How did America purchase Louisiana?

While America enjoyed its bloodless "Revolution of 1800," France was still in the throes of its more violent contortions. In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte engineered the coup that overturned the Revolutionary Directory, eventually making himself ruler of France. While most of Napoleon's grandiose plans focused on Europe, America had a place in the little colonel's heart. His first step was to force a weak Spain to return the Louisiana Territory to France, which it did in 1800. The second step was to regain control of the Caribbean island of St. Domingue. In 1793, at the time of the French Revolution, the island had come under control of a self-taught genius, General Toussaint L'Ouverture, who had led a successful slave revolt. To launch any offensive in North America, Napoleon needed the island as a base, and he sent 20,000 troops to retake it.

All of this French scurrying around in America's backyard alarmed President Jefferson, who knew that French control of New Orleans and the western territories would create an overwhelming threat to America. Jefferson had an option play ready. Although he preferred neutrality between the warring European nations, Jefferson dropped hints to the British about an alliance against the French, and found them receptive. At the same time he directed Robert Livingston and James Monroe to offer to buy New Orleans and Florida from France. Such a sale seemed unlikely until the French army sent to St. Domingue was practically wiped out by yellow fever after regaining control of the island. (The French withdrew to the eastern half of St. Domingue and the western half was renamed Haiti, the original Arawak name for the island, with Toussaint's successor, Dessalines, proclaiming himself Emperor. The island, Columbus's Hispaniola, remains split today between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.)

Without the safe base on the island, a French adventure into Louisiana was out of the question. Preparing to open a new European campaign, Napoleon wrote off the New World. He needed troops and cash. Almost on a whim, he ordered his foreign minister, Talleyrand, to offer not only New Orleans and Florida but the whole of the Louisiana Territory to America. Livingston and Monroe dickered with the French over price, but in May 1803 a treaty turning over all of Louisiana was signed. Nobody knew exactly what Napoleon sold, but under the treaty's terms, the United States would double in size for about $15 million, or approximately four cents an acre. Left unclear were the rights to Texas, western Florida, and the West Coast above the Spanish settlements in California. Spain had its own ideas about these territories. Ironically, the purchase was made with U.S. bonds, the result of Hamilton's U.S. Bank initiative, which Jefferson had resisted as unconstitutional.

Who were Lewis and Clark?

Months before the purchase was made, Jefferson had the foresight to ask Congress for $2,500 to outfit an expedition into the West. Ostensibly its purpose was to "extend the external commerce" of the United States, but Jefferson had several other motives: to get America into the fur trade; to feel out the political and military uses of the West; and, reflecting his philosophy as a true Enlightenment man, to collect scientific information about this vast, uncharted land.

With the purchase complete, the little expedition now became a major adventure to find out what exactly America now owned. For this job Jefferson selected Meriwether Lewis (1774–1809), his private secretary, an army veteran and a fellow Virginian. Lewis selected another Virginian soldier, William Clark (1770–1838), a veteran of the Indian wars, as his co-commander. With some forty soldiers and civilians, they set out from St. Louis in the winter of 1803–04 aboard three boats, a fifty-five-foot keelboat with twenty-two oars and two *pirogues* or dugout canoes, each large enough to hold seven men. Working their way upstream was arduous, and strict martial discipline was maintained

with regular floggings, but the company reached what is now North Dakota in the fall of 1804, built Fort Mandan (near present-day Bismarck), and wintered there.

In the spring of 1805 they set out again for the West, now joined by a French-Canadian trapper and his pregnant Indian squaw, Sacagawea, who acted as guides and interpreters. Crossing the Rockies in present Montana, they built boats to take them down the Clearwater and Columbia rivers, reaching the Pacific Coast in November, where they built Fort Clatsop (near the site of Astoria, Oregon). Hearing the Indians speak some "sailor's" English, presumably learned from traders, the expedition believed a ship might pass and they decided to winter there. When no ship appeared, they set off for an overland return, splitting the expedition in two after crossing the Rockies to explore alternate routes. The parties reunited at the site of Fort Union, and arrived together in St. Louis on September 23, 1806.

