**CHAPTER 13**

**The Continued Move West**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 1. Describe the conquest and development of the West between 1820 and 1850 by white Americans.

**Objectives**

1. Describe the American settlement of Texas, and explain the problems it caused with the ruling government of Mexico.
2. Describe American moves to the West, specifically to Oregon along the Oregon Trail.
3. Discuss the importance of Joseph Smith to the development of Mormonism, and describe the movement of the Mormons to Utah.
4. Explain why and how the California Territory experienced an influx of settlers, and describe their experiences there.
5. Discuss the conflicts between settlers in the West and native tribes already there; include the government’s response to the situation.
6. Explain the importance of mountain men to the settlement of the West.
   1. Explain how the expansionist spirit in the West led to political conflict at home.

**Objectives**

1. Discuss the conflicts that arose over whether Texas should become a state, explain President Polk’s position, and describe how Texas eventually came to enter the Union.
2. Discuss the issues that continued to be problematic concerning the Oregon Territory.
3. Explain the concept of Manifest Destiny, and discuss those who supported the concept as well as those who opposed it.
4. Explain the reasons why America went to war with Mexico, discuss the prosecution of the war, and assess the outcome of the conflict.

**Chapter Summary**

Americans developed four unique territories in the West between 1820 and 1844: Texas, Oregon, Utah, and California. Before the development of these territories, the society consisted of hardy mountain men, who mostly engaged in exploration and the fur trade. On their heels followed migrants on the Oregon Trail who clashed with nature and Native Americans. These pioneers led the way for future migrations to the northwest. Texas was a Spanish colony until 1821, when it became part of the newly independent nation of Mexico. A small handful of Anglo-Americans assimilated to Mexican culture, but most chose not to. Other areas of the North American continent were also in flux. For instance, Britain and the United States spent years arguing over a border between Canadian lands and the United States. The United States was successful in throwing off the colonial rule of Spain in Mexico. Mexico soon lost its territory as the Texas Republic successfully rebelled. Among the American settlers in Texas and Oregon were the Mormons who went west seeking a haven from religious persecution. After the religion was founded by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, the new head of the Mormons, led thousands of followers to the west. California remained the ultimate westward destination for a small but growing number of Americans who instigated a coup in time. Caught between these migration patterns, Plains Indians both fought with and assisted the pioneers. Slowly, their access to open land diminished as the American settlements expanded. Further conflicts paved the way for ultimate dominance of the west.

Expansionism was a major theme of James K. Polk’s presidency. Texas had pressed the U.S. for entry into the Union. The Republic’s embrace of slavery threatened to upset the balance of power in the Congress, if Texas was admitted as a state. However, the American people and their political parties—the Whigs tepidly and the Democrats solidly—agitated for annexation of Texas. A notable exception was the Liberty party, which opposed admitting any new slave territory into the country. However, John Tyler, a Whig, signed the resolution adding Texas as a state

The new president, James K. Polk, aggressively sought to increase the size of the nation. Despite his bluster over potential war, he accepted a reasonable negotiation with Britain to create the border along the 49th parallel. “Fifty-four Forty or Fight!” was the rallying cry referring to the Americans’ intended latitude for the contested border between the United States and Canada; Britain was willing to settle for the 49th parallel.

With territory along the Pacific Ocean, the United States became a continental power. However, there were other prize lands in the southwest that some ardent nationalists, like John P. Sullivan, believed to be divinely ordained to end up in American hands. The term manifest destiny—meaning that the United States was fated to possess North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific—was coined by Sullivan. This shared feeling set the stage for the Mexican–American War. Polk instructed the army to engage in provocative actions. Stung by the recent loss of Texas, Mexico took the bait. A patriotic fervor swept the U.S. as American and Mexican forces bravely faced off against each other. Quickly, American forces captured New Mexico and the short-lived California Republic. At the end of the war, after the U.S. had captured its capital, and Mexico surrendered. The hard terms of the deal that ended the war, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, transferred huge swaths of Mexican land to the U.S., including Utah, Nevada, California, western Colorado, and parts of Arizona and New Mexico, and it set the Mexican–American border at the Rio Grande. All the newly acquired territories challenged the balance between the free and slave states in the Congress.

