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“Solitary Place” or Golden State:
The Debate Regarding the Acquisition of California

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The purpose of this article is to examine how Americans wrote and debated the wisdom of expanding into California during the first half of the nineteenth century through the lens of print media. Doing so divulges that American attitudes regarding territorial expansion were exceedingly multifaceted and nuanced. The lively public discourse over California also moves far beyond partisan rhetoric, for each author had a distinct opinion and viewpoint that offers candid insight into the acrimonious debate over territorial expansion. Although there were a vast multitude of viewpoints and ideas being debated, nearly all Americans were unified in their opposition to what they perceived to be European style politics and insisted that the United States should find its own unique place among the world community.

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Alexis de Tocqueville noted in *Democracy in America*, “In America there is scarcely a hamlet that has not its newspaper. It may readily be imagined that neither discipline nor unity of action can be established among so many combatants, and each one consequently fights under his own standard.” In addition to serving as the main instrument for political and diplomatic news, they were also a source of entertainment. Whether or not one agreed with the article was immaterial, but debating and discussing the article’s merits was a popular way to pass the time.

Many nineteenth-century Americans were voracious readers and literacy for white male Americans improved with every passing year. In 1810 only 58 percent of white males were literate but by 1850 this had jumped to an astonishing 75 percent. As the population of the United States increased, so did the appetite and need for newspapers. In 1810 there were fewer than six million white Americans and 359 newspapers but by 1828 the population had increased to eleven million and 852 newspapers.

Less than a generation later, 1840, the population had grown to fourteen million with an astounding 1,631 newspapers available nationwide.¹

The decision to expand the continental boundaries of the United States to the Pacific Ocean was not manifest. Nor was it decided behind closed doors by prominent politicians while the majority of Americans remained blissfully ignorant of any territorial expansion. Instead, Americans from across the nation, from esteemed lawyers to hardscrabble farmers, were not only aware of but often participated in the debate over expansion. The mighty pen was the weapon of choice with their preferred battlefield the nineteenth-century newspaper. Editors from around the country eagerly expressed their own views and published pertinent letters to the

editor that ensured that many Americans were abreast of the current political climate. These voices were anything but silent about what they wanted for their country and how they expected the United States to behave in the international community.

Examining how American newspapers wrote and debated the wisdom of expanding into California during the first half of the nineteenth century reveals that American attitudes regarding territorial expansion were multifaceted, nuanced and unique.

The many disparate attitudes and ideas expressed by these articles and letters to the editor reveal that newspaper coverage on expansion into California was a transitional moment for political journalism. Eager to distance themselves from the idea that all newspapers were simply political organs for major political parties, many authors provided a distinct view-point that offers candid insight into the acrimonious debate over territorial expansion that erupted in the mid nineteenth century. The concept of Manifest Destiny was also coalescing at this time and Americans eagerly offered their own insight regarding this emerging ideology. Historian Alexander Saxton argues that Manifest Destiny “could justify territorial conquest as readily as inspire the search for national theater or for a distinctly American voice in art and poetry.” Studying the debate over expansion provides glimpses into how nineteenth century Americans saw themselves. Although there were a multitude of viewpoints being debated, nearly all Americans were unified in their opposition to what they perceived to be European style politics and insisted that the United States should find its own unique place among the world community.²

Newspapers were crucial to understanding the people of the United States. In the early years of the Republic, newspapers served as

mouthpieces for presidential administrations and the opposition parties and most articles towed the proper political line. Many of the more prominent papers, such as the *National Intelligencer*, had close ties to the power brokers in Washington. Unbiased coverage was mostly an unknown quantity as editors from around the country lined up neatly in support of or opposition to the current administration. For some editors, this close relationship proved an enormous fiscal boon as politicians frequently contributed to ensure their continued newspaper support.³

The introduction of the “penny press” in the 1830s, however, began a revolution in American journalism. Their cheaper price and regular publication schedules made newspaper articles accessible to the general public. Most importantly was the shift in tone that many of these articles took in regard to politics. Editors and concerned Americans started to publish political articles that offered independent views rather than traditional party rhetoric. Upon its founding in 1837 the *Baltimore Sun* proudly declared that “our object will be the common good, without regard to that of sects, factions, or parties; and for this object we shall labor without fear or partiality.” Even the famed editor, Horace Greeley, declared that his *New York Tribune* shall be “a journal removed alike from servile partisanship on the one hand and from gagged, mincing neutrality on the other.” These newfound independent journalistic voices were coming of age as American expansionism was reaching the Pacific coastline. Examining the debate over the acquisition of California, then, offers up unique insight that transcends the traditional expansionistic rhetoric.⁴

A Lonely Place: Early Depictions of California

California possessed many qualities that made it a likely candidate for American expansion. It was seen as sparsely populated, possessing a pleasing climate, capable of growing a variety of foodstuffs, with access to valuable trading ports on the Pacific Ocean. In the early years of the American republic, Spain governed

California and established a series of missions with the intent of spreading Catholicism. Yet it remained a distant and rarely mentioned place in the United States for much of the early nineteenth century. Most initial American news coverage of California was limited to shipping news or traveler accounts depicting the West. There were exceptions; the Richmond *Enquirer* published a detailed and informative article regarding California in 1805. In it, the author carefully considered but ultimately rejected the wisdom of annexing the land from its current owner Spain. The author reminded readers that the Pacific Coast possessed many areas suitable as harbors and insisted that lucrative trade with China could be undertaken and that the area was suitable for a variety of agricultural pursuits. Moreover, he believed the current inhabitants of the region were wasting these natural resources as they chose to spend all their time engaged in the fur trade. He derisively remarked that fur was “acquired without much knowledge and manufactured without much labor.” The condemnation of the fur trade was a common refrain among many Americans. The prevailing notion was that such a mercantile pursuit only utilized a small part of a region’s available resources. In contrast, a hardworking, enterprising, American could bring out the area’s potential. Many pro expansionist Americans would use this notion to justify expansion into Oregon and Maine. The editor also insisted that Americans had a legitimate legal claim to the Pacific Coast “either by right of first settlement or because we have gained it as a part of Louisiana.”⁵

Incredibly, the *Enquirer* author, after establishing the region’s attractiveness to merchants and legal right to settlement, proceeded to explain why the American government should *not* annex California and Oregon. He claimed that European nations often engaged in non-contiguous colonization, and by “imitating their policy, we should be exposed to their misfortunes.” He felt the economic cost of maintaining a colony would be too great and feared that should the United States take possession, California could be easily seized by the many European powers that coveted the region.

