I. The Accession of “Tyler Too”

- Whig party:
  - Wm. H. Harrison, a Whig, elected in 1841 and John Tyler elected Vice-President
  - Cabinet: Secretary of State—Daniel Webster
  - Henry Clay in Senate, uncrowned king of Whigs

- Harrison contacted pneumonia and died after only four weeks in office:
  - By far shortest administration in American history but longest inaugural address

- John Tyler:
  - “Tyler too” party of Whig ticket, now claimed spotlight
  - Stubbornly attached to principle
  - Resigned earlier from Senate, rather than accept distasteful instructions from Virginia legislature
  - Left Jacksonian Democrats for Whigs
  - Enemies accused him of being a Democrat in Whig clothing
  - Tyler was at odds with majority of Whigs

- Whig party platform:
  - Pro-bank, pro-protective tariff, and pro-internal improvements.
  - “Tyler too” rhymed with “Tippecanoe,” but there harmony ended.
  - Harrison, the Whig, served for only four weeks, whereas Tyler, the ex-Democrat but largely a Democrat at heart, served for 204 weeks.

II. John Tyler: A President Without a Party

- Whigs platform:
  - Outlined a strongly nationalist program
Financial reform came first:
- Whig Congress passed law ending independent treasury system
- President Tyler, disarmingly agreeable, signed it
- Clay drove though Congress a bill for a “Fiscal Bank” which would create a new Bank of the United States
- Clay—the “Great Compromiser”—would have done well to conciliate Tyler

II. John Tyler: A President Without a Party (cont.)
- Tyler vetoed bill on both practical and constitutional grounds
- Whig leaders tried again, passing another bill providing for a “Fiscal Corporation”
- Tyler again vetoed the offensive substitute
- Democrats were jubilant
- Whig extremists condemned Tyler as “His Accidency” and “Executive Ass”
  - He was formally expelled from his party
  - Entire cabinet resigned, except Secretary of State Webster, then in midst of delicate negotiations with England

II. John Tyler: A President Without a Party (cont.)
- Proposed Whig tariff:
  - Tyler vetoed bill
  - He disagreed with Whig scheme for distributing to states revenue from sale of public lands in West
  - He believed this would squander federal money
- Chastened Clayites redrafted tariff bill:
  - Removed dollar-distribution scheme
  - Lowered rates to moderately protective level of 1832—roughly 32% on dutiable goods
  - Tyler reluctantly signed Tariff of 1842

III. A War of Words with Britain
- Anti-British passions:
  - At bottom lay bitter memories of two Anglo-American wars
  - Pro-British Federalists had died out
  - British travelers wrote negatively about American customs in
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- Anti-British passions:
  - At bottom lay bitter memories of two Anglo-American wars
  - Pro-British Federalists had died out
  - British travelers wrote negatively about American customs in travel books
  - Writings touched off “Third War with England”
  - Fortunately this British-American war fought on paper broadsides; only ink was spilled

III. A War of Words with Britain (cont.)

- America a borrowing nation:
  - Expensive canals to dig and railroads to build
  - Britain, with overflowing coffers, was a lending nation
  - During panic of 1837, several states defaulted on bonds or repudiated them altogether
  - 1837—short-lived insurrection erupted in Canada
    - Hot-blooded Americans furnished military supplies or volunteered for armed service
    - Washington regime tried to maintain neutrality

III. A War of Words with Britain (cont.)

- But it could not enforce unpopular laws in face of popular opposition.
- Provocative incident on Canadian frontier brought passions to boil in 1837:
  - American steamer, Caroline, was carrying supplies to insurgents across Niagara River
  - Attacked by British and set on fire
  - Craft sank short of falls, but one American was killed
- Unlawful invasion of American soil had alarming aftermaths.

- In 1840 a man, McLeod, who confessed to being involved in Caroline raid, was arrested and indicted for murder
- London made clear his execution would mean war
- Fortunately, McLeod freed after establishing alibi
– Tensions renewed in 1841 when British officials in Bahamas offered asylum to 130 Virginian slaves who had rebelled and captured American ship Creole
– Britain had abolished slavery within empire in 1833, raising southern fears that its Caribbean possessions would become Canada-like havens for escaped slaves

IV. Manipulating the Maine Maps
• Maine boundary dispute:
  – St. Lawrence River icebound several months of year:
    • As defensive precaution, British wanted to build a road west from seaport Halifax to Quebec
    • Road would go though disputed territory claimed by Maine
    • Aroostook War threatened to widen into full war

