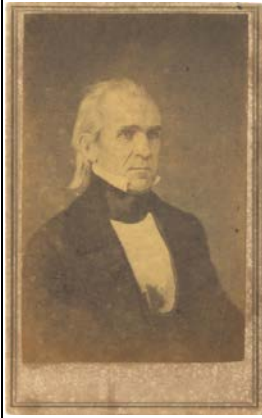


Chapter 141 – James Knox Polk Becomes The Eleventh President

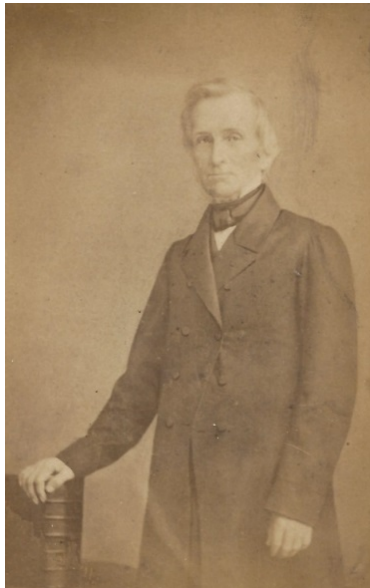


Dates:
1844- March 5, 1845

- Sections:**
- The 1844 Presidential Campaign Turns Nasty
 - James Polk And The Democrats Emerge
 - Personal Profile: James Knox Polk
 - Polk Supports The Texas Annexation In His Inaugural Speech
 - Polk Names His Cabinet

Date: 1844

The 1844 Presidential Campaign Turns Nasty



Theodore Frelinghuysen (1787-1862)

The Democrats are energized by the thought of James Polk -- “another Jackson” -- leading the party back to its historical dominance in Washington.

To insure this outcome, they go on the offensive, first to discredit Henry Clay’s character, with attacks on his well-known reputation for drinking, gambling, blasphemy, womanizing and dueling.

They then turn to undermining him across the South, focusing on three issues.

They claim his “American System” prioritizes federal authority over states’ rights, and results in high tariffs on cotton goods and increases in the national debt. Next comes the assertion that he opposes slavery, has referred to it as a “moral stain,” and may even be in league with the abolitionists. Finally, they zero in on his public statements opposing the annexation of Texas.

Failure to expand into Texas would represent a critical blow to the Southern economy, which by 1844 depends on opening more cotton plantations and selling more bred slaves into the west. Clay’s stance also draws fire from his old nemesis, Andrew Jackson, who says that it demonstrates his military naiveté and threatens the national defense.

In an 1844 letter to John Mason, Secretary of the Navy, the old General raises the specter of an alliance between the Republic of Texas and Great Britain to conquer the entire western half of the continent.

Texas ought to have been & now must be (added), or the safety of the south & west is jeopardized, New Orleans insecure, and our revenue destroyed, by smuggling, & in a war with England, her & Texas united, a British force might in ten days from the Sabine make a lodgment on the Mississippi...possess herself of the command of the navigation of Red River, raise a servile war, capture New Orleans, excite our Indians placed on our western borders to hostilities against us - with these [ancillaries], and her armies from Canada uniting on our west, how much blood & treasure would it take to regain New Orleans, put down the servile & Indian War thus created and supported by Great Britain. There is not an American heart & eye, that should not now be opened to the great security Texas will give to the United States & it ought to be seized with the greatest promptitude.

Discrediting Clay in the North is more challenging, but it too eventually succeeds.

The “Texas question” again plays the leading role in the strategy, with Clay being painted as “unpatriotic” for standing against America’s aspiration to control the entire continent. Those who oppose slavery or its spread to the west are also reminded that Clay, like Polk, is a slave owner. This fact cuts into his support among the “Conscience Whigs.”

For good measure, the Democrats decide to smear Clay’s running mate, Theodore Frelinghuysen. While in the Senate, he earns the nickname of “the Christian statesman,” based on his intense Bible study and support for various Dutch Reformed missions. But he earns Jackson’s wrath for a six hour speech on the floor in 1830 in opposition to the Indian Removal Act. For this transgression, he is tarred during the campaign as an anti-Catholic bigot, and opponent of the separation of church and state.

The Whigs respond in kind.

They characterize Polk as a weak puppet of Jackson, and one who would involve America in an illegitimate and costly war to steal land from Mexico for the purpose of extending slavery into the west.

They also engage in character assassination through political pamphlets which accuse Polk of branding his initials onto the shoulders of forty of his slaves, a total fabrication, and resurrect a rumor that his grandfather, Ezekiel, was a British sympathizer during the Revolutionary War.

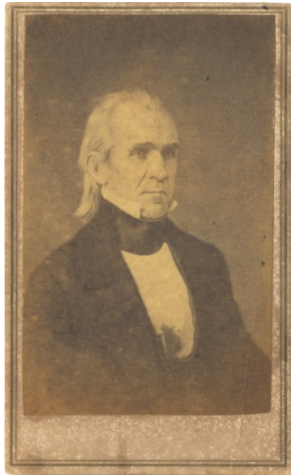
As the race plays out, both candidates are actively engaged.

To the surprise of many, Polk proves to be a crafty politician. He reassures Pennsylvania leaders that his tariff will protect their industries, while downplaying the duties in the South. He convinces Jackson to nudge Tyler out of running as an independent. He announces that he will serve only one term, encouraging future contenders like Cass, Buchanan and Calhoun to get out the Democratic vote.

Clay meanwhile senses the easy victory he anticipated slipping away. He finally realizes that his position on Texas is on the wrong side of emerging public sentiment, but several attempts to walk back his prior opposition fall flat. For many the “Great Compromiser” looks like he is abandoning his principles to win the White House.

Date: November-December 1844

James K. Polk And The Democrats Emerge Victorious



Ballots are cast in the 15th quadrennial election for president between November 1 and December 4, 1844. The total popular vote count exceeds the hotly contested 1840 race and reaches 2.7 million, with just under 80% of all age-eligible citizens participating

Popular Votes Cast For President

Year	Number	% Vs Y-A
1832	1,286,700	+12.1%
1836	1,502,300	+16.8
1840	2,411,808	+60.5
1844	2,701,552	+12.0

James Knox Polk (1795-1849)

When the results are in, the “dark horse” James Polk has won a razor thin victory, with 49.6% of the popular vote to 48.1% for Henry Clay.

1844 Presidential Election Results

1844	Party	Pop Vote	Elect Tot	South	Border	North	West
Polk	Democrat	1,339,494	170	60	7	77	26
Clay	Whig	1,300,004	105	24	23	35	33
Birney	Liberty	62,054	0				
		2,701,552	275	84	30	112	59

Polk loses in both his birth state of North Carolina and his home state of Tennessee, but carries most of the South, along with the Northern states of New York, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and Maine.

Party Power By State

South	1840	1844	Pick-Up
Virginia	Democrat	Democrat	
North Carolina	Whig	Whig	
South Carolina	Democrat	Democrat	
Georgia	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Alabama	Democrat	Democrat	
Mississippi	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Louisiana	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Tennessee	Whig	Whig	
Arkansas	Democrat	Democrat	
Border			
Delaware	Whig	Whig	
Maryland	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Kentucky	Whig	Whig	
North			
New Hampshire	Democrat	Whig	Whig
Vermont	Whig	Whig	
Massachusetts	Whig	Whig	
Rhode Island	Whig	Whig	
Connecticut	Whig	Whig	
New York	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
New Jersey	Whig	Whig	
Pennsylvania	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Ohio	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Maine	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Indiana	Whig	Whig	
Illinois	Democrat	Democrat	
Iowa	Democrat	Democrat	
Michigan	Whig	Democrat	Democrat

Clay's hopes are shattered when he loses New York state by only 5,106 votes. The difference here may have traced to the 15,812 ballots won by James Birney of the abolitionist Liberty Party, a former supporter of Clay. Had the state's 36 electoral votes shifted to Clay, he would have won the presidency in the Electoral College by a margin of 141-134, rather than losing 105-170.

1844 Results In New York State

1844	Party	Pop Vote	Elect Tot
Polk	Democrat	237,588	36
Clay	Whig	232,482	0
Birney	Liberty	15,812	0

The Democrats retain the firm control over the House they've held since the Whig collapse in 1842.

U.S. House Elections

Party	1840	1842	1844
Democrats	98	148	142
Whigs	144	73	79
Native American			6
Other		2	2

They also regain control in the Senate.

U.S. Senate Elections

Party	1840	1842	1844
Democrats	22	23	27
Whigs	29	29	24
Other			1

Date: 1795-1845

Personal Profile: James Knox Polk

James Polk is born in 1795 in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, named after Charlotte, wife of King George III, and famous for being first to publicly declare independence from Great Britain in 1775. His mother descends from the Scottish Presbyterian minister, John Knox, and his father is a lifelong Deist, who refuses to “affirm his faith” at a planned christening event, leaving James unbaptized until his deathbed 53 years later.

Both father and grandfather are outspoken Jefferson men who inculcate states’ rights and anti-Federalist principles early on. Sam Polk is also a savvy businessman, a successful farmer and slave owner, who decides in 1806 to move his family from the eastern piedmont range in NC across the Appalachians and into Tennessee.

Son James is a sickly youth, suffering from stomach ailments and, at age seventeen, a severe case of urinary stones, leading to life-threatening and primitive surgery and leaving him impotent for life. He is home schooled at first, until enrolling at the University of North Carolina in 1816, where he shines as a student and commencement speaker.

After graduation his future is shaped by studying law in Nashville with Felix Grundy, the top criminal lawyer in the state and future US Senator and Attorney General from 1838-40 in Van Buren’s cabinet. Grundy prepares him to pass the bar in 1820 and introduces him to the inner workings of the state legislature and the political arena that quickly captures his imagination.

His law practice flourishes and his income soars. He rounds out his credentials by joining the state militia and becoming a freemason. He wins a seat in the US House in 1825 as a strong supporter of Andrew Jackson, a friend of his father and grandfather alike, and his future political mentor.

Polk remains in the US House for seven consecutive terms, fighting for Jacksonian principles and for his legislative agenda as President, including his controversial war with the U.S. Bank. In his last four years he is elected Speaker of the House, and at age forty-three is widely regarded as a future presidential candidate.

In 1838 he decides to run for Governor of Tennessee against Newton Cannon, a Whig and fierce opponent of Jackson, seeking his third consecutive term in the office. Polk wins a very narrow 51-49% victory, and is sitting in the Governor's chair when the fall-out from the Bank Panic of 1837 rocks the nation and his home state.

After a frustrating first term, Polk runs again in 1840, at the same time the electorate decides to oust his party leader, Martin Van Buren, in favor of the first Whig President, Harrison. Polk loses 53-47%. In 1842, he tries again, and loses again by the same margin.

What appeared to Polk in 1840 to have been a soaring political future has fallen flat in 1844 as he heads off to the Democratic Party nominating convention in Baltimore.

There, after eight stalemated ballots, lightning strikes him as "the dark-horse nominee."

Date: March 5, 1845

Polk Supports The Texas Annexation In His Inaugural Speech

Polk is sworn in as President by Chief Justice Roger Taney on March 5, 1845, a rain-filled day in DC. At 49 years of age, he is the youngest man yet to hold the office. His inaugural address to a crowd gathered on the east side of the Capitol opens with obligatory appreciation for his election victory.

Fellow-Citizens: Without solicitation on my part, I have been chosen by the free and voluntary suffrages of my countrymen to the most honorable and most responsible office on earth...I am deeply impressed with gratitude for the confidence reposed in me. Honored with this distinguished consideration at an earlier period of life than any of my predecessors.

It segues to the principles Polk intends to follow in office, beginning with a classical restatement of Jefferson's Tenth Amendment call for limitations on the power of the Federal government over the States, to avoid "unfortunate collisions" which could threaten the Union.

It will be my first care to administer the Government in the true spirit of (the Constitution), and to assume no powers not expressly granted or clearly implied in its terms...(to avoid) those unfortunate collisions between the Federal and State authorities which have occasionally so much disturbed the harmony of our system and even threatened the perpetuity of our glorious Union..."To the States, respectively, or to the people" have been reserved "the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the States." Each State is a complete sovereignty within the sphere of its reserved powers.

While the Constitution calls for “majority rules,” it also protects the rights of the minorities against acts of oppression.

By the theory of our Government majorities rule, but this right is not an arbitrary or unlimited one It is a right to be exercised in subordination to the Constitution and in conformity to it. One great object of the Constitution was to restrain majorities from oppressing minorities or encroaching upon their just rights. Minorities have a right to appeal to the Constitution as a shield against such oppression. The inestimable value of our Federal Union is felt and acknowledged by all.

An example he cites is the Tariff, where he will oppose high “protective” rates benefiting some businesses or regions at the expense of others.

One of the difficulties which we have had to encounter in the practical administration of the Government consists in the adjustment of our revenue laws and the levy of the taxes necessary for the support of Government. In the general proposition that no more money shall be collected than the necessities of an economical administration shall require all parties seem to acquiesce. Nor does there seem to be any material difference of opinion as to the absence of right in the Government to tax one section of country, or one class of citizens, or one occupation, for the mere profit of another.

I have also declared... that I was "opposed to a tariff for protection merely, and not for revenue." ... To reverse this principle and make protection the object and revenue the incident would be to inflict manifest injustice upon all other than the protected interests.

Polk promises to run a frugal administration and avoid federal debt.

A national debt has become almost an institution of European monarchies.... Such a system is incompatible with the ends for which our republican Government was instituted... Ours was intended to be a plain and frugal government, and I shall regard it to be my duty to recommend to Congress and, as far as the Executive is concerned, to enforce by all the means within my power the strictest economy in the expenditure of the public money which may be compatible with the public interests.

True to Democratic Party doctrine, he will oppose a private national bank.

We need no national banks or other extraneous institutions planted around the Government to control or strengthen it in opposition to the will of its authors. Experience has taught us how unnecessary they are as auxiliaries of the public authorities--how impotent for good and how powerful for mischief.

He addresses growing “agitation” over slavery, never overtly mentioning the word as had Van Buren in 1836, but instead citing calls by one section for “the destruction of domestic institutions existing in other sections...which were recognized and protected in the Constitution.”

It is a source of deep regret that in some sections of our country misguided persons have occasionally indulged in schemes and agitations whose object is the destruction of domestic institutions existing in other sections--institutions which existed at the adoption of the Constitution and were recognized and protected by it. All must see that if it were possible for them to be successful in attaining their object the dissolution of the Union and the consequent destruction of our happy form of government must speedily follow.

His policy will be to tamp down such “sectional jealousies and heartburnings” which could lead to disunion. The “patriotic sentiment” he quotes is from Andrew Jackson’s famous toast vs. John Calhoun in 1832.

...Sectional jealousies and heartburnings must be discountenanced, and all should remember that they are members of the same political family, having a common destiny... Every lover of his country must shudder at the thought of the possibility of its dissolution, and will be ready to adopt the patriotic sentiment, "Our Federal Union--it must be preserved."

When it comes to foreign affairs, they are the province of the national government.

To the Government of the United States has been intrusted the exclusive management of our foreign affairs...In the management of our foreign relations it will be my aim to observe a careful respect for the rights of other nations, while our own will be the subject of constant watchfulness

And here he focuses on the annexation of Texas, which will lead to the war with Mexico and become the overarching focus of his administration. He begins by asserting that Texas was a part of the Louisiana Purchase, then “unwisely ceded” in the 1819 Adams-Onis Treaty to Spain, and now is simply wishing to rejoin the United States.

The Republic of Texas has made known her desire to come into our Union, to form a part of our Confederacy and enjoy with us the blessings of liberty secured and guaranteed by our Constitution. Texas was once a part of our country--was unwisely ceded away to a foreign power--is now independent, and possesses an undoubted right to dispose of a part or the whole of her territory and to merge her sovereignty as a separate and independent state in ours. I congratulate my country that by an act of the late Congress of the United States the assent of this Government has been given to the reunion, and it only remains for the two countries to agree upon the terms to consummate an object so important to both.

As an independent Republic, it also has the perfect right to take this action. The annexation is not a conquest, simply a matter of free choice by the residents.

I regard the question of annexation as belonging exclusively to the United States and Texas. They are independent powers competent to contract, and foreign nations have no right to interfere with them or to take exceptions to their reunion.... Foreign powers should therefore look on the annexation of Texas to the United States not as the conquest of a nation seeking to extend her dominions by arms and violence, but as the peaceful acquisition of a territory once her own, by

adding another member to our confederation, with the consent of that member, thereby diminishing the chances of war and opening to them new and ever-increasing markets for their products.

To cement his argument, he raises Jackson's specter of a "foreign nation more powerful than Texas" taking control of the Republic and of the entire Southwest.

None can one fail to see the danger to our safety and future peace if Texas remains an independent state or becomes an ally or dependency of some foreign nation more powerful than herself. Is there one among our citizens who would not prefer perpetual peace with Texas to occasional wars, which so often occur between bordering independent nations?

Bringing Texas into the Union will be an immediate priority.

To Texas the reunion is important, because the strong protecting arm of our Government would be extended over her, and the vast resources of her fertile soil and genial climate would be speedily developed, while the safety of New Orleans and of our whole southwestern frontier against hostile aggression, as well as the interests of the whole Union, would be promoted by it....I shall on the broad principle which formed the basis and produced the adoption of our Constitution, and not in any narrow spirit of sectional policy, endeavor by all Constitutional, honorable, and appropriate means to consummate the expressed will of the people and Government of the United States by the re-annexation of Texas to our Union at the earliest practicable period.

With regard to contested territory further west, he asserts that America has "clear and unquestionable" rights to the entire Oregon country land, already occupied by our settlers.

Nor will it become in a less degree my duty to assert and maintain by all Constitutional means the right of the United States to that portion of our territory which lies beyond the Rocky Mountains. Our title to the country of the Oregon is "clear and unquestionable," and already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it with their wives and children.

In neither the case of Texas nor of Oregon does he threaten warfare against Mexico or Britain – but both nations are implicitly put on notice by his contentions.

Polk ends his speech with the standard invocation of the Divine Being to watch over the United States.

Confidently relying upon the aid and assistance of the coordinate departments of the Government in conducting our public affairs, I enter upon the discharge of the high duties which have been assigned me by the people, again humbly supplicating that Divine Being who has watched over and protected our beloved country from its infancy to the present hour to continue His gracious benedictions upon us, that we may continue to be a prosperous and happy people.

What comes next is one of the most consequential presidential terms in American history.

Date: March 1845

Polk Names His Cabinet

Shortly after his election victory, Polk meets with Andrew Jackson. Among the topics discussed is the formation of his cabinet, where he hopes to avoid the many pitfalls the old General experienced with connivers like John C. Calhoun, the sitting Secretary of State under Tyler. Polk eventually offers Calhoun the job of Ambassador to Britain, but he turns it down to return to the Senate, as self-styled “defender of the South.”

In the end Polk names six men, all lawyers, save for Bancroft, his choice for the Navy post.

While he fully intends to oversee foreign affairs on his own, he chooses the Senator from Pennsylvania, James Buchanan, a twenty year veteran of Congress, as his Secretary of State. Buchanan soon proves troublesome, and Polk offers to appoint him to the Supreme Court when Justice Henry Baldwin dies, but Buchanan declines, wanting to stay put and try to succeed Polk after his promised single term is up.

For Treasury he picks Senator Robert J. Walker of Mississippi, whose early adulthood is in Pennsylvania, before moving South to build a successful business career speculating in land, cotton and slaves. Walker is a passionate defender of slavery and a straight Jacksonian, including aversion to any talk of dissolving the Union.

Secretary of War, William Marcy, at age fifty-eight, is the oldest member of the cabinet. His military credentials trace to combat experience in Canada as a militia captain early in the War of 1812. He then becomes the consummate New York politician, a member of the Albany Regency, Van Buren’s patronage machine, and coiner of the phrase, “to the victors belong the spoils.” He wins three elections at New York Governor before losing in 1838 to Henry Seward and falling out with Van Buren, who warns Polk not to name him, and is offended when his advice is ignored.

Tyler’s Secretary of the Navy, John Mason of Virginia, is retained by Polk, but in the position of Attorney General. His legal training traces to the famed Tapping Reed School, and his public service includes three years as a district court judge. His political history includes three terms in the U.S House. He is a Southern planter and a life-long backer of Jackson and Van Buren.

The only non-lawyer in the cabinet is George Bancroft, a Massachusetts’ man who earns a PhD in history from the University of Gottingen, and teaches Greek at Harvard College. He ventures into the political realm in 1837 when Van Buren appoints him Customs Collector for the port of Boston. He loses a run for Massachusetts’ Governor in 1844, collecting only 41% of the vote, and is an opponent of slavery. But he favors the Texas Annexation and is a Northern Democrat who eventually comes out for Polk at the critical moment in the 1844 nominating convention.

Lastly Polk names his long-term Tennessee friend and advisor, Cave Johnson, as the new Postmaster General. He is a four-time member of the U.S House, Polk’s campaign manager during his run for the White House, and the “fixer” of problems throughout the term.

James Knox Polk's Cabinet

Position	Name	Home State
Secretary of State	James Buchanan	Pennsylvania
Secretary of Treasury	Robert Walker	Mississippi
Secretary of War	William Marcy	New York
Attorney General	John Mason	Virginia
Secretary of Navy	George Bancroft	Massachusetts
Postmaster General	Cave Johnson	Tennessee

Four of his six appointees will serve all four years. Mason will switch back to his old position as Secretary of the Navy when Bancroft departs. His Attorney General post will go to Nathan Clifford and then Isaac Toucey.

Chapter 142 – The Republic Of Texas Is Annexed



Dates:
December 1844 –
March 1845

Sections:

- The Lame Duck Congress Again Debates The Texas Question
- The Texas Annexation Bill Is Finally Approved
- A Small Minority Resist The Annexation Exists As Imperialistic

Date: December 1844 – February 1845

The Lame Duck Congress Again Debates The Texas Question

Polk’s aggressive stance on the annexation of Texas has much to do with his election victory – and he hopes that Congress will authorize its go-ahead by the time he is sworn in.

But complexities abound, not the least of which is to clarify the exact territorial boundaries being claimed by the Texans. At one extreme, “Imperial Texas” encompasses a huge swath of land from the Rio Grande River in the South to a northern tip in later day Wyoming, and extending west into later day New Mexico.

Meanwhile there is the much smaller land mass actually occupied by the Republic, sandwiched between two rivers, on the north and east, the Arkansas, on the south and west, the Rio Grande.

Both “claims” regarding the actual Texas boundaries are hotly disputed by the Government of Mexico.

The debate over annexation is taken up by the 28th Congress in its lame duck session, which opens in December 1844, with Tyler still in the White House and Calhoun as Secretary of State.



Map of Texas Proper vs. The Claimed Territory

While their Annexation Treaty was rejected six months earlier, both are convinced by the election results that public opinion now favors approval. To make passage easier this time, they abandon the prior attempt to approve a “treaty” with Mexico – needing a 2/3rd majority in the Senate – and instead go for a standard legislative bill, requiring only a simple majority.

In the House, however, efforts to shape a final bill are stalled over a host of issues, including: final “boundary definitions;” whether Texas will become a territory or a state; its “status” regarding slavery; and how its accumulated debts will be handled.

On January 13, 1845, a proposed solution is offered by Milton Brown, a Tennessee Whig, who studies law under Polk’s mentor, Felix Grundy, before becoming a leader among Southern Whigs, and a consistent thorn in the side of the

Democrats. Brown argues in favor of immediately annexing the generally accepted, “narrow borders” of the Texas Republic, and holding over the broader land claims until Polk is in office.

His proposal involves four points:

1. Act now to annex the existing Republic of Texas land, and immediately grant it status as a slave state.
2. Assign all acreage to the state along with responsibility for any outstanding debts.
3. Delay resolution over the “claimed land” until further U.S. treaty negotiations with Mexico can occur.
4. Divide up any additional land acquired in the treaty negotiations into four more new states.

Brown’s plan to create additional slave states around Texas draws immediate fire, especially from the two leading Whig abolitionists in the House, JQ Adams and Joshua Giddings. The Ohioan’s remarks are particularly scathing. He says the annexation is not about patriotism; rather opening new slave markets to increase Southern wealth.

Texas is engaged in a war with Mexico and wants us to fight her battles...and a portion of this House say, we will do it, if, by that means, we can keep up slavery in Texas and thereby furnish a market for our slave-breeding states to sell their surplus population.

After further debate, however, Brown’s bill carries the House on January 25, 1845 by a 120-98 margin, decided along party, not regional, lines – with the vast majority of Democrats in favor and Whigs opposed.

The bill now moves to the Senate where it faces an even greater challenge, for two reasons: first, the Whigs still hold a majority during the lame duck session; and second, only six months ago, the powerful Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, opposed Tyler’s treaty and convinced seven other Democrats to also vote no.

Benton is sixty-two years old in 1845, a volatile figure that permanently shatters Andrew Jackson’s left arm in an 1813 duel, before reconciling with him. From then on, he becomes a leading force in Congress for passing the General’s legislation, especially around banking and hard money – where he earns the nickname, “Old Bullion.” Although a fierce “expansionist” – and father-in-law of the western explorer, John Fremont – his moral compass remains uncomfortable with any open-ended land grab from Mexico. Likewise his beliefs about slavery are evolving, especially around the wisdom of spreading it further into new states. This hesitancy will eventually cause Missouri voters to oust him in 1851.

But with Polk about to be in the White House, Benton changes his mind on Texas and decides to support the annexation. He calls for the existing Texas land (“narrow borders”) to be admitted immediately as a state, while any added land to become a territory, with “boundary and slavery issues” to be decided later by a five man commission set up by Polk. He feels that by delaying final calls on “slave vs. free” status for any other new states, more Northern Democrats will support the annexation.

Meanwhile Calhoun and his hard core faction in the Senate are lobbying for the broadest Texas borders, with all other land acquired being open to slavery right away.

Date: February 28, 1845

The Texas Annexation Bill Is Finally Approved



Map Of The Eventual State Of Texas Bordered By The Rio Grande River

At this point, Polk is frustrated by the lack of decisive action in the Senate. A possible solution comes from his soon-to-be Treasury Secretary, Senator Robert Walker of Mississippi, who proposes a combination of Brown’s plan to immediately annex existing Texas (“narrow borders”) along with Benton’s plan to delay closure on the broader “claimed lands” until later.

Benton signs on for this idea, believing, incorrectly, that Polk will be cautious in dealing with Mexico over “claimed land” conflicts, and on slavery-related issues. In turn, he whips all 25 Democrats into supporting the bill.

The Whigs, with 27 votes to cast, still threaten to defeat the annexation until two defectors from slave-holding states -- the Maryland Senator, William Merrick, and the Louisiana man, Henry Johnson – swing the balance in favor of passage – 27 aye vs. 25 nay.

