CHAPTER
5

The Legacy of Acquisition

How did the United States acquire the lands that became the American West? For nationalists of the mid-nineteenth century, the answer seemed obvious. It was the "manifest destiny" of the United States to stretch from ocean to ocean and possibly beyond. Can this dramatic expansion be explained by a series of peaceful agreements? Certainly not. The Louisiana Purchase seemed like an amiable international arrangement, but only if one ignores the larger context of Europe's Napoleonic wars and the successful slave rebellion against the French in what became Haiti. Then, Louisiana appears to be a wartime fire sale by the French. No claims of peaceful acquisition can be made for the land added to the United States after war with Mexico in the mid-1840s. And, Native Americans in the nineteenth century lost much of their lands through a series of wars, forced removals, broken treaties, and inept government policies. The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 increased the southwestern territory of the United States for $10 million, whereas the even larger expanse of Alaska cost only $7 million in 1867. These additions came peacefully, but the farthest western land, the islands of Hawai`i, did not. As with Texas in the mid-1830s, a rebellion by pro-American residents in the 1890s led eventually to annexation. All these acquisitions added a grand diversity of landscapes and peoples to the enlarged United States. How ready were the proponents of Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth century to accept this legacy of diversity? Did their supreme confidence about westward expansion ignore the realities of cultures in collision?

DOCUMENTS

The first three documents reveal attitudes about war between the United States and Mexico. Two Mexican military leaders, Mariano Arista and Anastasio Parrode, address different audiences. To the American troops across the Rio Bravo—named the Rio Grande by the Americans—General Arista emphasized

the unjust reasons for war between neighbors. He also wanted the soldiers to abandon their duties and join his ranks. How sincere was his offer? In the second document, Mexican commander Anastasio Parrode, addressed his own troops and vigorously urged them on to battle despite their recent defeat. The third document is a Texan's enthusiastic approval of the war. Charles DeMorse reminded his readers of those who had died during the Texas Revolution, especially at the "massacre of the Alamo." With Arista's and Parrode's fervent nationalism and DeMorse's demand for vengeance, could Mexicans accept the war's results and expect fair treatment from the Americans?

Documents four and five present the debate in the U.S. Congress in January of 1848 after the conclusion of the war. Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, the great advocate of black slavery, argued that the conquered nation of Mexico should not be incorporated into the United States. He based his view on a system of racial hierarchy that placed some Indian tribes above the Mexicans. Senator John A. Dix of New York believed differently. He spoke of the inevitable expansion of the United States that, to his thinking, dictated the annexation of some of Mexico and its peoples. Both Calhoun and Dix expressed their opinions about the undesirable results of mixing races. Can it be assumed that many American leaders wished to acquire Mexican lands but did not wish to include Mexicans?

The final two documents consider another story of acquisition—Hawai`i. The last monarch of the kingdom of Hawai`i, Queen Lilioukalani had been forced to abdicate her throne on January 19, 1895. The descendants of Anglo-American missionaries working with pro-American business interests established the Republic of Hawai`i in 1894. On February 5, 1895, a military tribunal charged Lilioukalani with treason against the republic. On the day of her trial, she pleaded not guilty and spoke directly in Hawaiian. Document five is a transcription of her speech, which indicates the role played by the United States in the overthrow of her kingdom. Lilioukalani remained under arrest for twenty-one months. The United States formally annexed Hawai`i in 1898, but to many Native Hawaiians a bitter legacy remains. Document six is a statement by Haunani-Kay Trask published in 1993. A member of Ka Lāhui Hawai`i, an initiative by Native Hawaiians for self-government, Trask is also director of the Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai`i. Her impassioned anger demonstrates that native peoples have a distinctly different view of the history of America's westward expansion.

Mexican General Mariano Arista's Advice to the Soldiers of the U.S. Army, 1846

Head-Quarters at Matamoros, April 20, 1846

Soldiers!—You have enlisted in time of peace to serve in that army for a specific term; but your obligation never implied that you were bound to violate the laws of God, and the most sacred rights of friends! The United States government, contrary to the wishes of a majority of all honest and honourable Americans, has ordered you to take *forcible* possession of the territory of a *friendly* neighbour, who has never given her consent to such

J'Nell L. Pate, *Document Sets for Texas and the Southwest in U.S. History* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1991), 62–63.

occupation. In other words, while the treaty of peace and commerce between Mexico and the United States is in full force, the United States, presuming on her strength and prosperity, and on our supposed imbecility and cowardice, attempts to make you the blind instruments of her unholy and mad ambition, and *force* you to appear as the hateful robbers of our dear homes, and the unprovoked violators of our dearest feelings as men and patriots. Such villany and outrage, I know, is perfectly repugnant to the noble sentiments of any gentleman, and it is base and foul to rush you on to certain death, in order to aggrandize a few lawless individuals, in defiance of the laws of God and man!