IV. Manipulating the Maine Maps (cont.)
– Britain sent to Washington a nonprofessional diplomat, Lord Ashburton, who established cordial relations with Secretary Webster
  • They agreed to compromise on Maine boundary (see Map 17.1)
  • A split-the-difference arrangement:
    – Americans retained 7,000 square miles of 12,000 square miles of wilderness in dispute
    – Britain got less land but won desired Halifax-Quebec route

IV. Manipulating the Maine Maps (cont.)
• Caroline affair patched up by exchange of diplomatic notes
• Bonus in small print:
  – British, in adjusting U.S.-Canadian boundary farther West, surrendered 6,500 square miles
  – Area later found to contain priceless Mesabi iron ore of Minnesota

V. The Lone Star of Texas Shines Alone
• Texas’s precarious existence:
  – Mexico:
    • refused to recognize Texas’s independence
V. The Lone Star of Texas Shines Alone (cont.)

– Threatened by Mexico, Texas maintained costly military defense
– Texas also negotiated with Britain & France to secure a defensive shield of a protectorate:
  • In 1839 and 1840, Texans concluded treaties with France, Holland, and Belgium.
  • Britain & France interested in an independent Texas to help block further American expansion

V. The Lone Star of Texas Shines Alone (cont.)

• Other foreigners interested in Texas:
  • British abolitionists hoped to end slavery in Texas
  • British merchants regarded Texas as important free-trade area—an offset to tariff-walled United States
  • British manufacturers hoped Texas could produce enough cotton to reduce Britain's chronic dependence on American fiber

VI. The Belated Texas Nuptials

– Texas became a leading issue in 1844 presidential campaign:
  • Foes of expansion assailed annexation
  • Southern hotheads cried, “Texas or Disunion”
  • Pro-expansion Democrats under James K. Polk defeated Whigs
  • Lame duck president Tyler interpreted narrow Democratic victory as “mandate” to acquire Texas
  • Tyler deserves credit for shepherding Texas into fold

VI. The Belated Texas Nuptials (cont.)

• Despairing of securing necessary 2/3 vote in Senate for a treaty, Tyler sought annexation by joint resolution
• After spirited debate, resolution passed in 1845, and Texas formally invited to become 28th state
• Mexico angrily charged Americans had despoiled it of Texas
• But clear by 1845 that Mexico would not be able to retake Texas

22 VI. The Belated Texas Nuptials (cont.)
– By 1845 Lone Star Republic had become a danger spot:
  • Invited foreign intrigue that menaced American people
  • Continued existence of Texas as independent nation threatened to involve United States in wars
  • United States can hardly be accused of haste in achieving annexation

23

24 VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon
• Oregon Country:
  – Geography
    • From Rockies to Pacific Ocean, north of California to 54° 40’ (present southern tip of Alaska panhandle)
    • Claimed at one time or another by Spain, Russia, Britain, and the United States
    • Two claimants dropped out of competition:
      – Spain through Florida Treaty of 1819
      – Russia retreated to 54° 40’ line by treaties of 1824 & 1825

25 VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)
– British claims to Oregon were strong:
  • Especially portion north of Columbia River
  • Based on:
    – Prior discovery and exploration
    – Treaty rights
    – Actual occupation
    – Colonizing agency Hudson's Bay Company
– American claims to Oregon:
  • Exploration and occupation
  • Captain Robert Gray (1792) stumbled onto Columbia River, which he named after his ship

26 VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)
• Famed Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806
• Presence of missionaries and other settlers, some of whom reached Willamette River valley
  – Missionaries, in trying to save the soul of the Indians, were instrumental in saving the soil of Oregon for United States
  – They stimulated interest in a faraway domain that many Americans earlier assumed would not be settled for centuries
• Scattered Americans and British pioneers lived peacefully side by side

27 VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)
  – Anglo-American Convention of 1818 (Chap. 12):
    • United States wanted to divide at forty-ninth parallel
    • British wanted Columbia River as dividing line
    • A scheme for peaceful “joint occupation” was adopted, pending future settlement
    • Handful of Americans in Willamette Valley was multiplied in early 1840s by “Oregon fever”

28

29 VII. Oregon Fever Populates Oregon (cont.)
  • Over 2,000 mile Oregon Trail (1846) five thousand Americans had settled south of Columbia River
  • British could only muster seven hundred north of Columbia River
  – Actually only a relatively small area was in dispute by 1845:
    – Americans proposed line @ forty-ninth parallel
    – British again offered line at Columbia River
    – Issue now tossed into presidential election of 1844, where it became overshadowed by question of annexing Texas

