American artist George Catlin traveled west to paint Native Americans. In 1832, he painted Eeh-nís-kim, Crystal Stone, wife of a Blackfoot leader. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Economic busts constantly threatened western farmers and communities. The economy worsened after the Panic of 1819. Falling prices and depleted soil meant farmers were unable to make their loan payments. The dream of subsistence and stability abruptly ended as many migrants lost their land and felt the hand of the distant market economy forcing them even farther west to escape debt. As a result, the federal government consistently sought to increase access to land in the West, including efforts to lower the amount of land required for purchase. Smaller lots made it easier for more farmers to clear land and begin farming faster.[25]

More than anything else, new roads and canals provided conduits for migration and settlement. Improvements in travel and exchange fueled economic growth in the 1820s and 1830s. Canal improvements expanded in the East, while road building prevailed in the West. Congress continued to allocate funds for internal improvements. Federal money pushed the National Road, begun in 1811, farther west every year. Laborers needed to construct these improvements increased employment opportunities and encouraged nonfarmers to move to the West. Wealth promised by engagement with the new economy was hard to reject.

However, roads were expensive to build and maintain, and some Americans strongly opposed spending money on these improvements.

The use of steamboats grew quickly throughout the 1810s and into the 1820s. As water trade and travel grew in popularity, local, state, and federal funds helped connect rivers and streams. Hundreds of miles of new canals cut through the eastern landscape. The most notable of these early projects was the Erie Canal. That project, completed in 1825, linked the Great Lakes to New York City. The profitability of the canal helped New York outpace its East Coast rivals to become the center for commercial import and export in the United States.[26]

Early railroads like the Baltimore and Ohio line hoped to link mid-Atlantic cities with lucrative western trade routes. Railroad boosters encouraged the rapid growth of towns and cities along their routes. Not only did rail lines promise to move commerce faster, but the rails also encouraged the spreading of towns farther away from traditional waterway locations. Technological limitations, constant repairs, conflicts with American Indians, and political disagreements all hampered railroading and kept canals and steamboats as integral parts of the transportation system. Nonetheless, this early establishment of railroads enabled a rapid expansion after the Civil War.

Economic chains of interdependence stretched over hundreds of miles of land and through thousands of contracts and remittances. America's manifest destiny became wedded not only to territorial expansion but also to economic development.[27]

IV. Texas, Mexico, and America

The debate over slavery became one of the prime forces behind the Texas Revolution and the resulting republic's annexation to the United States. After gaining its independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico hoped to attract new settlers to its northern areas to create a buffer between it and the powerful Comanche. New immigrants, mostly from the southern United States, poured into Mexican Texas. Over the next twenty-five years, concerns over growing Anglo influence and possible American designs on the area produced great friction between Mexicans and the former Americans in the area. In 1829, Mexico, hoping to quell both anger and immigration, outlawed slavery and required all new immigrants to convert to Catholicism. American immigrants, eager to expand their agricultural fortunes, largely ignored these requirements. In response, Mex-

ican authorities closed their territory to any new immigration in 1830—a prohibition ignored by Americans who often squatted on public lands.[28]

In 1834, an internal conflict between federalists and centralists in the Mexican government led to the political ascendency of General Antonio López de Santa Anna. Santa Anna, governing as a dictator, repudiated the federalist Constitution of 1824, pursued a policy of authoritarian central control, and crushed several revolts throughout Mexico. Anglo settlers in Mexican Texas, or Texians as they called themselves, opposed Santa Anna's centralizing policies and met in November. They issued a statement of purpose that emphasized their commitment to the Constitution of 1824 and declared Texas to be a separate state within Mexico. After the Mexican government angrily rejected the offer, Texian leaders soon abandoned their fight for the Constitution of 1824 and declared independence on March 2, 1836.[29] The Texas Revolution of 1835–1836 was a successful secessionist movement in the northern district of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas that resulted in an independent Republic of Texas.

At the Alamo and Goliad, Santa Anna crushed smaller rebel forces and massacred hundreds of Texian prisoners. The Mexican army pursued the retreating Texian army deep into East Texas, spurring a mass panic and evacuation by American civilians known as the Runaway Scrape. The confident Santa Anna consistently failed to make adequate defensive preparations, an oversight that eventually led to a surprise attack from the outnumbered Texian army led by Sam Houston on April 21, 1836. The battle of San Jacinto lasted only eighteen minutes and resulted in a decisive victory for the Texians, who retaliated for previous Mexican atrocities by killing fleeing and surrendering Mexican soldiers for hours after the initial assault. Santa Anna was captured in the aftermath and compelled to sign the Treaty of Velasco on May 14, 1836, by which he agreed to withdraw his army from Texas and acknowledged Texas independence. Although a new Mexican government never recognized the Republic of Texas, the United States and several other nations gave the new country diplomatic recognition.[30]

Texas annexation had remained a political landmine since the Republic declared independence from Mexico in 1836. American politicians feared that adding Texas to the Union would provoke a war with Mexico and reignite sectional tensions by throwing off the balance between free and slave states. However, after his expulsion from the Whig party, President John Tyler saw Texas statehood as the key to saving his political

career. In 1842, he began work on opening annexation to national debate. Harnessing public outcry over the issue, Democrat James K. Polk rose from virtual obscurity to win the presidential election of 1844. Polk and his party campaigned on promises of westward expansion, with eyes toward Texas, Oregon, and California. In the final days of his presidency, Tyler at last extended an official offer to Texas on March 3, 1845. The republic accepted on July 4, becoming the twenty-eighth state.

Mexico denounced annexation as "an act of aggression, the most unjust which can be found recorded in the annals of modern history."[31] Beyond the anger produced by annexation, the two nations both laid claim over a narrow strip of land between two rivers. Mexico drew the southwestern border of Texas at the Nueces River, but Texans claimed that the border lay roughly 150 miles farther west at the Rio Grande. Neither claim was realistic since the sparsely populated area, known as the Nueces strip, was in fact controlled by Native Americans.

In November 1845, President Polk secretly dispatched John Slidell to Mexico City to purchase the Nueces strip along with large sections of New Mexico and California. The mission was an empty gesture, designed largely to pacify those in Washington who insisted on diplomacy before war. Predictably, officials in Mexico City refused to receive Slidell. In preparation for the assumed failure of the negotiations, Polk preemptively sent a four-thousand-man army under General Zachary Taylor to Corpus Christi, Texas, just northeast of the Nueces River. Upon word of Slidell's rebuff in January 1846, Polk ordered Taylor to cross into the disputed territory. The president hoped that this show of force would push the lands of California onto the bargaining table as well. Unfortunately, he badly misread the situation. After losing Texas, the Mexican public strongly opposed surrendering any more ground to the United States. Popular opinion left the shaky government in Mexico City without room to negotiate. On April 24, Mexican cavalrymen attacked a detachment of Taylor's troops in the disputed territory just north of the Rio Grande, killing eleven U.S. soldiers.

It took two weeks for the news to reach Washington. Polk sent a message to Congress on May 11 that summed up the assumptions and intentions of the United States.

> Instead of this, however, we have been exerting our best efforts to propitiate her good will. Upon the pretext that Texas, a nation as independent as herself, thought proper to unite its destinies with our own, she has affected to believe that we have severed her rightful territory, and in official proclamations and manifestoes has repeatedly threatened to make

> war upon us for the purpose of reconquering Texas. In the meantime we have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted even before the recent information from the frontier of the Del Norte. But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.[32]

The cagey Polk knew that since hostilities already existed, political dissent would be dangerous—a vote against war became a vote against supporting American soldiers under fire. Congress passed a declaration of war on May 13. Only a few members of both parties, notably John Quincy Adams and John C. Calhoun, opposed the measure. Upon declaring war in 1846, Congress issued a call for fifty thousand volunteer soldiers. Spurred by promises of adventure and conquest abroad, thousands of eager men flocked to assembly points across the country.[33] However, opposition to "Mr. Polk's War" soon grew.

In the early fall of 1846, the U.S. Army invaded Mexico on multiple fronts and within a year's time General Winfield Scott's men took control of Mexico City. However, the city's fall did not bring an end to the war. Scott's men occupied Mexico's capital for over four months while the two countries negotiated. In the United States, the war had been controversial from the beginning. Embedded journalists sent back detailed reports from the front lines, and a divided press viciously debated the news. Volunteers found that war was not as they expected. Disease killed seven times as many American soldiers as combat.[34] Harsh discipline, conflict within the ranks, and violent clashes with civilians led soldiers to desert in huge numbers. Peace finally came on February 2, 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The United States gained lands that would become the future states of California, Utah, and Nevada; most of Arizona; and parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. Mexican officials would also have to surrender their claims to Texas and recognize the Rio Grande as its southern boundary. The United States offered $15 million for all of it. With American soldiers occupying their capital, Mexican leaders had no choice but to sign.

The new American Southwest attracted a diverse group of entrepreneurs and settlers to the commercial towns of New Mexico, the fertile lands of eastern Texas, the famed gold deposits of California, and the Rocky Mountains. This postwar migration built earlier paths dating back to the

General Scott's entrance into Mexico. Lithograph. 1851. Originally published in George Wilkins Kendall and Carl Nebel, *The War between the United States and Mexico Illustrated, Embracing Pictorial Drawings of all the Principal Conflicts* (New York: Appleton), 1851. Wikimedia Commons.

1820s, when the lucrative Santa Fe trade enticed merchants to New Mexico and generous land grants brought numerous settlers to Texas. The Gadsden Purchase of 1854 further added to American gains north of Mexico.

The U.S.-Mexican War had an enormous impact on both countries. The American victory helped set the United States on the path to becoming a world power. It elevated Zachary Taylor to the presidency and served as a training ground for many of the Civil War's future commanders. Most significantly, however, Mexico lost roughly half of its territory. Yet the United States' victory was not without danger. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an outspoken critic, predicted ominously at the beginning of the conflict, "We will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man who swallows the arsenic which will bring him down in turn. Mexico will poison us."[35] Indeed, the conflict over whether to extend slavery into the newly won territory pushed the nation ever closer to disunion and civil war.

V. Manifest Destiny and the Gold Rush

California, belonging to Mexico prior to the war, was at least three arduous months' travel from the nearest American settlements. There was some sparse settlement in the Sacramento Valley, and missionaries made the trip occasionally. The fertile farmland of Oregon, like the black dirt

The great environmental and economic potential of the Oregon Territory led many to pack up their families and head west along the Oregon Trail. The trail represented the hopes of many for a better life, represented and reinforced by images like Bierstadt's idealistic Oregon Trail. Albert Bierstadt, *Oregon Trail (Campfire)*, 1863. Wikimedia.

lands of the Mississippi Valley, attracted more settlers than California. Dramatized stories of Indian attacks filled migrants with a sense of foreboding, although most settlers encountered no violence and often no Indians at all. The slow progress, disease, human and oxen starvation, poor trails, terrible geographic preparations, lack of guidebooks, threatening wildlife, vagaries of weather, and general confusion were all more formidable and frequent than Indian attacks. Despite the harshness of the journey, by 1848 approximately twenty thousand Americans were living west of the Rockies, with about three fourths of that number in Oregon.

Many who moved nurtured a romantic vision of life, attracting more Americans who sought more than agricultural life and familial responsibilities. The rugged individualism and military prowess of the West, encapsulated for some by service in the Mexican war, drew a growing new breed west of the Sierra Nevada to meet with the Californians already there: a breed of migrants different from the modest agricultural communities of the near West.

If the great draw of the West served as manifest destiny's kindling, then the discovery of gold in California was the spark that set the fire

ablaze. Most western settlers sought land ownership, but the lure of getting rich quick drew younger single men (with some women) to gold towns throughout the West. These adventurers and fortune-seekers then served as magnets for the arrival of others providing services associated with the gold rush. Towns and cities grew rapidly throughout the West, notably San Francisco, whose population grew from about five hundred in 1848 to almost fifty thousand by 1853. Lawlessness, predictable failure of most fortune seekers, racial conflicts, and the slavery question all threatened manifest destiny's promises.

