

## 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

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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 30<sup>th</sup> 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