It is to no purpose if they tell you, that the law for the annexation of Texas justifies your occupation of the Rio Bravo del Norte; for by this act they rob us of a great part of *Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Chichuahua, and New Mexico;* and it is barbarous to send a handful of men on such an errand against a powerful and warlike nation. Besides, the most of you are Europeans, and we are the *declared friends* of a majority of the nations of *Europe.* The North Americans are ambitious, overbearing, and insolent as a nation, and they will only make use of you as vile tools to carry out their abominable plans of pillage and rapine.

I warn you in the name of justice, honour, and your own interests and self-respect, to abandon their desperate and unholy cause, and become *peaceful Mexican citizens.* I guarantee you, in such case, a half section of land, or three hundred and twenty acres, to settle upon, gratis. Be wise, then, and just, and honourable, and take no part in murdering us who have no unkind feelings for you. Lands shall be given to officers, sergeants, and corporals, according to rank, privates receiving three hundred and twenty acres, as stated.

If, in time of action, you wish to espouse our cause, throw away your arms and run to us, and we will embrace you as true friends and Christians. It is not decent nor prudent to say more. But should any of you render important service to Mexico, you shall be accordingly considered and preferred.

M. Arista,
Commander-in-Chief of the Mexican Army

Anastasio Parrode, Commander-in-Chief of the Department of Tamaulipas, to His Troops, 1846

Fellow-Citizens: The afternoon of the 8th of this month our brothers of Matamoros have fought with intrepidity and enthusiasm in the Fanques del Raminero. On the 9th they charged with the same ardour. But fate has not crowned our efforts. The enemy passed from the fort, favoured by the dense smoke of a wood on fire, which protected them from our shot. Thus have our enemies escaped!

J'Nell L. Pate, *Document Sets for Texas and the Southwest in U.S. History* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1991), 63–64.

Soldiers! another time we shall conquer. Such is the fate of war, a defeat to-day and glory tomorrow; that glory which shall be ours at the end of this holy struggle. The God of battles is trying our valour, but he had not abandoned us. We know how to conquer, and we know how to suffer.

Soldiers! the lamentation of the soldier for the companion who dies on the field of battle ought to be shot well-aimed at the enemy. Those are the tears which our brothers require of our love. Their tomb must be raised in the American camp. The corpses of the Yankees ought to form their mausoleums.

Soldiers! if we have lost some of our brothers, the glory will be greater, there will be fewer conquerors; it is not the number which gives victory. There were but three hundred Spartans, and the powerful Xerxes did not cross the Thermopylæ. The celebrated army of the great Napoleon perished in Spain at the hands of a defenceless people, but they were free and intrepid, and were fighting for their liberty.

Fellow-soldiers! shall we do less than they did? We are fighting for our liberty, our religion, our country, our cradles, our graves. Let him who does not wish to die a traitor, him who wishes to deserve the tears of his children, let him take breath and sustain his courage. He must not faint, he must not fear, but what have we to fear? The heart tells us that in it we shall find all that is requisite; and our hearts we will oppose to the enemy.

Soldiers! vengeance for our brothers! glory for our children! honour for our country!

We defend those cherished feelings. Do not fear. I swear to you that if the day be a laborious one, our glory will be sweeter; but glory we will have, and your general and companion will attain it with your loyalty and valour.

Anastasio Parrode
Tampico, May 13th, 1846

Charles DeMorse Gives a Texan's View of the War with Mexico, 1846

From the *Northern Standard* (Clarksville, Texas), May 13, 1846.

At last we have a real "sure enough" war on hand; something to warm the blood, and draw out the national enthusiasm. It seems that the "Magnanimous Mexican Nation" has at last come out of its chapparal of wordy diplomacy, treachery, meanness and bombast, and concluded for a little while, only a little while, to act like white people. There is at last—our pulses beat quickly with the thought—an opportunity to pay off a little of the debt of vengeance which has been accumulating since the massacre of the Alamo.

We trust that every man of our army, as he points his rifle and thrusts his bayonet, will think of his countrymen martyred at the Alamo, at Goliad,

Ernest Wallace, David M. Vigness, George B. Ward, eds., *Documents of Texas History* (Austin, Texas: State House Press, 1994), 163.

and at Mier, whose blood yet cries aloud from the ground for remembrance and vengeance, and taking a little closer aim or giving a little stronger thrust, will give his blow in his country's cause and an additional "God speed."