After twenty-eight months of incredible hardships met in traveling over difficult, uncharted terrain, in skirmishes with Indians, and in encounters with dangerous animals from rattlesnakes to grizzly bears, the Lewis and Clark expedition had suffered only a single casualty: one man had succumbed to an attack of appendicitis.

The journals they kept, the specimens they brought or sent back, the detailed accounts of Indians they had encountered and with whom they had traded were of inestimable value, priming an America that was eager to press westward.

While William Clark lived long and was influential in Indian affairs, Lewis suffered from melancholy and committed suicide, although many historians claim it was murder. Contrary to common myth, Sacagawea died in her twenty-eighth year.

What was the Monroe Doctrine?

America suffered one notable casualty in the War of 1812. The Federalist Party, which had opposed the war, was mortally wounded. Peace had delivered a large political bonus for Madison and his party. In 1816 the Federalists barely mounted opposition

to Madison's chosen successor, James Monroe, next in the "Virginian Dynasty" that started with Washington, was delayed by Adams, and continued through Jefferson and Madison.

Elected at age fifty-eight, Monroe had seen much in his life. A veteran of the War of Independence, he had fought at Trenton, was twice governor of Virginia and then a senator from that state. As a diplomat he helped engineer the Louisiana Purchase. Like Jefferson and Madison before him, he had served as Secretary of State, giving that post and not the vice-presidency the luster of heir apparent's office.

With the great foreign disputes settled and the nation comfortably accepting one-party rule, Monroe's years were later dubbed "The Era of Good Feelings." It was a period of rapid economic expansion, especially in the Northeast, as manufacturing began to replace shipbuilding as the leading industry. These calm years saw the beginnings of the machine age, as men like Eli Whitney, Seth Thomas of mechanical clock fame, and Francis Cabot Lowell were bringing America into the first stages of the Industrial Revolution. A series of postwar treaties with the British solidified the nation's boundaries and eliminated the threat of another war with England.

But the most notable historical milestone in this administration came in an address given to Congress in 1823. The speech was as much the work of Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, son of the second President, but some decades later it came to be called the Monroe Doctrine.

In this speech, Monroe essentially declared that the United States would not tolerate intervention in the Americas by European nations. Monroe also promised that the United States wouldn't interfere with already established colonies or with governments in Europe. In one sense, this declaration was an act of isolationism, with America withdrawing from the political tempests of Europe. But it was also a recognition of a changing world order. Part of this new reality was the crumbling of the old Spanish empire in the New World, and rebellions swept South America, creating republics under such leaders as Simon Bolívar, José de San Martín, and—the most unlikely name in South American history—Bernardo O'Higgins, the son of an Irish army offi-

cer and leader of the new republic of Chile. By 1822, America recognized the independent republics of Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and La Plata (comprising present-day Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Panama).

On the positive side, the Doctrine marked what might be called the last step in America's march to independence, which had begun in the Revolution and moved through post-independence foreign treaties, the Louisiana Purchase, the War of 1812, and the postwar agreements. But from another historical perspective, the Doctrine became the basis for a good deal of highhanded interference in South American affairs as the United States embarked on a path of meddling in Central and South America that, as the Nicaragua situation of the 1980s proves, is not yet finished.

What was the Missouri Compromise?

As proof of the "Good Feelings," Monroe was almost unanimously reelected in 1820, winning 231 of the 232 electoral votes cast that year. Popular legend has it that one elector withheld his vote to preserve Washington's record as the only unanimously elected President. But the facts show that the one elector who voted for Secretary of State John Quincy Adams did not know how everyone else would vote, and simply cast his ballot for Adams because he admired him.

While it may have been "The Era of Good Feelings," not everyone felt so good. Certainly the Indians who were being decimated and pushed into shrinking territories by the rapacious westward push didn't feel so good. Nor did the slaves of the South, who now had to harvest a new crop in cotton, which had replaced tobacco as king. And it was the question of slavery that led to the other noteworthy milestone in the Monroe years—one about which Monroe had little to say—the Missouri Compromise of 1820.

