

“Manifest Destiny”

Never in the history of any nation has a country acquired so much valuable land in such a short period of time as the U.S. acquired during a seventy year period from 1783 to 1853!

When America declared her independence from Britain in 1776, she didn't yet legally own one square foot of land in North America. It was still not known whether Britain would win that war, and therefore would refuse to grant America a title to land in North America.

But, after suffering military defeat in America, Britain offered the United States a very generous settlement — all the land between Canada and Florida east of the Mississippi. This vast stretch of land was granted to the U.S. in 1783 by the terms of the Treaty of Paris. And from 1783 until 1853 — a period of exactly 70 years — America was to acquire all of the rest of what now constitutes the original 48 contiguous states.

How did this great expansion take place?

Trouble in Texas

Martin van Buren became America's eighth President (1837-41). His administration wasn't very eventful.

William Henry Harrison succeeded him in office (1841), but he suffered from poor health and *died one month after taking office*.

John Tyler (1841-45) served as president during a comparatively uneventful time in U.S. history. During his term in office, the slavery issue was again beginning to make trouble in the nation. At this time the question of the annexation of Texas frustrated America. This, too, was tied in with the *slavery* issue. The slave states (mainly in the South) wanted Texas to be admitted as a slave state, whereas the northern states opposed slavery and wanted Texas to be admitted to the Union only as a free state. This vexatious problem was soon to boil over.

How did Texas become a state?

Mexico won its independence from Spain, and became a republic in 1821. The President of Mexico, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, invited Americans into Texas to help develop the territory. American speculators gladly agreed to settle large tracts of land.

Stephen F. Austin was the first who, in 1821, received a grant to settle 300 families on the Colorado River.

Shortly afterward, a "Texas fever" developed — as thousands of southeasterners moved with their slaves to the new cotton lands of east Texas. The Mexican government winked at the American's use of slaves.

Within ten years there were about 30,000 Americans in Texas and only about 3,500 Mexicans. Friction began to develop when the Americans demanded greater representation, and also when the Mexican government sought to abolish slavery.

Serious disagreements led to growing bitterness and this enmity flared up into a full-scale revolution when Santa Anna decided to strengthen his garrison in Texas.

By this time, Texas, with so many Americans, quite naturally felt a stronger tie with the U.S. than with the Republic of Mexico. The fact that the Florida Treaty of 1819 (between the U.S. and Mexico) had given up all claim to Texas made no difference so far as these Texans were concerned.

When President Santa Anna decided to strengthen his control over Texas, the Texans replied by declaring themselves independent.

At that critical point, the Texans decided to take matters into their own hands. Their leaders met at San Felipe on November 3, and formed a provisional government. The Texans captured San Antonio from the Mexicans in December, 1835. The Mexicans promptly agreed to withdraw into Mexico. All seemed to be going well for the Americans up to this point. But tragedy was soon to strike.

The Alamo Massacre

Mexico's dictator, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, recaptured San Antonio on March 2, 1836. Even so, a small number of defenders in the doomed city stubbornly resisted, and determined not to surrender to the despised dictator. At this point, Texans meeting at Washington-on-the-Brazos declared their independence and promptly established the Republic of Texas. They elected David G. Burnet provisional president. Sam Houston was given command of the army. (He was a former U.S. Congressman and governor of Tennessee, and was Texas's most remarkable figure).

When Santa Anna realized that the Texans had declared their independence from Mexico, this only stiffened his resolve to bring the rebels to heel. He would teach them a lesson or two which they would never forget — at least that's what he thought.

Santa Anna and his army of about 4,000 Mexicans began their siege of the Alamo on February 23. At that time the Alamo was defended by only 150 men, including the renowned Davy Crockett, James Bowie and Col. William B. Travis, the commander. A badly needed reinforcement of 32 men succeeded in slipping through Santa Anna's lines on March 1,

but further help was prevented from reaching the Alamo — mainly through confusion, dissension and ineptness of the provisional government.

Before the assault on the Alamo, the Mexican dictator Santa Anna ordered that no prisoners be taken. The defenders, however, stoutly defied Santa Anna's demands for surrender. They were hopelessly outnumbered and were now running out of ammunition. The siege which commenced in February continued on through the early days of March. By the 5th, the besieged garrison in the Alamo couldn't return Mexican fire simply because ammunition was low. This convinced Santa Anna that the fort could be successfully assaulted. He decided to attack the Alamo in the early hours of the morning of March 6th. On that fateful morning, the Mexicans finally succeeded in scaling the strong walls and stormed through a breach in the outer wall of the courtyard of the Alamo.

But the Texans had determined that they would fight to the death rather than surrender to the Mexican dictator. After running out of ammunition, the defenders used their muskets as clubs and fought until all but six of them were dead.

Santa Anna, in no mood to show pity, promptly ordered the six remaining defenders executed. Some historians say Davy Crockett was one of the six. What is certain however is that both of America's border heroes Davy Crockett and James Bowie died in the Alamo slaughter.

No male defenders of the Alamo survived. The only survivors of that fierce battle were Mrs. Dickinson (the wife of an officer), her baby, her Mexican nurse and a Negro boy.

