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Michael, Steven Bruce

OHIO AND THE MEXICAN WAR: PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE 1846-1848 CRISIS

The Ohio State University

Ph.D. 1985

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OHIO AND THE MEXICAN WAR:
PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE 1846-1848 CRISIS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Steven Bruce Michael, B.A., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University
1985

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Controversy, traditionally, has surrounded the historical interpretation of the Mexican War. Hubert H. Bancroft, in his six volume History of Mexico, 1824-1861 (San Francisco, 1883-1888), was one of the earliest historians to write a scholarly indictment of the conflict. The blame for causing the war, wrote Bancroft, lay with Polk and the southern politicians. The President lied when he said that Mexico provoked hostilities and he only pretended to want peace. Using unconstitutional powers, argued Bancroft, Polk authorized the invasion of Mexico when he ordered General Taylor to advance across the Nueces River. In addition, stated Bancroft, southern politicians generally were "smugglers, Indian-killers, and foul-mouthed, tobacco-spurtting swearers" who, in order to further the political and economic interests of the siavocracy, wanted more land. The Polk administration had an opportunity to assist a neighbor in building up republican institutions, asserted Bancroft, but chose instead to take advantage of a weaker nation and promote sectional interests by seeking the extension of slavery.

Justin H. Smith, whose extensive research makes his work still the best general history of the war, presented an argument directly countering Bancroft's interpretation. His two volume study, The War With Mexico (New York, 1919), discounted the existence of a southern
scheme for war led by the President. Smith contended that Polk lacked the necessary character and charisma to play "the brilliant villain's role in a grand international tragedy." The President was a cold, obstinate partisan, said Smith, "very wanting in ideality, very wanting in soulfulness, inclined to be sly, and quite incapable of seeing great things in a great way." Such a personality, "uninspired and uninspiring," lacked the capacity to lead such a conspiracy. Also, Smith defended Polk's methods in dealing with the Texas Issues. His confidential orders to the military commanders, stated Smith, were emphatically unwarlike in tone. The President, he added, made every effort to maintain diplomatic relations and promote friendly intercourse throughout the pre-war months. President Polk's professions, asserted Smith, "were every way most pacific."

Indeed, Smith pointed to sentiment inside Mexico and contended that the Latins, themselves, wanted war. The anti-Americanism of leading politicians and the Catholic church set the general mood in Mexico against a peaceful settlement of differences. Moreover, owing to the great distance of the conflict from Washington D.C., stated Smith, the Mexicans believed they would be fighting only the American settlers living in the immediate region. The British press, he explained, convinced the Latins that the American populace was not a race "fit to fight." Should the United States Army appear, the Mexicans believed it would prove as ineffectual as it had in 1812. In contrast, said Smith, the Mexican citizens considered themselves a people of martial instinct and well prepared for war. And, Smith added, because the British and the Central American states opposed
American expansion into the southwest, the Mexicans were confident that both would join them in the war as allies.

Smith's defense of the manner in which President Polk dealt with the frontier crisis was sustained by, "the father of American diplomatic history," Samuel F. Bemis. In his book, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York, 1936), Bemis presented a vindication of Polk's actions. The positioning of American troops in the southwest, he argued, was a justified response to the past harassment of American settlers and to the threatening overtones made by Mexico's military leadership. Too, the author asserted that Polk gave Mexico every chance for a peaceful settlement. While admitting that Polk probably did not grasp the technical distinction between sending a regular minister and a special commissioner ex hoc to Mexico, Bemis insisted the President had a desire to restore normal diplomatic relations on the basis of annexation as an accomplished fact. Finally, explained Bemis, Polk did not order General Taylor to advance into the disputed territory until he heard that Mexico had refused to negotiate with the American emissary, John Slidell.

Offering a more balanced interpretation than Bemis, Thomas A. Bailey, in his book *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (Englewood Cliffs, 1940), concluded that relations broke down and war ensued because neither the United States nor Mexico manifest a genuine will to preserve peace. Polk received word that a commissioner, to settle the boundary issues, would be welcomed; however, claimed Bailey, the sentiment in Mexico was anything but receptive to negotiation. Owing to anti-Americanism and a
beillgerent spirit among the populace, meeting with a United States emissary was tantamount to political suicide for any Mexican leader. And, argued Bailey, by sending a full-fledged minister plenipotentiary, Polk denied the Latin government any flexibility in the matter. If the coming of a commissioner was unpopular, then the reception of a minister, and the accompanying suggestion of normalized relations, was anathema to the Mexicans.

After Slidell’s rejection, contended Bailey, the President ascertained that his goals—recognition of the Rio Grande River as the proper boundary line, settlement of American claims, and the acquisition of California—could not peaceably be attained. Polk “was evidently determined” to encourage war, asserted Bailey, and he forced a showdown with Mexico by ordering General Taylor forward to the Rio Grande. The commencement of hostilities was unique, stated Bailey, in that both nations believed they were acting defensively, yet each “could seriously claim that it had been invaded by the other.”

David Pletcher’s book, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia, 1973), appraised Polk’s leadership and questioned the necessity of the war. The President drifted into war, argued the author, under the mistaken conviction that Mexico’s diplomatic resistance would collapse under the pressure of a tough American stance. His tactics, which Pletcher describes as “bluff and show of force,” narrowed subsequent choices until only war remained.
Pletcher admitted that the President's bold leadership resulted in shifting the Western Hemisphere's balance of power in favor of the United States and gained European respect for America; however, these advantages came not without significant cost. Besides the casualties and expenditures which accompany all wars, asserted Pletcher, this conflict emitted "strong hints of militarism and racism that coarsened democratic sensibilities and laid American ideologues open to charges of hypocrisy." Also, the Mexican War severely strained America's national unity and established its Image in Latin America as the "Colossus of the North." Suggesting that the costs of the war were too great, Pletcher contended that with greater patience the President probably could have averted war and later annexed an independent California. Instead, Polk's aggressive leadership made him the prime mover in fermenting the crisis.

K. Jack Bauer's study, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York, 1974), proceeded from the premise that the conflict was unavoidable. The "whole thrust of America's physical and cultural growth," he wrote, carried it westward to the Pacific. In the path lay three sparsely settled, inadequately defended Mexican provinces. The demands of nationalism and self-respect, argued Bauer, prevented Mexico from parting with those possessions without a struggle. The situation was compounded by the fact that neither side understood the other. Polk believed the application of more pressure would persuade Mexico to start serious negotiations. But, stated Bauer, the American administration did not comprehend "that the logic which it perceived so clearly was not equally evident in Mexico City."
Interestingly, Bauer's work, which some critics consider the best military history of the war, brought out points of similarity between the American venture into Mexico and the Vietnam war. The prominent theme in the diplomatic story of each crisis, explained Bauer, was the failure of the American government to initiate negotiations which would bring the war to an end. Too, those efforts at arbitration, for the most part, took place "against the background of guerrilla war." And, said Bauer, both conflicts were accompanied by the growing disenchantment of the American public. In each case, popular dissent reflected a deep disagreement with the war's objectives and frustration with the federal government's inability to end the crisis.

While historians have brought a wide range of interpretation to the Mexican War, little has been written about general public reaction to the crisis. Indeed, Frederick Merk, in his book *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York, 1963), has made the only qualifying statement on war sentiment in the Northwest. In his discussion of the location of pro and anti war opinion, Professor Merk investigated the background of the settlers who inhabited that section of the nation. His premise was that, on all issues, the populace would be "influenced by memories and habits of the homeland." Consequently, he concluded that the counties of southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois were the areas of pro-war sentiment in the Northwest because they were populated with people southern in origin. And, Merk believed that anti-war sentiment dominated the region lying north of a line which bisected
these states because it was inhabited by settlers from New England, the Middle Atlantic States and Europe.

The purpose of this study is to test Professor Merk's thesis in Ohio. To what degree did the Buckeye State participate in the call to arms? What was the reaction of Ohio's general public and politicians to the war crisis? These questions mark the scope of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 1

OHIO ANSWERS THE CALL TO ARMS

"...if there were none to brave the dangers of war the glory and independence of our country would soon be gone - and gone forever." [Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy, November 11, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS)]

The Mexican War resolution passed in Congress on May 13, 1846, and the call immediately went out to the states for volunteers. The total number of volunteers enrolled for the war was 73,260.\(^1\) This enrollment number, when divided geographically, substantiates the claim that interest in the war was found primarily in the western half of the United States.\(^2\) Not surprisingly, a disproportionate number of volunteers came from the Southwest - 40,406 in all. The Northwest was second with 17,746 while the Southeast and Northeast lagged well behind with 7,189 and 6,381 volunteers, respectively.\(^3\)

Ohio's 5,536 volunteers rank second among states in the Northwest. Illinois led the region with 6,123 while Indiana sent 4,585 and Michigan mustered in 1,103. Census figures reveal that about 1 in 73 men of military age were enrolled in Ohio. By comparison, 1 in 30 enrolled in Illinois, 1 in 44 in Indiana and 1 in 78 in Michigan.\(^4\) The Buckeye State responded to President Polk's initial call for troops by organizing, in 1846, three infantry regiments commanded by Colonels Alexander Mitchell, George Morgan, and Samuel Curtis. Twelve independent companies were mustered in,
also, but only one was sent to Mexico. In 1847, when a second call for troops was issued, Ohio responded with two more regiments - Colonels Charles Brough and William Irwin commanding. Eight independent units, likewise, went to Mexico with the second wave. Five of these were assigned to the Fifteenth United States Infantry.5

Governor Mordecai Bartley's proclamation, dated May 20, 1846, called the state to arms in the name of "Patriotism and fidelity to our country and to our countrymen...." He noted that the blood of Americans had already been shed on Mexico's border and that President Polk had called for the immediate enrollment of three Ohio Infantry regiments. Recognizing the expediency of the situation Governor Bartley added: "Whatever may be the diversity of views, it is now sufficient for us to know that war exists on our borders and that it is our duty to exert every effort to secure a speedy and honorable termination."6

The Adjutant General's office established temporary depots for the gathering of Ohio volunteers at Cleveland, Massillon, Zanesville, Mansfield, Columbus and Dayton. Camp Washington, located on the western outskirts of Cincinnati, was made the point of rendezvous. General Order Number Two from the Adjutant's office stated that each volunteer would be given clothing at the depots or in Cincinnati in addition to his pay of $8 per month. Recruits were allowed to bring their own wraps and a list of necessities was printed in the General Order; however, inspecting and mustering officers were to see that "volunteers are not overloaded with baggage."7 Any supplies, arms, ammunition and related accoutrements not issued at Camp Washington
were to be received as the troops passed the federal arsenal at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on their way to Mexico.\(^8\)

In order to finance troop mobilization, that is, sustain the volunteers until they were turned over to a United States officer, Governor Bartley secured loans for the state from the Life Insurance and Trust Company of Cincinnati for $10,000 and the Clinton Bank of Columbus for $4,032.75. The balance of the claims, said the Governor was "held by individuals who, being controlled by a spirit of patriotism, advanced their own funds to aid in the emergency of the case."\(^9\) The money, of course, was to be repaid to the banks and private individuals upon reimbursement of the state by the federal government.

When the call for volunteers reached the Ohio public, the citizenry was not unprepared to respond. A state militia system was well established and the members of the various brigades were accustomed to assembling for parades, special ceremonies and, if at no other time, to celebrate the anniversary of American independence. Upon hearing the Governor's proclamation, the militia system commenced operations. A spirit of muster excitement spread throughout much of the state as militia men rushed, most often to their respective county seats, where speeches were made, cannon fired, and parades organized to entice volunteer enrollment.

Frequently, ranking militia officers addressed the gatherings. After presenting their rendition of circumstances existing between the United States and Mexico, they called on their men, in the name of patriotism and duty, to volunteer. Colonel William Hatfield, at
the courthouse in Norwalk, addressed the men volunteering from Huron and Erie counties. He remarked that he wished no man to be deceived. "He knew there were many who seriously believed the war would be of short duration, that [the volunteers from Ohio] should never be brought into the conflict." Such was not the Colonel's opinion. He believed the troops were destined to see the Rio Grande and "he wished none to enlist, who would not do so under any circumstances whatever." The Colonel then requested that all those who had already or intended to volunteer take the opposite side of the house and the oath was administered to all those who had not previously been sworn in.10

Brigadier General James Rowe addressed a crowd of over 2,000, "enough to fill the courtyard and Paint Street," which gathered in Portsmouth. He alluded to the situation in the Southwest and spoke of the gallant deeds of General Taylor. Prompt action by the Ohio militia was expedient "in order to make a short and effective war...." General Rowe "appealed to the State pride of his auditory," urging the men to "come forward with alacrity, and show a disposition to serve their country." Adjutant Gilmore then detached some musicians who "passed along the lines, beating up for recruits." Within an hour, sixty-three men volunteered and were marched to the market house where they were sworn in and their names enrolled.11

At some gatherings the tone of appeal went beyond a mere call to duty. During the rally in Mansfield, remembered an eye-witness, the scene became melodramatic when Major William McLaughlin "sprang down from the stand, mounted his old horse, and rode about" urging men to
come forward. Finally, "springing from his saddle, he let his horse go its own way, and called all those who desired to enlist to form themselves into a group and join him in the march to Mexico[1]."
Seemingly the same emotionalism prevailed throughout the occasion as later that day the Major's actions were repeated on the public square in Mansfield. The net result was that "with little difficulty" two companies, one under McLaughlin and the other commanded by Thomas Ford, were raised for the campaign.  