From the day when Jefferson drafted the Declaration, through the debates at the Philadelphia convention, slavery was clearly an issue that America would be forced to confront. The earlier compromises of the Declaration and Constitution were beginning to show their age. Even though the slave trade had been outlawed in 1808 under a provision of the constitutional compromise, an illicit trade in slaves continued. The chief argument of the day was not about importing new slaves, however, but about the admission of new states to the union, and whether they would be free or slave states.

It is important to realize that while strong abolitionist movements were beginning to gather force in America, the slavery debate was essentially about politics and economics rather than morality. The "Three-Fifths" compromise written into the Constitution, allowing slaves to be counted as part of the total population for the purpose of allocating congressional representation, gave slave states a political advantage over free states. Every new state meant two more Senate votes and a proportional number of House votes. Slave states wanted those votes to maintain their political power. Of course, there was an economic dimension to this issue. Wage-paying northerners were forced to compete against slave labor in the South. For southerners, wealth was land. With Eli Whitney's cotton gin (the wood *gin* is short for "engine") allowing huge increases of efficiency in production, and the new factories of Lowell in New England to make cloth, the market for cotton was booming. Slave-holding southerners needed more land to grow more cotton to sell to the textile mills of the northeast and England and slaves were needed to work that land. If gaining new land to plant meant creating new states, slaveholders wanted them to be slave states.

By adding massive real estate to the equation under the Louisiana Purchase, the United States brought the free-state/slave-state issue to a head, particularly in the case of Missouri, which petitioned for statehood in 1817. With Henry Clay taking the lead, Congress agreed upon another compromise. Under Clay's bill, Missouri would be admitted as a slave state, but slavery would not be allowed anywhere else north of Missouri's southern border. But every politician in America, including an aging Thomas Jefferson, could see the strict sectional lines that were being drawn, and few believed that this Missouri Compromise would

solve the problem forever. Of course, the issue would soon explode.

The Union in 1821

The following is an alphabetical list of the twenty-four states in the Union following the Missouri Compromise, divided into free and slave states. The dates given denote the date of entry into the union or ratification of the Constitution for the original thirteen states; the number following the date denotes order of entry.)

Free States	*Slave States*
Connecticut (1788; 5)	Alabama (1819; 22)
Illinois (1818; 21)	Delaware (1787; 1)
Indiana (1816; 19)	Georgia (1788; 4)
Maine (1820; 23)	Kentucky (1792; 15)
Massachusetts (1788; 6)	Louisiana (1812; 18)
New Hampshire (1788; 9)	Maryland (1788; 7)
New Jersey (1787; 3)	Mississippi (1817; 20)
New York (1788; 11)	Missouri (1821; 24)
Ohio (1803; 17)	North Carolina (1789; 12)
Pennsylvania (1787; 2)	South Carolina (1788; 8)
Rhode Island (1790; 13)	Tennessee (1796; 16)
Vermont (1791; 14)	Virginia (1788; 10)

The possessions of the United States at this time also included the Florida Territory, ceded by Spain in 1819; the Arkansas Territory, which extended west to the existing border with Mexico (farther north than the modern border); the Michigan and Missouri Territories, comprising the Midwest to the Rockies; and the Oregon Country, then under joint British-American rule.

According to the census of 1820, the U.S. population was 9,638,453. New York had become the most populous state with 1.3 million people, followed by Pennsylvania with a little over a million. The population in the northern free states and territories was 5,152,635; the total for the southern states was 4,485,818.

What was the "corrupt bargain"?

There is a good deal of talk today about the problem of negative advertising in presidential campaigns. We like to look back fondly to the genteel days of the past, when high-minded gentlemen debated the great issues in the politest terms. Take 1824, for example. Candidate Adams was a slovenly monarchist who had an English wife. Candidate Clay was a drunkard and a gambler. And candidate Jackson was a murderer.

If America needed any evidence that Monroe's "Era of Good Feelings" was over, it came with the election of 1824. For a second time, the choice of a President would be sent to the House of Representatives after a ruthlessly bitter campaign demonstrated how clearly sectionalism, or the division of the country into geographic areas with their own agendas, had replaced party loyalties. The leading candidates for President in 1824 were all ostensibly of the same party, the Democratic Republicans of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. Even John Quincy Adams, son of the last Federalist President, was now a member of this party and, as Monroe's Secretary of State, a leading contender for the presidency. The other chief candidates, all from the South or West, were General Andrew Jackson, senator from Tennessee; House Speaker Henry Clay of Kentucky; William H. Crawford, Monroe's Treasury Secretary from Georgia; and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. After considerable infighting, Calhoun dropped from the race and opted for the vice-presidency, with an eye on a future presidential bid.