At 8 a.m. Santa Anna reported the Mexican victory to his government. But he had paid a very heavy price in his battle to subdue the 180-odd defenders of the Alamo. By the time the last of the doomed defenders perished in hand-to-hand fighting, Santa Anna and his army had lost between 1,000 and 6,000 badly needed men. This costly victory would lose Texas for Santa Anna, for not only did he lose from 1,000 to 6,000 of his soldiers, he also lost time. He was delayed long enough to give Sam Houston badly needed time to perfect plans for the defense of the Americans living in Texas. To this day, the Alamo is a defiant symbol of the Texans' heroic stand in the cause of freedom.

After the fall of the Alamo, Col. James W. Fannin, commanding 300 men at Goliad, was ordered to retreat. While retreating, his army was overtaken by the Mexicans on the afternoon of March 19. After a hopeless battle, his greatly outnumbered army was forced to surrender. The Texans were returned to Goliad. But on March 27, under direct orders from Santa Anna, Fannin's entire force was mercilessly slaughtered in cold blood.

The bloody battle at the Alamo and the Goliad massacre gave the

Texans two impassioned battle cries. "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!" resounded across the Jacinto River when they met the Mexican army for the last time. The enraged Americans were now looking for Mexican scalps. A brief, bizarre climax to the revolution — the battle of San Jacinto — was fought on April 21, on the banks of the San Jacinto River, near present-day Houston. After long, weary days of retreat, General Sam Houston turned on his Mexican pursuers and routed their entire army. Houston's outstanding victory was the result of a brilliant tactical maneuver in which he surprised the sleepy Mexicans during their afternoon siesta. In all, about six hundred Mexicans were killed and two hundred wounded during the brief twenty-minute battle at San Jacinto.

San Houston's army also captured Santa Anna and 700 others within a 24-hour period. Fewer than a dozen Mexicans escaped. Of about 800 Texans who took part in the battle, only nine were killed and 30 wounded.

Santa Anna was freed — after first being forced by Sam Houston to sign a treaty granting Texas her independence.

The Texans then drew up their own constitution, patterned on that of the U.S., and promptly applied for admission to the Union. Though President Jackson was sympathetic to Texas, he wanted to avoid conflict with Mexico. Texas was denied admission to the Union at that time. Andrew Jackson did, however, officially recognize the Lone Star Republic, as Texas was called because its flag had but one star, in 1837. For years afterward, Texans sought admission into the Union, but were repeatedly denied, partly because of the slavery issue. Many Texans had slaves, and if Texas joined the Union as a slave state, this would upset the states which opposed slavery.

After Texas became an independent republic in 1836, a new wave of immigrants flooded in. By 1844, there were about 140,000 Americans living in Texas, and they were still clamoring for annexation.

Annexation of Texas

James Knox Polk became America's eleventh President (1845-9). Under his presidency, the U.S. expanded its territory immensely.

In June 15, 1845, Texas was finally assured of U.S. protection if she agreed to annexation. General Zachary Taylor gave tangible evidence of this U.S. protection when he was ordered to defend a line "on or near the Rio Grande."

On November 10th, John Slidell was sent to Mexico by President Polk as minister plenipotentiary to restore, if possible, peaceful relations between the U.S. and Mexico. But the Mexican government officials refused to see him.

Relations between America and Mexico were by now seriously strained. The U.S. decided to go ahead and admit Texas to the Union. On December 29th, 1845, the Lone Star Republic was admitted to the Union, as the twenty-eighth state.

But war clouds were gathering over the U.S.-Mexican border. War between the U.S. and Mexico was now imminent!

The Oregon Territory

President Polk was able to settle peacefully the Anglo-American dispute over the Oregon Territory. The U.S. claimed territory as far north as British Columbia, and Britain claimed the Washington and Oregon territory.

A treaty between Britain and the U.S. had been signed in 1818, and renewed indefinitely in 1828, providing for the joint occupation of the Oregon Country west of the Rocky Mountains between 42° and 54° 40' N. latitude.

But British subjects had spilled over the 49th parallel into what is now U.S. territory, and Americans had crossed this same parallel and established themselves in what is now Canadian territory.

The only settlement in the region before the 1830s was the British Hudson's Bay Company outpost at Fort Vancouver.

American settlements in the Oregon Territory were stimulated by the glowing reports of merchants, and of missionaries who had established a Presbyterian mission in the Willamette Valley in 1835.

The seventy-eight year old ex-President, John Quincy Adams waxed ecstatic about the Oregon Territory. He said that the United States, which claimed all the Oregon Country, planned to “make the wilderness blossom as the rose, to establish laws, to increase, multiply, and subdue the earth, which we are commanded to do by the first behest of Almighty God.”

A depression after 1837 stimulated the “Oregon fever” and launched an endless train of covered wagons which followed the Oregon Trail up the Platte River, across the plains, and on across the mountains at the South Pass, and which finally made their way down the Snake River to the Columbia River, where they settled, mostly in the Willamette Valley.

There were about 5,000 Americans in the area south of the Columbia River by 1845. By this time, the settlers were already agitating for admission to the Union.

When James K. Polk campaigned for the Presidency in 1844, his slogan was “Fifty-four Forty or Fight.” Many Americans wanted to take by force all the Oregon Territory, including most of Western Canada. But after he became President, it appeared to both the U.S. and to

Britain that it would be far better to negotiate their differences, rather than coming to blows over their Oregon Territory claims.

