



Texas Revolution and Mexican American War

June 2021

There is considerable opinion in the US and nearly universal opinion in Mexico that the Mexican American War was a war of aggression against Mexico. There has been a tremendous amount of misinformation on this subject and we need to follow the facts.

Seldom in history has a country which made repeated attempts to avoid war with another country been branded an aggressor and the country which refused every attempt to peacefully resolve disputes and repeatedly call for war been labeled the victim. Yet this is exactly what happened with the US and Mexico. The US has been branded the aggressor for over a century and a half while Mexico has loudly proclaimed itself the victim.

The Mexican American War of 1846-48 was actually a continuation of the Texas War for Independence fought 10 years earlier. The facts conclusively prove that Mexico's leader, General Santa Anna, provoked the Texas rebellion in 1835. The cause of the Mexican American War 10 years later was Mexico's refusal to honor the peace agreement with Texas after being defeated in the 1835-36 war. Mexico vowed never ending war on Texas until they reconquered the land. When Texas voted to join the US in 1845 for their own protection. Mexico declared - repeatedly - that war with the United States was inevitable. In 1846, General Mariano Parades overthrew the existing government with one stated objective - start a war with the United States and retake Texas.

Historical revisionists claim we provoked Mexico into attacking the U.S. Army so we had an excuse to go to war and steal what became the southwest US from Mexico. The truth is Mexico was eager to start this war because they were confident they would defeat the US. After being thoroughly crushed, Mexico changed their story and decided it was all the US fault by claiming the US goaded Mexico into attacking the US. Historical revisionists have blindly followed the Mexican line.

Also, there was a lot of hatred and hostility between the US and Mexico because of the brutality and massacres committed by Mexico's dictator, General Santa Anna, during the Texas war for Independence. Mexico - mostly Santa Anna - continued to inflame this hatred during the years between the 2 wars.

Most Mexicans claim the southwest US is historically Mexican land. Wrong. This land is historically Indian land. The Spanish stole it from the Indians and then lost this land when they attacked the US to start the Mexican American War.

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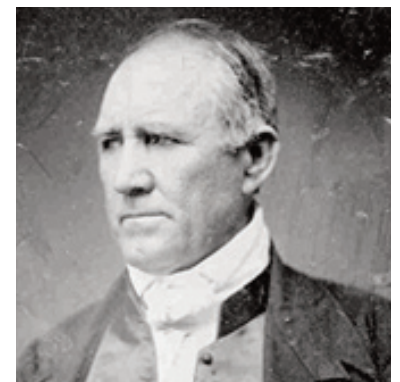
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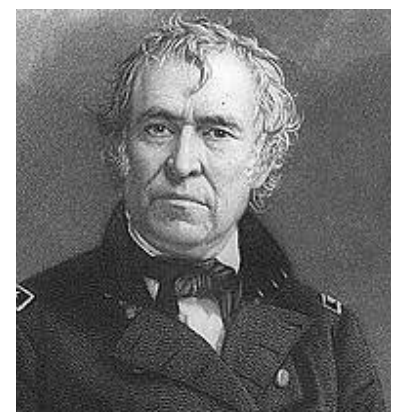
A drawing of the Alamo in 1854



Santa Anna(121)



Sam Houston



General Zachary Taylor



Origins of the Texas Revolution of 1835

Revolution in Spanish Texas

Texas was one of the provinces that belonged to the Spanish Colonial Empire called New Spain - which stretched from Panama in Central America to Oregon in the U.S. The capital of New Spain was Mexico City. Spain mostly ignored Texas, concentrating on mining silver and gold in other parts of the Empire. When Mexico revolted against Spanish colonial rule in 1810, revolution swept across Texas.

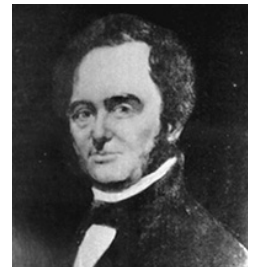
In January, 1811, Juan Bautista Casas lead a revolt and captured the governor, Manuel María de Salcedo. Casas declared himself governor, but in less then two months Spanish forces captured Casas and most of his followers, who were executed.(1)(2) One of the survivors. Bernardo Gutiérrez began raising an army of Americans to free Texas from Spanish rule.

He managed to raise a force of 130 American frontiersmen - lead by Augustus Magee. This force, which became known as the Gutiérrez-Magee expedition crossed into Texas on Aug 8, 1812. Many Tejanos (Mexicans born in Texas), Indians and deserters from the Spanish Army all joined, raising the force to about 800 men. This Texian "army" defeated the Spanish Army in several engagements and captured Governor Salcedo again, along with hundreds of his soldiers. Gutierrez then ordered the execution of many Spanish prisoner and the governor. This brutality sickened the Americans, and about 100 went back to the US.(3)(4)

The Spanish Army soon reorganized, and in August, 1813, the Texian Army was crushed by the Spanish Army. Over the next two weeks, hundreds of additional Texans were killed.(3)(4) The chaos in Texas continued up to 1820, when less then 2,000 Tejanos remained in Texas.(5)

Spain allows Americans into Texas

In 1820 Moses Austin presented a plan to colonize Texas to the Spanish Governor. Austin had lost his fortune in the Panic of 1819, and this was his next business move. Spain accepted the plan, believing the legal immigrants would provide a buffer against attacks on their government by American and Tejano rebels. But Moses Austin died before he could bring settlers into Spanish Texas, turning the endeavor over to his son, Stephen.(6)



Mexico's first leader as an independent nation: Agustín de Iturbide, Crowned emperor by Congress after mass demonstrations by supporters intimidated members. Iturbide dissolved Congress on Oct. 31, 1822, making himself dictator. He was later overthrown and executed in July 19, 1824.

Mexico's dysfunctional government

Mexico finally defeated Spain to become an independent nation in August, 1821. Mexico inherited huge amounts of land in the north, but had very little control over it. Only one percent of the population of Mexico lived north of the Rio Grande River in Texas and its other northern provinces of California and New Mexico. In the rush to claim land in the New World, often by several nations, possession meant ownership. Countries that claimed land without having enough people to settle the area made claims of ownership tenuous and your claims were open to challenge.

After becoming independent, most Mexicans believed they would become a prosperous nation as the US was becoming. This didn't happen because very few people in leadership in Mexican society had the wisdom and intelligence of America's Founding Fathers. A mere three years after independence, the Congress, in a solemn address to the nation, stated that without virtue liberal institutions would fail, revolution would follow revolution and anarchy would ensue.(7) As the years went by, politicians increasingly blamed all their problems on America.

Mexican society was harshly split by class and race. Most Mexicans had little education, the justice system was corrupt, civil liberties operated at the whim of whoever was in power at the time and corruption was rampant. In an address before the Mexican Congress in 1841, the President stated: "the root of the evil lies in the deplorable corruption which pervades all classes of society and in the absence of any corrective arising from the public opinion."(8)

The new Mexican government recognized that its northern territory was sparsely settled. In 1825, Texas had a population of approximately 3,500, with most of Mexican descent.[9] The people lived in mortal fear of Indian raids by the Apache and Comanche, who carried out large-scale raids deep into the country to steal livestock. The Mexican government didn't have the military capability to protect its citizens so settlers were empowered to create their own militias to help control hostile Indian tribes - but there were not enough citizens to do the job.

Mexico didn't have enough people to populate their northern territories and few people immigrated to Mexico because of constant uprisings and political instability. Mexico also knew that millions of immigrants were pouring into the US and many were headed west. The experiment to make good Spaniards/Mexicans out of the Indians had mostly failed. Now Mexico would try to get American immigrants to settle the area for Mexico and control the Indians.(10) The Mexican government - after first cancelling Austin's colonization contract with the former Spanish government - liberalized its immigration policies to permit immigrants from outside Spain for the first time.[11]

Five states seceded from Mexico in 1823

Because of the dysfunctional state of Mexican politics - and only 2 years after independence - **five states in Central America declared themselves independent from Mexico - Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.** Central Americans chafed at Mexican rule, and there were several battles with Mexican forces. On July 1, 1823, the United Provinces of Central America was formally established in Guatemala City. Constant infighting and wars resulted in the Union falling apart in 1838. **The five states became independent nations without any interference from Mexico or threats of perpetual war. WHY??**

Conditions that caused political separation

Stephen Austin began bringing Americans into Texas and by 1834, Texas had grown to approximately 37,800 people, with only 7,800 of Mexican descent.[12a] Another estimate had just under 40,000 anglos, 12,000 Indians, 3,500 Mexicans and 5,000 black slaves in 1835.[12b] Another study showed that by Autumn 1929, the Anglo population of Texas was approximately 20,000, while slaves numbered eleven hundred. [12c]

Mexico expected the Americans to swear allegiance to Mexico and become Catholic. While a majority of settlers were content with being Mexican citizens, most didn't convert to Catholic or just went through the motions. In Mexico, all religions were outlawed except the state religion - Catholic. In Austin's colony, the local priest formally inducted new arrivals into the Catholic faith, but then allowed them to worship as they pleased.[13] A much more contentious issue was that some settlers brought slaves with them.

As the years went by, Mexico claimed immigrants wouldn't assimilate with Mexicans. The fact was Mexicans and Americans had a difficult time adjusting to each other culturally and politically and this caused problems early on. American immigrants were used to the Rule of Law, Bill of Rights, religious freedom, due process, trial by jury and other basic premises of American Law - mostly lacking in Mexico. Americans came from a society of near total economic and personal freedom, intense individualism and dislike for government intrusiveness. The never ending chaos in the Mexican judicial and political system bewildered and alienated Texans. The Mexican Constitution of 1824 provided states with considerable local autonomy.

A high ranking Mexican official, Rafael Manchola, said in Oct. 1826 ". . . They do nothing more than practice their own laws which they have practiced since they were born, forgetting the ones they have sworn to obey, these being the laws of our Supreme Government."(14)

This was not exactly true. Up until the 1830s, American settlers worked within the system - petitioning the Mexican government many times for changes in the law.



Mexico in 1821 after independence.



Mexico in 1824 after 5 southern states seceded.

American settlers sided with the Mexican government in 1825, when Haden Edwards, one of the men bringing settlers to Texas, threatened to confiscate the land of anyone already living in the area unless they could present written deeds to the property. After multiple confrontations with Mexican authorities, on December 16, 1826, Edwards, his brothers, and 30 settlers issued a declaration of independence calling themselves the Republic of Fredonia. Stephen Austin sent 250 Texas militiamen to help the Mexican forces put down the revolt.[15]

As for the claim Americans did not obey some laws, it must be noted that revolutions and disobeying the government was a national pastime in Mexico. A few examples:

Vice President Nicolas Bravo lead a revolt in Dec. 1827. It was put down in Jan 1828. Bravo was expelled from the country while other mutineers were imprisoned.

Another revolt occurred over the results of the Presidential elections of Sep 1, 1828. The winner was Manuel Gomez Pedraza, who was supported by President Victoria. Vicente Guerrero rejected the results and organized a revolution with Santa Anna and others. After rebel forces bombarded the National Palace, Congress quickly annulled the election of 1828 and made Vicente Guerrero President.

Another action which alarmed Anglos in Texas occurred in 1829, when Spain invaded Mexico in an attempt to reclaim their former colony. The Mexican Congress granted President Guerrero complete control of the government, essentially making him a dictator.(16) The ease with which the Constitution could be nullified made Anglos more suspicious of living in this type of country.

Another factor in the political separation of Mexico from it's northern territories - California, New Mexico and Texas - was over trade. Starting in the 1820s, trade between the US and Mexico's northern territories greatly expanded.[17] Within 10 years, most trade was with the US. These strong commercial ties with the US was another reason local Mexicans felt less loyalty to a central government that was becoming increasingly irrelevant in their daily lives.

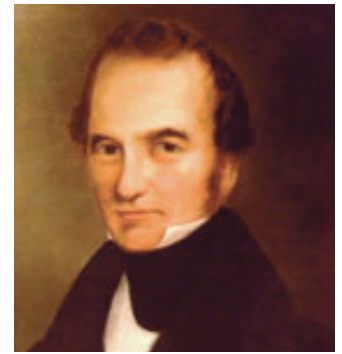
Santa Anna provokes Texas, Coahuila and Zacatecas to revolt

By 1833, both sides were losing patience with the other. Mexico was growing weary of demands for changes in the law and Texans were tired of the constant anarchy in Mexican politics. In Aug 1833, Stephen Austin traveled to Mexico City to negotiate on behalf of Texas. He left in December but was arrested and held in prison for a year without being charged. He was then allowed out of prison on bond but had to stay in Mexico City. He then was given amnesty and finally made it back to Texas in Aug. 1835. Austin, who had been the strongest voice of moderation, became a force for revolution.(18)

In May, 1833, Santa Anna was appointed President, but became increasingly dictatorial. He tried to legitimize his dictatorship with a new Constitution that abolished all state legislatures and centralized all power in Mexico City in 1835.(19a)(19b) This centralization of power by Santa Anna provoked rebellion, just as British abuses 50 years earlier had provoked the American revolution against the King of England. Texas, Coahuila and Zacatecas revolted.