Crawford was the choice of the congressional power brokers who nominated him in caucus. But given the growing popular resentment against the caucus system, that designation did more harm than good. When Crawford suffered a stroke during the campaign, his candidacy was left crippled. Issues became negligible in the campaign; personalities were the only subject of debate, and slanderous charges were thrown about by all. Adams and Jackson took the lead as popular favorites, but the election was inconclusive, with neither winning a majority of electoral votes, and the choice was given to the House, as it had been in 1800. Jackson, with 43.1 percent of the popular vote and ninety-nine

electoral votes, had a legitimate claim to the office. But Clay, also a powerful westerner, wanted to keep his rival Jackson from the office. It is more than likely that Clay legitimately believed Adams was the more experienced candidate but that an Adams election would clearly benefit Clay's political future at the expense of Jackson's. Clay threw his considerable influence in the House behind Adams, who won on the first ballot. Adams then named Clay to be his Secretary of State. Jackson supporters screamed that "a corrupt bargain" had been made between the two. In Jackson's words, Clay was the "Judas of the West."

Whether a deal was made in advance or not didn't matter. The damage was done. In the public eye, the people's choice had been circumvented by a congressional cabal. Brilliant in many ways and well intentioned, Adams was an inept politician. His administration was crippled from the start by the political furor over the "corrupt bargain," and Adams never recovered from the controversy. The Tennessee legislature immediately designated Jackson its choice for the next election, and the campaign of 1828 actually began in 1825.

What were "Jacksonian Democracy" and the "spoils system"?

Jackson got his revenge in 1828, after a campaign that was even more vicious than the one of four years earlier. The label of murderer was reattached to Jackson, an outgrowth of the general's numerous dueling encounters and his penchant for strict martial law, which had led to hangings of soldiers under his command. One Adamsite newspaper claimed that Jackson's mother was a prostitute brought to America by British soldiers, and that she had married a mulatto. Jackson's own marriage became an issue as well. He had married Rachel Robards in 1791, after she had presumably been divorced from her first husband. But the first husband had not legally divorced her until after her marriage to Jackson. Jackson remarried Rachel following the official divorce, but Adams supporters asked, "Ought an adultress and her paramour husband be placed in the highest offices?" One popular campaign ditty went,

> Oh Andy! Oh Andy!
> How many men have you hanged in your life?
> How many weddings make a wife?

(The attacks on his wife particularly enraged Jackson, as Rachel was sick and died soon after the election.)

John Quincy Adams was not safe from character assault either. For purchasing a chess set and a billiard table, he was accused of installing "gaming furniture" in the White House at public expense. In another campaign charge, Adams was charged with having procured a young American girl for the pleasure of Tsar Alexander I when he had served as minister to Russia in 1809–11, under Madison.

Jackson won a substantial victory in the popular vote, and took 178 electoral votes to Adams's eighty-three. For the first time in America's brief history, the country had a President who was neither a Virginian nor an Adams. (John Quincy Adams left the White House and returned to Congress as a representative from Massachusetts, the only former President ever to serve in Congress. He served there with considerable dignity and distinction, leading the antislavery forces in Congress until his death in 1848.) That a new American era was born became apparent with Jackson's victory and inaugural. A large crowd of Old Hickory's supporters, mostly rough-hewn western frontiersmen with little regard for niceties, crowded into Washington, flush with the excitement of defeating what they saw as the aristocratic power brokers of the Northeast. When Jackson finished his inaugural address, hundreds of well-wishers stormed into the White House, where tables had been laid with cakes, ice cream, and punch. Jackson was hustled out of the mansion for his own protection, and the muddy-booted mob overturned chairs and left a chaotic mess. All of the Adamsite fears of rule by "King Mob" seemed to be coming true.

