Transcript: 5.07 The Mexican-American War (PBS)

[BOMB EXPLODING] The war had begun in April 1846 over disputed territory along the border between Mexico and Texas, now a state of the American Union. But underlying the conflict was the determination of newly elected President James Polk to push the American border all the way to the Pacific Coast.

Americans were already looking towards the future and towards trade with Asia. And so there was this belief that we needed to expand, keep pushing that Western boundary.

Polk had first offered to purchase New Mexico in California for $25 million. But now, as the US Army marched west, it easily took New Mexico. California was next. In Los Angeles and San Diego, the Californios put up stiff resistance. In the north, Monterey fell without a single shot being fired.

The Mexican-American war lasted nearly two years. With Mexico's surrender in February 1848, the United States doubled in size, adding to its territory a full half of what had once been Mexico.

The enormous wealth that came to the United States-- the silver that came out of Nevada, Arizona became the center of copper in the United States, New Mexico supplied a huge portion of America's wool. All of this was Mexican territory seized by the United States as a result of winning the Mexican-American war.

80,000 Mexicans were given the choice to become American citizens under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided certain rights and protections for the newly made American citizens of Mexican descent. That included protection of their land rights, for example. They were to be treated as citizens entitled to the right to vote.

Americans and Mexicans will now be one and the same people, the military governor of California, Richard Mason, declared, subject to the same laws, enjoying the same rights and privileges. They should become a band of brothers.