

## The Age of Westward Expansion.

### Oregon Territory

During the mid 1800's, the nation grew rapidly due to Manifest Destiny. Farmers in search of good land were drawn to Oregon Country, an area shared by Britain and the United States (Russia and Spain later dropped their claims to the area). Pioneers followed Mountain Men for fur trading (Astoria- rendezvous) and missionaries west over the Rockies. Beginning in 1843, wagon trains bound for Oregon set out from Independence Missouri every spring. The 2000 mile path the wagon trains took was called the Oregon Trail and cost \$600 and took 6 months. Despite hardships of the travel, more than 50,000 people, from 1840 to 1860, reached Oregon. Despite President Polk's promise of "Fifty-four forty or fight" to take Oregon from Britain through war, the two sides decided to compromise. The U.S. got all land south of the 49 degree North latitude and named this the Oregon Territory. Oregon became a state in 1859. The rest of the territory was split into Washington (1889) and Idaho (1890).

### Texas Territory

With an abundance of New Spain Missions, farmers also looked to the newly independent Mexican lands in the southwest for farming. In 1821, Mexico allowed empresario Stephen F. Austin to lead the first group of American settlers to Texas, ("OLD 300"). By 1830, American settlers in Texas numbered 20,000. Texans rebelled against the Mexican dictator Santa Anna's laws in 1835. After the heroic loss at the Alamo and the tragic loss at Goliad, the Texans beat Santa Anna at the battle of San Jacinto. It is from this battle that Texas won independence from Mexico and became a struggling Republic in 1836. Because of fears of war with Mexico and the slavery balance in the Union, President Jackson refused to annex Texas. By 1845, those fears had lessened and Americans were fueled by Manifest Destiny. President Polk and Americans filled with this new desire wanted to add Texas as the 28<sup>th</sup> state. In 1845, Congress passed a joint resolution annexing Texas to the Union.

### California Territory

In the 1840's, Americans moved farther West into Mexican territory (Missions) and had a party (Donner)? The popular belief in Manifest Destiny led voters in 1844 to elect James Polk as President. Trying to keep with up with his campaign promises, Polk offered to buy the California and New Mexico territory from Mexico for \$30 million. After Polk's offer was refused, there was no other course but war. After shedding blood, the Mexican war began in 1846 and was quickly over by 1848 with a swift American victory and the Revolt of a Bear? For only \$15 million America gained California and New Mexico through the Mexican Cession as ordered by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. With the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, the dream of Manifest Destiny had come true. In 1848 and 1849, thousands of gold miners rushed to California, changing life there almost overnight. California would be admitted to the Union in 1850 as a free state but that is another story for later!