This was the beginning of so-called Jacksonian democracy. Part of this new order came with reformed voting rules in the western states, where property ownership was no longer a qualification to vote. Unlike the earlier "Jeffersonian democracy,"

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which was a carefully articulated political agenda voiced by Jefferson himself, this new democracy was, in modern political language, a grassroots movement. Jackson was no political theorist and hardly a spokesman for the changing order, but he was its symbol. Orphan, frontiersman, horseracing man, Indian fighter, war hero, and land speculator, Andrew Jackson embodied the new American spirit and became the idol of the ambitious, jingoistic younger men who now called themselves Democrats. At its best, Jacksonian democracy meant an opening of the political process to more people (although blacks, women, and Indians still remained political nonentities). The flip side was that it represented a new level of militant, land-frenzied, slavery-condoning, Indian-killing greed.

A large number of the unruly crowd that upset the ice cream in the White House had come to Washington looking for jobs. It was expected that Jackson would sweep out holdovers from the hated Adams administration. They had won the war and were looking for the "spoils" of that war in the form of patronage jobs in the Jackson White House. There was nothing new about this "spoils system"; it had been practiced by every administration from the beginning of the republic. But the widespread and vocal calls for patronage that followed Jackson's election have linked the "spoils system" to Jackson. Ironically, only a few new patronage jobs were created during his years in office, with most posts going to previous jobholders, all established Washington insiders—proof once again that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

What was the "Trail of Tears"?

From the moment Columbus stepped onto the sands of San Salvador, the history of European relations with the natives they encountered could be written in blood. It was a story of endless betrayals, butchery, and broken promises, from Columbus and the *conquistadores* through John Smith, the Bay Colony, the French and Indian War, right up to the War of 1812. From the outset, superior weapons, force of numbers, and treachery had been the Euro-American strategy for dealing with the Indians in manufacturing a genocidal tragedy that surely ranks as one of the cruelest episodes in man's history.

Hollywood has left the impression that the great Indian wars came in the Old West during the late 1800s, a period that many think of simplistically as the "cowboy and Indian" days. But in fact that was a "mopping-up" effort. By that time the Indians were nearly finished, their subjugation complete, their numbers decimated. The killing, enslavement, and land theft had begun with the arrival of the Europeans. But it may have reached its nadir when it became federal policy under President Jackson.

During the Creek War of 1814 that first brought him notice, Jackson earned a reputation as an Indian fighter, and a particularly ruthless one. To the Indians, Jackson became "Long Knife." Confronted by a tenacious Creek Nation in the South as commander of the Tennessee militia, Jackson had used Cherokees, who had been promised governmental friendship, to attack the Creeks from the rear. As treaty commissioner, Jackson managed to take away half the Creek lands, which he and his friends then bought on attractive terms.

In 1819 he embarked on an illegal war against the Seminoles of Florida. Claiming that Florida, still in Spanish hands, was a sanctuary for escaped slaves and marauding Indians, Jackson invaded the territory, unleashing a bloody campaign that left Indian villages and Spanish forts smoldering. Jackson's incursion set off a diplomatic crisis, eventually forcing the Spanish to sell Florida to the United States in 1819 on terms highly favorable to the Americans. Again, Jackson became governor of the newly conquered territory. As a land speculator, Jackson knew that he and his friends would profit handsomely by moving the Indians off the land.

But the harsh treatment of the Indians by Jackson as a general, as well as throughout earlier American history, was later transformed. It went from popular anti-Indian sentiment and sporadic regional battles to official federal policy initiated under Jackson and continued by his successor, Martin Van Buren. The tidy word given this policy was "removal," suggesting a sanitary resolution of a messy problem, an early-nineteenth-century equivalent of Hitler's "final solution." The Indians called it the Trail of Tears.

Some historians ascribe humane motives to Jackson's call for the wholesale forced migration of Indians from the southeastern states to unsettled lands across the Mississippi. Better to move them, argued Jackson, than to slaughter them, which was already happening. In 1831, for instance, Sac tribes under Black Hawk balked at leaving their ancestral lands in Illinois. But when a group of some 1,000 Indians attempted to surrender to the militia and the regular army, they were cut off by the Mississippi River and cut down by bayonets and rifle fire, with about 150 surviving the slaughter.

