**Manifest Destiny**

*Manifest Destiny is the belief that Americans had the right, or even the duty, to expand westward across the North American continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. This would spread the glorious institutions of civilization and democracy to the barbaric Native Americans. In order to accomplish this destiny, Americans did not flinch at atrocities such as provoking war with Mexico or slaughtering Indians.*

**Great American Desert:** The "Great American Desert" was a nickname for the Great Plains. This area, the present -day Midwest, was characterized by its arid climate, a flat topography, and lack of trees. Because of these features, it was considered inhospitable and early settlers chose to cross it on the way to the Willamette Valley of Oregon rather than settling there.

**"MANIFEST DESTINY":** "Manifest Destiny" was the term used, throughout the 1840s, to describe Americans’ belief that they were destined by God to spread their beliefs across the continent. This sense of duty created a sense of unity among the nation and stimulated westward expansion. The term itself was coined by John O’Sullivan in an 1845 magazine article. The concept justified westward expansion in all its forms and ramifications, including the Mexican War, the persecution of the Indians, and other such ethnocentric acts.

**Was it Imperialism?:** American annexation of territories such as Oregon are generally not considered imperialistic because these lands were obtained by negotiation between two equal powers and the people there were not opposed to joining the Union. However, lands gained by force, such as the Mexican cession, are considered imperialistic conquests.

**Horace Greeley:** Greeley was a journalist and political leader. He opposed slavery, but he was not an abolitionist. He was editor of the *New Yorker* and a Whig associated with Governor Seward of New York. In 1841, he founded the *New York Tribune*. In 1872, he was the Liberal Republican nominee for president.

**Annexation of Texas, Joint Resolution under President Tyler:** In 1843, Tyler started a campaign to annex Texas, and in 1844 he succeeded in sending a treaty to Congress for the annexation. This treaty was defeated in the Senate, but later, in early 1845, Congress passed a joint resolution to annex Texas because of the growing popularity of annexation.

**Reoccupation of Texas:** After Congress voted to annex Texas, the Mexican governmen began war preparations when Texans accepted annexation. In response, Polk sent troops to occupy Texas and the disputed territory south of the Nueces River. Polk believed that the land was part of the Louisiana Purchase, and therefore it belonged to the United States.

**Reannexation of Oregon:** Prior to 1846, America and Great Britain had jointly occupied the Oregon Country. However, in 1844, Polk began to demand that America obtain the entire territory. In compromise, a treaty was signed in 1846 giving the United States all of Oregon south of the 49th parallel.

**ELECTION OF 1844:** In the election of 1844, the Whigs nominated Henry Clay. The Democrats, however, were divided between Martin Van Buren and Lewis Cass. A deadlock at the Democratic national convention resulted in the nomination of dark-horse candidate James K. Polk. The Liberty party, consisting of a small group of northern antislavery Whigs who were alienated by Clay’s indecisiveness, nominated James G. Birney. Also, large numbers of Irish immigrants turned out to vote for Polk, and he won by a small margin.

**JAMES K. POLK:** Polk was a slave owning southerner dedicated to Democratic party. In 1844, he was a "dark horse" candidate for president, and he won the election. Polk favored American expansion, especially advocating the annexation of Texas, California, and Oregon. He was a friend and follower of Andrew Jackson. He opposed Clay’s American System, instead advocating lower tariff, separation the treasury and the federal government from the banking system. He was a nationalist who believed in Manifest Destiny.

**54 40’ or Fight!:** In the election of 1844, Polk used "54 40’ or Fight!" as a campaign slogan, implying that the he would declare war if Britain did not give the United States all the Oregon territory up to its northern boundary, the line 54 40’ N. latitude. However, in 1846 Polk agreed to negotiate, and the two countries divided Oregon at the 49th parallel.

**Slidell Mission to Mexico:** Slidell was a negotiator sent to Mexico by James Polk with orders to gain Mexico’s recognition of the independence of Texas and to purchase California and New Mexico. However, he was not received by the Mexican government because the threat of military revolt left the Mexican president to weak to negotiate.