Dewitt C. Loudon, a student at Ohio University, recorded in his journal the excitement of the call to arms in Athens. The streets of the town, he wrote, "were paraded with martial music and a large number of citizens assembled on the public square and heard a speech from R.C. Constable, after which they repaired to the hill North of town where the cannon was fired several times." But, the volunteers were excited by more than music, speeches and cannon. "R.C. Constable was very much excited partly by the music and partly by 'Canal Water,'" wrote Loudon. "He took a pretty wide swath and made no mistake." Although not yet himself a volunteer, Loudon went with the company, which had increased overnight to more than fifty, as far as Nelsonville where he "had a little - the tallest spree I ever had a hand in."  

After enlisting for service and electing officers, the companies usually established a camp grounds in a copse of trees on the edge of town where they had protection from the elements and room to drill. Here, the amount of preparation the troops received in military deportment depended on the experience and ability of their officers.
The Butler county men drilled very little "as nearly all the officers were inexperienced, and none more so than Captain [John B.] Weller, who was elected to that position during the rendezvous in the grove." And, it was reported that the Cass Rifle Guards from Huron and Erie counties "drilled very little, and the remainder of the day the soldiers lounged about the barracks." The appearance of the volunteers from Scioto county produced jeers from the citizens of Portsmouth, for "every man dressed in such clothes as they worked in at home." Most of the men came from rural districts, said a resident, and "afforded [sic.] considerable sport for our city-bred population."

On the other hand, some contemporary accounts note the very military behavior of volunteer companies, expressing confidence in the leadership and preparedness of their men. In Knox county, George Morgan was said to have drilled his men "eight hours a day for ten days" before marching them to Columbus en-route to Cincinnati. And Morgan's men were not an exception. The critical spirit of the Portsmouth residents, mentioned above, was transformed when they witnessed the military-like demeanor of the companies from the interior of the state that passed through their city. The people resolved that it would be a disgrace to send their company off to war so poorly clad. "They soon raised by subscription a sum sufficient to purchase material and set all the sewing women in the city to work and in a day or two had [the Scioto] company in as complete uniform as any company from Ohio."
Whether or not the volunteers were adequately prepared by their officers for the Mexican campaign, the troops were certainly sent forward with sufficient moral inspiration. Women's auxiliaries in many counties sewed flags for the local company and presented them to the commanding officers on the eve of departure. One presentation speech, made by Miss Catharine Dubble of Lancaster, has survived and is probably characteristic of the charge admonished on the volunteers by such groups. In part, she said:

...war has been declared by Mexico; American blood has been shed on American soil. To protect American life and property from destruction, and American soil from the pollution of hostile steps, the Government of the United States has called out the Volunteer force of the Republic. To that call thus made you have enthusiastically responded; you have with a patriotism and zeal worthy of the fiery days of the Revolution left your usual peaceful occupations, the calm and quiet home, the joys of family intercourse, for the stern and weary toils of a soldier's life - The Ladies of Lancaster in admiration and gratitude for your patriotism and gallantry, have desired to present you with some token of that admiration and gratitude. They have wrought for you this flag....We have committed it to brave hands and pure hearts. It will never be subdued or surrendered.\(^19\)

Such presentations often caused the recipients to burst forth in sentimentality and bold resolve. The captain of the Fairfield company assured the Ladies of Lancaster that although the flag was ever dear to the heart of the patriot, "It became doubly dear when female friends whom we know and admire, have, as you [Miss Dubble] have expressed it, wrought upon its folds." And, when "we gaze upon its stars and stripes in a distant land, we shall remember that to our hands you have confided it as a holy and sacred symbol, never to be subdued, never to be surrendered."\(^20\) The captain of the Stark
county volunteers expressed his gratitude to the Ladies of Massillon for the flag, "an offering of generous and holy hearts, [that] shall be to us a hallowed treasure. The gift of pure and lovely women, we shall look upon it as a consecrated emblem, and our hearts draw inspiration of goodness from its contemplation." Both officers gave their assurance that dishonor would never stain the ensign. They charged that their men had sworn ever to prove worthy of the public's confidence - "never to disgrace this flag" and promised that "it shall be our flag of victory or our burial shroud."

Also, the volunteers received moral inspiration from the spiritual leadership of their community. Addressing the troops from the front steps of Mr. T. Johnson's home in St. Clairsville, the Reverend James Alexander said "that he deplored the existence of war," but it had become "a necessary evil." It was, therefore, "the duty of the citizens to take up arms in defence of their country...." He concluded by saying "he hoped never to hear that the Belmont volunteers suffered the Star Spangled banner disgraced, or they themselves shot in the back."

"The duty of a Soldier is couched in a single term, obedience," preached the Reverend Joshua Wilson to a company of volunteers. Using the Capernaum centurian to portray the ideal soldier, Reverend Wilson said, "He was a good man and good men are valiant. It is the wicked that flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Also, the pastor assured his audience that the taking up of arms was not inconsistent with piety. All men knew that wars motivated by ambition, avarice and revenge resulted in tyranny and
oppression. However, he said, "when arms are employed for the disposition of tyrants, for the defence of innocence, for the protection of property, or liberty, of life - Justice approves, and heaven smiles with approbation." In conclusion, Reverand Wilson prayed that each volunteer would accept the centurlan's savior "as your King" and rule their own spirit that they "be cool and firm in the hour of danger." To be worthy to command each soldier must learn to obey. "Be faithful to God", he stated," and you will never betray your country."

Local auxiliaries of the American Bible Society, too, offered inspiration to the recruits by presenting them with New Testaments. John Creed, in presenting the Bibles to the Fairfield volunteers, asked that each man accept a copy "as a gift more valuable than any other that could be awarded." He admonished the troops to acknowledge the protection of God "as our Fathers In that period which 'tride men's souls'" and he hoped that through every trial the men would fully realize the "rich blessing of Heaven." "That God may guard and protect you," said Creed, "is our devout prayer."

An emotional ambivalence overwhelmed the Ohio communities as the volunteers departed for the general rendezvous at Camp Washington. The editor of the St. Clairsville Gazette wrote that "the citizens formed a line and gave them a handsome escort through and out of town, and parted with three deafening cheers." At the same time, he noted:

as a matter of course our females witnessed this scene with feelings of the deepest emotion and the big tear drops fell from their eyes as tokens of the almost
broken hearts of wives, sisters, and mothers, as they
looked upon the solemn tread of our citizen soldiers,
perhaps for the last time. 27

A journalist in Lancaster also observed the seriousness of the case
and wrote: "It is peculiarly solemn to witness such a scene - to see
the citizens of our country leaving their homes, their friends and
all they hold dear, to battle in their country's cause - to engage in
a dangerous and arduous enterprise." 28 In Dayton, people covered the
banks of the canal, roofs and bridges, and filled the streets "all
vying with each other in acts of kindness to the departing soldiers
and their weeping families." "The excitement was intense," said one
eyewitness, with the crowd "alternately crying and cheering." 29 And,
it was said that "nearly every man, woman, and child in Butler
County" witnessed the embarkation of the volunteers. The "cries of
women mingled with the shouts of the men made a strange mixture of
grief and jollity," recalled an observer. 30

The Ohio water system provided the primary means of transporting
the volunteers to Camp Washington. The companies marched from their
county seat, the first point of organization, to the nearest branch
of the canal network and, passing through a depot established by the
Adjutant General that lay on their route, made their way to the Ohio
River. The hardships that would afflict the volunteers throughout
their term of service seem to have begun with this first venture from
home, for one soldier wrote:

Our accommodations on the canal boat were extremely
poor. Our fare was sour bread and raw bacon. We had
either to sleep on the deck without blankets or else to
pile in amidships like hogs in a cold night. Several
of us were made sick on the way by our hard usage. 31
After reaching the Ohio River, the troops were transferred to steamboats for the remainder of their passage to Cincinnati.

General Order Number Four issued by the Adjutant General contained the rules and regulations under which Camp Washington was to be administered. No ardent spirits were allowed in camp and the firing of weapons was permitted only by order of commanding officers. Moreover, there was to be "no profane swearing, gambling, boisterous conversations, or riotous conduct...." Regulations on leaves were strict, as well. No more than six men from each company were allowed to leave camp at one time and leaves no longer than three hours could be granted only by the commandant. In an effort to acclimate these civilian volunteers to military life, the Adjutant General advised that the camp rules not be "strictly enforced" for the first three days of the encampment, "but after that period, the strictest adherence to them will be expected and required."32

The daily routine of camp life began with reveille at daylight, then roll call and drill in undress uniform at six o'clock. In one hour the signal for breakfast - "peas upon a trencher" - was beat and a second roll call taken. At nine o'clock the men were to assemble for police, drill, fatigue and guard duty. "Roast beef" was the signal for dinner and roll call at noon. Company drill was held at four o'clock and parade, in full dress, was made at sunset. "Tahoe" sounded at nine o'clock and after roll call all men were required to repair their tents. Taps sounded at nine thirty when all lights were to be extinguished and silence in camp preserved. The Adjutant's order ended with a charge to the volunteers stating:
Submission to rules and obedience to orders are indispensable to an army, and expected of every officer and soldier of the Ohio Volunteers. And when an order is given by a superior, it should be promptly obeyed. If you would learn to command, you should first learn to obey. Pride, not power - Patriotism, not fear - should regulate the 'Ohio Volunteers...!' If you would be foremost in the field, be first in the ranks. If you are eager to march, then learn to march. If you seek to be useful, be always at your post, and vigilant on duty.... Every volunteer must seek to promote order, harmony, and system, and remember the eyes of the State and our Country are upon you.

Camp Washington was situated on the canal, three or four miles west of Cincinnati, near old Fort Washington. The grounds were a mile in circumference, with the soldiers encamped on a hill at one side of the field while the other side, which was level, was used for training. The line of soldiers' tents extended "60 rods and back to a considerable depth." The tents of each company were formed in two lines with a parade ground between; "Privates' tents in front. Officers' in rear. Tables and fires still further in rear." Camp life appears to have been anything but monotonous. "There was lots of fun there," wrote Frank Hardy, "fiddling, dancing, singing, negroes playing the banjo &c. &c. We lived in tents...each calculated for 6 men & we lodged in them very comfortably - our food is beef, pork, bread, beans, rice, coffee, &c. - We are clothed by Uncle Sam & get $8.00 per month for service." Major Luther Giddings said that crowds of people from all parts of Ohio, "attracted by various motives," were in daily attendance at camp Washington. Contrary to the Major's expectation, "but little sickness prevailed in the encampment." There "was only one death during the month we remained at the rendezvous," he noted.
Where did these men come from and why did they assemble with such enthusiasm at Camp Washington? Altogether, forty-one Ohio counties organized at least one company (93 men average size) made-up of its own residents to serve in the war. These areas of militant support are located, generally, along a line extending from the Southwest toward the geographic center of the state, then, north to Lake Erie. Counties that raised companies but do not lie in this path — Columbiana, Jefferson, Belmont, Athens, Scioto — are found adjacent to the Ohio River. This group, representing 48% of Ohio's counties, had an average population of 29,500 and contained 61% of the state's population.

Not surprisingly, this group of counties included those selected by the Adjutant General to host a temporary depot for gathering troops. What is interesting, however, is that numbered among those raising their own company are seven Ohio counties that contained Federal Land Offices. Three other counties having land offices although not forming their own company, did send volunteers with neighboring county units. Sentiment favoring national expansion, thus, manifest itself in the Buckeye State during the call to arms.

The letters of the volunteers contain several themes, intertwined but nevertheless distinct, which further explains why young men in Ohio volunteered for service in the Mexican War. Many believed that the nation's honor has been impugned by Mexico and must be defended. Early insults, such as the claims issue and boundary dispute, had been tolerable, but the time of forbearance had ended with the loss of American lives. Major Giddings recalled the
alacrity with which the men of Ohio tendered their services when "It
was known that American blood had been shed" and circumstances "had
reached a point where words must give place to acts...."41

Patriotism is always a contributing factor in causing men to
enlist in war and this spirit too is evidenced among the Ohio
volunteers. Dewitt Loudon heard the parades and speeches calling men
to arms from his dormitory room where upon he wrote his father
stating: "I have been upon the point of going and am yet in the same
notion... I did not want to join without getting leave from you;
and if I had had that I should have been in the first crowd." Going
off to war of course meant dropping out of school, but Loudon
contended:

I still want to graduate and for that reason I should
like to know whether you would send me to college
after I came back, provided first that I should go and
secondly that I get back safe. If you would not I had
better stay and study while I have the dimes.... If
your answer is favorable I'm off. I believe in the
saying of Decatur 'Our country may she always be
right; but we'll defend her right or wrong!'42

This young man's sense of patriotism is again illustrated by an
incident which occurred on the eve of his departure. He recorded in
his diary that he saw a banner hanging on a guide board with an
inscription "worthy of the rankest Tory that ever polluted the soil
of freedom with his footsteps." The sign read: "Our cause if just,
Our Motto True, the present war with Mexico on the part of the U.S.
is a war for Plunder." Loudon tore the banner to shreds "just as I
would like to serve the infamous scoundrel who put it there" and
pronounced the following oath:
May the judgments of Heaven follow the villain while he lives and when he dies there be none to mourn his righteous fate but may he go down to the vile dust from whence he sprung, unwept, unhonored, and unsung. Let the owl hoot over his grave, and the raven crook a dirge to his infernal memory.

