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JUAN GONZALEZ HARVEST OF EMPIRE A HISTORY OF LATINOS IN AMERICA

# HARVEST OF EMP

REVISED EDITION

A History of Latinos in America

# JUAN GONZALE

FULLY REVISED & UPDATED WITH A NEW INTRO

Latin America, meanwhile, each effort by former Spanish colonies such as Mexico, Gran Colombia, and Brazil to replicate our democratic model met with failure.

Thus, by the early nineteenth century, three hundred years of colonialism had divided the New World into two huge contending cultural groups, the Anglo-Saxon and the Spanish-Latin, with smaller groups of Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Caribbean English colonies. The colonists of the two dominant societies had inexorably undergone a transformation. They were no longer Englishmen or Spaniards. They were now Anglo Americans and Latin Americans. They had adapted their religion, political and economic views, their speech, their music, and their food to the new land. They had built an uneasy intertwined identity with the natives they conquered and the Africans they brought as slaves. Latin America became a land of social inclusion and political exclusion. English America welcomed all political and religious views but remained deeply intolerant in its social and racial attitudes. Latin America, subsumed by the force of its Indian and African majority, became a land of spirit, song, and suffering among its masses, its elite living a parasitic existence on immense estates. North America's white settlers, segregated from the races over which they held sway, developed a dual and contradictory identity and worldview: on the one hand, a spirit of will, work, and unwavering optimism among its small farmer masses, on the other, a predilection among its elite for cutthroat enterprise, land speculation, and domination of the weak and of non-Europeans.

The conquest of America profoundly challenged and transformed the beliefs of settlers, natives, and slaves alike, while it raised troubling questions for Europeans back home: Were all men God's children? What was savagery and what was civilization? Would the New World's racial mixing create a new cosmic race of men and women? Was Church, king, or state the ultimate arbiter of society, or were individuals free to create their own destiny? The answers they chose—and the conflicts between those answers—molded the two main New World cultures that arose. Why the Spanish colonies, so rich in resources at the dawn of their nineteenth-century independence, stagnated and declined while the young North American republic flourished, is the subject of our next chapter.

# 2

# *The Spanish Borderlands and the Making of an Empire (1810–1898)*

> However our present interests may restrain us within our limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand beyond those limits, and cover the whole northern if not the southern continent.
>
> —*Thomas Jefferson, 1801*

When they embarked on the road to independence in 1810, Spain's American colonies were far richer in resources, territory, and population than the infant United States. Over the next few decades, however, the four Spanish viceroyalties—New Spain, New Granada, Peru, and Río Plata—fragmented into more than a dozen separate nations, most of them crippled by internal strife, by economic stagnation, by foreign debt, and by outside domination. The United States, on the other hand, expanded dramatically in territory and population, fashioned a stable and prosperous democracy, and warded off foreign control.

Why such a staggering difference in development? Historians in this country usually attribute it to the legacies of English and Spanish colonialism. The austere Protestant democracy of Anglo-Saxon farmers and merchants, they say, was ideally suited for carving prosperity from a virgin frontier in a way that the Catholic, tyrannical societies of Latin America were not.[1]

That view, however, ignores the discordant and unequal relationship that emerged between the United States and Latin America from the first days of independence. It masks how a good deal of nineteenth-century U.S. growth flowed directly from the Anglo conquest of Spanish-speaking America. That conquest, how it unfolded and how it set the basis for the modern Latino presence in the United States, is the subject of this chapter.

Our nation's territorial expansion during the 1800s is well documented, but less attention has been given to how that expansion weakened and deformed the young republics to the south, especially those closest to the ever-changing U.S. borders. Annexation of the Spanish-speaking borderlands evolved in three distinct phases: Florida and the Southeast by 1820; Texas, California, and the Southwest by 1855; and, finally, Central America and the Caribbean during the second half of the century, a phase that culminated with the Spanish-American War of 1898. Those annexations transformed an isolated yeoman's democracy into a major world empire. In the process, Mexico lost half of its territory and three-quarters of its mineral resources, the Caribbean Basin was reduced to a permanent target for Yankee exploitation and intervention, and Latin Americans were made into a steady source of cheap labor for the first U.S. multinational corporations.

Popular history depicts that nineteenth-century movement as a heroic epic of humble farmers heading west in covered wagons to fight off savage Indians and tame a virgin land. Rarely do those accounts examine the movement's other face—the relentless incursions of Anglo settlers into Latin American territory.

Ahead of the settlers came the traders and merchants—men like Charles Stillman, Mifflin Kenedy, and Richard King in Texas; Cornelius Vanderbilt, George Law, and Minor Keith in Central America; William Safford, H. O. Havemeyer, and John Leamy in the Antilles; and John Craig in Venezuela—all of whom amassed huge fortunes in Latin American lands and products. The merchants were joined by adventurers and mercenaries like General John McIntosh (Florida), Davy Crockett (Texas), and William Walker (Nicaragua), who swore allegiance to inexperienced or weak Latin American governments, then forcibly overthrew them in the name of freedom.

Most U.S. presidents backed the taking of Latin America's land. Jefferson, Jackson, and Teddy Roosevelt all regarded our country's domination of the region as ordained by nature. The main proponents and beneficiaries of empire building, however, were speculators, plantation owners, bankers, and merchants.[2] They fostered popular support for it by promising cheap land to the waves of European immigrants who kept arriving on our shores, and they bankrolled an endless string of armed rebellions in those Spanish-speaking lands by white settlers. To justify it all, our leaders popularized such pivotal notions as "America for the Americans" and "Manifest Destiny," the latter term emerging as the nineteenth-century code-phrase for racial supremacy.




But along with the conquered lands came unwanted peoples: Native Americans, who were pushed farther west, then herded onto reservations, and several million Mexicans, Cubans, Filipinos, and Puerto Ricans, who were placed under U.S. sovereignty. Even when Congress officially

declared some of the conquered peoples U.S. citizens, the newly arrived Anglo settlers routinely seized their properties, and those seizures were then upheld by the English-speaking courts the settlers installed. The Mexican Americans of the Southwest became a foreign minority in the land of their birth. Spanish-speaking, Catholic, and largely *mestizo,* they were rapidly relegated to a lower-caste status alongside Indians and blacks. Cubans and Filipinos eventually won their independence but found their nations under the thumb of Washington for decades afterward, while Puerto Rico remains to this day a colony of second-class citizens.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY YEARS: FROM INSPIRATION TO BETRAYAL

At the beginning of the 1800s, few Latin Americans could have foretold how the United States would treat them. The U.S. War of Independence, after all, was an enormous inspiration to intellectuals throughout the Spanish colonies. Some Latin Americans even fought alongside George Washington's rebel army. Bernardo de Gálvez, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, opened a second front against the English when he invaded British-controlled West Florida, defeated the garrison there, and reclaimed the peninsula as a Spanish colony. Merchants in Havana, meanwhile, supplied critical loans and supplies to Washington.

After the Revolution triumphed, Latin American patriots emulated the Founding Fathers. Fray Servando de Mier, a leading propagandist of Mexican independence, traveled to Philadelphia during Jefferson's presidency and often quoted Thomas Paine in his own polemics against monarchy.[3] In 1794, Antonio Nariño, a wealthy Bogotá intellectual and admirer of Benjamin Franklin, translated and secretly published the French Assembly's Declaration of the Rights of Man. José Antonio Rojas, the prominent Chilean revolutionary, met Franklin in Europe and later shipped numerous crates of Raynal's writings about the North American revolution to Chile. In 1776, Rojas penned his own list of Chilean grievances against the Spanish monarchy. Simón Bolívar, the great Liberator of South America, traveled throughout the United States in 1806. Inspired by its accomplishments, he launched Venezuela's independence uprising a few years later.[4]

Perhaps the best example of the close ties between revolutionaries of the north and south was Francisco de Miranda, the "Morning Star" of Latin American independence. Born in 1750 into a prosperous merchant family in Caracas, Miranda joined the Spanish army at seventeen. He later traveled to North America, where he served first with Gálvez's



Spanish troops in Florida, then with French general Comte de Rochambeau's troops. Handsome, erudite, and charismatic, Miranda was befriended by several U.S. leaders, including Alexander Hamilton and Robert Morris, and he met with President Washington. After a long personal odyssey through Europe, where he served as both a decorated general in Napoleon's army and a lover of Russia's Catherine the Great, Miranda returned to the United States and sought to win our government's backing for a campaign to liberate the Spanish colonies.[5]

Like all the well-known patriots of Latin America, however, Miranda was a *criollo* from the upper class. That limited his ability to win a mass following for independence among his own countrymen, for the *criollos,* unlike the Anglo-American revolutionaries, were a distinct minority within their own society. Of 13.5 million people living in the Spanish colonies in 1800, less than 3 million were white, and only 200,000 of those were *peninsulares,* born in Spain. Latin American rebels lived in constant fear of the 80 percent of the population that was Indian, black, and mixed-race, and that apprehension intensified during the final years of the U.S. Revolutionary War, when several major uprisings broke out among the Indians of South America.[6]

The specter of those uprisings made the *criollos* content at first to demand from Spain simply better treatment, not full-blown independence. They railed against high taxation, for more autonomy, and against the restrictions the Crown imposed on trade outside the empire. They condemned Spain's discrimination against them, how the Crown granted only *peninsulares* a monopoly on overseas trade, how it excluded *criollos* from top posts in the colonial government, and how it confined them only to mining and agriculture.[7] But no matter how much they might complain, the *criollos* dared not risk open rebellion for fear of unleashing revolt from the multitudes they had always oppressed.

