Chapter 17

Manifest Destiny and Its Legacy

1841-1848

**The Accession of "Tyler Too"**

At the beginning of Henry Harrison's presidency, Daniel Webster (secretary of state) and Henry Clay (leader of Whigs in the Senate) expected to control the Presidency because Harrison was not a very commanding figure. Only 4 weeks into Harrison's presidency, though, Harrison died.  This disrupted the plans of Webster and Clay.

John Tyler: Vice President to Henry Harrison; successor as President following Harrison's death; "Tyler too"; a Democrat at heart and contradicted many of the Whig Party's ideas.

**John Tyler:  A President without a Party**

The Whigs introduced many policy changes when the party won the presidency with Harrison (and then Tyler). The first change was **financial reform**.  The independent treasury system was ended.  A bill for a "**Fiscal Bank**," which would establish a new Bank of the United States went through Congress, but President Tyler vetoed it.  The Whigs presented a "**Fiscal Corporation,**" but Tyler again vetoed it.

President Tyler was rejected by his former Whig Party.

Tyler reluctantly signed the **Tariff of 1842** because he recognized the government's need for revenue.

**A War of Words with Britain**

The 19th Century was marked by periods of public disdain for Britain.  This sparked the "**Third War with England**."  This war was only fought with editorials in papers.

In **1837**, there was a small rebellion in Canada.  Although it was supported by many Americans, the rebellion failed because it was backed by few Canadians.

In **1837**, the American ship, the ***Caroline***, was carrying military supplies to the rebelling Canadians when it was sunk by a British ship.  Washington officials made ineffective protests against the attack.

In **1841**, British officials in the Bahamas offered asylum to 130 Virginia slaves who had rebelled and captured the American ship ***Creole***.

**Manipulating the Maine Maps**

In **1842**, the British wanted to build a road linking the seaport of Halifax to Quebec. The proposed road ran through disputed territory in northern Maine, though. Skirmishes between locals broke out and these skirmishes were referred to as the **Aroostook War**.

To prevent a wider-reaching war, the London Foreign Office sent Lord Ashburton to Washington to settle the dispute.  He and Daniel Webster negotiated and agreed to a new boundary for Maine that put the disputed road in Canadian territory.

**The Lone Star of Texas Shines Alone**

In the 8 years following 1836, Mexico considered Texas one of their provinces that was in revolt. Mexico refused to recognize Texas's independence. Mexico threatened war if America protected Texas.

Texas made treaties with France, Holland, and Belgium.  Britain was interested in seeing an independent Texas because they hoped it could be used to fragment and weaken America. The British were also interested in having Texas as a trading partner who was more friendly than the Americans.

**The Belated Texas Nuptials**

Texas was a leading issue in the presidential campaign of **1844**.  The Democrats were pro-expansion and supported the annexation of Texas, while the Whigs were against it.

The Democrats (James Polk) won the election of 1844, and lame duck (outgoing) President Tyler took that as a sign to acquire Texas before he left the presidency. He signed a resolution in **1845** that invited Texas to become the **28th** state in America.

**Oregon Fever Populates Oregon**

Four nations claimed parts of the **Oregon Country** at one time: **Spain, Russia, Britain,**and the**United States**.  Spain gave up its American territory with the Florida Treaty of 1819, and Russia gave up its land with the treaties of 1824 and 1825.

Britain controlled the Oregon territory north of the Columbia River, while American controlled the southern territory. Britain had a smaller population in the Oregon territory, but it did not want to give up its claims.  The disputed territory in the Oregon Country became an issue in the election of **1844**.

**A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny**

For the election of 1844, the Whigs chose Henry Clay, and the Democrats chose James K. Polk. Polk was the Speaker of the House of Representatives for four years and governor of Tennessee for two terms. He beat Henry Clay to win the **election of 1844.** He was known as "Young Hickory", he said he would protect Texas, and he avoided the issue of slavery.

In the 1840s and 1850s, the idea of **Manifest Destiny** spread across America. Many Americans felt that God had destined them to spread their democratic institutions over the entire continent and over South America as well.

Democrats strongly supported the idea of Manifest Destiny.

**Polk the Purposeful**

Polk had four main goals for his presidency: 1) A lower tariff; 2) Restore the independent treasury, which the Whigs dropped in 1841 because the Whigs won the presidency; 3-4) The acquisition of California and the settlement of the Oregon Country dispute without violence.

Robert J. Walker: Secretary of Treasury to James Polk; devised the **Walker Tariff of 1846**, a tariff-for-revenue bill that reduced the tariff from 32% to 25%.

The independent treasury was restored in 1846.

Britain presented Polk with the Oregon Country up to the 49th parallel. This offer was approved without a shot fired.

**Misunderstandings with Mexico**

The population of California in **1845**consisted of Spanish-Mexicans and Indians.

Polk wanted to buy California (**The Bear Flag Republic**) from Mexico but relations with Mexico were poor due to the annexation of Texas.

John Slidell: sent by Polk to Mexico City in 1845 to buy California for $25 million; the offer was rejected.

**American Blood on American (?) Soil**

On **January 13, 1846**, Polk ordered 4,000 men under General Zachary Taylor to the Rio Grande.  On **May 9, 1846**, Polk asked Congress to **declare war on Mexico** of the basis of **unpaid claims** and**Slidell's rejection** of the purchasing of California. Prior to this request, Mexican troops had already attacked American troops. War was subsequently declared.

Many people in Congress accused Polk of provoking war. Mexico was not willing to sell California and war seemed to be the only way that America could get California.

**The Mastering of Mexico**

Polk wanted California, not war. He hoped that America could pull out of the war with California.

American generals in Mexican-American War:

- General Stephen W. Kearny: led 1,700 troops to Santa Fe.

- General Zachary Taylor: won many victories including a victory over a large Mexican force at Buena Vista; future President

- General Winfield Scott: succeeded in battling his way to Mexico City by September 1847; became President Abraham Lincoln's first choice to lead the Union army in the Civil War.

**Fighting Mexico for Peace**

Nicholas P. Trist: chief clerk of the State Department; signed the **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo** on **February 2, 1848**.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded Texas and the area that included California to America for $15 million. This area was about half of Mexico. The antislavery Whigs in Congress ("Conscience Whigs") opposed the treaty because they had originally opposed the war. Expansionists also opposed the treaty because they wanted all of Mexico, not just part of it.

**Profit and Loss in Mexico**

The Mexican War provided field experience for the officers who became generals in the Civil War, including Captain Robert E. Lee and Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant.

David Wilmot: proposed an amendment that stated that the territory from Mexico should remain slave-free. This **Wilmot Proviso** never passed the Senate because the Southern members did not want to remove the possibility of future slave states from this territory.