While concerned about the anxiety that his enlistment had caused his parents, Frank Hardy believed that he must answer his nation's call to arms. He begged his folks to relinquish their anxious sentiments and not deprive themselves of the "pleasure and happiness which it seems to me you might experience in your present situation for you have four sons with you & a daughter close by and you do not want for anything...." Moreover, he asked them to consider "that if there were none to brave the dangers of war the glory & independence of our country would soon be gone - and gone forever." Hardy made his patriotic decision, then, in a rather pragmatic manner as opposed to Loudon's more emotional response.

Volunteers also viewed the call to arms as an opportunity to leave home and, in effect, establish their personal independence. One soldier characterized this sentiment by reasoning with his parents that since he had pretty faithfully served them during the years of his "minority," he ought to have the privilege of commanding his own "person." He added: "...as highly as I respect parental authority and prize parental advice - deprive me of full liberty to choose my own course of conduct and I would rather be confined in a prison than to look on the face of any man." Another Ohioan told his sister he was "now weaned from home" and did not foolishly pine for it "as some do thereby making themselves low in spirits and afflicted in body." Volunteering had opened the door of a new world
for he wrote: "I may be home again soon; it may be years - He that knows all things only can tell."^46

The volunteers' personal correspondence indicates, too, that some adventuresome young men enrolled primarily for pecuniary gain. John Cassil matter-of-factly stated "now is my opportunity." For him, Marysville had lost its allure; "...a man may spend his days there and if he is poor at first he will be so at last." On the other hand, Cassil was convinced that in going to Mexico he could "make that which every man so much seeks for - gold." He confessed it to be an arduous task but concluded that "If I fail I will have the satisfaction of having tried."^47 Nelson Huson went to Cincinnati seeking gainful employment about the time war broke out. Evidently not being enticed by the volunteer's pay of $8.00 per month (he wrote: "I did not finde work to soot [sic]....), Huson was employed aboard a steamboat and went to New Orleans. There, he found "work to soot" as a teamster for the army earning $25.00 per month. He later sailed with General Scott's expedition to Mexico.^48

Perhaps the most pathetic reason for volunteering that emerges from the historical record of the Ohio volunteers was a desire to escape the failures and frustration which life, to the time of enlistment, had offered. A sad story indeed is the tale of John W. Lowe who, wrote Carl Becker, met with frustration and anxiety in every attempt to establish himself as a lawyer, politician, and businessman. The chance to get a fresh start in life was pointed out to Lowe by his good friend, Ulysses Grant. The young lieutenant advised Lowe, through letters from Mexico, to seek command of a
volunteer company. This appeal came at a critical juncture in Lowe's life. "Heavily in debt, he saw in the income assured by military service a way to satisfy his creditors," stated Becker, and "at the same time he envisioned the achievement of personal glory." Still indecisive, the onset of disease, "probably an enteric disorder," and Lowe's belief that it was caused by the Batavia environment settled the question. Lowe believed that volunteering would provide the martial fame needed to rejuvenate his legal career and the economic salvation to relieve him of insistent creditors. "The futility that Lowe's life was in Batavia," wrote Becker, "impelled him to take part in the Mexican War, itself a chapter of failure in his life."^49

When the time came, in 1846, for organizing the companies into regiments bound for Mexico, Governor Bartley was placed in the unenviable position of having to choose among the overwhelming number of volunteers to fill Ohio's quota. On June 19, the St. Clairsville Gazette noted that nearly 1500 men were already in camp and 1250 more were enroute to Cincinnati.^50 One week later, the Governor reported that thirty-eight companies (approximately 3500 men) had "tendered their services" and "are all anxious to be received and dispatched without delay to the theatre of active operations on the Mexican frontier."^51

Among the Governor's papers are letters from company commanders who, fearing they would not reach Camp Washington in time to be assigned, hoped to reserve a position among the regiments for themselves and their men. Captain Joseph Hawkins wrote that his company from Preble County stood "in readiness to march at a moment's
warning to any point where the country may require our services." In an anxious manner, the captain petitioned for an "immediate acceptance of our services, and a prompt dispatch of our commissions to this place...."\(^52\) Sergeant William Taneyhill, likewise, sought to attract the Executive's attention. He informed the Governor that the men from Holmes County were making their way to Camp Washington and were "eager to take up their line of march to the seat of war on the Mexican frontier there to 'do or die' for their country."\(^53\)

Nevertheless, the state's quota did not provide the Governor with adequate space for assigning all the volunteers. The circumstance of having to choose from among so many companies, said Bartley, "especially when is considered the season of the year, and the nature of the climate in which these volunteers are destined to operate, speaks well for the spirit, the zeal, and patriotism of Ohio's sons, and cannot be a source of pride and congratulation to all her citizens, as it is gratifying to the Governor."\(^54\) In performing the "unwelcome duty" of determining which were to be organized into regiments, the Executive assured the men that he had "carefully considered every circumstance connected with the enrollment, location, and condition of each of the companies" and that he had deliberated "with an eye single to the rights of the parties and the good of the service...."\(^55\)

The Governor expressed a word of condolence to those who were omitted from the regiment lists, apologizing for "the chagrin and disappointment he inflict[ed] upon the volunteers whc...are debarred the privilege of serving their country under his call." He assured
them that they were not rejected because they were regarded in any manner "less meritorious" than the others, but such was the result of "a decision as has seemed to him just, proper, and absolutely necessary...." Governor Bartley, in asking these men to retire cheerfully and in a spirit of subordination, appealed to the volunteers' patriotism. He admonished them to be as true soldiers and obey with alacrity "when ordered to retreat as well as advance...."56

The Governor's words, however, did little to mollify the spirits of the rejected volunteers for their overall reaction was one of bitterness and frustration. The officers of the Holmes County company blamed their fate on "the counsel of a few political aspirants" who sprang at the excitement of war "to make themselves a little buncombe...." The Holmes men were advised to make up an independent company not knowing "this Independent movement to be for home service and that the leaders and many of the rank and file did not intend to fight...." Once this was discovered, all those who desired to serve their country "left that crowd and immediately were sworn in under the Brig[adier] General." But, all this took too much time and the state's quota was filled before the Holmes volunteers could reach the rendezvous.57

The Morgan County Riflemen, commanded by Captain Love, believed that "politicizing" and "favoritism" prevented them from going to Mexico. They were assured a position in the Third Regiment, argued a former member of the group, "but in a course of a week or ten days all the company except the captain was at home." Why?
A Major for the 3rd Regiment was to be elected, and with Captain Love's company in the regiment the election to that place of a young man from Muskingum County was rather doubtful; in order to secure it the company [from Morgan County] was thrown out and another substituted.

This, of course, produced remonstrance from the captain and his fellow officers; nevertheless, the company was discharged and furnished with transportation home. As a retributive measure, however, "Love's friends determined to defeat the Muskingum candidate, which result they effected, electing Love, who remained with the regiment as major until discharged at Buena Vista." 58

Perhaps the volunteers most chagrined by the Governor's troop selection were men from Hamilton County. Owing to their close proximity to Camp Washington - the fact that they were in camp first and drilled there longer than anyone - the men from the Cincinnati area contended that the regiments should be organized on a "first come, first served" basis. When some realized that despite their early presence they were not assigned to a regiment, they "mutinied, and for a time the unusual occurrence was presented of men ready to fight for the privilege of being enrolled for the fatigues and dangers of war." 59

It would be misleading to assume that dissatisfaction among the Ohio militia with the call to arms stemmed solely from rejection for foreign service. Other sources reveal that some Ohioans were concerned about the environment that awaited the troops in Mexico. A prospective volunteer from Drake County assured the Governor that the citizens from Greenville loved their country and would defend it. "They do not fear the Mexicans," he wrote, "but they are afraid of
the climate south - they [ask] why the volunteers of Ohio and some other States are called into immediate service and many of the Southern States remain at home.\textsuperscript{60}

Also, not all the volunteers were completely satisfied with the army's inducements to join. In some areas the question of pay raised considerable debate. William McLaughlin, Major General in the Ohio Militia, promised the men from Huron County that each person who volunteered to serve during the war "would receive eleven dollars per month, and be entitled to a bounty of 160 acres of government land." The editor of the Huron Reflector wondered where McLaughlin received his authority for holding out these promises for "the Adjutant General of Ohio says privates will be entitled to only $8 per month, and there is no law which allows any bounty, either in money or land, to volunteers."\textsuperscript{61}

The same problem arose in Sandusky County where the Sandusky Clarion reported that great dissatisfaction prevailed among the company "most of whom had enlisted or subscribed their name under the delusion that they were to receive $11 per month, and a bounty of 160 acres of land on being discharged; in consequence of which serious doubts were entertained whether the company could be organized." Besides this misapprehension, when the men from Norwalk reached Mansfield, "they were subject to all the rules and regulations of war, and the money and clothing which had been promised, were not forthcoming, and with no certainty when they were to march, the soldiers began to conclude, as well they might, that all was deception - \textit{intentional misrepresentation} from the commencement."
According to one account, a mutinous spirit raged to such an extent that only the voice of General McLaughlin was able to quell it.62

Finally, there is evidence that disillusion with the war effort had an effect on the men who considered the second call for troops. Recruiting in 1847 was no easy chore for George Weaver, who led in organizing a company from Richland County. In May, he made an appeal for troops, offering ambitious spirits a chance to serve their country. "The spirit of romance, however, was somewhat worn off by this time" as many of the first year's recruits were returning to give discouraging accounts of the climate and life experienced in Mexico. Weaver "found recruiting a rather tedious task" and the ranks of the company were filled only after being supplemented with volunteers from other counties at Camp Washington.63

Three pockets of resistance to the call to arms are evident in the state. The explanation for this phenomenon in Northeast and Southeast Ohio is twofold. First, a significant percentage of the population in this area came from the Northeast section of the United States. The Connecticut Western Reserve, where seven counties offered no volunteers and three others only moderately participated, was settled primarily by people moving west from New England. Although the percentage of New England settlers was less in Southeast Ohio, still, the Ohio Company which operated in Salem, Massachusetts, sold many tracts of land in this area to persons from the North Atlantic States.64 Six counties in the Southeast corner of the state did not offer volunteers. The demographic background of these two areas suggests, then, that potential volunteers were dissatisfied
with the causes and/or the justness of the Mexican War and, hence, did not proffer their services.

The lack of volunteers from these two areas suggests also that politicians played a role in influencing the decision of the militia. Three of the five Ohio Whig Representatives who voted against the war bill came from the Western Reserve. Joshua R. Giddings, from Ashtabula County, was in fact the leader of opposition to the war in the House. Likewise, opposition sentiments were well represented in the Southeast. Throughout the war years, Whig politicians dominated the region's state legislative districts. A discussion of Ohio politicians and the war follows in a later chapter. 65

The Northwest section of Ohio also demonstrated little volunteer enthusiasm for the war. Again, the explanation is demographic in nature. It is simply that this area, the last to be settled in Ohio, was sparsely populated when war broke out. Counties like Henry, Paulding, and Van Wert had 3434, 1766, and 4993 residents, respectively. Moreover, the region's rugged lifestyle necessitated that all able-bodied men remain at home. A historian of Hardin County wrote that when the Mexican War was at its height, the county had only 1238 voters. "Of these many were men past middle age, whose pioneer trials and perils had weakened their bodies...." They were far too occupied in combating disease, wild animals, and ills due to isolation and lack of cleared land to venture off to war. 66 Altogether, the counties that did not participate in offering volunteers for the Mexican War numbered twenty-eight, had an average population of 15,400 and held 21% of Ohio population. 67
The overall response of the Ohio militia to the call to arms was considerable. Nearly 1000 Ohioans more than the state quotas for 1846 and 1847 combined volunteered for service. These young men, averaging twenty-six years of age, were anxious and excited to defend their county's honor on the Mexican frontier. Patriotism and duty called them to serve. There were adventures to experience and riches to be found. Marching off to war was an undeniable sign of manhood, offering an escape from the confines of home and past failures.

The militia department from Cincinnati was indeed a grand and magnificent occasion. They marched from camp to the levee in "full uniform with our knapsack & [fatigue] clothes &c. packed on our backs in regular war style." The route was lined with "a dense multitude of spectators." Mothers and fathers, wives and sweethearts eagerly scanned the passing ranks for a familiar face and "ran to add another blessing and a last adieu." The windows and doors of the houses were filled with ladies who waved their farewell and sent with it their blessing while the banks of the river were likewise crowded with exuberant masses. The volunteers boarded the steamboats "amid the roar of cannon & the cheers of the multitude." One volunteer remembered the friendly volleys of artillery "that announced our departure from the wharf, shook stout hearts that afterwards remained unmoved, when 'death toll in every booming shot that knelled upon the ear." Another volunteer described his departure as being "under peculiar circumstances."

On one side 'ather, brother, sister, on the other my acquaintances and a great many friends with whom I had lived in intimacy from childhood. There were many
girls (God bless them) with some of whom I had been spending some of the Glorious 4th [of July] most gloriously. After shaking hands with all I stepped on the boat and for once in my life could not refrain from shedding tears when I saw so many persons who seemed to be interested in my welfare shedding tears. The scene however encouraged me to resolve to requite myself worthy of my friends.