In the end, the spark for Latin America's revolution came not from within the colonies but from Europe.[8] In 1808, Napoleon invaded Spain and installed his brother Joseph as king, setting off a chain of events that would lead to the breakup of the entire Spanish colonial empire. The Spanish people rejected the French invaders, formed local resistance juntas throughout the country, and launched a guerrilla war to return their imprisoned king to the throne. When they heard of the events in Europe, *criollo* leaders in the colonies followed the lead of the Spanish resistance. They formed juntas of their own in all the major American cities and assumed control of their local affairs in the name of the king.

The rebel juntas in Spain soon convened a new Cortes, and that Cortes promulgated a liberal constitution, one that granted full citizenship to

colonial subjects in the American colonies for the first time. But the Cortes stopped short of full equality when it refused to permit the colonies, whose population far outnumbered Spain's, a proportionate share of delegates. That refusal angered the most radical *criollo* leaders, who decided to break with the new Spanish government and declare their independence.

From then on, the Latin American revolution charted its own course. Even Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and the ousting of the French from Spain a few years later failed to bring the shattered empire back together. King Ferdinand, who was restored to the throne after Napoleon's defeat, refused to accept the loss of his colonies and sent his army to subdue the upstart Latin Americans. A series of wars ensued throughout the continent between loyalists and rebels, and in several regions between the patriotic leaders themselves. The conflicts differed from country to country, yet everywhere the human toll was immense. The mammoth size of the colonies made for an epic, disordered, and bloody canvas. Mexico's independence wars, for instance, began in 1810 after parish priest Miguel Hidalgo led an uprising of thousands of Indian peasants and miners in the town of Dolores in the rich Bajió region northwest of Mexico City, using a statue of the Indian Virgen de Guadalupe to rally his followers. By the time the wars ended in 1821, more than 600,000 were dead, 10 percent of the country's population.[9] Venezuela had lost half of its nearly 1 million inhabitants.[10] Overall, the Latin American wars lasted much longer and proved far more destructive to the region's inhabitants than the U.S. War of Independence, which claimed only 25,000 lives.

Despite their turbulent and debilitating fight for independence, the Latin American patriots always looked to the United States for their example. Several of the new nations modeled their constitutions on ours. During their wars, they pleaded for military aid from us, and after their victory, they sought friendship and assistance for their postwar reconstruction.[11]

Most U.S. leaders, however, coveted the Spanish colonies as targets for the nation's own expansion and held little regard for the abilities of the Latin American patriots. "However our present interests may restrain us within our limits," Jefferson wrote to James Monroe in 1801, "it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand beyond those limits, and cover the whole northern if not the southern continent."[12] Democracy no better suited Spanish America, John Adams said, than "the birds, beasts or fishes."

Miranda was the first to be surprised by the U.S. attitude. In 1806, after securing £12,000 from the British government for an expedition to liberate Venezuela, he rushed to the United States in expectation of further help, but President Jefferson and Secretary of State Madison rebuffed his appeals. Despite their refusal, Miranda managed to put together a rebel force from Anglo volunteers he recuited along the Eastern Seaboard. Once the expedition landed in Venezuela, however, Miranda's countrymen mistook it for a contingent of British soldiers. Instead of heeding his call for a revolt, the Venezuelans sided with the Spanish army, which quickly routed the rebels. Miranda barely managed to avoid capture and flee the country.



A decade later, with independence fever sweeping South America and the liberation armies battling fiercely against a powerful Spanish force, the United States rebuffed Bolívar as strongly it had Miranda. Monroe, first as Madison's secretary of state and then as president, insisted on neutrality toward the South American wars. Like Jefferson before him, Monroe hoped to keep Spain friendly enough so it would eventually sell its Cuba and Florida colonies to the United States, a feeling shared by most of our nation's leaders. "We have no concern with South America," Edward Everett, editor of the influential *North American Review,* wrote at the time. "We can have no well-founded political sympathy with them. We are sprung from different stocks."[13]

Latin American freedom, however, did have support among many ordinary Americans, even a few in high places, who opposed our neutrality. Among those was Henry Marie Brackenridge, whom Monroe sent to the region to assess the situation in 1817 as part of a U.S. commission. "The patriots . . . complain that our government is cold towards them, as if ashamed to own them," Brackenridge reported back.[14] By then, the Latin Americans were becoming increasingly suspicious of U.S. intentions. That suspicion turned to bitterness after an incident that year involving two merchant ships, the *Tiger* and the *Liberty.* Soldiers from Bolívar's Republic of Gran Colombia seized the ships near the Orinoco River in Venezuela after discovering that their hulls were filled with military supplies for the Spanish army. The White House demanded that Colombia release the ships and indemnify their owners. Bolívar responded by condemning the two-faced U.S. policy. In a series of angry diplomatic letters, he reminded the White House that the U.S. Navy had intercepted and captured several merchant ships, even British ships, laden with supplies for his revolutionary army. So why were North Americans now supplying his enemy?[15]

Unknown to Bolívar, this peculiar brand of neutrality was about to pay off handsomely. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 ceded Florida to the United States, but as part of those negotiations Monroe promised Spain

that our country would continue denying aid to the Latin American patriots.[16] The Latin American leaders, unaware of the secret agreement, could not believe how the United States kept turning its back on them. Bolívar, who had once praised our country as a "model of political virtues and moral enlightenment unique in the history of mankind," turned increasingly antagonistic to it by 1819. That year, he remarked: "In ten years of struggle and travail that beggar description, in ten years of suffering almost beyond human endurance, we have witnessed the indifference with which all Europe and even our brothers of the north have remained but passive spectators of our anguish."[17]

But there were deeper reasons behind the U.S. reluctance to see the Latin Americans succeed. Always foremost in the minds of southern planters and their congressional delegates was the issue of slavery. The planters watched with alarm as Latin America's independence wars dragged on, how Creole leaders like Bolívar were enlisting thousands of *pardos, mestizos,* Indians, and slaves in their armies, repaying the castes with greater social mobility and the slaves with their freedom.

Our slave owners were well aware that after Bolívar's second defeat by the Spanish army, Haiti's president, Alexandre Pétion, had helped finance his return to South America in 1815, outfitting seven ships and six thousand men with weapons and ammunition on condition that Bolívar emancipate Venezuela's slaves.[18] The Liberator's subsequent public condemnations of slavery enraged planters in this country. "Slavery is the negation of all law, and any law which should perpetuate it would be a sacrilege," he proclaimed at the founding congress of Bolivia in 1826.[19] Clearly, plantation owners here feared that emancipation fervor would spread from Latin America into the United States—by 1850, all the former Spanish colonies that had won their independence had abolished slavery—and that fear turned them into implacable foes of Latin American liberation.[20]

Abandoned by the U.S. government from their inception, reviled by the conservative monarchies of Europe, the Latin American republics concluded that their only reliable ally was England. Some six thousand English, Scotch, and Irish, most of them unemployed veterans from the British wars against Napoleon, signed up for Bolívar's army in 1817–1819. Among those volunteers was Daniel O'Leary, who went on to serve as Bolívar's top secretary.[21] That British aid, together with the daring battlefield strategies of Bolívar, San Martín, Bernardo O'Higgins, Santander, and the other great generals, succeeded by 1826 in routing the last of the Spanish armies on the continent.