Senate Vote On Texas Annexation Bill: February 28, 1845

Region	Dems-Yes	Dems-No	Whigs-Yes	Whigs-No
Northeast	8	0	0	10
Northwest	5	0	0	2
Border	3	0	1	5
Southeast	4	0	0	4
Southwest	5	0	1	4
Total	25	0	2	25

Note: Northwest = Ohio, Indiana, Mich, IL; Southwest = TN, Ala, Miss, La, Ark

Aside from giving Polk the go-ahead to secure Texas, the annexation votes also shows that the Congress remains split along party lines – Democrats vs. Whigs – rather than along sectional/slavery lines – South vs. North.

Analysis Of Texas Annexation Vote

Status	Yes	No
Democrats	25	0
Whigs	2	25
South States	14	13
North States	17	17

Surprisingly in supporting the annexation, the North also goes along with handing the South a momentary two state advantage in the balance of voting power in the Senate.

Post-Texas Admission

Status	Count
South/Slave States	17
North/Free States	15

On March 1, 1845, John Tyler signs the final Annexation bill into law.

The next step in the Texas scenario now belongs to a response from the Mexican government.

Date: March 1, 1845

Sidebar: Final Texas Annexation Bill Calling For Popular Sovereignty Over Slavery

28th Congress Second Session. Joint Resolution for annexing Texas to the United States.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress doth consent that the territory properly included within, and rightfully belonging to the Republic of Texas, may be erected into a new state, to be called the state of Texas, with a republican form of government, to be adopted by the people of said republic, by deputies in Convention assembled, with the consent of the existing government, in order that the same may be admitted as one of the states of this Union.

And be it further resolved, That the foregoing consent of Congress is given upon the following conditions, and with the following guarantees, to wit:

First-said state to be formed, subject to the adjustment by this government of all questions of boundary that may arise with other governments; and the constitution thereof, with the proper evidence of its adoption by the people of said republic of Texas, shall be transmitted to the President of the United States, to be laid before Congress for its final action, on or before the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and forty-six.

Second-said state, when admitted into the Union, after ceding to the United States all public edifices, fortifications, barracks, ports and harbors, navy and navy-yards, docks, magazines, arms, armaments, and all other property and means pertaining to the public defence belonging to said republic of Texas, shall retain all the public funds, debts, taxes, and dues of every kind which may belong to or be due and owing said republic; and shall also retain all the vacant and unappropriated lands lying within its limits, to be applied to the payment of the debts and liabilities of said republic of Texas; and the residue of said lands, after discharging said debts and liabilities, to be disposed of as said state may direct; but in no event are said debts and liabilities to become a charge upon the government of the United States.

Third- New states, of convenient size, not exceeding four in number, in addition to said state of Texas, and having sufficient population, may hereafter, by the consent of said state, be formed out of the territory thereof, which shall be entitled to admission under the provisions of the federal constitution. And such states as may be formed out of that portion of said territory lying south of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes north latitude, commonly known as the Missouri compromise line, shall be admitted into the Union with or without slavery, as the people of each state asking admission may desire. And in such state or states as shall be formed out of said territory north of said Missouri compromise line, slavery, or involuntary servitude, (except for crime,) shall be prohibited.

And be it further resolved, That if the President of the United States shall in his judgment and discretion deem it most advisable, instead of proceeding to submit the foregoing resolution to the Republic of Texas, as an overture on the part of the United States for admission, to negotiate with that Republic; then, Be it resolved, that a state, to be formed out of the present Republic of Texas, with suitable extent and boundaries, and with two representatives in Congress, until the next apportionment of representation, shall be admitted into the Union, by virtue of this act, on an equal footing with the existing states, as soon as the terms and conditions of such admission, and the cession of the remaining Texan territory to the United States shall be agreed upon by the governments of Texas and the United States: And that the sum of one hundred thousand dollars be, and the same is hereby, appropriated to defray the expenses of missions and negotiations, to agree upon the terms of said admission and cession, either by treaty to be submitted to the Senate, or by articles to be submitted to the two Houses of Congress, as the President may direct.

J W JONES

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

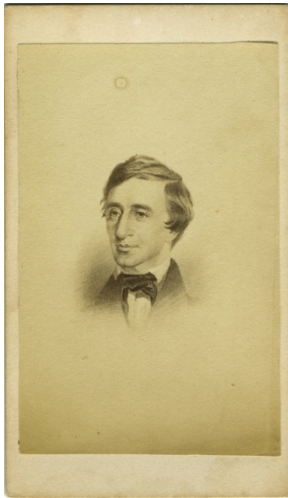
WILLIE P. MANGUM

President, pro tempore, of the Senate.
Approv'd March 1. 1845
JOHN TYLER

Note: The Texas legislature previously approves the annexation and a constitution on Oct 13, 1845.

Date: May 1845

A Small Minority Resist The Annexation Exists As Imperialistic



Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Despite the public popularity behind adding Texas, some Americans are troubled by what they see as Polk's imperialistic actions.

The abolitionist Lloyd Garrison calls the Texas annexation "the greatest crime of our age."

The New England transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau, refuses to pay his \$1 Massachusetts's poll tax in protest, and spends a night in jail. While released the next day, this experience leads to his 1849 treatise on "Civil Disobedience," where he poses questions of conscience that resonate with time.

Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator?

How does it become a man to behave toward this American government to-day? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also.

It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong?

Ohio congressman Joshua Giddings expresses his conscientious objections in no uncertain terms:

War, with all its horrors and its devastation of public morals, is infinitely preferable to a supine, inactive submission to the slaveholding power that is to control this nation if left in its present situation.

But these are the predictable abolitionist voices of protest – hardly enough to derail the momentum on Polk's side.

Chapter 143 – War Breaks Out With Mexico

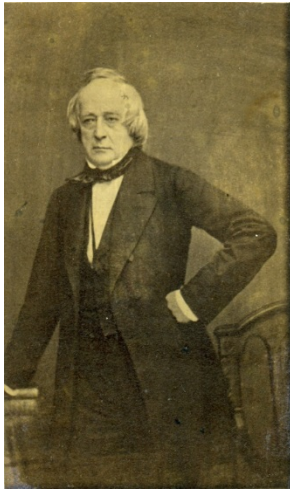


Dates:
March 6, 1845 –
May 9, 1846

- Sections:**
- An Angry Mexico Breaks Relations But Then Opens The Door To Negotiations
 - Treaty Talks Stall And Shots Are Fired Along The Border
 - Congress Declares War On Mexico
 - Polk Organizes His Forces As The Conflict Begins
 - The Opening Battle For Fort Texas
 - Taylor Wins His First Victories At Palo Alto And Resaca De La Palma

Date: March 6, 1845 – November 10, 1845

An Angry Mexico Breaks Relations But Then Opens The Door To Negotiations



John Slidell (1793-1871)

The Mexican government is predictably outraged by U.S. passage of the March 1, 1845 Annexation bill, and doubly so because it involves not only Texas proper (north and west of the Nueces River), but also another huge area of “claimed land” south to the Rio Grande.

They signal their anger on March 6, 1845, two days after Polk’s inauguration, by recalling their minister and severing diplomatic relations with Washington.

Anticipating possible hostilities, the President in May 1845 sends General Zachary Taylor and 2,400 troops to the Nueces River border of Texas “for defensive purposes.”

When Polk’s long-time mentor, Andrew Jackson, dies on June 8, 1845 at age 78, in Nashville, “Young Hickory” is left to stand on his own amidst the controversies.

Animosity toward Mexico builds into the summer, with public sentiment in favor of expansion further spurred by the journalist John L. O’Sullivan whose *Democratic Review* continues to assert that America’s “manifest destiny (is) to overspread the continent:”

It is now time for the opposition to the Annexation of Texas to cease, (for) our manifest destiny (is) to overspread the continent for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.

The strained relations continue until October, when Mexican President Jose Herrera, who hopes to avoid war, signals that he is willing to engage in talks about border issues, by which he means the original

seizure of the Texas Republic. Polk seizes upon this apparent “opening” to not only resolve the “claimed land” borders to the Rio Grande, but also to explore Mexico’s willingness to part with additional territory west to California.

Louisiana Senator John Slidell is chosen by Polk as Minister to Mexico on November 10, and is sent on a mission to negotiate a trade of land for money – the Rio Grande border in exchange for forgiving a \$3.5 million Mexican debt owed the U.S., the New Mexico territory for \$5 million, and the ports of San Francisco and Monterrey for another \$20 million.

He is also directed to inform Herrera that the U.S. would intervene in any move by Mexico to sell this land to a foreign power, such as Britain or France.

Date: November 29, 1845 – April 24, 1846

Treaty Talks Stall And Shots Are Fired Along The Border



President of Mexico
Mariano Paredes

On November 29, 1845, Slidell arrives at the gulf port of Veracruz, ready to engage Herrera in Mexico City.

But Herrera’s tenure in office is about to end, as the hawkish General Mariano Paredes, who had previously ousted Santa Anna, marches on the capitol and takes power on December 30.

Slidell is now left in a holding pattern, waiting to learn Paredes stance on the border issues.

Polk, however, is not in a waiting mood.

When news of Paredes stalling tactics reach him on January 12, 1846, he orders Taylor’s forces to advance further southwest from the Nueces line, and across disputed land to the east bank of the Rio Grande.

Paredes fires back by refusing to accept Slidell’s credentials as a diplomat. After standing idly by for over three months, the treaty mission officially ends in March 1846.



Map Showing Matamoros Just South Of The Rio Grande

Meanwhile Taylor’s troops, now 3,500 men strong, are strung out along the north bank of the Rio Grande opposite the town of Matamoros, on the eastern side of the river.

On April 24, 1846, they are attacked by Mexican forces, with sixteen Americans killed in action.

Date: May 8 - May 13, 1846

Congress Declares War On Mexico

On May 8, Slidell is back in Washington briefing Polk and his cabinet on his failed mission to Mexico City.

The President finds “ample cause for war” in Parades’ treatment of Slidell, and is in the process of drafting a message to congress, when word reaches him that fighting has already broken out. Polk responds by sending up a declaration of war to Congress on May 13, confident that any hold-outs will now be ready to act.

His assessment proves right, and his request quickly passes the Senate by 40-2 and the House by 174-14. The only declared opponents at that moment are a small cluster of House Whigs led by JQ Adams, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, and Jacob Brinkerhoff of Ohio who join the avowed abolitionist Joshua Giddings in labeling the conflict an “aggressive, unholy, unjust war.”

Date: May 1846

Polk Organizes His Forces As The Conflict Begins



U.S. Military Academy At West Point

On the day war with Mexico is declared, America’s military force is anemic.

Despite its actual and often anticipated conflicts with Britain, the notion of a large standing army is still seen by many as a potential threat to preserving the nation’s democracy. Should war break out, the fighting is to be done by a volunteer militia, led by a small Regular Army corps.

Officers for the army corps are trained since 1802 at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY. But the academy is modestly funded, with a total of only 59 graduates in the entire renowned class of 1846.

Meanwhile the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, has just opened its doors on October 10, 1845, as the brainchild of George Bancroft, Polk’s Secretary of the Navy.

On May 13, 1846, muster for the Regular Army stands at a mere 6,562 men comprising 14 regiments, with eight infantry, four artillery and two dragoons (mounted troops). To bolster this count, Polk asks Congress to fund an additional 50,000 volunteers.

On top of the need for more volunteers, Polk faces another challenge in deciding who should command his expeditionary army.

The obvious choice as overall leader is Major General Winfield Scott, the ranking officer in the army since his June 1841 promotion. Scott is 59 years old when war is declared and has served his country since 1809. He becomes a Brigadier General at twenty-seven after being severely wounded at Lundy's Lane in the War of 1812. From there he is called upon by one president after another to oversee any and all military crises.

Polk's reservations about naming Scott to lead the troops in Mexico are political in nature.

While the imposing 6 foot 5 inch tall general grows up on a Virginia plantation, he is an outspoken critic of slavery and a Whig who has already been considered for the presidency in 1840, before the nomination goes to William Henry Harrison. As such Polk views him more as a political competitor than a military subordinate.

Given this, Polk decides to leave Brigadier General Zachary Taylor in command, since he is already in action on the Rio Grande and, unlike Scott, professes no interest in politics, at least so far.

Date: May 3-8, 1846

The Opening Battle For Fort Texas

As the war begins, Taylor's initial strategy is two-fold:

- Meet and defeat the Mexican forces at the southern tip of the Rio Grande, and then move inland to the immediate west; and
- Send troops to occupy the northern provinces of New Mexico and Alto California so these can become U.S. territory when the conflict is over.



Map Showing Point Isabel, Ft. Texas And Matamoros

The hard fighting is under way for ten days before the official May 13 declaration passes Congress.

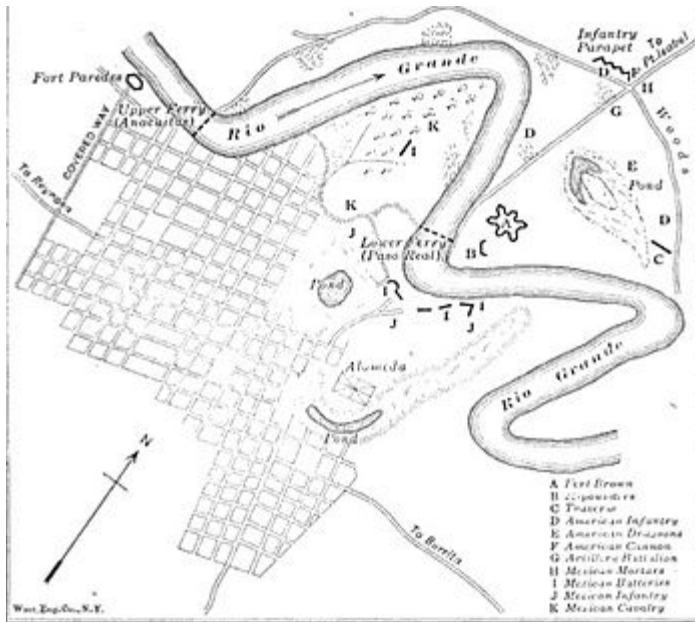
The first objective for the Mexicans is a star-shaped earthen defense outpost that Taylor's troops have built on the east side of the Rio Grande. It is christened Ft. Texas, and later re-named Ft. Brown, after the heroic major who falls there. It is occupied by only 500 U.S. troops, and General Mariano Avista begins to shell it on May 3 from his side of the river in Matamoros. He then advances across the river, surrounds the fort, and begins an all-out siege.



After five days of steady bombardment, the fort is still holding out, when Taylor, stationed 22 miles away to the east at Fort Isabel, sets out with 2200 men and 150 wagons to relieve the pressure.

General Avista hears of the movement and pivots the troops he has north of Ft. Texas, heading out along the Point Isabel Road to intercept Taylor.

General Mariano Arista (1802-1855)



Map Showing The Star-Shaped Ft. Texas North Of The Rio Grande

Date: May 8-9, 1846

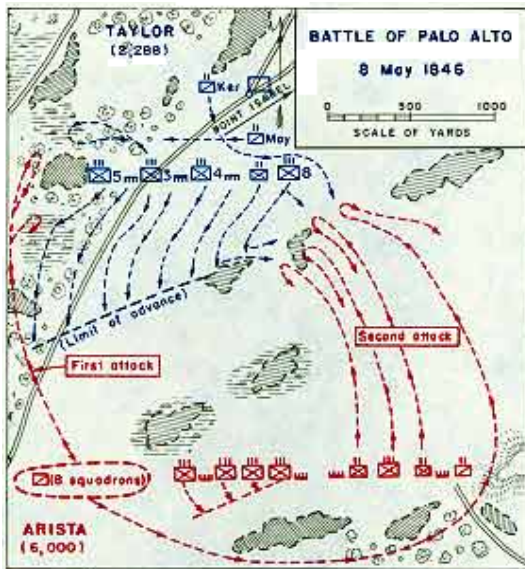
Taylor Wins His First Victories At Palo Alto And Resaca De La Palma

Taylor is outnumbered by Avista – on the order of two to one -- when the armies meet on May 8 on an open plain bordering the high chaparral, or shrub land, known as Palo Alto.

The action is particularly bloody, since neither side entrenches and there are no natural walls or fences to provide protection from artillery fire.

Over a five hour period, repeated charges by the Mexican infantry and dragoons are repulsed by the American’s “flying artillery,” lightweight cannon with exploding shells maneuvered by horses to critical

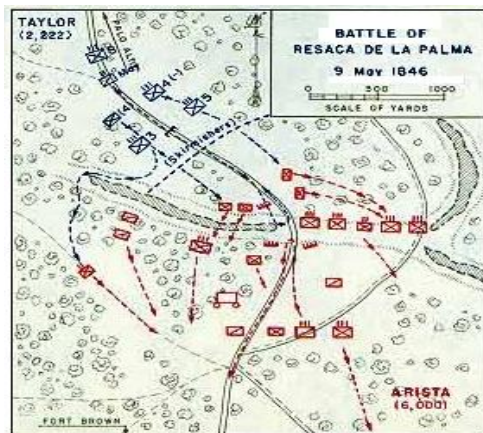
areas of the field. Avista finally abandons his attack, with casualties upwards of 600 killed or wounded vs. Taylor's losses reported at 4 killed and 37 wounded.



Map Of Palo Alto Battlefield North Of Ft. Texas

On the morning of May 9, the Mexicans fall back in good order some five miles to defensive fortifications they had previously prepared along the Point Isabel road to Fort Texas. Taylor chases after him.

Fronting the Point Isabel road is an ancient run-off channel of the Rio Grande, known locally as Resaca de la Palma, a ravine with waist-deep water surrounded by palm trees and other shrubs. Arista locates his HQ to the south while arraying his troops (in red on the maps) along the arc of the ravine, both west and east of the road.



Map Of Resaca De La Palma Between Palo Alto And Ft. Texas

His position is a strong one, and Taylor attacks it head on from the northwest. One of his young lieutenants is Ulysses S. Grant, who describes his early assault as follows:

I was with the right wing and led my company through the thicket wherever a penetrable place could be found...that would carry me to the enemy. At last I got pretty close up without knowing it. The balls commenced to whistle very thick overhead cutting the limbs of the chaparral left and right.

Another later-to-be-famous warrior, Lt. James Longstreet, offers his memories of the fight:

After a considerable march the battalion came to the body of a young Mexican woman. This sad spectacle unnerved us a little, but the crush through the thorny bushes brought us back to thoughts of heavy work...All of the enemy's artillery opened, and soon his musketry. The lines closed in to short work, even to bayonet work at places....A pause was made to dip our cups for water, which gave a moment for other thoughts; mine went back to her whom I had left behind. I drew her daguerreotype from my breast pocket, had a glint of her charming smile, and with quickened spirit mounted the bank (ahead).

The Americans continue this “heavy work” against the Mexican lines throughout the afternoon. They finally break through after a small force under Captain Robert Buchanan flanks the defender’s left wing and comes up in the rear of Arista’s men. This surprise infiltration collapses the Mexican’s line, wins the battle, and initiates a panicked 200 mile retreat due west to their bastion at Monterrey.

During the two days of fighting, the Americans suffer 34 killed and 113 wounded, while the Mexicans lose over 1500 men, killed, wounded or drowned during flight, along with the capture of 7 major artillery pieces.

With these opening victories, the Americans secure the Rio Grande border, demonstrate their tactical superiority on the battlefield, and prepare to drive further west into the interior of Mexico.

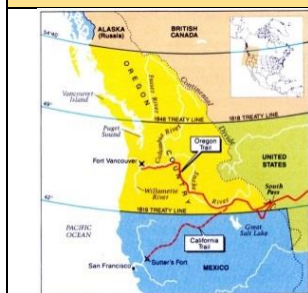


Lt. Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885)



Lt. James Longstreet (1821-1904)

Chapter 144 – Oregon Boundary Dispute With Britain Resolved

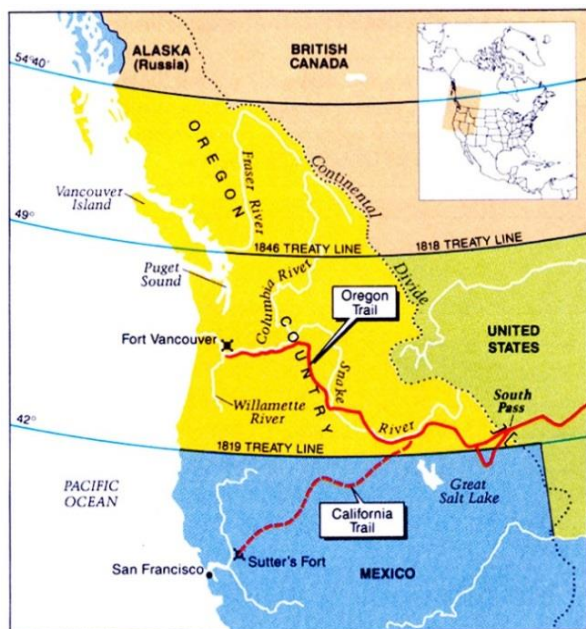


Dates:
June 18, 1846

- Sections:**
- The Oregon Boundary Lines Remain In Dispute
 - Polk Secures A Final Treaty On Oregon With Whig Support

Date: 1800-1840

The Oregon Boundary Lines Remain In Dispute



The Disputed Oregon Territory

As the war with Mexico gets under way, Polk acts to resolve another long-standing territorial dispute, this time with Great Britain.

In question is a vast area in the Pacific northwest, known to the Americans as the Oregon Country and to the British as the Columbia District of the Hudson Bay Trading Company.

Over time this land has played an important role in development of the fur trading industry.

America first enters the region in 1805, when Jefferson's Lewis & Clark expedition reaches the headwater of the Columbia River, where it empties into the Pacific. In 1811 a subsequent mission, funded by the tycoon, John Jacob Astor, arrives there and builds Ft. Astoria, a fur trading station servicing both Astor's Pacific Fur Company and another British competitor known as The North West Company.

The British seize Ft. Astoria during the War of 1812 and rename it Ft. George, until the 1814 Treaty of Ghent returns conditions to the status quo ante.

President James Monroe attempts to settle the Oregon borders with Britain during his first term.

In 1818 he tries to gain acceptance of the 49th parallel as the northern demarcation between Canada and the U.S., but Britain demands a line further south, for direct access to the Columbia River port. These

talks end with a ten year “joint occupation” agreement allowing settlers from both countries to live side by side.

Monroe’s negotiations with Spain over the southern border are more successful and the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty sets the 42nd parallel as the boundary between the Oregon and Spanish California. (This is also the same treaty that sets the Texas line along the Nueces River, which Polk bemoans in his inaugural address.)



The 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty Borders With Spain

Over the next two decades, Oregon develops gradually, with Ft. Vancouver, 90 miles inland from Ft. Astoria, becoming the hub of the fur trade, and the Hudson Bay Company reasserting its dominance. The 1818 “joint occupation” bargain with Britain is extended in 1827.

But things begin to change in the early 1830’s, as the Oregon Trail becomes passable for pioneer families, not just for independent mountain men. American settlers flock into the region, build homesteads, and vastly outnumber the British. As with the Texans, the Oregon population now looks to Washington to validate their land claims.

Date: June 18, 1846

Polk Secures A Final Treaty On Oregon With Whig Support

The demands of the Oregon settlers are reflected in the Democratic Convention platform of 1844, and Polk himself reinforces them in his March 4, 1845 inaugural address:

Our title to the country of Oregon is ‘clear and unquestionable’ and already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it with their wives and children.

Once that assertion is made public, final resolution with Britain on the exact northern boundary becomes a necessity.

Some Western hawks in Congress rally behind the slogan “fifty-four forty or fight,” a line that would gouge 300 miles north into British Canada. But Polk and his Southerners hope to solve the issue without the war that would likely follow.

Early discussions with England go badly. Polk’s “blustering announcement” in his inaugural being booed roundly in the British parliament.

Things worsen with a clumsy July 16 letter from Secretary of State James Buchanan to Sir Richard Packenham, which first reiterates America’s right to the entirety of Oregon, then backs off to a 49th parallel compromise in the “spirit of moderation.” Packenham rejects the terms outright, refuses even to forward the letter to Prime Minister Peel, and declines to offer a counter-proposal. In turn, Polk takes his initial proposal off the table.

Within the cabinet, Polk and Buchanan go head to head, with the Secretary calling for accommodation and the President intent on staying silent and forcing Britain’s hand. As Young Hickory says, “the only way to treat John Bull is to look him straight in the eye.”

In December 1845 the Oregon border issue heats up in Congress, as westerners again demand the fifty-four forty solution, southerners support the 49th parallel, and northerners simply wishing to avoid war with Britain. The debate in the House carries over to the new year, where a first term congressman from Ohio named John Cummins articulates a vision for an America in possession of the Oregon country:

(Oregon) is the master key of the economic universe, with flourishing towns and embryo cities (facing toward the Asian markets.) The commerce of the world would thus be revolutionized...Britain must lose her commercial supremacy in the Pacific...and (trading partners) must pay tribute to us.

On February 9, 1846, the House passes a bill calling on Polk to terminate the “joint occupancy” agreement with Britain inside of one year – while also encouraging a new border settlement that is amicable. When the bill goes to the Senate, the western wing of the Democratic Party led by Lewis Cass and the southern wing led by Calhoun clash, to Polk’s dismay. This persists until April 23, when a re-written joint “termination” directive passes the House 142-46 and the Senate 42-10.

Now the ball is back with the British, and a revised Parliament looking for resolution. On June 3, a letter from Packenham proposes a 49th parallel solution, as long as British settlers south of the line retain their lands, and access to the Columbia River is granted British ships. This breaks the stalemate, and on June 18, Polk sends a final treaty proposal to the Senate, which ratifies it by a 41-14 vote.

Remarkably, all 23 Whig senators support Polk’s measure – unlike his own Democrats who remain split.

Cass of Michigan is opposed to the compromise border. He is joined by other westerners including Atchison of Missouri, both senators from Illinois (Breese and Semple) and from Indiana (Hannegan and Bright), along with William Allen of Ohio, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, who resigns this post in protest.

Composition Of Senate Votes On The Oregon Bill

	Support	Oppose
Democrats	18	14
Whigs	23	0

But by early June 1846, the crafty Polk can declare victory on his promise to resolve Oregon, a move that adds a full 10% to America's total land mass.

He now turns his attention back to progress in Mexico.

Chapter 145 – Americans Occupy California And New Mexico



Dates:
Summer 1846

Sections:
Tensions Rise For American Settlers Living In Alta California
America Seizes Alta California In The “Bear Flag Revolt”

Date: Summer 1846

Tensions Rise For American Settlers Living In Alta California



Although the declaration passed by Congress on March 1, 1846 says that the war is being fought over the Rio Grande border for Texas, Polk’s true intent is to secure all of the land identified for purchase in the failed Slidell mission.