To all the manifestations of kindness exhibited by the crowd, reported one journalist, "the men responded with repeated cheers." The scene "was more like the triumphant return of victorious veterans, than the going forth of new recruits." In the midst of such pomp and fanfare, the Ohio volunteers set out for Mexico— their emotions churning in a pool of apprehension, anticipation, and resolve. Soon they would be "reveling in the halls of the Montezumas!"
1. Francis Heitman (ed.), Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army (2 vol., Washington D.C., 1903), 2, 282. Hamersly says the figure was 71,776 in Thomas H.S. Hamersly (ed.), Complete Regular Army Register of the United States for One Hundred Years, 1779-1879 (Washington D.C., 1880), 204.


3. Hamersly, Complete Regular Army Register, 204.

4. This is the ratio of Hamersly's statistics compared to the census records for men age 15 to 35. The Seventh Census of the United States 1850 (Washington D.C., 1853), 318.

5. Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio In the War of the Rebellion and in the Mexican War, (12 vols., Norwalk, 1895), 12, 585-597; Daniel J. Ryan, Ohio In Four Wars, (Columbus, 1917), 67-77.

6. Canton Ohio Repository May 12, 1846.

7. Norwalk Huron Reflector June 2, 1846.


9. Documents, Including Messages and other Communications made to the 45th General Assembly of the State of Ohio (Columbus, 1847), 11, pt. 1, 112. Governor Bartley expressed doubts that the War Department would make a refund of expenses to Ohio before the end of December, 1846. Nevertheless, he said that he "had frequent assurances that those expenditures would be met, and the money expended refunded to the state, and to the individuals who hold the claims." ibid.

10. Sandusky Clarion Weekly June 16, 1846.

12. A.A. Graham (ed.), *History of Richland County* (Mansfield, 1880), 295.


14. *A History and Biographic Cyclopedia of Butler County, Ohio, with Illustrations and Sketches of Its Representative Men and Pioneers* (Cincinnati, 1882), 199-207.


19. *Lancaster Gazette and Express* June 12, 1846.

20. Ibid.


22. Ibid.


25. *Cincinnati Cist's Weekly Advertiser* June 8, 1847.


27. *St. Clairsville Gazette* June 12, 1846.


32. *St. Clairsville Gazette* June 12, 1846.
33. Ibid.

34. Frank Hardy to William Hardy July 6, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).


36. Frank Hardy to William Hardy July 6, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

37. Luther Giddings, *Sketches of the Campaign in Northern Mexico by an Officer of the First Regiment of Ohio Volunteers* (New York, 1853), 17.

38. Hamilton county mustered the most volunteers by organizing at least ten companies. Franklin and Montgomery tendered four each while Licking and Richland sent three.

39. Percentages and population figures compiled from *The Seventh Census*.

40. Federal Land Offices were established in the following Ohio locations:
- Bucyrus, Crawford County
- Canton, Stark County
- Chillicothe, Ross County
- Cincinnati, Hamilton County
- Defiance, Defiance County
- Delaware, Delaware County
- Marietta, Washington County
- Steubenville, Jefferson County
- Wapakaneta, Auglaize County
- Wooster, Wayne County
- Zanesville, Muskingum County

Washington County was the only example of an area having a Federal Land office and not participating in the call to arms.


42. Dewitt Loudon to James Loudon June 3, 1846, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

43. Journal, Ibid.

44. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy November 11, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

45. Ibid.

46. John Cassil to H. Kinkade no date, John Cassil Papers (OHS).

47. Ibid.


51. *Chillicothe Scioto Gazette* June 25, 1846.

52. Joseph Hawkins to Governor Mordecai Bartley June 3, 1846, Mordecai Bartley Papers (OHS).

53. William Taneyhill to Governor Bartley June 3, 1846, Ibid.


55. The following is a list of the companies which went to Mexico. County names are used to denote residence of company members. The list was made by combining information from newspapers, county histories, and military reference books.

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<tr>
<th>First Regiment (1846)</th>
<th>Third Regiment (1846)</th>
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<td>1846-Sanderson's Mounted Riflemen:</td>
<td>Huron, Wayne, Franklin</td>
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<td>1847-John Duncan's Mounted Volunteers:</td>
<td>Licking</td>
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<td>1847-William Kenneally's First Foot:</td>
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<td>1847-Robert Riddle's Second Foot:</td>
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56. Chillicothe Scioto Gazette June 25, 1846.

57. Millersburg to Governor Bartley June 19, 1846, Mordecai Bartley Papers (OHS). In 1847, two companies from Holmes county were sent to Mexico.

58. Charles Robertson, History of Morgan County, Ohio, with Portraits and Biographical Sketches of some of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men (Chicago, 1886), 170.


60. Bill Mayor to Governor Bartley May 30, 1846, Mordecai Bartley Papers (OHS).

61. Norwalk Huron Reflector June 2, 1846.


63. Graham, History of Richland County, 300.

64. Thomas Ferguson, Ohio Land Grants (Columbus no date given), 3-15. Generally these are accepted demographic speculations about the background of Ohio settlers. No monograph on the subject exists.

65. Joseph Root and Daniel Tilden were the other Whigs from the Western Reserve who voted with Giddings against the war bill. The other two Ohioans who voted against the measure were Columbus Delano and Joseph Vance. Whig state senators controlled two districts in the southeast in 1846 and won a third in 1847. At the same time, they held the seats of five representative districts in that area of the state.

67. These figures were compiled from *Census 1850*.

68. The estimate of the number of volunteers not enrolled for service is based on accounts in county histories, newspapers, and the Governor's correspondence with rejected companies.

69. The *Official Roster of the Soldiers of Ohio* lists the ages of the troops; however, the accuracy of these numbers is questionable. For example, Dewitt Loudon is listed as 25 years of age, but his letters reveal that he was only 18.

70. Frank Hardy to William Hardy July 6, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).


72. *Eaton Democrat* July 8, 1847.

73. Frank Hardy to William Hardy July 6, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).


75. Journal, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

76. *Eaton Democrat* July 8, 1847.
CHAPTER 2
SOLDIERING IN MEXICO

"'Doing soldiering' is a melancholy thing...."  
(Zanesville Gazette, January 20, 1847)

From Cincinnati, steamboats transported the volunteers down the Ohio River to the confluence of the Mississippi and, in a matter of days, they docked near New Orleans. Here, the troops transferred to ocean steamers or brigs and made the week long passage to Mexico. Most transports anchored near the mouth of the Rio Grande River at Brazos Island, "a low sand bank about 8 miles long & from 1 to 3 wide.\textsuperscript{1} From this landing the troops advanced either up the Rio Grande to participate in the northern theater of operations under General Zachery Taylor, or further down the coast, to Vera Cruz, becoming part of General Winfield Scott's command.

For many volunteers, the passage to Mexico was agreeable and even exciting. Few previously had seen the "Father of Waters." "It is, emphatically, one of the grandest specimens of nature," wrote a volunteer from Huron County, "and awakens no ordinary feelings in the mind of the beholder.\textsuperscript{2} Private Frank Hardy, of the Third Regiment, reported the pleasant conditions on the river stating: "The weather since we left Cinti. has been delightful - there has been a breeze
blowing up the river continually which with the motion of the boat against it has made it the most delightful weather I ever saw."3

The mood among the men was one of anticipation and excitement. The war "affords such a chance to see the world," explained a volunteer to his family, "I could not withstand the temptation to go."4 Seeing a regiment of Kentucky horsemen near Louisville, the men of the Second Ohio raised a cheer which "was a caution to them what don't like noise" and a "noise" again echoed when they passed an Indiana regiment at New Albany.5 Besides being boisterous, at least one officer appraised his men "wild, thoughtless, and careless." They were continually at his cabin door complaining of toothaches, reporting lost shaving tools, alleging that their cup and plate had been stolen, and even asking to borrow money.6 Although their behavior proved them flappable and immature, the recruits were tempered with sincere resolve. Each man was convinced that his company would "honorably and faithfully" discharge each obligation which their friends and their country demanded. No force could seduce them "from the path of duty."7

The fact that the volunteers were bound for the seat of war during the Fourth of July served to charge their emotions further with patriotism and resolution. Officers were called out to address the men in the usual custom of "speechifying" to celebrate American Independence. Every member of the First Ohio Regiment agreed that the address of Brigadier-General Thomas Hamer, a state congressman who resigned his seat to join the volunteers, was the outstanding speech of the day. "His manner was natural; his gestures, graceful;
his words well selected from an abundant store," wrote a member of
the regiment. Using the men of the Revolution to illustrate, the
General stressed the importance of discipline and subordination among
men enrolled in a military venture. "Glory," he shouted at the
culmination of his address, is "the seed fruit of toil and danger, not of idleness and pleasure." Hamer's message, from all accounts,
had a good effect on solidifying the volunteers' determination to
serve their country well.8

Unusual sites and events lent an air of diversion to the trip
south. Dewitt Loudon remembered the excitement with which the men of
the Third Ohio rushed off to see the "Kentucky Giant." This colossus
of a man, who managed a grocery store along the river near
Louisville, was "8 1/2 feet high" and had a rifle "10 feet long." After seeing him, however, Loudon only concluded that he "does not
look stout" and it "seems as though he walks with difficulty."9

Charles Brough, colonel of the Fourth Ohio Regiment, recounted a
most unusual incident when he was awakened in the night by the cry of
"man overboard!" Soon, however, it was discovered that the Colonel's
presentation horse, rather than one of the volunteers, was missing.
The boat halted and after a prolonged search in the darkness, "Old
Fellow" was found standing on the nearest bank. "His instinct
conducted him to that shore," wrote Brough, "although to reach it he
had to cross the track of the boat to the stern in the midst of her
waves." The horse was reloaded and safely transported the remainder
of the journey.10
Perhaps the most interesting spectacle along the route was the condition and appearance of slavery. To the Buckeyes, plantations looked like little towns that sat narrow along the river and extended back into the hinterland. "The planters live in splendid houses generally," wrote one Ohioan, "and the slaves live in small houses (some of them are quite comfortable) which are arranged in rows...." In one instance, the volunteers went ashore to visit an estate. The men "kindly offered their assistance to the slaves, by showing them a specimen of their activity in hoeing [sic.] cotton." In return, the slaves directed them to "an excellent spring of water and Massa's watermelon patch...."

But, hardships were also part of the volunteers' fare on the trip to Mexico. Unfortunately, not all the alarms like that heard by Colonel Brough were erroneous. Several Ohioans did lose their lives by drowning and, although not given proper burial rites, were eulogized by their comrades for perishing "not in the camp or field of conflict, but in a watery grave." Accommodations for the privates were, in many cases, less than adequate. They were stowed wherever they could find a place while officers enjoyed the steamers' spacious cabin rooms. In addition, they were provided with no means to cook bacon or heat coffee. One veteran remembered that while crossing the gulf "provisions were brought out and scattered along on deck, just as the farmer scatters corn for his swine." Such was the plight of the privates that one of their number wrote: "No body seemed to care whether they [we] starved or not."
Motion sickness, however, seems to have been the principal foe of the troops during their passage. While moving down the river systems, a few complained of illness and the boat's "violent" movement, but accounts of the passage across the gulf are replete with references to sickness. On this passage," wrote Private Loudon, "I experienced the most severe sickness with which I was ever afflicted." The men were on the open waters no more than thirty minutes before they were "spewing and grunting terribly." Officers and men were making all manner of faces," wrote Colonel Brough," and occasionally as the ship lurched more violently than usual, hastily making tracks for the bulwarks. Captain John Lowe summed up the condition of himself and his comrades with a simple rhyme: "The blue above and the blue below, the sicker I get the further we go." The volunteers' poor condition resulted from their not being accustomed to travel on the open sea and the shallow, choppy waters of the gulf. And, their predicament was worsened by gulf storms - "Great Northerners" - which blew up rapidly and could prevent landing for days at a time. An Ohioan who endured one such storm recalled that the ship "at times seemed to be on a hill & then immediately it would plunge down between the waves & the water would dash over the Brig pretty smartly...." Although he assured his family that "there was little danger of being wrecked," many ships were blown aground at Brazos Island littering the beach with foodstuffs, bottles, woven goods and wood.
After anchoring, the sea weary recruits faced an agonizing delay while a limited number of shallow draft boats made monotonous rounds between the brigs and the shore unloading men and provisions. Although glad to be ashore, the men were again forced to wait until baggage wagons became available. In the meantime, they lay on the beach, exposed to the sweltering tropical sun, their constitutions already depleted. When orders finally came to march inland, a number of the troops were too weak to walk and had to be hauled to our encampment in one of the baggage wagons...

Albeit physically weakened the spirit of the volunteers was sustained by the fact that they were, at last, in Mexico. Moving upcountry past sites made famous by widely publicized accounts of the war's opening battles - Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma - revived the morale of the men. Upon sighting the "striped and starry flag" above the walls of Fort Brown, one sickly Ohioan remarked: "It is no easy task to describe one's feelings as he first sees his country's flag floating triumphantly over a conquered foe bearing witness of the gallantry and courage of his countrymen." Thus, the troops manifest a resilient spirit early in the campaign and it proved to be a principal asset of the volunteers throughout the war.