Instead, he asked Americans to consider that “we have land enough already for the cultivation of the richest productions; why should we divide our population and capital by the erection of new forts or the establishment of colonies.”⁶

This article brings forth several important issues. First, the author insinuates that the recent acquisition of the Louisiana territory should slake any expansion for the time being as Americans should be content with what they now safely possess and focus their attentions on the areas already secured. Although the author was against colonizing the Pacific region in 1805, he was not necessarily opposed to the idea of American rule but feared the upkeep of such a territory to be worth too much trouble. His major points of contention, it was too far away and too costly to protect, could perhaps be mitigated in future years. The major danger was an adoption of European like imperialism in the form of governing a territory that was non-contiguous. In this regard he was in line with many of his contemporaries who demanded that American policies be distinct from that of the “Old World.”

Other authors found the remoteness of California to be its greatest asset to the security of the United States. A letter to the editor penned by a gentleman known as Warburton, appeared in the *National Intelligencer*, insisted that California would be the perfect dumping ground for African-Americans. In his carefully worded letter, the author was convinced that slavery was a “disgusting and ugly monster,” which if left alone could destroy the nation. He hoped that the entire institution would be abolished soon but noted that even free blacks could prove to be trouble. The author needed to find an alternative place of habitation for blacks separate from white society. Sending them “back” to Africa would be too difficult and expensive, instead they should be settled on a region “more within the reach of our national means.” Warburton advocated that the federal government include an addendum in the treaty that ceded Florida to include California as well. He was convinced that “California is the most convenient spot to send the colored free people

to, and I am sure, would be more acceptable to them than Africa.” His “benevolent” solution would find productive use for that far off territory.⁷

Warburton was adamant that just shipping blacks to the West Coast with no supervision would be cruel. Instead, he envisioned the territory to be “an independent government, remaining during its infancy, under our protection. Its constitution and laws should be founded on equality; merit only, and not color, should give distinction.” He enthusiastically declared that if his idea was adopted, “in a century, there would not be among us a black slave, perhaps even a black man. Such is the distance of California, none sent there would return.” To further demonstrate his altruism, the author discussed the many benefits blacks would enjoy. Their new home would be “situated within the temperate zone, neither too cold nor too warm, and a soil variant and productive, well stocked with all kind of domestic animals; myriads of fish swarm in the surrounding waters, and to be caught without much trouble . . . they will be comfortable.” Warburton was confident that in a few generations, the new nation would thrive with a “government of perfect equality, they will enjoy all the delights of social life, all the comforts of industry, all the blessings of a pure religion, teaching love to God and duty to man.” All this could be achieved because the transplants, after witnessing the wonders of the United States (minus all that bondage and oppression nonsense), “will be acquainted with social rights and from being accustomed to subordination, they will easily be formed into a political society, and they will not have to . . . mingle their blood with the natives or any other race of mankind.” The author gushed that not only will the United States be free of blacks, but the newly formed nation of California could serve as a bulwark against European aggression. The new nation would be a “friendly frontier, and will be the propagators of more good than all the European powers—who are afraid of liberty.” For this American, the territory of California would be beneficial for a variety of reasons. Warburton envisioned that his plan

would end racial strife and prevent Europe from taking over the Pacific Province. Simultaneously, the new nation would show off the innate wonders of liberty and democracy without having to deal with accusations of European style imperialism.⁸

The most fascinating characteristic of this editorial was the author's unique stance toward California while still espousing ideas grounded in popular 19th century notions. Warburton's stratagem would not have seemed too far-fetched to his contemporaries. The founding of the American Colonization Movement in 1817 lent "credibility" to his scheme. Most proponents of colonization pushed for a "back to Africa" movement whereas African-Americans would be forcibly deported from the United States. Proponents argued that removal was the only way to prevent racial strife. Warburton's refined vision would accomplish not only the colonization movement's objectives but keep California out of the hands of Europe. A common and often repeated fear was that an "energetic" or "industrious" nation such as Great Britain may seek possession of California. Warburton's plan would forestall any such action and in time, create a friendly neighboring, yet subordinate power. The remoteness of California was also attractive as it ensured that all those freedmen sent would never return to the United States. Although Warburton's scheme would not be adopted, he was one of the first of many to espouse a unique view on what to do with California.

After Mexico earned its independence from Spain, American and Mexican officials continued to see California as too remote and lightly inhabited to be of much value. Criminals and dissidents were often sent there as punishment and by the 1820's the purported population was only 24,000. The Mexicans considered only 3,000 of them "people of reason" with the remaining "savages" being ignored for any official business. A law passed in the Mexican State of Pueblo in 1831 stipulated that anyone belonging to a Masonic Lodge would be penalized. The ordinance proclaimed that "whoever shall be convicted of having belonged to a lodge

shall be sentenced for the first time to one year's imprisonment, to two year's confinement for repetition of the offence, and for a fourth infraction of the law to four year's detention with the presidial of California." Apparently being sent to California in the 1830s was a fate far worse than being imprisoned elsewhere. A letter to the editor that appeared in the *Washingtonian Daily National Journal* explained this sense of emptiness. The author was a sailor who had recently stopped at ports in Santa Barbara and Turtle Bay. He observed that the latter was "one of the best harbors in the world" and remarked upon the natural beauty and peacefulness of the area. He claimed that few people lived in the area and even fewer ships visited, concluding the port was a "solitary place." For this homesick American, California was less an earthly paradise and more like a secluded place where one could gather seashells. The sailor's letter, however, does offer the reader hope since California had great potential. The harbor was deemed in excellent condition; perhaps in the future the once "solitary place" could prove useful.⁹

An 1832 letter to the editor in the Bostonian abolitionist paper *The Liberator* again mentioned California as a suitable place for the colonization of African Americans. This author, known only by his initials D.W.E., envisioned the United States free from both slavery and individuals of African descent. D.W.E.'s plan was far less specific than the earlier piece by Warburton but was still filled with nuance. D.W.E. acknowledged that colonization efforts to Africa were too expensive to be realistic and instead offered several alternatives. For northern blacks, he recommended they be forced to go to Canada, while southern blacks, upon being freed, would be encouraged to head west and settle. He made it clear that this was in their own best interest as the Western portion of territory known as California was lightly populated and perfect for settlement. He predicted that as more and more of these ex-slaves arrived, the territory "might be obtained of the Mexican Government, by the Jeffersonian mode of acquiring territory." Here the author is alluding to Jefferson's "conquer without war" stratagem. Under such an unof-

ficial policy, settlers without assistance from the government would create settlements until they became the dominant faction in the region and then declare independence. This was to be Jefferson's initial plan for acquiring New Orleans before the Louisiana Purchase made such a tactic unnecessary. No war would be necessary to make his dream a reality, just the will to "encourage" blacks to settle out west. D.W.E. was primarily concerned with simply eliminating Africans from the United States as he "earnestly wished that the fair map of our Union . . . might be nowhere shaded by a complexion darker than that of the sun-burnt operative of New Orleans." Although this latter scheme lacked the altruism of the first, both authors were certain that California could serve a useful purpose without the traditional trapping of European style imperialism.¹⁰