On May 11, 1835 Santa Anna's Army crushed the revolt in Zacatecas.(20) He then rewarded his victorious soldiers by allowing them two days of rape and pillage, during which more than 2,000 noncombatants were killed.(21) Fearing a similar fate, the governor of Coahuila, Agustin Viesca, disbanded the legislature on May 21.

On June 25, Viesca issued the following appeal: "Citizens of Texas, arise and take arms, or sleep forever! Your most cherished interests, your liberty, your properties, even more, your very existence depend on the changing whims of your most relentless foes."(22) Viesca tried to flee to Texas but was caught and arrested. Mexican forces, under General Martin Perfecto de Cós, had sealed the border to prevent sympathetic Mexicans from joining the revolt in Texas.(23) Later that year, Santa Anna began forming an Army to crush the Texas rebellion.



Stephen Austin



Nicolas Bravo



Manuel Gomez Pedraza



Vicente Guerrero



Santa Anna(117)



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There was no American conspiracy to steal Texas away from Mexico.

Some historians contend that American settlers moved to Texas in the belief that sooner or later the US would annex Texas into the Union. While there is no doubt that some settlers had this in mind, this was a minority view.(24) **To believe that thousands of poor immigrants moved to Texas as part of a vast conspiracy to steal Texas away from Mexico is ludicrous.** Americans settled in Texas to start a new life because land was far cheaper than in the US. Most were content to live their lives peacefully in Mexico.(25) **This is easily proven as most Texans were so apathetic they didn't join the revolt until Santa Anna's Army was moving into Texas!**(26) Had Santa Anna treated his prisoners humanely, the revolutionary zeal in Texas and the US would probably have waned.

This war was **not** a fulfillment of an abstract concept known as Manifest Destiny. Immigrants headed west for free land. Immigrants to Texas got one league (about 4500 acres) for free and immigrants to California got 11 leagues (about 50,000 acres) for free. If a settler bought unoccupied land in the US, you paid the federal government \$1.25 per acre.(76b)

The US was neutral during the Texas rebellion, refusing to send US Army forces to help Texas. Although young men were recruited from the United States and supplies were purchased in the US, it was not the deciding factor in the surprise victory of Texas forces over the Mexican Army at San Jacinto. If the US had grand designs for acquiring Texas, the logical step would be to support the Texans since there was no reason to believe that Texas would be successful in their revolt without outside help.

In addition, the minutes of public meetings, town councils, and committees of correspondence, as well as private letters, provide extensive proof that in early 1835 most people were content being citizens of Mexico.(27)

To claim that the Texas revolution occurred because of Anglo settlers conveniently ignores the fact that many states in Mexico rebelled against the central government in Mexico City and these states had few if any Americans. Texas was NOT the first state to win its independence from Mexico. States rebelling against the central government occurred repeatedly throughout Mexico. With the near constant rebellion of Mexican states, **it just might be the fault of the government of Mexico.**

The revolt in Coahuila, Zacatecas and Texas was the direct result of Santa Anna establishing a dictatorship - not an issue contrived by Texans so they had an excuse to revolt. **What made the Texas situation unique - and unforgiveable from Mexico's point of view - was that the central government was defeated by an Anglo army, not by fellow Spanish, as was the case of the five central American states that seceded from Mexico in 1823.**



"To the south, the Union has a point of contact with the empire of Mexico; and it is thence that serious hostilities may one day be expected to arise. But for a long while to come, the uncivilized state of the Mexican people, the depravity of their morals, and their extreme poverty, will prevent that country from ranking high amongst nations."
Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. De Tocqueville toured America in 1831-32 to search out the general principles of democracy in America - and for applying them to his native France.

Texas War for Independence (1835-6)

Santa Anna thought he would have little trouble defeating the Texans, as his forces were far larger than what the Texans could muster. Texas had no professional army - only farmers, ranchers and businessmen who volunteered for military service. Mexicans in Texas split on the issue with some fighting with Texas forces.

Hostilities started in Texas in Oct. 2, 1835. Santa Anna sent an Army detachment to seize a Cannon in the town of Gonzalez. The Texans refused to hand their cannon over and charged the enemy positions. The Mexicans retreated.

On November 3, 1835, delegates from across Texas assembled at San Felipe de Austin, and issued a declaration against Santa Anna and his military supporters, "who had by force of arms overthrown the Federal Institutions of Mexico, and dissolved the social compact which existed between Texas and the other members of the Mexican confederacy." (28) Even now, the group did NOT declare independence, but affirmed their intention of restoring the Constitution of 1824.

On Dec 10, 1835, Mexican General Martin Perfecto de Cós surrendered over 1,000 Mexican troops at San Antonio to Texan forces. Cós and his men were allowed to go back to Mexico under a promise not to fight against the Texans again.

By March 1836 it was time for Texans to decide what they were fighting for. Santa Anna was bombarding the Alamo. Were the Texans going to fight to save the Mexican constitution of 1824, or fight for independence? This was a question many other states in the Mexican confederation asked year after year - that often ended in rebellion. Texas decided that trying to save democracy in Mexico was a lost cause. (29a) The Texas Declaration of Independence was signed on March 2, 1836 and a provisional government formed for the Republic of Texas.

Less than a week later, Santa Anna's Army overwhelmed Americans and Texans at the Alamo, with about 200 men fighting to the death. (ten of the defenders at the Alamo had Spanish names) About 1,200 Mexicans were killed. (29b) One of the officers in charge of attacking the Alamo was none other than General Cós, who returned to Texas to fight the rebellion a second time.

On 20 March, 1836, 400 Texans surrendered near Goliad - and a week later were massacred on orders from Santa Anna, who then ordered their bodies to be piled up and burned. The Goliad and Alamo massacres galvanized Texan and American hatred against Mexico.

On April 21, 1836, San Houston's Army of 750 men defeated Santa Anna at San Jacinto River. Over 700 Mexicans were killed and 730 captured. The arrogant Santa Anna, who boasted he was the "Napoleon of the West" fled, disguised as a common soldier, but was captured the next day.



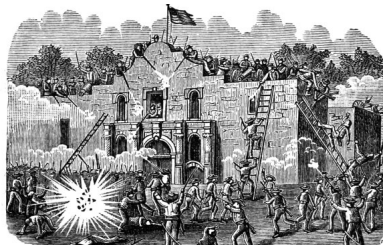
Mexican General Cos

After surrendering to Texian forces at San Antonio, he gave his word of honor to retire to the interior of the Mexican republic, and never again invade Texas. Three months later he commanded troops attacking the Alamo. Later he was again taken prisoner along with Santa Anna and Juan Almonte after Mexico was defeated at the Battle of San Jacinto. Again, he was allowed to return to Mexico unharmed.

Texas had done the impossible - they had defeated the dictator of Mexico.

Treaty of Velasco

There was strong sentiment in Texas to execute Santa Anna, but the new Texas government was more interested in a peace agreement than revenge. Santa Anna sent a message to General Filisola to retire to Victoria, advising: "I have agreed with General Houston for an armistice until matters can be so regulated that the war will cease forever." [30] After weeks of negotiations, on May 14, 1836, Santa Anna, the head of Mexico's government, signed two agreements, known as the Treaties of Velasco. The first treaty was to be implemented immediately, and the second "secret" treaty was to be published after the first treaty had been fulfilled. The public treaty contained 10 articles as follows:



Storming the Alamo.



Davy Crockett (left) and Jim Bowie died at the Alamo.



"Say to General Santa Anna that when I remember how ardent an advocate he was of liberty ten years ago, I have no sympathy for him now, that he has gotten what he deserves." Joel Poinsett to Santa Anna when he was held captive in Texas. Poinsett was minister to Mexico. [118]



"Say to Mr. Poinsett that it is very true that I threw up my cap for liberty with great ardor, and perfect sincerity, but very soon found the folly of it. A hundred years to come my people will not be fit for liberty. They do not know what it is, unenlightened as they are, and under the influence of a Catholic clergy, a despotism is the proper government for them, but there is no reason why it should not be a wise and virtuous one." --- Santa Anna in reply to former American envoy to Mexico Joel Poinsett after his capture by Texians in 1836 [118]

PUBLIC TREATY

Article 1st

General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna agrees that he will not take up arms, nor will he exercise his influence to cause them to be taken up against the people of Texas, during the present war of Independence.

Article 2nd

All hostilities between the mexican and texian troops will cease immediately both on land and water.

Article 3rd

The mexican troops will evacuate the Territory of Texas, passing to the other side of the Rio Grande del Norte. (Rio Grande River)

Article 4th

The mexican Army in its retreat shall not take the property of any person without his consent and just indemnification, using only such articles as may be necessary for its subsistence, in cases when the owner may not be present, and remitting to the commander of the army of Texas or to the commissioner to be appointed for the adjustment of such matters, an account of the value of the property consumed--the place where taken, and the name of the owner, if it can be ascertained.

Article 5th

That all private property including cattle, horses, negro slaves or indentured persons of whatever denomination, that may have been captured by any portion of the mexican army or may have taken refuge in the said army since the commencement of the late invasion, shall be restored to the Commander of the Texian army, or to such other persons as may be appointed by the Government of Texas to receive them.

Article 6th

The troops of both armies will refrain from coming into contact with each other, and to this end the Commander of the army of Texas will be careful not to approach within a shorter distance of the mexican army than five leagues.

Article 7th

The mexican army shall not make any other delay on its march, than that which is necessary to take up their hospitals, baggage and to cross the rivers--any delay not necessary to these purposes to be considered an infraction of this agreement.

Article 8th

By express to be immediately dispatched, this agreement shall be sent to General Filisola and to General T. J. Rusk, commander of the texian Army, in order that they may be apprised of its stipulations, and to this end they will exchange engagements to comply with the same.

Article 9th

That all texian prisoners now in possession of the mexican Army or its authorities be forthwith released and furnished with free passports to return to their homes, in consideration of which a corresponding number of Mexican prisoners, rank and file, now in possession of the Government of Texas shall be immediately released. The remainder of the mexican prisoners that continue in possession of the Government of Texas to be treated with due humanity -- any extraordinary comforts that may be furnished them to be at the charge of the Government of Mexico.

Article 10th

General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna will be sent to Veracruz as soon as it shall be deemed proper.

The contracting parties sign this Instrument for the above mentioned purposes, by duplicate, at the Port of Velasco this fourteenth day of May 1836.

David G Burnet Ant.

Lopez de Santa Anna

Jas Collinsworth, Sec of State

Bailey Hardeman, Secy of Treasury

T W Grayson, Atty General



Map showing strip of land between Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers.

SECRET AGREEMENT:

ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA, General-in-Chief of the Army of Operations, and President of the Republic of Mexico, before the Government established in Texas, solemnly pledges himself to fulfill the Stipulations contained in the following Articles, so far as concerns himself:

ARTICLE 1. He will not take up arms, nor cause them to be taken up, against the people of Texas, during the present war for independence.

ARTICLE 2. He will give his orders that, in the shortest time, the Mexican troops may leave the territory of Texas.

ARTICLE 3. He will so prepare matters in the cabinet of Mexico, that the mission that may be sent thither by the government of Texas may be well received, and that by means of negotiations all differences may be settled, and the independence that has been declared by the convention may be acknowledged.

ARTICLE 4. A treaty of commerce, amity, and limits, will be established between Mexico and Texas, the territory of the latter not to extend beyond the Rio Bravo del Norte.

ARTICLE 5. The present return of General Santa Anna to Vera Cruz being indispensable for the purpose of effecting his solemn engagements, the government of Texas will provide for his immediate embarkation for said port.

Mexico kills the Peace Treaty with Texas

General Filisola, Santa Anna's second in command took over, and despite considerable opposition from other officers, began withdrawing Mexican troops from Texas in accordance with the peace agreement signed by Santa Anna. But 6 days later, on May 20, the Mexican government declared the treaties Santa Anna had signed in captivity to be null and void. On May 28, the Mexican government ordered Filisola to maintain control over parts of Texas already conquered. However, by this time the withdrawal from Texas was largely complete. Filisola wanted to renew the war against Texas, but his troops were in no condition to go on another offensive, and Filisola decided to complete the withdrawal to Matamoras, on the south side of the Rio Grande River. On June 12, Filisola was removed from command.

Mexico's refusal to honor the Velasco peace agreement destroyed any chance of permanent peace with Texas.