In the end the U.S. and Britain both had to do some compromising. Britain and America finally agreed to settle their border on the 49th parallel which ran between the U.S. and British Northwest Territory. All territory north would be British, and all to the south would be American — except Vancouver Island. It was agreed that Vancouver Island would remain under the British flag.

The Oregon Treaty was signed on June 14th, 1846. The United States was given legal title to all of the territory south of 49° N. latitude comprising Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and parts of Montana and Wyoming.

America Coveted More Land

The United States had by now rapidly expanded from the original thirteen States on the eastern seaboard across the broad expanse of the entire North American continent!

With the U.S. acquisition of the Oregon Territory in 1846, America now stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific along the 49th parallel in the north. And with the annexation of Texas in 1845, American territory now reached well beyond the Mississippi River into the *southwestern* part of the continent.

But there was still a sizable chunk of North American real estate which the U.S. coveted, and which she somehow seemed to feel she was *destined* to possess. There was, however, a problem. Mexico happened to hold title to this vast area in 1846.

Would the American eagle be content to settle down on the territory which the U.S. had already acquired and cease to nourish any further expansionist ideas?

Or would the seemingly boundless energy of the restless Americans soon spill over into the Mexican-held territory of California? This question worried America's neighbor south of the border.

"Sea to Sea" Grants

What were some of the factors which contributed to America's persistent expansionist ideas?

When the original Thirteen Colonies were granted royal charters by the British Crown, about half of them had been given "sea to sea" grants.

Royal grants giving "sea to sea" rights (from the Atlantic to the Pacific) had been given to Massachusetts, Connecticut, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia.

These colonies felt they had claims from the Atlantic to the Pacific, though they didn't realize at first just how far away the Pacific Ocean really was. In actual practice, these grants only extended to the Mississippi River, since France and Spain claimed all of the land West of the Mississippi during America's early history.

When Britain ousted the French from North America in 1763, France ceded to Britain all of her New World territory in Canada, and all of the land between Canada and Florida, east of the Mississippi.

After the signing of the Treaty of Paris, Britain prohibited the American colonists in the Thirteen Colonies to advance further west than the Appalachian (or Allegheny) Mountains. She did this so that the Indians would not be further provoked into hostilities with the *British* colonies in eastern America.

But Britain might just as well have tried to stop the tides as to hold back the restless, energetic, adventuresome American frontiersmen behind the Appalachian Mountains. They were determined to venture to the west of those mountains, and neither British decrees nor Indian attacks could prevent their westward expansion.

The 49th Parallel

In 1818 America and Britain agreed that the U.S.-Canadian border should be settled at the 49th parallel — from the Lake of the Woods in Minnesota's northern border to the Continental Divide in the west.

This Anglo-American treaty also allowed America and Britain to jointly occupy the Oregon Country west of the Rockies (between 42° and 54° 40' N. latitudes).

America now had a window on the Pacific! Was it not just a matter of time until the U.S. would possess all the territory south of the 49th parallel to the Rio Grande River — between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans?

Belief in “Manifest Destiny”

During the 1840s, the idea of America's “Manifest Destiny” swept the nation like a religious revival.

John L. O'Sullivan was the first to join together the words “manifest” and “destiny” in a magazine article in 1845. These words were soon taken up by other writers and also by politicians who used them as a ringing slogan to further their expansionist aims of extending America's dominion “*from sea to shining sea.*”

O'Sullivan, writing in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, prophesied of “the fulfillment of *our manifest destiny to over-*

spread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."

Impatient with those who didn't want America to take immediate possession of the Oregon Territory, O'Sullivan, in 1845, urged Americans to action: "Away, away with all those cobweb tissues of rights of discovery, exploration, settlement, continuity, etc."

He argued that America's claim to this additional territory was "the right of *our manifest destiny to overspread* and possess the whole of the continent which *Providence has given us for the development of liberty and federative self-government.*"

O'Sullivan believed that Britain would not, or at least should not, settle Oregon, but in noble American hands "it must fast fill in with a population destined to establish . . . a noble young empire of the Pacific."

When trouble began brewing with Mexico, and the public clamored to annex Texas, O'Sullivan again invoked Manifest Destiny. In December, 1845, writing in the *New York Morning News*, O'Sullivan argued for the annexation of Texas.

The idea of America's Manifest Destiny was invoked in support of the annexation of Texas in 1845, the gaining control of the Oregon Territory (settled by U.S. Anglo-American Treaty in 1846), and in support of the war with Mexico in 1846 — so America could seize the southwest territory of California, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico.

An Expansionist President

So when James K. Polk was inaugurated on March 4th, 1845 as America's 11th President, he determined to play a decisive role in seeing to it that America fulfilled her Manifest Destiny of acquiring control of all of the American continent from "sea to sea."

Actually, President Polk (at 50, the youngest President the U.S. had ever had) only reflected the militant spirit of the war hawks who sought immediate possession of the Oregon Territory.

President Polk quickly approved the long-delayed annexation of Texas in 1845, and then endorsed the dividing of the Oregon Territory at the 49th parallel between the U.S. and Britain in 1846.

