

Mexican-Americans

Document A: Senator Cass on the Mexican War (1847)

“We do not want the people of Mexico, either as citizens or subjects. All we want is a portion of territory, which they nominally hold, generally uninhabited at all, sparsely so, and with a population, which would soon recede, or identify itself with ours.”

-Senator Lewis Cass (1847)

Document B: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)

“Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories, or disposing thereof, and removing the proceeds wherever they please, without their being subjected, on this account, to any contribution, tax, or charge whatever. Those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States.”

- Article VIII, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)

Document C: The Difficulty of Registering Mexican Land Claims (1857)

“The establishment of the American dominion in California, made it necessary that the titles to land, owned in the State, under grants from Mexico, should be recognized and protected in accordance with the principles of American law... But there was a question of much difficulty as to how this protection should be furnished. The Mexican titles were lacking in many of the conditions necessary to a perfect title under the American laws. The land systems of the two countries were constructed on entirely different principles and with different objects...

The grants made were not carefully registered. The law prescribed that the petitions for land should all be preserved, and a record of them kept, and that a registry should be made of all the lands granted; but the affairs of the Governor's office were loosely conducted; and in many cases where the claimants have been in possession for twenty years, and have an undoubted title, there is nothing in the archives or records of the former government to show for it...

When the great immigration of '49 filled the land with Americans, it became necessary to provide for the recognition and protection of the good Mexican titles by the American Courts. But how was this to be done? By the ordinary State Courts? The judges would not be sufficiently able, and would be ignorant of the laws under which the grants had been made; and the juries would be composed of Americans whose interests would lead them to do injustice to the large land-owners. Besides, the lawmakers and judges elected by a deeply interested populace could not be depended upon to do justice under such circumstances.”

-Hutchings' California Magazine, July 1857

Document D: The Family of Don Vicente Lopez (1870)



Document E: Declining Political Influence of Mexican Americans

“Between 1848 and the 1880s huge influxes of white immigrants, increasing Anglo domination over local economies, and a corresponding decrease in the wealth and property holdings of the former Mexican elite combined to erode Mexican Americans’ influence in politics... [B]y the 1870s, and certainly by the 1880s, unfavorable population ratios, combined with Americans’ use of gerrymandering and other forms of ethnic exclusion, gradually forced Mexican Americans out of the political arena...”

-David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (1995)