On June 3, 1836, Santa Anna - El Presidente - boarded a schooner for the trip to Vera Cruz. But a newly arrived detachment of soldiers prevented Santa Anna from leaving and he became a prisoner again.(31) Because of this second, unauthorized imprisonment of Santa Anna, some historians have declared that the US also broke the peace treaties. While this is technically accurate, the Mexican government had already killed the peace treaties. Even if Santa Anna had returned to Mexico as originally planned, neither Santa Anna nor the Mexican government had any intentions of keeping the peace agreement signed with Texas. THIS VERY BAD DECISION BY MEXICO MADE A SECOND WAR WITH TEXAS - AND THE UNITED STATES INEVITABLE.

After being released and returned to Mexico on February 1837, Santa Anna declared he had signed the treaties under duress as a prisoner of war. While this was certainly true, he could have refused to sign. What Santa Anna's fate would have been had he not signed a peace deal will never be known. What is known is Santa Anna was very cooperative. At any rate, throughout history, the winner in a war dictates the terms to the loser. Texas hoped this treaty would forever end the war with Mexico - but it didn't. Mexico refused to ratify the treaty and Santa Anna repudiated it upon his return to Mexico.



Mexican General Filisola.
"In our opinion the blood of our soldiers as well as that of the enemy was shed in vain... The massacres of the Alamo, of Goliad, of Refugio, convinced the rebels that no peaceable settlement could be expected, and that they must conquer, or die..." [119]



Santa Anna surrenders to a wounded Sam Houston.

Causes of the Mexican American War of 1846

Mexico refuses to recognize Texas independence or negotiate

In January, 1838, President Bustamante addressed the Mexican Congress and said: "With regard to the Texas campaign, I will only observe that its prosecution is the first duty of the Government and of all Mexicans."(32a)

When Santa Anna opened Congress in 1842, he said regarding the Texas question: "If we wish to preserve an honorable name among civilized nations, it is essential that we employ all our energies and resources in combating without cessation, at any sacrifice and at all hazards, until our arms and our pretensions finally triumph."(32b)

With Mexico refusing to honor the peace treaty, and threatening perpetual war with Texas, Texans in September 1837 voted for annexation by the US.(32c) Because of the slavery issue and fear of getting involved in a war with Mexico, Texas was not allowed to join the union.

By 1839, Texas was in negotiations with Mexico in the hopes that they would recognize Texas independence. Ironically, in the Autumn of 1839, General Antonio Canales visited Texan officials seeking help in rebelling against the Mexican government. The Mexican states of Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas wanted to form their own country called The Republic of the Rio Grande, with Laredo as the capital. The Texas government passed resolutions forbidding Texans to help Canales. Texas hoped that by staying out of this latest rebellion against the central government, Mexico would reward Texas with recognition of their independence.(33) But 160 Texans, seeing the chance for a peaceful neighbor to the south, fought with Canales anyway.(34)

The Republic of the Rio Grande ended In November 1840, when Gen. Canales and Mexican General Arista met to discuss the war. Mexico offered General Canales the position of brigadier general in the Mexican army in exchange for his abandoning the cause of the rebellion. Canales accepted and the rebellion ended.(35) Texas continued to negotiate with Mexico up to 1841, but got nowhere.(33)

When Santa Anna regained power in October 1841, Mexican hostility against Texas resumed:

- On March 5, 1842, a Mexican force of 500 men invaded Texas and briefly occupied San Antonio, plundered the town and then fled back to Mexico.(36)(37)
- On September 11, 1842, San Antonio was again captured by a force of 1400 Mexican troops.(36)(37) A Texan force sent to recapture San Antonio became involved in several bloody battles, including an engagement in what became known as Dawson's Massacre.(37)(38) The Mexicans then retreated back across the Rio Grande but took a large number of prisoners to Perote Prison near Vera Cruz. It was believed that Mexico would next attack Austin, hoping that a capture of the capital would be the end of Texas independence.(37)
- Mexico ordered two war steamers from England. Texas had reason to believe these would be used to occupy Galveston - which would destroy the Texas economy. In March 1842, every citizen of Galveston not in the army was called upon to labor in constructing defensive batteries.(39)



Mexican General
Mariano Arista



José Bocanegra

By 1843, Texas was in bad shape. The economy was bad, no standing army to defend against Mexico and the Treasury was empty. Santa Anna saw an opportunity to reconquer Texas, but fortunately for Texas, another rebellion in Mexico, this by Yucatan, occupied Santa Anna. In February 1843, Santa Anna sent a proposal to Sam Houston: If Texas would accept Mexico's sovereignty and be re-incorporated, Texas could retain control of her own internal affairs and Mexico wouldn't put troops in the state. A short time later, Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Relations informed the British that soon Mexico would attack Texas in the most ruthless manner. The Brits passed the message to the Texans. Two months later, believing Texans would be more inclined to accept his proposal with some threats, Santa Anna reminded Texans of the massacres Mexico had committed at Goliad and the Alamo!(40)

By now, Texans recognized that Mexico would never recognize their independence and would conduct harassing raids, threaten and possibly invade Texas again. Texans would NEVER trust or rejoin Mexico. Texas longed for a final solution.

It is ironic that Mexico expected Spain to recognize THEIR independence, but when the tables were turned, Mexico refused to even consider this course of action for Texas. Spain recognized Mexico as an independent country in 1836 - 15 years after their successful revolution. Mexico should have recognized Texas as an independent country as they no longer had any justifiable claim to the territory - Santa Anna DID sign a peace treaty with Texas. The Texas Republic was recognized as a free, sovereign nation by the US (1837), followed by France, Great Britain, Holland and Belgium.

All attempts at diplomacy over the issue of Texas were rejected by Mexico. In August 1843, Mexico's secretary of relations, Bocanegra declared "...the Mexican Government will consider equivalent to a declaration of war against the Mexican Republic the passage of an act for the incorporation of Texas with the territory of the United States; the certainty of the fact being sufficient for the immediate proclamation of war..."(52)(53) These threats of war were issued several more times. In 1844, Santa Anna was given 4 million for war with Texas.(54)

In addition to the impasse over Texas, Mexico refused to pay compensation to US citizens - stalling for years.(99A)(99B)(99C) On 5 Apr 1832, the U.S. and Mexico signed a treaty of amity, commerce and navigation. It was after this that grievances began to pile up. There were off and on negotiations with Mexico plus additional grievances were filed. Unable to come to a resolution, the U.S. and Mexico agreed to have an international umpire decide what grievances were legitimate and for how much. Baron Roenne of Prussia was the 'umpire.' The commission started on 17 Aug 1840 and ended on 26 May 1841. Baron Roenne made decisions on claims worth \$6,648,812 and Mexico was held liable for \$2,026,139. Eight claims were rejected on merit and ten on jurisdiction. Thirty six claims were valid - either wholly or partially.(99D) Mexico was to make 20 quarterly payments for 5 years but after 3 payments, Mexico failed to make their April 1844 payment.

In September 1844, Mexicans revolted against Santa Anna's ever increasing corruption and dictatorial ways. He tried to flee the country, but was captured in January, 1845 and exiled to Cuba.(29) Jose Herrera was installed as acting president of Mexico. On July 21, 1845, shortly after Texas accepted the US annexation offer, Herrera announced a resolution promising to declare war on the US whenever American troops "invaded" Texas.(54B) In the summer of 1845, Mexico gave official notice to England and France that war was inevitable.(55) The popular "La Voz del Pueblo" ranted "Extermination and death to the Sabine [River] was the cry of our victorious legions at the Alamo, Bejar and El Salado. Extermination and death will be the cry of the valiant regulars and of the citizen soldiery, marching enthusiastically to conquer Texas."(56A)



President Herrera

Mexico now blamed Texas for its escalating war with Indian tribes, especially the Apaches and Comanches. Early in 1845, Texas had signed peace agreements with the Indians, who turned their fury against Mexico. The truth is that the Indians had waged wars against Mexico for several centuries, but this was just another way to spew hate against Texas and ultimately the U.S.(56B)

The US continued its efforts for a negotiated settlement. In October, word was received that Herrera was prepared to discuss all differences with the U.S. John Slidell, a man who spoke fluent Spanish was sent to Mexico and arrived in Mexico City on 6 December. He had "full powers to adjust and definitively settle all pending differences between the two countries, including the boundary between Mexico and Texas."(57)



John Slidell

Slidell was also to attempt to buy New Mexico and California. The US believed Mexico would be willing to sell these lands as Mexico was constantly on the verge of bankruptcy with a staggering national debt, had scarcely any citizens on the land and had very little control over the area. Indians attacked Mexican settlements at will, as Mexican authorities did not have enough military personnel on hand to stop them. Unfortunately, by December, 1845, the Herrera government was about to be overthrown, and in a futile attempt to save itself, refused to meet with Slidell.(58)

Trying to justify their refusal to meet with Slidell, Mexico claimed they could only meet with a commissioner. Slidell, who had been credentialed as a minister, was then made a commissioner. Mexico still wouldn't meet with Slidell, showing that Mexico was quibbling over the mere form of Slidell's credentials for the purpose of evading negotiations. Paredes also refused to meet Slidell.

Americans were demonized by nearly every politician in Mexico. Trying to outdo the other with never ending hate speech against the U.S., John Slidell wrote in September 1845: "The most stubborn and malignant feeling seem to exist in the mind of every Mexican against the United States." (59) Later, Slidell summed up his experiences with Mexico: "We shall never be able to treat with her on fair terms until she has been taught to respect us. . . here all amicable advances are considered as indicative either of weakness or treachery." Slidell added privately to James Buchanan, "Be assured, that nothing is to be done with these people, until they shall have been chastised." (60)

Critics of the U.S. claim that attempting to buy this land was "insulting" to Mexico. But the US purchased land from Spain, France. There is nothing offensive about asking to buy land. You can just say 'no.' This accusation is unwarranted.

In 1842, US Navy Captain Thomas Jones, created a political storm in the U.S. and Mexico. After hearing false news that war had broken out between the U.S. and Mexico and the British were preparing to seize California, Jones captured Monterey, California on Oct. 19, 1842. The next day Californios informed Jones that there was no such war. Jones hauled down the U.S. flag, ran the Mexican flag back up, paid the Mexicans for damages and sailed away. After an investigation, Jones was relieved of command of the U.S. Navy Pacific Squadron. (61)

It should be noted that the issue of the Oregon Territory with Britain was settled peacefully after long and extremely difficult negotiations. (62) Mexico refused to negotiate at all.

The US decides to bring Texas into the Union



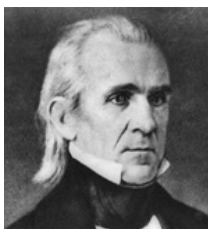
President Tyler

With negotiations a failure, Texas began to explore other options. One was to align itself with Britain for protection from Mexico. Another option was discussed in May 1843, in Ashley, South Carolina when a group of southern states met to discuss seceding from the US, joining with Texas and forming a new country. (41)(42) A third option was to join with California and Oregon and form a new nation. The desire of Californians to be free of Mexican rule was growing stronger all the time. (43)



Juan Almonte

By 1845, time had run out for the U.S. to make a decision on Texas. The U.S. feared commercial and political agreements between Texas and European countries that would make annexation impossible in the future. It was widely believed the British were working to take control of California from Mexico and attempting to align themselves with Texas. The war of 1812 against the British was still a traumatic event for many people and fear of British expansion into the western part of the continent was a legitimate concern. If the US did not annex Texas now, Texas would never become part of the US.



President Polk

In April 1844, the US agreed to annex Texas into the union. In May, 1844, a US military buildup of several thousand men was begun at Fort Jessup in Louisiana, to observe the Texas border. About the same time, a US representative met with Santa Anna's representative and explained that the US was compelled for its own security to negotiate a treaty for annexation with Texas. The border and monetary compensation was put on the negotiating table. Mexico's response was belligerent and non-compromising. (44) However, the annexation treaty lost in the Senate in June, 16-35. (45) The reasons were the slavery issue and not wanting to offend Mexico.

But when James Polk won the Presidency in November, 1844 on a platform of annexing Texas and Oregon, President John Tyler submitted a new treaty to Congress in the form of a joint resolution to bring Texas into the American Union. There was still opposition to admitting Texas because it would add another slave state and strengthen the south. However, the greater fears were British expansion and Mexico's continuous belligerence towards the U.S. which changed public opinion.