The *Arkansas Gazette* reiterated how empty many Americans saw California. In a humorous editorial entitled "crowding," the author recounts visiting an acquaintance in Missouri. The Missourian continually derided his current home as being far too crowded and unsuitable for any American. When asked how close the nearest neighbor was, he replied "right down upon me," close enough to be "right down in my very teeth." Upon additional questioning the offending neighbor was found to be "fifteen miles" away, which the Missourian found unsettling as "I'll never live where a neighbor can come to my house and go home the same day." After leaving the acquaintance, the author pondered what he had heard and facetiously found that most Americans were living much too close to one another. He found that traveling from the mouth of the Ohio River to New Orleans to be less a major journey and instead a "mere morning visit." He concluded that perhaps only "the mouth of Columbia...[or] California are the only country places for a family." Although this piece was obviously meant to be humorous, as the author clearly felt the concept of "crowding" to be silly, it is still illustrative. The author reiterated what many Americans felt about California, while pretty, was too remote to be of much use. The commercial importance of the

region's ports and its resources took a back seat to simple practicality. A new state must have the requisite American population to be worthwhile and then should be admitted to the Union. California lacked such an "industrious" population and thus was simply a punchline. This editor was voicing his own independent viewpoint. Although he was using the example of California humorously, his article exhibits a view that differs from many of his contemporaries and does not fit neatly into any larger political narrative.¹¹

A Sublime View: Pro-expansionist Depictions of California

Other Americans saw California as a territory with great promise to white settlers. The *St. Louis Commercial Advertiser* and *National Intelligencer* proclaimed California to be "one of the most interesting regions of America" and alluded to the peacefulness of the natives. The account, written by a "gentleman of the army," noted the region's sparse population and natural beauty. The "gentleman" claimed that gazing upon "the mountain of Saint Gabriel, with her volcanic fires . . . present to the eye the most awfully sublime view that man can behold." The author was astonished to learn that Spanish missionaries had little trouble converting the natives as they did so "without the assistance of military force." This implied tractability of the natives would prove to be a popular sentiment among Americans heading to California. Just as important, however, was the quality of the foodstuffs, with the author insisting "the olive, orange, pomegranate, fig and date grow abundantly here and too much perfection."¹²

The *St. Louis Enquirer* and *Pittsfield Sun* published a similarly glowing account from a recent traveler to the area. The author provided a sketch of California and detailed the major waterways and mountains in the region, making particular note that the territory possessed "many of the best harbors in the known world." The letter offered insight into what sort of professions would be useful to the area. Mining seemed to be scarce as "silver and lead are the only minerals yet discovered." Farming, on the other hand, was encouraged as "apples, peaches,

pears, oranges, figs, cherries, &c, &c come to fine perfection. Oats and clover grows spontaneously and are of superior quality." For an industrious and agriculturally inclined people, California could be heaven on Earth.¹³

A letter to the editor in the *National Intelligencer*, signed by only the initials D.L., remarked upon the region's natural beauty and resources. The author quoted several recent travelers to the area and pointed out its many benefits, including excellent harbors, like San Francisco whose "climate as salubrious as any in the known world," the potential foodstuff production, and "the abundance of game." D.L. concluded that "however neglected and remote the provinces of California may be, they are not considered as valueless or unimportant by disinterested and intelligent travelers." Consequently, he believed that the United States should acquire the territory. The only means he mentioned in his article was through "purchase." This author, like many of his contemporaries, saw the intrinsic value of annexing California but differed in large measure of the means to do so. He made no mention of any filibustering expeditions, encouraging Americans to settle there and rebel, or any other militaristic endeavor. Instead, for this American the only acceptable way to get this bountiful and useful province was to pay Mexico for it.¹⁴

In addition to praising the geography of California, some newspapers reported on the inadequacies of the Mexican people living there, carefully setting up the region for acquisition by a more "industrious" people. The *Pittsfield Sun* noted that "the number of inhabitants does not exceed 3,000. They are an ignorant, indolent people, spending most of their time on horseback." The *Tri-Weekly Ohio Statesman* claimed, "A Californian will not work, if he can avoid it. The time will come, must come, when this country will be peopled by another race, that is fully expected here." These sentiments are similar to the racial justifications which developed in Oregon and Texas, two other recently settled provinces. The British in Oregon were feared, in part because of their Anglo-Saxon heritage, which many Americans considered a superior

race. In Texas, many Americans considered the Mexicans "superstitious" and "lazy." D.L. expected the replacements to come from the United States, a country whose citizens would have little difficulty overtaking and controlling the province.¹⁵

Perceived European interests in California often lent credence to the expansionists' calls for annexation. Historian David Pletcher claims in the *Diplomacy of Annexation* that, "The stakes were high, fertile lands, rich deposits of minerals, and the fine harbors of San Francisco and Puget Sound." Pletcher argued that California "offered an ambitious United States the ingredients for future greatness." European designs on California sparked considerable interest in the United States press. Americans saw the British as the likeliest and most threatening interlopers. Many feared that John Bull would simply seek to expand the British Pacific coastline further south. Both British and Americans saw Mexican governance of California as ineffective at best and felt the great potential of the region's resources being wasted.¹⁶

For many nineteenth-century Americans, British interest in California was no fantasy. Two papers from New Orleans, the *Bulletin* and *Courier*, agreed that British control of California could be a serious threat to the national security of the United States. The fear stemmed principally from a letter from an American observer in Mexico City. The observer claimed that British officials were "negotiating with every prospect of success" in securing California. Doing so would grant them harbors perfect for "Man of War" ships. Even more alarming, according to the author, would be British attempts to send "colored battalions" to the region. These units were made up of both "yellow skinned sepoys from the East" and "black battalions from the West Indies." Incredibly, the author concluded that such actions would result in "the unscrupulous fanatics of England, would find argument for their abolition doctrines, such as it would require all the energies of our Southern states to resist." He hoped that the federal government would see the danger and "compel the imbecile Mexicans to reject the

dangerous proposal of England.” The only way to guarantee the national security of the United States would be to take possession of California. For this author, the stakes were too high for a lackadaisical attitude. If the British were to secure California, he insinuated, a racial war was just around the corner.¹⁷

