



Chapter 2 Expansion and Reform: 1801–1850

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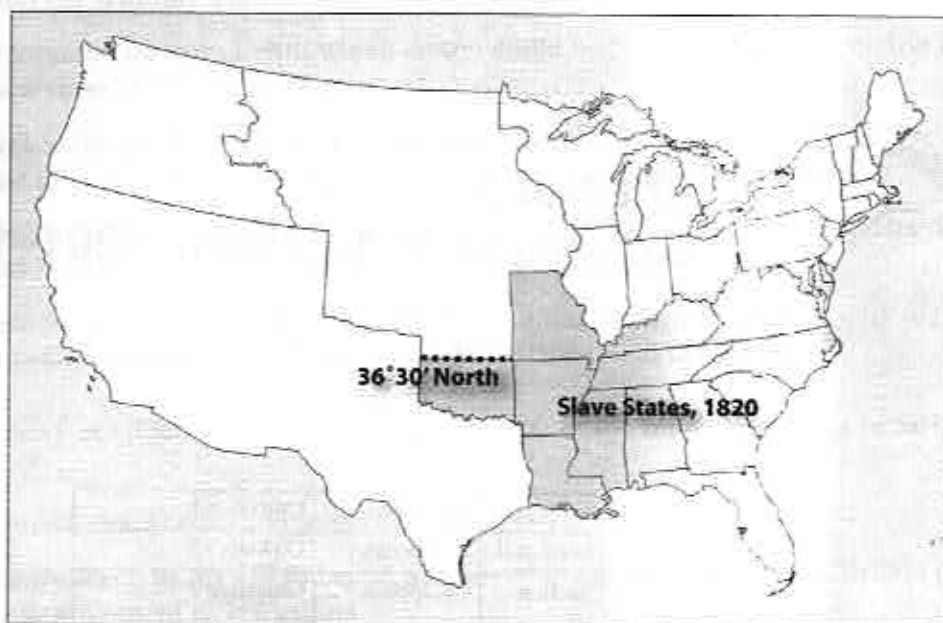
I. THE NATION EXPANDS

Objective 2.01

THE VISION OF WESTERN EXPANSION

THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION

Even before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, President Jefferson had chosen his personal secretary, **Meriwether Lewis** (1774 – 1809), to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis chose **William Clark** (1770 – 1838) to help him lead the expedition that departed from St. Louis in May of 1804. Finally, in November of 1805, the **Lewis and Clark Expedition** reached the Pacific Northwest coast. Many people thought the explorers had died along the way, but the group returned to St. Louis in September of 1806 with valuable information about the Oregon and Louisiana territories. This exploration led to the rapid migration of settlers to the Pacific Northwest. The pathway these settlers followed from Missouri became known as the **Oregon Trail**.



The Missouri Compromise

THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE

One of the most important issues facing the United States as it expanded was slavery. Free northern states opposed the addition of new slave states. Conversely, southern states feared that the addition of free states would leave them at a political disadvantage. In 1819, a debate raged in Congress over Missouri's application for statehood. Slave states and free states were equally represented in the Senate, and Missouri's admission would disrupt the balance of power. Senator Jesse B. Thomas of Illinois proposed a bill calling for the admission of Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. In addition, the southern boundary of Missouri, $36^{\circ}30'$ N latitude, would become a dividing line for any new states admitted to the Union. All new states north of that line would be free states, while those to the south would be slave states. The bill was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Monroe in 1820. It became known as the **Missouri Compromise**, and it was designed to maintain the balance of power between slave and free states in Washington, DC.

US EXPANSION AND THE CHEROKEE

As the United States entered the 1800s, Native American tribes were feeling the effects of US expansion. One such tribe that was prominent in western North Carolina and northern Georgia was the **Cherokee**. The Cherokee had assisted Andrew Jackson in his victory over the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend. They had also adapted their way of life to accommodate white settlement more than any other Native American people. They farmed, owned private land, and some even owned black slaves. One of their most notable leaders, **Sequoyah**, eventually developed a Cherokee alphabet that was used to publish the tribe's own newspaper. When gold was discovered on Cherokee land in Georgia, however, the US government took action to move the tribe and claim their territory for white settlement.

THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1830

In 1830, Congress passed the **Indian Removal Act**. This law authorized the removal of the Cherokee and several other tribes from the southeast United States. Desperate, the Cherokee appealed to the US Supreme Court for help. In the case of *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the Court — led by Chief Justice John Marshall — ruled that the Cherokee had a right to remain on their land and could not be forcibly removed. However, when Georgia's government ignored the court's decision and allowed whites to continue seizing land, President Jackson did nothing to intervene. When the Cherokee appealed to him for help, Jackson responded with his famous quote, "John Marshall has made his decision; let him enforce it." The very people who had saved Jackson at Horseshoe Bend were



Trail of Tears

eventually forced to march 800 miles to reservations in Oklahoma. Over one quarter of the Cherokee people died from disease, starvation, and exposure to the bitter cold during the journey. Their march became known among the Cherokee people as the **Trail of Tears**.

THE WEBSTER-ASHBURTON TREATY

As the 1840s began, the United States once again found itself on the verge of war with Great Britain. This time at issue was the boundary line between the US and Canada. Fortunately, British ambassador Lord Ashburton and US Secretary of State Daniel Webster were able to work out a compromise. The **Webster-Ashburton Treaty** was signed in 1842 and served to establish the United States' northern border with Canada.

TEXAS: INDEPENDENCE AND ANNEXATION

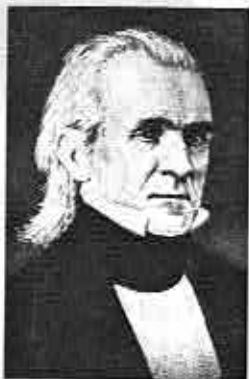
In 1821, Mexico gained independence from Spain. Not long afterwards, **Stephen Austin** (1793 – 1836) led a group of US settlers to Texas, which was now part of the new Mexican nation. In 1834, **General Antonio Santa Anna** (1794 – 1876) assumed power over the Mexican government and tightened his control over US settlers in the region. In response, a Texan named **Sam Houston** (1793 – 1863) led the settlers in a rebellion. On March 2, 1836, a convention of Texas delegates declared the territory to be an independent republic. Santa Anna answered with military force and, on March 6, a small group of Texans took their stand against the Mexican leader at an old mission called **The Alamo**. Despite the Texans' brave resistance, Santa Anna's forces were too strong. Every Texan who fought at the Alamo perished in the battle or was executed shortly after (among them, the famed Davy Crockett of Tennessee).



The Alamo

After a series of battles, the Texans eventually defeated Santa Anna and took him hostage. In exchange for his freedom, the Mexican leader promised to recognize the Republic of Texas and withdraw his forces back below the Rio Grande River. Wanting to become part of the United States, Texas asked to be **annexed** (made part of) by the US. President Jackson was in favor of annexing Texas, but he could not overcome northern opposition. Northerners knew that Texas would be admitted as a slave state. They also feared that, because of its large size, the area might be divided into *several* slave states. Texas remained an independent nation until 1845.

ELECTION OF 1844



James K. Polk

The annexation of Texas was a critical issue in the **election of 1844**. As a result, the Democratic Party split and **James K. Polk** (1795 – 1849) became the first “dark horse” (unexpected winner) presidential nominee in US history. Polk took a strong stand as the Democratic candidate, calling for the annexation of both Texas and Oregon. Meanwhile, Whig candidate Henry Clay tried to avoid the issue. In the election, a number of Whigs from New York cast their votes for James G. Birney of the anti-slavery Liberty party. This cost Clay much needed support and allowed Polk to win the election.

In the spring of 1844, President **John Tyler** (1790 – 1862) failed in his effort to push a treaty through Congress that would have annexed Texas. Polk’s victory, however, convinced the outgoing president that voters wanted Texas to be part of the Union. In the last days of his term, Tyler called for a joint resolution of Congress and proposed admitting Texas to the Union. Congress passed the resolution and admitted Texas as a slave state in 1845.