On February 28, 1845, six days before Polk took office, Congress passed the joint resolution for annexing Texas.(46A) In the Senate, fourteen slave state and thirteen free state men voted for the resolution, and twelve slave and thirteen free state men against it. In the House, sixty-seven slave state and fifty-three free state men were in favor of it, and eighteen slave and eighty free state men against it.(46B) Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the U.S. Mexico's minister in Washington, Juan Almonte, declared his country would maintain the claim to her former province "at all times, by every means . . . in her power."(47) On Apr 9, 1845, Almonte described the annexation of Texas as "an act of aggression the most unjust which can be found recorded in the annals of modern history."(48)

Polk defends admitting Texas to the United States

Newly elected President James Polk defended admitting Texas into the Union in his March 4, 1845 Inaugural speech: **"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 do not seem to appreciate the true character of our Government. Our Union is a confederation of independent States, whose policy is peace with each other and all the world. To enlarge its limits is to extend the dominions of peace over additional territories and increasing millions."(50)

"None can 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....Whatever is good or evil in the local institutions of Texas will remain her own whether annexed to the United States or not. None of the present States will be responsible for them any more than they are for the local institutions of each other.... Upon the same principle that they would refuse to form a perpetual union with Texas because of her local institutions our forefathers would have been prevented from forming our present Union."(50)

Faced with imminent American annexation of Texas, the British Minister to Mexico, Charles Bankhead and the French minister to Mexico persuaded Texas to sign their Peace Treaty on 29 March 1845, in which Mexico would recognize the independence of Texas, with boundaries that would be determined with French and British mediation. But Mexico made changes and didn't sign the document until 19 May, 1845, enraging Bankhead. The offer was finally presented to Texas, but it was too late. No one trusted Mexico.(49A) (49B) On July 4, 1845, Texas Congress accepted the US annexation offer and rejected Mexico's offer. On Oct 13, 1845, Texans voted to accept annexation into the US by 7,664 to 430.(46A) Also in October, about 3900 US troops gathered at Corpus Christi to ensure safety for Texas.(51) On December 29, 1845, Texas officially became the 28th state in the United States.

Herrera overthrown, Paredes takes power



General Paredes

Opponents of Herrera used the issue of Texas independence to further incite Mexican hatred of America, whip up war fever and undermine Herrera. In August 1845, the Centralist's leader, Mariano Paredes, demanded an attack on the United States. On Jan 2, 1846, Paredes marched into Mexico City at the head of the army.(63) Herrera fled for his life. On Jan 4th, Paredes took the oath of office as the new president and claimed all of Texas to the Sabine River - which separates Texas from Louisiana.(64)

This is the same Paredes who attempted to start a war with the U.S. in 1841. On August 8, 1841 he joined in a revolt against the regime of Anastasio Bustamante, whom he accused of not fighting to recover Texas. Francisco Echeverría was chosen interim president, but within a short time, Santa Anna assumed the presidency.

Paredes was pushed out of power and he became an enemy of Santa Anna. Later, in November 1844, after the U.S. agreed to annex Texas, Paredes declared war had begun against the U.S. On March 12, foreign Minister Joaquin Maria del Castillo y Lanzas forwarded a message to Slidell which stated that Paredes would not meet with him but hoped to resolve the situation peacefully. On Mar 21, Paredes vowed that Mexico "does not recognize the American flag on the soil of Texas. . ."(65)

Mexico certain of victory

Paredes confidently believed his experienced army would crush the Americans and their small army. The Mexican Army had about 32,000 men, far more than the US Army.(66) Paredes army was well disciplined and very experienced in battle from many revolutionary wars in Mexico. Paredes also believed that the U.S. would have a hard time keeping their army supplied so far from population centers and prevent the US from using a large force against Mexico.(67)(68)

Many Mexicans believed their army was nearly invincible. The Spanish Minister in Washington, Calderon de la Barca, said "There are no better troops in the world, nor better drilled and armed, than the Mexicans."(69) The Mexican correspondent to the London Times stated in 1845 that Mexican soldiers "are superior to those of the United States."(69) The Boletin Oficial of San Luis Potosi stated: "We have numerous and veteran forces burning with a desire to gain immortal renown."(69) "Not to speak of our approved infantry, our artillery is excellent, and our cavalry so superior in men and horses that it would be an injustice not to recognize the fact."(69) An editorial in La Voz del Pueblo said, "We have more than enough strength to make war." "Let us make it, then, and victory will perch upon our banners."(68) Juan Almonte, a military man, assured his government that it was "certain" that Mexico would defeat the U.S.(123)

Many international observers believed the U.S. would have a tough time defeating Mexico - and many thought the US would lose. The British minister in Texas, Captain Elliot, stated "They [US troops] could not resist artillery and cavalry in a Country suited to those arms."(70) The British weekly *Britannia* said the US is "fit for nothing but to fight Indians."(70) Mexicans looked at the poor performance of the U.S. military in the War of 1812 with satisfaction.(70) Some foreign observers believed it would take 250,000 US troops to win. Other observers stated that it would be nearly impossible to defeat Mexico - a nation of over 7 million people with many rugged mountains. The ability of Mexico to wage guerrilla war against our supply lines would prevent us from massing sufficient troops to defeat the Mexicans deep in their territory. Mexico could outlast the U.S. without suffering disastrously, while the US would have to wage an extremely costly war, raise a large army and still not be able to defeat Mexico. Eventually the Americans would tire of the war, the never ending casualties, huge military spending and make peace on Mexico's terms.(71)

The US never believed victory over Mexico was a sure thing, which was why it took so long to allow Texas to join the union and why we bent over backwards to peaceably resolve all the issues.

Mexico also hoped that Europe - mostly Britain - would help them win their war against the United States. Britain, which recognized the independence of Texas and had fought two wars with the U.S., refused to get involved. On June 1, 1846, British Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen sent this message to England's Ambassador to Mexico, Charles Bankhead: "She [Great Britain] would find herself engaged in a war with a Nation with which she would have no personal cause of quarrel, in behalf of a Nation and Government which she has repeatedly warned in the most friendly and urgent manner of their danger, and which, solely in consequence of their willful contempt of that warning, have at last plunged headlong down the precipice from which the British Government spared no efforts to save them." Bankhead was instructed to make these points when informing Paredes why Britain would not become involved in the war.(72)(73)

On Jan 12, 1846, Polk received word from Slidell that negotiations had failed. Polk realized that war with Mexico was inevitable. On Jan. 13, 1846, He ordered General Zachary Taylor to move his army from Corpus Christi to the north side of the Rio Grande River and prepare to defend Texas from a possible Mexican invasion. Taylor received these orders on Feb. 3. The order to Taylor stated that "It is not designed, in our present relations with Mexico, that you should treat her as an enemy," but "should she assume that character by a declaration of war, or any open act of hostility toward us, you will not act merely on the defensive, if your relative means allow you to do otherwise."(74)

Before leaving Corpus Christi, General Taylor wrote a proclamation to the people of Matamoros in which he alerted them to his march, promised that his intentions were peaceful and vowed to respect their religious freedom and civil rights of the people he encountered. He also vowed to pay market value for any goods purchased.(75) Taylor's army left Corpus Christi for the Rio Grande River on March 8. Despite the war rhetoric coming from Paredes, Polk still hoped to settle the disputes peaceably. **Mexico made herself believe that General Taylor was going to invade Mexico. This was just more self induced hysteria on Mexico's part and a way to arouse patriotic fervor in Mexico.**

On March 19, at a stream called Arroyo Colorado, Mexican scouts presented Gen. Taylor with a proclamation by General Francisco Mejia, denouncing the U.S. advance and promising that the Mexican army would turn back the Americans and launch a counterstrike for the reconquest of Texas.(76) Mejia then issued a proclamation to Mexicans living near the Rio Grande River: "For what Mexican worthy of the name can resign himself not to fight to the death and so to see his noble race under the detestable domination of the foreigner?"(77)

Taylor's force of about 4,000 men arrived on the Rio Grande on March 28, 1846. General Taylor again wrote letters to both civilian and military authorities across the river at Matamoros, expressing his desire to "enter into any arrangements to secure the peace and harmony of the frontier" until the US and Mexican governments could reach an official accord.(78) This force was HALF of the entire US army.(79) Surprisingly, Mexico only had a force of about 2000 men(80) including 20 artillery pieces(81) across the river at Matamoros though thousands of reinforcements were expected to arrive soon.

These reinforcements took much longer to arrive than expected. Locals refused to sell supplies to their own army because they were "paid" in promissory notes - which were worthless. Mexican officials were enraged when Mexicans eagerly sold food, cloth and horses to the American Army which paid in cash.(82)

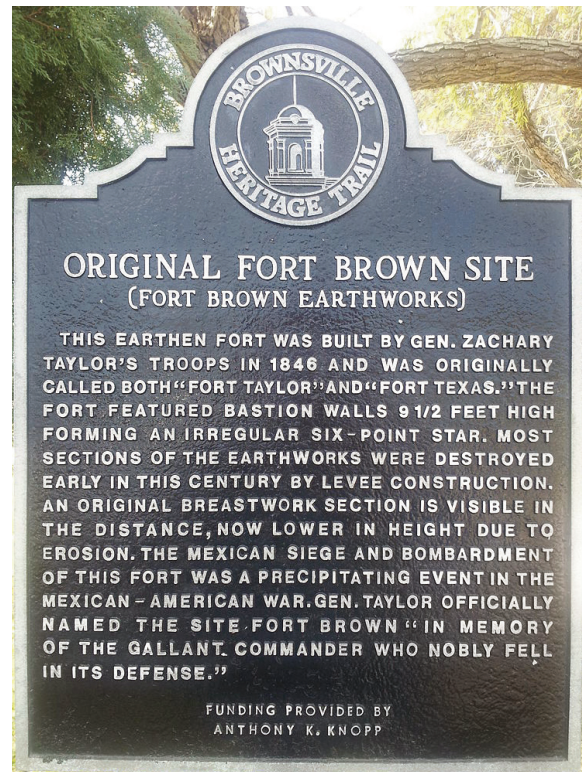
Face off on the Rio Grande River

On Mar 19, Mejia received orders to retreat from arroyo Colorado to defend Matamoros, He then built a large round fort of earth, timbers and brick to guard Anacuitas, the primary crossing into the city. Dubbed **Fort Paredes**, it could shelter up to 800 troops and occupied one of the highest points along the Mexican side of the Rio Grande.(83)

On March 29, the morning after the US Army arrived on the Rio Grande, Mexico put in place one 8 pound cannon aimed at the American camp and began to build elaborate defenses for Matamoros. By April 7, many more cannons were aimed at the US camp from multiple locations on the Mexican side.(84)

On Mar 29, American troops responded with 3 cannons, one of them pointing at General Mejia's headquarters. By Apr 7, the US had built a redoubt and mounted four 18 pound cannons aimed at the public square in Matamoros.(85) On April 7, the US began construction of their own fort, which became known as Fort Brown.(85)

Gen. Pedro Ampudia arrived on Apr 11 with about 3,000 additional troops. He replaced Mejia. Ampudia had a reputation for needless cruelty. He had executed a man named Francisco Sentmanat in 1844 and fried his head in oil for display in the public square of San Juan Batista.(86) The locals had a strong dislike for Ampudia and petitioned Paredes for a change in leadership. On Apr 15, Ampudia was replaced by General Arista. Ampudia was now second in command.(87)



On Apr 11, Ampudia ordered all American citizens evicted from Matamoros immediately and sent to the interior of Mexico. There were about 300 hundred foreign nationals in Matamoros, the majority American.(88) The Americans were forced, sometimes at bayonet point, to walk 150 miles south to the city of Victoria.(89)

On Apr 11, Ampudia sent a communication to Taylor: "I require you" to retire to the north side of the Nueces River within "twenty-four hours," while the U.S. and Mexican governments negotiate. Taylor rejected Ampudia's 'order' and replied that an envoy - John Slidell - had previously been sent by the U.S. to Mexico for that purpose to no avail and he would remain on the north side of the Rio Grande River pending orders from Washington.(5).

On April 25, 1846, about 1,600 Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande and ambushed American troops. The war was on.

SUMMATION - Why Negotiations failed and war was inevitable

The reality of the situation was clear. **Negotiations were useless because Mexico refused to accept the loss of Texas.** Mexican pride could not accept the fact that a bunch of outnumbered farmers, ranchers, businessmen and adventurous young men from the U.S. had defeated the Army of Mexico. **But this colossal stain on Mexican pride could be fixed if Mexico reconquered Texas. Mexico was not going to negotiate over the Texas border since settling the border issue would be an admission that Texas was separate from Mexico.** Mexico considered Texas a breakaway province and wanted it back.

The reason Mexico went nuts when Texas joined the U.S. was because instead of attacking Texas, Mexico now had to attack the US. The whole military equation changed dramatically. Of course, this is why Texas joined the U.S. in the first place - for protection from Mexico.

Who was provoking who?