Although the letter’s contents were alarmist and false, they were lent an air of credibility when both New Orleans’ papers reprinted it, in all seriousness. The *Bulletin* remarked that the letter was the only concrete proof of any such deal between Britain and Mexico but found that such a sale was “highly probable” as England was in desperate need of good harbors on the Pacific coast. More importantly, such an acquisition would “provide a barrier to the encroachments of the Texans and Americans.” Such a deal would upset what he saw as the natural progression of events, as he was confident that within a few years the tide of American emigration would reach the Pacific thus securing California. Consequently, the editor wanted the United States to remain vigilant and oppose any such agreement between the two nations.¹⁸

Another feature that could prove just as enticing to a prospective settler as land was the availability of women in California. The *Raleigh Register* reprinted a story from the notebook of world traveler Sir George Simpson regarding the basic temperament and condition of women living in California. The editor claimed that California was “a point of great interest to the American reader” and thus found it pertinent to include the story. The author, Sir George Simpson, reported that “white” women were relatively scarce and instead focused the article on those who lived in the cities among “civilized” society. Consequently, the editor’s term the “women of California” was rather narrow as he really only referred to Hispanics. The editor claimed the women possessed “sparkling eyes and glossy hair” and lacked fine clothing or adequate “provisions.” Simpson argued that the women of California were by far “the more industrious half of the population” and were often treated coarsely by their menfolk. He

found that they performed the “duties of their households with cheerfulness and pride.” Such an article could prove to be enlightening to the observant and prospective American male settler. Theoretically, The women of California would be grateful for an enterprising, hard-working Anglo who could provide for them. In exchange, these women with the “sparkling eyes and glossy hair” would happily run the household and be thankful for the opportunity to be around adventurous Anglos.¹⁹

One of the many expressed views was that expansion must follow a set procedure and unfold in a certain way. Historian Sam Haynes argued that Americans were confident that California would fall to “American dominion by gradual peaceful annexation.” The *Southern Patriot* detailed the process of expansion: “our settlers go into a Mexican province and take up their abode; others follow them; they take occasion to rise against the local authorities, sure of assistance from their countrymen in the United States, they struggle for liberty, they prevail and they and their country are in a condition to be annexed.” The *Patriot* editor insisted that this process, “which has given us Texas and which promises to secure California,” was infinitely “more convenient than a warlike invasion.” Some authors took great pains to clarify that this was a distinctly American and not in any way European type of expansion. Although territorial aggrandizement was taking place it was not under the cruel banner of imperialism but wrapped in the democratic cloak of liberation.²⁰

John O’Sullivan, the probable coiner of that most famous expansionistic phrase, selected California as a likely province to be granted the blessing of Manifest Destiny. He felt that the territory was of absolute value and hoped that it could be obtained through non-aggressive means. O’Sullivan predicted that California will “probably next fall away” and that “imbecile and distracted, Mexico never can exert any real governmental authority over such a country.” O’Sullivan revealed that “the Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon

emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting-houses.” He was exceedingly pleased to report that all predictions would come to pass “without agency of our government, without responsibility of our people.” It would be a natural progression and far removed from the despotic imperialism so favored by European nations.²¹

O’Sullivan reiterated several components of what made up the “proper” way for Americans to expand. This process must be strictly followed or the United States could devolve into European style colonialism. Most critically, American expansion should continue to be initiated by American emigrants who voluntarily settle in an area until they make up the majority of the population. When these inhabitants inevitably declare independence they shall set up democratic institutions. This process, according to O’Sullivan, need not be accompanied by bloodshed. He was convinced that Mexico would have neither the ability nor inclination to forestall any rebellions in their faraway province. Critically, O’Sullivan argued that the American people and government must stay neutral throughout this process. Sympathy and even indirect aid was acceptable but no direct intervention should take place. Doing so would destroy the idea that American expansion was unique and the utter antithesis of European style of conquest. Certain conditions had to be met before Americans could enjoy their new territory. O’Sullivan’s initial vision of Manifest Destiny was similar to the Jeffersonian stratagem to “conquer without war.”²²

By 1845 rumors abounded that California was already being rapidly populated by Americans and that Mexican governance was negligent or non-existent. While it is true that Mexican authorities were lax in protecting the borders, actual American emigration to California was far less than what was seen in Texas and Oregon. By the eve of the Mexican American war in 1846 American settlers made up less than ten percent of the sparsely populated territory. This reality, however, did not deter

many newspapers from publishing flattering accounts of a quickly Americanizing California. The editor of the *Nashville Union* extolled the virtues of the territory and claimed that newly arrived emigrants to the area “affirm that Oregon is but a bleak barren waste compared to California.” He stated that the territory was in a state of rebellion and that “the struggle shall be short.” The *Union* editor concluded that he “refer to these facts to show it is not unreasonable to assume that California may be in a condition at a very early day to be annexed to our Union.” The editor of the *Cleveland Herald* called California “a very desirable country” and was happy to report (falsely as it turned out) that Californians had thrown off the “Mexican yoke” and created a “Republican Government modeled after that of the United States.” This wonderful event was made even more glorious as it occurred “without bloodshed.” Greater still, he predicted that “as soon as Texas is secured, we presume the friends of enlarging our country will open negotiations for the annexation of California.” Not only was there significant debate regarding what to do with California, but Americans argued over what sort of events had even transpired there.²³

Demonstrating their unique voices, some editors broke with their contemporaries and advocated immediate acquisition. The editor of the *Washington Constitution* stated that “whilst it is not our policy to acquire new territory for the mere purpose of national glory, it does fall legitimately within the great objects of republicanism to extend the area of freedom, and diffuse the blessings of liberty and peace.” The author warned that the British had started negotiating with the Mexicans and stationed their fleet near Californian harbors. Fear of the British prompted the author to recommend that “our government cannot fail to see the importance of preventing any such acquisition by that power.” The editor claimed that the only solution was to “acquire the Californias.” Many Americans felt that no fate could be worse than having that bountiful province fall under British dominion. Not only would the United States lose the benefits of California but the poor inhabitants

would be forced to languish under those tyrannical monarchists. The *Tri-weekly Ohio Statesman* in 1846 declared that “California we want very much, as it is not less important to us than Oregon itself . . . if Mexico should persist in her foolish conduct and not come to terms, but fight, it may prove to be a prize of war.” Here the ends would justify the means. Securing California through either internal rebellion or by purchase would be acceptable but only if the acquisition was made promptly. Perceived British designs on the area meant that national security was at stake. Perhaps the most assured policy would be through war. Of course the editor was careful to lay the blame of such an occurrence on “foolish” Mexico for not negotiating but California would be secured. Even then, however, the American editors insinuated that the acquisition was unlike European style imperialism. Instead the newly taken land would be granted the “blessings of liberty and peace.”²⁴