30

31 VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny
  • Two major parties nominated their standard-bearers in May 1844:
    – Whigs selected Henry Clay
    – James Polk (Tennessee) chosen by Democrats—America’s first “dark horse”
  – Campaign an expression of Manifest Destiny:
    • Sense of mission, believing God had “manifestly” destined
U.S.A. for career of hemispheric expansion

32 VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny (cont.)
- Expansionist Democrats:
  • Strongly swayed by Manifest Destiny
  • Platform: “Reannexation of Texas” and “Reoccupation of Oregon” all the way to 54° 40’
  • “All of Oregon or None” (Slogan “Fifty-four forty or fight” not coined until two years later)
  • Condemned Clay as “corrupt bargainer,” dissolute character, and slaveowner

33 VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny (cont.)
- The Whigs:
  • Countered with their own slogans
  • Spread lie that a gang of Tennessee slaves had been on way to slave market branded with initials J.K.P. (James K. Polk)
  • Clay “straddled” crucial issue of Texas:
    - While he personally favored annexing slaveholding Texas (an appeal to South), he also favored postponement (an appeal to North)

34

35 VIII. A Mandate (?) for Manifest Destiny (cont.)
- Election results:
  • Polk nipped Clay 170 to 105 votes in Electoral College
  • 1,338,464 to 1,300,097 in popular vote
  • Clay would have won if he had not lost New York State by a mere 5,000 votes:
    - Tiny antislavery Liberty Party absorbed nearly 16,000 votes that would have gone to Clay
  • Democrats proclaimed they received a mandate from voters to take Texas

36 IX. Polk the Purposeful
- President James Polk:
  • Not an impressive figure
• His workload increased by his unwillingness to delegate authority
• Methodical and hard-working but not brilliant
• Shrewd, narrow-minded, conscientious, persistent
• Developed a four-point program, and with remarkable success achieved it completely in less than four years

37 IX. Polk the Purposeful
(cont.)
• Polk’s four-point program:
  – Lower tariff
    • Secretary of Treasury, Robert Walker, devised tariff-for-revenue bill that reduced average rates of Tariff of 1842 from 32% to 25%
    • With strong support from low-tariff southerners, Walker Tariff bill made it through Congress
    • Complaints came from middle states and New England (see Table 17.1)
    • Bill proved to be excellent revenue producer

38 IX. Polk the Purposeful
(cont.)
  – Restore independent treasury:
    • Unceremoniously dropped by Whigs in 1841
    • Pro-bank Whigs in Congress raised storm of opposition, but Polk successful in 1846
  – Third and fourth points on Polk’s “must list” were acquisition of California and settlement of Oregon dispute (see Map 17.2)

40 IX. Polk the Purposeful
(cont.)
• Settlement of Oregon dispute:
  • “Reoccupation” of “whole” had been promised to northern Democrats in 1844 campaign
  • Southern Democrats, once Texas annexed, cooled off
  • Polk, feeling bound by three offers of his predecessor to London, proposed line at 49°.
• British anti-expansionists now believed that Columbia River was not St. Lawrence of West
• Britain in 1846 proposed line at 49°

42 IX. Polk the Purposeful (cont.)
• Polk threw decision to Senate
• They speedily accepted offer and subsequent treaty
• Satisfaction with Oregon settlement among Americans not unanimous
• Polk, despite all the campaign bluster, got neither “fifty-four forty” nor a fight
• He got something that in the long run was better: a reasonable compromise without a rifle raised

43

44 X. Misunderstandings with Mexico
– Faraway California was another worry for Polk:
• Diverse population: Spanish Mexicans; Indians; some “foreigners” (mostly Americans)
• Given time these transplanted Americans might bring California into the Union
• Polk was eager to buy from Mexico
• Mexico owed United States some $3 million for damages to American citizens and their property
• More serious contention was Texas
• Deadlocked with Mexico over Texas’s boundaries

45 X. Misunderstandings with Mexico (cont.)
• Texas wanted boundary at Rio Grande River
• Mexico sought boundary at Nueces River
• Polk careful to keep U.S. troops out of no-man’s-land
– California continued to cause Polk anxiety:
• Rumors—British wanted to buy or seize California
  – Americans could not accept under Monroe Doctrine
• Polk dispatched John Slidell to Mexico City (1845):
  – To offer $25 million for California and territory to east
  – Mexico would not even permit Slidell to present his offer
XI. American Blood on American (?) Soil

- Polk decided to force a showdown:
  - January 13, 1846, he ordered 4,000 men:
    - Under General Zachary Taylor to march from Nueces River to Rio Grande hoping for a clash
    - When nothing happened, he informed cabinet (May 9, 1846) that he proposed to declare war because of:
      - Unpaid claims
      - Slidell's rejection
    - News of bloodshed arrived same night
    - Mexican troops crossed Rio Grande and met Taylor