Many believe he was at least partly responsible for engineering the war with Mexico in 1846-48 — for the express purpose of acquiring the southwestern portion of America — thus rounding out America's territorial "needs."

America's Tenuous Claim

Thoughtful Americans were asking themselves whether or not an expansionist war with Mexico should be undertaken on the tenuous claim that the boundary of Texas extended to the Rio Grande.

But some bold Americans even asked: “Should not America acquire all of Mexico?”

There is no question that Americans were in a land-grabbing mood during the 1840s. But did Americans really believe they had been called as “the chosen people” to perform an important mission?

“Overnight the magic words (Manifest Destiny) swept the nation because they expressed the mood of the people in the mid-1840s. More than a land-grabbing expansionism, Manifest Destiny was connected with the *American experiment in government* and the age-old *sense of a mission*. It was the mission of the United States to spread the blessings of *liberty, republican institutions*, and the *Protestant Church* across the continent. . . .” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1970 edition).

Mexico was highly offended when America admitted the Republic of Texas into the Union in 1845. Texas’ state boundary with Mexico was ill defined. Both Mexico and the U.S. claimed a large area on the Rio Grande. She had previously warned the U.S. that she would declare war if the U.S. ever annexed Texas.

The annexation of Texas merely brought to a head the deep-seated, mutual distrust, suspicion and enmity which had long simmered between the U.S. and Mexico. The brutal slaughter of the Texans at the Alamo had convinced many Americans that the Mexicans were ruthless brutes.

Then when Mexico severed diplomatic relations with America in 1845, and utterly refused to talk to President Polk’s special emissary, the insult proved to be the final straw that broke the camel’s back.

From Mexico’s point of view, they were stung by the loss of such a valuable piece of property as Texas, and many Mexicans were totally unwilling to grant Texas her independence — much less to recognize U.S. sovereignty over that territory.

Mexican nationalists demanded that America be taught a lesson. And since the U.S. army didn’t do too well in the war of 1812 — had proven itself militarily impotent, having failed to capture Canada — Mexico thought her army would be a match for any force the U.S. could field. At that time the Mexican Army of 40,000 was five times larger than the U.S. Army.

But in spite of this numerical superiority, Mexico hesitated to declare war, until a border dispute finally provided the spark to ignite the Mexican War! The bitter dispute over the *boundary* between Texas and Mexico added enough heat and fuel to the fire to ignite the smoldering ashes of conflict.

As an independent Republic, Texas had claimed the Rio Grande, though the real boundary (when Texas was part of Mexico) had been the Nueces River. Mexico claimed, rightly, that the Texas border had never extended farther than the Nueces River.

But in addition Mexico owed U.S. citizens about \$3 million in compensation for lives and loss of property during Mexico's revolution. Many Americans were demanding that the U.S. collect these debts by force in the 1840s.

On top of all this, there was a growing feeling in America that the country had a Manifest Destiny to expand westward into the Mexican-owned lands. American frontiersmen had already penetrated into California.

At the same time it was clear to many that Mexico was too weak to properly govern her northern territory. Mexicans and Americans living in the California Territory were dissatisfied with the weak government provided from Mexico City. Their discontent mounted, and it appeared that the Californians were almost ready to declare their own independence.

All they needed was the slightest excuse to spark them into doing so.

War With Mexico

When President Polk sent John Slidell to Mexico City as American minister in the fall of 1845, he was authorized to offer to pay Mexico \$25 million, and America would cancel all claims for damages — if Mexico would accept the Rio Grande boundary, and if she would sell New Mexico and California to the United States.

If Mexico utterly refused to sell this territory, Slidell was to offer to cancel all American claims on condition that she agree to the Rio Grande boundary.

Unfortunately, the Mexicans were then in a very weak bargaining position. Mexico was undergoing one of her periodic revolutions and neither the old nor the new president was willing to offer any concessions for fear of being denounced as a coward. The Mexicans flatly refused to see the American minister, who then advised President Polk that Mexico needed to be "chastised."

In the meantime, the U.S. President had ordered Major General Zachary Taylor with his 3,000-man army stationed on the Nueces River to advance to the Rio Grande.

By April, 1846, General Taylor's army was camped near the mouth of the Rio Grande, and this provocative action caused Santa Anna to move his army northward to meet the U.S. challenge. A detachment of Mexican cavalymen crossed the Rio and ambushed a small force of the U.S. Army on April 25th. A week later, the Mexican Army crossed to the north side of the River.

Soon the Mexican and American armies were in mortal combat. On May 8, 1846 Taylor's small army met and defeated the larger Mexican

forces (commanded by General Mariano Arista), about eight miles northeast of Brownsville, Texas. Then, on the 9th, Taylor’s 2,300-man army defeated Arista’s 5,000-man force in Cameron County, near Brownsville. These two victories opened the way for Taylor to invade Mexico itself.

On May 18th — without waiting for a formal declaration of war — General Taylor invaded Mexico, and occupied Matamoros. He captured Monterrey on September 24th.

America Declares War

News of the May 8th Mexican-American battle reached Washington on May 9th. On May 11th, President Polk asked Congress to declare war on the grounds that Mexico had wantonly “invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil.”

In truth, the first skirmishes occurred on *disputed soil* — soil whose true ownership was then in doubt.