A Community of Interests: Anti-expansion Viewpoints

Other Americans opposed expansion to California since they thought the addition of new territory would erode the stability and political advancement of the United States. The editor of Philadelphia’s *North American and Daily Advertiser* reminded readers that “the annals of empires by no means prove that substantial greatness increases with extended domination.” It was crucial for all Americans to understand that the vast empires of antiquity such as the Mongols and Romans were despotic and ultimately collapsed under their own weight. Yet, The United States was supposed to be different; its citizens were encouraged to debate and come to a consensus. Despite the ideals of America, compromise was becoming more and more difficult as the nation expanded. Admitting places like California not only upset “the share of power and influence” between North and South but allowed for greater differences in “popular sentiments.” Simply put, more territory begot more citizens with diverse and often differing viewpoints to the rest of the country. Such variety, according to this editor, was a clear detriment to

stability. Instead, he believed in a more homogenous society as “the closer the community of interest and the more perfect assimilation of the people, the more certain their strength and general progress. It is with these views that we look with doubt and distrust upon the project of adding to our present territory.” While the author opposed any further expansion, if the majority willed it, then so be it. He hoped that the question of Californian annexation “be maturely debated, and ample time allowed for the expression of public opinion, before any final action is taken upon it.” On the surface it would appear that this author was simply relaying the popular Whig opposition to expansion but in reality his viewpoint is more nuanced. While he was opposed to the acquisition of California personally, he put the will of the people ahead of any political agenda.²⁵

Another concerned citizen, the anonymous P.H.B., voiced his opinion in New York’s *Weekly Herald*. P.H.B. maintained that trade on the Pacific was integral to maintaining a strong and economically booming nation. He claimed that the United States needed formal harbors and bays to outfit their ships so that trade could ramp up with the Sandwich Islands and places farther East. He enthusiastically declared, “we have China within our reach, and all the islands of the Pacific.” The best place to achieve this goal, however, was somewhat surprising. He considered “Oregon as superior to California” and hoped the United States would focus upon settling that region. He found California to be “too warm for men to have any commercial enterprise,” as hot weather made people lethargic and less industrious. Oregon, on the other hand, had climate “warm enough . . . and more fine timber than they have in California.” He urged readers to settle in Oregon over California and hoped the government would not waste time trying to acquire the unnecessary province. Instead, Americans should invest in building up Oregon since it was vastly superior for commercial and agricultural interests. He was confident that with more emigrants to Oregon the “timbered land will be the best wheat land in this country.” This article demonstrates once

again how wide American opinions were in regard to expansion. This author was not opposed to the concept of expansion if it advanced national economic interests, but neither was he obsessed with unbridled growth, especially if it meant violating a neighbor's sovereign borders. For him the wisest course of action was to continue to populate the northern portion of the Pacific Coast and leave the hot-tempered climate of California to the Mexicans.²⁶

Other Americans viewed the annexation of California to be ill-conceived and analogous to European imperialism. The *Morning News* from Connecticut ran a *Nashville Union* story under the headline "What can Mexico Do?" The quoted excerpt from the *Nashville Union* stipulated that recent Oregon emigrants were continuing south and settling in California. These Americans found the new territory to have "the most delightful climate and a rich soil." The *Union* editor claimed that such stories "show that it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that California may be in a condition at a very early date to be annexed to our Union." The editor from the *News* found this story to be intensely troubling and claimed that the annexation of Texas seemed to only be the beginning of American expansionistic aggression and asked "how much more Annexation can Mexico stand? Bear in mind that her territory is limited." Americans not only saw the question of expansion as a cornerstone of domestic and international policy but as a reflection of their very identity. The blessings of liberty and freedom were only to be granted to willing participants. For this editor, wrenching territory away from Mexico did not qualify. The author even derisively used the term "annexation", a euphemism in his eyes for what was really going on; blatant territorial aggression.²⁷

A more substantial and astute protest came from the New Orleans *Tropic*. The editor was inspired to respond to a recent publication of the *New Orleans Courier*. The editor of the *Courier* felt settlement to California was a wondrous event and that it was "destined before long to be annexed to the United States." He was certain that such information would be found "acceptable" to his readers. The *Tropic's* editor staunchly

disagreed. The author lamented the *Courier's* position and felt they exemplified the "spirit of aggression and national plunder which has seized upon the minds of a portion of our people." He recounted in precise detail how Texas was acquired, unfairly in his view, from Mexico by American interlopers. He believed the tales of fertile soil and abundant land in both Texas and California to be "greatly exaggerated" and was unsure why so many Americans allowed themselves to be fooled. Although the editor deplored the events that transpired in Texas only a "portion of our people" were predisposed to such conduct. Most Americans, he reasoned, would oppose such lunacy if they only paid closer attention to what was going on.²⁸

The editor of the *Tropic* felt there was no mandate for expansion; the United States "had no shadow of claim" to California as it "has been for years in quiet possession of a neighboring friendly power." He admitted the beauty and desirable attributes of California and predicted the likely and unfortunate chain of events that would follow if Americans did not wake up to what was going on. He foretold that a "standard of revolt will be raised, the government will be overthrown, the cry of liberty will be raised in this country and thousands of the young and adventurous will fly to the relief of their oppressed countrymen in California." Once this process will be complete the new republic would be welcomed into the fold of the United States. The editor derisively remarked "we shall soon have marauding parties wandering into Mexico, making settlements, rebelling against the government and robbing churches, until the whole of that country is 're annexed' and the star spangled banner flouts from the turrets of the city of the Montezumas."²⁹

The editor beseeched his readers "to ponder upon these things; to ask themselves where all this is to end, and see if disunion, anarchy, bloodshed and confusion are not to be what we are to receive in lieu of our present great and glorious Union." Acquiring California was not simply wrong-it was robbery writ large. Talk of extending the "area of freedom" and "spreading liberty" were merely talking points designed to

obscure what was really going on; blatant theft of territory. For this editor, the process of acquiring territory, as laid out by O'Sullivan, was flawed. No matter how carefully expansionists tried to phrase it, taking land from non-belligerent neighbors was paramount to bullying and stealing. He felt the United States was already "great and glorious" at its present size; there was no reason to further expand the borders, especially through such unsavory means. In addition to his articulate and impassioned anti-expansionist stance, the author made some fascinating predictions. The "Republic of California" would briefly exist thanks to the Bear Flag Revolt of 1846 and the territory would shortly fall under American domination. The conclusion of the Mexican-American War would also see the American flag flying over Chapultepec Castle, the home of the Montezumas, and a slew of atrocities committed by American volunteer troops in search of plunder would realize his fear of "marauding parties wandering into Mexico." For this author, Americans were above such petty European style politics. This sharply worded critique called upon Americans to speak out against the "few" who were angling for annexation. This was beyond party politics, for the fate of the United States was at stake and it was up to all Americans to decide that destiny not just some well-placed politicians.³⁰