All of Spain's vast empire except Cuba and Puerto Rico was now free. That year, Bolívar convened the first Pan American Congress, where he elaborated his dream for a hemispheric confederation. His plan for uniting the revolutionary nations so worried U.S. leaders that Congress delayed sending representatives until the gathering had adjourned, and afterward, our government made clear to Bolívar that it was adamantly opposed to any expedition to liberate Cuba and Puerto Rico.

## FREEDOM, FILIBUSTERS, AND MANIFEST DESTINY

If the South American liberators found policy makers in Washington aloof, Latinos living near the U.S. borderlands found their Anglo neighbors downright hostile. The gobbling up of chunks of Florida between 1810 and 1819 set the pattern for U.S. expansion across the Spanish borderlands. Jefferson's Lousiana Purchase in 1803 had brought the first group of Spanish-speaking people under the U.S. flag. But our nation did not "purchase" Florida in the same way it purchased Louisiana. The Adams-Onís Treaty was more akin to a street corner holdup. It culminated two decades of unceasing pressure on Spain by southern speculators to give up the territory, an area which was then much larger in size than the current state since it stretched along the Gulf Coast all the way to the towns of Natchez and Baton Rouge.

The few thousand Spaniards inhabiting Florida's fortified Gulf Coast towns had made great strides, since the Franciscan missions of the sixteenth century, in building ties with the Indians of the Southeast. For nearly two centuries, the Creek, Choctaws, Cherokees, and Chickasaws had formed a buffer between Spanish Florida and Anglo settlers in Georgia and Kentucky. Known as the "civilized tribes" because they readily adopted European dress, tools, and farming methods, they numbered about forty-five thousand in the year 1800. The Florida colony, however, was an irritant to the Anglos, since it provided refuge both to Indians on the warpath and to escaped slaves from the southern plantations.[22] Moreover, the plantation owners regarded with horror the racial mixing between fugitive slaves and Indians that was commonplace among the Seminoles.

By the early 1800s, so many Anglo settlers were moving into Florida that Spanish soldiers in its thinly populated garrison towns could no longer control the territory. In a gamble aimed at reasserting that control, Spain agreed to legalize the newcomers, but in return the settlers had to pledge loyalty to the Crown, raise their children as Catholics, and

refrain from land speculation or political assembly.[23] The policy backfired, since it made it easier for settlers to immigrate and only postponed Spain's loss of the colony.[24]

In 1810, a group of settlers in West Florida launched a direct challenge to that authority. They resorted to a form of rebellion that eventually turned into a hallmark of Anglo adventurers and buccaneers throughout the Spanish borderlands: a band of newcomers or mercenaries simply captured a town or territory and proclaimed their own republic. The Spanish called them *filibusteros* (freebooters), and the uprisings were known as filibusters. In one of the earliest attempts, a group of Anglo settlers captured the Spanish garrison at Baton Rouge on September 23, 1810, and declared their independence. The rebellion prompted President Madison to send in federal troops to occupy the surrounding territory, and Congress later incorporated the area into the new state of Louisiana.[25] The rest of West Florida fell into U.S. hands during the War of 1812, after General James Wilkinson, head of the U.S. Army and a master at filibustering, captured the Spanish garrison at Mobile in 1813 and Andrew Jackson captured Pensacola in 1814. Spain's government, still paralyzed by the Napoleonic wars, was in no condition to resist any of the incursions.

Other filibuster revolts soon spread to East Florida (see table 1). Most of the revolts garnered backing from political leaders in the South who were anxious to expand slave territories and to speculate in Florida land. One of those leaders, Andrew Jackson, had engaged in repeated speculation throughout his life. In 1796, for instance, Jackson bought a half-interest in five thousand acres of the Chickasaw Bluffs in Mississippi for $100. He immediately sold a portion for a sizable profit. Twenty years later, as a U.S. Army commander, Jackson forced the Chickasaws to negotiate a treaty opening the territory to white settlers. He promptly sold the remaining part of his investment for $5,000.[26] But the parcel of land that always fired Old Hickory's imagination most was Florida. Several times, his soldiers invaded East Florida on the pretext of hunting down Seminole bands. Thanks to Jackson's repeated forays and to the filibuster revolts of Anglo settlers there, Spain gradually concluded that the U.S. thirst for Florida would never be quenched; the Adams-Onís Treaty was the result. In it, Spain ceded to the United States an area larger than Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland for a mere $5 million. Spain hoped that by giving up Florida it would salvage the remainder of its tottering empire, especially the province of Tejas, which had already been the scene of four separate filibuster revolts by bands of Anglos between 1801 and 1819.[27] As its only concession in the treaty, Washington



officially renounced all other claims on Spanish lands and accepted the Sabine River as its border with Spain's Texas colony.

Such was the situation in 1822, when President Monroe, who for years had refused to aid the Latin American revolution, suddenly did an about-face and became the first world leader to recognize Mexico's independence. Monroe followed that up the next year with an even more audacious act. He declared the Americas off-limits to any new European colonization with his famous Monroe Doctrine. Actually, Monroe issued the warning quite reluctantly, and only after much British prodding. The British pressure was brought on by the defeat of Napoleon and the subsequent decision of Europe's Holy Alliance to back an attempt by Ferdinand VII to recover Spain's Latin American colonies. England was already ensconced as Latin America's biggest trading partner, and British foreign minister George Canning feared that any recolonization of the region would close off that commerce. So Canning urged Monroe to join him in warning the European powers to stay out of America. Canning, however, wanted reciprocity for his alliance. He wanted Monroe to renounce any plans to colonize Texas or Cuba, something Monroe would not do.[28]

TABLE 1

**THE FILIBUSTERING RECORD**

*(Invasions by U.S. Citizens into Spain's Colonies or the Latin American Republics during the 1800s)*

1801—Philip Nolan crosses into Texas with a band of armed men; he is captured and shot by Spanish soldiers.

1809—General James Wilkinson's "volunteers" occupy parts of West Florida.

1810—Anglo settlers declare a republic in Baton Rouge, West Florida. Federal troops occupy the area and Congress annexes it into Louisiana.

1812—Former general John McIntosh captures Amelia Island and Fernadina, declaring the Republic of Fernadina. Spanish troops defeat him.

1812—Former U.S. lieutenant Augustus Magee, Mexican Bernardo Gutiérrez, and a group of Americans invade East Texas and are routed.

1813—General James Wilkinson captures Mobile in West Florida.

1817—Henry Perry invades Texas and marches on La Bahía.

1819—Mississippi merchant James Long invades Texas but fails to establish the Republic of Texas.
1826—Hayden and Benjamin Edwards seize Nacogdoches and proclaim the Republic of Fredonia. Mexican soldiers defeat them with help from Stephen Austin.
1835—General Ignacio Mejía and two hundred Americans raid Río Panuco in Tamaulipas. His defeat prompts Mexico to ban American immigration.
1836—Sam Houston and Texas rebels, along with a small number of Tejano federalists, revolt against General Santa Anna's rule. They defeat Santa Anna at San Jacinto and proclaim the Republic of Texas.
1839—Antonio Canales, a Mexican federalist, S. W. Jordan, and five hundred Americans declare the Republic of the Rio Grande. They become divided and are defeated by Mexican troops.
1849—Former Spanish army officer Narciso López, backed by publisher William O'Sullivan, attempts to invade Cuba, but U. S. authorities foil the plot.
1850—López invades at Cárdenas, but is routed. Of his six hundred men, all but five are North American.
1851—López invades a second time, at Bahía Honda. Once again, North Americans are a majority of his four hundred volunteers. Spanish troops capture and execute him.
1853—William Walker invades Mexico and declares the Republic of Sonora. Mexican troops chase him back across the border.
1855—Walker arrives in Nicaragua, seizes power and rules as dictator for two years until he is routed by the combined armies of Central America and Cornelius Vanderbilt.
1858—Walker invades Nicaragua again and is routed a second time.
1860—Walker invades Honduras, is captured, tried, and executed.

