

# Manifest Destiny and Crisis

## Guide to Reading

### Connection

In the previous section, you learned about social reform and growing tensions between states. In this section, you will discover how slavery continued to divide the country and how the election of Abraham Lincoln as president resulted in the secession of Southern states.

### Main Idea

- In the 1840s, the nation expanded as settlers moved west. (p. 193)
- Continuing disagreements over the westward expansion of slavery increased sectional tensions between the North and South. (p. 195)
- The slavery controversy shook up political parties and accelerated the crisis between North and South. (p. 198)
- The election of Abraham Lincoln led the Southern states to secede from the Union. (p. 199)

### Preview of Events



### Content Vocabulary

Manifest Destiny, annexation, popular sovereignty, secession, Underground Railroad, transcontinental railroad, insurrection, Confederacy

### Academic Vocabulary

adjacent, prospect

### People and Terms to Identify

John C. Frémont, Bear Flag Republic, Wilmot Proviso, Harriet Tubman, Republican Party, Dred Scott, Crittenden's Compromise, Jefferson Davis

### Places to Locate

Harpers Ferry

### Reading Objectives

- **Describe** the issues surrounding the War with Mexico and the statehood of Texas and California.

- **Evaluate** how the Fugitive Slave Act and the transcontinental railroad heightened sectional tensions.
- **Analyze** the significance of the *Dred Scott* decision and John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry.
- **Explain** how the election of Abraham Lincoln as president led to the secession of the South.

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing** Complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below to describe the outcomes of disputes that arose during this period.

Dispute	Outcome

The following are the main History–Social Science Standards covered in this section.

**11.1.3** Understand the history of the Constitution after 1787 with emphasis on federal versus state authority and growing democratization.

**11.2.6** Trace the development of the United States and its emergence as a major industrial power, including its gains from trade and the advantages of its physical geography.

**11.10.2** Examine and analyze the key events, policies, and court cases in the evolution of civil rights, including *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, and California Proposition 209.

## The Big Idea

**Differences in economic, political, and social beliefs can lead to division within a nation.** As the United States continued to expand even farther west, sectionalism and disagreements over slavery in the new territories continued to plague the nation. The crisis between free states and slave states resulted in the destruction of the Whig Party and division within other political parties. After the raid on Harpers Ferry, Southern Democrats became convinced that Northerners and Republicans would stop at nothing to end slavery. Spurred by failing compromises and the election of Abraham Lincoln as president, Southern states seceded from the Union, proclaimed themselves a separate nation known as the Confederate States of America, and appointed Jefferson Davis as their president.

## Manifest Destiny

**Main Idea** In the 1840s, the nation expanded as settlers moved west.

**Reading Connection** To which country did California and Texas belong before they became part of the United States? Read on to learn how the two states entered the Union.

With the Louisiana Purchase opening up the West, thousands of people began pushing into the Midwest and beyond, journeying all the way to California and the Oregon Territory.

### ★ An American Story ★

In July 1821, Stephen F. Austin set off from Louisiana for the Texas territory in the northeastern corner of Mexico. The Spanish government had promised to give his father, Moses, a huge tract of Texas land if the elder Austin settled 300 families there from the United States. Moses died before he could fulfill his end of the deal. On his deathbed, his dying wish was that Stephen take his place in Texas.

Stephen Austin was favorably impressed with the region. As he surveyed the land grant between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers, he noted its natural abundance:

“The Prairie comes bluff to the river . . . and affords a most beautiful situation for a Town or settlement. . . . The country . . . is as good in every respect as man could wish for, Land all first rate, plenty of timber, fine water, beautifully rolling.”

—quoted in *Stephen F. Austin: Empresario of Texas*

Between the late 1830s and early 1860s, more than 250,000 Americans braved great obstacles to venture west along overland trails.

**Pushing West** The opportunity to farm fertile soil, enter the fur trade, or trade with foreign nations across the Pacific lured farmers, adventurers, and merchants alike. Most emigrants, like the majority of Americans, believed in **Manifest Destiny**. Manifest Destiny was the idea that the nation was meant to spread to the Pacific.

Latecomers to the Midwest set their sights on California and Oregon, although other nations had already claimed parts of these lands. The United

States and Great Britain had agreed in 1818 to occupy the Oregon land jointly. The British dominated the region until about 1840, when the enthusiastic reports of American missionaries began to attract large numbers of would-be farmers to the region.

California was a frontier province of Mexico. Because few Mexicans wanted to make their homes in California, the local government welcomed foreign settlers. By 1845 more than 700 Americans lived in and around the Sacramento Valley. Though the central government in Mexico City relied on these American settlers, it was suspicious about their national loyalties.