Small, sporadic instances of rebellion, in most cases just talk of becoming independent, erupted in California in 1845. While none of these rebellions would prove successful, they did spark considerable interest back in the United States. The editor of the *Charleston Patriot* had few illusions that Americans were chiefly responsible for the recent revolution. He claimed, erroneously, that the "revolutionaries" had successfully and completely driven out all Mexican officials and set up their own independent government. Confident that the event was likely to end in the same way the "conflict between Texas and Mexico terminated" with the United States soon to take control of California. The editor then insisted that Mexico's inability to maintain control of her provinces lent credence to the idea that "she may soon be numbered

among the Republics that were." Who exactly was responsible for Mexico's misfortunes was still up for debate. He wondered if Mexicans were accountable then "we will have to regret the existence of such a crazy race." Conversely, "if others have wronged her, impartial history will do her justice—and her sons, though conquered, will still have their *honor*." Such a statement is truly fascinating. The editor clearly understands the "others" to be the United States and admitted that the Mexicans had been wronged. Stating that future generations of Mexicans, bereft of independence but with their honor intact, implicitly meant that those responsible for taking Mexican lands were dishonorable. It was evident here that the editor was unsure if the "process of annexation" was in fact an honorable way of acquiring territory. Regardless of how uncomfortable he may have felt, he never came out directly to condemn the United States, merely stating that "impartial history" may criticize the "others" responsible and that the Mexicans themselves may be the sole source of their misfortune.³¹

War News: The Fate of California

By May of 1846 the United States was formally at war with Mexico but the major flashpoint occurred not in fiercely contested California but in Texas. The 1845 treaty that joined Texas and the United States did not adequately address any boundaries, instead vaguely stating "the Republic of Texas, acting in conformity with the wishes of the people and every department of its government, cedes to the United States all its territories, to be held by them in full property and sovereignty, and to be annexed to the said United States as one of their Territories." Historically the boundary of Texas was the Nueces River, however when Santa Anna was captured by Texan Revolutionaries in 1836 he agreed to make the boundary the Rio Grande, 125 miles to the south. Since such an agreement was made under duress, the Mexican government, and some Americans, never accepted it. From 1836 to 1845 the land between the two rivers was essentially considered no-man's land and few settlers from either country lived there. Presi-

dent James K. Polk and other expansionists demanded that the Rio Grande serve as the border, when the treaty of annexation was confirmed Polk ordered American troops under General Zachary Taylor to the disputed area.³²

While American troops were deployed in the disputed region a skirmish broke out which resulted in the death of sixteen American soldiers. When news of the attack reached Polk, he immediately asked Congress to declare war. In his speech to Congress, Polk claimed that “Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded its territory and shed American blood on American soil. As war exists, and not withstanding our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself.”³³

In June of 1846 many Anglo settlers in California deduced that now was the most opportune time to strike. Around eighty armed revolutionaries, or drunken adventurers, depending on the author, rode into Sonoma and forced the Governor to surrender. The Anglo settlers were inspired but not directly led by the often maligned American officer and adventurer John Charles Fremont. President Polk dispatched Fremont to scout the area and in typical filibuster fashion, Fremont exceeded his orders. He and his small contingent of fellow adventurers encouraged the rebellion but technically remained neutral. Upon removing the governor from power, the revolutionaries promptly declared the entire province of California to be free from Mexico and established the Bear Flag Republic. All were keenly aware that American troops were heading to the territory and they anxiously awaited the chance to hand control over to the United States. As one astonished Mexican spectator Antonio Maria Osio reported, “they [the Anglo revolutionaries] decided to camouflage the flag of Stars and Stripes with a temporary flag which depicted a brown bear on a white field.” Less than two weeks later Fremont and his men rode to Sonoma and officially took the territory over for the American government. The “proper” way to acquire territory was followed.³⁴

By the summer of 1847, the American military began to take official control of California.

An American naval expedition seized San Francisco, while army ground forces arrived to secure Los Angeles. While the conquest was going well militarily, many Americans feared such success would lead to European style imperialism. The editor of the *Scioto Gazette* suspected that naval officer Robert Stockton, a senior military official in California, may try and set up his own country. The editor claimed that Stockton had a sincere “thirst for power” and was refusing to obey orders from Washington to relinquish control of the region to army General Stephen Kearny. Instead, the commodore, since “the conquest had been made by him” felt he had the right to form a civil government loyal to him. The editor was appalled at such insubordination and advocated that the United States government “send a considerable force to California” to regain order. On the surface this controversy stemmed from the fact that both Stockton and Kearny shared equivalent military ranks and neither was willing to back down. With the arrival of additional troops, Kearny’s claim prevailed and order was restored in California. But the article reveals something deeper. Not only was the editor reporting upon the developments in California but expressing his own unique viewpoint on the matter. In addition, he reiterated the common American refrain that above all else the United States must not fall into the trap of European despotism. This fear saw Stockton as a power mad officer who may have had Napoleonic delusions of grandeur. It was up to the American press to condemn such actions and demand intervention.³⁵

By October of 1847, American forces had achieved a string of impressive military victories and captured Mexico City. Although major organized resistance had collapsed, the United States was forced to deal with a virulent and growing Mexican partisan movement. President Polk was under domestic pressure to end the war. He ignored the Whig charge of abandoning all territorial gains as well as forsaking the extreme expansionist position for the “All of Mexico” movement which sought to annex the entirety of the vanquished enemy’s land. Instead,

Polk chose the middle course of action which would result in the acquisition of the now American Southwest, including the long debated for California.³⁶

With the acceptance of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo the debate over California shifted once again. Although the question of whether or not to take possession of California had been answered in the affirmative, Americans now debated whether or not it should come in as a Free or Slave state. This question was a matter of great interest and importance to not just politicians but all Americans. Many editors were especially incensed and felt that only politicians debated the question and did not seek out their constituents' wishes. To rectify the matter several cities organized rallies to debate this "momentous question." In the *National Intelligencer* a short blurb appeared in the classifieds that reminded readers to attend "a discussion of the question 'Should California be admitted into the Union.'" The *Natchez Semi-Weekly Courier* publicized that in one week "every man in the county" should come to the courthouse and "express their honest opinions on the exciting topic at issue, freely, fully and independently." The editor promised the event would be "no party meeting . . . it will be a meeting of the people, the real people—not of the politicians."³⁷

