with its massive new gun, the "peacemaker." Tyler was belowdecks during the ceremony when, during a demonstration, the gun misfired, and the explosion killed Upshur, Tyler's servant, and several others.

Following Upshur's death, Tyler named John C. Calhoun as the secretary of state. This placed a strong advocate of the expansion of slavery in the highest diplomatic position in the government. It placed even greater emphasis on the events occurring on the southern border, where, following Mexican independence in 1821, large numbers of Americans had arrived. They soon led a new revolutionary movement in the northern province known as Texas.

Empire of Liberty or Manifest Destiny?

Manifest destiny, often ascribed to the so-called Age of Jackson (1828–48), began much earlier, when the first Europeans landed on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century colonial frontier. Later, eighteenth-century Americans fanned out into the trans-Appalachian West after the American Revolution, exploring and settling the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. It was from this perspective, then, that Jacksonian Americans began to see and fulfill what they believed to be their destiny—to occupy all North American lands east and west of the Mississippi and Missouri river valleys. Thomas Jefferson had expounded upon a similar concept much earlier, referring to an Empire of Liberty that would stretch across Indian lands into the Mississippi Valley. Jefferson, as has been noted, even planned for new territories and states with grandiose-sounding names: Saratoga, Vandalia, Metropotamia, and so on. The Sage of Monticello always envisioned a nation with steadily expanding borders, comprised of new farms and citizen-farmers, bringing under its wings natives who could be civilized and acculturated to the Empire of Liberty.

During the 1830s and 1840s the embers of Jefferson's Empire of Liberty sparked into a new flame called manifest destiny. It swept over a nation of Americans whose eyes looked westward. The term itself came from an 1840s Democratic newspaper editorial supporting the Mexican-American War, in which the writer condemned individuals and nations who were "hampering our [America's]

power, limiting our greatness, and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."[54] Ralph Waldo Emerson's speech the "Young American" extolled the virtues of expansion, and John L. O'Sullivan agreed: "Yes, more, more, more!"[55]

Given that most of the expansionist talk revolved around Texas and points south, the popularization of manifest destiny by the press, to a certain extent, validated the abolitionists' claim that a "slave power" conspiracy existed at the highest reaches of power. A majority of newspapers owed their existence to the Democratic Party, which in turn loyally supported the slave owners' agenda, if unwittingly. Even the Whig papers, such as Horace Greeley's *Daily Tribune*, which was antislavery, indirectly encouraged a western exodus. Then, as today, contemporaries frequently fretted about overpopulation: President James K. Polk, in his inaugural address in 1845, warned that the nation in the next decade would grow from 3 to 20 million and obliquely noted that immigrants were pouring onto our shores.[56]

There were other, more common, economic motives interwoven into this anxiety, because the Panic of 1837 created a class of impoverished individuals eager to seek new opportunities in the West. Yet many of these individuals were white Missourians, not slaveholders, who headed for the Pacific Northwest, where they aimed to escape the South's slave-based cotton economy and the slave masters who controlled it. Complex economic motives constituted only one voice in the choir calling for manifest destiny. Religion played an enormous factor in the westward surge as Great Awakening enthusiasm prompted a desire to expunge Spanish Catholicism, spread Protestantism, and convert the Indians.

Other than California, if any one area captured the imagination of American vagabonds and settlers, it was Texas. Before Mexican independence, Texas had failed to attract settlers from Spain and subsequently proved difficult to secure against Indian raids. Since few Mexicans would settle in Texas, the Spanish government sought to entice American colonists through generous land grants. Moses Austin had negotiated for the original grant, but it was his son, Stephen F. Austin, who planted the settlement in 1822 after Mexico won independence from Spain. By 1831, eight thousand Texan-American farmers and their thousand slaves worked the cotton fields of the Brazos and Colorado river valleys (near modern-day Houston). Although the Mexican government originally welcomed these settlers in hopes they would make the colony prosperous, the relationship soured. Settlers accepted certain conditions when they arrived, including converting to Catholicism, conducting all official business in Spanish, and refraining from settling within sixty miles of the American border. These constraints, the Mexican government thought, would ensure that Texas became integrated into Mexico. However, few Protestant (or atheist) Texans converted to Catholicism; virtually no one spoke Spanish, even in official exchanges; and many of the new settlers owned slaves. The Republic of Mexico had eliminated slavery in the rest of the country, but had ignored the arrival of American