Mexico put themselves into a corner with their never ending hate speech against America by most Mexican politicians which kept the people in a war frenzy. They **had** to attack the U.S. or be viewed as a traitor. After 10 years of constant war rhetoric from Mexico, the U.S. had to confront Mexico: Accept the fact you lost to Texas and negotiate or start the war you keep saying you want. It was time to resolve the situation. Taylor was on the Rio Grande to protect Texas and force a decision. That this display of force caused Mexico to start the war rather than bargain does not prove the U.S. provoked the war. **It proves Mexico chose war over negotiations.**

Critics of the U.S. for over 150 years have condemned the U.S. for sending troops to the Rio Grande, maintaining this was a ploy intended to provoke Mexico into starting the war. This is bogus reasoning and ignores facts. **Who was provoking who?? How could the U.S. be responsible for provoking a war with a country that had repeatedly declared war on the U.S., refused to negotiate, vowed to conquer Texas and put an invasion force on the border?** Consider:

- First, Herrera was overthrown by General Mariano Paredes, whose sole objective was to start a war with the U.S. - a war they were certain they would win. On Jan 4th, Paredes publicly claimed every foot of Texas to the Sabine River - the border between Texas and Louisiana.(64) This was not just bluster on Mexico's part. Lieutenant Gillespie of the U.S. Marines was in Mexico after Paredes took power and saw war preparations underway. Troops and military supplies were being assembled near Mexico City on a large scale.(93)
- Second, Mexico's obsession for 10 years was with conquering Texas, which they considered a breakaway province. Mexico did NOT attack Texas over a boundary dispute. Mexico NEVER said they merely wanted to conquer the land up to the Nueces River. Polk was aware of this Mexican scam.(95) If Mexico wanted the boundary to be the Nueces, they had 10 years to bring it up with Texas, and later the U.S. and negotiate a deal. The obvious truth was that Mexico was NEVER going to resolve the border impasse as that would be an admission that Texas was separate from Mexico. Mexico intended to conquer all of Texas.
- Third, Mexico apparently accepted the Rio Grande as the boundary. Santa Anna DID sign a peace deal with Texas which placed the southern border at the Rio Grande. Santa Anna DID instruct the remnant of the Mexican Army to position themselves south of the Rio Grande after their defeat by Sam Houston at San Jacinto in 1836, and this is where they stayed.(96) Mexico and Santa Anna both repudiated the peace agreement with Texas, so if Mexico DID consider the Nueces River the correct boundary line, why didn't they place their army there, instead of the southern side of the Rio Grande? If Mexico was fearful of a confrontation by placing their army at the Nueces, why didn't they negotiate on the issue? President Polk believed the true Texas border was the Rio Grande, not the Nueces River: "The Texas which was ceded to Spain by the Florida treaty of 1819, embraced all the country now claimed by the State of Texas between the Nueces and the Rio Grande."(95)
- Fourth, Mexico's claim that America had no valid claim to land between the Nueces and Rio Grande is NOT true. Doctor John Beales made a contract with the State of Coahuila and Texas in Oct 1832 for colonizing a tract of land between those rivers, comprising **three million** acres. Beales brought at least two groups of colonists to a settlement named Dolores, north of Laredo between 1834 and 1836. Everyone fled for their lives when Santa Anna's army invaded Texas early in 1836. One large wagon train was attacked by Comanche Indians and all the settlers were massacred except two women and their small children, who were taken captive.(97)
- Fifth, when General Taylor began his march to the Rio Grande River from Corpus Cristi, he constantly informed Mexican authorities of his movements, so Mexico would not think we were going to attack them. The U.S. stated multiple times their intentions were to defend Texas from Mexico's constant vows to invade.

- Sixth, Evidence after the war shows that Mexico desired the war. In Oct 1847, a pamphlet written by Mariano Otero, editor of El Siglo XIX and Senator from the state of Jalisco, appeared. Otero wrote: "The American forces did not advance to the Rio Grande until after the war became inevitable, and then only as an army of observation." (92) In 1847, Santa Anna admitted that Mexico desired to go to war with the U.S., as did the minister of relations in 1849. (123) In December, 1847, General Arista declared, "I had the pleasure of being the first to begin the war." (92)

- Seventh, by refusing to resolve the border issue, Mexico - whether by design or accident - laid a political trap for the U.S. The boundary only became important AFTER Gen. Taylor's force went south of the Nueces to the Rio Grande. Suddenly, Mexico claimed the U.S. invaded Mexican territory and Mexico was compelled to defend herself and her honor. Mexico thus absolved itself of blame for starting an offensive war to conquer Texas by claiming they were fighting a "defensive" war to conquer Texas!

In his war proclamation of Apr 23, 1846, Paredes stated: ". . . I have commanded the general-in-chief of the division of our northern frontier to attack the army which is attacking us; . . . From this day defensive war begins, and every point of our territory which may be invaded or attacked shall be defended by force." (98)

- Finally, there was the issue of Mexican belligerence towards the US over money owed American citizens. After years of stalling, (99A)(99B)(99C) Mexico finally agreed to make 20 quarterly payments for 5 years, starting April 1843. But after making 3 payments, Mexico stopped payments.

The U.S. was not the only country having problems dealing with Mexico. British diplomat Ashburnham said: "There is scarcely one foreign power with whom they have had any relation, which has not had more or less cause to complain of the iniquity and persecution to which its subjects here have been exposed;" (99E) Britain and France had used force, or the threat of it, to induce the Mexican government to pay claims on behalf of their citizens. The US was more patient with Mexico than it should have been - to the point that Mexico viewed our patience as weakness. Although the US had legitimate reasons to use military force against Mexico over the grievances, no president wanted a war with Mexico and Congress never pushed for one either. (99F) Polk did not want a war with Mexico. Had Mexico resolved the dispute over Texas, Taylor would not have been sent to the Rio Grande River to protect Texas from Mexico.

Some critics claim US peace efforts were disingenuous - designed to fail. Actually it was the other way around. Mexico was disingenuous.

Polk did NOT want a war with Mexico

Polk had every reason to seek a diplomatic solution with Mexico. The U.S. Army was untested against a conventional army. The last time the U.S. Army faced off against a regular Army was the War of 1812, when they were routed by the British. Why would Polk fight a country with an untried army far from home over unfamiliar territory? Many foreign observers believed it would be nearly impossible to defeat Mexico - a nation of over 7 million people with many rugged mountains. The ability of Mexico to wage guerrilla war against our supply lines would prevent us from massing sufficient troops to defeat the Mexicans deep in their territory. Mexico could outlast the US without suffering disastrously, while the U.S. would have to wage an extremely costly war, raise a large army - at least 250,000 - and still not be able to defeat Mexico. Eventually the Americans would tire of the war, the never ending casualties, huge military spending and make peace on Mexico's terms. (71)

If Polk was planning to go to war against a strong country like Mexico, he would have begun a massive build up for the military, but he did not. Polk's cabinet recommended an additional 2,600 men for the army and none for the Navy. (90) This is an inconsequential increase.

The fact is the U.S. didn't have to go to war to acquire California or New Mexico. The U.S. had thousands of immigrants moving west each year. Within a few years, California would have had a heavy majority of Americans and New Mexico would only be a few years behind. So why go to war, if population growth could accomplish the same thing without all the bloodshed and cost of a war?

Manifest Destiny

This war was **not** a fulfillment of an abstract concept known as Manifest Destiny. Immigrants headed west for free land. Immigrants to Texas got one league (about 4500 acres) for free and immigrants to California got 11 leagues (about 50,000 acres) for free. If a settler bought unoccupied land in the US, you paid the federal government \$1.25 per acre. (91)

It's important to recognize that Spain/Mexico, like many other countries, had their own version of "Manifest Destiny." Spain's "manifest destiny" was to conquer all of the New World (except for Brazil) for Spain and Catholicism. Incredibly, Spain wanted more than just the New World. In 1513, Vasco Balboa claimed the entire Pacific Ocean and all lands adjoining it for Spain. Although Balboa didn't know it, he claimed modern day United States, Canada, Alaska, Siberia, Japan, Korea, China, The Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia - all for Spain. **Many of Spain's land claims were meaningless.** It was really inevitable that Spain/Mexico's "manifest destiny" would come into conflict with America's more limited expansion. **While Spain/Mexico was claiming land just to claim it - land they had a difficult time putting people on - the U.S. was expanding based on a growing population.**

Texas was NOT the first state to secede from Mexico

Because of the dysfunctional state of Mexican politics - and only 2 years after independence, five states in central America declared themselves independent from Mexico - Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. On July 1, 1823, the United Provinces of Central America was formally established in Guatemala City. The Union fell apart in 1838 and the five provinces became independent nations. **So why hasn't Mexico made an issue out of this over the past 190 years?** Is it because they are fellow Spanish, whereas the northern territories came under control of those evil Anglo Americans? Are Mexicans racist? Just wondering.

Mexican leaders **did** use some racist rhetoric against Americans. For instance, General Mejia issued this declaration after Taylor informed him he was moving to the north side of the Rio Grande River: "For what Mexican worthy of the name can resign himself not to fight to the death and so to see his noble race under the detestable domination of the foreigner?"(92)

There was no American conspiracy to steal Texas away from Mexico.

Some historians contend that American settlers moved to Texas in the belief that sooner or later the US would annex Texas into the Union. While there is no doubt that some settlers had this in mind, this was a minority view.(24) **To believe that thousands of poor immigrants moved to Texas as part of a vast conspiracy to steal Texas away from Mexico is ludicrous.** Americans settled in Texas to start a new life because land was far cheaper than in the U.S. Most were content to live their lives peacefully in Mexico.(25) **This is easily proven as most Texans were so apathetic they didn't join the revolt until Santa Anna's Army was moving into Texas!**(26) Had Santa Anna treated his prisoners humanely, the revolutionary zeal in Texas and the U.S. would probably have waned.

The U.S. was neutral during the Texas rebellion, refusing to send US Army forces to help Texas. Although young men were recruited from the U.S. and supplies were purchased in the U.S., it was not the deciding factor in the surprise victory of Texas over the Mexican Army at San Jacinto. If the U.S. had grand designs for acquiring Texas, the logical step would be to support the Texans since there was no reason to believe that Texas would be successful in their revolt without outside help.

In addition, the minutes of public meetings, town councils, and committees of correspondence, as well as private letters, provide extensive proof that in early 1835 most people were content being citizens of Mexico.(27)

To claim that the Texas revolution occurred because of Anglo settlers conveniently ignores the fact that many states in Mexico rebelled against the central government in Mexico City **and these states had few if any Americans.** With the near constant rebellion of Mexican states, **it just might be the fault of the government of Mexico.** The revolt in Coahuila, Zacatecas and Texas was the direct result of Santa Anna establishing a dictatorship - not an issue contrived by Texans so they had an excuse to revolt. **What made the Texas situation unique - and unforgivable from Mexico's point of view - was that the central government was defeated by an Anglo army.**

Why Revisionist historians are wrong

With the same information available to everyone, why is there such a difference of opinion on who started the Mexican American War? The answer is revisionist historians, such as Howard Zinn, are politicians first and historians second - they pick and choose what information to include in order to 'prove' their storyline. ANY evidence that would support Mexico's claim is given prominence but evidence that shows Mexico was guilty of starting the war is minimized or ignored.

It is a sad fact in today's world that America has to be 100% perfect in any given situation or the U.S. position is suspect. If America is only 99% correct, then the doubters believe America is 100% wrong. America's adversaries can have huge inconsistencies in their arguments, but their position is always given the benefit of the doubt.

Mexican American War - 1846-1848

Mexico started it - all by themselves!



Mexican General Arista

In a letter dated Apr 18, 1846, Paredes wrote to General Arista "It is indispensable that hostilities begin, yourself taking the initiative." (92)

On April 25, 1846, 1,600 Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande and ambushed a force of 80 American troops. Eleven men were killed and the rest taken prisoner.

The US declares War on Mexico

President Polk received a report of the ambush on May 9. On May 13, Congress declared war on Mexico. Although there was some opposition to the war, most Americans supported it - especially in the south. Approximately 75,000 men eagerly enlisted in volunteer regiments raised by the various states, including Massachusetts, where Whig opposition to the war was strongest.

Thousands more enlisted in the regular U.S. Army. There was no need for a draft. In some places, so many men flocked to recruiting stations that large numbers had to be turned away. Thousands of newly-arrived Irish and German immigrants also heeded the call to arms. (100) In state after state, thousands more volunteered for the US Army then were needed. (101)



General Zachary Taylor

Before Congress could declare war, two more battles took place on the north side of the Rio Grande - at Palo Alto on May 8 and Resaca de la Palma on May 9. The U.S. Army, commanded by General Zachary Taylor, won both battles, losing just 50 men. Mexico lost over 1,000. Being certain of victory at Resaca de la Palma, General Arista's victory meal, being prepared at his camp nearby, was eaten that evening by American soldiers.

