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Mexico 14: Mexican-American War
1846-1848

Lead: Beginning in April 1846, the United States, the clear aggressor, and Mexico fought a war over territory. The result was the largest U.S. expansion since the Louisiana Purchase.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: By the 1840s the United States and Mexico had achieved their independence, both by colonial wars from their European founders. Mexico, however, was in debt, had deep class-based social divisions, and

suffered acute political instability. Thus, it was difficult for Mexican leaders to govern and populate the huge territory recently won from the Spanish in present day California and the southwestern United States. On the other side of the border, ambitious Americans, hungry for land and trade in the Pacific rim, were migrating westward in increasing numbers.

The leaders and citizens of the United States were infected with a growing philosophy of national greatness called “manifest destiny.” Americans believed they had left the arthritic culture and politics of Europe and had a God-given right to expand their national borders from

Atlantic to Pacific. Shortly after the United States annexed Texas in 1845, the Mexican government severed relations, refused to consider paying its debts to the United States in the form of land – something the United States desperately wanted.

Although the United States was divided on the idea of going to war with Mexico, the long festering dispute between Mexico and the separationists in Texas, led by Sam Houston, provoked an outbreak of war fever. President Polk sent troops to the disputed area between the Rio Grande and Nueces River and the following month, on May 13, 1846, Congress declared war on Mexico. The Mexican War resulted in victory

for the United States and the gain of one half million square miles of territory. The peace Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed on February 2, 1848.

Research by Ann Johnson, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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