A number of Ohioans who were members of the regular army also served in Mexico. Four men illustrate Ohio's participation in this regard. Ulysses Grant, who grew up in Brown County, was a lieutenant in the Fourth Infantry when the conflict began. Years afterward, Grant recalled that his first ambition had been "to become an assistant professor of mathematics at West Point," but because so
many officers of the regiment had been assigned to other duties he chose to stay with the unit. The Fourth infantry formed part of the Army of Occupation which sailed from New Orleans to Corpus Christi in September, 1845, under the command of Zachary Taylor. Grant, although not convinced that the war's cause was just, served two years under Taylor, then, in 1847, transferred with his regiment to General Scott's command and participated in the march to the valley of Mexico.

Francis Collins, a native of Butler County, and William T. Sherman, who hailed from Lancaster, were both more anxious than Lieutenant Grant to serve at the seat of war. In 1846, both men were recruiting officers assigned to fill the regular army regiments in preparation for war. Collins was stationed in Raleigh and, later, Greensboro, North Carolina. The latter town he described as being "so inaccessible to all news that I was utterly ignorant of what I was most desirous to know, viz., how my comrades were getting on in the field, and whether they were advancing their promotion while I was vegetating in that remote and insignificant village." Much to Collins's relief, he was finally ordered to return to Fort Monroe, Virginia, and from thence to join his regiment in Mexico. Although an illness delayed his departure, he was able to reach Brazos Island in time to take part in General Scott's campaign.

Anxious to enter the fray in Mexico, Sherman gathered the twenty-five recruits he had enrolled at Pittsburg and set out for Newport, Kentucky, where he hoped to find Colonel Fanning, the superintendent who "would send me on down the River." Eventually, he
found the Colonel in Cincinnati, but instead of being complimented for his feat and aspiration, Sherman wrote: "I got a regular old fashioned army cursing for leaving my post without orders and was ordered most emphatically to get back to Pittsburg at once." Upon returning to his post, Sherman found waiting for him a letter from Edward O. C. Ord, a friend who was being sent to California with an artillery company. Discovering that an opening existed on the unit's staff for a First Lieutenant, Ord recommended Sherman to his superiors. After informing the Ohioan of all that had transpired, Ord summarized:

Now Sherman this is the best opening the zoning time forces have had for many years, & I almost know you would be delighted with such a chance, but & having those buts I you, it appeared to me when we parted, were a little anxious about something, or somebody, west & I attributed it to domestic prospects soon to be.... The Co. is filled with picked men & I presume that it...is to take possession of California.... I wouldn't miss this trip for a thousand dollars Sherman, and so I think wouldn't you.

Ord had correctly assessed Sherman's situation. Going to war meant leaving Ellen Ewing, his sweetheart, later to become his wife, for nearly four years; nevertheless, wrote Sherman: "For me to stay on recruiting service whilst a war is going on was to [sic.] terrible to contemplate...." Hence, the First Lieutenant, convinced that his participation would result in glories won and promotion gained, made his way to New York in time to sail with the expedition to California.

Finally, Abraham Robinson Johnston, son of John Johnston, the Federal Indian Agent in Piqua, served in the Mexican War as
aid-de-camp to General Stephen Kearny. The Captain's duties included outfitting the expedition which Kearny lead from Fort Leavenworth, through Santa Fe and on to the conquest of California. "To fit regular troops for so long a march is a great undertaking," wrote Johnston, "but to equip and put in fighting order fifteen hundred volunteers, all of whom (even the officers) being ignorant of their duties, is a task requiring a large stock of patience." Like the volunteers who landed at Brazos Island, Johnston and the men of Kearny's expedition suffered considerably on their trip to Mexico. At one point, Johnston recorded in his journal: "Our men killed a horse today for food....Poor fellows! They are well nigh naked - some of them barefoot - a sorry looking set." But, also like the Buckeye volunteers, Johnston's spirit remained undaunted by his circumstances. "A dandy would think that, in those swarthy sun burnt faces, a lover of his country will see no signs of quailing," he wrote. "They will be ready for their hour when it comes." Traditionally, historians have argued that the Yankee soldiers suffered a dismal plight in Mexico. The climate exhausted them and disease assailed their ranks; there was not enough "battle" to quench their thirst for action and boredom spoiled the experience for many. These generalizations are true; yet, in themselves they do not accurately portray the experience of the American soldiers. While the Ohioans did endure hardship, disease and boredom, they also availed themselves of comfort, health and recreation.

The principle physical hardships suffered by Ohioans were marches made over the rugged terrain of Mexico and disease indigenous
to the tropical climate. Whether moving inland with a military advance or performing escort duty for supply wagons, the long marches were arduous experiences, indeed. Moving up the Rio Grande valley with General Taylor's expedition, the Buckeyes claimed that the temperature reached 120° F. The bushes of the chaparral were "just high enough to keep off the air, while they did not in the least exclude the sun...."

After advancing a day's journey from Vera Cruz, Lieutenant Collins was told by officers who had been with the army on other campaigns that "they have never endured such suffering on a march as they have experienced today." Because the generals rode horses, wrote Collins, they "didn't realize the severity of marching through sandy soil or the heat." Such campaigns took a heavy toll on the men. Few of them had been in the service long enough to be physically conditioned for marches of fifteen to twenty-five miles. They fell along the way suffering from heat exhaustion, sun stroke and blistered feet. In order to keep up with the advance, several Ohioans purchased mustangs and burros. This scheme frequently failed, however, for the animals were usually found to be stolen property or untrained. Sources of good drinking water were sparsely scattered across the countryside. A sulphur spring located on the route to Monterey provided the men with water "better than that of the Bluelick springs in Kentucky," but on the march to Saltillo the troops recalled traveling nineteen miles and having no more water than that in their canteens. Too often, the men were forced to drink from ponds, "thick with a green scum over it, and full of dead fish, and cattle," the latter having
perished after becoming stuck in the mud. There was a saying among the men, recalled an old Ohio veteran, that the water in Mexico was at times so thick, "you had to bite it off when you wanted to stop drinking." And, the poor condition of Mexican roads meant that accoutrements and supplies sometimes failed to keep pace with the troops. "The tent and knapsacks of my mess were not brought," complained a member of the First Ohio Regiment, "and I was left without tent, blanket, coat, or pants." An Ohioan in the regular army remarked that he began the campaign at Vera Cruz with four days' rations in his haversack and a month had passed without the receipt of food stuffs. His company, he explained, had subsisted on animals in the area, especially Mexican cattle, until supply trains arrived.

Remarkably, 87% of all American casualties in the Mexican War were due to disease. Among the five Ohio Regiments, there were 348 casualties with 286 or 82% attributed to sickness. Ohioans believed that the unhealthy condition of Mexican cities was a major cause of illness. William Sherman blamed the filthiness of Monterey, California, a town he described as "full of dirt and fleas," for the death of his close friend Colville Minor. Vera Cruz, especially noted for its unsanitary condition during the summer months, claimed the lives of many Yankees. An army teamster from Ohio who was moving supplies inland for Scott's campaign, wrote: "In vary Cruse It is vary sickly here yet [August, 1847] with the yellow fever and black vomit they is a grant many Amercians dying here every day." [sic.] The unhealthy conditions of the port city continued
through the following spring when American troops were withdrawing from Mexico. Francis Collins was outraged that the troops were rushed "to the immediate vicinity of the fatal city of Vera Cruz" to be stranded for three weeks waiting to embark. "If ships have not

DEATH TOTALS

Regulars & Volunteers in United States Military

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Volunteers in United States Military

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Ohio Regiments

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<td>62</td>
<td>286</td>
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* estimates made based on % from other regiments


c Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion and in the Mexican War (12 vols., Norwalk, 1895), 12, 585-597.
arrived as fast as expected," he asked, "why were we not allowed to remain in the health region of Jalapa, until they were ready for us?"

Collin's plea that his men be moved out of the city went unheeded and, as he feared, the fever broke out among the troops causing more casualties even as they sailed homeward. 45

Poor camping conditions and bad food also attributed to the soldiers' sickly plight. Without question, the worst campsite endured by the Ohioans was Camp Belknap, located on the banks of the Rio Grande near the town of Camargo. Between the tents and the river lay water "midleg deep" which "stunk very sensibly." 46 The men were compelled to traverse this swamp in order to obtain their provisions. The supplies were "carried in barrels, swung on poles, the ends of which rested upon the aching shoulders of the volunteers, and sinking knee-deep in the mire." 47 The drinking water was very bad, wrote a volunteer, but "we are glad to drink it, mud and all, considering the distance we have to carry it, the scorching weather, and the salt provisions." 48 The food at Belknap was equally abominable, being infested with "critters" which if not dead from eating bad flour would have "made biscuits come to life." Nevertheless, a private wrote he "would not mind this so much, if they would only serve us out enough; we do not get half rations, and were it not for the wild beef we shoot, we would starve." 49

The camp was thought by Ohioans to be the most sickly place in the Rio Grande valley. The low, saturated ground, wrote a volunteer officer, gave off exhalations "which were quickened by the heat of summer into pestilent malaria." 50 Although the fallacy of the
soldier's belief in the cause of disease is self-evident, his testimony that the hospital tents at Camargo "were constantly full" cannot be doubted. The dead were removed "at sunrise and sunset, but to make room for the dying," he wrote despondently. The death march "was ever walling in our ears, and even at this distant period, I can scarcely look back to our brief stay there without a shudder.\textsuperscript{51} The pathetic condition of the men at Camp Belknap prompted another Buckeye to tell his family: "If you could have seen us you would not wonder that the patriotic fire within our breasts was dampened, if not extinguished.\textsuperscript{52}

However, the situation at Belknap does not generally characterize the camping conditions of the Ohioans. In Monterrey, for example, the First Regiment quartered in an old college "built four square like the Neal House, with a courtyard inside." "Yes," quipped a young soldier to his father, "If I am not pursuing my studies I at least eat and sleep in a college."\textsuperscript{53} Dry and comfortable housing was also enjoyed by the men of the Fourth Ohio, in Puebla. Colonel Brough reported that his regiment was quartered in a "spacious Monastery" where, with fifteen privates sharing each room, 600 men were being housed.\textsuperscript{54}

The record left by the Ohioans also demonstrates that accommodations in an army tent could be quite satisfactory. Frank Hardy and his six mess mates shared a tent which covered an area ten feet square, reached to nine feet high in the center and was "shaped like the roof of a house." Inside, wrote Hardy:
We have a large chest sitting on one side in which we put some of our clothes, our dishes, sugar, coffee &c. &c. we also have a barrel on the same side which we fill with water from the river every night.... from end to end nearly up to the top we have a line tied on which we hang a part of our clothes & the rest of them we put in our knapsacks - on one side we spread down an old bed tick & spread our blankets on it & lay down our knapsacks for pillows...the weather is so warm that we do not need any covering. We have a piece of board fastened up at one end of the tent to hold our muskets up which we keep loaded & our cartridge boxes hung on them ready for use at a moments warning.55

No doubt, some of the food provided for the troops was spoiled and certainly rations at times were scarce; however, the Ohioans divulge that, generally, they enjoyed palatable foodstuffs and a variety in their diet. The troops used the abundance of flour, salt pork and soap issued by the quartermaster to trade with Mexican venders in local markets. Most often they bought fresh meat and fruit from the natives, but they also traded for corn, bread, coffee and milk.56 Colonel Brough expressed a great pleasure at the variety of foodstuffs offered at his mess including chickens, eggs, fruits, turkey, coffee and milk. Indeed the Colonel must have enjoyed the food for he confessed: "I am surely twenty pounds heavier...then when I left home."57

After several months' experience, the troops were convinced that they could cook "as well as two thirds of the women."58 One volunteer, especially proud of his ability to make good coffee, claimed that it tasted "like mother's used to."59 Another bragged that he was "a pretty tall cook" and rightfully so if his tale is true. "I can make good light bread, light biscuit, [sic.] short cakes, dough nuts, flap jacks, sweet cakes and dumplings," he
boasted. And, the soldiers asserted that by flavoring their meat and vegetables with a sauce made from Mexican peppers and vinegar, they concocted "one of the richest soups which can be produced."

The physical rigors of the Mexico campaign were not the only challenges to the troops. Their spirit and morale were tested as well by the mundane penchant of a soldier's life. Visions of battle, honor and glory disappeared for many of the "stern realities of salt pork and hard biscuit, hunger, thirst, fatigue" took their place. "We are literally hewers of wood and carriers of water, and nothing else," wrote a disillusioned Ohioan. Boredom overtook another volunteer who lamented:

What is there then left for the 2nd Ohio, but to now and then, when it had no grave to fill, ask itself what day of the month it was, indulge in some remembrances of having seen a dollar, carry its clothes sentimentally to the wash and then wash them itself, eat its 'middlings,' and look in the post office.

Missing out on the battles and armed conflict was the most difficult woe to endure for Lieutenant Sherman. After realizing his remote situation in California, he confessed: "I fear that I leaped the mark in search of Glory...." Much to his chagrin, the young officer was convinced the war would end "and I will have to blush and say I have not heard a hostile shot."

