Chapter 17

*Manifest Destiny* and Its Legacy,
1841–1848

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**“Manifest Destiny”**

- First coined by newspaper editor John O’Sullivan in 1845.
- “... the right of our *manifest destiny* to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative development of self-government entrusted to us. It is right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth.”
- A myth of the West as a land of romance and adventure emerged.

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I. The Accession of “Tyler Too”

- **Whig party:**
  - Wm. H. Harrison, a Whig, elected in 1841 and John Tyler elected Vice-President
  - Cabinet: Secretary of State—Daniel Webster
  - Henry Clay in Senate, uncrowned king of Whigs
  - Harrison contacted pneumonia and died after only four weeks in office:
    - By far shortest administration in American history but longest inaugural address

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I. The Accession of “Tyler Too” (cont.)

- **John Tyler:**
  - “Tyler too” party of Whig ticket, now claimed spotlight
  - Stubbornly attached to principle
  - Resigned earlier from Senate, rather than accept distasteful instructions from Virginia legislature
  - Left Jacksonian Democrats for Whigs
  - Enemies accused him of being a Democrat in Whig clothing
  - Tyler was at odds with majority of Whigs

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I. The Accession of “Tyler Too” (cont.)

- **Whig party platform:**
  - Pro-bank, pro-protective tariff, and pro-internal improvements.
  - “Tyler too” rhymed with “Tippecanoe,” but there harmony ended.
  - Harrison, the Whig, served for only four weeks, whereas Tyler, the ex-Democrat but largely a Democrat at heart, served for 204 weeks.
II. John Tyler: A President Without a Party

- Whigs platform:
  - Outlined a strongly nationalist program
  - Financial reform came first:
    - Whig Congress passed law ending independent treasury system
    - President Tyler, disarmingly agreeable, signed it
    - Clay drove though Congress a bill for a “Fiscal Bank” which would create a new Bank of the United States
    - Clay—the “Great Compromiser”—would have done well to conciliate Tyler

- Proposed Whig tariff:
  - Tyler vetoed bill
  - He disagreed with Whig scheme for distributing to states revenue from sale of public lands in West
  - He believed this would squander federal money
  - Chastened Clayites redrafted tariff bill:
    - Removed dollar-distribution scheme
    - Lowered rates to moderately protective level of 1832—roughly 32% on dutiable goods
    - Tyler reluctantly signed Tariff of 1842

- Trends in Antebellum America: 1810-1860
  1. New intellectual and religious movements.
  2. Social reforms.
  4. Re-emergence of a second party system and more political democratization.
  5. Increase in federal power → Marshall Ct. decisions.
  6. Increase in American nationalism.
  7. Further westward expansion.
The Pony Express

- Between April, 1860 and Nov., 1861.
- Delivered news and mail between St. Louis, MO and San Francisco, CA.
- Took 10 days.
- Replaced by the completion of the trans-continental telegraph line.

IV. Manipulating the Maine Maps

- Maine boundary dispute:
  - St. Lawrence River icebound several months of year:
    - As defensive precaution, British wanted to build a road west from seaport Halifax to Quebec
    - Road would go through disputed territory claimed by Maine
    - Aroostook War threatened to widen into full war

IV. Manipulating the Maine Maps (cont.)

- Britain sent to Washington a nonprofessional diplomat, Lord Ashburton, who established cordial relations with Secretary Webster
  - They agreed to compromise on Maine boundary
    A split-the-difference arrangement:
    - Americans retained 7,000 square miles of 12,000 square miles of wilderness in dispute
    - Britain got less land but won desired Halifax-Quebec route

IV. Manipulating the Maine Maps (cont.)

- Caroline affair patched up by exchange of diplomatic notes
  - Bonus in small print:
    - British, in adjusting U.S.-Canadian boundary farther West, surrendered 6,500 square miles
    - Area later found to contain priceless Mesabi iron ore of Minnesota
Maine Boundary Settlement, 1842

Texas Declaration of Independence

The Republic of Texas

Independence (1836-1845)