slaveholders in Texas. With the Mexican Colonization Act of 1830, however, the government of Mexico prohibited further American settlement and banned slavery in the northern provinces, specifically aiming the ordinance at Texas. These disputes all led to the 1830 formation of a Texan-American independence movement, which claimed its rights under the Mexican Constitution of 1824.

When Texans challenged Mexican authority, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna marched north from Mexico City in 1836. His massive column, which he quickly divided, numbered some 6,000 troops, some of whom he dispatched under General José de Urrea to move up the coast and mop up small pockets of resistance. Urrea surrounded Col. James Fannin's troops on their retreat from Goliad, and convinced Fannin to surrender. The prisoners were marched back to Goliad where they joined other groups swept up by Urrea's troops and were brutally executed by orders from Santa Anna. Meanwhile, Santa Anna led his main column to San Antonio to confront the forces gathered at the Alamo, an adobe mission turned fort. As he laid siege to the Alamo, on March 2, 1836, the Texans issued a Declaration of Independence, founding the Republic of Texas. Sam Houston, an 1832 emigrant from Tennessee, was elected president of the Lone Star Republic, and subsequently the general of the Texan army.

At the Alamo, a legend was being born. Opposing Santa Anna's 4,000-man army was the famed 187-man Texan garrison led by Colonel William B. Travis and including the already famous Jim Bowie and David Crockett. "Let's make their victory worse than a defeat," Travis implored his doomed men, who sold their lives dearly. It took Santa Anna more than a week to bring up his long column, and his cannons pummeled the Alamo the entire time. Once arrayed, the whole Mexican army attacked early in the morning on March sixth, following a long silence that sent many of the lookouts and pickets to sleep. Mexicans were at—or even over—the north wall before the first alarms were raised. The first attack by conscripts was repulsed, and then a second attack repelled in hand-to-hand fighting. Santa Anna sent in his reserves after a lull, attacking the north and south walls simultaneously and the vastly outnumbered Texans, having spent much of their ammunition, were overwhelmed. Crockett, one of the last survivors found amid a stack of Mexican bodies, was shot by a firing squad later that day. "Remember the Alamo" became the battle cry of Houston's freedom fighters.

The generalissimo had won costly victories, whereas the Texans staged a retreat that, at times, bordered on a rout. Only Houston's firm hand—Washington-like, in some respects—kept any semblance of order. Unknown to him, Santa Anna had sustained substantial losses taking an insignificant fort: some estimate that his assault on the Alamo left 500 dead outside the walls, reducing his force from one fourth to one third after accounting for the wounded and the pack trains needed to deal with them. If he won the Alamo, he soon lost the war. Pursuing Houston, Santa Anna continued to divide his weary and wounded force. Houston, convinced he had lured the enemy on long enough, staged a counterattack on April 21, 1836, at San Jacinto, near Galveston Bay. Ordering his men to, "Hold

your fire! God damn you, hold your fire!" he approached the larger Mexican force in the open, struggling to push two cannons called the Twin Sisters up a ridge overlooking the Mexican positions. Even though Santa Anna had pickets posted and saw the Texans draw up in open field, he did not think they would attack. Houston's men charged and routed Santa Anna, who was seen "running about in the utmost excitement, wringing his hands and unable to give an order."[57] When the Texans screamed out the phrases, "Remember the Alamo, Remember Goliad," the Mexican forces broke and ran. Santa Anna escaped temporarily, disguised as a servant. His capture was important in order to have the president's signature on a treaty acknowledging Texan independence, and the general was apprehended before long, with 730 of his troops. Texan casualties totaled 9 killed, whereas the Mexicans lost 630. In return for his freedom, and that of his troops, Santa Anna agreed to cede all of Texas to the new republic, but repudiated the agreement as soon as he was released. He returned to Mexico City and plotted revenge. Meanwhile, the government of the Texas Republic officially requested to join the United States of America.[58]

The request by Texas brought to the surface the very tensions over slavery that Van Buren had sought to repress and avoid. In the House of Representatives, John Quincy Adams, who had returned to Washington after being elected as a Massachusetts congressman (he and Andrew Johnson, a senator, were the only former presidents ever to do so) filibustered the bill for three weeks. Van Buren opposed annexation, the Senate rejected a ratification treaty, and Texas remained an independent republic sandwiched between Mexico and America.