The frustration and discontentment of the Ohioans manifest itself in various ways. On occasion, they turned their ire against the army. "Uncle Sam has us within his iron grasp until next June and there we must stay, unless he sees proper sooner to release us," complained a private. Another volunteer sardonically stated he did
not realize that in joining the military ranks he was "obliged to forget that I was born with the feelings of a man." Nevertheless, he bemoaned, "Such is the case and I wish this cursed war would end, that I and everyone here could go to our homes." Other remarks by the Buckeyes were more exasperated in tone. The "Master Tyrant," fumed John Cassil, "has never paid us one cent of our wages though we have been in his service for upwards of four months." And, the men of the First Ohio, chafing under the restrictive bent to their orders, exclaimed, "We are in a prison." Of his situation, Private James Gillespie resolutely stated: "It will be a smart man to get me in another snare of this kind...."

Other Ohioans exercised their frustrations in a more militant fashion. Enduring the hardships of military life was burdensome enough without being denounced by the "milksap politicians at home as a set of mercenaries." The anti-war speech of Thomas Corwin, Ohio Senator from Warren County, was too much for the men to bear. A bonfire was built in the camp of the Third Ohio Regiment and a large crowd gathered while Corwin was burned in effigy. Theodore Gibbons, reputedly "a mean, bad man," was disdained by his officers for causing the affair, but the acquiescence of the entire unit seems evident.

Too, some of the men turned their discontent inward and thought wishfully of home. Being especially grateful "for the unmerited kindness and affectionate solicitude" of his family, Frank Hardy confessed that "tears started to my eye when I read your letter." Such sentimentality seemed uncharacteristic, he wrote, for "I am near
the middle age of man and have stood in line drawn up for battle…."74 Another Ohioan acknowledged that a letter from home, received in a moment of particular despondency, caused a tear to steal down his cheek, "the first I have shed since the day I left Marysville." - "I am almost ashamed to acknowledge such weakness," he wrote, "but such was my feeling that the silent monitor escaped ere I was aware."75 After seven months of duty in Mexico, Dewitt Loudon assured his parents that he would "leave these diggins just as soon as circumstances will admit." Thoughts of home and friends, he wrote, were his fortitude "in this country of chaparral, children & dogs." "I would be very glad to be with you all today," he pined, "seated round the table, in the old kitchen...."76

In contrast to this intermittently melancholy disposition, Ohioans exhibited a desire to make the best of their station and enjoy their term of service as much as possible. Around camp, they engaged in the practical exercises of darning, patching and washing while they entertained themselves with writing, singing, playing ball, drinking, card playing, swinging and reading.77 Several ambitious troops taught themselves Spanish; indeed, one wrote a letter to his family in the romance language.78 Away from their quarters, the men went hunting for hares "twice as large as our rabbits and very good to eat."79 They hiked up the mountains and witnessed Mexico's natural beauty. Some went horseback riding and claimed the animals were so durable that the Mexicans "think nothing of galloping them a distance of thirty miles."80 Several Ohioans discovered a hot springs while riding out from Saltillo and took
occasion to bathe in warm water "said to be medicinal in its properties...." Fraternization with the Mexican citizenry, too, was an important part of recreation outside of camp. Some Ohioans, like Charles Brough, enjoyed the hospitality of local prominent families. The Colonel recalled delightful evenings spent at a large Spanish mansion, taking pleasure in fine food and being entertained by the family's four daughters who "play the piano and harp, and sing and dance divinely." Understandably, the Mexican *fandango* became one of the most popular forms of entertainment among the troops. "The señoritas danced well," wrote a volunteer, and "were very active and graceful in their movements...." Coffee, whiskey and bread were provided as refreshments with prices "as cheap as we could get it at home." While these dances were disdained by one Ohio officer as "low assemblages generally ending in a riot and sometimes a murder," the troops more commonly reported that the occasion "was conducted in good order."  

The Ohio accounts divulge, then, that the soldiers did endure harsh conditions, but that their experience included numerous comforts and pleasurable diversion. Likewise, the Buckeye records reveal that, in their assessment of Mexico, the Ohioans found an unnatural contradiction.

The general consensus among United States troops from Ohio was that Mexico was a nation blessed with great beauty and abundant resources. "Where we were camped we were surrounded by mountains," wrote a soldier from Brown County. "The scenery is
Indeed magnificent.®® From the heights above Vera Cruz, another Buckeye extroled the beautiful scene of a valley with "the brawling stream foaming against the rocks" and on the wide horizon "we saw dimly the ocean and the gleam of a white sail in the harbor...."®® Indeed, the panoramic splendor of Mexico was such, concluded one volunteer, that "no artist could equal its colorings" nor any description "do it justice."®®

The mineral wealth of the land, if not previously appreciated by the Ohioans, became readily apparent when they observed the rich ornamentation of the cathedrals. At least one soldier came to believe that Mexico held "the richest mines of the precious metals, copper etc. which are found in the world...."®® In addition, the countryside was teeming in animal life. Wild cattle roamed the plains, "the finest I have ever seen; being large and fat," wrote one soldier. Another recalled the large number of "wild horses, jacks [rabbits] & mules" which inhabited the area near his garrison post.®® All these were supplemental to an abundant wildlife population of geese, brants, ducks, turkeys and deer which inhabited the regions traversed by the army.®®

And, as a capstone to all the beauty and bounty of Mexico, the Ohioans praised the nation's fertile soil and balmy climate. The land's fertility was clearly evident to the men in the abundance of tropical flora and fruits found throughout the country. Mexico's "beautiful flowers and luxuriant plants" were considered by Luther Giddings to be "the richest and most diversified...in any country on the globe"®® and seemingly each Mexican residence had its own grove
of orange, lemon and pomegranate trees. Volunteers from the South
told the Ohioans "that the bottoms here are equal to the best
Louisiana land for cane and cotton." Dewitt Loudon was convinced
that Mexico offered a perfect environment for farming. In addition
to the fertile soil, Mexico had a southern climate which allowed for
two annual harvests; besides, the farmers had no concern over
rainfall "because the country abounds in springs from which water is
conveyed through ditches over their fields...." In short, the only
labor which the Ohioans thought necessary in farming Mexico soil was
planting the seed.

But, if Mexico was in reality a country so abundantly blessed,
why was it not a more vibrant, productive nation? Indeed, the
immense resources of the land brought to bear so little "that they
seemed to be about as much the source of poverty as of wealth" to the
Ohioans.

The primary explanation for this paradoxical condition offered
by the troops was that the Mexican people were a degenerate and
brutish race. "What a wrong and unnatural thing it is that this
beautiful country should be possessed by such a worthless, idle,
vicious, mongrel race," lamented one Ohioan. The inhabitants were
"poor and ignorant, indolent and superstitious in the extreme" and
Mexico's circumstance, wrote Frank Hardy, "proves that no country
however great its natural resources can flourish without industry." Another Buckeye did not understand why Mexican culture had not
demonstrated some progress merely due to the close proximity of "the
universal Yankee nation." Were they so slothful that they could not
profit."by any of the useful inventions of our country and age?" he asked.98

Most commonly, the soldiers used the term "mulatto" in describing the Latins to their friends at home and classified them with the negroes which they saw on southern plantations.99 A Brown County resident in a letter to his mother compared them to "the color of Lewis that yellow boy that lives with Capt[ain] Johnston & not white like we are."100 Such was the Mexican appearance to another soldier that he assured his friend, "if you was here and see the people in this Country you would think that they was the up starts of the Devil."101 [sic.]

The depraved condition of Mexico's people also was frequently mentioned by the Ohioans and seemed commensurate with their poor breeding. "You shall see in the market place," wrote Colonel Brough to his wife, Abigail, "not a few merely but thousands...[of people] living upon offal upon charity, by theft - many of them scarce living at all."102 The troops believed they had never before witnessed such a mass of dependent people roaming city streets. "You can scarcely walk a hundred yards without meeting some blind beggar, led along by a child, or by an equally intelligent dog," noted a soldier. "The sidewalks are lined with them."103

Two groups of people escaped some of the disdain and prejudice expressed by the Ohioans. Mexican people of direct Spanish decent were readily apparent to the northerners and provided the few examples of culture and "good breeding" that the troops witnessed. They bore the "fair complexion, regular features, and graceful forms
of Castile and were the wealthy Spaniards "who have houses and live more like white folks...." The Mexican senoritas were not only spared the soldiers' contempt, but were commended for having "some of the most admirable virtues and qualities...." They were "faithful, benevolent, and affectionate" especially towards the sick and unfortunate, and were "superior in all classes to the men...."

A composite sketch of this Mexican lovely in the words of the soldiers depicts her being "between 4 & 5 feet high" and having "small hands, small feet and ankles, black hair and eyes and generally good teeth." Her lips appeared "as though they would taste sweeter than some home made molasses running in streams from a long necked jar just fresh from the sugar camp." And, the senorita's talents went beyond singing and dancing to playing the piano and guitar with exceptional skill. While romantic interludes most frequently occurred only in the imaginations of the soldiers, one Ohioan had the good fortune to realize his fantasy; strolling through a garden spot on a starlit evening with a beautiful Spanish maiden. Dewitt Loudon recalled his experience:

Strange feelings arose within my breast, when thus for the first time for six months, far away from home, in the midst of an enemy's country, I took a beautiful girl by the hand and felt the warm throbbing of her pulse as it thrilled through her veins. That hand! It seemed as if it were the product of some artist in a moment of fancy....Her eyes were black and sparkling with life and intelligence. Her hair, dark as a raven's wing, hung in thick clusters about her alabaster neck. Her rounded and snowy bosom gradually tapering into her sylph like waist, formed a model combining both dignity and grace.
The Ohio troops expressed the conviction that an impotent government and a corrupt priesthood contributed to Mexico's backward condition. The military's dominance of the political system made circumstances impossible for efficient administration of the country. The government, observed Luther Giddings, existed only by the consent of the army and "is compelled to sustain that army at all hazards and sacrifices." Mexico's plight illustrated this truth to the Buckeyes. The years of strife between Mexico and Texas had been prolonged by military leaders merely as a pretext for the army to make heavy impositions on the populace. Those demands brought on exploitation of the people and war for the country.\(^{113}\)

The contrast between the abject poverty of the Mexican citizenry and the vast wealth of the Catholic church convinced the Ohioans that an avaricious clergy was exploiting parishioners. While cathedrals were garnished with silver candelabras\(^{114}\) and "entirely gold plated on the inside,"\(^{115}\) the people suffered in squalid poverty. Moreover, asked one Ohioan, who could fathom the nefarious deprivations committed by the clergymen with the confines of the "grand cathedrals, gloomy and mysterious convents and ecclesiastical whore-houses?"\(^{116}\) How disgusting, wrote Francis Collins, that priests "with their own souls reeking in the foulest sins" pronounce absolution and forgiveness on worshipers "who in comparison to them are pure of heart...."\(^{117}\) Considering the abuses of the church and state, remarked a volunteer, is it little wonder "that the principle production of the country should be pronunciamientos, priests and prickly-pears?"\(^{118}\)
As the soldiers' assessment of Mexico's contradiction—a blessed land inhabited by a despised people—began to take form, new sentiments on the purpose and justification of American involvement in the war began to appear in their writings. Because the Mexicans had not done justice to the land, William Sherman believed the law of nature would pass it into "hands more enterprising if not more honest and happy...." The "blue-eyed Saxon—the chosen people of the age," asserted Luther Giddings, were prepared to accept this responsibility. Once they inhabited Mexico, he wrote, the land would "stand so thick with corn that it would laugh and sing." In occupying the country, the Ohioans believed they had already improved the government of the nation. The laws, wrote one officer, "are better administered here than at any previous period, their property more valuable and their prospects brighter;" yet, exclaimed Private Frank Hardy, how much better the condition of the country would be if "American laws and institutions" were introduced. And, Lieutenant Collins, especially outraged at the wantonness of the Mexican clergy, expressed confidence that once "the light of truth" was shared with the people "pure temples of Christianity" would replace the foreboding ecclesiastical buildings.

The reaction of the Ohioans to their campaigning experiences in Mexico are significant in two respects. First, their record gives improved perspective on the plight of American soldiers. While their condition was at times dismal and unhealthy, the resolve and enthusiasm with which they began the campaign fostered a resilient spirit that sustained the troops throughout their year of duty. The
contrasting statements in the writings of the Buckeyes in no way detract from the credibility of their accounts. Indeed, it is a fusion of these divergent experiences and moods which accurately portrays the soldiers' campaign life.

Secondly, the Ohio record demonstrates that during their campaign the soldiers became imbued with the precepts of Manifest Destiny. Having an opportunity to make a first hand assessment of Mexico, they were convinced that Anglo-Saxon peoples, American political institutions and religious freedom would remedy the country's paradoxical condition. Their purpose for serving in the Mexican War, thus, went beyond patriotism and defense of national honor to fulfilling the destiny and mission of America in an age of expansion.
Chapter 2
Footnotes

1. Frank Hardy to Edward Hardy July 25, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

2. *Norwalk Huron Reflector* July 28, 1846.

3. Frank Hardy to William Hardy July 6, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.


11. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy July 10, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).


23. Ibid.


32. U.S. Congress, *House Executive Document No. 41* 30th Cong., 1st sess., 1848, 603. This is a publication of that portion of captain Abraham R. Johnston's journal not printed in Beiber (ed.), "Marching with the Army of the West."