Key Figures in Texas Independence, 1836

Sam Houston (1793-1863)

Steven Austin (1793-1836)

Remember the Alamo!
V. The Lone Star of Texas Shines Alone

- Texas’s precarious existence:
  - Mexico:
    - refused to recognize Texas’s independence
    - regarded Lone Star Republic as a province in revolt to be reconquered in future
    - Mexican officials threatened war if U.S.A. ever annexed Texas
  - Threatened by Mexico, Texas maintained costly military defense
  - Texas also negotiated with Britain & France to secure a defensive shield of a protectorate:
    - In 1839 and 1840, Texans concluded treaties with France, Holland, and Belgium.
    - Britain & France interested in an independent Texas to help block further American expansion

V. The Lone Star of Texas Shines Alone (cont.)

- Other foreigners interested in Texas:
  - British abolitionists hoped to end slavery in Texas
  - British merchants regarded Texas as important free-trade area—an offset to tariff-walled United States
  - British manufacturers hoped Texas could produce enough cotton to reduce Britain’s chronic dependence on American fiber
VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon

• Oregon Country:
  – Geography
    • From Rockies to Pacific Ocean, north of California to 54° 40’ (present southern tip of Alaska panhandle)
    • Claimed at one time or another by Spain, Russia, Britain, and the United States
    • Two claimants dropped out of competition:
      – Spain through Florida Treaty of 1819
      – Russia retreated to 54° 40’ line by treaties of 1824 & 1825

VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)

– British claims to Oregon were strong:
  • Especially portion north of Columbia River
  • Based on:
    – Prior discovery and exploration
    – Treaty rights
    – Actual occupation
    – Colonizing agency Hudson’s Bay Company

– American claims to Oregon:
  • Exploration and occupation
  • Captain Robert Gray (1792) stumbled onto Columbia River, which he named after his ship

VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)

– Famed Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806
– Presence of missionaries and other settlers, some of whom reached Willamette River valley
  – Missionaries, in trying to save the soul of the Indians, were instrumental in saving the soil of Oregon for United States
  – They stimulated interest in a faraway domain that many Americans earlier assumed would not be settled for centuries
– Scattered Americans and British pioneers lived peacefully side by side

VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)

– Anglo-American Convention of 1818 (Chap. 12):
  • United States wanted to divide at forty-ninth parallel
  • British wanted Columbia River as dividing line
  • A scheme for peaceful “joint occupation” was adopted, pending future settlement
  • Handful of Americans in Willamette Valley was multiplied in early 1840s by “Oregon fever”

VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)

– Over 2,000 mile Oregon Trail (1846) five thousand Americans had settled south of Columbia River
– British could only muster seven hundred north of Columbia River
  – Actually only a relatively small area was in dispute by 1845:
    – Americans proposed line @ forty-ninth parallel
    – British again offered line at Columbia River
    – Issue now tossed into presidential election of 1844, where it became overshadowed by question of annexing Texas

On the Oregon Trail
Covered Wagons About to Cross a Stream on the Oregon Trail, 1843

Mormon Wagon Train, Utah, 1873

Trails Westward

Overland Emigration to Oregon, California & Utah, 1840–1860

Between 1840 and 1860, more than 250,000 people made the trek westward.

The Doomed Donner Party

April, 1846 – April, 1847

The Doomed Donner Party

James Reed & Wife

Cannibalism!!

- Of the 83 members of the Donner Party, only 45 survived to get to California!
The Oregon Dispute: 54° 40" or Fight!

- By the mid-1840s, "Oregon Fever" was spurred on by the promise of free land.
- The joint British-U.S. occupation ended in 1846.