Congress unanimously supported the war, but there were some who suspected this was a southern conspiracy to add Mexico to the U.S. as *slave* territory.

By the end of 1846, General Taylor had occupied Victoria and Saltillo, and had secured northeastern Mexico under American control.

America hoped these military reverses would persuade Mexico to come to the negotiating table. But Mexico still refused to negotiate.

President Polk then decided it best to land an American army at Veracruz, on Mexico’s east coast, and strike a swift blow at the very heart of Mexico itself — Mexico City!

General Taylor was ordered to send his best troops to join with General Scott, America’s senior military officer, who was to lead the troops which were to land at Veracruz and drive for Mexico City.

Taylor, suspecting political motives, refused to obey the order. Rather he continued his own military operations, and met Santa Anna and his army at Buena Vista, in the mountains beyond Saltillo. Here, Taylor and the small U.S. army badly defeated the Mexicans. Taylor was thereafter the hero of the Mexican-American war. Later, this popularity won him the presidency.

Meanwhile, General Winfield Scott, America’s highest ranking U.S. Army officer, with a force of about 10,000 landed at Veracruz on March 9th, 1847. It took him nearly three weeks to capture Veracruz. Then on April 8th he began his advance toward Mexico’s capital.

On April 17 and 18th the U.S. army stormed a mountain pass at Cerro Gordo, and pushed quickly on toward Mexico City. On August 19th and 20th, the American army won the battles of Contreras and Churubusco. A two weeks’ armistice followed. Then American forces

won another battle at Molino del Rey and stormed and captured the mountain hilltop fortress of Chapultepec.

General Scott and the American army entered Mexico City on Sept. 14, 1847. The war was over, but there still had to be a settlement.

Even though America had won a succession of brilliant victories, President Polk could not get the Mexican government to negotiate a peace treaty.

Santa Anna resigned as President shortly after General Scott occupied Mexico City. A new government was then formed which was willing to accept America's demands.

America's demands were essentially what she had asked for before the war had erupted. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (a small village near Mexico City) was signed on February 2nd, 1848. In the treaty, the U.S.-Mexican border was established at the Rio Grande and Gila Rivers. And the U.S. agreed to pay Mexico \$15 million for the newly ceded territory. Mexico agreed to cede to the U.S. present-day California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico with parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

By the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the U.S. gained over 525,000 square miles of new territory.

The Conquest of California

Even before the Mexican War began, both the Mexicans and the American settlers in California were provoked with Mexico City's weak, ineffectual government in California, with many of the Californians thinking about declaring independence from Mexico.

The Mexican-American War gave them the final initiative to free themselves from Mexican rule, and as soon as the Mexican War commenced, American settlers in California declared their independence. They staged their own "Bear Flag Revolt" against Mexico.

John C. Fremont, who just *happened* to be in command of an American "surveying" expedition joined the rebels. And an American Naval squadron soon arrived at Monterrey.

When American forces arrived in California from Kansas by way of Santa Fe (where they had just taken over New Mexico without firing a single shot), the settlers had just about finished ousting the Mexicans.

The Gadsden Purchase

The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo made the U.S. responsible for preventing Indian raids into northern Mexico. But, unfortunately Apache depredations grew worse after the treaty. How could America prevent further Apache raids into Northern Mexico?

The proposed solution to this problem was tied up with another problem which confronted the U.S. The 1848 treaty with Mexico had established the natural boundary of the Rio Grande as the border between El Paso and the Gulf of Mexico. This boundary seemed like a natural and easily defensible boundary.

But the U.S.-Mexican treaty of 1848 did not establish a positive border west of El Paso to the Pacific. The treaty merely declared that the boundary west from El Paso should coincide with the line shown on Distunell's map (1847 edition). But Distunell's map was found to be highly inaccurate. It placed El Paso 34 miles north of its actual site. This serious error gave Mexico an unexpected advantage.

So the U.S. and Mexico could not agree as to just where their border should run between El Paso and the Pacific. How could they settle the dispute?

During this period of American history, the decision was about to be made to build a transcontinental railroad. Where would the railroad be built? Across the center of America, or would it take a northern or southern route?

The U.S. Secretary, Jefferson Davis, strongly advocated a southern route for this transcontinental railroad. He believed the more practical route to California was across the Mesilla Valley and then up through the Gila River Valley, which at the time was completely on the Mexican side of the 1848 U.S.-Mexican border.

Jefferson Davis recommended that the president of the South Carolinian railroad, James Gadsden, be sent to Mexico as U.S. minister in May, 1853, for the express purpose of trying to purchase some of the Mexican land through which the proposed southern rail route would run.

Gadsden had various proposals which he could offer Mexico, and a settlement was finally reached and a treaty concluded on December 30, 1853. According to the terms of the treaty, Mexico was to relinquish her control over the Mesilla Valley, and she would also cede about 19,000,000 acres south of the Gila River. By this treaty, Mexico also agreed to drop all her claims for Indian depredations. But what would the price tag be? Gadsden agreed to give Mexico \$15,000,000 for this land.

Even though Gadsden had made a good bargain with the Mexicans, his treaty sparked violent sectional debates in the U.S. senate. Northerners feared that the southerners wanted to extend slavery into the new lands, and they were, therefore, hostile toward this purchase.