33. Ibid.

34. This is the interpretation of many historians who have written general histories of the war: Charles Dufour, *The Mexican War*:
A Compact History (New York, 1968); Seymour Conner and Odie Faulk, North America Divided: The Mexican War, 1846-1848 (New York, 1971). Also, scholars have directed special studies to the poor plight of the soldiers: Thomas Irey, "Soldiering, Suffering, and Dying in the Mexican War," Journal of the West, 11 (April, 1972), 285-298. Smith and Judah's The Chronicles of the Gringos is the only work which attempts to give a complete study of the soldiers' experience in Mexico.

39. A.A. Graham (ed.), History of Richland County, Ohio (Mansfield, 1880), 296.
42. Percentages compiled from Thomas Irey, "Soldiers, Suffering, and Dying in the Mexican War," Journal of the West, 11 (April, 1972), 285-298; Francis Heitman (ed.), Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, 2 (Washington, D.C., 1903), 2, 282; Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion and In the Mexican War, 12 (Norwalk, 1895), 12, 585-597.
43. William T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing October 8, 1847, William T. Sherman Family Papers (OHS).
44. Nelson Huson to Thomas Huson August 3, 1847, Nelson Huson (OHS).
47. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 39.
48. Zanesville Gazette August 26, 1846.
49. Ibid., September 2, 1846.
50. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 40.
51. Ibid., 83.
52. **Columbus Ohio State Journal** December 9, 1846.


54. Charles Brough to Abigail Brough January 5, 1848, Charles Brough (OHS).

55. Frank Hardy to Amos Hardy August 22, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

56. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Ibid.

57. Charles Brough to Abigail Brough January 5, 1848, Charles Brough (OHS).

58. Frank Hardy to Amos Hardy August 22, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).


60. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

61. Ibid.

62. **Norwalk Huron Reflector** January 22, 1847.

63. **Zanesville Gazette** September 2, 1846.

64. Ibid., January 20, 1847.

65. William T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing April 25, 1847, William T. Sherman Family Papers (OHS).

66. William T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing February 3, 1848, Ibid.


68. **Norwalk Huron Reflector** June 22, 1847.

69. John Cassil to Mrs. James Kinkade October 12, 1846, John Cassil Papers (OHS).

70. Journal, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

71. E.P. Gillespie to James Gillespie March 20, 1848, E.P. Gillespie (OHS).

72. **Cleveland Plain Dealer** July 9, 1847.

73. **Canton Ohio Repository** September 2, 1847.
74. Frank Hardy to Amos Hardy April 25, 1847, Frank Hardy (OHS).

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76. Dewitt Loudon to James Loudon January 30, 1847, Dewitt Loudon Papers (OHS).

77. Carr White to Margaret White December 6, 1846, Carr White (OHS); Dewitt Loudon and Fyffe to Friends February 28, 1847, Dewitt Loudon Papers (OHS).

78. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy May 13, 1847, Frank Hardy (OHS).

79. Dewitt Loudon to James Loudon January 14, 1847, Dewitt Loudon Papers (OHS).

80. Carr White to Margaret White December 6, 1846, Carr White (OHS).

81. Dewitt Loudon to James Loudon March 24, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

82. Charles Brough to Abigail Brough January 5, 1848, Charles Brough (OHS).

83. Dewitt Loudon to James Elliot August 9, 1846, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

84. Charles Brough to Abigail Brough August 12, 1847, Charles Brough (OHS); Dewitt Loudon to James Elliot August 9, 1846, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

85. Dewitt Loudon to Elizabeth Loudon January 9, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

86. Cincinnati Clist's Weekly February 8, 1847.


88. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

89. Frank Hardy to George Hardy August 5, 1846, Ibid.

90. Frank Hardy to Amos Hardy February 14, 1847, Ibid.

91. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 51.

92. Graham, History of Richland County, 295-300.

93. Dewitt Loudon to James Elliot August 9, 1846, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).
94. Dewitt Loudon to Adaline W. Loudon March 18, 1847, Ibid.
95. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).
97. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).
98. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 53.
99. Columbus Ohio State Journal September 19, 1846; December 9, 1846.
100. Carr White to Margaret White December 6, 1846, Carr White (OHS).
102. Charles Brough to Abigail Brough October 25, 1847, Charles Brough (OHS).
104. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 55.
105. Columbus Ohio State Journal December 9, 1846.
107. Ibid.
108. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 58.
110. Dewitt Loudon to Adaline Loudon March 18, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).
111. D.W. Henderson to James Thompson September 16, 1847, James Thompson (OHS).
113. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 51.
115. Jacob Schneider to C. Schneider November 24, 1847, Schneider Family (OHS). Translated from German by Wolfgang Fleischhauer.


117. Ibid.

118. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 51-52.

119. William T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing March 12, 1847, William T. Sherman Family Papers (OHS).

120. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 51-54.

121. William T. Sherman to Philemon Ewing February 2, 1848, Philemon B. Ewing Papers (OHS).

122. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).


124. Frederick Merk, Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation (New York, 1963), 24-34.
CHAPTER 3

OHIOANS UNDER ARMS

"I have saw the Elephant and am satisfied." [Carr White to John White September 29, 1846, Carr White (OHS)]

The total enrollment of the American force that advanced into Mexico was 30,954 men in the regular army and 73,776 volunteers. The regulars were, without question, the bulwark of the United States corps. "In addition to being steady themselves," wrote Justin Smith in his two volume work The War With Mexico, "they helped immensely to steady the volunteers.

The volunteers generally were perceived as being unruly and prone to independent rather than obedient behavior. "At the commencement of the campaign," remembered an Ohio veteran, "It was a standing joke among the regulars that the officers of volunteers found it necessary to enforce every trifling order with a stump speech; and that therefore the discipline of each regiment dependent pretty much upon the eloquence of its colonel." It was the good fortune of the American army, believed Ulysses Grant, that the campaigns of the war proceeded at a moderate pace. This gave the regulars time to prepare the militia forces for battle. Francis Collins, a West Point graduate from Butler county, was certain that the volunteers under his instruction were a more heterogeneous,
undisciplined compound of material called soldiers" than ever had been assembled. The officers made little effort to assimilate their responsibilities, argued Collins, and seemed convinced that there was nothing to do on a campaign "besides playing gentlemen" while the troops seemed to have embarked on the venture solely "in anticipation of a grand frolic."\(^5\)

Albeit difficult to manage, the volunteers offset their lack of discipline with patriotism and enthusiasm.\(^6\) Upon arriving in Mexico, Luther Giddings, Major of the First Ohio, admitted that "a surprise would have been fruitful of disaster to our undisciplined corps...." However, after a few weeks' drill "during which the parade-ground was duly beaten to dust under the feet of the men," the Major boasted, there was no "school of battalion" the troops could not perform.\(^7\) These exercises instilled the militia with confidence in themselves and their comrades. Once the enthusiasm of the American volunteer became united with his "native courage and intelligence and a proper degree of discipline," wrote Giddings, he became "the most formidable soldier in the world...."\(^8\)

While instruction and drill fostered self-confidence among the Ohioans, the example set by their commanders nurtured faith and certitude in the leadership of the army. in explaining the confidence and devotion that General Zackary Taylor inspired in his men, Justin Smith concluded: "The fact that one so plain could be a paladin made even the ordinary feel capable of heroism."\(^9\) Preferring to wear a linen coat and trousers rather than a uniform of rank, the general was indeed "quite an ordinary looking man;"\(^10\) yet, his
"mahogany complexion, piercing eye, iron grey hair and stout frame" were immediately recognized by all.\textsuperscript{11} In personality, Ohioans found Taylor amiable and solicitous. "There was no ice to break in approaching him," wrote Major Giddings, for the "natural grace and kindness of his reception at once placed us at ease....His first question was concerning the health of the men....\textsuperscript{12}

Although discipline and order were essential for success, Taylor did not allow military regulations to handicap his command. Years after the war, an Ohio veteran from Stark County recalled that, despite orders against foraging, he had purloined "a number of fine fowls" from a Mexican farm. While he was in the process of preparing the animals for dinner, the General "who was sitting sideways in a dirty and delapidated suit of clothing, on a bony old horse" rode into camp. "Where in h--l did you get those chickens?" he demanded. After listening patiently to the Ohioan's confession, Taylor "said in a low tone, reflectively, 'Y-e-e-s; well you may cook one of them for me, and I'll be around shortly.'" Thus, rather than being disciplined for his actions, the Buckeye, after a brief scare, enjoyed the General's company at mess and received praises for his cooking talents.\textsuperscript{13}

The Ohioans were confident in the fighting spirit of "Old Zack." He rode across the battlefield, usually sitting sideways in the saddle, "to see through his own eyes the situation.\textsuperscript{14} And, though he "conversed in a stammering voice," stated Major Giddings, "no man could be more prompt in action than Old Rough and Ready.\textsuperscript{15} Ulysses
Grant, whom some biographers believe patterned himself after Taylor, concisely stated the troops' assuredness in the General's leadership:

No soldier could face either danger or responsibility more calmly than he. These are qualities more rarely found than genius or physical courage. General Taylor never made any great show or parade. In dress he was possibly too plain, rarely wearing anything in the field to indicate his rank, or even that he was an officer; but he was known to every soldier in his army, and was respected by all.16

In contrast to Taylor, Ohioans discovered that Winfield Scott was a more traditional general. "He always wore all the uniform prescribed or allowed by law," wrote Grant, and notice of his visitation was sent in advance allowing for a proper reception.17 His demeanor was perceived by some to surpass the boundaries of self-confidence, becoming unreticent vanity. Those who communicated directly with the General knew that he was not averse to speaking of himself in the third person and "he would bestow praise upon the person he was talking about without the least embarrassment...."18

Scott, who one Ohioan described as "about the largest man I ever saw and a very fine looking man indeed"19 commanded his troops with great care and organization, his meticulous design appears to have been the mortar which kept his army intact. An Ohio Lieutenant, commenting on the difficulties of the landing at Vera Cruz, wrote:

From the disembarkation of our troops up to this hour, General Scott has conducted the siege with that patience, energy, and skill, which all expected from so great a general. Almost insurmountable obstacles have opposed us, not among the least of which may be reckoned the hostile element, wind and storms of sand....[These] caused delays in our offensive operations, and caused some to complain of inefficiency in the commanding General; but with equal patience he overcame the obstacles and endured the murmurings.20
His successful advance on Mexico City, culminating in the capture of the Mexican capital, prompted words of praise and pledges of devotion to the General. Francis Collins, who had been with Scott throughout the campaign, concluded that the General had "made no mistakes" and "no failures or misfortunes have befallen him." "His great abilities and honest purposes," wrote Collins, "have triumphantly carried him over the enemy that was before him...." Reflecting on the military situation of the United States following the Mexican War, an Ohio veteran expressed confidence that "if our government was now to call out a hundred thousand volunteers for a war with any European nation, at least ninety-nine thousand of them would prefer Winfield Scott as their leader to any living man." Without question, the most venerated Ohio officer of the Mexican War was Brigadier-General Thomas Hamer. A prominent Democrat from Brown County, Hamer had been re-elected to Congress immediately prior to the outbreak of war. He resigned his seat in the House and volunteered as a private in the company from Georgetown. Later, he told Ulysses Grant, a young man he had nominated for West Point, that the First Ohio planned to elect him Colonel, but he declined the offer knowing that a commission as Brigadier was forthcoming from President Polk. The General proved to be a great inspiration to the men from Ohio. Enroute to Mexico, it was Hamer's oratory, mentioned earlier, that admonished the troops to take resolve in their mission. And, before the walls of Monterrey, he rode along the Buckeye line shouting orders and encouragement to the men as they marched into battle.
Hence, it came as a great tragedy that Brigadier-General Hamer died of disease on December 2, 1846. "No incident of the Mexican War created a more profound impression of sorrow on the people of Ohio," wrote Daniel Ryan, an Ohio military historian.24 One volunteer in the First Regiment confessed that it seemed he had "almost lost a father." "To him I could always go with confidence for advice or assistance," lamented the young soldier.25 In his Memoirs, Grant recalled the remorse Hamer's death brought to the army and speculated that had the General survived the war "he would have been President of the United States during the term filled by President Pierce."26 But, perhaps the highest praise rendered to Hamer came from General Taylor who remarked: "I have lost the balance wheel of my volunteer army."27 A delegation was sent by the Ohio Legislature to retrieve Hamer's remains for entombment in Georgetown. Upon the return of his body, the Masons conducted the funeral before a crowd estimated by eyewitnesses to number between 7,000 and 10,000 people.28

The Ohioans marched into battle inspired by their leadership and believing themselves adequately prepared for conflict. As one would expect, the sentiments of most became sober and thoughtful as the Buckeyes entered the fray. "It is no trifling affair," wrote a volunteer to his cousin, "yet not so serious as it might be." He confessed to feeling "a little queer" when preparing to march into the enemy's fire, but after the action started, he remarked, "I did not feel so badly excited as I have often been when declaiming before a large audience."29 Lieutenant Grant agreed that it was "no great sport" to be surrounded by flying bullets, but added, "I find I have
less horror when among them then when in anticipation. Perhaps, however, he was more truthful when writing his memories of the war, for then he admitted that as a young lieutenant "who had never heard a hostile gun before, I felt sorry that I had enlisted." Luther Giddings recalled the "unusual quiet" of the assembled force as the men stood ready to advance. His thoughts, he remembered, raced between visions of the future and memories of the past. Too, he was amazed at how "ineffably pleasing to the aroused senses were all the works of nature then!"