VI. The Belated Texas Nuptials

- Texas became a leading issue in 1844 presidential campaign:
  - Foes of expansion assailed annexation
  - Southern hotheads cried, "Texas or Disunion"
  - Pro-expansion Democrats under James K. Polk defeated Whigs
  - Lame duck president Tyler interpreted narrow Democratic victory as "mandate" to acquire Texas
  - Tyler deserves credit for shepherding Texas into fold

VI. The Belated Texas Nuptials (cont.)

- Despairing of securing necessary 2/3 vote in Senate for a treaty, Tyler sought annexation by joint resolution
- After spirited debate, resolution passed in 1845, and Texas formally invited to become 28th state
- Mexico angrily charged Americans had despoiled it of Texas
- But clear by 1845 that Mexico would not be able to retake Texas

VI. The Belated Texas Nuptials (cont.)

- By 1845 Lone Star Republic had become a danger spot:
  - Invited foreign intrigue that menaced American people
  - Continued existence of Texas as independent nation threatened to involve United States in wars
  - United States can hardly be accused of haste in achieving annexation

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR: Causes

- Election of 1844
- James K. Polk
- U.S. Annexation of Texas, 1845

President James K. Polk (1845-49)
X. Misunderstandings with Mexico

Faraway California was another worry for Polk:
- Diverse population: Spanish Mexicans; Indians; some “foreigners” (mostly Americans)
- Given time these transplanted Americans might bring California into the Union
- Polk was eager to buy from Mexico
- Mexico owed United States some $3 million for damages to American citizens and their property
- More serious contention was Texas
- Deadlocked with Mexico over Texas’s boundaries

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR: Causes

- Election of 1844
- James K. Polk
- Annexation of Texas, 1845
- Texas boundary dispute
  - Nueces River
  - Rio Grande River
- War (May 13, 1846)

War With Mexico

The annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845 worsened relations between Mexico and the United States, which had already been bad for years.  

The two countries also could not agree on the border between Texas and Mexico.  

The United States placed the border at the Rio Grande, while Mexico claimed it was at the Nueces River, 150 miles farther north.
X. Misunderstandings with Mexico

- Texas wanted boundary at Rio Grande River
- Mexico sought boundary at Nueces River
- Polk careful to keep U.S. troops out of no-man’s-land - 150 mile section between the two “borders”
  - California continued to cause Polk anxiety:
    - Rumors—British wanted to buy or seize California
      - Americans could not accept under Monroe Doctrine
    - Polk dispatched John Slidell to Mexico City (1845):
      - To offer $25 million for California and territory to east
      - Mexico would not even permit Slidell to present his offer

XI. American Blood on American (?) Soil

- Polk decided to force a showdown:
  - January 13, 1846, he ordered 4,000 men:
    - Under General Zachary Taylor to march from Nueces River to Rio Grande hoping for a clash
    - When nothing happened, he informed cabinet (May 9, 1846) that he proposed to declare war because of:
      - Unpaid claims
      - Slidell’s rejection
    - News of bloodshed arrived same night
    - Mexican troops crossed Rio Grande and met Taylor
    - Mexican soldiers attacked some of Taylor’s troops in this disputed area on April 24, 1846.

Some Americans opposed war with Mexico. Abraham Lincoln, a member of Congress, thought Taylor’s troops had been attacked in Mexican territory, meaning there were no grounds for retaliation or war.

Some people, such as antislavery activist Frederick Douglass, feared that expansion into the West would carry slavery with it.

Did Polk provoke war?

- California was imperative in his program
- Mexico would not sell it at any price
- Polk wanted California, so he pushed quarrel to bloody showdown
- Both sides were spoiling for a fight
- Both sides were fired by moral indignation
- Mexicans wanted to fight “Bullies of the North”
- Many Americans sincerely believed Mexico was aggressor
XII. The Mastering of Mexico

• Polk wanted California—not war:
  – When war came, he wanted to fight on a limited scale and then pull out when he captured prize
  – Santa Anna convinced Polk that he would betray Mexico, but he then drove his countrymen to a desperate defense of their soil

Many Americans turned their anger on Mexico, and on May 11, Congress declared war on Mexico.

