

# 1836 - 1845

## EXPANSION WESTWARD

As the land from the Louisiana Purchase was divided up into Territories, Arkansas became the 25th in 1836. The territory of Florida was established after acquiring the land from Spain in 1819. Florida became the 27th state in 1845.

(1) Heavily influenced by the expansionist principles of Manifest Destiny, President James K. Polk called for war with Mexico in May 1846. His goal was to expand the United States and acquire territory in the present-day southwest. In 1835, Texas gained its independence after war with Mexico. Texas remained an independent nation despite Mexico's refusal to agree to a defined border. In spite of the possibility of incurring the wrath of Mexico, Polk's predecessor, John Tyler, annexed Texas in 1845 and it was admitted as the 28th state on December 29th. Though Mexico failed to follow through with their threat of war following the annexation of Texas, tensions remained strained over the disputed border between Texas and Mexico. Polk exploited these tensions. He ordered U.S. troops, under future president Zachary Taylor, to occupy the disputed land between Mexico and Texas. While there, they skirmished with Mexican troops and Polk used this fighting to convince Congress to declare war on Mexico on May 13, 1846.

The U.S. army was highly successful in Mexico and captured the Mexican capital by September 1847, effectively ending the fighting. The war officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. In this treaty, the United States, in exchange for 15 million dollars, received California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, most of Arizona and Colorado, and parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming. Many northerners opposed the war as they felt it was an unjustified attack on weaker nation designed by southern politicians to acquire more land in which to expand slavery.

((1) Excerpt from National Park Service, "No claim to original U.S. Government works.")