**Rio Grande, Nueces River, Disputed Territory:** A dispute over the southern boundary of Texas contributed to the Mexican War. Mexico claimed that the Nueces River was boundary of Texas, but Polk insisted that the Rio Grande River was the boundary line. The land between these two rivers was uninhabited, but it was a significant slice of Mexican territory.

**MEXICAN WAR:** The Mexican war lasted from 1846 to 1848. The main cause of the war was American desire for territory, especially Texas and California. The war took place mainly on Mexican soil. Partially because of disorganization and instability in the Mexican government, the war resulted in and American victory. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the war, made the southern boundary of Texas the Rio Grande, gave California and New Mexico to the United States, and gave $15 million to Mexico in compensation.

**General Zachary Taylor:** Taylor was an American major general who became a war hero during the Mexican War. His troops won important victories in northern Mexico at Matamoros, Monterrey, and Buena Vista, and his resulting popularity helped him win the presidential election in 1848.

**Battle of Buena Vista:** The battle of Buena Vista was a battle during Mexican War. Five thousand American troops commanded by General Taylor defeated three times as many Mexican troops under Santa Anna. As a result of this battle, Taylor was put in control of all of northern Mexico. This American victory also hastened end of the War.

**Stephen Kearney:** Kearney was an American colonel in the Mexican War. In 1846, he led an army to Santa Fe and took the New Mexico territory without firing a shot. Kearny then suppressed a rebellion of both Indians and Mexicans, and managed to send a detachment of his army south into Mexico in time to join Taylor in the Battle of Buena Vista.

**John C. Fremont:** Fremont was an explorer, soldier, and politician known as "the Great Pathfinder." In 1846, he assisted in the annexation of California by capturing insurgents, seizing the city of Sonoma, and declaring the independence of the "Bear Flag Republic." In 1856, Fremont became the first presidential candidate for the Republican party.

**Senator Thomas Hart Benton:** Senator Benton was an American statesman. He represented Missouri in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. His daughter, Jessie Benton, married adventurer John C. Fremont, and Benton used his influence to have records of Fremont’s explorations published as government documents.

**General Winfield Scott:** General Scott commanded American troops during the Mexican War, and led those troops victory at Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, and Chapultepec. He also led the final defeat of Santa Anna when he captured Mexico City in 1847. He ran for president of United States in 1852.

**Nicholas Trist:** Trist was the chief clerk of state department and a peace officer. He was sent to Mexico by Polk to negotiate with Mexican president Herrera. They wanted Trist to convince Herrera to lower the price he was asking for California and to give Americans the right of movement over the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In 1846, Herrera rejected the offer.

**All Mexico Movement:** Many Senators in Congress wanted the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to include all of Mexico, because they believed that to have control of all of Mexico would give the United States more power. However, this movement failed because the acquisition of California and her ports satisfied Polk.

**MEXICAN CESSION:** The Mexican Cession was the land that Mexico ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Guadelupe Hidalgo in 1848. This territory included California, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Texas, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. The addition of so much land to the United States exacerbated conflict over the expansion of slavery because some Northerners feared that the extension of slavery into California and New Mexico would deter free laborers from settling there.

**Webster-Ashburton Treaty:** The Webster-Ashburton Treaty was a treaty negotiated by Lord Ashburton of Great Britain and Daniel Webster of the United States in 1842. It settled a dispute over the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick. The treaty was very popular in the North because the United States got more than half of the disputed territory.

**Caroline Affair:** The American steamboat, the *Caroline,* was being used by Canadian rebels when it was attacked by the government of Canada in late 1837 in American waters. In 1842 Daniel Webster asked for an apology from British government. The event heightened tensions between the United States and Britain, but this tension was soon eased.

**Aroostook War:** The Aroostook War was a boundary dispute between settlers in Maine and New Brunswick from 1838 to 1839. Full-scale war was avoided through an agreement in 1839, and the issue was settled by Webster-Ashburton Treaty in 1842.

**OREGON FEVER:** During the 1830s and 1840s, many Americans traveled to the Oregon Territory in order to start a new life. The fertile farmland available in the Willamette Valley attracted many farmers. People in the East heard exaggerated, enthusiastic reports from missionaries and pioneers, convincing them that Oregon was a "pioneer’s paradise." Many settlers traveled to Oregon overland by way of the Oregon Trail or around Cape Horn in the newly invented clipper ships. This was an important part of westward expansion.