XII. The Mastering of Mexico (cont.)

• American operations in Southwest & California completely successful: Both General Stephen Kearny and Captain John Frémont had success in West
  – Frémont collaborated with American naval officers and local Americans who hoisted banner of short-lived California Bear Flag Republic

Polk had a three-part plan to win the war with Mexico.

- First, drive Mexican troops out of the disputed territory in Texas north of the Nueces River and secure the Texas border
- Second, seize New Mexico and California
- Third, capture Mexico’s capital, Mexico City

The Bear Flag Republic

The Revolt → June 14, 1846

California Bear Flag Republic

John C. Frémont

The Mexican War (1846-1848)

Map: pg. 374
XII. The Mastering of Mexico (cont.)

– General Taylor defeated Mexicans in several battles and then reached Buena Vista (February 22-23, 1847):
  • Here his 5,000 troops repulsed attack by 20,000 troops under Santa Anna
  • Taylor became “Hero of Buena Vista”
  • Taylor, however, could not defeat Mexico decisively in semi-deserts of northern Mexico
  • Need a crushing blow at enemy’s vitals—Mexico City

General Winfield Scott

General Zachary Taylor at Palo Alto

“Old Rough and Ready”

The Bombardment of Vera Cruz

U.S. Forces Land at Vera Cruz, Mexico, March 9, 1847

XII. The Mastering of Mexico (cont.)

• General Winfield Scott succeeded in battling his way to Mexico City by Sept., 1847
  – One of most brilliant campaigns in U.S. history
  – Scott proved to be most distinguished U.S. general between American Revolution and Civil War
XIII. Fighting Mexico for Peace

- Scott and chief clerk of State Department Nicholas Trist arranged:
  - Armistice with Santa Anna (cost $10,000)
  - Polk ordered Trist home, but he wrote a 65-page letter explaining why he could not come home
  - Trist signed Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, forwarded it to Washington
XIII. Fighting Mexico for Peace (cont.)
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo:
  - Confirmed American title to Texas
  - Yielded enormous area stretching to Oregon, the ocean, embracing California
  - Total expanse was about ⅔ of Mexico
  - United States agreed to pay $15 million for land and to assume claims of its citizen against Mexico (amount = $3,250,000)

XIII. Fight Mexico for Peace (cont.)
- Polk submitted treaty to Senate:
  - Antislavery Whigs in Congress—dubbed “Mexican Whigs” or “Conscience Whigs”—denounced “damnable war”
  - Another peril impended:
    - A swelling group of expansionists clamored for all of Mexico
    - If America had seized it, she would have been saddled with an expensive and vexatious policing problem

XIV. Profit and Loss in Mexico
- As wars go, Mexican War a small one:
  - Cost 13,000 American lives, most by disease
  - Fruits of war were enormous:
    - America’s total expanse was increased by ⅓
    - Proved to be blood-spattered schoolroom for Civil War
    - Campaigns provided priceless experience for army
    - Navy valuable in blockading Mexican ports

XIV. Profit and Loss in Mexico (cont.)
- Marine Corps won new laurels and to this day sings in its stirring hymn about the “Halls of Montezuma”
- Army waged war without defeat and without a major blunder
- Opposing armies emerged with increased respect for each other
- Mexicans never forgot that U.S.A. tore away about ⅓ of their country
- Marked an ugly turning point in relations between United States and Latin America
XIV. Profit and Loss in Mexico (cont.)

- War aroused slavery debate that not stop until Civil War
- David Wilmot of Pennsylvania introduced amendment that slavery should never exist in any territories wrested from Mexico
- Wilmot Proviso never became law, but:
  - Endorsed by legislatures of all but one of free states
  - Came to symbolize burning issue of slavery in territories
- More than any other issue, debate over slavery in new western lands divided North & South
- From perspective of history, opening shots of Mexican War were opening shots of Civil War

Wilmot Proviso, 1846

Provided, territory from that, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any the Republic of Mexico by the United States, by virtue of any treaty which may be negotiated between them, and to the use by the Executive of the moneys herein appropriated, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.

Anti-Catholic Feelings

Results of the Mexican War?