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Seeking to maneuver between the geopolitical schemes of England and the Holy Alliance, Monroe chose instead to act alone. After years of refusing support to the Latin American revolution, he suddenly reversed course. On December 2, during his annual address to Congress, he issued the most important policy statement in hemispheric history, announcing that the Latin American countries were "henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers . . . it is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to



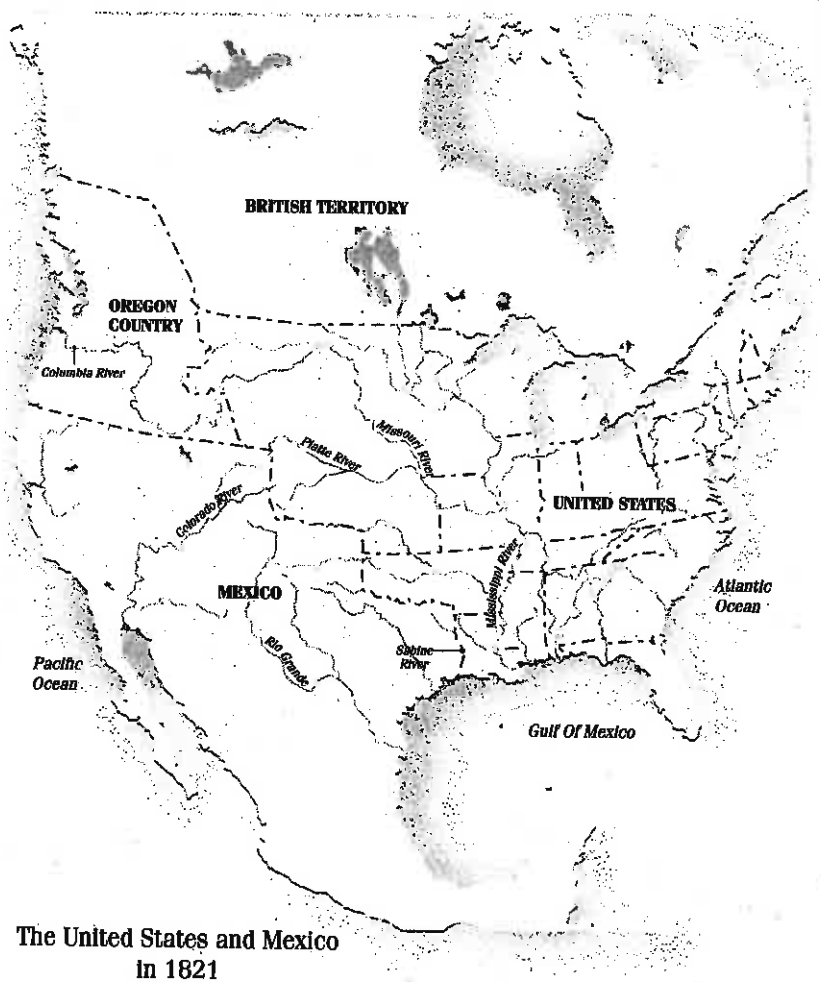
any portion of [the continent] without endangering our peace and happiness."[29]

The new policy was hailed at first by Latin American leaders. At last, they thought, U.S. neutrality toward their struggle would end. "An act worthy of the classic land of liberty," said Colombia's president Santander. The European monarchies, of course, were more worried about the guns of the powerful British navy than the threats of the upstart North American republic. Nonetheless, with England and the United States as nominal protectors of Latin American independence, the new countries of the region at least managed to avert the catastrophes that befell much of Africa and Asia when the European powers divided those areas between them during the great colonial partitions of the late nineteenth century.

Notwithstanding the Monroe Doctrine's strong language, European governments successfully pursued more than a dozen major interventions into Latin America during the rest of the century, and numerous minor ones, with only occasional U.S. opposition.[30] Worse than the many U.S. failures to honor its own policy was how subsequent presidents turned the doctrine into its opposite. Latin America, especially the Caribbean Basin, was turned into a virtual U.S. sphere of influence. Bolívar, weary of the growing arrogance from North Americans, declared before his death that the United States seemed "destined by Providence to plague America with torments in the name of freedom."[31] During the twentieth century, a succession of presidents used Monroe's words to justify repeated military occupations of Latin American nations. This duel interpretation of the doctrine's provisions continues to this day. It underscores an unresolved contradiction of U.S. history—between our ideals of freedom and our predilection for conquest.

The earliest example of that contradiction came during the next phase of borderlands expansion, the repeated annexations of Mexican territory between 1836 and 1853. Prior to those annexations, the United States of Mexico, as the new country called itself, and the United States of America were eerily similar in territory and population. In 1824, Mexico comprised 1.7 million square miles and contained 6 million people, while the United States stretched for 1.8 million square miles and had 9.6 million people. That equivalence was radically transformed over the next three decades as Anglo settlers poured onto Mexican land.

The settlements began with Moses and Stephen Austin and the town of San Felipe de Austin. Moses, who had lived in Missouri when Spain controlled the Louisiana territory, secured permission from the Spanish crown in 1820 to found a town of Anglo families in the province of Tejas.




The United States and Mexico in 1821

Within a year, Austin died and Mexico won its independence, but his son Stephen chose to carry out his father's plan. The new Mexican government honored Spain's grant so long as Austin's settlers took an oath of allegiance to Mexico and converted to Catholicism. San Felipe was so successful that dozens of other Anglo colonies in Texas soon followed.[32]

Farther south, at the mouth of the Rio Grande, Connecticut merchant



Francis Stillman landed by ship near Matamoros with a cargo of hay and oats in 1825. Impressed by the demand for his goods, Stillman sent his son Charles to the area to set up a branch of the family business.[33] Charles, or Don Carlos as the Mexicans referred to him, proved to be a wizard at trade. Before long, he was the biggest merchant and landowner in the region. By 1832, three hundred foreigners were living in Matamoros, most of them North Americans.[34] Among them was James Power, who married Dolores de la Portilla, an heiress of the rich De la Garza landowning family. Power thus initiated a form of land acquisition that hundreds of Anglo adventurers in the Southwest copied—he married into the Mexican elite and thereby acquired a *mayorazgo*.[35] Across the river from Matamoros, Don Carlos Stillman founded the town of Brownsville, where his son James Stillman was born in 1850. That son would grow up to be a titan of American finance as the president of First National City Bank and as the notorious ally of robber barons John D. Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan.

Far to the north of the Rio Grande, Anglo settlers had started moving into East Texas in the 1820s. Many were illegal squatters drawn by fraudulent sales of land at 1 to 10 cents an acre from speculators who had no legal title.[36] Some of those squatters soon took to filibustering.[37] The Hayden Edwards revolt, in particular, prompted the Mexican government to bar further immigration by U.S. citizens. It even abolished slavery in 1829 in hopes of cutting off economic incentives for southerners to emigrate.

But it was too late. By then, Anglo settlers far outnumbered the Mexicans in Tejas. "Where others send invading armies," warned Mexican secretary of state Lucas Alaman, in an eerie precursor to our modern immigration debate, "[the Americans] send their colonists. . . . Texas will be lost for this Republic if adequate measures to save it are not taken."[38] Local Mexican authorities, unlike the government in Mexico City, welcomed the economic boom that accompanied the influx of foreigners, just as today Anglo businessmen routinely welcome Mexicans who have crossed illegally into the country and are willing to work for low wages.

When General Santa Anna seized power in Mexico City in 1833, one of his first acts was to abolish the exemptions from taxes and antislavery laws that prior Mexican governments had granted the Texans, giving them the excuse they needed to break from Mexico City's "tyranny."

Few incidents in U.S. history so directly confront our cultural identity as does the Texas War of Independence and its legendary Battle of the Alamo. For more than a century and a half, the fort's siege has been a part of American mythology. Its 187 martyred defenders, among them

William Barret Travis, Jim Bowie, and Davy Crockett, have been immortalized as American heroes despite the fact that they openly defended slavery, that they were usurping the land of others, and that they were not even American citizens. Technically, they were Mexican citizens rebelling to found the Republic of Texas.

Most of the Anglo settlers had been in the province less than two years. Many were adventurers, vagabonds, and land speculators.[39] Travis had abandoned his family and escaped to Texas after killing a man in the United States. Bowie, a slave trader, had wandered into the Mexican province looking to make a fortune in mining. Sam Houston, commander of the victorious rebels, and Crockett were both veterans of Andrew Jackson's grisly victory over the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend, and they shared Old Hickory's racist and expansionist views toward Latin America.