John C. Calhoun Opposes Incorporating Mexico, 1848

Sir, we have heard how much glory our country has acquired in this war. I acknowledge it to the full amount, Mr. President, so far as military glory is concerned. The army has done nobly, chivalrously; they have conferred honor on the country, for which I sincerely thank them.

. . . Now, sir, much as I regard military glory; much as I rejoice to behold our people in possession of the indomitable energy and courage which surmount all difficulties, and which class them amongst the first military people of the age, I would be very sorry indeed that our Government should lose any reputation for wisdom, moderation, discretion, justice, and those other high qualities which have distinguished us in the early stages of our history.

. . . It is without example or precedent, either to hold Mexico as a province, or to incorporate her into our Union. No example of such a line of policy can be found. We have conquered many of the neighboring tribes of Indians, but we never thought of holding them in subjection—never of incorporating them into our Union. They have either been left as an independent people amongst us, or been driven into the forests.

I know further, sir, that we have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race—the free white race. To incorporate Mexico, would be the very first instance of the kind of incorporating an Indian race; for more than half of the Mexicans are Indians, and the other is composed chiefly of mixed tribes. I protest against such a union as that! Ours, sir, is the Government of a white race. The greatest misfortunes of Spanish America are to be traced to the fatal error of placing these colored races on an equality with the white race. That error destroyed the social arrangement which formed the basis of society. The Portuguese and ourselves have escaped—the Portuguese at least to some extent—and we are the only people on this continent which have made revolutions without being followed by anarchy. And yet it is professed and talked about to erect these Mexicans into a Territorial Government, and place them on an equality with the people of the United States. I protest utterly against such a project.

Sir, it is a remarkable fact, that in the whole history of man, as far as my knowledge extends, there is no instance whatever of any civilized colored races being found equal to the establishment of free popular government, although by far the largest portion of the human family is composed of these races. And even in the savage state we scarcely find them anywhere with such government, except it be our noble savages—for noble I will call

From *The Congressional Globe*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., 1848, January 4, 1848, 98–99, 136–137.

them. They, for the most part, had free institutions, but they are easily sustained amongst a savage people. Are we to overlook this fact? Are we to associate with ourselves as equals, companions, and fellow-citizens, the Indians and mixed race of Mexico? Sir, I should consider such a thing as fatal to our institutions. . . .

I come now to the proposition of incorporating her into our Union. Well, as far as law is concerned, that is easy. You can establish a Territorial Government for every State in Mexico, and there are some twenty of them. You can appoint governors, judges, and magistrates. You can give the people a subordinate government, allowing them to legislate for themselves, whilst you defray the cost. So far as law goes, the thing is done. There is no analogy between this and our Territorial Governments. Our Territories are only an offset of our own people, or foreigners from the same regions from which we came. They are small in number. They are incapable of forming a government. It would be inconvenient for them to sustain a government, if it were formed; and they are very much obliged to the United States for undertaking the trouble, knowing that, on the attainment of their majority—when they come to manhood—at twenty-one—they will be introduced to an equality with all the other members of the Union. It is entirely different with Mexico. You have no need of armies to keep your Territories in subjection. But when you incorporate Mexico, you must have powerful armies to keep them in subjection. You may call it annexation, but it is a forced annexation, which is a contradiction in terms, according to my conception. You will be involved, in one word, in all the evils which I attribute to holding Mexico as a province. In fact, it will be but a Provincial Government, under the name of a Territorial Government. How long will that last? How long will it be before Mexico will be capable of incorporation into our Union? Why, if we judge from the examples before us, it will be a very long time. Ireland has been held in subjection by England for seven or eight hundred years, and yet still remains hostile, although her people are of kindred race with the conquerors. A few French Canadians on this continent yet maintain the attitude of hostile people; and never will the time come, in my opinion, Mr. President, that these Mexicans will be heartily reconciled to your authority. They have Castilian blood in their veins—the old Gothic, quite equal to the Anglo-Saxon in many respects—in some respects superior. Of all nations of the earth they are the most pertinacious—have the highest sense of nationality—hold out longest, and often even with the least prospect of effecting their object. On this subject also I have conversed with officers of the army, and they all entertain the same opinion, that these people are now hostile, and will continue so.

But, Mr. President, suppose all these difficulties removed; suppose these people attached to our Union, and desirous of incorporating with us, ought we to bring them in? Are they fit to be connected with us? Are they fit for self-government and for governing you? Are you, any of you, willing that your States should be governed by these twenty-odd Mexican States, with a population of about only one million of your blood, and two or three millions of mixed blood, better informed, all the rest pure Indians,

a mixed blood equally ignorant and unfit for liberty, impure races, not as good as the Cherokees or Choctaws?