His eye is focused first on Alta California, the upper part of the province, sparsely populated by Mexicans and largely ignored by their civil government. Of particular interest are the ports of San Francisco and Los Angeles and the surrounding valleys, where clusters of American settlers have already put down roots.

Included here are a host of early adventurers: “mountain men” like Joseph Walker, who explores the region in 1832 along with the Paris-born, West Point grad, Benjamin Bonneville; Isaac Graham, who opens a distillery in 1836 and tries to form up a Texas-style Republic; and one Johan Suter (later John Sutter), a German immigrant, who travels the Oregon Trail to the west coast, takes on Mexican citizenship, and opens
John C. Fremont (1813-1890)

a fort bearing his name some 90 miles northeast of San Francisco. By 1845, Ft. Sutter is well-known locally as a resting place for weary pioneers; two years later it is world famous when gold is discovered on the land.

As customary, Polk acts aggressively on his goals. He sends American warships to blockade the Pacific coast ports and orders Colonel Stephen B. Kearney to march from Kansas toward Alta California. Kearney is a battle tested fifty year old who begins his military career in the War of 1812, helps explore the West, and then earns fame as the “father of the U.S. Cavalry” for decades of service protecting settlers across the Great Plains. Kearny rides out of Leavenworth on June 3, with 1700 men and his immediate sights set on reaching Santa Fe, some 750 miles to the west.

Before he gets even that far, Polk’s quest for control of California is almost resolved through the actions of a band of local settlers around Sacramento, aided by the western adventurer, Captain John C. Fremont.

Together they engineer a military filibuster known thereafter as the Bear Flag Revolt.

Date: June - July 1846

America Seizes Alta California In The “Bear Flag Revolt”



Map Showing The Sacramento Valley, Yuba City And San Francisco

On June 8, 1846, Fremont, Kit Carson and a band of 55 armed troopers are encamped at Sutter Butte, in the Sacramento Valley, near Yuba City.

They have arrived there after Fremont’s third expedition – mapping the route of the Arkansas River – has morphed into a year-long journey into the Oregon Country and then down into Alta California, where he makes contact with American settlers in the region.

The Mexicans regard Fremont as a nuisance and chase him back into Oregon for a period of time. But as word reaches him of possible hostilities, he re-positions his troops back in the valley.

I saw the way opening clear before me. War with Mexico was inevitable; and a grand opportunity presented itself to realize in their fullest extent the far-sighted views of Senator Benton. I resolved to move forward on the opportunity and return forthwith to the Sacramento valley in order to bring to bear all the influence I could command.

Once there, he is approached by a band of local Americans led by William Ide and Ezekiel Merritt, who claim that Mexican troops are about to drive all foreign settlers out of Sacramento. They ask Fremont if he would be willing to support them in establishing a Texas-like republic.

Evidently Fremont encourages them to proceed, but without committing his own troopers to any action. Ide and Merritt plunge forward, assembling and equipping their own thirty man posse and heading back toward San Francisco to launch a military-style filibuster.

On June 14, 1846, they arrive at the sleepy Mexican outpost in Sonoma, some 45 miles north of the port city, and surround the home of General Mariano Vallejo, "Commandante of Northern California." They proceed to arrest both Vallejo and his brother, and declare their new status as an independent nation.

The Commander in Chief of the Troops assembled at the Fortress of Sonoma... declares his object to...defend himself and companions in arms who were invited to this country by a promise of Lands on which to settle themselves and families, and who were also promised a "republican government," (but) when arriving in California were denied even the privilege of buying or renting Lands of their friends... and instead of being allowed to participate in or being protected by a "Republican Government" were oppressed by a "Military Despotism."

A white bedsheet serves as their makeshift flag, painted across the top with the outline of a California grizzly bear and a single red star, mimicking Texas.

On July 1, the "Bear Flag" rebels, now under Fremont's direct leadership, reach San Francisco and occupy the Presidio compound, which is undefended. At first they raise their banner over the works, but within days it is replaced by the stars and stripes. This ends the brief history of the "Bear Flag Revolt" and begins the de facto seizure of Alta California from the Mexicans.

Chapter 146 – Polk Achieves His Financial Goals



Dates:
July – August 1848

- Sections:**
- A New Tariff Is Approved By Congress
 - The West Is Emerging As The “Swing Vote” In Congress
 - Polk Gets His Independent Treasury With Help From Benton

Date: July 28, 1846

A New Tariff Is Approved By Congress



U.S. Treasury Department

For the hard-charging President Polk, the first three months in office have been a whirlwind, although he remains determined to complete all his identified objectives in one term.

He has settled the border dispute over Oregon on June 18, 1846, and his forays into Texas and Alta California are progressing well. He decides now to tackle nagging issues related to tariffs and the federal treasury.

Polk was a second term member of the U.S. House in 1828 when the “Tariff of Abominations” bill – cynically designed to undermine the South’s political opponents – backfired on John C. Calhoun, and was signed into law. It doubled the tax on imported goods to an average of 45%.

For the nascent New England manufacturers, this high tariff on imported goods such as cotton, wool and pig iron provides marketplace “protection” by keeping their retail prices in line with what is offered by their competition – the larger and hence more efficiently run factories in Europe.

The West also favors the higher rates, since they stand to benefit disproportionately from increases in the government’s infrastructure spending that will follow.

Federal Spending On Internal Improvements (1820-29)

Region	% Spending	% Population
North	49%	47%
South	19	40
West	32	13

Malone (1998)/Douglas Irwin

Meanwhile the Southern planters are outraged by the negative effects on the tariff on their cotton industry. Higher taxes on finished goods from Europe dampens both total demand and pricing of US exports of raw cotton. The effect on Southern wealth is such that planters attempt to “nullify” the bill by refusing to collect the duties in ports under their control. This renegade action, led by Calhoun, ends in 1830 with President Jackson’s “Force Bill” threatening to send troops south to insure compliance.

Jackson lowers the rates in 1830, only to have the “protectionists” drive them back up in 1832. The Compromise of 1833 delivers a framework that holds up well until 1842. It focuses on all imported goods currently being taxed at high rates in 1833, and imposes a formula for gradual yearly reductions to adjust them down to a 20% target by 1842.

But when 1842 arrives, the Whigs have taken control in Congress, and, despite two vetoes by Tyler, Henry Clay’s so-called “Black Tariff” drives the levies back up to roughly 40%.

As a congressman, Polk experiences all of this regional turmoil, and hopes to never see it repeated.

He believes – with good cause – that America’s manufacturing sector is now well established, and no longer in need of “protection” from the federal government. At the same time, however, he recognizes that tariff revenues continue to supply upwards of two-thirds of all money coming into DC. These funds will now be needed to carry on the Mexican War, in addition to further infrastructure projects.

Polk charges his Treasury Secretary, Robert Walker, with arriving at a new tariff bill that lowers the tariff while striking a proper balance between the financial needs of the nation and the political needs of his Democrat party.

The “Walker Tariff of 1846” breaks imported goods into five classes, assigning staggered rate to each, from a high of 100% to a low on 0%, reserved for coffee and tea. The historically most fought-over items fall into the “C-Class” (iron, other metals, wood, glass, paper, wool, woolens, leather) taxed at 30%, and the “D-Class” (including cotton) at 25%.

The Bill breezes through the House, but ends in a tie 27-yea vs. 27-nay vote in the Senate – and only due to a last ditch effort by the Governor of Tennessee to convince Whig Senator Spencer Jarnigan to vote “yes.”

Responsibility for breaking the tie falls on the shoulders of Polk’s Vice-President, George Dallas, of Pennsylvania. Dallas plans to run for President in 1850 and knows that his backing in New England will erode if he supports the lower tariff. Still, as a Democrat, he has no real choice in the matter. He votes “aye” on July 28, 1846, and the Walker Tariff becomes the law of the land. It will survive intact until 1857 when rates are further reduced to 17% on average.

Date: 1828-1846

The West Is Emerging As The “Swing Vote” In Congress

While Polk finally secures approval for his 1846 Tariff, the voting reveals an adjustment in the balance of power in Congress.

The North consistently favors higher rates; the South wants them lowered, and both sides prioritize their own regional self-interest over any compromises.

What has changed with time is the role and impact of the West in deciding the tariff issue. In 1828, the West cast only 16% (39 of 199) of all votes in the House; by 1846, that number has grown to 29% (60 of 209).

As such, the West is becoming the “swing vote” on which bills will pass and which will fail in Congress.

In the case of the tariff, the West sides with the South, having little to lose by a lower tariff when it comes to manufacturing, and something to gain by participating more fully in exports, especially of flour.

That will not, however, be the outcome later on when the issue becomes opening the West to slavery.

Votes On Major Tariff Bills: 1829-1846

	1828	1832	1833	1842	1846
Tariff Goes	Higher	Same	Lower	Higher	Lower
House	105-94	132-65	119-85	104-103	114-95
North	73-34	79-35	34-75	80-19	27-66
South	3-50	27-27	55-1	4-50	49-7
West	29-10	36-3	30-9	20-34	38-22
Senate	26-11	32-16	29-16	24-23	28-27
North	14-7	22-0	11-11	14-4	4-18
South	1-13	2-12	12-0	2-14	10-5
West	11-1	8-4	6-5	8-5	14-4
“Control”					
House	Pro-AJ	Dem	Dem	Whig	Dem
Senate	Pro-AJ	Dem	Dem	Whig	Dem
President	Adams	Jackson	Jackson	Tyler	Polk

Voteview/Douglas Irwin

Date: August 6, 1848

Polk Gets His Independent Treasury With Help From Benton

Alongside his efforts to resolve the tariff, Polk faces head-on into ongoing debates over a federal banking system.

Going all the way back to Jefferson, Democrats distrust the notion of a privately run bank corporation having control over the government's money and, in turn, the future direction of the economy. From their perspective, it puts too much power in the hands of un-elected officials, offers too many temptations to put selfish interests above the public good, and lacks the transparency needed to avoid corruption.

Polk's mentor, Andrew Jackson, launches a personal crusade against the Second Bank of the United States which he calls "the monster on Chestnut Street." In 1834 he discovers that rampant speculation by banks has driven up land prices for western settlers and undermined the true value of all soft money. In response he abruptly shuts down the BUS, provoking the financial panic of 1837.

At that time, Thomas Hart Benton, offers an option to the BUS which he calls the National Exchequer Bank. It would still handle all revenue deposits and sell insurance backing independent transactions, but have nothing whatsoever to do with impacting the course of the economy. Jackson likes this option, but Congress refuses to go along.

After the crash of 1837, Van Buren proposes an Independent Treasury, run by government officials and not private investors, committed to receiving tax payments in hard money, and operating within a narrow charter – depositing federal revenue, disbursing funds to cover federal spending, and making loans to demonstrably solvent state banks.

Van Buren finally gets congressional approval in 1840, at the end of his term. Jackson applauds the move as does his hard money advisor, William Gough, who cites the utter simplicity of the solution:

So plain would be the accounts that we might choose for the chief bookkeeper...a cordwainer (shoemaker)...who daily threw into the leg of one boot his receipts for the day, and into another...his expenditures.

But the Independent Treasury stands for only one year before Henry Clay and his Whigs repeal the bill – hoping to establish a Third U.S. Bank, to keep more credit in the marketplace, and to back their spending on infrastructure.

When Tyler vetoes this effort, all federal revenues are deposited directly into state banks.

In 1846 it is the need to fund the Mexican War which forces Polk's hand on the banking system.


He has begun as a strict Jacksonian, inclined to hard money and suspicious of all private banks and bankers. But he grudgingly comes around to seeing the need for banknotes to support daily commerce and for a public agency to handle the government's cash flow and insure the value of the currency.

He decides that Van Buren's Independent Treasury is the best path to meeting these goals – and supports a bill to re-instate it, along with a clause giving Secretary Walker the power to issue short-term notes (bonds) to bolster cash-on-hand, as needed.

The Independent Treasury Act passes Congress on July 29, 1846, with vote cast along straight party lines.

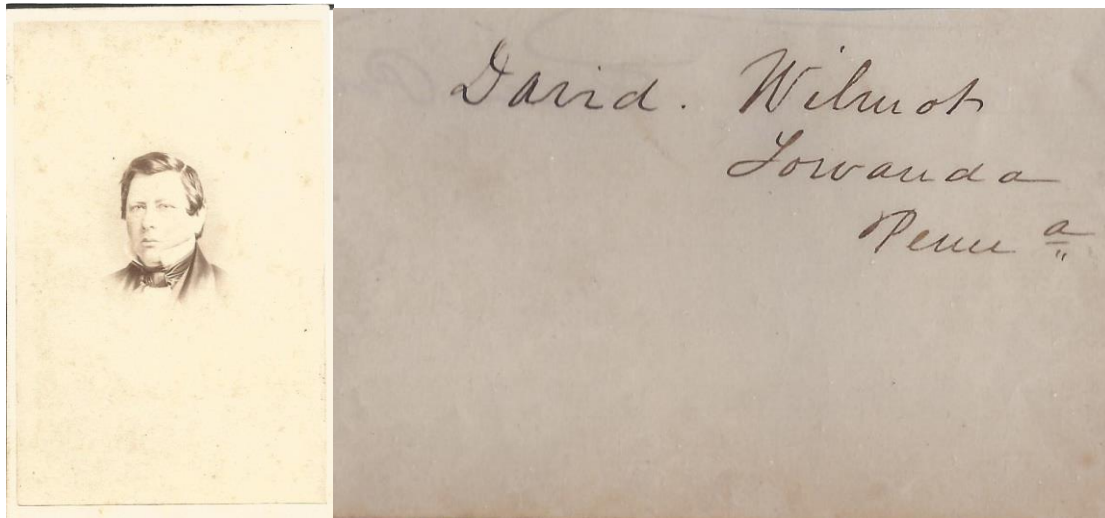
"Old Bullions" Benton applauds it as the final divorce between the State and the Banks. Henceforth decisions about spending federal money would rest with elected officials and not private corporations.

Chapter 147 – The Wilmot Proviso Is An Existential Threat To The South

	Dates: August 1846	Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wilmot’s Proviso Signals A New Crisis• The Complex Roots Of Rebellion Among Northern Democrats• The Wilmot Proviso Passes In The House• Southerners Finally Stall The Wilmot Proviso In The Senate• The Profound Implications Of The Passage Of The Wilmot Proviso
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Date: August 8, 1846

Wilmot’s Proviso Signals A New Crisis



Congressman David Wilmot (1814-1868) and Signature – Whose 1846 “Proviso” Helped Spark The Civil War

Only two days after the Independent Treasury Act is passed, Polk’s remarkable string of victories in Congress comes to a sudden halt – on a vote in the House that focuses ominously on slavery and presages the break-up of the Union.

The impetus is a straight forward appropriations bill to set aside \$2 million to fund the Mexican War, which the President hopes to pass in the final two days before the 29th Congress adjourns for recess.

Polk fully expects the bill to prompt the usual criticism of the war from his Whig opponents, and this occurs when the New Yorker, Hugh White, says the conflict is a Southern plot to “extend the limits of slavery” into the west. He promises to vote against funding the war unless the language in the bill...

Forever precludes the possibility of extending the limits of slavery...and I call upon the other side to propose such an amendment...as evidence of their desire to restrain that institution within its constitutional limits.

The next member to speak is first term congressman David Wilmot, representing the 12th district of Pennsylvania.

Wilmot is only 32 years old, but imposing in stature, sporting a chew of tobacco, and ever ready to buck the system on behalf of speaking his mind. After being recognized by the Speaker as a likely-to-be friendly voice in the storm, Wilmot announces that he will support Polk's bill, but only if a "proviso" is added.

Provided, That, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from 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.

His fellow Democrats are stunned by his declaration!

When asked to explain his amendment, he says that he voted for the Texas annexation, and has no moral qualms over slavery, nor any wish to abolish it. Rather his intent is simply to preserve "free soil" out west in order to "uphold the dignity of white men's labor."

I would preserve for free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance where the sons of toil of my own race and color, can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor....If free territory comes in, God forbid that I should be the means of planting this institution upon it.

As such, Wilmot offers up a new rationale for opposing slavery.

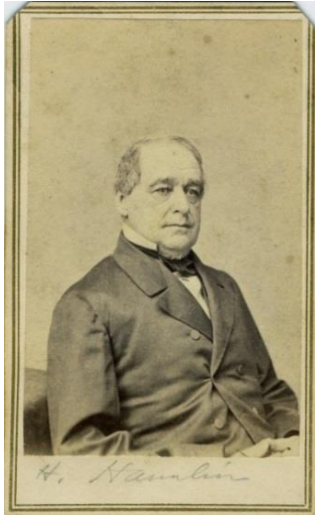
It is directed at upholding the value of white men's labor, not ending the black man's suffering.

To achieve this end, it flat out prohibits any further spread of slavery.

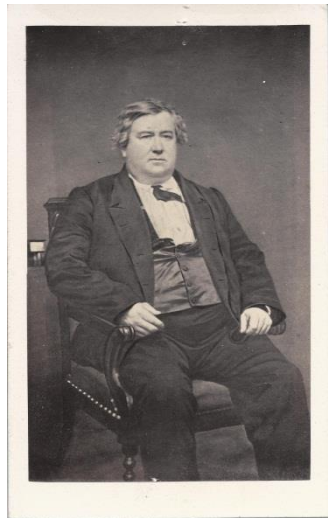
As such it is the worst nightmare for Polk and the men of the South – and it originates with a Democrat!

Date: 1844-1846

The Complex Roots Of Rebellion Among Northern Democrats



Hannibal Hamlin (1809-1891)



Preston King (1806-1865)

Once Wilmot's Proviso is out in the open, Polk's supporters scurry to identify its origin and to determine just how much support it has, especially within the Democrat Party.

What they learn is deeply distressing.

Wilmot's dissent is widely shared among Northern Democrats, and aimed at Polk and the Southern wing of the party. Its origins trace all the way back to the 1844 Nominating Convention, where many feel that Van Buren was robbed of his chance for a second term.

Much of it is concentrated in New York, especially among men "Van Buren men" like Senator John Dix and Governor Silas Wright.

They are joined by others, including Preston King of New York, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine and Jacob Brinkerhoff of Ohio, who go beyond sheer political animosity and see a Southern cabal at work, determined to take over the party and put a pro-slavery man in the White House, one who will back their regional agenda.

This opposition group becomes known as the "Barnburner Democrats," accused by other members of being more willing to destroy the party than to back the President. Indeed many will assert that it is actually Brinkerhoff or Preston, rather than Wilmot, who pens the August 8 Proviso in the first place.

Other factors also play into this notion that the "Slave Power" has co-opted the Democrat Party, to the detriment of Northern interests.

Two powerful Democratic senators, Lewis Cass of Michigan and William Allen of Ohio, have led the “Fifty-four forty or fight” cry to occupy all of the Oregon Country. When Polk compromises with Britain on the 49th parallel boundary, the suggestion is that he will fight for slave territory in Texas, but not for free land in Oregon.

Then there is the Walker Tariff, perceived by many Northerners as a reduction in rates to satisfy the planters of the South at the expense of manufacturing in the east and added infrastructure in the west.

Finally comes the widening of the war against Mexico, no longer confined to disputed land within Texas, but now extending across the Southwest and opening the way to a host of new slave states.

Out of these combined grievances a sizable group of Northern Democrats in the House decide that it is time to send a signal to their Southern colleagues that their interests will not be ignored.

And what better way than to threaten the one thing the Southerners want most – the extension of slave plantations west of the Mississippi.

Date: August 8, 1846

The Wilmot Proviso Passes In The House

With time nearing on a final vote, House Democrats scramble to find an option to the Wilmot Proviso.

The main attempt comes from the Indiana Democrat William Wick, who offers up an alternative solution for all new land west of the Mississippi.

Wick’s proposal is one that will be heard over and over in Congress between 1846 and the collapse of the Union in 1861.

Instead of a universal ban on slavery, why not simply extend the old 36’30” Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific, with states falling south of the line allowing slavery and north of the line prohibiting it. That solved the conflict in 1820 and why shouldn’t it work again in 1846.

The answer in the House is a resounding “no.” Wick’s proposal goes down by an 89-54 margin.

At this point it becomes clear that the usual political calculus has broken down.

The rejection is not a matter of a split along traditional party lines, as in unified Democrats against unified Whigs.

Instead *both parties are split along regional lines* – with Northern members favoring Wilmot’s ban on extending slavery and Southerners in opposition.

Once this division is clear, Southern forces in the House try to stall. The floor debate continues into the evening, with procedural votes taken on the wording of the Proviso and then on whether to table consideration of the bill until the House reconvenes in December. Both attempts fail.

At last, Polk's Appropriation Bill with the Wilmot Proviso added comes to a vote. It passes by a narrow margin of 85-80, with only small differences showing up in total between Democrats and Whigs.

House Vote On Appropriation Bill With The Wilmot Proviso Added

Region	Democrats Yes - No	Whigs Yes - No	American Yes - No	Total Yes - No
Northeast	37 - 0	24 - 6	5 - 0	66 - 6
Northwest	15 - 4	2 - 2		17 - 6
Border	0 - 9	2 - 9		2 - 18
Southeast	0 - 27	0 - 7		0 - 34
Southwest	0 - 15	0 - 1		0 - 16
Total	52 - 55	28 - 25	5 - 0	85 - 80
Not Voting	(32)	(23)	(1)	(56)

VoteView/Library of Congress Records

But looked at along regional lines, the final vote shows that Northern members support Wilmot by 83-12 while Southerners oppose it 68-2.

North Vs. South Split Over The Wilmot Proviso: August 8, 1846

Region	Democrats Yes - No	Whigs Yes - No	American Yes - No	Total Yes - No
North	52 - 4	26 - 8	5 - 0	83 - 12
South	0 - 51	2 - 17	-- - --	2 - 68
Total	52 - 55	28 - 25	5 - 0	85 - 80

This outcome is NOT about a moral judgment on slavery, NOT about conscience-stricken Northern whites wishing to end the suffering of Southern slaves.

Rather it is a direct shot by Northerners in both parties across the bow of Polk and the South. It expresses their wish to reserve any new territory in the west for the exclusive benefit of white settlers -- unencumbered by the prospect of rich planters trying to buy the best acreage, and black slaves who would erode the "dignity" of their labor, threaten the safety of their families, and diminish the social fabric.

As such, the Wilmot Proviso expresses the anti-black racism prevalent at the time, and marks what proves to be an irreversible line in the sand between Southerners and those in the North and West.

Date: August 10, 1846

Southerners Finally Stall The Wilmot Proviso In The Senate

After the House passes the Wilmot Proviso, all that's left for the Southern coalition to try to delay a vote in the Senate, until the clock runs out toward recess of the 29th congress on August 10.

This strategy works, despite a filibustering effort by the Massachusetts Senator "Honest John" Davis to force a vote.

On August 10 both chambers adjourn, leaving Polk without approval of his \$2million appropriation request to fund the war, and the Northerners without approval of their Wilmot Proviso.

Still, a clear-cut message from the North to the South has been delivered.

The astute Southern leader, John Calhoun, sums it up as follows:

- The North now enjoys a commanding majority of the votes in the House;
- The Wilmot measure shows that the North intends to stop the spread of slavery to the west;
- The South can no longer count on unwavering support for their cause from Northern Democrats;
- Nor does it have a ready-made solution in extending the old 36'20" compromise line.

Unless some new accommodation between the two sections can be found, disunion will be inevitable.

As usual, the South Carolina man accurately foretells the future.

From August 10, 1846 onward, the leaders of congress will begin a 15 year search for a new accommodation capable of holding the nation together.

In the end, they will fail.

Date: August 1846 Forward

The Profound Implications Of The Passage Of The Wilmot Proviso

This vote on the Wilmot Proviso will become a watershed moment in the eventual dissolution of the Union.

It expresses a flat "no" to Southern plans to extend slavery west of the Mississippi, even under the 34'30" line set in the 1820 Missouri Compromise.

It also initiates a dramatic shift in the number of whites willing to stand against the further spread of slavery.

Before Wilmot, this is largely confined to a small eastern band of so-called “radical abolitionists” hoping to free all slaves on moral grounds and even allow them wander North, threatening all-white towns and neighborhoods.

After Wilmot, one need not be a “radical” to want to pen slavery up in the South.

That’s because of a new battle cry – “free soil for free men” – that will soon catch fire in the North and West.

It adds two pragmatic reasons against expanding slavery that go beyond mere anti-black racism and fear.

The first is that land prices for western settlers will go way up if average white farmers have to compete with rich plantation owners in the bidding.

The second is more subtle, but every bit as powerful.

It taps into America’s long-standing embrace of the “Protestant work ethic” – the belief that with hard labor comes both dignity and monetary rewards. But, as Wilmot argues, both suffer when blacks are doing the same work as white men, but for free. He calls this a “disgrace” – with white labor diminished to the level of slave labor.

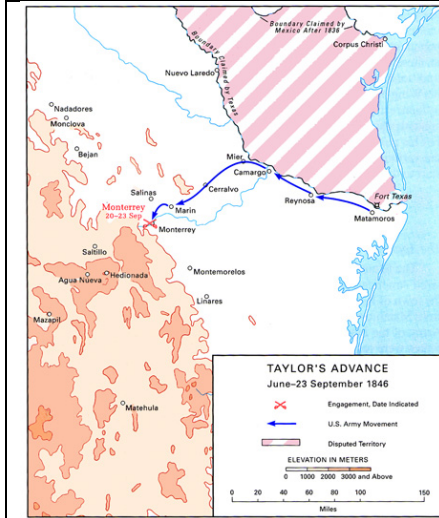
If the value of white labor in America is to be preserved, it must not exist side by side with slave labor.

From this notion new political movements will soon take hold, the Free Soilers, the Know-Nothing Nativists, and eventually the Republican Party. All dedicated to preserving the new western land for white men.

When the South balks at this outcome, it will be branded by more and more Northerners as “the Slavocracy” -- forever prioritizing the self-interest of its rich plantation elites over the good of the white settlers.

The savvy abolitionist Lloyd Garrison quickly recognizes the power of this new theme and the Wilmot Proviso votes to serve his own ends, characterizing it as “the beginning of the end of our fight.”

Chapter 148 – The War With Mexico Picks Up Momentum



Dates:
Fall –
Winter 1846

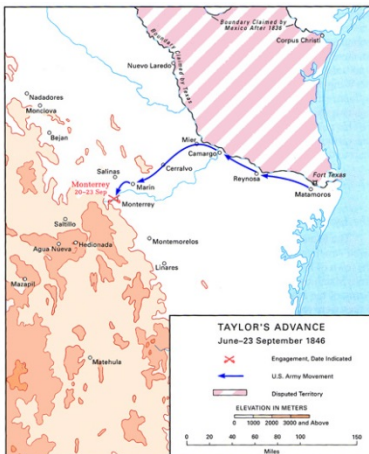
- Sections:**
- Santa Fe Is Captured And The Battle For Monterrey Begins
 - Monterrey Falls To Taylor
 - Polk’s Cabinet Debates War Strategy And Commanders
 - General Scott Announces His Plan

Date: August 15 - September 21, 1846

Santa Fe Is Captured And The Battle For Monterrey Begins

While the “Bear Flag” land grab is playing out in California during June-July 1846, further U.S. incursions into Mexico are under way.