Houston, a onetime governor of Tennessee, was part of Jackson's White House kitchen cabinet before moving to Texas in 1832. While Houston plotted the rebellion, Jackson offered unsuccessfully to purchase Texas outright from Mexico. The two men were so close that Jackson's enemies, among them former president John Quincy Adams, accused Houston of being Jackson's secret agent in Texas. Although historians have found no documentary proof of this, Jackson certainly was aware of his disciple's plans for the Mexican province.[40]

After the Alamo defeat, Houston's rebel army won the war's decisive battle at the Battle of San Jacinto, captured Santa Anna, and forced him to sign a treaty recognizing Texas independence in exchange for his freedom. But the Mexican government refused to sanction the treaty, and the precise boundaries of Texas remained in dispute for some time. The territory remained nominally independent until its annexation in 1845 only because northern congressmen kept blocking its admission to the union as a slave state. While the debate raged, cotton farming took hold in the Texas Republic and its leaders allowed the territory to be turned into a major transit point for smuggling slaves from Cuba into the southern states.[41]

Texas annexation touched off a fever for even more westward expansion. The slogan of the Monroe Doctrine, "America for the Americans," was barely two decades old when a new battle cry suddenly replaced it in the popular imagination—"Manifest Destiny." John O'Sullivan coined the term in July 1845 in his *United States Magazine and Democratic Review.* O'Sullivan, a publicist for the Democratic Party and friend of several presidents, counted Poe, Longfellow, and Whittier among the contributors to his influential magazine and was a steadfast advocate of



expansion into Latin America, especially Cuba, where he personally financed several filibuster expeditions.

Proponents of Manifest Destiny saw Latin Americans as inferior in cultural makeup and bereft of democratic institutions. Our country's Calvinist beliefs reinforced those territorial ambitions perfectly. Americans could point to the nation's prosperity, to its amazing new networks of canals, steamboats, and railroads, as proof of their God-given destiny to conquer the frontier. Newspapers and magazines of the day were replete with articles by noted phrenologists like Dr. George Caldwell and Dr. Josiah C. Nott, who propounded the superiority of white Europeans over Indians, blacks, and Mexicans.

"To the Caucasian race is the world indebted for all the great and important discoveries, inventions, and improvements, that have been made in science and the arts," Caldwell wrote in his influential *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race.* Nott, one of the South's best-known surgeons, took Caldwell's views one step further. He urged the need for eugenics to keep the white race pure. "Wherever in the history of the world the inferior races have been conquered and mixed in with the Caucasian, the latter have sunk into barbarism," Nott proclaimed in a speech in 1844.

The phrenologists were not some marginal intellectual sect. By 1850, their ideas were part of mainstream thought in this country. Proponents traveled from town to town, carrying casts of skulls and detailed charts of the brain, giving speeches and distributing free books, and charging money to read heads. World-famous scholars such as Samuel George Morton, the Philadelphia ethnologist who possessed the largest collection of human skulls on earth, buttressed their conclusions with "scientific" studies on the relative size, capacity, and composition of the brains of different races. Morton, according to Nott, "has established the fact, that the capacity of the crania of the Mongol, Indian, and Negro, and all dark-skinned races, is smaller than that of the pure white man." Nott even extended those differences to single out other Caucasians or "mixed-breeds." Contrasting whites in the United States "with the dark-skinned Spaniards," he wrote, "It is clear that the dark-skinned Celts are fading away before the superior race, and that they must eventually be absorbed."[42]

With southern planters pressing to increase their proslavery votes in Congress, and many northerners captivated by the racialist theories of Manifest Destiny, the national outcry to annex more Mexican land became overwhelming. To no one's surprise, the entry of Texas into the union precipitated war with Mexico. It was a conflict that even the last

president of the Texas Republic, Anson James, regarded as shameful. James blasted President Polk and war hero General Zachary Taylor for their attempts "to induce me to aid them in their unholy and execrable design of manufacturing a war with Mexico."[43] More than 100,000 U.S. soldiers served in the war, and nearly 14,000 perished, the highest mortality rate of any war in our history.[44] Their advance into Mexico produced horrifying incidents of brutality and racism by U.S. troops. A few even drew the public condemnation of generals Grant and Meade. Grant later admitted the war was "one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation."[45]

As the army advanced toward Mexico City, however, those same theories of Mexican inferiority sparked a national debate over how much of Mexico the United States should claim. By taking too much land, some argued, the country would be absorbing millions of racially mixed Mexicans, which in the long run might threaten the Anglo-Saxon majority. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo finally forced Mexico to relinquish that half of its territory that was the least densely populated and that included the present-day states of New Mexico, California, Nevada, parts of Arizona, Utah, and the disputed sections of present-day Texas. Five years later, the United States added an additional strip of land in Sonora, the Gadsden Purchase.[46]

Also included in the 1848 treaty was the crucial 150-mile-wide Nueces Strip, between the Rio Grande and Nueces rivers. The U.S. negotiators demanded its inclusion as part of Texas despite the fact that Spain, and later Mexico, considered the strip part of Coahuila province. The Nueces, which is equal in size to present-day Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey combined, was especially important because it included the fertile Lower Rio Grande Valley and because the plains north of that valley were teeming with wild horses and cattle. The herds, introduced by Spanish settlers in the early 1700s, numbered more than 3 million head by 1830.[47] Securing control of those herds, and of the original Spanish land grants in the region, soon produced vast fortunes for early Anglo settlers like Charles Stillman, Richard King, and Mifflin Kenedy.

Out of those Mexican lands, the U.S. cattle industry was born, even though the majority of ranch hands in the industry's early decades were anything but Anglo. The *vaqueros,* or cowboys, were generally *mestizos* or *mulatos*, sometimes even blacks or Indians. Certainly this was true on the famous King Ranch below Corpus Christi, which eventually grew to nearly 1 million acres. So dominant was the Mexican *vaquero* in the industry that Anglo cowboys copied virtually all the culture of the range



from them. As historian Carey McWilliams has noted, the cowboy got from the *vaquero:*

> his lasso or lariat, cinch, halter, *mecate* or horsehair rope, "chaps" or *chaparejos,* "taps" or stirrup tips *(lapaderas),* the chin strap for his hat *(barboquejo),* the feedbag for his horse *(morral)* and his rope halter or *bosal.* Even his famous "ten gallon hat" comes from a mistranslation of a phrase in a Spanish-Mexican *corrido "su sombrero gallonado"* which referred to a festooned or "gallooned" sombrero.

The Nueces Strip and the northern part of New Mexico were the only regions where the original Mexican inhabitants remained a clear majority over the Anglos even after annexation. Because of that, the language of the range, even that used by Anglo Americans, is derived mostly from Spanish words, among them bronco, buckaroo, burro, mesa, canyon, rodeo, corral, loco, lariat. Yet the cowboy myth in popular folklore, the one Hollywood has propagated around the world, is of a lone white Anglo sitting tall in the saddle, with Mexicans of the Old West invariably portrayed either as bandits or doltish peasants riding donkeys.[48]

Texas, however, was not the richest prize of the war with Mexico—California was. From the early 1800s, New England sea captains who reached the Pacific sent back glowing reports of that far-off Spanish colony. Despite those reports, few Anglos had settled in the Far West before the Mexican War because of the long and difficult overland passage through Indian country necessary to get there. Then, two weeks before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill on the American River. The news touched off an overnight stampede. Prospectors streamed into the territory from the East, Mexico, and South America, even from Hawaii and Australia. Within a year, California's non-Indian population rocketed from 20,000 to 100,000, overwhelming the original Mexican inhabitants, who numbered only about 13,000, and the territory's several hundred thousand Indians.

The first Mexican and South American prospectors to reach the California fields had a distinct advantage, for they drew on a tradition of gold and silver mining that dated back to the *conquistadores.* Not surprisingly, they had more initial success than the inexperienced Anglos from back East. That success frustrated the white prospectors and soon led to physical attacks, even lynchings, of Mexicans. In 1850, the state imposed a foreign miners tax to give Anglos a better edge.

Even though the gold fields petered out within a few years, the California

discoveries provided immediate dividends to the entire country, just as Aztec gold and silver had for sixteenth-century Spain. The mines turned out more than a quarter billion dollars in ore during their first four years. Their revenues spawned a generation of new bankers who rapidly turned to financing myriad other ventures throughout the West. Eventually, the Anglo immigrants shifted their attention to the state's more enduring wealth, its soil. Thousands seized or squatted on the large estates of the native *californios.* Within two decades of the Sutter's Mill discovery, most Mexicans in the state had been driven off their land.

Just as Texas became the country's cotton and cattle center after the war, and California and Nevada its source for gold and silver mining, Arizona and New Mexico gave birth to two other critical U.S. industries—copper and wool.