These two defeats of Centralists forces resulted in rebellion throughout much of Mexico against Parades. On July 28, 1846, Parades turned the government over to his vice-president to take command of the Mexican Army. On August 4, 1846, Paredes was overthrown and imprisoned. On Aug 22, the Federalists placed Valentin Gomez Farias in power and restored the constitution of 1824.

Once again, Santa Anna got involved. Santa Anna, who was in exile in Cuba, informed President Polk that if he were allowed through the US blockade of Mexico and be restored to power, he would sell New Mexico and California to the US. Santa Anna also wrote to the Mexican government that if he was able to return to the country, he would lead the military battle against the US, but had no aspirations to return to political power. Santa Anna lied on both accounts. The US allowed Santa Anna back into Mexico on Aug 16, 1846, and he took charge of the war effort. Santa Anna also overthrew Mexican President Farias and declared himself president.

Campaign in California

For over 200 years, Spain/Mexico gave California little attention and this huge area of land was sparsely settled. Most Mexicans in California - who referred to themselves as Californios, detested the despotic government in Mexico City. Although the central government in Mexico City demanded the expulsion of Americans from California, the locals declined to follow the orders. In fact, about a third of the land that was given away went to Americans. As a result, American strength continued to grow. (102)

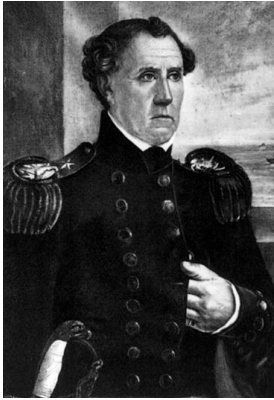
In 1845, with tensions growing between the US and Mexico, John D. Sloat, commander of the US Navy's Pacific Squadron, was instructed to land in California and claim it for the US if war broke out. It was a tragedy that some US government and military officials didn't recognize the profound political differences between Mexicans and Californios. While there was hatred between the US and Mexico, most Californios, led by General Mariano Vallejo, had strong pro-American feelings.



John Fremont

These feelings were sorely tested after explorer John Fremont arrived in December, 1845. Despite orders to "conciliate the feelings of the Californians. . ." Fremont instigated numerous confrontations with authorities. Convinced authorities were about to forcibly expel him and his men and believing war between the US and Mexico was imminent, about 3 dozen men started what became known as the Bear Flag Revolt on June 10, 1845. Incredibly, the Bears took General Vallejo and other pro American Californios prisoner, took control of Sonoma and declared the Republic of California.

Sloat, not wanting to take action prematurely, waited until July 7, when Sloat's men defeated a small detachment of Mexicans and raised the US flag at Monterey. A proclamation was then issued, declaring "the first importance to cultivate the good opinion of the inhabitants." (103) By the end of



Commodore John Sloat

July, some 160 settlers and US soldiers plus sailors and Marines from Sloat's ships had seized all of northern California. Fremont met Sloat aboard the Navy ship Savannah and Sloat demanded to see his orders that authorized Fremont to take up arms against the Californians. Learning Fremont had no such orders, Sloat unleashed a blistering tirade against Fremont.(104) On July 29, Sloat ordered Vallejo released and the others prisoners were released soon afterwards. Most residents of northern California were elated and General Vallejo put his old Mexican military uniforms in a pile and set them on fire.(105)

The Mexicans, under Comandante Castro and Governor Pico, fled south to Los Angeles and prepared to defend the city with a force of 800 men. On August 10, a force of 360 sailors and Marines and 80 settlers approached the city but the Mexican force evaporated and US forces occupied the city the next day unopposed. On Aug 22, all of California was under US control and elections were scheduled for Sep 15 to choose municipal officials.

Unfortunately, things did not remain peaceful do to inept and heavy handed leadership by some U.S. officials. On Sep 23, the uprising began and soon a force of over 300 Mexicans retook Los Angeles and by Oct 29, all of southern California was under control of local Mexicans. But the locals were halfhearted rebels, and most young men went into hiding when Mexican recruiters went looking for them. Within days, Americans retook San Diego and on Jan 2, 1847, went on the offensive. After several battles, Los Angeles surrendered on Jan 10 and this was the last fighting in the reconquest of California.

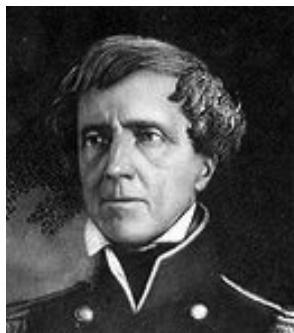
With both American commanders feuding over who was in charge, John Fremont, now a much wiser man, took the initiative and negotiated a generous peace treaty between the US and the Californios. The Treaty of Cahuenga was signed on January 13, 1847. All Mexicans involved in the rebellion were pardoned and asked to lay down their arms and return to their occupation. They were allowed the same rights and privileges as citizens of the United States, and would not be compelled to take an oath of allegiance until a treaty of peace was signed between the United States and Mexico. They could leave the country if they chose to, though nearly all stayed.



General Vallejo

Conquest of New Mexico

On July 31, 1846, Colonel Kearny issued a proclamation to "the citizens of New Mexico," advising that he was entering that territory "... with a large military force for the purpose of seeking union with and ameliorating the conditions of its inhabitants. ... They will not be interfered with by the American Army, but will be respected & protected in their rights both civil & religious."(106) On Aug 1, Kearny sent a letter to Governor Armijo, advising that he came "as a friend and with the disposition and intention to consider all Mexicans and others as friends ... Such persons shall not be disturbed by any one under my command either in their Persons, their Property or their Religion."(107)

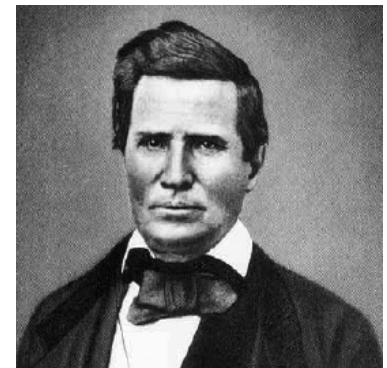


General Stephen Kearny

On Aug 15, despite warnings that Armijo was planning a major battle for Las Vegas, no army was present. Most Mexicans living under Armijo despised the man and few were willing to fight for him. Later, Armijo fled south for fear of being assassinated by his own people. There was a public ceremony where New Mexico was proclaimed now part of the U.S. and citizens were promised protection of their property and especially protection from the dreaded Navajos and Apaches. This ceremony was repeated in other villages. The people recognized they had nothing to lose and everything to gain by becoming part of the U.S.

On Aug 18, Kearny's forces rode unopposed into the village of Sante Fe. The Lieutenant Governor Juan Aland served wine and brandy to Kearny and the next day, Kearny gave the oath of allegiance to the United States to the towns people.(108)

The northern part of the territory was under U.S. control. On Sep 22, a new government was established with Charles Bent the first Governor.



Alexander Doniphan was an attorney, soldier and politician from Missouri. He refused a direct order to execute Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of the Mormon faith in 1838. He lead an army of Missouri volunteers during the Mexican American War, decisively defeating the Mexican Army at El Paso and Sacramento River, about twenty-five miles north of Chihuahau, Mexico. Doniphan and his men marched nearly 5,500 miles during the conflict, the longest march since Alexander the Great.

Kearny and 300 men then left to join in the California campaign being replaced by volunteers from Missouri led by Alexander Doniphan. Days later, Kearny's men discovered the Mexican town of Pulvidera had just been raided by Apaches. All the men had been killed and the horses and women taken. The women would be treated as slaves for the rest of their lives. Kearny ordered Doniphan to subdue the Indians before going south to fight against Mexico. After 7 weeks, The Indians agreed to a peace treaty and Doniphan left Santa Fe for the war with Mexico.(109) On Christmas of 1846, just 30 miles from El Paso, a battle between Mexican forces and Missouri volunteers left over 100 Mexicans dead. The Americans then occupied El Paso.

Meanwhile, the bullying attitude of some American volunteers in Santa Fe caused the locals to feel abused rather than protected. On Jan 19, 1847, Governor Bent, visiting in Taos, was killed and about 20 more Americans were killed over the next several days. On Feb 2, a US force of close to 500 troops surrounded an area north of Taos where the rebels were making their stand. About 150 rebels were killed and the rest surrendered. Following this ordeal, the area remained peaceful.

Mexico must be conquered!

Amphibious Landing in Mexico

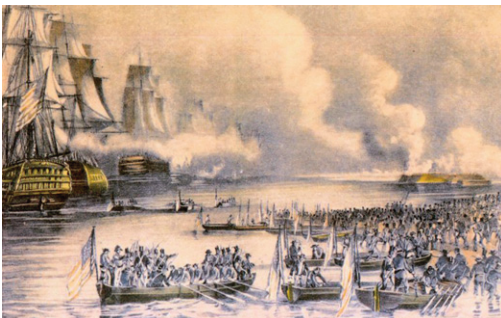


General Winfield Scott

Initial U.S. strategy was to defend Texas and then attack across the Rio Grande into Mexico and conquer the Mexican territories of New Mexico and California. This, it was hoped, would persuade Mexico to negotiate a permanent peace with the U.S. By August, 1846, these lands had been conquered. But with Mexico still refusing to negotiate, a heated debate took place in Washington on how to prevent this war from dragging on indefinitely. General Taylor's opinion was that we had already conquered enough territory to pay all of our monetary claims against Mexico, and we should just stop the war and force Mexico to undertake any future offensive operations. Many in the U.S. favored this idea over a long war of attrition.(110)

Ultimately, this idea was rejected. Such a defensive plan was precisely what the Mexicans, whose ancestors had fought the Moors of Spain for hundreds of years, desired. It was exactly this policy of endless war against Texas that had propelled Texas to join the American Union

for her own defense. Endless war with Mexico would have required a large and continuous military force on the border and eroded national resolve.(110) By November, Polk realized that Mexico had to be conquered. U.S. forces would have to occupy or threaten Mexico City and that it would be best to approach it from the Gulf coast, rather than from the north, taking the same route Cortez followed three centuries earlier when the Spanish conquered the Aztecs.(110)



US forces land at Vera Cruz

On March 1847, General Winfield Scott made his amphibious landing near Vera Cruz with about 12,000 men. Over the next 5 months, the American Army, with less than 15,000 men repeatedly outmaneuvered, outsmarted and decisively defeated Santa Anna and the Mexican Army.

In June it was learned from an English delegation that Santa Anna was willing to talk peace to end the war. The U.S. was to send him \$10,000 in cash so that he could influence the necessary people. The money was given to Santa Anna, but it turned out to be another scam.(111)

Unable to maintain a secure supply line, Scott lived off the land. Mexicans eagerly sold Scott all the food and supplies he needed because the U.S. Army paid in cash. On September 13, 1847, Scott's men entered Mexico City. Santa Anna, the "Napoleon of the West" turned the government over to Pena y Pena, the president of the Supreme Court of Justice, and fled the country.



General Scott and the U.S. Army march into Mexico City.

Scott's 5 month conquest of Mexico was one of the most brilliant military campaigns in history. After predicting a disaster for Scott, the Duke of Wellington wrote, "His campaign was unsurpassed in military annals." The amphibious landing at Vera Cruz was the largest in history to that time.

The Peace Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

After over a decade of insults and obstinate refusals to negotiate, Mexico had finally been put into a position where it had no choice but to finally make a deal. In a country with about 7 million people, a tiny American Army had taken control of the capital city, the main port of Veracruz, many major cities and ports, arsenals, forts and even the mines in Mexico plus all the territory north of the Rio Grande River - Upper California and New Mexico.. The state of Yucatan had refused to send any men to fight the Americans. Most of the native Americans living under Mexican rule felt no desire to defend Mexico. By the end of the war, Mexico only had 8,109 men left in their army(112) and the country was broke.(113) The US could continue to occupy these cities indefinitely because the vast majority of the local population were content to live under US occupation. The truth is the average Mexican had it better living under the US military then under their own corrupt government. Some Mexicans wanted the US to annex ALL of Mexico so it would have a good government.(114a)

General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who served superbly under General Scott, recorded in his diary on Nov 14, 1847: *"During my sickness I have had many interesting interviews with intelligent Mexicans on the political relations of this country and my own. . . . three distinguished members of Congress, now sitting at Queretaro, and the editor of a liberal paper here."* They *"wish that the troops of the U.S. may hold this country till the Mexican army is annihilated, in order that a proper civil government may be securely established. They are opposed to payment of money by the United States to the government of Mexico, saying it would only corrupt those in power."* *"General Scott, while in command in the city of Mexico, was urged to issue a pronouncement and declare himself dictator for six years; but he declined at once. . ."* On Nov. 26, he wrote: *" . . . Another proposition was discussed at great length this morning. Dr. ----- came to see me, saying he was going to Queretaro, and wished to ask the Mexican Government to apply for admission into the Union of the United States."*(114b)



Ulysses S. Grant

Ulysses S. Grant, later to become a general in the Union Army during the Civil War remarked: *"...the people who remained at their homes fraternized with the "Yankees" in the pleasantest manner. In fact, under the humane policy of our commander, I question whether the great majority of the Mexican people did not regret our departure as much as they had regretted our coming. Property and person were thoroughly protected, and a market was afforded for all the products of the country such as the people had never enjoyed before."*(115a)

This realization by the ruling class in Mexico meant that it was time to make a deal so the "hated" gringos would go home. On Oct 20, 1847, negotiations to end the war were started with Pena y Pena, the head of the interim government and a moderate who wanted peace. The negotiations continued slowly til the end of January, 1848, when the Mexican side accepted the new boundaries but demanded \$30 million for the territory. The US negotiator, Trist, turned this down, but on Feb 2, 1848, agreement was reached and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, ending the war. The treaty gave the U.S. California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming. In return, Mexico received \$15 million and the U.S. assumed Mexican debts of \$3.25 million owed to American citizens.