A letter to the editor in the *Natchez Semi-Weekly Courier*, signed by a "Southron," echoed the call for more public involvement in the admission process. The author claimed, "this California Question was never before the people for them to discuss and decide." Instead, when concerned Americans organized and concluded that admission would be a mistake, they "are denounced as traitors and submissionists" and told "that it ought to be left to the politicians." He fervently declared that such a "doctrine" was the "essence of despotism." Free discourse and debate was integral to the survival of the Republic, and he warned readers to "pause, and reflect well on this matter and on the course and conduct of politicians in connection with it." Allowing California to be annexed as a free state without the approval of the masses was an example of "real undoubted charges of northern

aggression."³⁸

This was a shrewd move by the author "Southron." He was incensed not only because he feared the slave states' power might wane but also by the "despotic" way in which it was done. No free-thinking American, whether from the North or South, would dare argue that public discourse was unimportant to the stability of the country. His fervent call for debate further demonstrates that many Americans were simply uncomfortable with unbridled expansion, that too closely resembled the political machinations of Europe and was to be avoided. Opposing or supporting expansion took on a myriad of forms and justifications, but all Americans were united in their staunch belief in debating the issue. This debate moved far beyond simply controlling a new territory but showcases the scrutiny and interest that Americans had for their place in the world. This matter was too important to be left up to politicians—it was up to all Americans to voice their concerns. This fervent and free discourse is what separated the United States from Europe—at least in their eyes. Although "Southron" was obviously pushing for a pro democratic and pro slavery California, the more important issue was what he felt was lack of proper representation. Despotic politicians were acting like petulant overlords and the only cure was to consult the public. Let the masses decide the fate of California lest the shining city upon the hill fall further into the abyss that was European imperialism.³⁹

Ultimately, the debate over expanding into California was multi-faceted and heated. This article demonstrated by surveying the mass communication medium of the age, newspapers; that the acquisition of California was neither a universally applauded event nor did coverage line up into pro or anti expansion lines. Instead, the viability and usefulness of the territory was vociferously debated and discussed by countless Americans in the public forum. These nineteenth century authors offered myriad opinions that were complex than simple political mouth-pieces. Some felt the addition to be unnecessary as the Union was already large enough while others felt the commercial advantages of the

region warranted annexation. Some felt the region to be desirable but only if acquired through treaty but others preferred its acquisition by any means necessary.⁴⁰ The territory of California was portrayed as a lonely place, suitable for only criminals, a dumping ground for African-Americans, or a newly found Elysium. These American authors wanted the United States to stand apart from Europe and find their

own unique place in the world. Examining the acquisition of California reveals that American newspapers were independent entities who advocated for a wide variety of policies. In the end, by investigating their rhetoric it is revealed that the destiny of the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century was anything but manifest.

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, book two, chapter VI (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 185-188. Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States: A Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 76. Peter Hutchinson, "Magazine Growth in the Nineteenth Century" in *A Publisher's History of American Magazines*, (accessed November 20th, 2011). http://themagazinist.com/uploads/Part_1_Population_and_Literacy.pdf

Just as antebellum expansionism sparked debate among Americans in the nineteenth century, historians have carried on the fight. There is little consensus among historians regarding what fueled antebellum expansion and there are a multitude of views. One of the more common interpretations of Manifest Destiny is that of an expansionist ideology identical to imperialism. These historians have also tended to emphasize the importance of federal policy and political leaders as the major force behind expansion. Albert Weinberg's *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935); Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr. and Gene Smith *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997); Thomas R. Hietala *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); and Robert W. Merry *A Country of Vast Designs: James K Polk, The Mexican War, and the Conquest of the American Continent* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009). Although these works do a good job of examining expansion from the top down, they tend to downplay the importance of "common" Americans and neglect to explore how the expansionist debate played out in the public forum. Probably the most well-known and lauded historian of Manifest Destiny is Frederick Merk, a disciple and eventual successor of Frederick Jackson Turner. Merk's publications continued his mentor's American exceptionalism argument. This tendency is most evident in his attempt to refute Weinberg's argument in his seminal work *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*. Merk claims American expansionism has taken distinct forms throughout history. Jeffersonian expansion was unrelated to Manifest Destiny, which in turn was the "antithesis" of imperialism. The only common thread between these different eras of expansion was the innate American sense of "mission," which he characterizes as a longing to better the world. Merk acknowledges the debate that surrounded expansion but argues that the American people were misled by an elite group of politicians and select editors. Although he makes some interesting points and was the first to question the inevitability of Manifest Destiny, his work is not without some cogent criticisms. Most problematic is his insistence that "mission" was the largest driving force behind American expansion and his tendency to overemphasize the importance of elites in propagating the justifications for expansion.

² The debate over the viability and righteousness of territorial expansion was not a new one to the American Republic. The wisdom of expanding American borders to include the Louisiana Purchase, Florida, Oregon, and Texas also saw much debate in the public forum. California is important as it results in the culmination of these endeavors for the continental United States. Although this debate would continue in regards to overseas expansion at the end of the nineteenth century, California exemplifies the era of Manifest Destiny. Alexander Saxton *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Verso Publishing, 1990), 147.

³ An excellent analysis of how closely tied newspapers were to the political parties in the early republic can be found in Mel Laracey's article "The Presidential Newspaper as an Engine of Early American Political Development: The Case of Thomas Jefferson and the Election of 1800" in *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* (Spring 2008), 7-46; Michael Schudson *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books Inc, 1978), 12-16.

⁴ *Baltimore Sun* as it appeared in *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), 180; Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life* (New York: J.B. Ford, 1868), 137; Schudson, 20-23

⁵ *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), August 9, 1805. The idea that the economy of the Pacific Northwest was based solely on the fur trade was often brought up by Americans as a way to justify why they would be better caretakers of the land. In truth, the Hudson Bay Company, chief target for later disparaging remarks, was actually quite diverse in their economic activities. For more information see Richard Somerset Mackie *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Mississippi, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

⁶ *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), August 9, 1805.

⁷ *National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), December 20, 1819.

⁸ *National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), December 20, 1819.

⁹ Stanley Green *The Mexican Republic 1823-1832* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1987), 23-25; *Arkansas Gazette* August 31, 1831; *Daily National Journal* (Washington D.C.), August 2, 1831.

¹⁰ *The Liberator* (Boston, MA), February 25, 1832. Robert Tucker & David Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 95-100. The “Jeffersonian mode of acquiring territory” would be used to great effect in Texas, as once the mostly American born Texians became the dominant faction they separated from the Empire of Mexico.

¹¹ *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), January 19, 1830.

¹² *National Intelligencer* as it appeared in the *St. Louis Commercial Advertiser* (St. Louis, MO), June 1, 1836.

¹³ *St. Louis Enquirer* as it appeared in the *Pittsfield Sun*, (Pittsfield, MA), January 5, 1843.

¹⁴ *National Intelligencer*, January 16, 1841.

¹⁵ *Pittsfield Sun*, January 5, 1843; *Tri-Weekly Ohio Statesman* (Columbus, OH), October 27, 1845.