**John Jacob Astor:** Astor was a wealthy New York merchant who invested in real estate. He became involved in the fur business and organized a fur trading empire from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean and to China and Japan. He created the American Fur Company and established Astoria, the first major fur trading post in Oregon.

**Oregon Trail:** The Oregon Trail was an overland route to the Oregon territory, stretching almost 2,000 miles from Independence, Missouri to the Willamette Valley. The pioneers who traveled this trail in wagon trains faced many dangers. It is estimated that about 11,500 emigrants used overland trails like the Oregon Trail to reach Oregon between 1840 and1848.

**Willamette Valley:** The Willamette Valley was an area of fertile farmland in the Oregon Territory which attracted large numbers of farmers in the 1830s and 1840s, especially those from the Mississippi River Valley. Reports of the abundance of this land sparked the movement of many pioneers to the West Coast.

**Oregon Territory:** Congress made the Oregon Territory an official territory of the United States in 1848. Prior to 1846, the Oregon Territory had been jointly occupied by Great Britain and the United States with its northern boundary the line 54°40’. In a 1846 treaty, the two countries split the territory, dividing it at the 49th parallel.

**49th Parallel:** The 49th parallel was the line of latitude dividing the United States’ and Great Britain’s portions of the Oregon Territory after 1846. Originally they had jointly occupied the entire territory, but a compromise was forged in 1846 because president Polk demanded title to this territory and neither side wanted to go to war over it.

**Election of 1848: Cass, Taylor:** Zachary Taylor was the Whig candidate in the election of 1848, and his platform was based solely on personal popularity because he was a war hero.; Lewis Cass was the Democratic candidate. Both parties avoided making the issue of slavery a campaign issue. Taylor won election on his popularity.

**Joseph Smith:** Joseph Smith was the founder of the Mormon church. He translated the Book of Mormon in 1827, after which, he and his followers set up a model city and temple in Nauvoo, Illinois. Smith saw himself as a prophet, increasing the negative sentiment towards Mormonism. After being charged with treason and jailed, he was killed by a mob in 1844.

**Brigham Young:** Brigham Young was the patriarch of the Mormon church who took control of the church after Joseph Smith was killed. After the Mormons were forced out of Illinois, Young led them to Utah in 1846, where they prospered. Young has been criticized for both his support of polygamy and his intolerance towards opposition.

**Mormons:** The Mormon religion was founded in 1827 by Joseph Smith. Their church is based in Utah and they believe that the Book of Mormon is the supplement for the Bible. The Mormons are characterized by their preference to be set apart from the rest of the community, apparent in their views, which were antebellum in the time the religion was born.

**John Sutter:** John Sutter was granted 49,000 acres of land by the Mexican government in 1834 and established a sawmill on the land in 1846. In 1848, he discovered gold. This discovery led to the onset of the California Gold Rush. Land squatters disputed over Sutter’s land claims and, subsequently, Sutter’s holdings were found invalid by the Supreme Court.

**forty-niners:** In 1849, 100,000 Americans, along with immigrants from Europe, Asia and South America rushed to California in search of easy riches. Competition led to violence and greed. As a result of inadequate shelter and food and the lack of medical supplies, 10,000 died the first year and few even benefited from the expedition.

**Walker Tariff, 1846:** The Walker tariff was created by Robert J. Walker, Polk’s secretary of the treasury, in 1846. The bill slashed all duties to the minimum necessary for revenue. It also reversed the trend of replacing certain specifics for ad value duties and dropped the minimum valuation principle. The tariff was signed July 30, 1846.

**Independent Treasury System, Van Buren:** The system was introduced by Martin Van Buren in 1837 and it passed through Congress in 1840. The bill had the federal government keep their revenue, and by doing this, kept public money from private business corporations. This also kept the government’s money out of state banks.

**Independent Treasury System, Polk:** After Van Buren was defeated in the election of 1840 by William Henry Harrison, the Independent Treasury System was repealed. However, when Polk was elected in 1844, he brought back the Independent Treasury System. This intensified the divisions between the Whigs and Democrats.