On August 15, 1846, General Stephen Kearny captures Santa Fe, the capital of the province of New Mexico, without firing a shot.



At the same time, General Taylor is heading west at a leisurely pace in pursuit of the Mexican army, which he defeated at Resaca de la Palma back in April.

He will find it in September, holed up at Monterrey, an enclave of 10,000 inhabitants, and the capital of Nuevo Leone province.

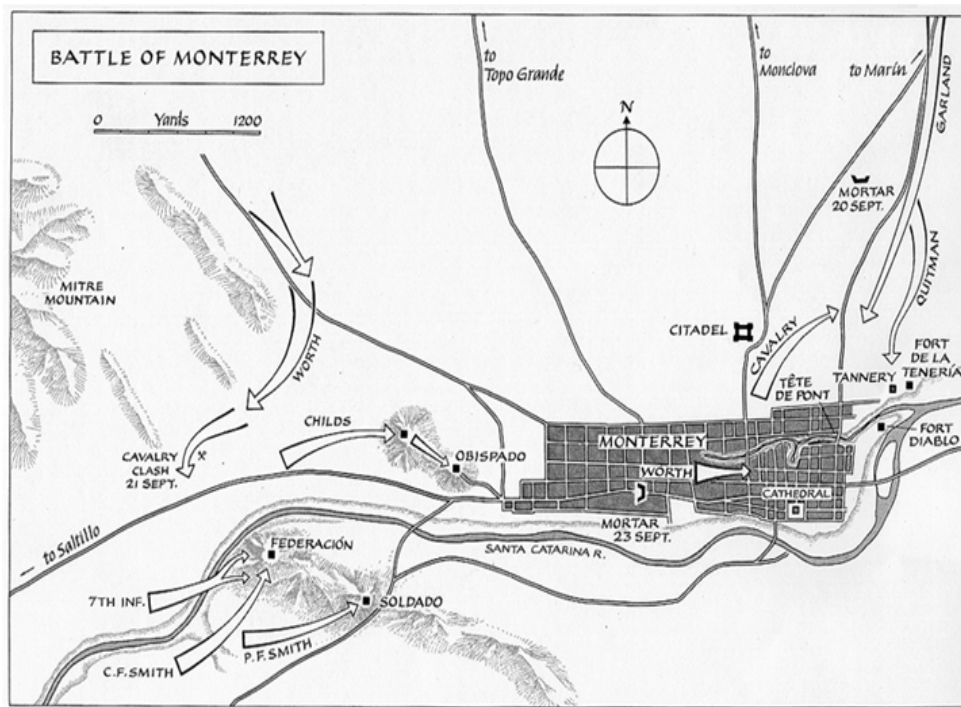
Map Of Taylor’s Route From Matamoros To Monterrey

The city sits in a valley surrounded on two sides by the 4,000 foot peaks of the Mitre mountains, with the Santa Catarina River running along its eastern and southern flanks. Its location along the main road through the mountains toward Saltillo makes it strategically important to the westward advance of Zachary Taylor’s army -- and knowing this, General Pedro Ampudia, who has now replaced Avista, decides to defend Monterrey.

In addition to its natural advantages in terrain, Monterrey is also well protected by a series of redoubts and stone buildings that dot the roads in from the northeast. General Ampudia concentrates his 9,000 troops across these fortifications, and confidently awaits the Americans.

Taylor, however, pauses for several weeks after his opening victories, and it is not until June 12 that he sends Ben McCulloch and his Texas Rangers out to scout the whereabouts of the Mexican army. When Taylor learns they are dug in at Monterrey, he sets three divisions and some 6600 troops in motion under Generals William Worth, David Twiggs and John Quitman. They arrive in early September and begin to plan their strategy.

Lacking heavy artillery, Taylor knows that he must assault rather than siege Monterrey. After studying the ground, he settles on a daring two-prong attack. Quitman and Twiggs will send the bulk of the army headlong at the heavily defended fortresses north and east of the city. Worth and 1700 men will swing west 7 miles under cover and arrive in the enemy's rear on the Saltillo road, cutting off the Mexican's supply and escape routes. If practicable, Worth will then launch a surprise attack against the more lightly defended western edge of the city. On September 20, Worth's flanking movement secures the Saltillo road, after a brief cavalry battle. Mexico's northern army is now effectively trapped in Monterrey as Taylor's assault begins on September 21.



Zachary Taylor's Attack On Monterrey

Colonel John Garland, leading Twiggs' division, opens the battle against the eastern fortifications, with support from Mississippi and Tennessee units under Quitman and Colonel Jefferson Davis. They capture Fort de al Teneria and the bridge leading over the river to Ft. Diablo. Ohio troops under General Butler join the attack on Diablo, but it is successfully defended throughout the day by General Ampudia's forces. After ferocious street to street combat the Americans have gained a solid toehold on the eastern side of the city by nightfall.



Brvt Colonel Charles F. Smith (1807-1862)

Progress to the west is even greater, with the hero of the day being Captain Charles F. Smith, who leads his four companies up a spur of Mt. Mitre known as Federacion Hill, drives off the Mexican defenders, and turns decisive artillery fire down on the city. As the first day of battle to the west ends, General Worth is poised to invade Monterrey from the west.

Date: September 22-24, 1846

Monterrey Falls To Taylor



General John Quitman (1798-1858)

Overnight, General Ampudia decides to consolidate his two wings in the center of the city. He abandons Ft. Diablo, and draws back all his forces to the Cathedral and Central Plaza area, for a last stand.

At daybreak on September 23, General Quitman and a force of Texas Rangers resume their advance on Ft. Diablo and, finding it empty, race past it into the city, with shouts of “Alamo and Goliad” ringing through the streets. Taylor, however, is unaware of their breakthrough, and orders them to hold for the moment.

Meanwhile, General Worth hears the early sounds of battle and sends his troops forward to capture the western end of the city and envelop the remaining Mexicans. They quickly take the Bishop’s Palace outpost and begin house to house fighting.

By nightfall Worth has reached to within one block of the Plaza, and is in contact with Quitman and his troops, now nearby. The fates of the Mexican army and of the city of Monterrey are sealed – and General Ampudia knows it. On the night of September 23, he approaches General Worth for “terms of surrender.”

The agreement he finally works out with General Taylor is so stunning in its generosity that when word filters back to Washington, Polk wants to relieve Taylor of his command, despite the victory. In return for ceding all public property in Monterrey to the Americans, Ampudia is allowed to evacuate his army, along with its small arms, within seven days, and any further conflict is suspended for the next six weeks.

While Taylor has lost 500 soldiers in the battle, to over 1,000 for the enemy, he is evidently so convinced that the Mexican army is defeated once and for all that he allows it to walk off the field in another retreat west.

Five months later he will realize that this calculation was not quite right.

Sidebar: Milestones In Taylor's Invasion Through Texas

Taylor's 190 Mile Drive From Matamoros To Monterrey

Date	Events
April 24, 1846	Taylor attacked along the Rio Grande
May 9	Taylor victory at Resaca de la Palma
May 13	Official declaration of war
May 18	Taylor occupies Matamoros
June - July	California taken in Bear Flag Revolt
August 15	Kearney secures New Mexico
September 24	Taylor victory at Monterrey

Date: Winter 1846

Polk's Cabinet Debates War Strategy And Commanders

Ever since General Zachary Taylor's troops are first attacked along the Rio Grande on April 25, 1846, the conflict with Mexico has all gone the American's way. His northern army, under Kearney, has planted the American flag from Santa Fe through California, and Taylor's central force has driven inland to capture Monterrey.

The only thing lacking so far is a formal capitulation by the Mexican government and a treaty resolving final ownership of the conquered lands. Various emissaries from Mexico hint at this resolution, but so far it remains simply a wish.

So the question becomes one of what it will take to bring the war to closure. This topic is hotly debated within Polk's cabinet. As usual, the President is clear about his preference – to expand the invasion until the enemy gives in.

His cabinet, led by the ever bothersome Secretary of State, James Buchanan, and the War minister, William Marcy, object to his proposal for three reasons:

- A broader invasion will extend the fighting and produce more agitation in Congress;
- They do not believe that General Winfield Scott is up to the task of leading the troops; and
- Both Scott and Taylor are Whigs who might run for president in 1848.

Polk floats out the possibility of promoting Senator Benton of Missouri to Lieutenant General, ranking Scott and taking overall command in the field, but he backs off when others resist. It's now clear that whatever future course the war takes, Scott will remain the lead general.

As the cabinet ponders options to end the war, critics begin to assert that Polk's hidden intent is to conquer all of Mexico, absorb it into the United States, and reinstitute slavery, banned there in 1829.

Polk flatly rejects these charges and insists that all future decisions about slavery in new territory acquired from the war will be left to the will of the settlers, as they write their state constitutions.

But this assurance isn't enough for the skeptics in congress – who again wave the Wilmot proviso in the face of the President and the Southerners.

Date: Winter 1846

General Scott Announces His Plan



General Winfield Scott (1786-1866)

As political controversies over the war swirl about Washington, all eyes look toward the 61 year old General Winfield Scott for his plan to resolve the conflict.

Scott is a Southerner by birth and grows up on a Petersburg, Virginia plantation. He briefly attends the College of William & Mary, studies and practices law, then enlists in the Virginia militia. He comes to fame in the War of 1812, in the back and forth battles around Lake Ontario. He is wounded twice in the fighting, first as a Colonel, while capturing Ft. George, and later as a Brigadier General, near Niagara Falls at the Battle of Lundy's Lane. For his heroism, he is made a Brevet Major General at age 27. But the bullet wound to his left shoulder leaves him with a partially paralyzed arm, and he is unable to resume field duty.

After the 1812 War, Scott studies military strategy in France, writes various military manuals on drilling and tactics, and continues to advance his career. President Jackson calls on him to help put down the Nullification threat in 1832, to fight the Seminoles in 1836, to relocate the Cherokees in 1838. He becomes the ranking officer in the army in 1845, as a full Major General.

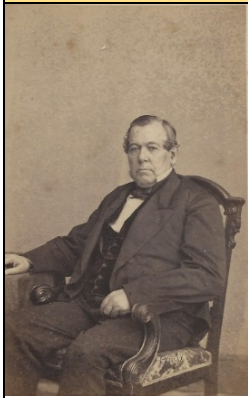
Scott is an enormous man, standing 6'5" and weighing over 250 lbs. His manner is imperious; he is a stickler for discipline; and he constantly decks himself out in elaborate uniforms. Hence the nickname, "Old Fuss and Feathers." Polk regards him in 1847 as a man filled with 'arrogance and inordinate vanity.'

Nevertheless, the General finally steps forward with a plan to win the war. He will assemble and personally lead an invasion force of some 14,000 troops, capture the port city of Veracruz, then march overland to overwhelm and occupy the capital of Mexico City.

Polk reluctantly adopts the plan, and orders go out for Taylor to hold his position at Monterrey, while detaching the bulk of his army to join up with Scott's invasion force.

The fate of the President's war now rest in the hands of two Whig Generals, both of whom he distrusts as military commanders and as potential political opponents of his Democratic Party.

Chapter 149 – Congress Debates The Morality And Implications Of The Mexican War



Dates:
December 7,
1846 to February
15, 1847

- Sections:**
- Polk Tries To Stem Divisiveness In His Annual Address To Congress
 - The House Debates Legal Precedents For Declaring Oregon A “Free State”
 - Tom Corwin Warns Of The Damage To Follow From The Mexican War
 - Senator John Calhoun Issues A Southern Warning Over Wilmot
 - The House Passes A New And Harsher Proviso On Expanding Slavery

Date: December 7, 1846

Polk Tries To Stem Divisiveness In His Annual Address To Congress

Polk’s words show that he is clearly alarmed by the House vote on the Wilmot Proviso, which leaves him without funding for the war and with disunity in his own party over the future expansion of slavery.

The slavery question is assuming a fearful and most important aspect.

When the second and final session of the 29th Congress reconvenes on December 7, 1846, his Annual Message first attempts to align all sides behind his war efforts. His address begins with reassurances that the intent of the war is not to annihilate Mexico, and that the wish is end it as soon as the enemy will accept peace terms.

In my (last) annual message...I declared that-- The war has not been waged with a view to conquest, but, having been commenced by Mexico, it has been carried into the enemy's country and will be vigorously prosecuted there with a view to obtain an honorable peace....It has never been contemplated by me, as an object of the war, to make a permanent conquest of the Republic of Mexico or to annihilate her separate existence as an independent nation....Whilst our armies have advanced from victory to victory from the commencement of the war, it has always been with the olive branch of peace in their hands, and it has been in the power of Mexico at every step to arrest hostilities by accepting it.

He then turns to the delicate topic of slavery, not mentioning it explicitly, rather choosing to invoke the memory of George Washington and his warnings about geographical divisiveness as a threat to the Union.

(Washington) that greatest and best of men foresaw.. the danger to our Union of "characterizing parties by geographical discriminations--Northern and Southern, Atlantic and Western--whence

designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views," and warned his countrymen against it.

So deep and solemn was his conviction of the importance of the Union and of preserving harmony between its different parts, that he declared to his countrymen in that address: It is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you indignantly frown upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

After the lapse of half a century these admonitions of Washington fall upon us with all the force of truth.

From there he boldly attempts to dismiss the battle over the Wilmot Proviso as nothing more than “differences of opinion upon minor questions of public policy.”

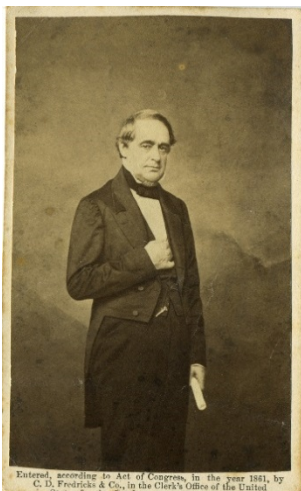
It is difficult to estimate the "immense value" of our glorious Union... How unimportant are all our differences of opinion upon minor questions of public policy compared with its preservation, and how scrupulously should we avoid all agitating topics which may tend to distract and divide us into contending parties, separated by geographical lines, whereby it may be weakened or endangered.

Polk’s message on December 7, 1846 is one that both he and his immediate successors will wish to believe – that sectional resistance to the presence of Africans, either slave or free, west of the Mississippi is a nothing more than a minor diversion.

Going forward, Congress should simply “avoid (these) agitating topics which may tend to distract and divide” the country.

Date: January 16, 1847

The House Debates Legal Precedents For Declaring Oregon A “Free State”



Hannibal Hamlin (1809-1891)

Despite Polk’s plea, the political jockeying over extending slavery into new western territory resumes early in the new session.

The initial focus is not the Southwest, but rather the Oregon Territory.

While all sides agree that Oregon should be declared a “Free State,” they argue over the legal basis for the call.

The rationale cannot be the Wilmot Proviso, since Oregon is acquired in the June 1846 treaty with Britain, and does not involve territory associated with the Mexican War.

But why then should Oregon have Free State status?

Southern members, led by Calhoun's man, Armistead Burt of South Carolina assert that the precedent should be the 1820 Missouri Compromise, simply extending the 34'30" line to the west coast. This is the same proposal offered six months earlier by Indiana's William Wick and supported by Stephen Douglas.

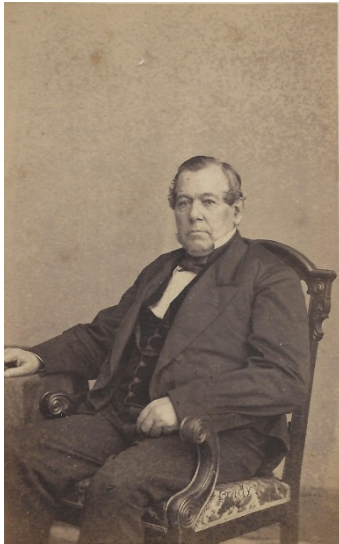
Again it meets resistance. Congressman Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, an outspoken abolitionist, says that the Missouri line "has no more application to the territory of Oregon than it has with the East Indies."

A contrived rationale finally emerges around the 1797 Northwest Ordinance ban on slavery, and it musters enough votes to ram the bill through a still rebellious House, on January 16, 1847.

The bill declaring Oregon a Free State goes on to the Senate, where it is immediately tabled.

Date: February 11, 1847

Tom Corwin Warns Of The Damage To Follow From The Mexican War



Senator Thomas Corwin (1794-1865)

The next volley over slavery comes when the Senate turns to a modified request from Polk for funds to prosecute the war with Mexico.

The ante has now risen from \$2 million to \$3 million, as it becomes clear that a more substantial invasion will be required to force an end to the fighting.

The leading spokesman for the Whigs is the ex-Governor now Senator from Ohio, Tom Corwin.

Corwin addresses his colleagues on February 11, 1847 in an eloquent and balanced speech, intended to challenge Polk's justification of the Mexican War and to warn members that geographical divisions over slavery is destined to lead on to "civil conflict."

Corwin begins by recalling Mexico's recent struggle for freedom from Spain, from Father Hidalgo's "cry" ("El Grito de la Independencia") at the town of Dolores in 1810 to the final Treaty of Cordova in 1821. And now, says Corwin, America comes as a new invader, seeking land the Mexicans bled over.

What is the territory, Mr. President, which you propose to wrest from Mexico? It is consecrated to the heart of the Mexican by many a well-fought battle with his old Castilian master. His Bunker Hills, and Saratogas, and Yorktowns are there! The Mexican can say, "There I bled for liberty! and shall I surrender that consecrated home of my affections to the Anglo-Saxon invaders? What do they want with it? They have Texas already.

The Senator then looks directly at the topic that Polk has treated in elliptical fashion – the potential for a war of acquisition to divide the Union over the issue of expanding slavery.

There is one topic connected with this subject which I tremble when I approach, and yet I cannot forbear to notice it. I allude to the question of slavery.

Opposition to its further extension, it must be obvious to everyone, is a deeply rooted determination With men of all parties in what we call the nonslaveholding states. New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, three of the most powerful, have already sent their legislative instructions here. So it will be, I doubt not, in all the rest.

How is it in the South? Can it be expected that they should expend in common their blood and their treasure in the acquisition of immense territory, and then willingly forgo the right to carry thither their slaves, and inhabit the conquered country if they please to do so? Nay, I believe they would even contend to any extremity for the mere right, had they no wish to exert it.

Once divided, Corwin argues, the result will be a civil conflict at home – which means, in turn, that bills calling to continue and fund the war are nothing less than “treason to the Union.”

I believe (and I confess I tremble when the conviction presses upon me) that there is equal obstinacy on both sides of this fearful question

This bill would seem to be nothing less than a bill to produce internal commotion. Should we prosecute this war another moment, or expend one dollar in the purchase or conquest of a single acre of Mexican land, the North and the South are brought into collision on a point where neither will yield.

Why should we precipitate this fearful struggle, by continuing a war the result of which must be to force us at once upon a civil conflict? Sir, rightly considered, this is treason, treason to the Union, treason to the dearest interests, the loftiest aspirations, the most cherished hopes of our constituents. It is a crime to risk the possibility of such a contest. It is a crime of such infernal hue that every other in the catalogue of iniquity, when compared with it, whitens into virtue.

The only way out is to abandon the war with Mexico, along with its demands for land beyond Texas. Mexico already knows that it cannot prevail on the battlefield, so peace terms will be readily accepted..

Let us abandon all idea of acquiring further territory and by consequence cease at once to prosecute this war. Let us call home our armies, and bring them at once within our own acknowledged limits. Show Mexico that you are sincere when you say you desire nothing by conquest. She has learned that she cannot encounter you in war, and if she had not, she is too weak to disturb you here. Tender her peace, and, my life on it, she will then accept it.

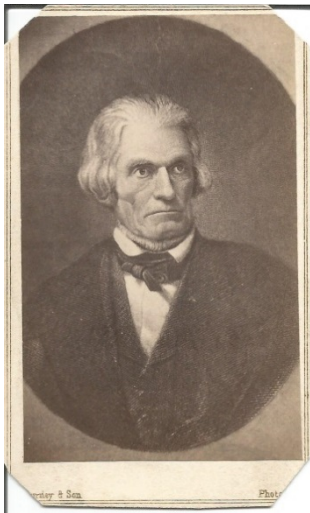
Once cleansed of Mexican blood, Corwin says, America can escape the prospect of its own civil war and restore “ancient accord and eternal brotherhood” at home.

Let us then close forever the approaches of internal feud, and so return to the ancient concord and the old ways of national prosperity and permanent glory. Let us here, in this temple consecrated to the Union, perform a solemn lustration; let us wash Mexican blood from our hands, and on these altars, and in the presence of that image of the Father of his Country that

looks down upon us, swear to preserve honorable peace with all the world and eternal brotherhood with each other.

Date: February 15, 1847

Senator John Calhoun Issues A Southern Warning Over Wilmot



John Calhoun (1772-1850)

Like Corwin, John Calhoun of South Carolina is another prescient commentator on the consequences of the war and of the Wilmot bill. He sums up his thoughts in a senate speech delivered four days later.

The ever dour Calhoun begins by summing up the situation in congress as he sees it – with non-slaveholding states in both chambers apparently determined to prohibit slavery in the new “public domain” lands to the west.

Mr. President, I rise to offer a set of resolutions in reference to the various resolutions from the State legislatures upon the subject of what they call the extension of slavery, and the proviso attached to the House bill...

It was solemnly asserted on this floor...that all parties in the non-slaveholding States had come to a fixed and solemn determination...that there should be no further admission of any States into this Union which permitted, by their constitutions, the existence of slavery; and...that slavery shall not hereafter exist in any of the territories of the United States; the effect of which would be to give to the non-slaveholding States the monopoly of the public domain... At the same time, two resolutions which have been moved to extend the compromise line from the Rocky

Mountains to the Pacific, during the present session, have been rejected by a decided majority... It is a scheme, Mr. President, which aims to monopolize the powers of this Government and to obtain sole possession of its territories.

The slaveholding states, he says, are already in the minority in the House (138-90) and in the Electoral College (168-118).

Sir, already we —I use the word “we” for brevity’s sake—are already we are in a minority in the other House, in the electoral college, and I may say, in every department of this Government, except at present in the Senate of the United States—there for the present we have an equality.

There are two hundred and twenty-eight representatives, including Iowa, which is already represented there. Of these, one hundred and thirty-eight are from non-slaveholding States, and ninety are from what are called the slave States—giving a majority, in the aggregate, to the former of forty-eight. In the electoral college there are one hundred and sixty-eight votes

belonging to the non-slaveholding States, and one hundred and eighteen to the slaveholding, giving a majority of fifty to the non-slaveholding.

Only in the Senate do the slaveholding states retain enough voting power to block the will of the majority, and this is transitory. The admission of Iowa and Wisconsin will give the Free States a 32-28 edge in Senate seats, and if 12-15 more Free States are added, the South will be further overwhelmed.

We, Mr. President, have at present only one position in the Government, by which we may make any resistance to this aggressive policy which has been declared against the South...And this equality in this body is one of the most transient character. Already Iowa is a State...Already Wisconsin has passed the initiatory stage, and will be here the next session. This will add...four in this body on the side of the non-slaveholding States, who will thus be enabled to sway every branch of this Government at their will and pleasure.

Sir, there is ample space for twelve or fifteen of the largest description of States in the territories belonging to the United States.... How will we then stand? There will be but fourteen on the part of the South—we are to be fixed, limited, and forever—and twenty-eight on the part of the non-slaveholding States! Twenty-eight! Double our number! And with the same disproportion in the House and in the electoral college! The Government, Sir, will be entirely in the hands of the non-slaveholding States—overwhelmingly. ...If this scheme should be carried out...wo! wo! I say, to this Union!

This brings Calhoun to a favorite theme of his, echoed over decades: the need for the majority to avoid trampling on the wishes of the minority. So, he says, if the North denies the rights and the needs of the South on slavery, there will follow revolution, civil war and disaster.

Sir, the day that the balance between the two sections of the country ...is destroyed, is a day that will not be far removed from political revolution, anarchy, civil war, and widespread disaster.

His solution is forever grounded in the literal words and promises of the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing “perfect equality” for all. It says that each man has the right to transport their “property” (in the form of slaves) into any state or territory they choose. The majority simply cannot deny that guarantee without violating the law.

Now, Sir, I put again the solemn question—Does the constitution afford any remedy?

The whole system is based on justice and equality—perfect equality between the members of this republic. Now, can that be consistent with equality which will make this public domain a monopoly on one side—which, in its consequences, would place the whole power in one section of the Union, to be wielded against the other sections? Is that equality?

And is it consistent with justice—is it consistent with equality, that any portion of the partners, outnumbering another portion, shall oust them of this common property of theirs—shall pass any law which shall proscribe the citizens of other portions of the Union from emigrating with their property to the territories of the United States?

Furthermore, the essence of American democracy lies with the right of the people “to establish what government they may think proper for themselves.” It is simply an “outrage against the constitution” to demand that the people in all new territories must ban slavery before being admitted to the Union.

Mr. President... that proposition... which undertakes to say that no State shall be admitted into this Union which shall not prohibit by its constitution the existence of slaves, is equally a great outrage against the constitution of the United States.

Sir, I hold it to be a fundamental principle of our political system that the people have a right to establish what government they may think proper for themselves; that every State about to become a member of this Union has a right to form its government as it pleases; and that, in order to be admitted there is but one qualification, and that is, that the Government shall be republican.

And yet, Sir, there are men of such delicate feeling on the subject of liberty—men who cannot possibly bear what they call slavery in one section of the country—although not so much slavery, as an institution indispensable for the good of both races—men so squeamish on this point, that they are ready to strike down the higher right of a community to govern themselves.

Calhoun turns to extending the 34°30' Missouri line as a possible compromise. Ever the purist, he argues that the line has always been unconstitutional – before saying that he would “acquiesce to it to preserve the peace of the Union.”

Mr. President, the resolutions that I intend to offer present, in general terms, these great truths... Overrule these principles, and we are nothing! Preserve them, and we will ever be a respectable portion of the Union.

Sir, here let me say a word as to the compromise line. I have always considered it as a great error—highly injurious to the South, because it surrendered, for mere temporary purposes, those high principles of the constitution upon which I think we ought to stand. I am against any compromise line. Yet I would have been willing to acquiesce in a continuation of the Missouri compromise, in order to preserve, under the present trying circumstances, the peace of the Union.... But it was voted down by a decided majority. It was renewed by a gentleman from a non-slaveholding State, and again voted down by a like majority.

I see my way in the constitution. I cannot in a compromise. A compromise is but an act of Congress. It may be overruled at any time. It gives us no security. But the constitution is stable. It is a rock. On it we can stand.... Let us be done with compromises. Let us go back and stand upon the constitution!