XI. American Blood on American (?) Soil (cont.)

- Polk sent vigorous war message to Congress:
  - Congress overwhelmingly voted for war
  - In message to Congress, Polk was making history—not writing a balanced account
  - Spot resolution—by Abraham Lincoln demanded information as to precise “spot” on American soil where American blood had been shed
  - Did Polk provoke war?
    - California was imperative in his program
    - Mexico would not sell it at any price

XI. American Blood on American (?) Soil (cont.)

- Polk wanted California, so he pushed quarrel to bloody showdown
  - Both sides were spoiling for a fight
  - Both sides were fired by moral indignation
  - Mexicans wanted to fight “Bullies of the North”
  - Many Americans sincerely believed Mexico was aggressor

XII. The Mastering of Mexico

- Polk wanted California—not war:
  - When war came, he wanted to fight on a limited scale and then
XII. The Mastering of Mexico

Polk wanted California—not war: When war came, he wanted to fight on a limited scale and then pull out when he captured prize. Santa Anna convinced Polk that he would betray Mexico, but he then drove his countrymen to a desperate defense of their soil.

American operations in Southwest & California completely successful (see Map 17.3):
- Both General Stephen Kearny and Captain John Frémont had success in West.
- Frémont collaborated with American naval officers and local Americans who hoisted banner of short-lived California Bear Flag Republic.

General Taylor defeated Mexicans in several battles and then reached Buena Vista (February 22-23, 1847):
- Here his 5,000 troops repulsed attack by 20,000 troops under Santa Anna.
- Taylor became “Hero of Buena Vista.”
- Taylor, however, could not defeat Mexico decisively in semi-deserts of northern Mexico.
- Need a crushing blow at enemy’s vitals—Mexico City.

General Winfield Scott succeeded in battling his way to Mexico City by Sept., 1847:
- One of most brilliant campaigns in U.S. history.
- Scott proved to be most distinguished U.S. general between American Revolution and Civil War.

Scott and chief clerk of State Department Nicholas Trist arranged:
- Armistice with Santa Anna (cost $10,000).
- Polk ordered Trist home, but he wrote a 65-page letter explaining.
why he could not come home
– Trist signed Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, forwarded it to Washington

XIII. Fighting Mexico for Peace
(cont.)
• Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo:
  • Confirmed American title to Texas
  • Yielded enormous area stretching to Oregon, the ocean, embracing California
  • Total expanse was about ½ of Mexico
  • United States agreed to pay $15 million for land and to assume claims of its citizen against Mexico (amount = $3,250,000)
  – (see “Makers of America: the Californios”)

XIII. Fight Mexico for Peace
(cont.)
• Polk submitted treaty to Senate:
  – Antislavery Whigs in Congress—dubbed “Mexican Whigs” or “Conscience Whigs”—denounced “damnable war”
  – Another peril impended:
    • A swelling group of expansionists clamored for all of Mexico
    • If America had seized it, she would have been saddled with an expensive and vexatious policing problem

XIII. Fight Mexico for Peace
(cont.)
• Victors rarely pay an indemnity:
  – Polk arranged to pay $18,250,000 after winning
  – Critics claimed Americans had guilty conscience
  – Apologists pointed proudly to “Anglo-Saxon spirit of fair play”

XIV. Profit and Loss in Mexico
• As wars go, Mexican War a small one:
–Cost 13,000 American lives, most by disease
–Fruits of war were enormous:
  • America's total expanse was increased by 1/3
  • Proved to be blood-spattered schoolroom for Civil War
  • Campaigns provided priceless experience for army
  • Navy valuable in blockading Mexican ports

61 XIV. Profit and Loss in Mexico
(cont.)
  • Marine Corps won new laurels and to this day sings in its stirring hymn about the “Halls of Montezuma”
  • Army waged war without defeat and without a major blunder
  • Opposing armies emerged with increased respect for each other
  • Mexicans never forgot that U.S.A. tore away about ½ of their country
  • Marked an ugly turning point in relations between United States and Latin America

62 XIV. Profit and Loss in Mexico
(cont.)
  • War aroused slavery debate that not stop until Civil War
  • David Wilmot of Pennsylvania introduced amendment that slavery should never exist in any territories wrested from Mexico
  • Wilmot Proviso never became law, but:
    – Endorsed by legislatures of all but one of free states
    – Came to symbolize burning issue of slavery in territories
  • More than any other issue, debate over slavery in new western lands divided North & South
  • From perspective of history, opening shots of Mexican War were opening shots of Civil War