New Mexico had served as a nexus for sheep raising from early colonial times, the first herds arriving with *conquistador* Juan de Oñate in 1598. By then, Spain already boasted the oldest and most advanced sheep culture in Europe. Its herdsmen introduced the *churro* and *merino* breeds to North America. The *churro,* a small, scrubby animal ideally suited to the arid Southwest, made possible the existence of many far-flung and remote Spanish outposts in the region. Sheep provided not only food and clothing to settlers and soldiers but also were a main source of cash. Over the centuries, New Mexicans evolved an intricate tradition of sheep raising, with formally defined rights, ranks, privileges, even organizations among the sheepherding workforce. As cattle did for South Texas, sheep raising defined much of the culture of New Mexico, Colorado, and parts of California. But the sheep did more than provide culture; they created enormous wealth. Two years after New Mexico became a U.S. territory, southwestern herders were clipping a mere 32,000 pounds of wool annually. By 1880, the number of pounds had zoomed to 4 million.[49]

What sheepherding was for New Mexico, copper became for Arizona. The Spaniards opened their first silver and copper mine, the Santa Rita, in western New Mexico in the early 1800s. That was followed by the Heintzelman mine in Tubac, Arizona, which employed eight hundred men by 1859. Then came the famous Clifton and Bisbee mines in the 1870s. Between 1838 and 1940, Arizona mines produced $3 billion in metal, most of it copper. Workers in the mines were overwhelmingly Mexicans, either natives to the territory or migrants recruited from across the border by labor contractors. "By the mid-1880s," writes Chicano historian Rudy Acuña, "Chihuahuan farmers, after planting their



crops, traveled to eastern Arizona and local mines, working for day wages, returning home at harvest time."[50]

But the Mexican contribution to American prosperity didn't stop there. Before the coming of the railroads, Mexican workers provided the main teamster workforce in the Southwest, moving goods across the territory in long mule caravans. And after the railroads arrived, they were the section hands and laborers who maintained them. While the Mexican population of the ceded territories was only 116,000 in 1848, it grew steadily after the war as hundreds of thousands more came and went between Mexico and the United States as migrant laborers, which meant that Mexican influence on the region was far greater than the early population figures might suggest.

The combination of mineral and animal wealth the Anglos found on the annexed Mexican lands, plus the Mexican laborers Anglo businessmen recruited to extract it, provided the underpinnings of twentieth-century western prosperity. That combination made possible the vast expansion of our country's electrical, cattle, sheep, mining, and railroad industries.[51] Yet this historic Mexican contribution has been virtually obliterated from popular frontier history, replaced by the enduring myth of the lazy, shiftless Mexican.

## ANGLO SETTLERS HEAD SOUTH OF THE BORDER

The Mexican annexations of 1836 to 1848, however, were not sufficient to satisfy the expansionist schemes of Manifest Destiny proponents. Some called for seizing more of Mexico's mineral-laden northern territory. Southern planters especially coveted the tropical Central America isthmus, where a half-dozen fledgling republics seemed ripe for conquest.

Perhaps the foremost representative of those expansionists was William Walker. A Tennessee-born lawyer and journalist, Walker hardly fit the image of the swashbuckling mercenary dictator he would become. Originally trained as a doctor, he was soft-spoken, a mere five feet, five inches tall, and weighed a paltry 120 pounds. After a stint as a reporter in San Francisco, Walker appeared in November 1853 in Baja California with a small band of armed followers. From there, he launched an uprising in Mexico's Sonora province, proclaimed the Republic of Sonora, and named himself its president. Within a few weeks, Mexican troops chased him and his ragtag followers back to the United States, where federal agents arrested him for violating U.S. neutrality laws. His

audacious uprising made him an instant folk hero of the expansionist press, and all the newspapers reported extensively on his trial and eventual acquittal.

After the trial, Walker shifted his attention farther south, to the little-known isthmus of Central America that had broken away from Mexico in 1823 and formed a loose confederation called the United Provinces of Central America. A few British and North American businessmen, fired by dreams of building a canal across the isthmus to link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, had started visiting the region shortly after its independence.[52] In 1838, the confederation splintered into five independent countries, and the leaders of those countries were soon locked in intermittent shooting wars with each other. By then, the U.S. government, already concerned about a future canal, reached agreement with Colombia on the need to build that waterway through Panama, which was then a Colombian province. That agreement, cemented in a treaty in 1846, stipulated that the United States would guarantee the neutrality of any future canal.[53]

The California Gold Rush, however, created an instant demand for a faster route to the Pacific Coast. The only sea route at the time, from New York to San Francisco around Cape Horn, took four months, and the narrow Central American isthmus offered the best bet for cutting that time dramatically.

Two competing New York merchant groups had recently secured contracts from Congress to carry mail between California and the East Coast by steamship lines and then overland through Panama. The U.S. Mail Steamship Company, operated by George Law and Marshall O. Roberts, had the Atlantic portion of the route, while William H. Aspinwall's Pacific Mail Steamship Company had the western portion. Using a generous $900,000 annual subsidy Congress allotted them for the mail, the companies decided to transport people as well. Unfortunately, the part of the trip that involved an arduous fifty-mile trek by mule train across Panama's jungle was too forbidding for the average person heading for California. So Aspinwall negotiated a deal with the Colombian government to build a railroad across the isthmus. His Panama Railroad took six years and $2 million to build, and it claimed four thousand lives, most of them West Indian and Chinese laborers whom Aspinwall imported. Once completed, however, the line paid for itself three times over within the first few years of operation.[54]

While Aspinwall was building his line in Panama, Cornelius Vanderbilt, perhaps the most ruthless baron of his age, moved to carve out a quicker competing route through Nicaragua. Vanderbilt and Joseph L. White, a former congressman, founded the Nicaragua Accessory Transit Company, a combination steamship and railroad line that began operation sooner than Aspinwall's railroad. The Nicaragua company grossed $5 million the first year, with profits of between 20 and 40 per cent.[55]



Aspinwall's railroad and Vanderbilt's steamship line, however, were inadequate for U.S. merchants who wanted a canal through which their goods could travel on ships. Most engineers and politicians in the country favored a canal route through Nicaragua. While a Panama route was shorter, Nicaragua's was easier to build, they argued, since it could incorporate the natural waterways of the San Juan River and giant Lake Managua.

As a result, Nicaragua started to draw increasing attention from both Washington politicians and Anglo fortune hunters. In 1853, U.S. sailors went ashore to defend Vanderbilt's company in a dispute with the local government, and in 1854, the navy bombarded and destroyed the town of San Juan/Greytown over another financial dispute between a U.S. company and local authorities.[56]

Colonel Henry L. Kinney, a land speculator and founder of the Texas Rangers, arrived in 1854. Kinney immediately purchased 22 million acres of Nicaraguan land from trader Samuel H. Shepherd, who claimed he had been "granted" the land in 1839 by the Miskito king. The Nicaraguan government, as might be expected, refused to recognize Kinney's claim to 70 percent of its territory. Shareholders in Kinney's Central American Land and Mint Company included U.S. attorney general Caleb Cushing and Warren Fabens, President Pierce's commercial agent in San Juan/Greytown.[57]

A *New York Times* correspondent who lauded Kinney's colonization scheme back then wrote, "Central America is destined to occupy an influential position in the family of nations, if her advantages of location, climate and soil are availed of by a race of 'Northmen' who shall supplant the tainted, mongrel and decaying race which now curses it so fearfully."[58]

To enforce his dubious claim, Kinney armed some followers and launched a revolt against the government, but he was forced to flee after Vanderbilt, anxious that the land dispute not affect his own investments, pressured the British and U.S. governments to oppose his claims.

Despite Kinney's setback, Yankee influence in Nicaragua kept growing. More than six hundred North Americans were living in the country by 1855.[59] By then, England, still the most powerful nation in the world, made clear that it would challenge any U.S. plans to dominate a transoceanic canal project. That year, the two nations negotiated the Clayton-Bulwer

Treaty, in which they agreed to jointly guarantee the neutrality of any future canal, and to refrain from occupying or controlling any of the Central American countries. Neither nation, of course, bothered to consult any of the governments in the region affected by the treaty.

But politicians and merchants weren't the only ones suddenly eyeing Nicaragua. Walker, undaunted by his Mexican fiasco, set sail from San Francisco in 1855 with a band of fifty-six mercenaries he had recruited, supposedly to fight for a faction in Nicaragua's continuing civil war. Shortly after arriving, Walker rebelled against the faction that employed him, seized control of the country, and, in one of the most bizarre episodes of Latin American history, declared himself president.