Nearing the end of his speech, the sixty-four year old South Carolina planter reflects on his personal history and his commitment to not surrendering his sense of honor, to “not sinking down into acknowledged inferiority.”

But I may speak as an individual member of that section of the Union. Here I drew my first breath; there are all my hopes. There is my family and connections. I am a planter—a cotton-planter. I am a Southern man and a slaveholder—a kind and a merciful one, I trust—and none

the worse for being a slaveholder. I say, for one, I would rather meet any extremity upon earth than give up one inch of our equality—one inch of what belongs to us as members of this great republic! What acknowledge inferiority! The surrender of life is nothing to sinking down into acknowledged inferiority!

He closes with his four proposed “resolutions” to protect the rights of the slaveholding states under the constitution.

Resolved, That the territories of the United States belong to the several States composing this Union, and are held by them as their joint and common property.

Resolved, That Congress, as the joint agent and representative of the States of this Union, has no right to make any law, or do any act whatever, that shall directly, or by its effects, make any discrimination between the States of this Union, by which any of them shall be deprived of its full and equal right in any territory of the United States, acquired or to be acquired.

Resolved, That the enactment of any law, which should directly, or by its effects, deprive the citizens of any of the States of this Union from emigrating, with their property, into any of the territories of the United States, will make such discrimination, and would, therefore, be a violation of the constitution and the rights of the States from which such citizens emigrated, and in derogation of that perfect equality which belongs to them as members of this Union—and would tend directly to subvert the Union itself.

Resolved, That it is a fundamental principle in our political creed, that a people, in forming a constitution, have the unconditional right to form and adopt the government which they may think best calculated to secure their liberty, prosperity, and happiness; and that, in conformity thereto, no other condition is imposed by the Federal Constitution on a State, in order to be admitted into this Union, except that its constitution shall be republican; and that the imposition of any other by Congress would not only be in violation of the constitution, but in direct conflict with the principle on which our political system rests.”

In February 1847, Calhoun’s speech is regarded as radical, just one more attempt on his part to run for the presidency. A decade later, after his death, it will reflect the sentiments of most men across the South. be widely endorsed across the South.

Date: February 15, 1847

The House Passes A New And Harsher Proviso On Expanding Slavery

While the debate continues in the Senate, the House takes up the Three Million Dollar Bill to fund the war.

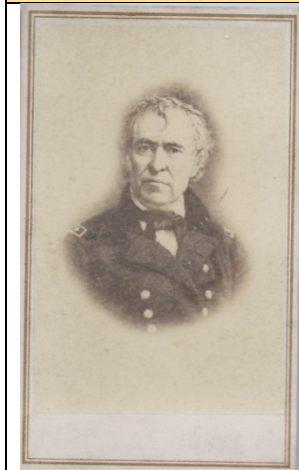
Once again, the New York “Barnburner,” Preston King, proposes an amendment in the form of a revised version of the Wilmot Proviso.

King's version is even more onerous to the South than Wilmot's. It declares that slavery be banned in "any territory on the continent of America which shall hereafter be acquired." This being a direct shot at expansionists who wish to annex all of Mexico and Cuba and perhaps even parts of central America.

Polk calls this a "mischievous and foolish amendment...with (no) connection to making peace with Mexico."

Regardless, the House passes the bill on February 15 by a margin of 115-106 and sends it to the Senate.

Chapter 150 – General Zachary Taylor Wins Lasting Fame At Buena Vista



Dates:
September –
December, 1846

Sections:

- General Taylor Drifts Southwest From His Victory At Monterrey
- The Battle of Buena Vista Ends The Campaign In Northern Mexico

Date: September – December 1846

General Taylor Drifts Southwest From His Victory At Monterrey



Zachary Taylor (1784-1850)

After scoring his decisive victory at Monterrey on September 23, 1846, General Zachary Taylor allows the Mexican army to leave the field, much to the chagrin of Polk and his cabinet.

His orders from Washington are to consolidate his hold on Monterrey, but instead he continues westward, taking the town of Saltillo on November 16, and ordering General John Wool to move south to Aqua Nuevo, where he arrives on December 21.

As Taylor drifts further into the interior, Mexican General Ampudia is sacked in favor of the familiar figure of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

His is a chequered past, starting with early support of Spanish rule, then flipping sides after independence is won in 1821 and finally defeating Spain's attempt to reconquer Mexico at the 1829 Battle of Tampico. This victory makes him a national hero and leads to a political career, whereby he is in and out of the presidency on seven occasions, his last term ending in exile to Cuba after a coup.

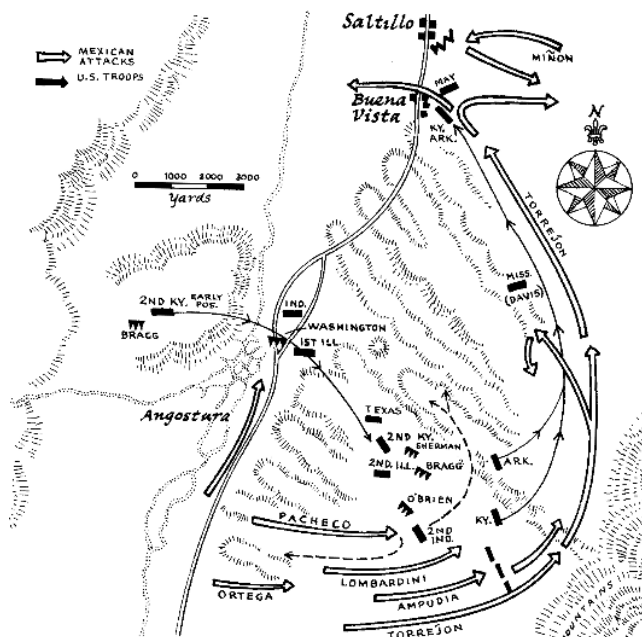


Map Showing Route From Monterrey To Saltillo And Buena Vista

His first move will play out just below the town of Saltillo, at Buena Vista.

Date: February 22-23, 1847

The Battle of Buena Vista Ends The Campaign In Northern Mexico



Battle of Buena Vista - February 23, 1847

Map Showing Santa Anna Flanking Movement Against Taylor's Left

But in late 1846 he again “offers his services to the country” to put down the American invaders – just as he did in March 1836 defeating the Texans at The Alamo and then in the Goliad Massacre.

With his return comes a guarantee to the government to stay out of politics, and a secret hint to the U.S. that he is ready to sign a peace treaty. He quickly abandons both promises, re-taking political control in 1847 and fighting tooth and nail against the U.S. invaders.

Santa Anna remains a courageous warrior, despite the loss of his left leg to a cannon ball in 1838.

He is a sound military planner, and also confident of victory – believing that he can first destroy Taylor’s depleted forces up north and then sweep down south on any invaders aiming at Mexico City.

At 8AM on February 23, the Mexicans launch a ferocious two-pronged attack. The main body of their infantry crashes into Taylor's left center which wavers until pivotal artillery support from Lt. George Thomas and Captain Braxton Bragg stiffens the defense. Meanwhile another contingent of roughly 1500 lancers head far east and north to encircle the American's left flank. These lancers break through and pose a serious threat to Taylor's rear – until a courageous rush by Colonel Jefferson Davis and his 7th Mississippi Rifles hurls them back.



Braxton Bragg (1817-1876)

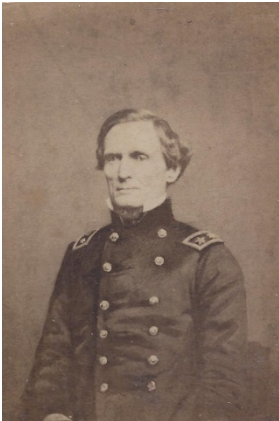
Santa Anna still believes by mid-afternoon that the U.S. forces will break under one more concentrated assault. At 5PM he throws everything he has left against the American center and again forces it backwards until Bragg's flying artillery and Davis's infantry are once again able to save the day.

When Santa Anna retreats from Buena Vista the next day, his Mexicans will have come as close to securing a battlefield victory as they will at any time during the entire war.

The butcher's bill for the day of fighting on February 23 is high – with 3700 men killed/wounded/missing on the Mexican side and 750 on the American side.

Two U.S. heroes emerge from the battle.

The first is Zachary Taylor, who, despite disobeying orders and marching into a 4:1 manpower trap, has escaped with another victory to close out his campaign to secure the Rio Grande border for Texas.



Jefferson Davis (1808-1889)

The second, ironically, is Taylor's son-in-law, Jefferson Davis, who suffers a severe wound to his foot at Buena Vista, ending his military duty and leaving him on crutches for two years. He returns as a hero, and is chosen by Governor Brown to serve in the U.S. Senate, which is vacant by a death in office.

Davis joins the Senate on August 10, 1847 and immediately becomes a leader in the Democratic Party.

Sidebar

Death of Henry Clay, Jr.

Among those lying dead on the field at Buena Vista is Henry Clay, Jr., age 36, son of a famous father whose presidential ambitions have been derailed by his opposition to the Mexican War.

The younger Clay is the seventh of eleven children in the family, and the one chosen not only to bear his father's given name, but also to follow in his public footsteps.

Unlike his two older brothers, Henry Clay, Jr. exhibits his father's energy and ambition early in life. After graduating from Transylvania College, he goes on to finish second in his class at West Point in 1831. He resigns his commission, studies the law, and marries the 18 year old beauty, Julia Prather, in 1832. A single term in the Kentucky House in 1835-36, is followed by overseeing the Ashland Plantation and caring for two of the four children who have survived infancy.

Then, in 1840, his world changes when Julia dies after delivering another son, who survives. But the younger Clay never fully recovers from this loss. He remains dutiful to his family, but loses some of the "purpose" that marked his youth.

The War with Mexico lends him a new cause, a chance to serve his country, in the tradition set by his father. He helps to form the Second Kentucky Volunteer Infantry unit, assuming the rank of Lt. Colonel. He arrives in Mexico, but doesn't reach Taylor's command until after the victory at Monterrey. At that point, it looks like he will miss all of the fighting.

On February 23, 1847, however, Taylor, and Clay, are confronted by a Mexican army with a 4-1 manpower advantage, at Buena Vista. The 2nd Kentucky is caught in the front ranks as the battle begins, and is soon overrun by Santa Anna's forces.



HENRY CLAY and WIFE.
Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1851, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, by Jas. Cremer, No. 12 South Eighth St. Philadelphia.

Henry Clay (1777-1852) and Lucretia Hart Clay (1781-1864)

Lt. Colonel Henry Clay, Jr. falls with a severe wound in the left thigh. His men attempt to move him to the rear, but they fail, and he hands them his pistols and orders them to flee and save their own lives. When the Mexican lancers arrive on the field, they spear the remaining wounded, including Clay, to death.

After Taylor's remarkable victory at Buena Vista, Clay's body is temporarily buried in Saltillo. It rests there until the summer, when the remains of many Kentucky soldiers are re-interred in a cemetery in Frankfort. On July 20, 1847, the Clay family, along with some 20,000 other local citizens attend the final service. It becomes immortalized in a long poem – *The Bivouac of the Dead* – written by a Kentucky trooper named Theodore O'Hara. The opening stanza:

*The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on life's parade shall meet
The brave and daring few.
On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead.*

For the seventy year old Henry Clay, and his aging wife, Lucretia, the day is marked by deep sadness, rather than glory. They have just lost the seventh of their eleven children, and here in a war that Clay has already called “calamitous, as well as unjust and unnecessary.”

Chapter 151 – Congress Finally Approves A Funding Bill Without A Ban On Slavery



Dates:
March 1-3, 1847

- Sections:**
- The Senate Opposes The House Bill Again And Passes Its Own Option
 - The House Passes The Appropriation Bill Without The Wilmot Proviso

Date: March 1, 1847

The Senate Opposes The House Bill Again And Passes Its Own Option

With the final session of the 29th Congress set to adjourn on March 3, 1847, both chambers feel a sense of urgency about funding the Mexican War.

The House has already passed a bill, but with the amendment from Preston King prohibiting any future expansion of slavery, in the west or in other lands acquired by the United States. This prohibition, even more drastic than that from Wilmot, is considered too divisive in the Senate, and it goes down to defeat on March 1 with 21 ayes and 32 nays.

Senator Thomas Hart Benton then proposes a \$3 Million Appropriations Bill, without the King amendment. It passes 29-23 on March 1, 1847, with the only Democrat voting “no” being Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, a strong opponent of slavery. The only Whig “yes” belongs to Henry Johnson of Louisiana, who cast the decisive vote earlier to annex Texas.

Senate Vote On Appropriation Bill -- Without Wilmot (March 1, 1847)

Region	Democrats Yes - No	Whigs Yes - No	Other Yes - No	Total Yes - No
Northeast	6 - 1	0 - 8	0 - 3	6 - 11
Northwest	5 - 0	0 - 2		5 - 2
Border	2 - 0	0 - 5		2 - 5
Southeast	3 - 0	0 - 4	1 - 0	4 - 4
Southwest	10 - 0	1 - 1	1 - 0	12 - 1
Total	26 - 0	1 - 20	2 - 3	29 - 23
Not Voting	(2)	(1)		(3)

VoteView/Library of Congress Record

Date: March 3, 1847

The House Passes The Appropriation Bill Without The Wilmot Proviso



Stephen Douglas (1813-1861)

With time running out, the Senate bill is back in the House for reconciliation, where those opposing the spread of slavery make one final attempt to add back the King Amendment. But this time it goes down to defeat by a narrow spread of 97 ayes to 102 nays.

This funding battle has lasted since August 8, 1846, a full nine months, and many House members now seem to conclude they have been operating in a dark and dangerous place far too long.

American soldiers are in the field in Mexico; they deserve to be properly funded and supported; the time has come to push on and win the war. Also one war seems enough for the moment -- without adding the visible threats of disunion that have surfaced over the Wilmot and King injunctions. Better to step back from this cliff for now, and possibly return to it later.

This is the theme promoted by the indefatigable Illinois congressman, Stephen Douglas, who lobbies hard to convince Northern Democrats to delay the battle over the spread of slavery until the various territories have been established, settlers have arrived and debated their state constitutions, and requests for admission are filed with congress.

This line of reasoning mirrors the plea from Calhoun that the people in each new state should determine their own form of government. As a principle it will soon become known as "popular sovereignty," a new option to Wilmot/King and the 34'30" compromise line and one that postpones North-South violence until Kansas applies for statehood in 1856.

The efforts by Douglas and other party leaders pay off when the final bill passes by a comfortable 115-82 margin in the House on March 3, 1847.

House Vote On Appropriation Bill -- Without A Slavery Ban

Region	Democrats Yes - No	Whigs Yes - No	American Yes - No	Total Yes - No
Northeast	31 - 7	0 - 40	1 - 3	32 - 50
Northwest	22 - 3	0 - 10		22 - 13
Border	10 - 0	0 - 8		10 - 8
Southeast	28 - 0	0 - 5		28 - 5
Southwest	22 - 0	1 - 6		23 - 6
Total	113 - 10	1 - 69	1 - 3	115 - 82
Not Voting	(20)	(9)	(1)	(30)

VoteView/Library of Congress Records

Analysis of the final outcome on the \$3 Million Bill shows a remarkable shift among the Democrats in the seven months since the Wilmot Proviso passed the House on August 8, 1846. At that time, 52 Democrats voted in favor of the bill limiting the spread of slavery; by March 1847, only 10 of them are left! This is an early testament to Stephen Douglas' powers of persuasion

Shift In Democrat Votes For The War Appropriations Bill

Bill Limiting Spread Of Slavery	Aug 8, 1846	Mar 3, 1847	Change
# Democrats Voting Aye	52	10	(42)
# Democrats Voting Nay	55	113	+58

The ten hold-outs are all Northern Democrats, led by David Wilmot, and joined by others including Preston King, Jacob Brinkerhoff and Hannibal Hamlin.


The Ten Hold-Out Northern Democrats

Name	State
Jacob Brinkerhoff	Ohio
John Campbell	Pa
Martin Grover	New York
Hannibal Hamlin	Maine
Joseph Hoge	Illinois
Preston King	New York
Mace Moulton	New Hampshire
John Wentworth	Illinois
Horace Wheaton	New York
David Wilmot	Pennsylvania
Bradford Wood	New York

Meanwhile, the House Whigs remain solidly against the appropriation bill and the war itself.

Sidebar: Recap Of The Key Votes On The Wilmot Proviso						
Chamber	Date	Form Of Bill	Yes	No	(NV)	Resolution
House	August 8, 1846	\$2MM + Wilmot	85	80	(56)	Senate Tables
House	February 15, 1847	\$3MM + King	115	106	(6)	House Passes
Senate	March 1, 1847	\$3MM + King	21	32	(3)	Senate Opposes
Senate	March 1, 1847	\$3MM w/o Proviso	29	23	(3)	Senate Passes
House	March 3, 1847	\$3MM + Wilmot	97	102	(28)	House Opposes
House	March 3, 1847	\$3MM w/o Proviso	115	82	(30)	House Passes

Chapter 152 – Whigs Make Large Gains In The Off-Year Election Of 1846

	<p>Dates: August 1846 to November 1847</p>	<p>Sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whigs Take Back The House While Democrats Hold The Senate • Important New Faces Join Congress In 1847
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Date: August 1846 – November 1847

Whigs Take Back The House While Democrats Hold The Senate

With the war and the Wilmot controversy swirling in the background, the off-year congressional elections drag on for fifteen months, from August 1846 to November 1847. As usual, House members are chosen by popular vote of all white men (without property ownership or taxes paid as qualifiers), with Senators selected by state legislators.

The results in the House are a serious blow to Polk and the Democrats -- as the Whigs pick up 37 seats to gain narrow control over the lower chamber.

House Election Results For 1846

Parties	1844	1846	Change
Democrats	143	112	-31
Whigs	79	116	+37
Others	6	6	NC

The largest gains for the Whigs – 26 of their new 37 seats – occur in the North. Fourteen of these are in New York state alone, where the Democratic rift between Van Buren men (the “Barnburners”) and the Polk backers (“Hunkers”) hands the outcome to the Whigs.

But Democrat losses also occur across the board, suggesting unease about extending the war with Mexico beyond the borders of Texas, and about the aftermath, as it relates to national strife over the slavery issue.

Whig Gains in the House: 1846 Election

	1844	1846	Change
Northeast	19	40	+21
New York	9	23	+14
Pennsylvania	10	16	+6
New Hampshire	0	1	+1
Northwest	10	15	+5
Ohio	8	11	+3
Indiana	2	4	+2
Border	9	10	+1
Maryland	2	4	+2
Kentucky	7	6	(1)
Southeast	7	14	+7
Virginia	1	6	+5
North Carolina	3	6	+3
Georgia	3	4	+1
Southwest	1	4	+3
Florida	0	1	+1
Alabama	1	2	+1
Mississippi	0	1	+1
Total Whig Gains			+37

In the Senate, with its staggered six year terms, only one-third of the seats are in play, and all votes are cast by state legislators rather than the public.

The results here are much more comforting to Polk than those in the House – with his Democrat Party ending up with a solid 37-21 majority.

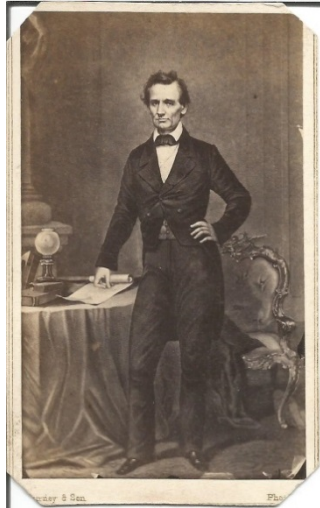
Composition Of The Senate: 1846 Election

	Democrat	Whig	Total
Free States	16	10	26
Northeast	9	9	18
Northwest*	7	1	8
Slave States	19	11	30
Border	2	6	8
Southeast	5	3	8
Southwest	12	2	14
	35	21	56

* Iowa admitted in 1846, with two vacancies filled by Democrats in 1848. Wisconsin will be admitted in 1848, restoring free/slave balance to 24/24

Date: Spring 1847

Important New Faces Join Congress In 1847



Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

By the time the 30th Congress convenes on December 6, 1847 for its first session, the South has assembled a roster of outspoken pro-slavery Senators who are determined to defeat the Wilmot Proviso and restore unity to the Democrat Party.

John C. Calhoun returns to the Senate after serving one year as Tyler's Secretary of State. He is joined by his fellow South Carolinian, Andrew C. Butler, another fierce States' Rights advocate.

Virginia also elects two new senators -- Robert T.M. Hunter, former Speaker of the House, and Calhoun's close friend, James Mason.

Jefferson Davis graduates from the House to the Senate in August, 1847, after his heroic duty at Buena Vista.

Three other sitting Democrat will complete the inner circle, one a Southerner and the other two, Northern men with strong pro-Southern sympathies. The Southerner is David Rice Atchison of Missouri, who is elected President Pro Temp of the Senate. The two Northerners – both future Presidential nominees – are Lewis Cass of Michigan and Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.

As of 1847, opponents of the Southern agenda in the Senate lack enough depth and alignment to have their way.

The political turmoil impacting the House Democrats in New York state is muted in the Senate. Daniel Dickinson remains a Polk loyalist, off-setting the Van Buren "Barnburner," John Dix.

On the Whig side, Henry Clay, has left the Senate after losing to Polk in the 1844 election. The equally formidable Daniel Webster continues to serve in the chamber, but his party support has faded after he chooses to remain Secretary of State under the "turn-coat Whig," John Tyler. Two other esteemed Whigs, Senators John Bell of Tennessee and John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, are both from Slave States and uninclined toward any actions that might threaten the Union.

Still the South will need to contend with two aggressive adversaries in the Senate: the Whig, Tom Corwin of Ohio, and the Democrat-turned-Independent, John P. Hale of New Hampshire.

Hale has been a Democrat throughout his career, and supports the Polk-Dallas ticket in 1844. But he has also been a consistent critic of slavery, joining the Whig JQ Adams in the House in opposing various "Gag Rules." This leads to an attempt by his state adversary, Franklin Pierce, to oust him from the party – a move that ends with a crusade by Hale to turn New Hampshire against slavery and his first election to the Senate in 1846.

While men like Hale and Corwin and Dix will begin to push back against the strong pro-Southern forces in the Senate, they will make little progress until additional support arrives in the election of 1848.

The House of Representatives is another story. It has already passed the Wilmot Proviso and is beginning to latch on to the powerful new notion of “free soil for free men” – and is eager to fight for both.

It is also joined in 1847 by a first term congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln is the lone Whig in a House delegation dominated by the members of Senator Stephen Douglas’ statewide machine. He will serve a single term before returning to his Springfield law practice – and a circuitous path toward the presidency.

Chapter 153 – General Scott Moves Inland In The South



Dates:
March – July 1847

Sections:

- Scott Takes Vera Cruz By Siege and Moves Inland
- The Battle At Cerro Gordo

Date: March 9-29, 1847

Scott Takes Vera Cruz By Siege and Moves Inland



Map Of Winfield Scott's Mexican Campaign

Two weeks after Taylor's victory at Buena Vista, Scott executes America's first major amphibious invasion, landing some 11,000 American troops on Sacrificios Island, just below the fortress city of Veracruz. The operation involves repeated trips ashore by 65 surf boats, each packed with 100 men and equipment, and lasts for over six hours. Once ashore, the men march north to surround the Mexican enclave, which includes 5,000 local civilians in addition to 4,400 garrisoned troops, under General Juan Morales.

The terrain leading into Veracruz is marked by the high chaparral and deep arroyos typical of Mexico's landscape. In addition to these natural obstacles, cannon are arrayed along a 15 foot high stone wall encircling the city and the road in is guarded by the formidable castle of San Juan D'Ulloa, and another 1,000 troops.

Scott immediately decides to siege the city. Colonel Joseph Totten oversees the plan, along with help from a 40-year old engineer, Captain Robert E. Lee. Lee's placements of three 32 pound naval guns, hauled onland, will prove critical as the siege develops. Aside from Lee, several other soon to be famous West Pointers experience their first taste of battle at Veracruz, including Thomas Jonathan Jackson and George McClellan.



Robert E. Lee (1807-1870)

On March 22 Scott is ready to launch an all-out bombardment from land and sea, but, before beginning, he asks Morales to surrender. When the offer is refused, Scott begins his attack.

The results are devastating. For three days Veracruz suffers under constant barrages from field artillery and naval guns. Mortars lob solid iron balls weighing upwards of 30 lbs. into the city from the west. In the bay to the east, the U.S. fleet unleashes its Paixhans guns, with 68 lb. shells that whistle in at low trajectories and explode on contact. Some 6700 shot and shell weighing over 450,000 lbs. rain down on the defenders.

Naval officer Sydney Smith Lee, Robert's older brother, observes the action from his frigate:

The battery's fire was terrific. The shells were constant and regular discharges, so beautiful in their flight and so destructive in their fall. It was awful! My heart bled for the inhabitants.

By March 25, the buildings and walls of Veracruz are crumbling and morale has worn thin. When Morales's finally requests a truce to evacuate civilians, Scott refuses, insisting on a full surrender. After haggling, the final details are worked out on March 29.

Scott's siege has lasted 20 days, and he has sustained a mere 58 casualties.

His gaze now shifts toward Mexico City, 225 miles inland.

Scott knows that this will not be an easy target. His army will be outnumbered along the way, and fall further distant from its supply base as it marches off. His enemy will have superior knowledge of the terrain ahead, and be motivated by fighting on and for its homeland. Still the General is confident of success.

He also knows from studying Napoleon that strict discipline in the ranks will be required to avoid alienating the local population and provoking partisan activity. His General Order 20 outlines harsh penalties for all Americans, soldiers or civilians, involved in robbery, rape, murder, destruction of property, and any acts affecting Catholic churches and worship.

Date: April 17-18, 1847

The Battle At Cerro Gordo



Map Showing City Of Xalapa Where Battle Of Cerro Gordo Occurs

After securing his hold over Veracruz, Scott sends a lead force of 8,500 men out of the city on April 8, heading northwest along the national road, with General David Twiggs and his 2nd Division in the lead.



David Twiggs (1790-1862)

Six days later they are on the winding road to Xalapa, where Santa Anna plans to ambush and kill them.

The Mexican General knows this ground particularly well, since it lies on his private estate. His plan is to lure the U.S. troops into a cul du sac formed by the Rio del Plana flowing along his right flank and the 950 foot high Cerro Gordo (“fat hill”) guarding his immediate left.

