

Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion

I. The Idea of Manifest Destiny

A. Phrase "Manifest Destiny" first coined by John O'Sullivan

B. Main ideas

1. God is on the side of American expansion
2. Free development - the expansion of government rule expanded the area of freedom
3. Population growth required more land (fear that immigration would reduce opportunity and bring European style class conflict)

C. For many, Manifest Destiny meant that U.S. was destined to rule all the continent

II. Manifest Destiny in foreign policy

A. The Texas Revolution

1. Much of Mexican politics had always been a struggle between Mexico City and the provinces
2. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna becomes dictator in 1834
 - a. Had been President before
 - b. Tried to abolish provincial autonomy and impose a strong centralized government
 - c. Results in numerous provincial revolts, including Texas
3. Texas declares independence
 - a. Revolt began in 1835, settlers declared independence in 1836
 - b. Some of the rebels were *tejanos* - Mexican speaking Texan
 - c. Santa Anna initiates a brutal campaign, but is captured and forced to recognize Texan independence

B. Republic of Texas and Annexation

1. Most Texans believed they would soon be annexed by the U.S.
2. President Tyler promotes annexation, but there was opposition
 - a. Some feared war with Mexico

b. Slavery was also a stumbling block

i. South clearly saw Texas as a way to expand slavery, gain power

ii. Northern abolitionists opposed annexation for this reason

c. Anti-annexationists in Congress defeat Tyler's efforts

3. Election of 1844 brings James K. Polk to White House

a. A firm believer in expansion and defender of slavery

b. Ran on a platform of annexation of both Texas and Oregon territory

c. His victory led to quick annexation of Texas

C. War with Mexico (1846-1848)

1. Many in Mexico prepared to fight over Texas

a. Had reluctantly recognized Texan independence in 1845

b. But saw annexation as wound to national honor

c. And there was a border dispute - Nueces River or Rio Grande?

2. Polk prepared to negotiate - but only on question of purchasing California and the rest of Mexico's northern territories, not Texas

3. War broke out when U.S. sent troops across Nueces into disputed territory

4. Mexican defeat

a. Two very small armies battled in enormous territory

b. Mexico was disunited

i. coups and revolts continued *during the war*

ii. Generals continued to compete for power, would not coordinate

iii. Elites feared arming the populace for fear of social revolt

c. Gen. Winfield Scott captured Mexico City in Sept, 1847

D. Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, 1848

A. Gave U.S. California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, the rest of Texas and other territories

B. U.S. agreed to pay Mexico \$15 million and assume American claims against Mexico

C. Mexicans on new U.S. territory would be U.S. citizens and maintain property rights

1. The rights of new Mexican-Americans often abused
2. In New Mexico, where there were more of them, controlled provincial government into the 1920s - and increasingly do so again now
3. For the most part thought, rights of Mexican-Americans often ignored, and many of them lost their land and businesses

D. Aftermath of war left United States divided

1. Many Northerners had opposed war on principle
2. Irish Catholics often opposed to war - saw it as brutal attack on Catholic nation
3. North accused Polk and South as conspiring to expand slavery
4. War gave military experience to many officers who would fight in Civil War

E. Mexican-American War was Manifest Destiny in its most extreme form

1. Justified by belief that continent was our destiny
2. Justified by belief that Catholic, near-Mediaeval Mexico represented the past, not the future

III. Polk and the Oregon Question

- A. Oregon Territory (Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia) had been jointly occupied by U.S. and Britain
- B. Polk's presidential campaign had argued for the whole thing - "Fifty four forty or fight!"
- C. As President, renounced joint occupation, implying desire to seize all of it
- D. Eventually compromised with British, extended 49th parallel as border
 1. Didn't want a war with both Mexico and Britain
 2. Because it extended free territory, made annexation of Texas more acceptable to North
 3. Many Northerners believed Polk's compromise on Oregon but unwillingness to compromise on Mexico was a sign that he favored South over North

IV. Westward Migration

- A. Americans moved west for many reasons

1. Economic advancement, usually by gaining land for own farm
2. Mining opportunities - largest wave of would be miners was the 1849 Gold Rush to California
3. Religion
 - a. missionaries followed the migrants and sought to evangelize the Indians
 - b. Mormons escaping persecution
4. Mormons - Church of Later Day Saints
 1. Founded by Joseph Smith, 1830
 2. Smith claimed he had received revelations through an angel - The Book of Mormon
 3. Smith believed he was a prophet destined to restore the original pure church the Christians in the Book of Mormon had created
 4. Mormon life under Smith
 - a. Smith created system of morally strict, hierarchical, communal living
 - b. Built settlements in Missouri and Illinois
 - c. Encountered great hostility, particularly because of Smith's revelation that legitimized polygamy
 - d. Smith killed by a mob in Illinois, replaced by Brigham Young
5. Brigham Young and the Trek
 - a. Young believed the Mormons needed to separate themselves from non-believers, for purity and survival
 - b. Some 12,000 Mormons marched across Indian territory to the Great Salt Lake, then in Mexico
 - c. Mormons because of discipline and cooperative living, were quite successful
 - d. After Utah became part of US, Mormons had to give up polygamy for Utah to become a state and remain under their control
6. Mormons as Manifest Destiny
 - a. One of best examples of "conquest of the West"
 - b. Believed God was on their side

- c. Believed that "promised land" was in the West and was their destiny

B. Getting to the West - The Overland Trails

1. Series of wagon trails starting mainly in Iowa and Missouri, heading to Oregon and California
2. First half of the trip was relatively easy
3. Second half was more difficult - illness, mountains, and conflict with Indians

C. Expansion and the Plains Indians in the Antebellum period

1. Numerous groups, very mobile. Used horse and rifle to hunt buffalo, battle with each other
2. Many settlers were convinced that the Indians were a degenerate culture, destined to die out
3. Settlers and westward migrants disrupted buffalo herds, caused their numbers to diminish
4. So many migrants crossed the Plains during the 1849 Gold Rush that both buffalo and grass wiped out in large areas
5. Fort Laramie Council - 1851
 - a. Conference of leaders of Plains tribes with government officials to try to resolve conflicts
 - b. Government offered compensation for destruction of land if Indians settled down, confined themselves to particular territories
 - c. Fort Laramie Treaty was first treaty between government and Plains Indians
 - d. But it did not prove to be a final resolution, and conflict would continue