ANNEXATION OF OREGON

With the question of Texas settled, Polk turned his attention to acquiring Oregon. In 1827, the US and Great Britain had reaffirmed their agreement at the **Convention of 1818** to occupy the Oregon territory jointly. Beginning in 1843, thousands of US settlers moved to Oregon seeking a better life. President Polk approached Britain, arguing that the US had rightful claim to the territory up to 54°40'N latitude. Thus arose the slogan, **54-40, or fight!** Polk’s aggressive tone irritated the British, but they were ready to give up Oregon because the territory was no longer profitable. Furthermore, the United States had become an important consumer of British goods, leading Britain to desire friendly terms with the US. The United States accepted a treaty declaring the forty-ninth parallel as the official boundary and, in 1846, Oregon became a US territory.

THE MEXICAN WAR (1846 – 1848)

Mexico considered the United States’ annexation of Texas to be an act of aggression. This did not deter President Polk who, along with many members of Congress, believed in **Manifest Destiny** (the idea that it was the United States’ divine destiny to expand and possess territory all the way to the Pacific Ocean).

In June of 1845, Polk ordered **General Zachary Taylor** to lead his troops to the Texas border. He also sent John Slidell to Mexico to settle the disputes over the US-Mexico border and negotiate for the purchase of California and New Mexico (the area between Texas and California). After the Mexican president refused to meet with Slidell, Polk ordered Taylor to move into the disputed territory between the Nueces and Río Grande rivers. In response, Mexican troops crossed the Río Grande and attacked



War with Mexico

Taylor's forces. Immediately, Polk demanded that Congress declare war on Mexico proclaiming that the Mexicans had "shed American blood on American soil." Though some representatives disagreed, Congress passed a declaration of war on May 13, 1846. The war was a series of US victories leading up to September 14, 1847, when General Winfield Scott finally marched his troops into Mexico City and forced Mexico to surrender. After months of negotiations, the US and Mexico finally ended the war with the **Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo**, on February 2, 1848. The treaty called for the **Mexican cession** (giving up) of the New Mexico and California territories to the United States in exchange for financial compensation. The acquisition of these territories all but completed the continental expansion envisioned by those who believed in Manifest Destiny.

THE WILMOT PROVISIO

Even before the war with Mexico was over, it became evident that the issue of slavery would once again be a major problem. Victory in the war would mean new territories and the question of whether or not they should allow slavery. In the summer of 1846, a Pennsylvania congressman named David Wilmot put forth what would come to be known as the **Wilmot Proviso**. This *proviso*, or condition, proposed banning slavery from any land purchased from Mexico. It was embraced by northerners but denounced in the South. It was voted down, but it reopened the debate about slavery and exposed serious sectional divisions in the country.

CALIFORNIA BECOMES A STATE

In 1848, gold was discovered just north of Sacramento, California. The following year, gold seekers came from all over the world as part of the **California Gold Rush of 1849**. These new arrivals came to be known as **49ers**, and they served to rapidly increase California's population. This growth produced a need for stable government almost overnight. For this reason, when the debate over slavery prevented Congress from organizing the territory, Californians took matters into their own hands by drafting and approving a state constitution. Finally, thanks to the **Compromise of 1850**, Congress admitted California as a free state on September 9, 1850.

GADSDEN PURCHASE (1853)



In 1853, boundary disputes with Mexico still remained. President Franklin Pierce sent James Gadsden to settle the problem and to purchase land for a southern transcontinental railroad. The **Gadsden Purchase** gave the United States parts of present day New Mexico and Arizona in exchange for \$10 million.

Practice 1: The Nation Expands

- Which of the following positions would President Andrew Jackson have MOST likely agreed with regarding the Cherokee?
 - Their rights must be protected because of the help they gave the United States at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.
 - They should be shown special favor because of their willingness to adapt to the ways of white settlers.
 - Unless the Supreme Court rules otherwise, the Cherokee have no right to land in the southeast and it is lawful for the government to move them.
 - It is the state, and not the Court, that should decide the fate of the Cherokee.
- What did the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850 have in common?
 - They were both meant to deal with the issue of slavery in new US territories.
 - They were designed to allow for the annexation of Texas without upsetting the balance of power between slave and free states.
 - They were both presented as alternatives to the Wilmot Proviso.
 - They were both supported by northern states but rejected by the South.
- What was the Wilmot Proviso and how did it expose sectional differences between the North and South?