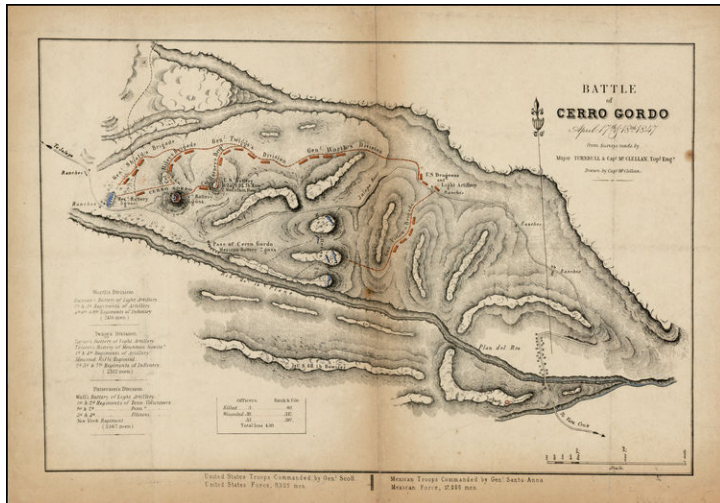
He arrays the bulk of his 12,000 troops in a classical L-shaped formation, with artillery batteries and infantry scattered across the Jalapa road and additional units ready to fire down from the Cerro Gordo on his left.

He also stations troops along a plateau to the east of the road, hoping to lure the Americans in or close off their subsequent line of retreat. With this shooting gallery in place, the Mexicans await the U.S. columns.

But Twiggs and his West Point engineers know an ambush when they see one, and they halt on April 14, north of the bend in the road leading down into Santa Anna’s position.

After scouting the area, they settle on a plan involving a trap of their own.

It hinges on enveloping the Mexicans, by hacking out a new road across the gullies and plateaus north of Santa Anna's left flank, without being discovered. The work requires three full days to complete.



U.S. Troops (in red above) Encircle the Mexican Forces At Cerro Gordo



George B. McClellan (1826-1885)

On April 17 Scott divides his army and advances. His light left wing, under Polk's ex-law partner, General Gideon Pillow's, demonstrates against the Mexican forces east of the road, while his main body, comprising Twiggs' and Worth's divisions, swoop down on Santa Anna from behind Cerro Gordo.

Battery placements by Lt. George B. McClellan prove especially galling to the Mexicans, and the Lieutenant is cited for valor during the assault.

By nightfall the surprised Mexicans are desperately trying to organize a credible defensive line.

As daybreak dawns on April 18, Colonel William Harney and his First Brigade dragoons deprive them of all hope -- clawing their way to the top of Cerro Gordo and occupying the fortress there known as the Tower.

From this vantage point, American artillery now dominates the entire field below.

Once the American flag appears atop the Tower, Santa Anna knows that his position is hopeless.

His troops along the eastern plateau surrender to Pillow's command, and Santa Anna himself barely escapes with his life, on foot, amidst a panicked general retreat west toward Jalapa.

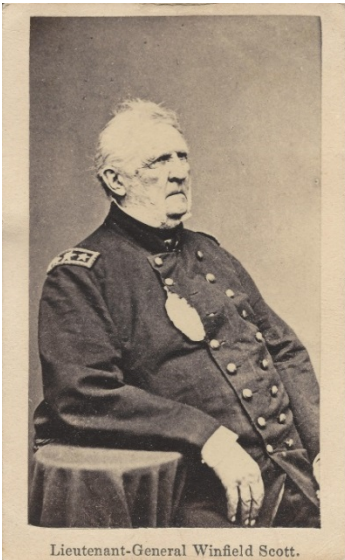


Gideon Pillow (1806-1878)

His losses are steep. Over 1100 Mexicans fall in the battle, and 3000 prisoners are taken, including five general officers. Another substantial depletion in artillery, smaller arms and ammunition also further weakens their capacity to fight on.

Date: May – July, 1847

Scott Pauses To Balance Diplomacy And Warfare



Lieutenant-General Winfield Scott.

General Winfield Scott (1786-1866)

Scott's successes on the battlefield lead Polk and his cabinet to step up their plans for negotiating a treaty to end the conflict. The issues center on how much land they can convince the Mexicans to give up, and at what price. The cabinet agrees that an ideal outcome would involve all territory west, from where the upper Rio Grande touches New Mexico, to the Pacific – at a price not to exceed \$30 million.

Secretary of War Marcy drafts an outline of the plan, to be delivered to Scott by Nicholas Twist, the number two official at the state department under Buchanan. Twist arrives at Veracruz on May 6 on the start of what will be a long and rocky mission.

By this time, Scott's army has chased the Mexicans all the way from Cerro Gordo to Puebla, only 80 miles east of the capital.

This produces a mood within Mexico City itself that is a mixture of outrage and panic. After finally driving out the Spaniards to win independence, here comes another foreign invader – and a Protestant-dominated one at that – in search of conquest.

Calls go up in the capital to sack the government, declare martial law, draft all able-bodied men, commence guerrilla warfare.

The last thing Scott wants to hear is talk of a religious war involving guerrilla bands operating outside the boundaries of conventional warfare.

On May 8, 1847, he issues a carefully worded proclamation to the people of Mexico. It asserts that the war is with government leaders, not with the people; that it's about policy, not religion; and that, once ended, the Americans will exit Mexico, not occupy it.

With these reassurances comes a warning. Scott's army is powerful and about to double in size, and it would be wise for the population to stay peacefully in their homes until the fighting is over.

Mexicans!--At the head of a powerful army, soon to be doubled-a part of which is advancing upon your capital...I think myself called upon to address you.

Americans are not your enemies, but the enemies, for a time, of those men who, a year ago, misgoverned you, and brought about this unnatural war between two great republics. We are the friends of the peaceful inhabitants of the country we occupy, and the friends of your holy religion, its hierarchy and its priesthood. The same church is found in all parts of our own country, crowded with devout Catholics, and respected by our government, laws and people...

Let all good Mexicans remain at home, or at their peaceful occupation...should Mexicans wisely accept this, war may soon be happily ended, to the honor and advantage of both belligerents. Then Americans, will be happy to take leave of Mexico and return to their own country.

Truth be told, Scott's army in May is much less prepared to advance on the capital than he lets on.

The inevitable diseases that plague troops in the field have taken their toll, and the enlistment term for several volunteer regiments is about to expire. With his battle-ready forces under 6,000 men, he pauses in place at Puebla for eight weeks awaiting reinforcements.

Chapter 154 – The Mormons Find Their Home And Support The War

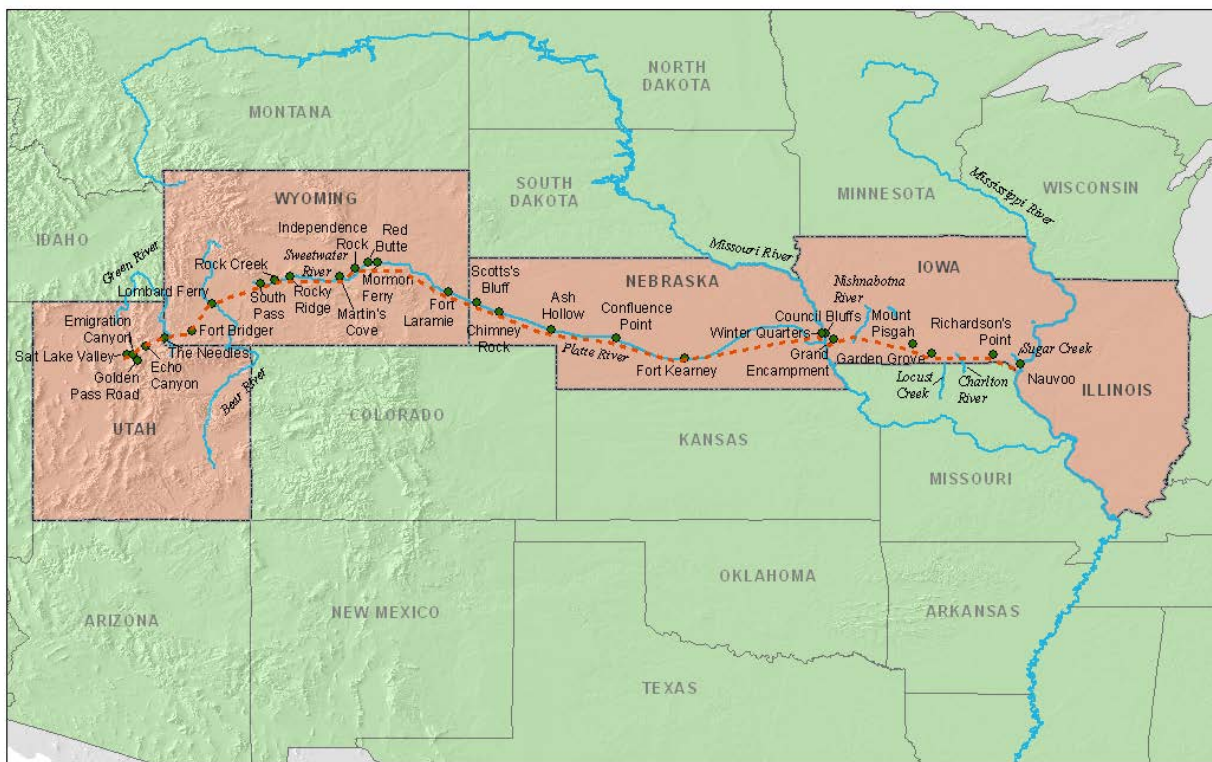


Dates:
1846-1847

- Sections:**
- The Mormons Arrive At Their “New Jerusalem” In Salt Lake City
 - A Mormon Brigade Supports The War With Mexico

Date: July 24, 1847

The Mormons Arrive At Their “New Jerusalem” In Salt Lake City



Map Of Mormon Trail From Nauvoo, Illinois To Salt Lake City

While the U.S. Army marches toward Mexico City, followers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or Mormons, are on their way toward their “New Jerusalem” home in Salt Lake City.

Their journey has been marked by a long string of setbacks.

After being driven out of their home base in Missouri in 1839 for the practice of polygamy, they settle in Illinois, at the city of Nauvoo, on the banks of the Mississippi River, roughly 200 miles upstream from St.

Louis. But here too local attacks on members of the sect soon materialize. Then on June 27, 1844, their charismatic leader, Joseph Smith, and his brother Hyrum are murdered while under arrest for ordering an attack on an opposition newspaper in town.

Many assume that Smith's death will mark the end of the sect, among them *The New York Herald*, which writes:

The death of the modern mahomet (Mohammed) will seal the fate of Mormonism. They cannot get another Joe Smith. The holy city must tumble into ruins, and the 'latter-day saints' have indeed come to the latter day.

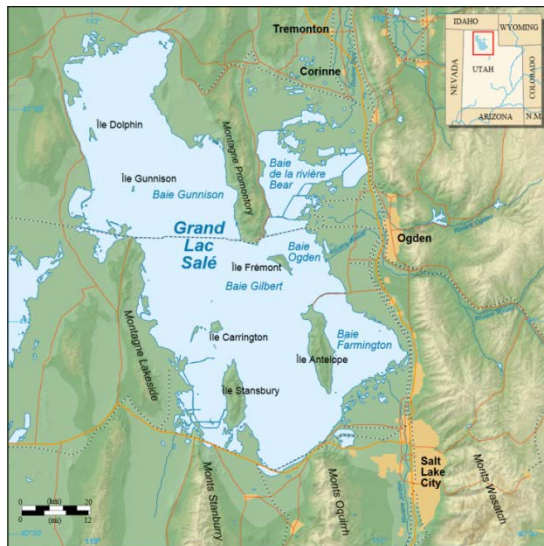
With Smith gone, the Mormons are indeed shaken, and deeply divided over the choice of a successor. When the main body settles in 1845 on Brigham Young, one of the Twelve Apostles, several splinter groups depart from Nauvoo and scatter to new sites. Young too recognizes the need to abandon the town and looks to the west in search of a permanent home.

In February of 1846 he leads an initial contingent of 4,000 of the faithful out of Nauvoo. They struggle across the frozen Mississippi some 300 miles to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they set up winter quarters.

In the spring of 1847, a small group resumes what will become another laborious three month journey. Accompanying Young here are 143 men, three women and two boys, traveling in 72 wagons. As they set out, they are accompanied by some 93 horses, 66 oxen, 52 mules, 19 cows, 17 dogs and a batch of chickens.

Their path takes them due west along the Oregon Trail, the well-known and well-traveled route mapped in 1842 by the John Fremont expedition – whose records Young relies on to guide his way.

The Mormons pass through Ft. Kearney and Ft. Laramie and, after the usual hard uphill climb, Young crosses the Rockies at the “South Pass,” veering south from there to Ft. Bridger and down through Echo Canyon.



Map Of The Great Salt Lake And Vicinity

On July 22, 1847 an advance contingent emerges from the Wasatch Mountains and gazes upon a valley southwest of the 2,000 square mile Great Salt Lake -- the sixth largest lake in America, with salinity levels far in excess of ocean water. They set up camp and await the arrival of Young himself, who lags behind due to illness.

Two days later when Young arrives, several members of the party urge him to continue on to California – but he demurs, saying simply:

It is enough. This is the right place.

Land for the Mormon's Salt Lake Temple and the adjoining Tabernacle is dedicated within days, and the settlers begin to lay out their city grid, build homes, plant crops and begin their new lives.

They will be soon be joined by thousands of others who hope to finally practice their religion in peace.

In December 1847, Brigham Young – “prophet, seer, and revelator to the world” -- becomes the Second President of the Church (succeeding Joseph Smith), an office he will hold until his death in 1877.

At long last, the Church of the Latter Day Saints have found their new leader and their permanent home.

Date: July 1846-47

A Mormon Brigade Supports The War With Mexico



Map Of The “Mormon Brigade’s” Overland March – July 1846-47

During their stay in Illinois, the Mormons have consistently supported the Democratic Party, including both Stephen Douglas and James Polk.

In 1845, Brigham Young writes to Polk, asking for government protection of his followers. Polk expresses his support for the Mormons, including a small personal donation of \$10 to their cause.

From that time on, Young looks for a way to repay the debt, and the opportunity arises as they trek toward Utah during the early days of the War with Mexico.

Polk desperately needs additional troops to prosecute the war, especially in the far west.

In 1846, he asks Young to assemble a 500 man force to support the fight, to demonstrate the sect's loyalty to the United States and, in turn, to dampen public opposition to their religious beliefs.

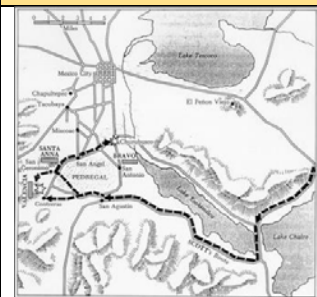
Thus the “Mormon Battalion,” roughly 550 men strong, is mustered into the U.S. Army in July 1846, and sent on the longest overland military march in history, southwest through Kansas, New Mexico and Arizona to their destination at Los Angeles.

However, like most troops in the northern theater, the Mormon Battalion sees no actual combat.

After their one year-long enlistment expires; many Mormons stay on in California. One of them, a man named Henry Bigler, ends up in January 1847 on a sawmill construction project near Ft. Sutter – where he earns lasting fame, along with Jim Marshall, as the first to discover gold along the American River. Over time, a total of \$17,000 will be contributed to the Mormon cause by Brigade members who participate in the subsequent 1849 gold rush.

In the end, the Battalion's efforts have served Young's ends, establishing good will with Polk and the public, and also providing funds -- from the \$30,000 total pay the unit receives for its year of service -- to purchase livestock, wagons and supplies needed for the upcoming trek to find a new home.

Chapter 155 – General Scott Conquers Mexico City And Ends The War



Dates:
August 20 --September
16, 1847

Sections:

- Fighting Resumes At Churubusco In The Valley Of Mexico
- The Battles Of Molino Del Rey and Casa de Mata
- Assault On Chapultepec Castle And The Halls Of Montezuma
- Land Occupied In Mexico By The End Of War

Date: August 20, 1847

Fighting Resumes At Churubusco In The Valley Of Mexico

General Scott's pause after his victories at Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo allows time for envoy Nicholas Trist to negotiate for peace, and for him to add more men before moving further inland toward his next goal, Mexico City.

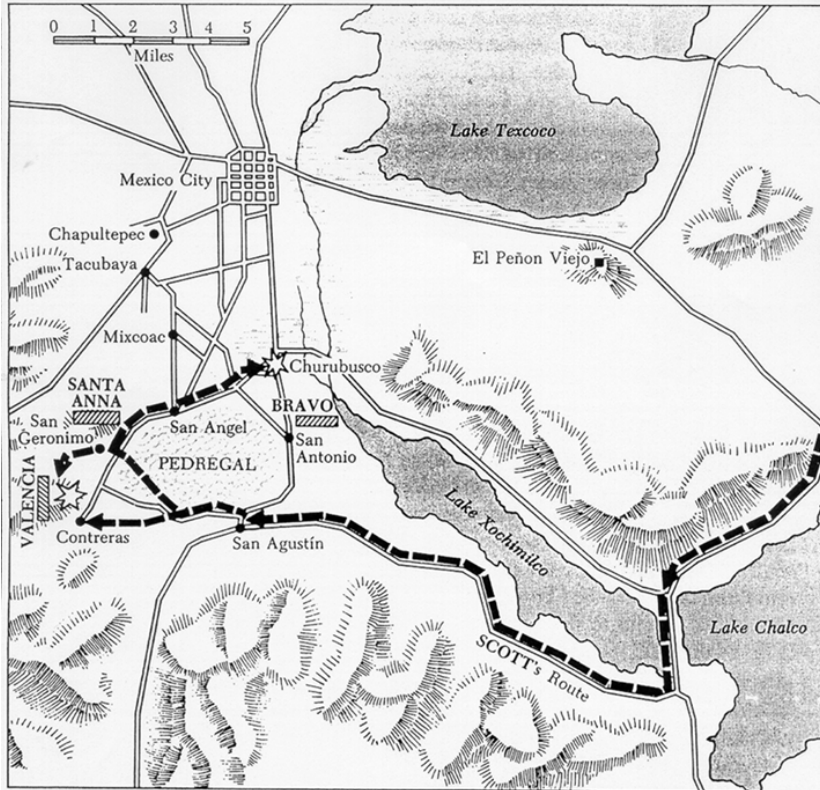
The first contingent of 2,000 troops arrives in July, followed soon by another 2,400, under Brigadier General Franklin Pierce. On August 10, 1847, Scott decides that he is ready, and his total force of 10,700 men – half new untested volunteers – heads west.

Soon they are cresting the mountains east of the capital where they come upon a dazzling landscape in the valley below. There, at 7250 feet above sea level, lays the city built by the Aztecs in 1325 and ruled by them until Cortez overthrows Montezuma in 1519. The historian, Horatio Ladd, in his 1883 chronicle of the war, describes the sight:

A few miles beyond Rio Frio they came suddenly upon an enchanting vision of the valley of Mexico. It was a dazzling picture of earthly beauty. The rich spring verdure of the plains dotted with the white walls of villages and haciendas, the silvery lines of mountain streams, the blue surfaces of lakes whose shores, winding about the base of mountains, stretched far into the green valleys and the hills rising to lofty ranges white with snow and glistening beneath the soft blue sky, all presented a scene that made the romance of Spanish conquests in the days of Montezuma appear like the truths of sober history.

Scott now must decide how he plans to conquer the capital city.

By August 16 he has reconnoitered the direct approach from the east over the National Road through El Peñon Viejo, and concluded that it will leave him with only one line of assault on the capital. So he settles instead on a difficult 27 mile march heading south of Lake Chalcothen east along the Acapulco Road. He intends to bypass the Mexican defenses at San Antonio, march around the Padregal lava fields to the town of Contreras, and attack north from there.



Lake Chalco Where Scott Swings South To Attack The Capital From Below

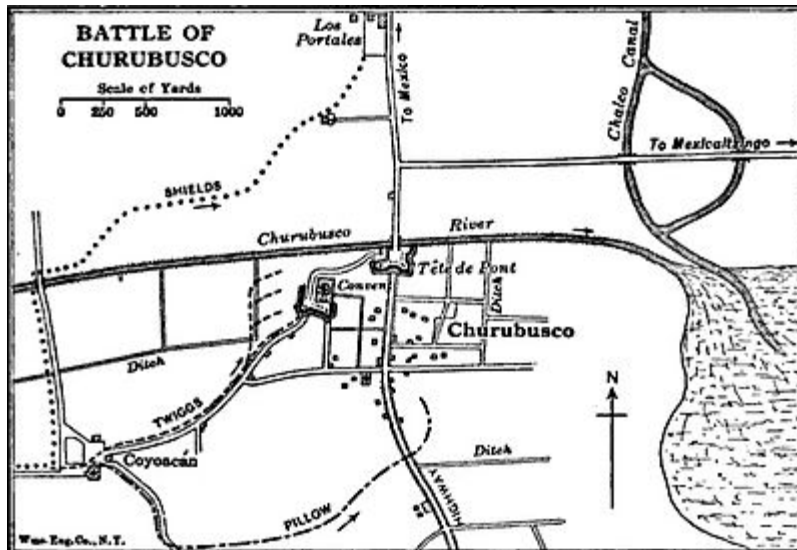
Santa Anna, however, anticipates Scott's path and intends to attack him along the road from Contreras to Churubusco. He lays out strong positions over the entire route, with General Valencia's 7,000 men on a steep hill bordering Contreras, his own 11,000 men two miles to the north, General Ruicon with another 6,000 at Churubusco, guarding a river bridge, and General Bravo with 3,000 men above San Antonio.

Once again, as at Cerro Gordo, Santa Anna is confident of victory. His 27,000 soldiers outnumber Scott by 3:1, and they are fighting to protect the capital city of their nation.

But once again, Scott finds a way to outmaneuver and defeat the Mexicans, despite their courageous efforts.

Coming up first against Valencia on August 19, General Persifor Smith's brigade is beaten back and left in a trapped position at the foot of the Contreras hill. That night Valencia celebrates, passing out brevets along with hard liquor to his troops. As the Mexicans revel, Smith's engineers find a way out of their trap – a passable ravine that circles to the right of the hill and comes up on Valencia's rear. At 3AM on the 20th, Smith's men race up the slopes and a rout ensues. According to Smith, it has "taken just 17 minutes" to clear the Mexicans off the hill and send them scurrying toward Churubusco.

Santa Anna tries to stabilize his troops throughout the day, but to no avail. General William Worth forces his way through San Antonio on the Mexican left and unites with Twiggs and Pillow at Churubusco. They are slowed briefly by stiff resistance from a heavily fortified church convent, but soon break through and seize the key bridge over the Churubusco River.



Map Showing Twiggs And Pillow Assaulting Churubusco

The first line of defense protecting the capital city has been breached by Scott in his three victories on August 20, 1847. American casualties for the day total 120 killed and 816 wounded. The Mexicans suffer 3,250 total casualties, along with 2,627 prisoners.

Four and a half months have elapsed since U.S. forces left Veracruz on their audacious mission.

Now all that's left is one final push.

But instead of rushing headlong to the capital, Scott turns momentarily cautious. He fears that his army has been fought out at Churubusco, and wants time for his engineers to plot the best approaches into the city.

When he halts, Santa Anna sends emissaries out under a flag of truce to explore an armistice. Buchanan's man, Twist, joins the talks, and soon the lull in battle reaches two weeks. By then Scott concludes that Santa Anna is simply stalling for time to strengthen his defenses, and he ends the armistice on September 7.

His army is refitted and his strategy laid out. On September 8, 1847, he resumes his advance.

Date: September 8, 1847

The Battles Of Molino Del Rey and Casa de Mata



Painting of Mexico City Around 1629

The ancient city now in Scott's front is built originally on an island just off the western edge of Lake Texcoco. By the late 17th century, the population is expanding and the lake is being drained away to prevent flooding and provide more living space. Eventually the lake vanishes into marshland, with eight elevated causeways built as routes into the city.

To reach the interior, Scott must first overcome three formidable outposts guarding the entrance to the western causeways – the citadel at Casa de Mata, the Molino del Rey mill and foundry, and the daunting Chapultepec Castle, regarded by many as the strongest fort on the North American continent.

A bitter dispute over strategy for attacking the Molino erupts here between Scott and General William Worth, his right hand man going all the way back to the War of 1812. Scott prevails, but Worth never fully forgives him for the carnage that follows.



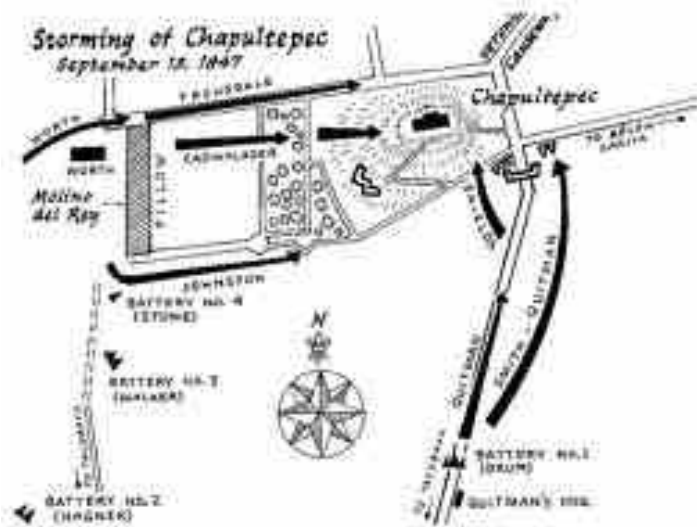
John G. Foster (1823-1874)

At dawn on September 8, Lt. John Foster leads the first head-on attempt to storm the Molino. This ends in a hail of musket fire and grapeshot that repulses the Americans and leaves Foster lying with a shattered leg on the field. And there he stays for another two hours of sustained violence in what turns out to be one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

The Americans eventually prevail at both the Molino and the Casa de Mata citadel, but at a cost of 729 casualties, including 58 officers. The Mexican losses top 3,000, with Santa Anna's top two commanders killed outright, General Leon at Molino and General Valderez at de Mata.

Date: September 16, 1847

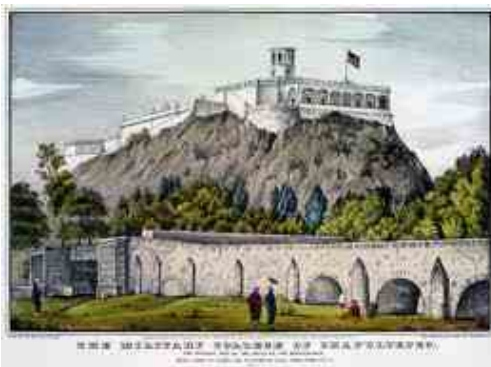
Assault On Chapultepec Castle And The Halls Of Montezuma



U.S. Attack On Chapultepec Castle In Mexico City

With the Molino secured, Scott decides that he will storm the capitol from two directions. His main attack will come from the west, under General Pillow, along the six foot high causeway leading to the San Cosme (customs house) Gate. Pillow will be supported by infantry units under the Mississippi General, John Quitman, driving from the south against the Belen Gate.

