

How and why did america expand westward term paper sample

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



As a country America has always been seen as a unique unit of states with a common goal and a common destiny. This has always been her allure and her selling point. But as a nation America too had to evolve and grow from a smaller unit to the super power she is today. This expansion came about in various ways and some of the most common were via purchases and treaties. But just like other countries America too had to engage in warfare in a bid to expand her shores. America has been involved in many wars over the period of her existence and they have been fought for a myriad of reasons - honour for their country, pride of location or a duty for God. The Mexican American War was fought for all the above reasons. There were different opinions at the time on whether America should indeed expand to the west but the desire for expansion and the rewards that would come with it was too great from America to back down from what she called Manifest Destiny.

Justification for Territorial Expansion

The desire for a country to expand is one that is as old as time itself and the United States has over time participated in. However the term Manifest Destiny was not coined till 1845 when it was used in a political magazine that was discussing an article it had titled Annexation. John O'Sullivan used the term to explain how the Democrats of his day viewed expansion. He stated that in siding President Polk and his clamour for expansion they were claiming that it was their God-given duty as a nation to expand and spread their ideology as they went along. They did receive opposition to this plan as people like Abraham Lincoln and David Webster believed that steadying the economy was more beneficial than acquiring more land. (Ricardo

Valenzuela). Unfortunately, the opposition did not deter the United States from expanding as they views lands like Arkansas, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin dream acquisitions. By the 1840s and 1850s America has increased by a third in the span of five years. By this time Texas had been annexed and Mexico was weakened further by the war as they were ill equipped versus the might of the United States. This loss saw to most of the west and southwest ceded to the United States from Mexico. The ceded lands was to become the states of Nevada, Utah, California, new Mexico, Wyoming and some parts of Arizona. All the expansions that were taking place during this period via wars and purchases and treaties sparked a movement of the people to the " Wild West"

The period between 1846 and 1848 saw two North American nations engaged in battle as the United States and Mexico fought bitterly for a period of twenty one months. Often confused with the Spanish American war or even the Texas Revolution, the Mexican American war left its mark in history and left it scars on mankind. This war began in the nineteenth century when President Polk valued the land belonging to a Mexico that was undergoing instability and changes in leadership. Although the United States succeeded in the war and gained the Southwest region as its prize, it also created frustration and pain. Lives were lost and people were displaced from their homes and comfort, losing their lands and facing the obstacles of living and surviving in a country with a new name. this war would end in a treaty.

Why the War

Manifest Destiny is a term that was used in the United States to describe what they believed to be their God-given right. As a nation America was of the opinion that the onus of the civilization of their continent fell on them. This desire to occupy was one of the reasons of the Mexican American War – a dispute over acquisition of land. At this time many Americans were migrating into lands owned by Native Americans and Mexicans in the west. As time went by they believed that if they took the over the lands, they could perform a much better job on them as opposed to the current dwellers. Making their desire public President Polk offered to purchase the land but the offer was rejected and this led to increased tensions between both countries (Lewis Fisher).

Earlier in the 1830s American citizens were welcomed by the Mexicans into Texas. The land was under populated and it was agreed that the Americans living in there would change that. This offer however came with requirements and one of such was an oath of allegiance to Mexico to the Americans coming into Texas. They were also advised to convert to Catholicism. At that time many Americans agreed to the terms and moved into Texas but with time disagreements began to arise. Disagreement arose among the Americans and how the government of Mexico ran the province and a revolution broke out between the Americans and Mexicans there in a fight for independence. Sam Houston led the battle against the Mexican president. He was captured when America gained victory and Texas gained her independence with the signing of the Treaty of Velasco.

Opposing Viewpoint

For most Americans the war with Mexico that brought about expansion into the west is not one that they may not be very familiar with. However the story will be different for the Mexicans as this war left a scar in their people and on their land so they are more prone to remember it passionately. This difference of opinion also arises with the viewpoints as can be seen in the way the war is been described by either side. The Americans may see the war as the Mexican-American war but the Mexicans see it as the US Invasion. To Mexico the annexation of Texas was an unacceptable event that would threaten their security as a territory. It also had legal ramifications as it was in violation of the border treaty of 1828. As this went off Mexico was forced to defend their territory from an inevitable US invasion as friendly relations could no longer be re-established.

Manifest Destiny at this time had become so ingrained into the American mind that they could see no other option but to go forth and conquer, fulfilling their duty to God as they passed their ideology and way of life upon every land they possessed. America at this time had suffered two depressions while also experiencing great numerical increase as a result of increase in birth rate and increase in immigration. These reasons made expansion an easier activity to sell to the people as America needed to expand to accommodate their increased growth. They saw it as just a natural progression therefore to move towards the cheaper land that could provide opportunities for economic growth. When the dust had settled and America had finished fighting her first armed conflict on foreign land one third of the land previously owned by Mexico had changed hands to the United States.

Conclusion

This war would come to an end with the signing of the treaty in 1848.

However this treaty would twice see ratification, once by Mexico and the other time by the senate of the United States. If these eventual ratifications accomplished anything, it did strengthen the grasp the United States had the lands she had acquired and the stranglehold she now had as a result on the Mexicans living on those grounds. The expansion of the United States saw an exodus of Americans and European settlers who had previously never migrated far from home begin to come to populate the expanded United States. Also the end of the wars played a significant role in the outpouring of people across the continent (The US Mexican War). Expanded land began to get populated and with time places like Indiana and Mississippi were made part of the union. Manifest Destiny therefore could be said to play a major role in America's expansion as she believed stretching from sea to shining sea was a fulfilment of that destiny.

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