The removals were concentrated on the "Five Civilized Tribes" of the Southeast. Contrary to popular sentiment of the day and history's continuing misrepresentation, the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Cherokee, and Seminole tribes had developed societies that were not only compatible with white culture, but even emulated European styles in some respects. The problem was that their tribal lands happened to be valuable cotton-growing territory. Between 1831 and 1833 the first of the "removals" forced some 15,000 Choctaws from Mississippi into the territory west of Arkansas. During the winter, pneumonia took its toll, and with the summer came cholera, killing the Choctaws by the hundreds. The Choctaws were followed by the Chickasaws and then the Creeks. In the new Indian Territory, 3,500 of 15,000 immigrants died of hardship, disease, and exposure.

The final removal began in 1835, when the Cherokees, centered in Georgia, became the target. Like the other tribes that had been forced out, the Cherokees were among the "Civilized Tribes" who clearly provided proof that the "savages" could coexist with white, Euro-American culture. The Cherokees, at the time of their removal, were not nomadic savages. In fact, they had assimilated many European-style customs, including the wearing of gowns by Cherokee women. They built roads, schools, and churches, had a system of representational government, and were becoming farmers and cattle ranchers. A written Cherokee language had also been perfected by a warrior named Sequoya. The Cherokees even attempted to fight removal legally by challenging the removal laws in the Supreme Court and by establishing an independent Cherokee Nation.

But they were fighting an irresistible tide of history. In 1838, after Long Knife Jackson left office, the United States government forced out the 15,000–17,000 Cherokees of Georgia. About 4,000 of them died along the route, which took them through Tennessee and Kentucky, across the Ohio and Missouri rivers, and into what would later become Oklahoma (the result of another broken treaty). This route and this journey were the Trail of Tears.

The strongest resistance to removal came from the Seminoles of Florida, where the Indians were able to carry out another costly war, in which 1,500 U.S. soldiers died and some $20 million was spent. The leader of the Seminoles was a young warrior named Osceola, and he was only captured when lured out of his camp by a flag of truce. He died in a prison camp three months later. With Osceola gone, the Seminole resistance withered and many Seminoles were eventually removed to the Indian Territory. But several bands remained in the Everglades, continuing their struggle against the Federals.

What made the South fear a slave named Nat Turner?

Nothing struck deeper fear into the hearts of southerners, whether they held slaves or not, than the idea of a slave revolt. Contrary to the popular image of docile slaves working in peaceful servitude, there had been numerous small rebellions and uprisings of slaves, often in union with Indians or disaffected whites, as far back as slavery in the New World under the Spanish. These were not limited to the South, as murderous uprisings took place in colonial Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York. One of the bloodiest of these uprisings occurred in South Carolina in 1739, when slaves killed some twenty-five whites under the leadership of a slave named Jemmy.

But the greatest horror for young America came from the Caribbean, where Toussaint L'Ouverture, a former carriage driver and a natural military genius, led the slaves of St. Domingue (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) in a successful rebellion during the 1790s. Inspired by the revolutions in America and France, L'Ouverture's rebellion resulted in some 60,000 deaths and a republic of freed slaves on the island. Yet Toussaint was a remark-

able administrator as well, and successfully integrated the white minority into the island's government. In 1800, Napoleon sent troops to retake the island with little success until Toussaint was lured to the French headquarters under a truce flag, arrested, and jailed in the Alps, where he died in a jail cell.

Slaveholders tried for years to keep the news of Toussaint and his rebellion from their slaves. But as Lerone Bennet writes in *Before the Mayflower*, "Wherever slaves chafed under chains, this man's name was whispered." In 1831 a new name came to the fore as the most fearful threat to white control, that of Nat Turner (1800–1831). Nat Turner's rebellion followed two earlier unsuccessful rebellions by slaves. The first was of some thousand slaves led by Gabriel Prosser in an aborted assault on Richmond, Virginia, in 1800. The second, in Charleston in 1822, was led by another charismatic slave, Denmark Vesey, and failed because of betrayals.