Mr. Polk's War

When, in 1842, the president of the Republic of Texas, Sam Houston, again invited the United States to annex his "nation," the secretary of state at the time, Daniel Webster, immediately suppressed the request. Webster, an antislavery New Englander, wanted no part in helping the South gain a large new slave state and, at a minimum, two Democratic senators. In 1844, however, with Calhoun shifting over from the Department of War to head the State Department, a new treaty of annexation was negotiated between Texas and the United States with an important wrinkle: the southern boundary was the Rio Grande. This border had been rejected by the Mexican Congress in favor of the Nueces River farther north.

Northern-based Whigs, of course, stood mostly against incorporating Texas into the Union, and thus to win their support, the Whig candidate, Henry Clay, whose name was synonymous with sectional compromise, could not come out in favor of an annexation program that might divide the nation. Both Clay and Van Buren, therefore, "issued statements to the effect that they would agree to annexation only if Mexico agreed."[59] In an amazing turn of events, the leaders of each major party, who personally opposed the expansion of slavery, adopted positions that kept them from addressing slavery as an issue. The system Van Buren designed had worked to perfection.

Yet there was a catch: at least half the nation wanted Texas annexed, and the impetus for annexation was the November 1844 election of Tennessean James K. Polk. With both Van Buren and Clay unpopular in large parts of nonslaveholding states, and with Van Buren having to fight off a challenge within the Democratic Party from Lewis Cass of Michigan, a northerner who supported annexation, a deadlock ensued that opened the door for another annexationist nominee, a dark horse candidate congressman—Polk. The son of a surveyor, James Knox Polk was a lawyer, Tennessee governor, former Speaker of the House, and a southern expansionist who not only supported annexation, but even labeled it reannexation, claiming that Texas had been a part of the Louisiana Purchase. Defeated for reelection as Tennessee governor in 1843, he turned his attention to the national stage. Polk maneuvered his way to the Democratic nomination after nine ballots, to his own surprise.

Facing Clay in the general election, Polk turned Clay's conservatism against him. The Kentuckian said he had "no personal objection to the annexation of Texas," but he did not openly advocate it.[60] Polk, on the other hand, ran for president on the shrewd platform of annexing *both* Texas and Oregon. Clay's vacillation angered many ardent Free-Soilers, who found a purer candidate in James G. Birney and the fledgling Liberty Party. Birney siphoned off 62,300 votes, certainly almost all at the Whigs' expense, or enough to deprive Clay of the popular vote victory. Since Clay lost the electoral vote 170 to 105—with Polk taking such northern states as Michigan, New York, Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania—it is likely that the Liberty Party cost Clay the election. New York alone, where Birney took 6,000 votes from Clay to hand the state to Polk, would have provided the Kentuckian his margin of victory. By any account, the election was a referendum on annexing Texas and Oregon, which Polk had cleverly packaged together. Linking the Oregon Territory took the sting out of adding a new slave state. The election accelerated the trend in which a handful of states had started to gain enough electoral clout that they could, under the right circumstances, elect a president without the slightest support or participation from the South.

Calling himself Young Hickory, Polk found that his predecessor had made much of the expansionist campaign rhetoric unnecessary. Viewing the results of the election as a mandate to annex Texas, in his last months in office Tyler gained a joint annexation resolution (and arguably a blatant violation of the Constitution) from Congress. This circumvented the need for a two-thirds Senate vote to acquire Texas by a treaty, and the resolution passed. Tyler signed the resolution in March 1845, the same month Polk took office, and Texas was offered the option of coming into the Union as one state or later subdividing into as many as five. On December 29, 1845, a unified Texas joined the Union as a slave state, a move John Quincy Adams called "the heaviest calamity that ever befell myself or my country."[61] Mexico immediately broke off diplomatic relations with the United States—a sure prelude to war in that era—prompting Polk to tell the American consul in California, Thomas Larkin, that if a revolt broke out among the *Californios* against the Mexican government, he should support it.

All along, Mexico suspected the United States of being behind an 1837 revolution in New Mexico. Then there remained the continuing issue of whether the Nueces River, and not the Rio Grande, was the actual boundary. Despite his belligerent posturing, Polk sent Louisianan James Slidell as a special envoy to Mexico in January 1846 with instructions to try to purchase New Mexico and California with an offer so low that it implied war would follow if the Mexicans did not accept it. Anticipating the failure of Slidell's mission, Polk also ordered troops into Louisiana and alerted Larkin that the U.S. Navy would capture California ports in the event of war. Slidell's proposal outraged Mexico, and he returned home empty-handed. Satisfied that he had done everything possible to avoid war, Polk sent General Zachary Taylor, "Old Rough-and-Ready," with a large force, ordering them to encamp in Texas with their cannons pointed directly across the Rio Grande. Polk wanted a war, but he needed the Mexicans to start it. They obliged. General Mariano Arista's troops skirmished with Polk's men in May, at which point Polk could disingenuously write Congress asking for a war declaration while being technically correct: "Not withstanding our efforts to avoid it, war exists by the act of Mexico herself."[62] He did not mention that in December he had also sent John C. Frémont with a column west and dispatched the Pacific Fleet to California, ostensibly "in case" hostilities commenced, but in reality to have troops in place to take advantage of a war.

Northern Whigs naturally balked, noting that despite promises about acquiring Oregon, Polk's aggression was aimed in a decidedly southwesterly direction. A Whig congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, openly challenged the administration's policy, demanding to know the exact location—the "spot"—on which American blood had been shed, and sixty-seven Whigs voted against providing funds for the war. Lincoln's "spot resolutions" failed to derail the war effort, but gained the gangly Whig political attention for the future. For the most part, Whigs did their duty, including Generals Taylor and Winfield "Old Fuss and Feathers" Scott. The Democratic South, of course, joined the war effort with enthusiasm—Tennessee was dubbed the Volunteer State because its enlistments skyrocketed—and the Mexican War commenced.

Some observers, such as Horace Greeley, in the New York *Tribune*, predicted that the United States "can easily defeat the armies of Mexico, slaughter them by the thousands, and pursue them perhaps to their capital."[63] But Mexico wanted the war as well, and both Mexican military strategists and European observers expressed a near universal opinion that Mexican troops would triumphantly march into Washington, D.C., in as little as six weeks! Mexican leaders thought the American forces were "totally unfit to operate beyond their [own] borders" and a leading Mexican newspaper, *La Voz del Pueblo*, agreed, insisting "We have more than enough strength to make war. Let us make it, then, and victory will perch upon our banners."[64] Critics of American foreign policy, including many modern Mexican and Chicano nationalists, point to the vast territory Mexico lost in the war, and even Mexican historians of the day blamed the war on "the spirit of aggrandizement of the United States . . . availing itself of its power to conquer

us."[65] Yet few have considered exactly what a victorious Mexican government would have demanded in concessions from the United States. Certainly Texas would have been restored to Mexico. The fact is, Mexico lusted for land as much as the gringos did and fully expected to win.

Polk made clear in his diary the importance of holding "military possession of California at the time peace was made," and he intended to acquire California, New Mexico, and "perhaps some others of the Northern Provinces of Mexico" whenever the war ended.[66] Congress called for 50,000 volunteers and appropriated $10 million. Taking part in the operation were several outstanding junior officers, including Ulysses Grant, George McClellan, Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, Braxton Bragg, Stonewall Jackson, George Pickett, James Longstreet, and William Tecumseh Sherman.

At Palo Alto, in early May, the Americans engaged Arista's forces, decimating 1,000 Mexican lancers who attempted a foolish cavalry charge against the U.S. squares. It was a brief, but bloody draw in which Taylor lost 9 men to the Mexicans' 250, but he was unable to follow up because of nightfall. At his council of war, Taylor asked for advice. An artillery captain blurted out, "We whipped 'em today and we can whip 'em tomorrow." Indeed, on May ninth, the Americans won another lopsided battle at Resaca de la Palma.[67] Playing no small role in the ensuing American victories was the new revolving pistol invented by Samuel Colt, which gave American cavalry in particular exponentially greater firepower than what their Mexican counterparts had.

While the military was winning early victories in the field, Polk engaged in a clever plan to bring the exiled dictator who had massacred the defenders of the Alamo and Goliad back from exile in Cuba. On August 4, 1846, Polk negotiated a deal to not only bring Santa Anna back, but to pay him $2 million—ostensibly a bribe as an advance payment on the cession of California. The former dictator convinced Polk that if the United States could restore him to power, he would agree to a treaty favorable to the United States.

Two separate developments ended all hopes of a quick peace. First, Pennsylvania congressman David Wilmot attached a proviso to the $2 million payment that slavery be prohibited from any lands taken in the war. Wilmot, a freshman Democrat from Pennsylvania, further eroded the moratorium on slavery debate, which had been introduced in December 1835 to stymie all legislative discussion of slavery. Under the rule all antislavery petitions and resolutions had to be referred to a select committee, whose standing orders were to report back that Congress had no power to interfere with slavery.[68] This, in essence, tabled all petitions that in any way mentioned slavery, and it became a standing rule of the House in 1840. But the gag rule backfired. "This rule manufactures abolitionists and abolitionism," one Southerner wrote, comparing the rule to religious freedom: "It is much easier to make the mass of the people understand that a given prayer cannot be granted than that they have no right to pray at all."[69] (Ironically, replaced the gag rule *had applied* to prayer in Congress too.) After it was repealed in 1844, Speakers of the House kept the slavery discussion under

wraps by only recognizing speakers who had the Democratic Party's trust. The chair recognized Wilmot largely because he had proven his loyalty to Polk by voting with the administration on the tariff reduction when every other Democrat had crossed party lines to vote against it.[70] But Wilmot hammered the president with his opening statements before invoking the language of the Northwest Ordinance to prohibit slavery from any newly acquired territories.

Although the Wilmot Proviso never passed, a second obstacle to a quick treaty with Santa Anna was the Mexican president himself, who probably never had any intention of abiding by his secret agreement. No sooner had he walked ashore, slipped through the American blockade by a British steamer given a right-of-way by U.S. gunboats, than he had announced that he would fight "until death, to the defense of the liberty and independence of the republic."[71] Consequently, a Pennsylvania congressman and a former dictator unwittingly collaborated to extend the war neither of them wanted, ensuring in the process that the United States would gain territory neither of them wanted it to have.

Meanwhile, in the field, the army struggled to maintain discipline among the hordes of volunteers arriving. New recruits "came in a steamboat flood down the Mississippi, out onto the Gulf and across to Port Isabel and thence up the Rio Grande to Matamoros of Taylor's advanced base . . . [When the "12-monthers" came into camp in August 1846], they murdered; they raped, robbed and rioted."[72] Mexican priests in the area called the undisciplined troops "vandals" from hell and a Texas colonel considered them "worse than Russian Cossacks."[73] Each unit of volunteers sported its own dress: the Kentucky volunteers had three-cornered hats and full beards, whereas other groups had "uniforms" of every conceivable color and style. Once they entered Mexico, they were given another name, "gringos," for the song they sang, "Green Grow the Lilacs." With difficulty Taylor finally formed this riffraff into an army, and by September he had about 6,000 troops who could fight. He marched on Monterrey, defended by 7,000 Mexicans and 40 cannons—a formidable objective.