¹⁶ David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 89-90; Don E. Fehrenbacher “The Mexican War and the Conquest of California”, *Essays and Assays: California History Reappraised* (Los Angeles: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1973), 58-63. For fantastic insight into the acrimonious and suspicious relationship between the united States and Great Britain in the 1830’s and 1840’s see Howard Jones’ and Donald Rakestraw’s *Prologue to Manifest Destiny: Anglo-American Relations in the 1840’s*. (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc, 1997).

¹⁷ *New Orleans Bulletin*, February 15, 1840; *New Orleans Courier* as it appeared in the *New York Spectator* March 9, 1840.

¹⁸ *New Orleans Bulletin*, February 15, 1840.

¹⁹ *Raleigh Register*, (Raleigh, NC), June 8, 1847; A longer reprinted section of the same story appeared in the *Boston Daily Atlas* May 24, 1847. After the acquisition of California the male population dramatically exploded, thanks in large measure to the gold rush, and women were often viewed as a rare but useful commodity. The hodgepodge of cultures, Hispanic, Indian and Anglo, each with their own sense of culture and gender identity also made life for women in early California chaotic and difficult. For more information, see Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999). See Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), for additional insight into how nineteenth-century Americans perceived Latino women.

²⁰ Sam Haynes, *James K. Polk and the Expansionistic Impulse* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 111; *Southern Patriot* (Charleston, SC), April 25, 1845; *Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, GA), March 22, 1845; *Berkshire County Whig* (Pittsfield, MA), May 15, 1845.

²¹ John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (July 1845). There is still some debate regarding who in fact coined the phrase Manifest Destiny. Although O’Sullivan is still the most commonly accepted author, Linda S. Hudson has offered a contrasting alternative author in her work *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807-1878* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001).

²² O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” 8. Attacks regarding Mexican ethnicity and culture would continue in the coming years and grow more vociferous during the Mexican-American War.

²³ David Weber *The Mexican Frontier 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 205-206; *Nashville Union* (Nashville, TN), as it appeared in *Boston Courier* May 5, 1845; *Cleveland Herald* (Cleveland, OH), June 3, 1845.

²⁴ *Georgia Telegraph*, March 22, 1845; *Washington Constitution* (Washington D.C.), as it appeared in the *New-Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* (Concord, NH), September 4, 1845; *Pittsfield Sun*, September 4, 1845; *Tri-weekly Ohio Statesman*, March 20, 1846.

²⁵ *North American and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 13, 1842.

²⁶ *Weekly Herald* (New York, NY), December 28, 1844.

²⁷ *Morning News* (New London, CT), May 17, 1845.

²⁸ *Tropic* (New Orleans, LA), as it appeared in the *National Intelligencer*, May 7, 1845; *Barre Patriot* (Barre, MA), May 16, 1845.

²⁹ *Tropic* (New Orleans, LA), as it appeared in the *National Intelligencer*, May 7, 1845.

³⁰ *Tropic* (New Orleans, LA), as it appeared in the *National Intelligencer*, May 7, 1845

³¹ *Charleston Patriot* (Charleston, SC), as it appeared in the *Greenville Mountaineer* (Greenville, SC), June 6, 1845.

³² Avalon Project "A Treaty of Annexation, concluded between the United States of America and the Republic of Texas" <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/texan05.htm>. James McCaffery, *Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) 5-6; Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 10-13.

³³ McCaffery, 7-8; Frederick Merk, "Dissent in the Mexican War." *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 81 (1969): 121-136; *Southern Patriot*, May 14, 1846. Polk's original intentions may not have been to start a war with Mexico. In his diary, he claimed that a Colonel Atocha offered him a way to gain California and the disputed section of Texas without having to resort to war. Atocha claimed he spoke for Santa Anna, who was in exile in Cuba, and stated that he was willing to cede the desired territories for \$30 million. Atocha claimed that the Mexican public would never allow such a sale unless there was no alternative. To pull off such a stunt, Atocha requested that American troops be stationed on the border so it would appear to the Mexican public that Santa Anna had no choice in the matter and sold the territory only to save the rest of Mexico from the United States. Polk stated that "He [Atocha] is evidently a man of talents and education, but his whole manner and conversation impressed me with a belief that he was not reliable, and that he would betray any confidence reposed in him, when it was in his interest to do so." Polk thanked Atocha for visiting but gave no indication of whether he would agree to such a deal. Polk makes no further mention of this discussion in his diary and it is not known for sure if he agreed to the deal. If such a rumor is true it certainly complicates the argument that American forces simply declared war to militarily grab the desired territory by force. Several notable historians also validate the story including William DePalo *The Mexican National Army 1822-1852* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 95-96, Jack Bauer *The Mexican War*, 27-29, and Frederick Merk, "Dissent in the Mexican War." 134.

Regardless, of his intentions, Polk quickly made the best of the situation. He declared to his cabinet that although the war was not about seizing California, it may become necessary to acquire the territory to help defray the costs of war. For more information see Haynes, *James K. Polk and the Expansionistic Impulse* p.132. James K. Polk, *Polk: Diary of a President 1845-1849*, ed. Allan Nevins (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952) 15-18.

³⁴ Dale Walker, *Bear Flag Rising: The Conquest of California, 1846* (New York: Tom Dougherty Associates, 1999), 116-128. For more information regarding Fremont and his exploits see Tom Chaffin *Pathfinder: John Charles Fremont and the Course of American Empire* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003).

³⁵ William DePalo *The Mexican National Army 1822-1852* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 107-108; *Scioto Gazette*, June 2, 1847. This article's relevance reflects a well-known controversy over who was in charge in California with Kearny, Stockton and Fremont all vying for the top spot and arguing that they were in fact the instrument of the President's will. For additional information regarding this power struggle see Dwight Clarke's biography *Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), although this large tome deals with the entirety of Kearny's career much space is devoted to his time in California.

³⁶ Irving Levinson *Wars within Wars: Mexican Guerrillas, Domestic Elites, and the United States of America, 1846-1848* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2005), 99-121. Polk also seriously considering acquiring the Mexican provinces of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Baja California but thanks to additional partisan assaults reconsidered. He also took great pains to provide monetary support to Mexican elites so that they could maintain control of Mexico amidst their unrest to ensure that the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo would be followed.

³⁷ *National Intelligencer*, April 16, 1850; *Natchez Semi-Weekly Courier* (Natchez, MS), March 5, 1850.

³⁸ *Natchez Semi-Weekly Courier*, March 15, 1850

³⁹ *Natchez Semi-Weekly Courier*, March 15, 1850. Unfortunately, the avocation of letting the masses decide the status of an incoming state would morph into the concept of popular sovereignty and lead to the atrocities committed

during “Bleeding Kansas.” For insight into this dark period see Nicole Etcheson’s *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era*.