Although Turner's rebellion also ultimately failed, it changed the South. Born in 1800, Turner was also marked by birth for an unusual life. A mystic and preacher, he used his visions and biblical authority to build a devoted following. In August 1831, Turner and about seventy followers started their rampage. Beginning with his own masters, Turner embarked on a death march that spared no one. The whites around Southampton, Virginia, were thrown into utter panic, many of them fleeing the state. Turner's small army, lacking discipline, halted their march, allowing a group of whites to attack. Turner counterattacked, but was soon vastly outnumbered and went into hiding. Thousands of soldiers were pressing the search for this one man who had thrown the country into hysterical terror. A massacre of any slaves even suspected of complicity followed. Turner eluded capture for some two months, during which he became a sort of bogeyman to the people of the South. To whites and slaves alike, he had acquired some mystical qualities that made him larger than life, and even after his hanging, slaveowners feared his influence. Stringent new slave laws were passed, strict censorship laws aimed at abolitionist material were passed with Andrew Jackson's blessing, and, perhaps most important, the militant defense of slavery took on a whole new meaning.

American Voices

William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), in the first issue of the abolitionist journal *The Liberator* (1831):

> On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. . . .

Who fought at the Alamo?

When Jackson left office, there were clearly unanswered questions about the nation's future. Southern politicians were already setting forth the argument that because states had freely joined the Union, they could just as freely leave. And while there was much talk of tariffs and banks, the real issue was slavery. The slave question pervaded the national debate on almost every question before Congress, including the momentous one regarding the fate of Texas, then a part of Mexico.

Led by Stephen F. Austin (1793–1836), Americans settled the area at the invitation of Mexican authorities. President Jackson, and Adams before him, offered to buy Texas from Mexico, but were turned down. By 1830, more than 20,000 white Americans had been drawn to the fertile, cotton-growing plains, bringing with them some 2,000 slaves. They soon outnumbered the Mexicans in the territory, and in 1834 Austin asked the authorities in Mexico City to allow Texas to separate from Mexico as a prelude to statehood. Besides the obvious reason that these Americans wanted to remain American, an overriding cause for their request was Mexico's prohibition of slavery. Austin was arrested and jailed. By 1836, President Santa Anna of Mexico announced a unified constitution for all Mexican territories, including Texas.

The Americans in Texas decided to secede. With an army of 6,000 men, Santa Anna marched against what he viewed as the treasonous Texans. With a force of 3,000, Santa Anna approached San Antonio, held by 187 men under the command of Colonel William B. Travis. The defenders took a defensive stand behind the walls of a mission called the Alamo. For ten days,

in a now-legendary stand, the small group fended off Santa Anna's massed troops, inflicting tremendous casualties on the Mexicans. But the numbers were insurmountably in the Mexicans' favor. As the Mexican bands played the *Degüello,* literally "throat-cutting," artillery breached the walls of the Alamo, and Travis's band was overrun. The five American survivors of the final onslaught, including the wounded, were executed. All of the Americans' corpses were soaked in oil and then set on fire. Among the dead were the Bowie brothers, a pair of slave smugglers who are better known for Jim's famous long knife, and Davy Crockett (1786–1836), the professional backwoodsman, congressman, and veteran of Andrew Jackson's Creek War. (Unlike Jackson, Crockett had grown to respect the Indians and had become friendly with them.) Only three Americans came out of the Alamo alive: a woman named Susanna Dickinson, her fifteenth-month-old baby, and Travis's slave Joe. They were freed by Santa Anna to warn Sam Houston (1793–1863), commander of the Texas army, of the fate that awaited them if they continued to resist.

A second slaughter, in which hundreds of Texans were slain by Santa Anna's troops at the town of Goliad, stoked the flames higher. Santa Anna pressed the small Texan army that remained under Houston until the forces met at San Jacinto in April 1836. With "Remember the Alamo!" as their rallying cry, the vastly outnumbered Texans swept into the Mexican lines, who had been granted a siesta by the self-assured Santa Anna. The battle was over in eighteen minutes. With the loss of nine men, the Texans killed hundreds of Mexicans, captured hundreds more, including Santa Anna, and sent the bulk of the Mexican army into a confused retreat across the Rio Grande.