1. The 17-month war cost $100,000,000 and 13,000+ American lives (mostly of disease).
2. New territories were brought into the Union which forced the explosive issue of SLAVERY to the center of national politics.
   * Brought in 1 million sq. mi. of land (incl. TX)
3. These new territories would upset the balance of power between North and South.
4. Created two popular Whig generals who ran for President.
5. Manifest Destiny partially realised.

Gen. Zachary Taylor

- Hero of Mexican War
- Elected President in 1849
- 2nd President to die in office, 1850

First War Fought by Graduates of U.S. Military Academy, West Point

- Robert E. Lee
- Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson
- Ulysses S. Grant
- George G. Meade
- George McClellen
- William T. Sherman
Free Soil Party
Free Soil!
Free Speech!
Free Labor!
Free Men!

- “Barnburners” – discontented northern Democrats.
- Anti-slave members of the Liberty and Whig Parties.
- Opposition to the extension of slavery in the new territories! *WHY?*

### The 1848 Presidential Election Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Electoral Vote</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Percent of Popular Vote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lewis Cass (Dem)</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>1,222,342</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Van Buren (Free Soil)</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>291,263</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary Taylor (Whig)</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1,340,967</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Mexican Cession

- Territory ceded by Mexico to U.S., 1848

### GOLD! At Sutter’s Mill, 1848

John A. Sutter

### California Gold Rush, 1849

49er's
Digging for Gold in California

Two Views of San Francisco, Early 1850s

• By 1860, almost 300,000 people had traveled the Oregon & California Trails to the Pacific coast.

Territorial Growth to 1853

Westward the Course of Empire

Emmanuel Leutze, 1860

Expansionist Young America in the 1850s

Wilmot Proviso, 1846

Provided, territory from that, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any the Republic of Mexico by the United States, by virtue of any treaty which may be negotiated between them, and to the use by the Executive of the moneys herein appropriated, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.

America's Attempted Raids into Latin America

Rep. David Wilmot (D-PA)
**Free Soil Party**

**Free Soil!**
**Free Speech!**
**Free Labor!**
**Free Men!**

**WHY?**
- *Barnburners* – discontented northern Democrats.
- Anti-slavery members of the Whig and Liberty Parties.
- Opposition to the extension of slavery in the new territories

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**III. A War of Words with Britain**

- Anti-British passions:
  - At bottom lay bitter memories of two Anglo-American wars
  - Pro-British Federalists had died out
  - British travelers wrote negatively about American customs in travel books
  - Writings touched off "Third War with England"
  - Fortunately this British-American war fought on paper broadsides; only ink was spilled

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**Sources**
- PBS: The West (Ken Burns) – Archives
- Library of Congress – American Memory Project
- University of Texas - [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/)
- Susan Pojer, "Manifest Destiny" PPT
III. A War of Words with Britain (cont.)

– America a borrowing nation:
  • Expensive canals to dig and railroads to build
  • Britain, with overflowing coffers, was a lending nation
  • During panic of 1837, several states defaulted on bonds or repudiated them altogether

– 1837—short-lived insurrection erupted in Canada
  • Hot-blooded Americans furnished military supplies or volunteered for armed service
  • Washington regime tried to maintain neutrality

III. A War of Words with Britain (cont.)

• But it could not enforce unpopular laws in face of popular opposition.
• Provocative incident on Canadian frontier brought passions to boil in 1837:
  – American steamer, Caroline, was carrying supplies to insurgents across Niagara River
  – Attacked by British and set on fire
  – Craft sank short of falls, but one American was killed
• Unlawful invasion of American soil had alarming aftermaths.