As Bernardo Couto, one of the negotiators put it, *"The present treaty does not merely prevent an increase of our losses by a continuance of the war; but it serves to recover the better part of that which was already under the control of the conquering army of the United States; it is more exactly an agreement of recovery than an agreement of cession."* By early August, 1848, U.S. troops had completely withdrawn from Mexico.



Land ceded to U.S. after the Mexican American War

If Mexico had recognized Texas independence 10 years earlier, this war could have been avoided. In addition, Mexico refused to pay monetary compensation to Americans. While no American president would go to war over monetary claims against Mexico, once Mexico started the war, **there had to be consequences**. Compensation in the form of land became the policy. Polk said on Dec 7, 1847, *"It is well-known that the only indemnity which it is in the power of Mexico to make in satisfaction of the just and long-deferred claims of our citizens against her and the only means by which she can reimburse the United States for the expenses of the war is a cession to the United States of a portion of her territory."*(115b) The war cost at least \$75 million. With Mexico's hostility towards America appearing to be permanent, the new border on the Rio Grande River gave the U.S. a much shorter and more defensible border.

The reality is that the U.S. was far more generous to Mexico then they needed to be. We paid Mexico \$15 million for New Mexico and California - land we already controlled - and the U.S. gave back to Mexico the land we had conquered south of the Rio Grande. Unlike so many other conquering armies, we treated civilians with respect, paid our just bills, took care of wounded Mexican soldiers and did not pillage the riches of Mexico - primarily Catholic Churches.

Most Mexicans had little interest in California or New Mexico. Spain had numerous plans to colonize Alta California since the early 1600s. But after well over **200 years**, California was sparsely settled - about 15,000 Mexicans on this land.(116) About 99% of the Mexican population (7 million people) lived on the land south of the Rio Grande with 1% living north of the Rio Grande.



General Mariano Vallejo

"My opinion is made up that we must persevere in throwing off the galling yoke of Mexico, and proclaim our independence forever. All will probably agree with me that we ought at once to rid ourselves of what may remain of Mexican domination....but another remains to be taken. I will mention it plainly and distinctly: It is annexation to the United States. In contemplating this consummation of our destiny, I feel nothing but pleasure, and I ask you to share it. Discard old prejudices, disregard old customs and prepare for the glorious change which awaits our country. Why should we shrink from incorporating ourselves with the happiest and freest nation in the world, destined soon to be the most wealthy and powerful? When we join our fortune to hers, we shall not become subjects, but fellow-citizens, possessing all the rights of the people of the United States, and choosing our own federal and local rulers. We shall have a stable government and just laws. California will grow strong and flourish, and her people will be prosperous, happy and free."(120)

General Mariano Vallejo,
Commandant of the Mexican
Garrison, Sonoma, Alta California, June 1846

Aftermath of the War

The fact that such a small American Army was able to control a country of 7 million people proves that a lot of Mexicans were not that interested in fighting the "hated" Americans and stayed home. If all of Mexico had mobilized to defend the country, an army of over a quarter million men could have easily been raised.

Most Mexicans living in Texas, California and New Mexico had little loyalty to Mexico and were not concerned about American rule. Many actually favored being under American jurisdiction as it would provide stable government. However, after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, some Mexicans chose to return to Mexico. Most Mexicans stayed and were granted US citizenship.

Many Mexicans struggled after the US took over. Mexican administrators had created vast cattle ranches or ranchos in California where a small number of families emerged as the governing elite. Most used Native Americans or low class Mexicans as virtual serfs. One of the effects of the US takeover was the abolition of the rancho system, class distinctions along with the peonage system. Education was now for everyone, not just the privileged. Free enterprise and self initiative was largely a new concept, as was the US legal system. Some land grant claims became contentious issues.

Despite some misgivings, Mexican Americans only had to look at the never ending chaos in Mexico to understand how much better their lives turned out to be.

Some prominent former Mexicans played important roles in the early days of Texas and California. In 1851, former General Mariano Vallejo, elected to the California State Senate, donated land for the first state capital in Vallejo. The former Mexican Governor Pio Pico was also elected to the California State Senate. Romualdo Pacheco became California governor and was elected to Congress twice. Pablo de la Guerra, who had served in Castro's army, became a California state senator and then lieutenant governor and district judge. The first Vice-President of the Republic of Texas was Lorenzo de Zavala, formerly the governor of the State of Mexico.

The bad decisions by Santa Anna and other Mexican leaders in both the Texas rebellion and Mexican American war left a legacy of disaster for the Mexican people. Our hope is that events of long ago can be put behind us so the Mexican and American peoples can be friends and allies today just as the American and British people are.



Lorenzo de Zavala.

Born in Yucatan in 1788, he was a principal writer of the Mexican Constitution of 1824. He fought against monarchy and centralized government power, a belief that forced him to flee to the United States in 1830. Out of frustration with Mexican politics, he joined the Texas rebellion. Fluent in Spanish, English and other languages, he served as translator for Sam Houston in his negotiations with Santa Anna after his capture at the battle of San Jacinto.

In 1831, Zavala wrote a book about his time in the US, titled: *Journey to the United States of North America*. The book is similar to de Tocqueville's *"Democracy in America"*, and the two men - from very different backgrounds - hold similar views about the United States. Zavala writes: *"What will be the final outcome of its greatness and prosperity? ...it is a new social order, brilliant, positive; a political system that has excluded all privilege... Standing before this political phenomenon statesmen of all countries, philosophers, economists have stopped to contemplate the rapid march of this amazing people, and agreeing with one accord on the never before seen prosperity of its inhabitants side by side with sobriety, love of work, unlimited liberty, domestic virtues, a creative activity, and an almost fanatical religious feeling..."*(pg 189)

Was the US just beating up on a weaker nation - Mexico?

General/President Ulysses S. Grant was largely responsible for the belief that the US was beating up on Mexico after his memoirs came out in 1885 - 38 years after the war ended. Grant stated: "For myself, I was bitterly opposed to the measure [the annexation of Texas], and to this day regard the war, which resulted, as one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation." (p 53) The only reason this viewpoint was credible is because we won so decisively. Had the war gone badly for the US and had we suffered huge casualties, this view would not be credible. The truth is that in most every battle, the difference between victory and defeat for the US was VERY small. The US Army was always outnumbered by large margins. With a mistake here and there, America could easily have lost the war.

Mexico did not feel inferior to the US at all and was confident they could defeat the US. Many Mexicans believed their army was nearly invincible. The Spanish Minister in Washington, Calderon de la Barca, said "There are no better troops in the world, nor better drilled and armed, than the Mexicans." (69) The Mexican correspondent to the London Times stated in 1845 that Mexican soldiers "are superior to those of the United States." (68)

The Boletin Oficial of San Luis Potosi stated: "We have numerous and veteran forces burning with a desire to gain immortal renown." (69) "Not to speak of our approved infantry, our artillery is excellent, and our cavalry so superior in men and horses that it would be an injustice not to recognize the fact." (69) An editorial in La Voz del Pueblo said, "We have more than enough strength to make war." "Let us make it, then, and victory will perch upon our banners." (68) Juan Almonte, a military man, assured his government that it was "certain" that Mexico would defeat the US. (123) General Francisco Mejia declared US troops "... cannot withstand the bayonet charge of our foot, nor a cavalry charge with the lance." (125)

The US never believed victory over Mexico was a sure thing, which was one of the reasons it took so long to allow Texas to join the union and why we bent over backwards to peaceably resolve all the issues. Our military was very small and concerned primarily with battling the Indians. In conventional warfare against an established army, the US was considered to be outclassed. Many observers believed that it would be nearly impossible for the US to defeat Mexico - a nation of over 7 million people with many rugged mountains. The ability of Mexico to wage guerrilla war against our supply lines would prevent us from massing sufficient troops to defeat the Mexicans deep in their territory. Mexico could outlast the U.S. without suffering disastrously, while the US would have to wage an extremely costly war, raise a large army and still not be able to defeat Mexico. Eventually the Americans would tire of the war, the never ending casualties, huge military spending and make peace on Mexico's terms. (71)

A famous American of that time, General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, one of the finest strategists of the day, felt the US did not have the manpower necessary to defend Texas from Mexico - much less launch offensive operations. In his diary, published in 1909, his entries written on 26 March 1846 - BEFORE the war started - states: "*Our force is altogether too small for the accomplishment of its errand. . . for, whatever becomes of this army, there is no doubt of a war between the United States and Mexico.*" (129) The 'errand' was to defend Texas from the Mexican invasion. Hitchcock adds the next day: "*. . . the enemy has time to fortify and strengthen himself at Matamoras, or on this bank of the river where General Taylor told the prefect he would give him an answer to his protest. So they know where the General designs going. If he succeeds under all these circumstances, he will be fortunate beyond belief; for we have not more than 2300 men at the outside, and the Mexicans can certainly bring against us three or four times that number.*" (130)

Once the war started, it quickly became evident that Mexican generals were very poor strategists while American Generals Taylor, Scott and Hitchcock were brilliant tacticians. These outnumbered American forces then destroyed the Mexican Army at Palo Alto on May 8, Resaca de la Palma on May 9 and over the next year and a half, destroyed the Mexican Army.

The fact remains that Mexico instigated the war and believed they could defeat the US. California and New Mexico were not attacked until after Mexico started the war. In war, the winner dictates terms to the loser.

The Mexican American War today

Today, 170 years later, most Mexicans still harbor a grudge against America for losing the war of 1846. Many Mexicans consider the southwest U.S. stolen Mexican land. **The truth is this land historically belongs to the Indians. The Spanish took this land from the Indians and then lost this land to the U.S.** Many Mexicans also believe the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was too harsh on Mexico. So the real issue today is this: Even if Mexico is 100% to blame for starting both wars - which they were - did the US have the right to take almost half of Mexico's territory? The answer is ABSOLUTELY YES!! Here's why:

Mexico was determined to conquer Texas and was looking for an excuse to start this war because they were certain they could defeat the US. But Mexico lost every major battle. To have beaten Mexico as badly as we did, conquered most of their country including the capital city, and then told them they must accept Texas as part of the US, which it already was, and then retreated back to the U.S. without Mexico suffering any consequences would not have been fair for us. This would have been an unforgivable disgrace to the men who died and the rest who went through hell to attain victory - and we would be inviting another attack.

Now put yourself in Mexico's shoes. Your army has been repeatedly defeated, nearly the entire country has been conquered, and the consequences are - nothing!! Just be nice and don't threaten Texas again! In a machismo society like Mexico, would they sit back and say 'OK' or would Mexicans think we Americans are unbelievably gullible. Mexico would hold Americans in contempt for conquering their country and not making them pay a price for their warmongering. The reality is that once Mexico attacked the US, losing the land north of the Rio Grande became necessary to repay the US for the cost of the war and repay US citizens for monetary damages Mexico refused to pay. Mexico had to pay a price for attacking the U.S.

If the US could change history, what could we change so Mexico would love us today? If we only kept Texas and gave back California and New Mexico, would Mexico still hate us for keeping Texas? Absolutely yes. If we gave Texas to Mexico, would they love us? No, Mexico would still be bashing America and sending drugs and illegal aliens into all parts of our country. They already are. Giving Texas and the southwest US to Mexico would gain us nothing.

Since the 1960s, an increasing number of Mexican leaders have claimed that the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494 gives legal ownership of the southwest U.S. to Mexico. Some Mexicans claim legal ownership of most of the U.S. for Mexico. This Treaty gave Brazil to Portugal and Spain got all the rest of the New World.