**Chapter Outline**

I. Western Conquest and Development, 1820–1844

* 1. Mountain Men
  2. Texas

1. Mexican–American Hostilities
2. A Victory for Texas ... and for Slavery
   1. Oregon and the Oregon Trail
3. New Settlements and Indian Violence
4. Oregon Fever
   1. Utah and the Mormons
5. Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormonism
6. Brigham Young
7. To Utah
   1. California: Ranches and Gold
   2. Tribal Conflicts
   3. Conclusion

II. The Expansionist Spirit Rebounds

1. Texas and the Rise of James K. Polk
2. The Election of 1844
3. Texas and the Liberty Party
4. Tyler and Texas
5. Oregon and American Dominance in the West
6. Polk as President
7. 54 º40'
8. 49th Parallel
9. Manifest Destiny
10. The Mexican–American War
11. Polk Seeks a Fight
12. Patriotic Fervor
13. California and New Mexico
14. Invading Mexico
15. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

III. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

1. Manifest Destiny: Was It America’s Destiny? Or did America Make It So?
2. Texas: From Spanish Colony to American Statehood
3. The Plains Indians: Did They Ever Have a Chance?
4. The Mormon Migration: Strangers in a Strange Land Indeed
5. James K. Polk: Expansionist
6. Competition and Cooperation Among Racial Groups in the West

(13-2a). There were four reasons why the United States' official interest in westward expansion surged in the 1840s:

1. Route to China?
2. Politically popular
3. A new beginning
4. National ambition

Ask students to guess which type of person would use a specific reason to argue for American expansion westward. Assign to the students the task of using the Internet to search for a real historical person to match their fictitious guess. Students can turn this in as a written assignment or as a short discussion exercise.

**The Reasons Why**

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Or, as an instructor, one could assign the topics to the students. Below are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

1. Filling in the Pieces—Use poster board and watercolors to make a visual representation of the last areas that were added to the United States, beginning with the Louisiana Territory. In other words, construct a large map on the poster board, draw lines to represent each purchase/acquisition of territory, and then color each one a different color. Label each section with the year that it came under the control of the United States.
2. What If?—The Mexican–American War has ramifications that still exist today. Have students write a short what-if scenario involving the War. They could write about “what if” topics such as “What if Mexico won the war?,” “What if the U.S. took all of Mexico?,” or “What if Britain (or France) intervened in the American West or during the war?” None of these events happened but they were a possibility. After a student has chosen his or her scenario, pass the work over to another student to write the history of the previous student’s answer up to the year 1900. Then pass the assignment over to a third student who would write the history of 1901–present, following the themes and ideas presented by the previous student. Evaluate the responses based on realism or creativity. Have the best answers be read by the contributing students in class.
3. Manifest Destiny—Develop a list of prominent Americans who supported the concept of manifest destiny, and also a list of noted people who opposed that idea. Ask students to locate a quote from as many of these people as they can, to illustrate their reasons for either supporting or opposing manifest destiny.
4. “GTT—Gone to Texas”—Why? List the most famous people who were either at the Alamo or involved in the Battle of San Jacinto. Compose a sentence or two about each person, explaining what had compelled them to go to Texas in the first place.
5. The Oregon Trail was a popular computer game during the 1980s and early 1990s. Try to locate a copy and bring it to class. Work through the simulation with the class using a large screen. Discuss the program, asking students to evaluate it as a teaching tool. Have them make a list of the various skills needed in order to get through the simulation.

**Additional www Resources**

“The Missouri Mormon War,” Missouri State Archives Digital Heritage.

<http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/mormon.asp>

“Mountain Men and the Fur Trade,” American Mountain Men website.

<http://www.mtmen.org/>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: James K. Polk Message on War with Mexico 1846**

*Introduction:* President Polk's speech, "Message on War with Mexico," was delivered to Congress on May 11, 1846. In the speech, the president focused on an attack by Mexicans on American soldiers on April 24 in U.S. territory north of the Rio Grande. With this act of aggression, according to Polk, Mexico had in effect declared war, and the president said that Congress had no choice but to declare war in return.

*Visit URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth\_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/polkwar.html*

[James K. Polk, Message on War with Mexico (1846)](http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/polkwar.html)

*Instructions*: After reading the introduction and the primary source provided, answer the questions below.

1. What is the provocation cited by Polk as the reason why America needed to declare war on Mexico?

2. What is the present-day name of the Rio del Norte?

3. Why did Polk likely feel he needed the congressional declaration of war?

**Assignment Name: Dickinson Senate**

*Introduction:* Senator Donald S. Dickinson's Speech, justifying the U.S. acquisition of territory, was delivered on January 12, 1848. The speech lays out the rationale for the U.S. acquisition of Texas, California, and other western lands settled by Americans. He contends that such lands were too distant for Mexico to govern them effectively. Dickinson was a leader of the conservative wing of the Democratic Party in New York State. He delivered his speech shortly before peace negotiations ended the Mexican War.

*Visit URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth\_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/dickson\_senate.html*

[Read Democratic Senator Donald S. Dickinson’s speech justifying the U.S. acquisition of territory](http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/dickson_senate.html) and then take a brief quiz to check your understanding.

1. What are the main reasons why Dickinson thinks the United States should annex Mexican territory?

2. Does he want local territorial governments to have a lot of power, or does he prefer that the federal government rule new territories?

3. How does this speech support the concept of Manifest Destiny?