III. A War of Words with Britain (cont.)

– In 1840 a man, McLeod, who confessed to being involved in Caroline raid, was arrested and indicted for murder
– London made clear his execution would mean war
– Fortunately, McLeod freed after establishing alibi
– Tensions renewed in 1841 when British officials in Bahamas offered asylum to 130 Virginian slaves who had rebelled and captured American ship Creole
– Britain had abolished slavery within empire in 1833, raising southern fears that its Caribbean possessions would become Canada-like havens for escaped slaves
VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny

- Two major parties nominated their standard-bearers in May 1844:
  - Whigs selected Henry Clay
  - James Polk (Tennessee) chosen by Democrats—America’s first “dark horse”
  - Campaign an expression of Manifest Destiny:
    • Sense of mission, believing God had “manifestly” destined U.S.A. for career of hemispheric expansion

VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny (cont.)

- Expansionist Democrats:
  • Strongly swayed by Manifest Destiny
  • Platform: “Reannexation of Texas” and “Reoccupation of Oregon” all the way to 54° 40’
  • “All of Oregon or None” (Slogan “Fifty-four forty or fight” not coined until two years later)
  • Condemned Clay as “corrupt bargainer,” dissolute character, and slaveowner

VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny (cont.)

- The Whigs:
  • Countered with their own slogans
  • Spread lie that a gang of Tennessee slaves had been on way to slave market branded with initials J.K.P. (James K. Polk)
  • Clay “straddled” crucial issue of Texas:
    - While he personally favored annexing slaveholding Texas (an appeal to South), he also favored postponement (an appeal to North)

VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny (cont.)

- Election results:
  • Polk nipped Clay 170 to 105 votes in Electoral College
  • 1,338,464 to 1,300,097 in popular vote
  • Clay would have won if he had not lost New York State by a mere 5,000 votes:
    - Tiny antislavery Liberty Party absorbed nearly 16,000 votes that would have gone to Clay
  • Democrats proclaimed they received a mandate from voters to take Texas

IX. Polk the Purposeful

- President James Polk:
  • Not an impressive figure
  • His workload increased by his unwillingness to delegate authority
  • Methodical and hard-working but not brilliant
  • Shrewd, narrow-minded, conscientious, persistent
  • Developed a four-point program, and with remarkable success achieved it completely in less than four years
IX. Polk the Purposeful (cont.)

• Polk’s four-point program:
  – Lower tariff
    • Secretary of Treasury, Robert Walker, devised tariff-for-revenue bill that reduced average rates of Tariff of 1842 from 32% to 25%
    • With strong support from low-tariff southerners, Walker Tariff bill made it through Congress
    • Complaints came from middle states and New England (see Table 17.1)
    • Bill proved to be excellent revenue producer

IX. Polk the Purposeful (cont.)

– Restore independent treasury:
  • Unceremoniously dropped by Whigs in 1841
  • Pro-bank Whigs in Congress raised storm of opposition, but Polk successful in 1846
– Third and fourth points on Polk’s “must list” were acquisition of California and settlement of Oregon dispute (see Map 17.2)

IX. Polk the Purposeful (cont.)

• Settlement of Oregon dispute:
  • "Reoccupation" of "whole" had been promised to northern Democrats in 1844 campaign
  • Southern Democrats, once Texas annexed, cooled off
  • Polk, feeling bound by three offers of his predecessor to London, proposed line at 49°.
  • British anti-expansionists now believed that Columbia River was not St. Lawrence of West
  • Britain in 1846 proposed line at 49°

IX. Polk the Purposeful (cont.)

• Polk threw decision to Senate
• They speedily accepted offer and subsequent treaty
• Satisfaction with Oregon settlement among Americans not unanimous
• Polk, despite all the campaign bluster, got neither "fifty-four forty" nor a fight
• He got something that in the long run was better: a reasonable compromise without a rifle raised
CHRONOLOGY

1837 - Caucasian rebellion and Canadas incident
1838 - Mexican War breaks out over Texas boundary
1840 - Democratic party organized
1841 - Election day: Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas
1842 - Webster-Ashburton Treaty
1844 - Polk elects Clay as "Masseflow Destiny" candidate
1845 - United States annexes Texas
1846 - Walker Treaty
1846 - Treaty of Meat Fort
1847 - Battle of San Antonio
1848 - Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo