

General Overview: The war between Mexico and the United States had its beginnings with the struggle over who would control Texas. American settlers began moving to the Texas territory in the 19th Century, after the Revolutionary War had been won and the exploration of lands west of the Appalachian Mountains had begun. The Louisiana Purchase had stretched the western boundaries of the United States farther west than they had ever been. After the success of Lewis and Clark, more and more Americans explored and settled in the Louisiana Territory.

And right next to Louisiana was Texas. Texas was big land, rich with resources and possibilities. It was also largely part of Mexico. As more and more Americans moved to the Texas territory, the cry grew for Texas to be part of the U.S. This began to happen in 1835, when Texas declared itself independent from Mexico. The Texas Republic was born, and its first president was Sam Houston. The secretary of state of this new republic was Stephen F. Austin, who had been a pioneer in helping settle the Texas territory.

The Fighting Begins: Mexico was not at all happy about this, and they told the Americans so. Angry words were exchanged, and Mexico soon tired of words. Action was needed, according to Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, and action was taken. The first major action was at the Alamo, a San Antonio-area fort controlled by Americans but desired by Mexicans. A total of 189 defenders, including such famous Americans as Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett, gave their lives in defense of the Alamo. But the fort was overrun and controlled by Mexico. This was in 1836. In the same year, at Goliad, following the Battle of Coleto Creek, Mexican General Santa Anna ordered the massacre of 342 American prisoners. The massacres at the Alamo and Goliad outraged many in America and many in Mexico. American soldiers responded by fighting back. The result was the Battle of San Jacinto, in which a force of several hundred Americans defeated a much larger Mexican force. Half of the Mexican soldiers were killed, and most of the rest were taken prisoner. The result was an American-controlled Texas, for the most part. Despite the troubles, Americans continued to move there. Tensions remained high, but fighting was at a minimum for several years.

The Coming of War: In 1844, the U.S. annexed Texas, making it an American territory. Two years later, war began. The first major battle was at Palo Alto, in Texas, and neither side could claim victory. The Battle of Monterrey soon followed, and American forces under General Zachary Taylor seized the strategic Mexican city. Also at this time, fighting was taking place further west. An American army occupied Los Angeles but was soon forced out. The California city of Monterey surrendered to American commodore John Sloat in 1846. In that same year, the American Army of the West, under Colonel Stephen Kearny, marched toward California. He reached Santa Fe in the summer and California in December. In January 1847, American troops reoccupied Los Angeles and kept it this time. In Texas and Mexico in 1847, American troops enjoyed many successes:

- In February, near Monterrey, at the Battle of Buena Vista, 5,000 American troops commanded by General Zachary Taylor went up against 14,000 Mexican troops commanded by Santa Anna. Despite being outnumbered almost 3-to-1, the Americans won the battle.
- In March, 12,000 American troops under the command of General Winfield Scott made the country's first amphibious landing, moving from ships to land near the city of Vera Cruz. After a weeklong siege, Mexico surrendered the city.
- Several more battles followed, resulting in more American victories and more Mexican retreats.
- American forces captured the Mexican capital, Mexico City, in September.

The Making of Peace: With the occupation of Mexico City by American forces, both sides were ready to talk peace. It took a few months, but the details were ironed out and on February 2, 1848, both sides signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the war. Mexico agreed to give up about 55 percent of its territory and got \$15 million in return. This territory was called the Mexican Cession. This territory included all of the present-day states of California, Nevada, and Utah and also parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. The two countries weren't exactly on friendly terms after that, but war did not resume. American explorers and settlers flocked to the new territories, and the Westward Movement was on.