Even at this early stage, it became clear that the United States would prevail, and in the process occupy large areas of territory previously held by Mexico. At Monterrey, in September 1846, Taylor defeated a force of slightly superior size to his own. The final rush was led by Jefferson Davis and his Mississippi volunteers. On the cusp of a major victory, Taylor halted and accepted an eight-week armistice, even allowing the Mexicans to withdraw their army. He did so more out of necessity than charity, since his depleted force desperately needed 5,000 reinforcements, which arrived the following January. American troops then resumed their advance.

Attack was the American modus operandi during the war. Despite taking the offensive, the United States time and again suffered only minor losses, even when assaulting Mexicans dug in behind defenses. And *every* unit of Taylor's army

attacked—light dragoons, skirmishers, heavy infantry. The success of the Americans impressed experienced commanders (such as Henry Halleck, who later wrote about the offensives in his book, *Elements of Military Art and Science*), who shook their heads in wonder at the Yanks' aggressiveness.[74]

Meanwhile, Taylor now had a reputation as a true hero. Suddenly it dawned on Polk that he had created a viable political opponent for any Democratic candidate in 1848, and he now scrambled to swing the military glory to someone besides Old Rough-and-Ready. Ordering Taylor to halt, Polk instructed General Winfield Scott, the only other man truly qualified to command an entire army, to take a new expedition of 10,000 to Vera Cruz. Polk ironically found himself relying on two Whig generals, "whom he hated more than the Mexicans."[75] Scott had no intention of commanding a disastrous invasion, telling his confidants that he intended to lose no more than 100 men in the nation's first amphibious operation: "for every one over that number I shall regard myself as a murderer."[76] In fact, he did better, losing only 67 to a fortified city that had refused to surrender.

Other offensives against Mexican outposts in the southwest and in California occurred simultaneous to the main Mexican invasion. Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny marched from Leavenworth, Kansas, to Santa Fe, which he found unoccupied by enemy forces, then set out for California. Reinforced by an expedition under Commodore Robert Stockton and by the Mormon battalion en route from Iowa, Kearny's united command reached San Diego, then swept on to Los Angeles. By that time, the Mexicans had surrendered—not to Stockton or Kearny, but to another American force under John C. Frémont. The Pathfinder, as Frémont was known, had received orders from Polk to advance to California on a "scientific" expedition in December 1845, and had signed the Treaty of Cahuenga instead of General Kearny—an act for which he was found guilty at a subsequent court-martial. Even though Frémont and Kearny were often at odds, from the outset Polk had ensured that sufficient American force would rendezvous in California to "persuade" the local pro-American *Californios* to rise up. What ensued was the Bear Flag Revolt (hence the bear on the flag of the state of California), and Polk's ambition of gaining California became a reality.

In Mexico, in August, Scott renewed his advance inland toward Mexico City over the rugged mountains and against stiff resistance. Scott had no intention of slogging through the marshes that protected the eastern flank of Mexico City, but instead planned to attack by way of Chapultepec in the west. As he reached the outskirts of Chapultepec, he found the fortress defended by 900 soldiers and 100 young cadets at the military college. In a pitched battle where American Marines assaulted positions defended by "los niños"—students from the elite military school—and fighting hand to hand, saber to saber, Scott's forces opened the road to Mexico City. On September 14, 1847, in the first-ever U.S. occupation of an enemy capital, American Marines guarded the National Palace, "the Halls of Montezuma," against vandals and thieves. Santa Anna was deposed and scurried out of the country yet again, but 1,721 American soldiers had died in action and another 11,155 of disease.

Occupying both California and Texas, plus the southwestern part of North America, and following Scott's capture of Mexico City, the United States was in a position to negotiate from strength. Polk instructed Nicholas Trist, a staunch Whig, to negotiate a settlement. Polk thought Trist, a clerk, would be pliant. Instead, Trist aggressively negotiated. Whigs and some Democrats cast a wary eye at occupied Mexico herself. The last thing antislavery forces wanted was a large chunk of Mexico annexed under the auspices of victory, then converted into slave territory. They recoiled when the editor of the New York *Sun* suggested that "if the Mexican people with one voice ask to come into the Union our boundary . . . may extend much further than the Rio Grande."[77] Poet Walt Whitman agreed that Mexico "won't need much coaxing to join the United States."[78]

Such talk was pure fantasy from the perspective of majorities in both the United States and Mexico. White Americans had no intention of allowing in vast numbers of brown-skinned Mexicans, whereas Mexico, which may have detested Santa Anna, had no love for the gringos.