Reies Tijerina, a very influential Mexican-American racist from the 1950s til his death in 2015, referenced the Treaty of Tordesillas to justify forcing all Anglos to move back to Europe!(131) Mario Obledo, who co-founded MALDEF in 1968 declared that Anglos "*ought to go back to Europe.*"(132)

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, in his autobiography, *Message to Aztlan* declared: "*We are all heirs to the land. We, the mestizo, the Indian, and of Spanish birth, owners of the Southwest by precedent and by legal title.*"(133)

Mexican treaty claims to any part of the US are fatally flawed. Since only Portugal and Spain signed this Treaty, no other country was obligated to obey it. In addition, Mexicans ignore all subsequent treaties after the Treaty of Tordesillas - the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo - which Mexico signed to end the Mexican American War in 1848. Mexico signed away their rights with these treaties. Therefore, the U.S. has legal ownership of all the U.S. CASE CLOSED.

Another scam by today's Mexicans is to claim that any Mexican who has Indian blood in them - Mestizos - has the right to illegally enter the US and resist assimilating because their goal is to reconquer the southwest US, starting with California. Jose Angel Gutierrez, 'professor' at the University of Texas at Arlington and a founder of La Raza Unida declared: "We cannot, we will not, and we must not be made illegal in our own homeland. We are not immigrants that came from another country to another country; we are migrants, free to travel the length and breadth of the Americas because we belong here. . ."(134)

Very few mestizos originated in what became the U.S. But being part Indian doesn't make you superior or above the law. There are millions of Americans with Indian blood in them. Does this mean they can ignore the border with Mexico?

Mexico lost additional territories!!

Texas was NOT the first state to secede from Mexico. Because of the dysfunctional state of Mexican politics and only 2 years after Mexico's independence, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica declared themselves independent from Mexico on July 1, 1823. These five countries became the United Provinces of Central America. But infighting resulted in the Union falling apart in 1838 and they became independent nations. **Why hasn't Mexico made an issue out of this over the past 190 years?** Is it because they are fellow Spanish, whereas the northern territories came under control of Anglo Americans?

We should also keep in mind that Mexico (actually Santa Anna) DID sell the US the land that became known as the Gadsden territory in 1854 - only 6 years after the end of the Mexican American War. Mexico was broke (again) and Santa Anna needed money to pay his army to put down ongoing rebellions and maintain his extravagant lifestyle. Santa Anna agreed to sell 45,000 square miles south of the New Mexico territory for \$15 million. The U.S. Senate *reduced the land purchased* to 29,670 square miles and paid Santa Anna \$10 million. Santa Anna signed the revised treaty on June 8, 1854.(126) The deal was so unpopular in Mexico that Santa Anna was removed from office and banished.

Had Mexico not started a war with the US, Mexico wouldn't have lost the southwest US, or if they did, there could be no denying that the US stole it.

Not acquiring these lands (Texas, N Mexico and California) would have the U.S. weaker military, economically and with a smaller population. The US might not have been powerful enough to have won WWII or the Cold War. Mexico mostly sat out the Cold War and World War Two.

The southwest US was vital in making the US a powerful nation. The US can't be replaced as the defender of the free world. Mexico could NEVER have filled our shoes. They were too big. **So was it Manifest Destiny for the US to acquire these lands, so the US could save democracy in the world a century later???**

What if Mexico had kept the northern territories?

Most Mexicans believe that if they had kept ownership of the land north of the Rio Grande - Texas, California and New Mexico, these areas would be economically prosperous like they are now. **This is delusional thinking.** These areas became prosperous because they belong to the US, not Mexico. Had these lands stayed under the control of Mexico, they would not have helped Mexico prosper. This part of Mexico would be as dysfunctional as the rest of Mexico. All that would change is that constant revolutions, widespread poverty, a disastrous economic system, bad health care, poor education, political turmoil and murderous drug cartels would be in a country twice as large as it is now. Even more illegal immigrants from Mexico would be coming into our considerably smaller country for jobs. So be happy the U.S. won.

Spain really didn't know what to do with all this land. Not content with having seized most Caribbean Islands, Central America and South America (except for Brazil), Spain also wanted North America too but the Spanish didn't have enough people to populate all this land. Over 99% of the Mexican population lived on land south of the Rio Grande and less than 1% lived north of the Rio Grande. The government had to manipulate people to move into these areas. As mentioned earlier, in the rush to claim land in the New World, if you didn't have people to settle the land you claimed, your claims were open to challenge. Mexico had virtually no immigration and no hopes of attracting immigrants, which is why they invited Americans to settle Texas in the first place.

And there is additional proof that the US wasn't out to merely steal land from other countries. During Polk's presidency, there was a dispute with England over the Oregon territory. Some Americans wanted all of the territory - "54 40 or fight" was the slogan. But Polk and England settled the dispute by making the boundary at the 49th parallel. The US thus gave up claims to about half the Oregon Territory - a huge amount of land.



Mexico in 1821 after independence.



Mexico in 1824 after 5 southern states seceded.

Where do we go from here?

Mexicans who come to the US have two choices:

1) The first choice is for Mexicans who come to the US to embrace America, her history and traditions. The attitude of immigrants from Mexico should be the same as immigrants from any other country - you're proud of your ancestry but your loyalty is now totally to America. America is your native country. No other country has accomplished what the US has - which is why you are here. You are an American and should feel proud waving the American flag and celebrating July 4th.

2) The second choice is for Mexicans to come to the US as invaders, which must be confronted and defeated.

The US and Mexico will NEVER have a good relationship until Mexico stops holding a grudge for a situation **they** created. Mexican Americans who live in America and proclaim loyalty to Mexico don't deserve to live in the US. And it's time to end the pity party for Mexico.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Question: Was the US responsible for the poor relations we had with Mexico even before the Texas revolution?

Answer: Mexico was a country with few statesman and relations with the US deteriorated almost from the day Mexico became independent from Spain. Although Mexico envisioned a prosperous future similar to the US, Mexico degenerated into political strife, violence, instability and economic mismanagement. While America was founded by men of intellectual brilliance, Mexico was not. Mexico over time developed an attitude of hostility rooted in jealousy against the US. As the years went by, Mexican politicians unfairly blamed the US for more and more of their problems - problems they created with their own incompetence.

Question: Was it right for the US to demand compensation for damages done to American citizens considering Mexico was such a poor, unstable country?

Answer: Mexico had, and has, tremendous natural resources. History shows that most nations are poor because of a corrupt government, corrupt economic system and uneducated citizens. Mexico had only herself to blame for her dire economic circumstances - then and now.

In addition, the prosperity of the US and the impoverishment of Mexico has no bearing on the rights of citizens to collect from a government that refuses to conform to a proper code of conduct for the nations of the world. The civilized world agrees that one's debts are to be paid. The incompetence and excessive spending of Mexico's rulers was no excuse to not pay their just bills against foreign citizens that have been abused and taken advantage of.

History shows that the US was more patient with Mexico than it should have been - to the point that Mexico viewed our patience as weakness. Britain and France had used force, or the threat of it, to induce the Mexican government to pay claims on behalf of their citizens. In October, 1829, the US approached Mexico for compensation for their crimes against our citizens. Mexico responded with insults and refused to cooperate. In June, 1836 - 7 years later - our ambassador reported that our grievances continued to be treated with "cold neglect." In January of 1843 - 14 years later - Mexico agreed to make payments starting the following April. After making 3 payments, Mexico broke her word again and stopped making payments.

Question: What was the integrity and character of Santa Anna?

Answer: Santa Anna was a man of no integrity or character. As the leader of Mexico 11 different times, he was concerned with doing whatever it took to stay in power and spent so much money holding lavish fiestas in honor of himself that Mexico was constantly teetering on bankruptcy. As a military leader, he was a very poor strategist and was a mass murderer of Texan soldiers and Mexican civilians. Yet such was his charisma that he was always able to charm his way back into the good graces of most Mexicans - or at least the ones that counted. Santa Anna's huge ego served him well in the macho society of Mexico.

He served in the Royalist Army under Spain fighting rebels and keeping the Indians in line. When he saw the rebellion growing stronger, he promptly switched sides. Switching sides would become a trademark for Santa Anna. In 1838, he lost part of a leg battling the French and later had it mounted on a monument and demanded that it be worshiped. He declared himself to be the "Napoleon of the West." His busts and statues were to be found throughout Mexico.

General Santa Anna, in the memoirs of his old age, wrote a brief and untruthful account of the battle of San Jacinto, an alibi blaming General Filisola for the defeat. He said he had ordered Filisola to join him by forced marches, for the attack on Houston's army, and was waiting for the reinforcements when he found Houston camped on the San Jacinto. The truth is that Mexico lost the battle because Santa Anna didn't post guards and most of his army - including Santa Anna himself - was sleeping and caught by surprise.

Santa Anna finally did himself in in 1853 after he was once again appointed President. He promptly declared himself dictator for life and demanded he be addressed "Most Serene Highness." Continuing his habit of extravagant feasts honoring himself, the national treasury was so depleted he sold millions of acres to the US in what became known as the Gadsden Purchase. Mexicans united against Santa Anna, drove him into exile and he never again ruled Mexico.

Question: What was the character and integrity of Texan and US leaders during the two wars?

Answer: Leaders of the Texas Revolution and the 1846 war were men of great integrity. Unlike Santa Anna, Texan leaders committed no massacres and put great effort into treating Mexican civilians and captured Mexican soldiers with respect.

During the Texas war, a Mexican force under General Cos surrendered to the Texans at Bexar and were allowed to return to Mexico if they would pledge not to again take up arms against Texas. Cos didn't keep his word. He commanded troops attacking the Alamo. Later, Cos was captured a second time, along with Santa Anna when the Mexicans were defeated by Sam Houston at San Jacinto River. Again, Cos and surviving Mexican troops were allowed to return home to Mexico.

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Justin Smith was born in 1857 in New Hampshire; died 1930 in Brooklyn, New York. Educated at Dartmouth (B.A. 1877; M.A. 1881) and Union Theological Seminary (1879-1881). Smith worked for Charles Scribner's Sons publishers 1881-1883 and Ginn & Co. 1883-1898 (becoming a partner in 1890); he was Professor of Modern History at Dartmouth 1899-1908. He resigned his professorship in 1908 to pursue historical research, and published *The Annexation of Texas* in 1911 and *The War with Mexico* in 1919. For the latter he received the Pulitzer Prize in 1920 and the first Loubat Prize in 1923. From 1917 to 1923 Smith was chairman of the Historical Manuscripts Commission of the American Historical Association. Smith is regarded as the most thorough researcher of the war. Smith declared that nine tenths of the material he used in the preparation of this work was new information. His search extended to the archives of Great Britain, France, Spain, Cuba, Columbia, Peru, American and Mexican states and Mexican cities. Smith examined over 100,000 manuscripts, 1200 books and pamphlets and 200 periodicals. Smith talked or corresponded with as many of the veterans as he could reach and spent more than a year in Mexico. All of the material used by Smith to write his book takes up 7 linear feet at the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. This information is from the Preface of the *War with Mexico*, vol 1. (1919), Justin H. Smith.
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Full text of Commander John Sloat's order of July 7, 1846:

We are about to land on the Territory of Mexico, with whom the United States are at war. To strike her flag, and to hoist our own in the place of it, is our duty.

It is not only our duty to take California, but to preserve it afterwards as a part of the United States, at all hazards. To accomplish this, it is of the first importance to cultivate the good opinion of the inhabitants, whom we must reconcile.

I scarcely consider it necessary for me to caution American seamen and marines against the detestable crime of plundering and maltreatment of unoffending inhabitants.

That no one may misunderstand his duty, the following regulations must be strictly adhered to, as no violation can hope to escape the severest punishment:

1st. On landing, no man is to leave the shore until the commanding officer gives the order to march.

2d. No gun is to be fired, or other act of hostility committed, without express orders from the officer commanding the party.

3d. The officers and boat keepers will keep their respective boats as close to the shore as they will safely float, taking care they do not lay aground, and remain in them, prepared to defend themselves against attack, and attentively watch for signals from the ships, as well as from the party on shore.

4th. No man is to quit the ranks or to enter any house for any pretext whatever, without express orders from an officer. Let every man avoid insult or offence to any unoffending inhabitant, and especially avoid that eternal disgrace which would be attached to our names and our country's name by indignity offered to a single female, even let her standing be however low it may.

5th. Plunder of every kind is strictly forbidden. Not only does the plundering of the smallest article from a prize forfeit all claim to prize money, but the offender must expect to be severely punished.

6th. Finally, let me entreat you, one and all, not to tarnish our hope of bright success by any act that we shall be ashamed to acknowledge before God and our country.

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