To succeed, Pillow must first pass the Chapultepec Castle, jutting out on a rock ledge 150 feet above the ground, surrounded by walls that are 4 feet thick and 20 feet high. The castle, formerly home to Aztec emperors, is now the site of the Mexican Military Academy, their West Point.



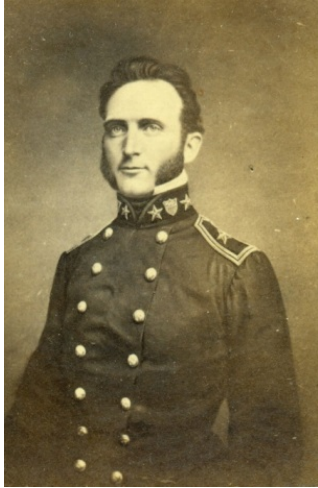
Chapultepec Castle by Nathaniel Currier, 1847

But not even this imposing barrier can hold up under the advanced artillery hardware and engineering tactics that have helped the Americans prevail from one battle to the next.

On September 12, four U.S. batteries, in easy range and well sheltered, begin to reduce the fort's defenses.

On September 13, as the bombardment continues, the Americans storm Chapultepec.

Pillow's troops race through the Molino grounds and into a cypress grove, where the General falls with a severe wound to his ankle. His men, however, move steadily forward and deploy scaling ladders to begin their ascent of the rocky hill leading to the castle itself. One officer who particularly distinguishes himself in this action is Lt. Tom Jackson, who wins another brevet for his artillery work alongside Captain John Magruder.



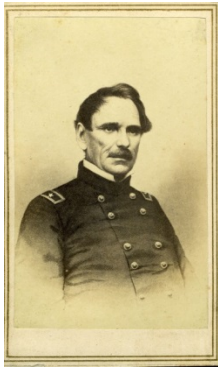
Pillow's men are quickly joined by General Quitman's troops coming up from the other side of the hill. Both contingents encounter fierce resistance, but nothing is about to deny the Americans at this point. By late morning shouts go up across the battlefield as the Stars & Stripes appear on the castle ramparts.

During this brave assault on the castle, a litany of future civil war military heroes have suffered wounds. Lt. PGT Beauregard is hit twice in the action. Major William Loring loses his left arm. Second Lt. James Longstreet goes down with a bullet to his thigh while carrying a regimental flag he hands off to Lt. George Pickett. Others wounded include Lt. Colonel Joseph Johnston, Captains Silas Casey and Magruder, Lts. Innis Palmer, Lewis Armistead, Earl Van Dorn, Isaac Stevens, and John Brannan.

Lt. Tom Jackson, later Stonewall (1824-1863)

The Mexican troops are both astonished and demoralized by the fall of Chapultepec, and they flee east along the two major causeways toward the central city.

The Americans follow post haste – with Worth picking up the lead for Pillow toward the San Cosme Gate, and Quitman's forces, under the wounded General James Shields, closing on Belen.



Shields is a hot-headed Irish politician from Springfield, Illinois, who, in 1842, had challenged Abraham Lincoln to duel over a perceived slight. His battle temper is similarly up as he chases after the Mexicans, and he breaks through Belen and into the city proper by 1PM, only to come under heavy fire from the Citadel in the central Plaza. By evening Shields and Quitman are hunkered down and waiting on Scott's next orders.

James Shields (1810-1879)



Worth's drive toward San Cosme proves to be much slower going, despite courageous initiatives from men like Second Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant, who sets up a howitzer in the belfry of a church and scatters defenders in his front. Rearguard skirmishes and sniper fire continue on this causeway throughout the afternoon, and Worth halts his men by 8PM within easy artillery range of his assigned gate.

Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885) and His Horse Cincinnati

The scene is now set for the climax of Scott's campaign to occupy Mexico City, which began on March 9, with the landing at Veracruz.

September 14 opens with the sight of emissaries from the city coming out to meet Scott. They inform him that Santa Anna has resigned his presidency and that the main body of the Mexican army has fled overnight out the backdoor exit along the National Road. They also request that control over the population, some 200,000 strong, be assigned to municipal authorities and the church.

Scott has not come this far to leave the capital in Mexican hands, and he immediately orders his troops forward.



General John Quitman (1798-1858)

The right wing, under Quitman and Shields, are already inside the city, and they proceed rapidly toward the Grand Plaza and the National Palace, seat of the Mexican government. Once there, General Quitman is given the honor of raising the American flag in the square.

Clean-up operations against diehards continue over the next day and a half, until the morning of September 16, when control over the entire city has been secured.

On September 16, 1847, Scott names Quitman military governor of Mexico City, a position he will hold all the way until July 20, 1848 when the U.S. occupation ends. At the same time, Scott allows the local city council to continue to function, along with the local police force and justice system. The Americans fine the city 150,000 pesos to care for wounded soldiers, and insure payment by controlling the customs gates. Eventually some of the funds collected go against efforts to rebuild the city.

Since entering the Valley of Mexico on August 10 with 10,700 troops, Scott has suffered 2,703 killed or wounded, including 383 officers. Mexican losses are pegged at 7,000 total casualties, along with 3,700 prisoners. When asked about “why” his massively outnumbered forces have prevailed in Mexico, Scott points to the superior military training and leadership of his West Point officer corps.

I give it as my fixed opinion, but that but for our graduated cadets the war between the United States and Mexico might, and probably would, have lasted some four or five years, with, in its first half, more defeats than victories falling to our share; whereas in two campaigns we conquered a great country and (won) peace without the loss of a single battle or skirmish.

If West Point had only produced the Corps of Engineers, the country ought to be proud of that institution.

The 78 year old Duke of Wellington, victor at Waterloo, attributes the victory to Scott, calling him “the greatest living soldier” and his Mexican expedition “unsurpassed in military annals.” On the other hand, General Pillow declares himself the “hero of Chapultepec” and is court marshaled by Scott, along with Worth, for writing after-battle reports considered self-laudatory and unprofessional.

Scott's attention now turns to working toward a peace treaty, in conjunction with Nicholas Twist.

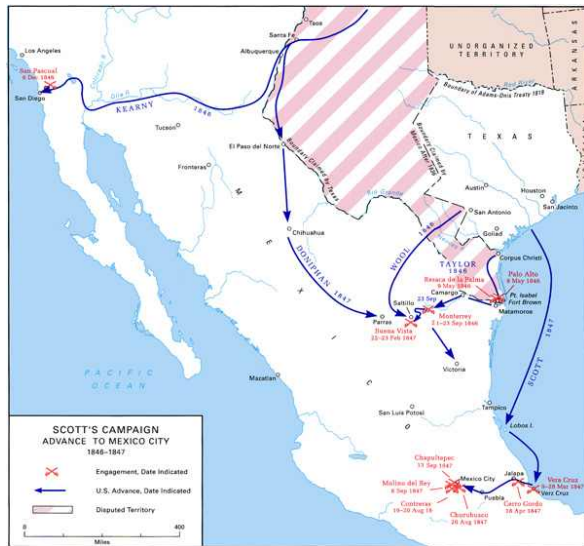
Sidebar: Milestones In Scott's Drive To Mexico City

Scott's 275 Mile Drive From Vera Cruz To Mexico City

Date	Events
March 29, 1847	Amphibious assault at Vera Cruz
April 20	Battle of Xalapa/ Cerro Gordo
Spring	Pause as Trist negotiations proceed
August 27	Win at Cherubusco
September 8	Molina del Rey
September 16	Mexico City

Date: September 1847

Land Occupied In Mexico By The End Of War



Despite some sporadic, mostly guerrilla, fighting after the capital falls, America is now the de facto ruler of all Mexico, only 26 years after that nation's independence from Spain.

Occupational garrisons are set up across all three theaters of the conflict.

To the north, General Kearny and Commodore Stockton control key cities roughly due west from Amarillo in northern Texas through Santa Fe and Albuquerque and over to Los Angeles.

Map Of Kearny, Doniphan And Scott Advances Through Mexico

In the center, Generals Doniphan and Taylor have gouged out a huge semicircle of land below the originally disputed Rio Grande border. Doniphan has driven down from Santa Fe to victories at El Paso on December 25, 1846 and Chihuahua on February 1847 and over to meet Taylor, who has secured Palo Alto, Monterrey and Buena Vista.

To the South, Scott holds a horizontal slash of 300 miles west from Veracruz to Mexico City.

At this point two questions remain for the conquerors: what land do they want to acquire permanently and how can they get the Mexicans to agree in a final peace treaty?

Sidebar: Some Other Civil War Generals Who Fight Together In The Mexican War

The fighting in Mexico will serve as a dress rehearsal for the strategies and tactics employed fifteen years hence in the American Civil War.

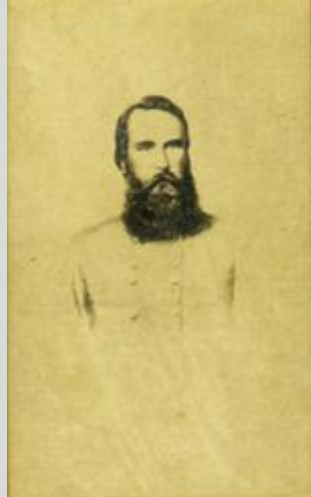
It also provides the cauldron of combat that produces many of that war's senior commanders – some 194 Union and 142 Confederate general officers in all.

Before these men are enemies at Bull Run, Antietam and Gettysburg, they have been brothers at Buena Vista, Monterrey and Veracruz. Together their deeds are nothing short of remarkable.

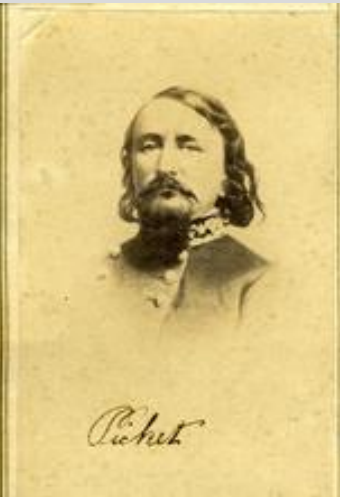
The capture of Mexico City is one of them. As future CSA General William Gardner (West Point class of 1846) says:

The idea of 10,000 men marching through a hostile country upon a capital containing upwards of 200,000 inhabitants, defended by 30,000 troops equipped with 100 pieces of cannon, and fortified by both nature and art! The capture of the city of Mexico under such conditions was a feat of arms to astound the world.

Confederates/CSA



James Longstreet (1821-1904)



George Pickett (1825-1875)



Joe Johnston (1807-1891)



Ambrose P. Hill (1825-1865)



P.G.T. Beauregard (1818-1893)



A. S. Johnston (1803-1862)

Union/USA



Samuel Fench (1818-191)



John Gibbon (1827-1896)



Winfield Scott Hancock (1824-1886)



Joseph Hooker (1814-1879)



Henry Hunt (1819-1889)



George Meade (1815-1872)

Chapter 156 – Two Splinter Parties Nominate Their Presidential Candidates Early On



Dates:
September 10 –
October 20, 1847

Sections:

- The Native American Party Selects Zachary Taylor
- The Liberty Party Splits In Two

Date: September 10-11, 1847

The Native American Party Selects Zachary Taylor



Derogatory Depiction Of Irish Catholic Immigrants In The 1840's

With the Mexican War winding down, Lewis Levin and his anti-immigrant Native American Party try to get a jump on the 1848 election by holding their first national convention.

The party has won six House seats in the 1844 race, but is down to one – Levin himself -- after the off-year balloting. Its goal now is to revitalize itself, arrive at a platform and try to strengthen its organization and broaden its base of voters.

The name of Levin's party will vary over the next decade.

At first it's known as the American Republican Association. This morphs into the Native American Party by 1847, or the American Party for short. An off-shoot calling itself The Order of the Star Spangled Banner surfaces in 1849, before a skeptical journalist, Horace Greeley, finds members reciting a set response when asked about the party principles – "I know nothing."

Greeley responds by handing the group its enduring nickname, the "Know Nothing Party."

The party convention is held on September 10-11 at the Assembly Building in Philadelphia, with roughly one hundred delegates in attendance.

A full party platform won't be fleshed out until 1852, but for now they agree on several things:

- The country should “belong” to American born, white Protestant citizens.
- The sharp rise in overall immigration in the 1840's threatens this outcome.
- The danger is compounded by the fact that many immigrants are Catholics, beholden to Rome.

In turn, the solution to “saving the country” lies in a host of actions aimed at the “foreign invaders” – from shutting down further immigration to waging “war to the hilt” against Catholics already in the country.

When the time comes for the American Party to nominate their choice for 1848, they settle on the warrior of the Mexican War, General Zachary Taylor.

For Vice-President it is 64 year old Henry A. S. Dearborn, son of Revolutionary War General Henry Dearborn, and current Mayor of Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Date: October 20, 1847

The Liberty Party Splits In Two

The 1848 race will be the third and final campaign for the abolitionist Liberty Party.



Salmon P. Chase (1808-1873)

Its roots trace back to 1839 and the schism within the movement between the Boston-based followers of Lloyd Garrison and the New Yorkers, drawn to the philanthropists, Gerritt Smith and the Tappan brothers, and the Cincinnati journalist, James Birney.

Both groups share the same ends -- immediate emancipation and full citizenship for all who remain enslaved – but differ on the means.

The Garrisonians refuse to be drawn into the political arena, arguing that the Constitution and the DC office holders have kept the Africans in chains, and that change will occur only through appealing directly to the good will of the public. They point to the steady progress made by their Anti-Slavery Societies and local lecture tours to support their convictions.

In 1846 Garrison labels the Mexican War “the greatest crime of our age” and campaigns against it. He calls the 1846 Wilmot Proviso a “landmark of anti-slavery resistance,” and in the Fall of 1847, lectures to some 20,000 people across fifteen towns, frequently referring to the Union as “a sinful abomination.” He also burns the U.S. Constitution as a public protest.

But his inflammatory rhetoric and anti-political posture is gradually costing him some support, including that of his long-time protégé, Frederick Douglass. In 1847 Douglas decides to start up his own abolition paper, *The North Star*, in 1847, without first informing Garrison. From then on their relationship grows distant.

Others, like the strategist, Salmon Chase, simply conclude that Garrison’s strategy is naïve, and that the only realistic path to ending slavery will be to undermine its support in Congress through new legislation. The Liberty Party is born out of this belief in 1840.

Its election performance, however, proves anemic. In 1840, James Birney tops the ticket and receives only 7,000 votes nationally. In 1844 he is again nominated, garnering 62,000 votes or 2% of the ballots cast.

These results provoke an internal split between the Gerritt Smith faction and the Salmon Chase faction, which surfaces at the party convention held in Buffalo on October 20, 1847.

The politically astute Chase is impressed by the anti-slavery traction evident in the congressional votes cast on the Wilmot Proviso, and argues that the Liberty Party would be better off in the short run by fighting the westward spread of slavery rather than by focusing exclusively on total abolition now.

The majority of the delegates line up behind this tactical shift, and nominate the vocal anti-slavery Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire over his one competitor, Gerritt Smith, on the first and only ballot.

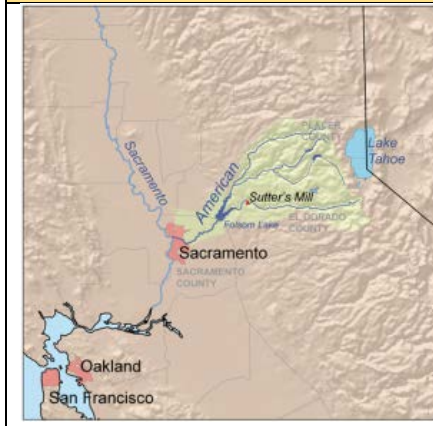
Initial Vote Of Liberty Party (1847)

Candidate	Votes
John P. Hale	103
Gerritt Smith	41

When Smith learns of this outcome, he claims that the party has been hijacked by moderates who would forfeit the abolition crusade for a few more political votes.

His response is to hold a convention of his own on June 2, 1848 in Rochester, New York, where his loyalists back him for President and Presbyterian minister Charles C. Foote of Michigan as Vice-President.

Chapter 157 – Gold Is Discovered In California

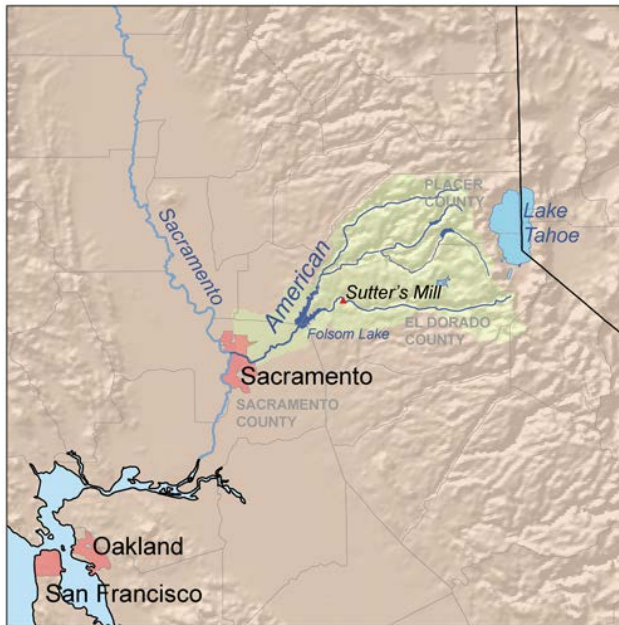


Dates:
January 28,
1848 to 1849

- Sections:**
- Johan Sutter Dreams Of A “New Switzerland” Community Along The California Trail
 - Gold Is Discovered Nearby At Sutter’s Sawmill
 - The Miner 49ers Rush To California To Get Rich Quick

Date: 1841-1843

Johan Sutter Dreams Of A “New Switzerland” Community Along The California Trail



Map Showing Fort Sutter And The Surrounding Area

The U.S. conquest of the Mexican province of Alta California takes on new and dramatic importance in January 1848 with the announcement that gold has been discovered some 35 miles northeast of Sacramento, at a sawmill being constructed near Fort Sutter.

The fort is named for the German immigrant, Johann August Suter, who flees from a debt-ridden past in Switzerland in 1834 to start a new life in America. He is 31 years old at the time, and anglicizes himself as “Captain John Sutter of the Swiss Guard.” He is multi-lingual and mixes easily in the French, German and Spanish communities around St. Louis, before joining the westward tide, first to Santa Fe and then to the “Oregon Country.” Once there, he learns the fur trapping and trading business, and decides to settle down in northern California.

Since the territory is in the hands of Mexico at the time, he goes through the laborious process of gaining permission to settle on the land, although his legal rights to the property will later be contested, much to his misfortune. In August 1840 he qualifies as a Mexican citizen and in June 1841 is given title to 49,000 acres along the American River. He christens the site “New Helvetia (Switzerland)” and dreams of establishing an old world agricultural community there, capable of thriving economically and fending off threats from both local tribes and the Mexican militia, if need be.

Between 1841 and 1843 he constructs his town center, Fort Sutter, comprising roughly six acres of land surrounded by walls that are 2.5 feet thick and stand fifteen feet high. Inside the compound is housing, a large kitchen and bakery, a smithy, carpentry shop, distillery, jail, a blanket factory, extensive storage facilities, and a supply depot and grocery store for travelers heading up or down the California Trail. Outside the compound is a flour mill, herds of cattle, and farmland, capable of providing the food and cash crops needed to sustain both settlers and guests.

The American River runs along the west side of the fort, with a dock and boats that ferry passengers some ninety miles down to San Francisco Bay.

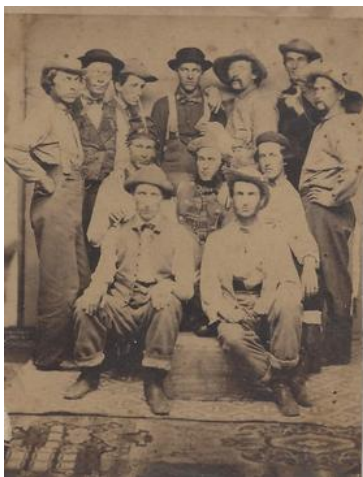
“New Helvetia” thrives, and Sutter is soon in need of additional lumber to keep up with his plans to expand the town. To supply it, he decides to construct his own sawmill at Coloma, some 40 miles upstream from the fort. Work on the mill is contracted out to James Marshall, who comes to the fort as a carpenter in 1845, and goes on to fight alongside John C. Fremont in the 1846 “Bear Flag Revolt,” before rejoining Sutter in 1847.

The two form a partnership, with Marshall charged with building the sawmill in exchange for wages and a share of the lumber produced. He hires a construction crew composed of local Nisenan tribesmen, and members of the “Mormon Battalion” who have stopped temporarily at the fort after the Mexican War, on their way home to Salt Lake City/

Work on the mill gets under way in August 1847.

Date: January 24, 1848

Gold Is Discovered Nearby At Sutter’s Sawmill



A Full Dozen Of Western Miners

Constructing a nineteenth century water-powered saw mill is a complex endeavor, and when Marshall tries to start his up in January 1848, he immediately encounters a problem. The flow of water into and through the wheel which drives the saw blades is not fast enough to generate the rotations per minute needed. Marshall analyzes the flow and concludes that the run-off ditch (or “trace”) below the wheel must be deepened and widened. A crew begins digging to widen this trace.

On the morning of January 24, 1848, Marshall is inspecting progress on the new ditch when he spots an unusual mineral formation. One of the Mormon crew on the scene at the time, James S. Brown, later records Marshall’s words at the time:

This is a curious rock, I am afraid that it will give us trouble...I believe that it contains minerals of some kind, and I believe that there is gold in these hills... Well, we will hoist the gates and turn in all the water that we can to-night, and tomorrow morning we will shut it off and come down, and I believe we will find gold or some kind of mineral here.

The drama continues the next day, as recalled by Brown:

Marshall said, Boys, I have got her now. I, being the nearest to him, and having more curiosity than the rest of the men, jumped from the pit and stepped to him, and on looking in his hat discovered say ten or twelve pieces of small scales of what proved to be gold. I picked up the largest piece, worth about fifty cents, and tested it with my teeth, and as it did not give, I held it aloft and exclaimed, "gold, boys, gold!" At that they all dropped their tools and gathered around Mr. Marshall.

The crew on the scene agrees to keep the find a secret among themselves, while fanning out across the area around the mill for their own discoveries. Over the next few days, more nuggets materialize and the excitement builds.

Marshall decides that he must share the news with Sutter, and he sends a message back to the fort with an Indian courier. Sutter's reactions are predictable. He first tries to contain the news locally, and then to determine whether he has any claims to the land around the mill.

Containment fails owing to a shady figure named Samuel Brannan, a Mormon and an early settler in California, who founds a newspaper in San Francisco and tries to convince Brigham Young to settle there. One of Brannan's duties is to collect tithes for the church, and he learns of the find when several Mormons at the sawmill hand him bits of gold on his visit. His response is immediate. He buys up all of the gold mining equipment he can find – using the church tithes along with his own money – and opens a supply store near Fort Sutter – then walks the streets of San Francisco shouting out the news of “gold found along the American River!”

For his efforts, Brannan becomes one of the first gold rush millionaires, albeit after expulsion by the Mormon church for fraud.

Sutter also learns that all of the land around his sawmill is considered “in the public domain,” and is available to any miner who stakes out a claim to mineral rights on “their plot.” In response, he heads to Coloma and tries his hand at mining, but never makes a strike.

The gold rush also proves unkind to Sutter's utopian wish for New Helvetia.

Get-rich-quick explorers from across the globe are soon squatting on his land and siphoning off his crops and livestock. His attempts to regain control are simply overwhelmed by the hoards, and his debts mount quickly. In 1849 he sells his fort for \$7,000, deeds his remaining land to his son, and takes up residence in Yuba City, some fifty miles to the north. For the next thirty years, John Sutter attempts to convince the U.S. Congress to reimburse him for the loss of the land originally granted to him by Mexico, and for his important contribution to colonizing California. In June 18, 1880, his \$50,000 is again ignored, and he dies two days later of heart failure at his latest residence in Lititz, Pennsylvania.

Date: 1849

The Miner 49ers Rush To California To Get Rich Quick



At first, news of the “find” at John Sutter’s sawmill on the American River is regarded with the usual skepticism by the public at large. This, despite an initial report by James Gordon Bennett’s prestigious *New York Herald* published on August 19, 1848.

The response changes in dramatic fashion on December 5, 1848, when President Polk confirms the discovery of quantities of the precious ore that “would scarcely command belief:”

Recent discoveries render it probable that these mines are more extensive and valuable than was anticipated. The accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service who have visited the mineral district and derived the facts which they detail from personal observation.

With that, the rush is on!

Two Mining Pards Off To Make Their Fortunes

The first challenge for the 49ers lies in getting to California from the east. Primary paths are identified in the press: across the Isthmus of Panama; through Nicaragua; around Cape Horn; overland along the Oregon and California Trails or various southern routes over the former or current Mexican territory. A Cape Horn ship is the safest and fastest (25-30 days) option, but the price quickly skyrockets to \$400.

One adventurer who sets out in January 1849 is Samuel McNeil, a shoemaker living in Lancaster, Ohio. His journey there will cover over 3300 miles, take roughly five full months to complete, and be memorialized in his publication, *McNeil’s Travels In 1849 In California*.

He reaches New Orleans by steamboat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers on February 20. His intent is to continue west through Nicaragua, but instead ends up on the overland route across Mexico, first reaching the town of Brazos, where he buys a mule and rides it for over 1,000 miles to the coast at Mazatlán, arriving there on May 10. The remaining 1500 miles of his trip is completed on May 30, 1849, when the ship he is on puts in at the port of San Francisco – still a tent city, comprising less than one thousand residents.

McNeil is finally ready to try his hand at mining for gold. He is armed with a pick and shovel, “cradle” and pan, acquired at grossly inflated prices, and whatever knowledge he has gleaned from various “how-to” write-ups that are already appearing widely in print. His destination ends up being “Smith’s Bar,” north of Sacramento, at the fork of the Bear and Feather Rivers.



Site Of Samuel McNeil's Brief Dig On The Feather & Bear Rivers

Once there, McNeil makes his claim to mineral rights (but not land ownership) by putting stakes down on the plot he will be actively working day in and day out. Early on, these plots are invariably either along the banks of a river or creek or even mid-stream in the water flow. The searching process is done by hand, with the miner scooping shovels of black sand and gravel into either a 4-foot long “cradle” or a simple pan, and then draining off the water and shaking the container in search of flecks or nuggets of gold.

It is a back-breaking task, but made tolerable by the pay-off for success. Thus, while day laborers back east are lucky to be earning \$1.00 a day in wages,

McNeil reports that the average prospector is finding \$16 a day in gold, and that some fabulous finds are yielding \$9,000 a week.