The northerners wanted to see the transcontinental railroad built in a more northern latitude, and therefore argued that the Gadsden Purchase handed America a hunk of worthless territory.

But in spite of this opposition to the purchase, the treaty was finally

ratified by Congress on April 25, 1854 — but only after the purchase price had been reduced from \$15,000,000 to \$10,000,000.

How many square miles were included in the Gadsden Purchase? This territory included about 29,640 square miles, though some estimate the size to be only 26,185 square miles, and others have estimated its size to be as high as 45,535 square miles.

The territory included in the Gadsden Purchase was bounded on the east by the Rio Grande, on the west by the Colorado River, and on the north by the Gila River.

Though America finally decided to build her first transcontinental railroad further north, nonetheless the acquirement of this new territory gave the U.S. and Mexico a clearly definable border, and finally ended U.S.-Mexican border friction.

America's purchase of this new territory in 1853 gave the U.S. all of the original territory encompassed in the original 48 states — stretching from the Pacific in the West to the Atlantic in the east, and from the 49th Parallel in the north to the Rio Grande in the south.

America's belief in Manifest Destiny had caused her peoples to push westward, northward and southward until the U.S. had acquired all the land which she felt she needed to round out her national borders. Now America was content to let her borders with Mexico and Canada remain where they were.

The California Gold Rush

In 1848, the very year America gained legal control over California, gold was discovered. James Wilson Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill on January 25th, 1848 — not far from San Francisco.

The news of this rich gold find electrified America. Gold fever swept over the country. As the news spread, men from all over America left their jobs, their homes and even their families and headed for California to stake out their claim before it was too late.

A large-scale gold rush was fully under way by 1849. Men (mainly from back east, where most of the population was) left their homes and their belongings behind (except what they could cart with them) and headed west. Most of the Forty-niners journeyed to California by land. Leaving Independence, Missouri, they journeyed along the Oregon Trail until they met the California Trail, which led them to the gold fields of northern California. Some went on foot. Others rode on horseback, or in covered wagons. Some chose to go by boat to Panama, then crossed the Isthmus and caught another boat north to San Francisco.

But regardless of how they came, they continued to stream into California. Seeking instant wealth, some struck it rich. But many didn't make it. Multitudes fell victims to sickness, Indians, or died from ex-

posure to the harsh elements along the way. Some died from hunger and thirst.

Almost overnight boom towns mushroomed everywhere. San Francisco grew from a very small sleepy little town to a city of 25,000 within the first year of the discovery of gold. Sacramento also had a phenomenal growth in population, and many who failed to make a fortune at gold mining settled down in California as farmers or ranchers. The population of California between 1848 and 1860 jumped from 26,000 to 379,994.

Since gold was plentiful and relatively cheap, and there was a great scarcity of commodities (due to the sudden influx of people), prices skyrocketed. Reportedly, a night's rest on a simple cot could cost as much as \$15.00 — a lot of money at the time. And a hardly livable shack could sometimes be rented for \$100.00 a week or even more.

Gambling, prostitution, hard drinking and crime also skyrocketed. Some were even willing to murder to get their hands on a little more of the shiny metal. Fortunes were quickly made, and often as not, just as quickly lost.

But before most of the Forty-niners arrived at Sutter's Mill, the richer claims had already been established, and men fought and elbowed each other for what was left.

The man who had owned the huge acreage on which the gold was discovered, John Sutter, lost everything he had. His vast ranch was invaded, his livestock were stolen or burned when he tried to keep the invaders out. He eventually died in poverty.

And the man who discovered the gold, James Marshall, was swindled out of just about every claim he had staked out. He was threatened and intimidated by those who used strong-arm tactics to gain control over much of the vast gold wealth. When Marshall took the offenders to court to get justice, he was always blocked by men who had been bribed by the very men who had swindled him.

John Marshall died at the age of thirty-seven, dispirited and penniless — in total financial ruin. He was buried within sight of the sawmill where he had unluckily turned up the glittering metal which would ruin both him and John Sutter.

American Foreign Policy

For decades after the Revolutionary War, the United States was satisfied with attending to her own domestic growth and tranquility. After the espousal of the Monroe Doctrine, America more or less stayed out of foreign entanglements. But as her industrial and commercial power grew, and she traded throughout the world's ports, her sense of world involvement and participation grew.

A presentiment of the future was portrayed in America's first dealings with the mysterious nation of Japan.

Japan's Early History

Europeans first learned about Japan from Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller, who had travelled to China in the late 1200s. While in China, he learned of this mysterious country. Marco Polo called Japan *Cipango*, and affirmed that it was a land of gold and great riches.

The people of Nippon (as it was later called) were a proud people with a very ancient history. The Emperor of Japan looked upon himself as a god, and was so considered by his peoples. And the Japanese peoples thought of themselves as children of the sun goddess. Since they believed their country was the first to be created, they thought it was the fairest land on earth, and they believed themselves to be the *chosen people* of the gods. They were chosen for a great destiny. Shintoism, meaning "The Way of the Gods," eventually became their national religion. Its basic features included ancestor-worship and nature-worship.

The Japanese concluded that since their emperor was divine, the gods especially favored Japan and kept a protective eye over their nation. They believed that since the emperor and his people were descended from the gods, they were *superior* to all other peoples.