By the 1840s, several east-to-west routes had been carved, including the Oregon Trail, the California Trail, and the Santa Fe Trail. As the overland traffic increased, the Plains Indians came to resent the threat it posed to their way of life. They feared that the buffalo herds, on which they relied for food, shelter, clothing, and tools, would die off or migrate elsewhere. Hoping to ensure peace, the federal government negotiated the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851. Eight Plains Indian groups agreed to specific geographic boundaries, while the United States promised that the defined territories would belong to the Native Americans forever. White settlers still streamed across the plains, however, provoking Native American hostility.

*Stephen F. Austin* ▼





attempts failed, and they decided to separate from Texas and organize their own government. Devastating losses at the Alamo and Goliad galvanized the Americans, who were able to defeat Mexican forces at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836.

Five months later, in September, the citizens of Texas voted in favor of **annexation**—absorption—by the United States. However, Texas wished to enter the Union as a slave state, which antislavery leaders opposed. In addition, Mexico continued to claim ownership of Texas. To avoid conflict, President Andrew Jackson made no move toward annexation.

Texas statehood became a key issue as the presidential race of 1844 began. The Democratic nominee, James K. Polk of Tennessee, promised to annex not only Texas but also the contested Oregon Territory in the Northwest. In addition, he vowed to buy California from Mexico. The platform appealed to both Northerners and Southerners because it furthered Manifest Destiny while promising to maintain the delicate balance between free and slave states.

The Whig nominee, Henry Clay, originally opposed annexing Texas. He later announced his support of annexation if it could be done without causing war with Mexico. Many Whigs opposed to slavery felt so betrayed that they gave their support to James G. Birney of the pro-abolition Liberty Party. With the Whig vote split, Polk won the election. Even before Polk took office, in February 1845, Congress passed a joint resolution to annex Texas, and in December 1845, Texas became a state. Six months later, Britain and the United States agreed to divide Oregon along the 49th parallel. Britain took the Canadian province of British Columbia, and the Americans received the land that later became the states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.



**Geography Skills**

1. **Interpreting Maps** Which American officer assisted Frémont's attacks in northern California?
2. **Applying Geography Skills** What land did the United States obtain under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo?

**Texas and Oregon Enter the Union** One of the regions settled was the Mexican region of Texas, which at the time was part of the state of Coahuila. Although Mexico at first had encouraged Americans to settle there, tensions developed. Mexicans distrusted the Americans who refused to accept the conditions of Mexico's offer. When Mexico in 1830 closed its borders to further immigration, the settlers, under the leadership of Stephen Austin and Sam Houston, tried to negotiate changes to that policy. Repeated

## Picturing History

**Independence for California** In June 1846, John C. Frémont and other California settlers declared their independence from Mexico. **When did California become part of the United States?**

**War With Mexico** Texas's entry into the Union outraged the Mexican government, which promptly broke diplomatic relations with the United States. Matters worsened when the two countries disputed Texas's southwestern border.

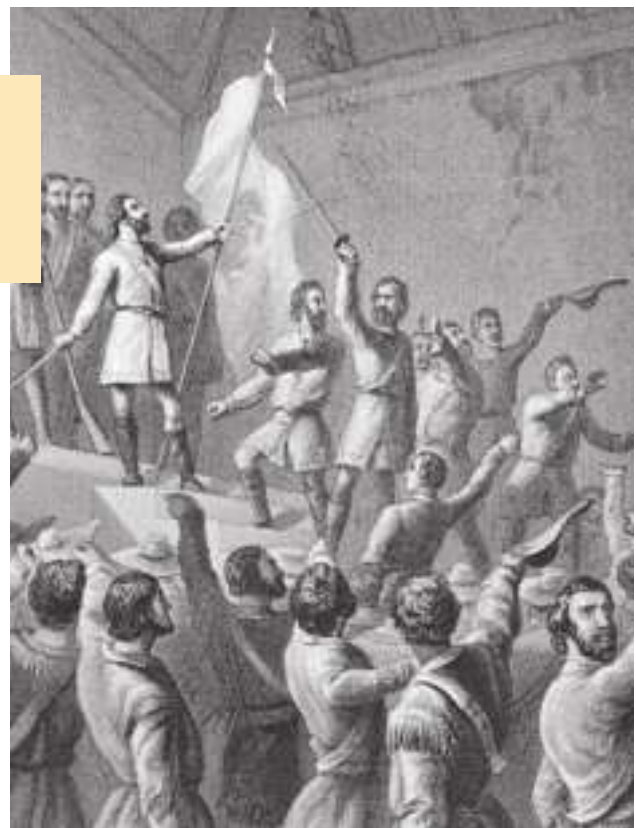
President Polk's designs on California added to the conflict. In November 1845, he sent John Slidell as an envoy to Mexico City to try to purchase California and resolve other differences. Mexico's new president, José Joaquín Herrera, refused even to meet with Slidell.

With no realistic chance of a diplomatic solution, the president ordered General Zachary Taylor in January 1846 to lead troops across the Nueces River into territory claimed by both the United States and Mexico. Polk wanted Mexican troops to fire the first shot. If he could say Mexico was the aggressor, he could more easily win support for a war. Finally, on May 9, news reached him that a force of Mexicans had attacked Taylor's men. Four days later, the Senate and House both overwhelmingly voted in favor of the war.