On January 24, 1848, James W. Marshall, a contractor hired by John Sutter, discovered gold on Sutter's sawmill land in the Sacramento Valley area of the California Territory. Throughout the 1850s, Californians beseeched Congress for a transcontinental railroad to provide service for both passengers and goods from the Midwest and the East Coast. The potential economic benefits for communities along proposed railroads made the debate over the route rancorous. Growing dissent over the slavery issue also heightened tensions.

The great influx of diverse people clashed in a combative and aggrandizing atmosphere of individualistic pursuit of fortune.[36] Linguistic, cultural, economic, and racial conflict roiled both urban and rural areas. By the end of the 1850s, Chinese and Mexican immigrants made up one fifth of the mining population in California. The ethnic patchwork of these frontier towns belied a clearly defined socioeconomic arrangement that saw whites on top as landowners and managers, with poor whites and ethnic minorities working the mines and assorted jobs. The competition for land, resources, and riches furthered individual and collective abuses, particularly against Indians and older Mexican communities. California's towns, as well as those dotting the landscape throughout the West, such as Coeur D'Alene in Idaho and Tombstone in Arizona, struggled to balance security with economic development and the protection of civil rights and liberties.

VI. The Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny

The expansion of influence and territory off the continent became an important corollary to westward expansion. The U.S. government sought to keep European countries out of the Western Hemisphere and applied the principles of manifest destiny to the rest of the hemisphere. As secretary of state for President James Monroe, John Quincy Adams held the

This cartoon depicts a highly racialized image of a Chinese immigrant and Irish immigrant "swallowing" the United States—in the form of Uncle Sam. Networks of railroads and the promise of American expansion can be seen in the background. *The great fear of the period That Uncle Sam may be swallowed by foreigners : The problem solved*, 1860–1869. Library of Congress.

responsibility for the satisfactory resolution of ongoing border disputes between the United States, England, Spain, and Russia. Adams's view of American foreign policy was put into clearest practice in the Monroe Doctrine, which he had great influence in crafting.

Increasingly aggressive incursions from Russians in the Northwest, ongoing border disputes with the British in Canada, the remote possibility of Spanish reconquest of South America, and British abolitionism in the Caribbean all triggered an American response. In a speech before the U.S. House of Representatives on July 4, 1821, Secretary of State Adams acknowledged the American need for a robust foreign policy that

simultaneously protected and encouraged the nation's growing and increasingly dynamic economy.

> America . . . in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations while asserting and maintaining her own. . . . She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. . . . She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. The frontlet on her brows would no longer beam with the ineffable splendor of freedom and independence; but in its stead would soon be substituted an imperial diadem, flashing in false and tarnished lustre the murky radiance of dominion and power. She might become the dictatress of the world; she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit. . . . Her glory is not dominion, but liberty. Her march is the march of the mind. She has a spear and a shield: but the motto upon her shield is, Freedom, Independence, Peace. This has been her Declaration: this has been, as far as her necessary intercourse with the rest of mankind would permit, her practice.[37]

Adams's great fear was not territorial loss. He had no doubt that Russian and British interests in North America could be arrested. Adams held no reason to antagonize the Russians with grand pronouncements, nor was he generally called upon to do so. He enjoyed a good relationship with the Russian ambassador and stewarded through Congress most-favored trade status for the Russians in 1824. Rather, Adams worried gravely about the ability of the United States to compete commercially with the British in Latin America and the Caribbean. This concern deepened with the valid concern that America's chief Latin American trading partner, Cuba, dangled perilously close to outstretched British claws. Cabinet debates surrounding establishment of the Monroe Doctrine and geopolitical events in the Caribbean focused attention on that part of the world as key to the future defense of U.S. military and commercial interests, the main threat to those interests being the British. Expansion of economic opportunity and protection from foreign pressures became the overriding goals of U.S. foreign policy.[38] But despite the philosophical confidence present in the Monroe administration's decree, the reality of limited military power kept the Monroe Doctrine as an aspirational assertion.