The Great Mongol conqueror, Kublai Khan, sent a force to Kyushu in 1274 to conquer Japan, but it was defeated by the Japanese. The Kublai Khan again tried to invade and conquer Japan in 1281. But his second attempt also failed. A destructive typhoon dashed his fleet, totally destroying his plans of invasion. The Japanese were jubilant, believing that the typhoon was sent by their god. They called the typhoon *kamikaze* (meaning *divine wind*).

In 1338, the Ashikaga family gained governmental control in Japan. They continued ruling the country for the next 250 years until civil war finally put an end to their dynasty.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-98) became a mighty warrior and succeeded in gaining control of Japan in 1585. He is sometimes referred to as the Napoleon of Japan. He planned conquests which would have extended his empire to include China and India. But his armies failed to conquer Korea, and when he died in 1598, his soldiers withdrew back to Japan.

His chief deputy in eastern Japan, the great warrior Iyeyasu (1542-1616), became *shogun* (military ruler) of Japan. His family (the famous Tokugawa family) continued to rule Japan until the emperor's imperial power was restored under Emperor Mutsuhito in 1867.

Christians Expelled

The Portuguese became the first Europeans to reach the islands of Japan in 1543. And in 1549 Saint Francis Xavier, a Spanish Jesuit priest, arrived in Kagoshima in southern Kyushu. He was a zealous priest and immediately began preaching and teaching the Christian religion. The Japanese welcomed this Catholic priest, and many thousands soon became converted to Roman Catholicism. Later, other missionaries from Spain and Portugal followed, and traders also sailed to Japan to open up trade between that country and the West. Traders from Holland and England arrived in Japan in the early 1600s.

Japanese officials and nobles at first welcomed these foreigners. It was not long however before the Japanese rulers became deeply suspicious. Would these missionaries and traders soon bring European armies to conquer their islands?

During the late 1700s the occasional arrival of foreign ships in search of trade or supplies startled the Japanese. The rulers of Japan began to interpret the arrival of ever-increasing numbers of foreign ships as a threat to their national independence.

The Japanese, fearing that Christianity might be used to their enemies' advantage, decided to extirpate that religion from Japanese soil. The Nipponese rulers decided to gradually get rid of the Christian movement. The great warrior Iyeyasu ordered all Christian priests to leave Japan in 1614. He also ordered all native Japanese to give up Christianity. And then in 1637, government troops massacred several thousands of Japanese Christians at Shimabara.

Japan Sealed Shut

In that same year, Japan's rulers forced all foreign traders, except the Dutch (who had *not* helped spread Christianity), to leave Japan. From that day forward until the mid-1800s, Japan became shut up in its own national cocoon. She became a hermit country, almost totally cut off from the world.

Only one Dutch ship was permitted to put into Japanese ports each year. Ships from all other nations were banned. Japanese citizens weren't allowed to leave the country, and those who lived abroad were forbidden to return.

At this time, one thing alarmed the Japanese — the ever-growing Russian menace. Russian expansion had already placed them firmly on the eastern coast of Asia in the 17th century. The Russians were becoming more active on their Pacific seaboard — especially in Kamchatka, Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands.

The Russians had made coastal raids on Japan and the rulers of the

island kingdom began to fortify their defenses — especially in the north.

In 1808 the British ship the *Phaeton*, entered Nagasaki harbor and, after receiving an unfriendly reception, seized hostages in order to secure its supplies — and then managed to escape before countermeasures could be taken by the Japanese.

But most ominous of all, was the news of Britain's victory over China in the first "Opium War" of 1839-42. Japan worried that she might be the next victim of British aggression.

These and other incidents caused the Japanese to close their nation tightly against outsiders, hoping to avoid foreign domination.

Abuse of American Sailors

It was about this same time that the U.S. government became gravely concerned over Japan's mistreatment of American sailors who had been shipwrecked in Japanese waters. America still believed in Manifest Destiny and had enough national pride to be willing to assert herself aggressively toward any nation which needed to learn a lesson.

The U.S. government decided to open the Japanese cocoon. Accordingly, Commodore James Biddle was dispatched to Japan in 1846 for the express purpose of opening up that nation to American diplomatic and trading interests.

But Commodore Biddle failed to understand the Japanese. When he presented copies of the new U.S.-Chinese treaties, and requested similar arrangements with the Japanese, his requests were totally ignored. Biddle's peaceful departure after receiving such rude treatment convinced the Japanese that they had won a victory. They had, however, been deeply impressed with the size and strength of the four U.S. warships. They now fully realized that such warships had the capability of forcing a blockade on Yedo (Tokyo) harbor, thereby preventing the delivery of Japan's ocean-borne food supplies from Osaka.

America now realized that the polite, civilized, soft approach had not worked. Would the Japanese understand and respect a greater show of strength? It was certainly worth a try.

But who would be the right man to entrust with such a crucial mission? It would need to be someone who was experienced, courageous, wise, and who, if need be, could act decisively to drive home the American point of view.

It was during the presidency of Millard Fillmore (1850-53) that America decided to see if she could change Japan's attitude of traditional isolationism.

America's emissary on this important mission to open up Japan was Matthew Calbraith Perry.