The Texans immediately ratified their constitution, and Houston, who nearly died from gangrene after the San Jacinto battle, was made President of the new Republic. They then petitioned for annexation into the United States. Jackson did nothing until his last day in office, when he recognized Texan independence. Van Buren also hesitated. Both men feared war with Mexico, but more seriously, the admission of Texas added fuel to the burning slave debate. The southern states wanted another

slave territory. The North saw annexation of Texas as breaching the balance that had been reached in the Missouri Compromise (under which slave-state Arkansas and free-state Michigan had been admitted as the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth states). For the next nine years the Texas question simmered, further dividing North and South over slavery, and pushing relations with Mexico to the brink of war.

What was "Manifest Destiny"?

The annexing of Texas was a symptom of a larger frenzy that was sweeping through America like a nineteenth-century version of "Lotto fever." In 1845 this fervor was christened. In an expansionist magazine, *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review,* journalist John L. O'Sullivan wrote of "the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."

O'Sullivan's phrase, quickly adopted by other publications and politicians, neatly expressed a vision that sounded almost like a religious mission. Behind this vision was some ideological saber-rattling, but the greatest motivator was greed, the obsessive desire for Americans to control the entire continent from Atlantic to Pacific. As each successive generation of Americans had pressed the fringes of civilization a little farther, this idea took on the passion of a sacred quest. The rapid westward movement of large groups of settlers was spurred by the development of the famous trails to the West. The Santa Fe Trail linked Independence, Missouri, with the Old Spanish Trail to Los Angeles. The Oregon Trail, mapped by trappers and missionaries, went northwest to the Oregon Territory. The Mormon Trail, first traveled in 1847, first took the religious group and then other settlers from Illinois to Salt Lake City. And in the Southwest, the Oxbow Route, from Missouri west to California, carried mail under a federal contract.

The fact that California, with its great ports, was still part of Mexico, and that England still lay claim to Oregon, only heightened the aggressiveness of the American desire to control all of it.

Why was there a war with Mexico?

If you thought Vietnam was a nasty little war, you should have seen the Mexican War. For the first time in America's short history, the nation didn't go to war with a foreign power over independence, foreign provocation, or global politics. It was a war fought unapologetically for territorial expansion. One young officer who fought in Mexico later called this war "one of the most

unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation." He was Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant.

The war with Mexico was the centerpiece of the administration of James K. Polk, the most adept of the Presidents between Jackson and Lincoln. Continuing the line of Jacksonian Democrats in the White House after Tyler's abbreviated Whig administration, Polk (1795–1849) was even dubbed "Young Hickory." A slaveholding states'-rights advocate from Virginia, Polk slipped by Van Buren in the Democratic convention and was narrowly elected President in 1844. His victory was possible only because the splinter antislavery Liberty party drew votes away from Whig candidate Henry Clay. A swing of a few thousand votes, especially in New York State, which Polk barely carried, would have given the White House to Clay, a moderate who might have been one President capable of forestalling the breakup of the Union and the war.

It was a "Manifest Destiny" election. The issues were the future of the Oregon Territory, which Polk wanted to "reoccupy," and the annexation of Texas, or, in Polk's words, "reannexation," implying that Texas was part of the original Louisiana Purchase. (It wasn't.) Even before Polk's inauguration, Congress adopted a joint resolution on his proposal to annex Texas. The move made a war with Mexico certain, which suited Polk and other expansionists. When Mexico heard of this action in March 1845, it severed diplomatic relations with the United States.

Treating Texas as U.S. property, Polk sent General Zachary Taylor into the territory with about 1,500 troops in May 1845, to guard the undefined "border" against a Mexican "invasion." After months of negotiating to buy Texas, Polk ordered Taylor to move to the bank of the Rio Grande. This so-called army of observation numbered some 3,500 men by January 1846, about half of the entire U.S. Army. Escalating the provocations, Polk next had Taylor cross the Rio Grande. When a U.S. soldier was found dead and some Mexicans attacked an American patrol on April 25, President Polk had all the pretext he needed to announce to Congress, "War exists." An agreeable Democratic majority in the House and Senate quickly voted—with little dissent from the Whig opposition—to expand the army by an additional 50,000 men. America's most naked war of territorial aggression was under way.