Such good fortune does not befall McNeil himself. He gives up after several futile weeks, and decides to earn his fortune in a different fashion – by opening “The Sycamore Tree Establishment,” evidently a combination saloon and brothel. While business is brisk, he is soon homesick for Ohio. On September 2, 1849 – only three months after his arrival in California – he has sold his saloon, clearing a \$2,000 profits, and is back on a ship headed home to resume his former life and publish his memoirs.

As McNeil departs, other more determined 49ers are pouring into San Francisco.

By 1850 it is a full-fledged “boom town,” with 25,000 settled residents, and some 300,000 prospectors passing through over the next decade. Included here are thousands of Chinese immigrants, who are mistreated in ways generally reserved for the native tribes. Upwards of 90% of the additions are males, whose lifestyles justify the wild-wild west label they are handed.

The value of the gold they produce is staggering – reaching a high of \$81 million in 1852 and then tapering off to around \$45million just prior to the war. The individual prospector, panning by hand in the middle of a river, soon gives way to larger enterprises using industrialized equipment familiar in other mining operations.

Gold Produced In California

Year	Gold Output (000)
1848	\$245.3
1849	\$10,151.4
1850	41,273.1
1851	75,938.2
1852	81,294.7
1853	67,613.5
1854	69,433.9
1855	55,485.4
1856	57,509.4
1857	43,628.2
1858	46,095.1
1859	44,095.2

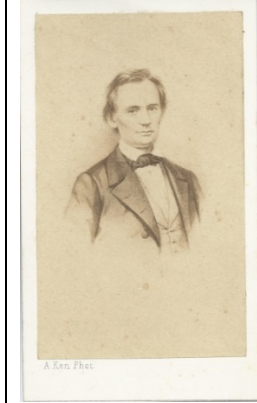
Along with the rapid growth in people and wealth comes a merchant class eager to service every wish of successful miners with gold to spend. Demand for goods and services perpetually outstrips supply, and those capable of meeting immediate needs often profit more than the average miners themselves.

Success stories abound. Two start-up bankers, Henry Wells and William Fargo, provide their customers with a safe place for their daily finds. They also open a stage-coach service which ferries travelers, along with mail, back and forth across the prairie.

One John Studebaker is making wheelbarrows just south of the gold-fields when the news breaks, and uses the profits from their sales to become a leader in manufacturing carriages. The German immigrant Levi Strauss arrives in 1850 with plans to make canvas tarps for covered wagons, then shifts to blue denim work pants quickly popularized in dry goods stores. The famous butcher and meatpacker, Philip Armour, builds his business from the \$8,000 bankroll he accumulates during the rush period.

Aside from the personal fortunes created and the impact on the national economy, the gold rush of 1849 puts the issue of governance of the territory of California front and center on the agenda for the politicians in Washington.

Chapter 158 – The Political Battle Over The War And The Peace In Mexico Intensifies



Dates:
Winter 1847 to
Winter 1848

Sections:

- Polk Is Frustrated By Internal Conflicts Over Negotiating A Treaty With Mexico
- The Whig, Abraham Lincoln, Calls The War A “Sheer Deception”
- The Democrats Search For A “Solution” To The Wilmot Proviso
- Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas Promotes “Popular Sovereignty”

Date: Winter-Spring 1847

Polk Is Frustrated By Internal Conflicts Over Negotiating A Treaty With Mexico

The Mexican War is effectively over on September 16, 1847, when Scott secures the capital city.

Still President Polk properly senses by December 1847 that he is losing control in Congress over the final outcomes of the war.

Even within his own Democratic Party, divisions run deep about what to do with Mexico and its territory.

Polk’s Treasury Secretary, Robert Walker, wants to annex the entire country.

James Buchanan, who publicly opposed any land acquisition when the war began, now turns acquisitive, to boost his odds for the presidential nomination. Once again Polk is enraged by his erratic Secretary of State.

Senator John C. Calhoun, whose hawkishness over Texas provoked the war, expresses horror at this thought – which would blemish America’s racial purity.

We have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race – the free white race. To incorporate Mexico, would be the very first instance of (including) an Indian race. Ours, sir, is the government of the white man...To erect these Mexicans into a territorial government and place them on an equality with the people of the United States is (something) I protest.

Then there is the especially galling NY wing of the party, now being called the “Wilmot Proviso Democrats,” who continue to insist that slavery be prohibited on any new land acquired from Mexico.

Polk himself opposes a wholesale annexation, but argues that America must be “indemnified” (i.e. compensated) for the costs of a war Mexico started by “their invading U.S. soil” along the Rio Grande on April 25, 1846. He decides to “wait out” the Mexicans, hoping they will offer up attractive peace terms.

He has sent his version of the territorial boundaries he favors to Nicholas Trist of the State Department, to advance talks toward a treaty.

But gradually he learns that Trist is negotiating on his own terms, with potential concessions in Texas and Alta (upper) California that Polk opposes. He also hears that Scott has court marshaled his confidante, Pillow, and joined Trist in working out a treaty, including a possible \$1 million bribe to Santa Anna.

At this point, Polk concludes that the time has come to sack both Trist and Scott -- but he is emotionally so averse to personal confrontations that both men stay on by default.

Date: Feb 12, 1848

The Whig, Abraham Lincoln, Calls The War A “Sheer Deception”



Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Polk’s troubles from his Democrats are now matched by an increasingly vocal Whig opposition, with its 116-112 majority in the House.

On November 13, 1847, Henry Clay lays out the Whig position in a speech in Lexington, Kentucky. The war was one of “aggression,” not defense, initiated by Polk’s false claim that Mexico invaded U.S. land. The end must not lie in annexing all of Mexico or in any extension of slavery into new land. Hearing these words, Polk’s supporters label Clay a convert to the abolitionist movement.

As the second session of the 30th Congress convenes, Clay’s arguments are amplified in two addresses by the 38 year old freshman representative from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln.

Since speaking out after the 1837 murder of the abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy, Lincoln has devoted his energy to building a law practice in Springfield, courting and marrying Mary Todd in 1842, buying a home, and raising his first two sons, Robert and Willie. He has also dabbled in local politics, serving four terms in the Illinois House. In 1846, he is elected to the US House as the only Whig in a delegation dominated by Douglas and his Democrats.

Lincoln’s reputation is that of a “free soil man,” opposing those who would seek to extend it geographically, while not calling for abolishing it entirely. As such he will vote five times in favor of Wilmot’s proviso during his term in office.

His first address to the House, on December 22, 1847, is very brief, but pointed. It becomes known as the “spot speech” for its “respectful request” of the President to inform the members...

1st. Whether the spot on which the blood of our citizens was shed, as his messages declared, was or was not within the territory of Spain, at least after the treaty of 1819, until the Mexican revolution.

2d. Whether that spot is or is not within the territory which was wrested from Spain by the revolutionary Government of Mexico.

3d. Whether that spot is or is not within a settlement of people, which has existed ever since long before the Texas revolution, and until its inhabitants fled before the approach of the United States army.

After eight such constructions, Lincoln has made the case that American was intruding on Mexican land, and not vice versa, when the fighting began.

Lincoln’s second speech comes nine days after the House has passed a resolution by a vote of 85-81 saying that the war was “unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States.” It paints a picture of a President who deceived the nation into starting a war to grab land belonging to Mexico, and is now “bewildered” about how to force the Mexicans into a treaty that makes it all look legal.

Mr. Chairman: Some if not all the gentlemen on the other side of the House... have spoken complainingly ...of the vote given a week or ten days ago declaring that the war with Mexico was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President...I am one of those who joined in that vote; and I did so under my best impression of the truth of the case

The President, in his first war message of May, 1846, declares that the soil was ours on which hostilities were commenced by Mexico... Now, I propose to try to show that the whole of this issue and evidence is from beginning to end the sheerest deception.

All of this is but naked claim; and what I have already said about claims is strictly applicable to this. If I should claim your land by word of mouth, that certainly would not make it mine.

I am now through the whole of the President's evidence... (and) I more than suspect already that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong.

My way of living leads me to be about the courts of justice; and there I have sometimes seen a good lawyer, struggling for his client's neck in a desperate case, employing every artifice to work round, befog, and cover up with many words some point arising in the case which he dared not admit and yet could not deny and from just such necessity, is the President's struggle in this case.

He insists that the separate national existence of Mexico shall be maintained; but he does not tell us how this can be done, after we shall have taken all her territory...As to the mode of terminating the war and securing peace, the President is equally wandering and indefinite.

As I have before said, he knows not where he is. He is a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man. God grant he may be able to show there is not something about his conscience more painful than his mental perplexity.

A decade later, Stephen Douglas will cite these speeches as evidence of Lincoln's "lack of patriotism" when the two pair off in a race for a senate seat.

Date: Winter 1847-48

The Democrats Search For A "Solution" To The Wilmot Proviso



Daniel Dickinson (1800-1866)

While the Whigs continue to hammer away at Polk over his motives for the war, the Democrats are desperately searching for a path to securing peace within their own party.

To do so, they must arrive at an option to Wilmot's total ban on the expansion of slavery into the west, which is anathema to their entire Southern wing.

Their first choice – declaring that the 34°30' Missouri Compromise line be the boundary for Slave vs. Free State designation in all newly acquired land – has been rejected repeatedly in the House.

As a fallback, they turn to a new option, one will become known as "popular sovereignty."

On the surface the idea is simple and altogether consistent with the original spirit of personal liberty in America – namely, that the people themselves should determine the rules by which they will be governed.

John Calhoun's February 15, 1847 address in opposition to the Wilmot Proviso cites this theme in his "fourth resolve:"

Resolved, That it is a fundamental principle in our political creed, that a people, in forming a constitution, have the unconditional right to form and adopt the government which they may think best calculated to secure their liberty, prosperity, and happiness; and that, in conformity thereto, no other condition is imposed by the Federal Constitution on a State, in order to be admitted into this Union, except that its constitution shall be republican; and that the imposition of any other by Congress would not only be in violation of the constitution, but in direct conflict with the principle on which our political system rests."

This is the classical argument of the States' Rights Democrats going all the way back to Jefferson, and forever disputed by the Federalist conviction that local "sovereignty" is trumped by the majority will of the nation as a whole. Sixty years after the 1787 "constitutional contract" this fundamental dispute still

simmers – and, as always, within the context of Southern demands related to slavery and its economic imperatives.

The notion of a “popular sovereignty” solution is floated out on the floor of the Senate on December 22, 1847, by Senator Daniel Dickinson of New York. He is a member of the “Hunker” faction in the state, men who seek to smooth tensions with the South, and who oppose the “Barnburner” wing’s attempt to stop the spread of slavery.

The Enduring Rift Within The New York Democrats

Factions	Key Members
“Barnburners” (Pro-Wilmot)	Martin Van Buren, John Van Buren, Preston King, Silas Wright, John Dix
“Hunkers” (Anti-Wilmot)	Daniel Dickinson, William Marcy, Horatio Seymour, Edwin Crosswell, Samuel Beardsley

Healing the division in New York is critical to the Democrat’s chances in the 1848 political race, since the Empire state remains the top prize in the Electoral College with 36 votes. It is also considered “in play” in 1848 – with the Whig Harrison having carried it in 1840 and Polk in 1844.

Top Ten Electoral Vote States In 1848

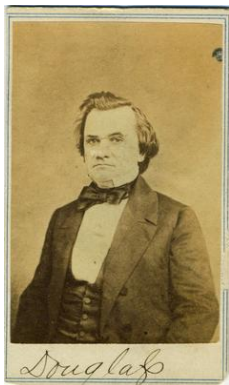
N.Y.	Pa	Ohio	Va	Tenn	Mass	Ky	Ind	NC	Ga	All-Other	Total US
36	26	23	17	13	12	12	12	11	10	172	290

It will now be up to two powerful Western Democrats – Lewis Cass of Michigan and Stephen Douglas of Illinois – to make the case for “popular sovereignty” as the road to alignment and victory in 1848.

With Polk holding true to his promise of one term in office, both men also have their eyes on the nomination.

Date: Winter 1847-48

Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas Promotes “Popular Sovereignty



It is the 35 year old Douglas who becomes the most visible spokesperson for “pop sov” from the beginning.

Two raw ambitions drive “the Little Giant” from early on: power and wealth.

Power has come to him through a meteoric political career, organizing the Democratic Party machine in Illinois, then heading to the U.S. House in 1843 and the Senate in 1847.

Stephen A. Douglas 1813-1861

His idol all along has been Andrew Jackson, and like the ex-President, he is an outright racist, as his harsh rhetoric demonstrates. In March 1847, he also becomes a slave-owner through his marriage to Martha Martin, who inherits a large cotton plantation in Mississippi.

This property will provide Douglas with wealth and spare capital, which he uses throughout his career to buy up land around Chicago, always with an eye to windfall profits if he can someday route a trans-continental railroad through the city.

To protect his political image in the North, Douglas manages his Mississippi plantation surreptitiously,.

Both his views on blacks and his personal stake in the future of cotton and slaves make him an ideal ally for his Southern colleagues in the capital. In fact, while in DC, he shares his living quarters with four leading Southerners, and their slave servants, in what becomes known as the “F-Street mess.” Three of his housemates chair important Senate Committees -- Finance (Robert TM Hunter of Virginia), Foreign Affairs (James Mason of Virginia), and Judiciary (Andrew Butler of South Carolina). The fourth is the outspoken pro-slavery Missouri Senator, David Atchison.

Douglas himself is Chairman of the Committee on Territories, a perfect position from which to both shape and promote “popular sovereignty” in the new western lands. He describes the process to statehood as follows:

- Once a sizable number settle in a new Territory, they will hold a State convention.
- At this convention, they will write and debate a State Constitution.
- Included in this document will be a “free state” or “slave state” declaration.
- The Constitution will then be voted on – yes or no – by all citizens of the State.
- Once a Constitution has passed, the Territory will apply to Washington for recognition.

In other words, popular sovereignty becomes...

Simply let the people decide!

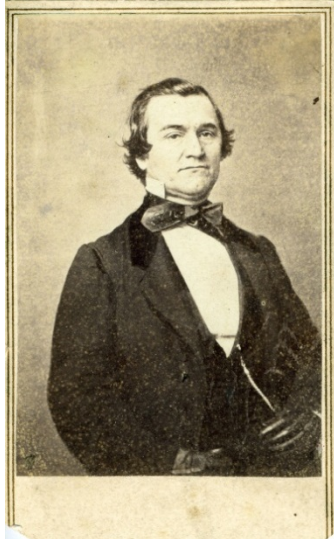
Once formulated, Douglas and Lewis Cass attempt to rally the party and the public to their solution.

With this formulation, they are convinced that “popular sovereignty” will thread the political needle between Northerners, uncertain about extending slavery into the west, and Southerners, demanding it. His next step is to try it out among his Southern colleagues.

Date: February 14-15, 1848

The Southern “Fire-Eaters” Respond With The 1848 “Alabama Platform”

What Douglas and Cass find when they go to “sell popular sovereignty” is a growing band of Southern Democrats who will become known as the “Fire-eaters” – whose zeal around expanding slavery is every bit as intense as the Northern “Barnburners” wish to contain it.



William L. Yancey (1814-1863)

The Fire-Eaters understand that the entire economic future of the South rests on raising cotton and selling slaves west of the Mississippi, from Texas to California – and they want “guarantees” of this outcome from Washington.

“Popular sovereignty” boosts their odds of success above Wilmot’s flat-out ban; but it falls well short of the “certainties” they point to in the U.S. Constitution and even the 1820 Missouri Compromise. Simply put, the risks of a pop-sov vote going against them are too high to bear.

One “Fire-Eater” who now joins Calhoun in attempting to unite the South behind a better option is Senator William L. Yancey of Alabama.

Yancey is born in Georgia and educated at Williams College in Massachusetts. His step-father is a New School Presbyterian minister who supports abolition, and other family members are strongly pro-Union.

After college he moves to South Carolina, edits a local newspaper, and speaks out against the 1832 “Nullification Bill” proposed by John Calhoun. In 1834 he passes the bar and begins to practice law.

At this point he looks like anything but a future pro-slavery secessionist.

His views shift, however, in 1835 when he marries the daughter of a wealthy Alabama planter and receives, as a dowry, extensive cotton land and 35 slaves of his own, near the town of Cahaba. Yancey takes up residence there and quickly blends in to the lifestyle of the southern aristocrat. To give voice to his now outspoken support of slavery, he becomes editor of *The Cahaba Southern Democrat*, and enters politics, first in the state legislature, then, in 1844, as a member of the Alabama delegation to the U.S. House.

In his personal life, Yancey embraces the “code duello,” which defines “honorable behavior” for men of the South. Included here are a series of “how-to’s” – how to manage a plantation, treat women and slaves, interact in society, serve one’s country, uphold traditions. Also, how to avenge insults or sleights, something Yancey does on two noteworthy occasions: first, when he kills a doctor who offends him, in a brawl, which leads to a jail term; and second, in 1846, when he fights a harmless duel with Thomas Clingman, a Whig congressman, who criticizes his speech on the Texas Annexation.

In 1848 Yancey focuses his ire on the continuing push in Congress to approve the Wilmot Proviso.

Like Calhoun, he believes the time has come for the South to take a united stand against all threats to abolish or limit the expansion of slavery. To create this united front, he orchestrates the development of five principles related to the Mexican Cession lands that become known as the “Alabama Platform:”

1. Mexico's 1821 law abolishing slavery must be revoked for the new US territories.
2. Settlers must be able to bring slaves into any territory once it is opened up.
3. The federal government must protect the rights of slave-holders in the territory.
4. Slavery will be legal until and unless a formal state Convention votes to prohibit it.
5. Alabama delegates will oppose all presidential candidates supporting either Wilmot or a "pop sov" version that prohibits bringing slaves into any new territories.

Yancey's demands are all aimed at "rigging" any popular voting in favor of slavery by making it a fait d'accompli in a new territory well in advance of any state constitution or election.

This will be accomplished, Yancey believes, by rushing slaves onto farms and plantations in new territories as quickly as possible and then delaying any popular vote until the institution is well established. On the premise that removing slavery once it has taken root will be more difficult than banning it from the start.

Yancey admits that his "fait d'accompli strategy" is not the ironclad guarantee the South would ideally seek, but it does build off the Democrat's "popular sovereignty" platform, while tipping the scales of any live vote in favor of slavery.

The 5-point "Alabama Platform" is approved by his home state legislature on February 14-15, 1848, and Yancey then tries to "sell it" across the South. He succeeds in three other states – Virginia, Georgia and Florida – and will take his case to the May 22 Democratic National Convention in Baltimore.

Chapter 159 – The Treaty Of Guadalupe Hidalgo Ends The War With Mexico



Dates:
March 10, 1848

- Sections:**
- A Negotiating Breakthrough Leads To The Mexican Cession Of Southwestern Land
 - Death Of The Remarkable John Quincy Adams

Date: February 19 - March 10, 1848

A Negotiating Breakthrough Leads To The Mexican Cession Of Southwestern Land



Map Of Land Acquired From Mexico In The Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty

With political pressures mounting on Polk, good news arrives from Mexico City saying that the controversial Nicholas Trist has achieved a breakthrough on a treaty with Manuel de la Pena y Pena, the ex-Supreme Court justice named interim president, after Santa Anna's resignation.

Since arriving in Veracruz on May 6, 1846, Trist's negotiations have violated all diplomatic norms. After Polk orders him to return home in December, he learns that Trist and General Winfield Scott are moving forward essentially on their own. The two men by now share a common disdain for Pillow, Buchanan and Polk and a belief that they are America's best hope for reaching a settlement of the war.



Manuel de la Peña y Peña (1789-1850)

Unlike the strident Santa Anna, Peña y Peña is eager to resolve the conflict, assuming it allows Mexico to retain its standing as an independent nation. Trist knows that Polk supports this outcome, and so the talks, at the town of Guadalupe Hidalgo outside Mexico City, focus on drawing territorial boundaries in the north and agreeing on a cash payment.

Trist walks a fine line with Polk's instructions here. He agrees to a border that is slightly farther north than Polk wants, both in Arizona and in Alta (upper) California, while still insisting on control over the important port city of San Diego. At the same time he convinces the Mexicans to accept \$15 million for the land, well under the \$30 million Polk sets as a maximum.

On February 2, 1848, Trist and Peña y Peña sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and send it off hoping for final approval in Washington. Polk receives a copy on February 19, and finds the terms acceptable, despite his ongoing anger over Trist's rogue methods. The next day, he forwards it to the Senate.

As expected, the treaty becomes a political football, with both the Democrats and Whigs trying to stake out their positions on the war and the treaty in advance of the 1848 presidential race.

The contentiousness is momentarily muted by news on February 23 that ex-President John Quincy Adams has died, following a sudden collapse on the floor of the House. After a hiatus to honor him, the Trist Treaty is finally approved on March 10 by a vote of 38-14.

With the Mexican Cession in place, America has both extended and secured, once and for all, its borders, and its recognition as one of the world's most powerful nations.

But the victory comes with a "poison pill" that will haunt and divide the nation going forward: whether or not slavery will be allowed to take hold in the Mexican Cession land just acquired. This is exactly the issue that kept Andrew Jackson and other Presidents prior to Polk from prior invasions in the west.

Sidebar: Death Of The Remarkable John Quincy Adams



John Quincy Adams (1767-1848)

No Whig has been more strongly opposed to the aggressive war against Mexico or more supportive of Wilmot's ban on expanding slavery than John Quincy Adams.

In February 1848, the ex-President is serving his eighth term in the House. He is 80 years old and still standing after the death in 1845 of his bete noir, Andrew Jackson, a man he forever regards as a "murderer, adulterer and slanderer."

In November 1846 he suffers a slight stroke that impairs his right side for several months and leaves him frail upon his return to the second session of the 30th Congress. Still his compelling sense of duty has him back on the floor on February 21, 1848, registering his final opposition to the war, when he topples over, into the arms of his colleagues.

He is carried to the Speaker's office, but is soon comatose. Two days later, on February 23, he dies in the Capitol building. He is survived by Louisa, his London born wife of fifty years and by one of the couple's children, Charles Francis Adams, who follows in his father's diplomatic and political footsteps.

In the end, JQ Adams has spent his entire life trying to live up to the "good son and public servant" dictates of his iron-willed parents, John and Abigail Adams.

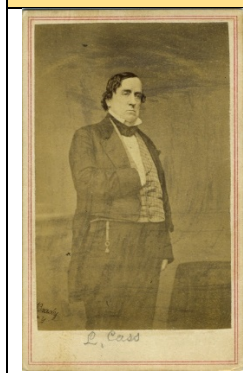
As a small boy he has witnessed the American Revolution, and at age fourteen, in 1781, his father sends him on his first diplomatic journey to Russia. All else follows on from there, as if on iron rails. His life has never been easy, but he sums it up well in his own words:

With regard to what is called the wheel of Fortune, my career in life has been, with severe vicissitudes, on the whole highly auspicious.

Public Service Record Of JQ Adams

Dates	Age	Office
1781 -- 1784	14-17	Assistant to US Minister to Russia
1794 – 1797	27-30	Minister to Netherlands
1797 -- 1801	30-34	Minister to Prussia
1803 – 1808	36-41	U.S. Senator from Massachusetts
1809 – 1814	42-47	Minister to Russia
1814 – 1817	47-50	Ambassador to Britain
1817 – 1825	50-58	Secretary of State (Monroe)
1825 – 1829	58-62	President of the United States
1831 -- 1848	64-80	U.S. House of Representatives

Chapter 160 – The Contentious Democrats Nominate Lewis Cass



Dates:
May 22, 1848

Sections:

- The Democrats Nominate Cass

Date: May 22, 1848

The Democrats Nominate Cass



On May 22, 1848, ten weeks after the Mexican War Treaty is signed, the Democrats convene in Baltimore to pick a presidential nominee to secede Polk, who keeps his promise of serving only one term.

Delegates from all 30 states are present, with the total count evenly split between northerners and southerners.

As expected, the issue of “slavery in the new western territories” is front and center for all.

Its divisive character is evident right away in a floor fight over seating the New York delegation, with both the Barnburners and the Hunkers claiming to represent the state. After heated debate, the convention decides, by a margin of 126-125, on a compromise, with each faction awarded 18 votes.

Lewis Cass (1782-1866)

This results in the first “walk-out,” with the Barnburners exiting the convention to explore an alliance with other “free soil” groups, across parties, who oppose the spread of slavery.

The second walk-out occurs after Fire-Eater William Yancey presents the “Alabama Platform” proposals to the delegates, and they are voted down by a wide 216-36 margin. In protest, the hot-tempered Yancey leaves the hall.

As the actual balloting begins, it’s clear that no Southern dark horse, like Polk in 1844, will win the day.

Instead, three Northerners are in the running.

One is Supreme Court Justice, Levi Woodbury, ex-Senator and Governor of New Hampshire, and a solid Jackson man. His cause, however, is hurt by his role as Secretary of the Treasury during the Bank Panic of 1837 and the following recession.

A second contender is Polk’s Secretary of State, James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, who received a trickle of votes in the 1844 convention. The President comes to regard Buchanan as self-serving, untrustworthy and lacking in good judgment. His handling of the Oregon dispute almost leads to war with Britain; he tries to torpedo Scott’s plan to conquer Mexico City; and he plays politics with the final peace treaty, attempting to hide his early vocal opposition to acquiring any new land from the war. Despite these gaffes, Buchanan’s “resume” is sufficient for him to make a second run at the nomination.

As in 1844, however, the front runner is again Senator from Michigan, Lewis Cass.

The 68 year old Cass is first off a tried and true Democrat, who has served in Jackson’s cabinet, consistently backs Polk, favors annexing all of Mexico, and never wavers on the rights of slave owners. On top of that, he is known forever as “General Cass,” conqueror of Tecumseh and “hero of the War of 1812” – a legacy the party hopes will allow him to offset the popular appeal enjoyed by the potential Whig military candidates, Taylor and Scott.

The voting favors Cass from the start, and he wins handily on the fourth ballot.

Voting For Democratic Party Nomination

Candidate	1	2	3	4
Lewis Cass	125	133	156	179
Levi Woodbury	53	56	53	38
James Buchanan	55	54	39	33
John Calhoun	9	0	0	0
Others	9	9	5	5
Abstaining	39	38	37	35

His running mate will be General William O. Butler, whose military career has spanned the War of 1812 through the Mexican War, where he is second in command to Taylor and wounded at the Battle of Monterrey. Butler is from Kentucky, and has served two terms in the U.S. House (1839-43) before joining Cass on the ticket.

In the end, the nomination of Cass from Michigan is symbolic of what becomes the Democrats search for a North-South presidential compromise -- something that will be repeated in 1852 with Franklin Pierce and in 1856 with James Buchanan.

All are Northern men who embrace Southern sympathies in their drive to win the presidency.

Over time they will all share the same epithet in the Northern press, that of “Doughfaces” – men lacking in firm principles, as pliable as bread dough when it comes to standing up to the South on tough issues like slavery.