Perry was from a family of famous naval men. Matthew's brother,

Oliver had distinguished himself in the War of 1812 by forcing the British naval fleet on Lake Erie to surrender. During the battle, the British attack had been so fierce that 83 out of 101 men on Perry's ship were either killed or injured. The ship was also badly damaged. In spite of this, Perry was able to abandon the ship under heavy enemy fire and transfer to another American ship — from which he continued the battle and finally forced the British to surrender. Oliver Perry also served the U.S. Navy against the Barbary pirates in 1815-16, and in 1819 he was sent to clear the West Indian waters of pirates. He was stricken with yellow fever and died at Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Matthew had also distinguished himself, by serving in the War of 1812 on the *Revenge* under his brother's command, and it was he who was chosen to head the important mission to open up Japan in 1853-54.

Matthew was an officer of the *Cyane*, which in 1820 helped to found an American Negro colony in Africa. His first independent command was the *Concord*, in which he took America's envoy to Russia in 1830. He became a captain in 1837. Later, Matthew Perry took command of the *Fulton II*, the first U.S. war vessel run by steam.

Perry also commanded the African Squadron, helped in wiping out the slave trade, and protected the American Negro settlements in Africa.

During the Mexican War, Perry commanded the *Mississippi*, and served as commander-in-chief of the U.S. squadron off the coast of Mexico. His squadron was the largest the American navy had sailed up to that time. Perry worked closely with the forces commanded by General Winfield Scott in the siege and capture of Veracruz. His squadron was responsible for the bombardment of Veracruz while General Scott and his army landed.

A Most Important Mission

But Matthew Perry's most important assignment was to the Orient.

For some time European and American ships had wanted to be able to put into port in Japan. This was steadfastly denied them. Steam ships needed bunkering facilities. Shipwrecked men who landed in Japan continued to be treated very badly.

Some European ships had tried to put into Japanese ports to open up diplomatic relations with that country and had been fired upon.

Commodore Perry believed the Japanese did not respect weakness. He was a man of action, valor and wisdom. In March, 1852, during the last year of President Fillmore's presidency, Perry was appointed commander of a naval expedition to be sent to Japan. Its task was to establish diplomatic relations and trade with the Japanese, and to obtain humane treatment for shipwrecked sailors.

After carefully studying the situation, Perry decided that Japan's

traditional isolationism would be altered only if a superior naval force were displayed, and if the Japanese officials were approached boldly with a "resolute attitude."

Accordingly, he decided "to demand as a *right*, and not to solicit as a favour, those *acts of courtesy* which are due from one civilized country to another. . . ."

On July 8, 1853, Perry sailed boldly into Yedo harbour (now Tokyo Bay) with four warships. When the Japanese unceremoniously ordered his ships out of the harbor, he flatly refused to obey. He did, however, send word that if the Japanese government did not delegate a high official to receive the documents in his possession, he would "go on shore with a suitable force and deliver them personally, be the consequences what they might."

Perry's boldness succeeded! Two Japanese princes were sent to receive the documents.

Commodore Perry told the high Japanese officials they should seriously consider the American demands contained in the documents. Before departing, he informed them he would return with a bigger naval force a year later, expecting a reply to America's demands. Perry's warships then sailed for China.

Perry returned to Japan, arriving in Yedo Bay in February, 1854, with more ships. The Japanese had been impressed by the boldness of this American, and they felt it wise to have a satisfactory reply waiting when Perry returned. The Japanese response was very favorable. A few weeks after Perry's second arrival (in February, 1854) the Japanese signed the Kanagawa Treaty near Yokohama, granting the U.S. trading rights in two Japanese ports — Shimoda and Hakodate.

Japan Emerges from Her Cocoon

What was the importance of this Japanese-American treaty?

Japan not only opened up her ports to Americans (and to other nations) but the treaty also assured better treatment of shipwrecked sailors, and permitted U.S. ships to take on fuel and supplies at two Japanese ports.

This bold show of force also revealed to the Japanese their own vulnerability. They were impressed not only with Perry's ships, but by western technology which was far superior to Japanese.

The Japanese became convinced they were two hundred and fifty years behind Western civilization in almost every facet of economic and industrial progress. Shortly after the treaty of 1854, Japan began to import wholesale Western technology, and in only one generation she emerged as a powerful industrial nation. No nation had ever leaped from a feudalistic society into the modern world in so short a time.

Japan's fantastic industrial expansion made her one of the most highly industrialized nations in the world. She would soon be able to compete with the nations of the West on equal terms. Her ships, guns, planes and other implements of war would soon convince a startled world that Japan had suddenly become one of the world's leading industrial nations.

Perry's successful mission to Japan helped contribute to the collapse of Japan's feudal regime, and helped propel the Japanese along the road toward modernization. But there were thorns in the Japanese rose. Japan had been roused out of its feudalistic slumber. An energetic, modernized Japan would later send temblors through all the Orient, and threaten the fabric of world peace.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS the Senate of the United States, *devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, has by a resolution requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation;* and

Whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord;

And, insomuch as we know that by His divine law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.

It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do by this my proclamation designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer. And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite at their several places of public worship and their respective homes in keeping the day holy to the Lord and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the divine teachings that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this 30th day of March, A.D. 1863, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-seventh.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, *Secretary of State.*