During his time in office, Walker reinstituted slavery, declared English a coequal language with Spanish, and ordered all lands to be registered. The latter decree facilitated passing many land titles into the hands of Anglo American settlers.[60] Both Walker and the Nicaraguans, however, were actually pawns in a nefarious high-stakes contest for control of the region's commerce by competing groups of U.S. investors. A group of Transit Company officials who had temporarily wrested control of the shipping line from Vanderbilt helped finance Walker's army, while George Law, owner of the U.S. steamship line in Panama and Vanderbilt's chief competitor, supplied Walker with guns. In order to defeat his economic rivals, Vanderbilt bankrolled the allied armies of Costa Rica, Salvador, and Honduras, which defeated and routed Walker in 1857.

Some have attempted to dismiss the Walker adventure as a minor footnote of American history. But during his two years of psychotic and racist rule, more than eleven thousand North Americans settled in Nicaragua, equal to one-third of the total white population in that country at the time.[61] Most of those immigrants were Walker supporters and anywhere from three thousand to five thousand joined his occupying army. In this country, thousands rallied in the major cities to cheer Walker as a hero. A Broadway musical based on his exploits became an overnight hit; the Pierce administration sanctioned his outright aggression by recognizing his government; and the Democratic Party convention of 1856, influenced by Walker's actions, nominated James Buchanan, a more rabid proponent of Manifest Destiny, over his opponent Pierce. As president, Buchanan proceeded to welcome Walker to the White House after his expulsion from Nicaragua. By then, a thousand U.S. citizens had been killed in Walker's War—a death toll far greater than the Spanish-American or Persian Gulf wars.[62] Walker made two more unsuccessful attempts to return to power in Nicaragua. On his final try in



1860, he landed in Honduras, where local soldiers promptly captured and executed him.

By then, Manifest Destiny and the fervor for expansion were being rapidly eclipsed by the conflict over slavery and the war between the North and South. Following the end of the Civil War, the triumphant northern industrialists turned their attention to buying up the western frontier and building a railroad system to connect that frontier to the rest of the country. While a few U.S. policy makers still dreamed of a Central American canal route, the Central American leaders, bitter over the Walker episode, refused to consider the project for decades. The memory of Walker assured that Colombia and Nicaragua would balk at any project that involved American control over their territory.

So Central America turned to Europe instead. In 1880, Frenchman Ferdinand de Lesseps, seeking to replicate his triumph in building the Suez Canal, secured Colombia's permission to begin work on a Panama waterway. Like Vanderbilt's line through Nicaragua and the Panama railroad, the De Lesseps project opted to use West Indian blacks as imported laborers. The French transported fifty thousand blacks to work on the project, but De Lesseps's company collapsed in 1889, engulfing Europe in the biggest financial scandal in history. When all work on the half-finished canal abruptly ended, the West Indian workers were left stranded. As a result, West Indian colonies suddenly sprouted in the towns of Colón and Panama City.[63]

De Lesseps's failure left the U.S.-owned Panama Railroad as the only means of transportation across Central America. Throughout the nineteenth century, the railroad remained the single largest U.S. investment in Latin America and the Colombian government's prime source of revenue. The trip by ocean steamer and the Panama Railroad continued to be the fastest means of transport between the two American coasts until 1869, when the first transcontinental railroad began operating. The Panama line also became a constant source of conflict, as U.S. troops intervened more than a dozen times before 1900 to enforce American control or to protect the line from warring Colombian factions.[64]

For the rest of the nineteenth century, railroads and banana growing became the prime interest of the Anglo merchants who settled on the isthmus. In 1870, Charles Frank, a steward on the Pacific Mail Steamship Line, began growing bananas on land the Panama Railroad owned. During the same decade, Santo Oteri and the Machecca brothers, Italian immigrants from New Orleans, set up banana plantations along the coast of Honduras and Guatemala. Their firm eventually became the Standard

Fruit Company.[65] In 1871, Costa Rica's president granted tycoon Henry Meiggs Keith the contract to build a railroad from the capital of San José to the country's undeveloped Atlantic Coast. Keith, like others before him, imported thousands of West Indian and Chinese laborers for construction. He and his nephew, Minor Keith, eventually branched out into fruit growing. By 1886, their Tropical Trading and Transport Company was shipping twenty thousand tons of bananas annually to the United States.[66]

Far more important than Central America, however, was Mexico. The reign of dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911) turned the country into a paradise for foreign investors. By the time Díaz was overthrown, U.S. investment in Mexico totaled $2 billion. Led by the Rockefellers, Guggenheim, E. H. Harriman, and J. P. Morgan, North Americans ended up controlling all the country's oil, 76 percent of its corporations, and 96 percent of its agriculture. The Hearst family, whose newspapers and magazines routinely lauded Díaz, owned a ranch with a million cattle in Chihuahua. U.S. trade with Mexico, which amounted to only $7 million in 1860, jumped tenfold by 1908. By then, the United States was consuming 80 percent of Mexico's exports and supplying 66 percent of its imports.[67]

## THE LURE OF THE GREATER ANTILLES

The same quest for trade, commerce, and conquest that propelled Americans into Mexico and Central America brought them to the Greater Antilles. As early as 1809, Thomas Jefferson had been eyeing Cuba.[68] "The annexation of Cuba to our federal republic will be indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself," wrote John Quincy Adams in 1823.[69] But U.S. leaders were unwilling to risk a war with the British navy over the island. They preferred allowing a weak Spain to keep control of Cuba rather see it independent or under the sovereignty of another nation.[70] As Martin Van Buren expressed it, "No attempt should be made in that island to throw off the yoke of Spanish independence, the first effect of which would be the sudden emancipation of a numerous slave population, the result of which could not be very sensibly felt upon the adjacent shores of the United States."[71]

Spain, after all, permitted North Americans to invest in Cuban property, and that was the most important matter. By 1823, as many as fifty North Americans owned plantations valued at $3 million just in the province of Matanzas.[72] Those planters soon joined with Cuban *criollos* and Spanish landlords to seek annexation to the United States. Planter D. B. Woodbury and merchant William F. Safford founded the city of



Cárdenas in 1828 as a port to export sugar. So many U.S. citizens moved there that sections became virtual North American enclaves. "Our language is more common there than in any other Cuban city," wrote a visitor to Matanzas in 1859.[73] As early as 1848, President Polk offered Spain $100 million outright for the island. Four years later, President Pierce upped the offer to $130 million, without success.

While U.S. presidents sought to buy Cuba, American adventurers sought to capture it with guns, just as they did with Florida, Texas, and Nicaragua. Between 1848 and 1851, three filibustering expeditions attacked the island. Each was led by Narciso López, a rich former Spanish army officer who favored annexation to the United States, and in all three attempts, North Americans made up most of the combatants. Of six hundred who attacked Cárdenas in 1849, for instance, only five were Cuban.[74]

Railroad construction in the late 1850s brought thousands of Anglo engineers and mechanics to the island.[75] This flow of immigrant labor from the North did not slow until the early 1870s, when the first Cuban War of Independence, known as the Ten Years' War, forced thousands of native Cubans and Yankee settlers to flee.

The North Americans returned as soon as the war ended, however. They rapidly dominated sugar production and established beachheads in other island industries. Bethlehem and Pennsylvania Steel started iron, manganese, and nickel subsidiaries, and U.S. investments grew to more than $50 million by 1890. By then, 94 percent of Cuba's sugar exports were going to the United States.[76] Among the new arrivals was Lorenzo Dow Baker, a Massachusetts captain who had initiated a steady trade of bananas from Jamaica to the United States. Baker joined Boston shipping agent Andrew Preston in 1885 to form a new company, the Boston Fruit Company. Their firm was importing 16 million bunches of bananas annually before the turn of the century.[77]

So important did Cuba become to the United States that by the 1880s it already accounted for nearly one-fourth of our nation's world commerce.[78] On the eve of the Spanish-American War, the island was a Spanish colony in name only.

A similar pattern developed in the Dominican Republic. After Haiti's independence in 1804, Haitian armies invaded the eastern end of Hispaniola and freed the Dominican slaves, but they also oppressed the local elite. The occupation eventually sparked a popular rebellion that drove out the Haitians and led to the founding of the Dominican Republic in 1844. The first emissary from Washington, John Hogan, arrived the following year. Hogan immediately fixed his sights on the military

potential of spectacular Samana Bay in the northeast. Samana, he reported back home, is "capable of providing protection to all the navies of the world."[79] Dominican president Pedro Santana negotiated an initial deal to provide the bay as a coal refueling station to the U.S. Navy. Santana even broached the idea of the U.S. annexing his country, but opposition in both nations quickly scuttled the scheme.