Trist and Mexican representatives convened their discussions in January 1848 at the town of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and a month later the two sides signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. It paid Mexico $15 million, plus paid off Mexico's debts to Americans. When put in terms of modern U.S. dollars as a share of government revenues, this constituted the modern equivalent of paying nearly $1 *trillion to Mexico*—an astounding precedent for a *victor* to pay a defeated foe.[79] The United States gained California, the disputed Texas border to the Rio Grande, and a vast expanse of territory, including present-day Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada. Trist, instructed to acquire the harbor of San Diego at all costs, was encouraged to press for Baja California, Sonora, and Chihuahua—all of which Doniphan's expedition had conquered during the war.

Polk was furious and recalled Trist, who then ignored the letter recalling him, reasoning that Polk wrote it without full knowledge of the situation. Trist refused to support Polk's designs on Mexico City; and Scott, another Whig on-site, concurred with Trist's position, thus constricting potential slave territory above the Rio Grande. Polk had to conclude the matter, leaving him no choice but to send the treaty to Congress, where it produced as many critics as proponents. But its opponents, who had sufficient votes to defeat it from opposite sides of the slavery argument, could never unite to defeat it, and the Senate approved the treaty on March 10, 1848. As David Potter aptly put it, "By the acts of a dismissed emissary, a disappointed president, and a divided Senate, the United States acquired California and the Southwest."[80]

Victorious American troops withdrew from Mexico in July 1848. Polk's successful annexation of the North American Southwest constituted only half his strategy to maintain a balance in the Union and fulfill his 1844 campaign promise. He also had to obtain a favorable settlement of the Oregon question. This eventually culminated in the Packenham-Buchanan Treaty. A conflict arose over American claims to Oregon territory up to Fort Simpson, on the 54-degree 40-minute parallel that encompassed the Fraser River. Britain, however, insisted

on a Columbia River boundary—and badly wanted Puget Sound. Polk offered a compromise demarcation line at the forty-ninth parallel, just below Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island—which still gave Americans claim to most of the Oregon Territory—but the British minister Richard Packenham rejected Polk's proposal out of hand. Americans aggressively invoked the phrase "Fifty-four forty or fight," and the British, quickly reassessing the situation, negotiated with James Buchanan, secretary of state, agreeing to Polk's compromise line. The Senate approved the final treaty on June 15, 1846.

Taken together, Mexico and Oregon formed bookends, a pair of the most spectacular foreign policy achievements in American history. Moreover, by "settling" for Oregon well below the 54-degree line, Polk checked John Quincy Adams and the Whigs' dreams of a larger free-soil Pacific Northwest. In four short years Polk filled out the present boundaries of the continental United States (leaving only a small southern slice of Arizona in 1853), literally enlarging the nation from "sea to shining sea."

At the same time, his policies doomed any chance he had at reelection, even should he have chosen to renege on his campaign promise to serve only one term. Polk's policies had left him a divided party. Free-soilers had found it impossible to support the Texas annexation, and now a reduced Oregon angered northern Democrats as a betrayal, signaling the first serious rift between the northern and southern wings of the party. This breach opened wider over the tariff, where Polk's Treasury secretary, Robert J. Walker, pressed for reductions in rates. Northerners again saw a double cross.

When Polk returned to Tennessee, where he died a few months later, he had guided the United States through the high tide of manifest destiny. Unintentionally, he had also helped inflict serious wounds on the Democratic Party's uneasy sectional alliances, and, as he feared, had raised a popular general, Zachary Taylor, to the status of political opponent. The newly opened lands called out once again to restless Americans, who poured in.