We make a great mistake, sir, when we suppose that all people are capable of self-government. We are anxious to force free government on all; and I see that it has been urged in a very respectable quarter, that it is the mission of this country to spread civil and religious liberty over all the world, and especially over this continent. It is a great mistake. None but people advanced to a very high state of moral and intellectual improvement are capable, in a civilized state, of maintaining free government; and amongst those who are so purified, very few, indeed, have had the good fortune of forming a constitution capable of endurance.

John A. Dix Advocates Expansion onto Mexican Lands, 1848

Sir, no one who has paid a moderate degree of attention to the laws and elements of our increase, can doubt that our population is destined to spread itself across the American continent, filling up, with more or less completeness, according to attractions of soil and climate, the space that intervenes between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. This eventual, and, perhaps, in the order of time, this not very distant extension of our settlements over a tract of country, with a diameter, as we go westward, greatly disproportioned to its length, becomes a subject of the highest interest to us. On the whole extent of our northern flank, from New Brunswick to the point where the northern boundary of Oregon touches the Pacific, we are in contact with British colonists, having, for the most part, the same common origin with ourselves, but controlled and moulded by political influences from the Eastern hemisphere, if not adverse, certainly not decidedly friendly to us. The strongest tie which can be relied on to bind us to mutual offices of friendship and good neighborhood, is that of commerce; and this, as we know, is apt to run into rivalry, and sometimes becomes a fruitful source of alienation.

From our northern boundary, we turn to our southern. What races are to border on us here, what is to be their social and political character, and what their means of annoyance? Are our two frontiers, only seven parallels of latitude apart when we pass Texas, to be flanked by settlements having no common bond of union with ours? Our whole southern line is conterminous, throughout its whole extent, with the territories of Mexico, a large portion of which is nearly unpopulated. The geographical area of Mexico is about 1,500,000 square miles, and her population about 7,000,000 souls. The whole northern and central portion, taking the twenty-sixth parallel of latitude as the dividing line, containing more than 1,000,000 square miles, has about 650,000 inhabitants—about two inhabitants to three square miles. The southern portion, with less than 500,000 square miles, has a population of nearly six and a half millions of souls, or thirteen inhabitants

From *The Congressional Globe,* January 26, 1848, pp. 181–182.

to one square mile. The aboriginal races, which occupy and overrun a portion of California and New Mexico, must there, as everywhere else, give way before the advancing wave of civilization, either to be overwhelmed by it, or to be driven upon perpetually contracting areas, where, from a diminution of their accustomed sources of subsistence, they must ultimately become extinct by force of an invincible law. We see the operation of this law in every portion of this continent. We have no power to control it, if we would. It is the behest of Providence that idleness, and ignorance, and barbarism, shall give place to industry, and knowledge, and civilization. The European and mixed races, which possess Mexico, are not likely, either from moral or physical energy, to become formidable rivals or enemies. The bold and courageous enterprise which overran and conquered Mexico, appears not to have descended to the present possessors of the soil. Either from the influence of climate or the admixture of races—the fusion of castes, to use the technical phrase—the conquerors have, in turn, become the conquered. The ancient Castilian energy is, in a great degree, subdued; and it has given place, with many other noble traits of the Spanish character, to a peculiarity which seems to have marked the race in that country, under whatever combinations it is found—a proneness to civil discord, and a suicidal waste of its own strength.

With such a territory and such a people on our southern border, what is to be the inevitable course of empire? It needs no powers of prophecy to foretell. Sir, I desire to speak plainly: why should we not, when we are discussing the operation of moral and physical laws, which are beyond our control? As our population moves westward on our own territory, portions will cross our southern boundary. Settlements will be formed within the unoccupied and sparsely-peopled territory of Mexico. Uncongenial habits and tastes, differences of political opinion and principle, and numberless other elements of diversity will lead to a separation of these newly-formed societies from the inefficient government of Mexico. They will not endure to be held in subjection to a system, which neither yields them protection nor offers any incentive to their proper development and growth. They will form independent States on the basis of constitutions identical in all their leading features with our own; and they will naturally seek to unite their fortunes to ours. The fate of California is already sealed: it can never be reunited to Mexico. The operation of the great causes, to which I have alluded, must, at no distant day, detach the whole of northern Mexico from the southern portion of that republic. It is for the very reason that she is incapable of defending her possessions against the elements of disorder within and the progress of better influences from without, that I desire to see the inevitable political change which is to be wrought in the condition of her northern departments, brought about without any improper interference on our part.