Even before war with Mexico was officially declared, settlers in northern California, led by American general **John C. Frémont**, had begun an uprising. The official Mexican presence in the territory had never been strong, and the settlers had little trouble overcoming it. On June 14, 1846, they declared California independent and renamed the region the **Bear Flag Republic**. Within a month, American navy forces arrived to occupy the ports of San Francisco and San Diego and claim the republic for the United States.

Despite the loss of California and defeat in several battles, Mexico refused to surrender. Polk decided to send General Winfield Scott to seize Mexico City. After a 6-month campaign beginning in the Gulf Coast city of Veracruz, Scott's forces captured Mexico's capital in September 1847.

Defeated, Mexico's leaders signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. Mexico gave the United States more than 500,000 square miles (1,295,000 sq. km) of territory—what are now the states of California, Nevada, and Utah, as well as most of Arizona and New Mexico and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Mexico also accepted the Rio Grande as the southern border of Texas. In



return, the United States paid Mexico \$15 million and took over \$3.25 million in debts the Mexican government owed to American citizens.

With Oregon and the former Mexican territories now under the U.S. flag, the dream of Manifest Destiny had been realized, but this expansion had cost more than 12,000 American lives. Furthermore, the question of whether the new lands should allow slavery would soon lead the country into another bloody conflict.

**Reading Check** **Explaining** What is the idea of Manifest Destiny?

## Slavery and Western Expansion

**Now Info** Continuing disagreements over the westward expansion of slavery increased sectional tensions between the North and South.

**Reading Connection** Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe that citizens are justified in disobeying a law? Read on to learn how some Northerners responded to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which required them to aid in the capture of runaway slaves.

When California applied for statehood, attempts by Congress to find a compromise further heightened opposing viewpoints on slavery.

**Impact of the War With Mexico** In August 1846, Representative David Wilmot, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, proposed that in any territory the United States gained from Mexico, “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist.” Despite fierce Southern opposition, a coalition of Northern Democrats and Whigs passed the **Wilmot Proviso** in the House of Representatives. The Senate refused to vote on it. Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina argued that Americans settling in the territories had the right to bring along their property, including enslaved laborers, and that Congress had no power to ban slavery in the territories.

Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan suggested that the citizens of each new territory should be allowed to decide for themselves if they wanted to permit slavery. This idea, which came to be called **popular sovereignty**, appealed strongly to many members of Congress because it removed the slavery issue from national politics. It also appeared democratic, since the settlers themselves would make the decision. Abolitionists, however, argued that it still denied African Americans their right to be free.

As the 1848 election approached, both major candidates—Democrat Lewis Cass and General Zachary

Taylor, the Whig nominee—sidestepped the slavery issue. Many Northern opponents of slavery decided to join with members of the abolitionist Liberty Party to form the Free-Soil Party, which opposed the spread of slavery onto the “free soil” of the western territories. Adopting the slogan “Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men,” they chose former president Martin Van Buren as their candidate. On Election Day, support for the Free-Soilers pulled votes away from the Democrats. When the ballots were counted, the Whig candidate, Zachary Taylor, had won a narrow victory.

**Congress Struggles for a Compromise** Within a year of President Taylor’s inauguration, the issue of slavery took center stage. A year earlier, in January 1848, a carpenter named James Marshall found traces of gold in a stream near a sawmill in Sacramento, California. Word of the find leaked out, and San Franciscans abandoned their homes and businesses to pile into wagons and head to the mountains in search of gold. During the summer, news of the find swept all the way to the East Coast and beyond, and the California Gold Rush was on.

By the end of 1849, over 80,000 “Forty-Niners” had arrived in California hoping to make their fortunes. Mining towns sprang up overnight, and the frenzy for gold led to chaos and violence. Needing a strong government to maintain order, Californians decided to seek statehood. With the encouragement of President Taylor, California applied to enter the Union as a free state in December 1849.

At the time, there were 15 free states and 15 slave states. If California tipped the balance, the slaveholding states would become a minority in the Senate. Southerners dreaded losing power in national politics, fearful it would lead to limits on slavery. A few Southern politicians began to talk of **secession**—taking their states out of the Union.

In early 1850, one of the most senior and influential leaders in the Senate, Henry Clay of Kentucky, tried to find a compromise that would enable California to join the Union and resolve other sectional disputes. Among other resolutions, Clay proposed allowing California to come in as a free state and organizing the rest of the Mexican cession without any restrictions on slavery. Clay further proposed that Congress would be prohibited from interfering with the domestic slave trade and would pass a stronger law to help Southerners recover African American runaways. These measures were intended to assure the South that the North would not try to abolish slavery after California joined the Union.

▼ Poster calling for antislavery meeting