Westward Again

Beneath the simmering political cauldron of pro- and antislavery strife, pioneers continued to surge west. Explorers and trappers were soon joined in the 1830s by a relatively new group, religious missionaries. Second Great Awakening enthusiasm propelled Methodists, led by the Reverend Jason Lee, to Oregon in 1832 to establish a mission to the Chinook Indians.[81] Elijah White, then Marcus Whitman and his pregnant wife, Narcissa, followed later, bringing along some thousand migrants (and measles) to the region. White and Lee soon squabbled over methods; eventually the Methodist board concluded that it could not Christianize the Indians and dried up the funding for the Methodist missions. The Whitmans were even more unfortunate. After measles spread among the Cayuse Indians, they blamed the missionaries and murdered the Whitmans at their Walla Walla mission. Such brutality failed to stem the missionary zeal toward the new western territories, however, and a number of Jesuit priests, most notably

Father Pierre De Smet, established six successful missions in the northern Rocky Mountains of Montana, Idaho, and Washington.

Pioneer farmer immigrants followed the missionaries into Oregon, where the population rose from fifty to more than six thousand whites between 1839 and 1846. They traveled the Oregon Trail from Independence, Missouri, along the southern bank of the Platte River, across Wyoming and southern Idaho, and finally to Fort Vancouver via the Columbia River. Oregon Trail pioneers encountered hardships including rainstorms, snow and ice, treacherous rivers, steep mountain passes, and wild animals. Another group of immigrants, the Mormons, trekked their way to Utah along the northern bank of the Platte River under the leadership of Brigham Young. They arrived at the Great Salt Lake just as the Mexican War broke out; tens of thousands of their brethren joined them during the following decades. The Mormon Trail, as it was called, attracted many California-bound settlers and, very soon, gold miners.

Discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill near Sacramento in 1848 brought hordes of miners, prospectors, and speculators, virtually all of them men, and many attracted to the seamier side of the social order. Any number of famous Americans spent time in the California gold camps, including Mark Twain and Richard Henry Dana, both of whom wrote notable essays on their experiences. But for every Twain or Dana who made it to California, and left, and for every prospector who actually discovered gold, there were perhaps a hundred who went away broke, many of whom had abandoned their families and farms to seek the precious metal. Even after the gold played out, there was no stopping the population increase as some discovered the natural beauty and freedom offered by the West and stayed. San Francisco swelled from a thousand souls in 1856 to fifty thousand by decade's end, whereas in parts of Arizona and Colorado gold booms (and discoveries of other metals) could produce an overnight metropolis and just as quickly, a ghost town.

The Pacific Coast was largely sealed off from the rest of the country by the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. Travel to California was best done by boat from ports along the Atlantic to Panama, then overland, then on another boat up the coast. Crossing overland directly from Missouri was a dangerous and expensive proposition.

St. Joseph, Missouri, the jumping-off point for overland travel, provided plenty of reputable stables and outfitters, but it was also home to dens of thieves and speculators who preyed on unsuspecting pioneers. Thousands of travelers poured into St. Joseph, then on across the overland trail to Oregon on a two-thousand-mile trek that could take six months. Up to 5,000 per year followed the trail in the mid-1840s, of which some 2,700 continued on to California. By 1850, after the discovery of gold, more than 55,000 pioneers crossed the desert in a year. Perhaps another thousand traders frequented the Santa Fe Trail. Many Forty-niners preferred the water route. San Francisco, the supply depot for Sacra-

mento, overnight became a thriving city. In seven years—from 1849 to 1856—the city's population filled with merchants, artisans, shopkeepers, bankers, lawyers, saloon owners, and traders. Access to the Pacific Ocean facilitated trade from around the world, giving the town an international and multiethnic character. Saloons and gambling dens dotted the cityscape, enabling gangs and brigands to disrupt peaceful commerce.

With the addition and slow settlement of California, the Pacific Northwest, and the relatively unexplored American Southwest, Americans east of the Mississippi again turned their attention inward. After all, the objective of stretching the United States from sea to shining sea had been met. Only the most radical and unrealistic expansionists desired annexation of Mexico, so further movement southward was blocked. In the 1850s there would be talk of acquiring Cuba, but the concept of manifest destiny had crested. Moreover, the elephant in the room could no longer be ignored. In the years that followed, from 1848 until 1860, slavery dominated almost every aspect of American politics in one form or another.