Next to arrive was William L. Cazneau, who had been involved in Texas secession and later backed Walker in Nicaragua. Cazneau, a fervent expansionist, resurrected the annexation scheme. He won over William Seward, the secretary of state for both Andrew Johnson and Ulysses S. Grant.[80] At Seward's suggestion, Grant publicly announced he favored it, and the white Dominican elite, who were desperate to safeguard against another Haitian invasion, welcomed his offer.

The rest of the Caribbean, however, was too alive with revolutionary ferment to accept annexation quietly. Puerto Rican and Cuban patriots were locked in battle against Spanish rule, while popular movements were in open rebellion against conservative oligarchies in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. When the Haitian rebels triumphed in 1869, they offered their capital of Port-au-Prince as a safe haven to all Caribbean democrats. Among those who accepted the offer were Puerto Rico's Ramón Emeterio Betances and Dominican generals Gregorio Luperon and José Cabral.[81]

In the midst of all this ferment, Grant signed his annexation treaty with Dominican dictator Buenaventura Báez. Grant's idea was to turn the Caribbean country into a colonizing venture for any American blacks who were dissatisfied with the post–Civil War South. The treaty outraged patriots throughout the Antilles, who saw it as the beginning of direct American control of their islands.[82] When he learned of it, Luperon prepared to invade his homeland from Haiti to overthrow Báez. The dictator appealed for U.S. help and Grant ordered the navy to "to resist any effort to invade Dominican territory by land or sea."[83] Grant's navy may have been all-powerful in the Caribbean, but the president had overestimated his strength at home. The Senate, still dominated by post–Civil War Reconstruction radicals, did not share his dreams for a Caribbean empire. Led by Massachusetts abolitionist Charles Sumner, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, it defeated Grant's treaty in 1870.[84]

The treaty's failure, however, did not deter American planters, who had suddenly discovered another weak, underdeveloped Latin American country that was ripe for exploiting. Before 1850, the bulk of Dominican trade had been with Europe, largely exports of tobacco, cocoa, and coffee.[85] That changed rapidly after three thousand Cuban and



Spanish planters relocated to the country during the first Cuban War of Independence. The newcomers, with their advanced steam-driven mill technology, turned sugar into the leading Dominican crop almost overnight. Not far behind the transplanted Cuban planters were British, Italian, and North American planters. Americans Alexander Bass and his son William first acquired the Consuelo Mill in San Pedro de Macorís in the late 1880s. Then, in 1893, the family established the Central Romana, which would become one of the largest plantations in the Western Hemisphere.[86] As the sugar crop expanded, so did the importance of the American market. By 1882, less than forty years after independence, half of all Dominican trade was with the United States. The arriving Americans found a ready benefactor and ally in General Ulises Heureaux, the country's dictator from 1886 until 1899, when he was assassinated by Liberal Party rebels. During his reign, Heureaux reduced tariffs for U.S. imports, concluded numerous secret deals that benefited U.S. sugar growers, borrowed heavily abroad, first from Dutch financiers and later from Wall Street bankers, and filled his jails with anyone who opposed his policies.[87] By the time of his death, his nation had become another economic possession of the United States.

The pattern in U.S.–Latin American relations by now was unmistakable. During the first seventy-five years of their independence, Latin America's leaders had watched incredulously as their northern neighbor annexed first the Floridas, then Texas, then another huge chunk of Mexico. They followed with consternation the exploits of Walker in Nicaragua, of López and his mercenaries in Cuba; they were aghast at the arrogant way North American leaders treated them in diplomatic circles, at the racist labels those leaders used to describe Latin Americans in the U.S. popular press; they watched fearfully as annexation schemes gave way to massive economic penetration, so that by century's end, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Spain's Cuban and Puerto Rican colonies, and much of Central America had become economic satellites of an expanding U.S. empire.

Anglo Americans, on the other hand, saw a radically different and more benign canvas. Their view of the country's growth was perhaps best captured by historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who saw in the conquest of the frontier the essence of North American democracy, individualism, and progress. "American social development," Turner said in a famous speech in 1893, "has been continually beginning over again on the frontier." That frontier was for Turner the "meeting point between savagery and civilization." He believed that "this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch

with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character." Turner, however, focused exclusively on how European settlers confronted Native Americans and a virgin land. His analysis mentioned nothing of Mexicans and other Latin Americans encountered on the frontier, either as settlers or immigrant laborers, or of their contribution to shaping our national character.

Moreover, this view of the frontier as a democratizing element obscures how western expansion permitted violence to flourish against outsiders as a solution to political problems. Whenever a politician such as Sam Houston or Davy Crockett found his rise barred by opponents at home, he simply packed his bags, conquered some new territory, and created a state where he and his allies could dominate. The frontier thus became an outlet for violence and corruption, for those within American society who wanted the fewest rules and least control.

U.S. territorial expansion did not climax with the closing of the western frontier; rather, it reached its culmination with the Spanish-American War of 1898. The mysterious explosion of the USS *Maine,* together with the prowar fever created by Hearst and other expansionist publishers, convinced President McKinley to seek a declaration of war from Congress. But McKinley balked at recognizing the Cuban rebel army's provisional government as a partner in that war. "Such recognition," McKinley told Congress, "is not necessary in order to enable the United States to intervene and pacify the Island."[88]

Cuban patriots, who were on the verge of victory after thirty years of proindependence struggle, had other ideas. "If intervention shall take place on that basis, and the United States shall land an armed force on Cuban soil," warned Horatio S. Rubens, a lawyer for the Cuban resistance, "we shall treat that force as an enemy to be opposed."[89]

Aware that the Cubans had a combat-hardened army of thirty housand, Congress rebuffed McKinley and opposed any intervention at did not recognize Cuba's right to independence. Led by Senator enry M. Teller of Colorado, Congress adopted a final joint war declara- n that renounced any U.S. "intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdic- n, or control over said island except for the pacification there of."[90] anks to the Teller Amendment, the Cuban rebels welcomed the U.S. asion and provided critical support to General William R. Shafter's troops. But once on Cuban soil, Shafter and his solders, mostly hern white volunteers, treated the black Cuban soldiers with utter empt. "Those people are no more fit for self-government than gun- der is for hell," Shafter would say.[91] After the capture of Santiago in ey battle of the war, Shafter barred Cuban soldiers from the city,



refused to allow their general, Calixto García, to attend the Spanish surrender, and permitted the old Spanish colonial authorities to remain in charge of civilian government.[92]

A long line of historians, beginning with Julius W. Pratt in his 1934 study, *American Business and the Spanish American War,* have since insisted that McKinley and the U.S. business establishment were dragged unwillingly into the war and into a colonial empire by Hearst and by pro-expansion intellectuals like Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, Alfred T. Mahan, and Henry Adams. In *The Rise of Modern America,* Arthur M. Schlesinger asserts that Wall Street actually favored peace with Spain over war. Those historians somehow divorce the war from the entire story of nineteenth-century U.S. expansionism in Latin America. Others, such as Martin Sklar, Walter LaFeber, and Philip Foner, offer less idealized accounts. They demonstrate that key sections of American business were demanding rapid expansion into the markets of Asia and Latin America. Foner, in particular, points to how corporate titans Astor, Rockefeller, and Morgan all turned avidly prowar in the months preceding Congress's declaration.[93] Spain, a teetering, stagnant power, was never a match for the rising United States. Its defeat finally achieved what Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, and the other Founding Fathers had long sought: plopping Cuba, the juiciest plum of the Caribbean, into U.S. palms, and securing Anglo American domination over Latin America for the next century. The Treaty of Paris that formally ended the war gave the United States direct control not only of Cuba but also over Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

The end of the war brought a new wave of Yankee companies. On March 30, 1899, banana merchants Baker and Preston merged their Boston Fruit Company with Minor Keith's Central American holdings. They called the combined firm the United Fruit Company. At its inception, United Fruit owned more than 230,000 acres throughout the region and 112 miles of railroad.[94] More than any other U.S. company, United Fruit became the twentieth-century symbol of U.S. imperialism. It would evolve into a corporate octopus, controlling the livelihood of hundreds of thousands and toppling governments at will.

The Spanish borderlands had been brought to their knees. The next century would reveal the price of that conquest.