**Westward Expansion topic notes**

**(goes with Westward Expansion topics 3-6 images)**

**Annexation of Texas**

Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, and Texas naturally became part of northern Mexico. The Mexican government continued to encourage American settlement, but the rules for those who came to Texas were: 1) Become Mexican citizens; 2) Obey Mexican laws; 3) Be Roman Catholic. In 1829, Mexico passed a law prohibiting slavery.

By 1831, American settlers outnumbered Tejano (Mexican Texans) settlers by 5-to-1. Many of these Americans were slave-owners who were immigrating from Southern American states like Tennessee and Georgia. A ban was put on Anglo-American immigration to Mexico, but Americans continued to enter Texas anyway.

In 1833, Stephen Austin delivered a petition to Mexico City asking for a separate Texas. This was denied by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

In 1836, Anglo Texans declared themselves an independent state, named the Lone Star Republic. They organized an army led by former Tennessee governor Sam Houston.

On March 2, 1836, General Santa Anna led an attack Texan troops at a Spanish mission in San Antonio called the Alamo. This attack lasted for twelve days and eventually all but a small handful of the Texans (including Davy Crockett) were killed. This loss became a rallying cry for Texans in the future – “Remember the Alamo!”

At the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, Sam Houston led an attack on Mexican troops while they were sleeping. It was a one-sided victory for the Texans and General Santa Anna was captured. Santa Anna was forced to sign a peace treaty which recognized Texas’ independence.

After a nine-year period of self-rule, Texas was annexed by the United States and it became a state in 1845. Leading Texans like Sam Houston had been pushing this to happen for a while. Americans were split on this issue. The expansionist Democrats, led by James Polk, wanted Texas, especially as it would be a slave-owning state.

**Mexican War**

The annexation of Texas increased bad feelings between the U.S. and Mexican governments. President Polk wanted to provoke a war, believing that it would give the U.S. an opportunity to take more land and bring New Mexico and California into the union.

In 1845, Polk ordered American troops to the border in both Texas and California. He also makes an offer of $15 million to Mexico for the territories of California and New Mexico. When Mexico rejected the offer, American troops invaded in 1846.

General Winfield Scott captured Mexico City in 1847. Other American forces take control of California and New Mexico in the same year. Mexico formally surrenders on February 2, 1848.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends the war. The U.S. gained the “Mexican Cession” which includes the current states of CA, NV, and UT as well as parts of AZ, CO, WY, and NM. The U.S. $15 million for those lands. Mexico formally recognized TX as part of the U.S. (as it had never formally recognized Texas independence) and accepted the Rio Grande River as the border between the U.S. and Mexico.

**Mormon Migration**

Joseph Smith begins preaching to followers in upstate New York that he has received a revelation from God through an angel named Moroni. Smith claimed to have discovered a series of gold tablets detailing the ancient history of the Americas. He translates these tablets and publishes them as *The Book of Mormon* in 1830. Smith considered this book to be an extension of God’s word beyond what is in the Bible.

Smith and his followers call themselves the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), or Mormons. As their congregation grows, Smith’s teachings are considered “blasphemous” to other Christians, who hound the Mormons from one settlement to another. They Mormons build a community in Illinois called Nauvoo, but an anti-Mormon mob lynched Joseph Smith and his brother in 1844.

Smith’s associate Brigham Young is elected leader of the Mormons, and he prepares the group to migrate to the far West, beyond the reach of their enemies. The Mormons separated themselves off from non-Mormons in many ways but looked to make converts among the poor, Native Americans, and enslaved blacks.

Thousands of Mormons set off in a wagon train in 1846. The route was hard and dangerous, and hundreds died, but the Mormons were well-organized and arrived at the Great Salt Lake Basin (in modern-day Utah) in July 1847. Tension between the U.S. government and the Mormon leaders of Utah remained for decades.

The Mormon community in Utah, which they called “Deseret,” grew quickly as more migrants arrived. They were industrious and ambitious, and used complex irrigation systems to turn the dry desert of Utah into farmland. Salt Lake City became the headquarters of the Mormon church and eventually the capitol of Utah.

One of the practices that set Mormons apart was their embrace of what they called “Plural Marriage,” or polygamy. Mormon men were encouraged to take multiple wives. Leading Mormon men might have had up to ten or twenty wives to whom they were wed under the church, but this was illegal in most state laws. The official LDS church would ban polygamy in 1890, and today fundamentalist Mormons who practice it are shunned by the LDS church.

**California Gold Rush**

James Marshall discovered gold while building a sawmill on James Sutter’s land on the American River in California in 1847. Sutter and Marshall made a pact to keep the discovery a secret, but word got out.

By early 1849, word had spread across the country, in part due to advertisements that ran in east coast newspapers about the fortunes made by miners. Thousands of young men, mostly in their late teens and early twenties, flocked to California. They were nicknamed “49’ers.” People came from other countries and continents as well, including South American and Asia.

There were different routes to get to California. To go by land, beyond the reach of existing railway lines, required a 2000 mile trek over undeveloped land. The sea route took 6 months and was safer, but tickets on passenger ships cost more than many of these poor prospectors had.

Secondary lines-of-work opened up in order to provide services to (and take advantage of) desperate miners. Prices for things like food, lodging, alcohol, clothing, and equipment skyrocketed. One San Francisco businessman developed a method of making pants that would stand up to the tough work of mining, using metal rivets and denim. His name was Levi Strauss.

San Francisco grew quickly as it became the primary port city near the gold. Mining towns came and went as the gold dried up, though they developed a reputation for being wild and dangerous. (Some names for mining camps included: Hangtown, Gouge Eye, Rough and Ready, and Whiskeytown.)

The easy gold ran out quickly and prospectors developed methods to sift streams through sluice boxes to separate the gold dust from the water. The work was hard but it still gave a chance to earn a fortune to people who probably would have little opportunity for such wealth if they had stayed home.