The First Ohio was the only Buckeye regiment to be engaged in a major battle of the war. Under the command of General Taylor, the Ohioans formed part of the American attack on the northeast defenses of Monterrey September 20, 1846. Taylor's initial attack, which suffered heavy losses, sent troops into a deadly triangle covered by Mexican fire from the Citadel, the Tannery, and Devil's Corner. His second advance was aimed against the Tannery and the fort fell to American control just as the Buckeyes arrived on the edge of town. Carr White remembered that, as they neared the city, General Thomas Hamer came dashing along the line shouting his loudest: "Push on boys! Close up Close up! Close up!" All the men recognized the voice of the prominent Ohioan and in response to the General's admonishment the troops in White's company shouted three hearty cheers.

The regiment moved at double-quick time down the road lying west of the Tannery, passing regulars and members of the Tennessee Regiment which had suffered severe casualties in capturing that
Mexican stronghold. Discovering that a ditch carrying water to the Santa Catarine River blocked their advance along this route, the Ohioans turned west on a street extending out to the Tannery and ran toward Monterrey under a shower of Mexican fire. After advancing about 800 yards, the regiment met Major Mansfield of the Topographical Engineers. "He came limping up the street wounded & bloody," wrote Private White, "& told Gen. Hamer for God Sake not to lead his men up their [sic.] or he would have them all killed." Mansfield's command had entered the streets extending north from the Purlisima Bridge, a stronghold of the city's defenses, and unknowingly walked into the direct fire of a Mexican cannon. The Buckeyes stopped short of these streets, turned their column south and, crossing two or three avenues, came opposite Devil's Corner.

In order to attack the Mexican position, the troops had to cross the same waterfilled ditch which had earlier impeded their advance. While the enemy poured "a deadly fire" on them, the soldiers hastily tried to ford the channel on logs and plank hurriedly thrown down to span the water. In the stampede to cross, Dewitt Loudon was one of those pushed into the ditch. The water, he wrote, was over his head "spoil[ing] all my cartridges" and he was forced "to draw the load in the hottest of the firing." Two American officers, General William Butler and Colonel Alexander Mitchell, were wounded when the advance temporarily stalled in this exposed position. General Hamer replaced Butler as commander of the Third Division and Lieutenant-Colonel John Weller succeeded Mitchell as ranking officer of the First Ohio Regiment.
Once across the ditch, the Ohioans rushed behind a stone wall and commenced a steady fire upon the fort. "We had not a man in our company that flinched," wrote Private White. "They laid their guns on the wall & took as deliberate aim as if they were shooting at squirrels. [sic.]" General Hamer ordered a portion of the men to advance and they successfully reached a position within twenty-five yards of the enemy bulwark. "We almost silenced the firing of their small arms with out fatal fire," boasted White. The American barrage was so intense, he argued, that the Mexicans "soon got so they would not show their heads at all but would stick the muzzles [sic.] of their guns over & fire without exposing anything but their hands."36

The Ohioans suffered further losses and experienced unusual incidents of battle during this heated exchange at Devil's Corner. White's friends feared he had been severely wounded due to blood stains covering his chest and arms; however, he explained that a fellow beside him had been shot through the temple and fell against him "bloodying my sword & shirt."38 The cock of Sergeant Johnston's rifle was shot off while he was taking it down from the wall and John Allen had a ball strike the shank of his musket, nearly breaking it off. Another Ohioan, while kneeling to reload, was buried in rubble when an artillery shell struck the wall in front of him. But, when the men close by dug him out, "he loaded up & went to firing" again.40

In order to thwart the American attack, Mexican forces inside the city (probably those defending the Purisima Bridge) repositioned their cannon and fired on the Buckeye right flank. Caught in a
veritable cross-fire, General Hamer ordered his men to withdraw. Bedlam prevailed once more at the ditch as the troops rushed to recross the channel amid Mexican grape and canister. Dewitt Loudon was again pushed into the water "and considerably bruised against a tree in consequence of which I got considerably behind the regiment."  

Seeing the American withdrawal, the Mexicans deployed a unit of lancers to attack the foot soldiers in the open fields on the northeast edge of town. Carr White described the scene:

I looked to the left [West] & it appeared as if they covered the ten acres of ground. It was the prettiest sight I ever saw. They all came with their Lances at a rest with a little flag 18 in. long & 12 in. wide flying most brilliantly. It was a matter of impossibility to form a hollow square in our situation. Gen. Hamer seeing that he ordered us to jump over a brush fence just to our right which was instantly done & every fellow had his gun leveled waiting their coming.  

As the lancers were about to ride into point blank range of Hamer's men, a shell from one of Taylor's howitzers back on the plain exploded among them, scattering the horsemen in every direction. Private Loudon, whose return to camp had been cut off by the lancers watched from the outskirts of town as those who rode within rifle shot of the fence trumbeled from the saddle, their "heels fly[ing] up nicer than any thing you every saw."  

That evening, the Ohioans sat exhausted from the day's fight and ate in darkness as a chilling rain began to fall. Someone placed a lantern on the table where Major Luther Giddings was eating. Much to his surprise, he found the boards "covered between the plates and
cups with thin strips of human flesh and clots of gore." A surgeon, in macabre fashion, assured the distressed officer that he had amputated only a few arms and legs on the table. Dewitt Loudon could not forget the horrors he had witnessed in making his escape from Monterrey. "Men and horses were strewn over the plain," he wrote in his journal, "mangled in all possible ways." Some bodies were headless and many were "without arms or legs." All were begging for water and "many a poor fellow was asking for God's Sake to kill him and put him out of his misery." "The cries and groans of the wounded at night," wrote Loudon, "...took much from the splendor of the day's fight." Private White summarized his thoughts in a letter to his father, stating:

We have had a hard fight. I was in the Hottest of it & escaped unscathed though the Bullets grape & canister whizzed rather close for comfort. I have saw the Elephant and am satisfied. [sic.]" Apc, writing at the desk of his wounded commander, Lieutenant-Colonel John Weller stated in his official report: "To much credit cannot be given to the officers and men under my command for the gallant and chivalric manner in which they acquitted [sic.] themselves during the engagement."

Despite the fact that most histories of the war make slight mention of the Buckeye advance and consider as inconsequential the First Regiment's assault on Devil's Corner, the Ohioans did play a significant role in the battle of Monterrey. Their march to the vicinity of the Purisima bridge and the attack on Devil's Corner marked the American's deepest penetration of Mexican fortifications
on September 20. Moreover, because the Buckeyes successfully forded the waterfilled ditch, they could claim that their regimental banner was the first American ensign to wave inside Monterrey.\textsuperscript{50} And, due to pressure the Ohioans helped bring to bear on the city's northeast defenses, the Mexicans were forced to withdraw from Devil's Corner and consolidate their line near the fortified bridge before the second day of fighting.\textsuperscript{51}

Escort duty was another important military role which the Ohioans performed in the war. The First, Second and Third Regiments protected supply trains moving between Camargo and Monterrey while the Fifth Ohio escorted provisions following the army from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. The size of the supply trains could be quite considerable; one bound for Mexico City was made up of one thousand wagons and two thousand pack mules.\textsuperscript{52} The proportion of such a column made it vulnerable to attack and indeed these operations offer the few examples of Mexican military success in the war.

The difficulties which the Ohioans experienced in transporting supplies between Camargo and Monterrey, in early 1847, illustrate well the Mexican successes in ambush and the hardships brought to bear on American troops performing escort duty. Marching with a supply train bound for Monterrey, Lieutenant-Colonel William Irwin and three companies of the Second Ohio were surrounded by Mexican forces near Marine.\textsuperscript{53} When word of Irwin's predicament reached Monterrey, a member of the Ohio detachment stationed there wrote: "Five companies of Infantry, two pieces of artillery and one company
of Cavalry immediately started to the relief of the garrison at Marine.\textsuperscript{54}

When the relief column found Irwin, "he was surrounded on all sides, at the distance of 300 yards, by a large force."\textsuperscript{55} The Mexicans had destroyed many of the wagons and mutilated the bodies of soldiers and drivers. The hearts of many, said witnesses, had been "cut out and hung on bushes over their heads" while the charred bodies of other dead lay among the burning wagon frames.\textsuperscript{56} Major William Wall later told friends in the First Ohio that in order to protect the supplies the escort had formed a hollow square with the wagons in the middle; however, the relentless attack of the Mexican lancers wore down the Yankee defenses. They had endured a continuous assault from the enemy for about five hours. The rescue forces reached the surrounded Buckeyes in time to save a portion of the supply train and, albeit exhausted, famished and "with feet scaled and blistered," Irwin's command finally arrived at Monterrey.\textsuperscript{57}

Within a month of the attack on Irwin, a like emergency befell Major Luther Giddings and a contingent of the First Ohio.\textsuperscript{58} Assigned to protect a train of 150 wagons enroute to Camargo from Monterrey, Giddings' command was ambushed near Cerralvo. The Major rushed his charges to within the confines of the town where barricades were erected, but forty wagons and a number of men were lost in the process. His garrison lay surrounded for four days and was not relieved until the arrival from Mier of Colonel Samuel Curtis with several companies of the Third Ohio.\textsuperscript{59} After the war, Giddings' men expressed their appreciation for his gallant leadership at Cerralvo.
by giving him a sword, one of the finest presentation sabres offered to any officer of the Mexican campaign.\textsuperscript{60}

To the Ohioans, garrison duty was the most disconcerting military task of the Mexican War. Here, they were confronted with the two-fold problem of maintaining order in the midst of war and coexisting with a foreign people. All of the Ohio regiments served in this regard: the First at Monterrey, the Second at Camargo, the Third at Mier, and the Fourth and Fifth at Puebla.

The army used a variety of techniques in order to restore peace to the occupied cities of Mexico. A curfew was enforced in Monterrey where anyone found in the streets after tattoo was jailed for the night.\textsuperscript{61} While his men served as a security force, Colonel Charles Brough of the Fifth Ohio presided over a council of war which tried the criminal cases in Puebla.\textsuperscript{62} And, while visiting Mexico City, Jacob Schneider observed that General Scott maintained order among the low class thieves by beating them "every monday between 2 and 4 o'clock on the Grand Plaza."\textsuperscript{63}

In northern Mexico and California, the army often sanctioned the Mexican alcalde, or magistrate, allowing him to retain his position of local authority during American occupation. Lieutenant William Tecumseh Sherman was impressed with the sense of justice manifest by the alcalde in Monterey, California. A man known by reputation to be a wife-beater was brought to trial for bloodying both his spouse and mother during a particular fit of rage. The magistrate bound the accused in the courtroom and armed the mother with a cowhide. "She gave the fellow a good dressing," wrote Sherman, "and then mother,
son & daughter went home impressed with the moral influence of the law.\textsuperscript{64}

While in garrison, it became clear to the Ohioans that the policy of the United States was to "war upon the Government of Mexico and not upon the people....\textsuperscript{65} No pillaging or taking of private property for public or individual use was allowed "without satisfactory compensation."\textsuperscript{66} Sherman noted that, after Monterey was under marshall law, sailors broke into a church and stole several silver chalice crosses. Eventually, he wrote, the valuables "were partially recovered, the offenders most severely punished, and ample restitution made to the padre." He added that "in every instance since we have been here, whatever damage to property which was done by soldier or sailor has been fully repaired and offenders punished."\textsuperscript{67}

Too, the Ohioans immediately realized that the American policy, described by one of their number as a product of "the high character which they sustain for magnanimity and generosity," brought great advantages to the Mexican people.\textsuperscript{68} The poor benefited from the war "for they were formerly much oppressed by their rulers," observed Frank Hardy.\textsuperscript{69} A Mexican citizen reportedly told one of the Ohioans that due to "the arrogance and extortion of his own troops" he preferred the presents of the American army. Since their occupation, the farmer said, "he was sure of obtaining fair compensation for his property."\textsuperscript{70} And, with the presence of the army, wrote Ulysses Grant, "a market was afforded for all the products of the country such as the people had never enjoyed before."\textsuperscript{71} The soldiers
regularly purchased goods in the local market place and bought foodstuffs from vendors who, wrote Private Hardy, traversed the campground morning and night selling "pies, beer, cakes, milk, bread etc." Moreover, the American employed natives as teamsters, muleteers, and deckhands to aid in moving munitions and supplies. Mexican laborers accustomed to earning twenty-five cents per day were now receiving four times that amount. Years after the war, Ulysses Grant recalled with great pride the amenable American policy in Mexico. "In fact," he stated in his Memoirs, "under the humane policy of our commander, I question whether the great majority of the Mexican people did not regret our departure as much as they had regretted our coming.

Though the Ohioans were confident that their presence among the people brought stability and advantages to Mexico, the troops found little consolation in the performance of garrison duty. As previously discussed, camplife could become routine, boring and, depending on the location, quite miserable for these young men who had enlisted to "see the elephant." Many shared the sentiments of William Sherman who, having gone to California to fight, instead found himself engaged in issuing identification papers to Indians and keeping supply records. Greatly disappointed, he wrote that his company had been "converted into a species of police and custom house officers" rather than used as an instrument of war.

Also, despite the fact that relations appeared to be amiable, a strong undercurrent of hostility existed between invader and citizen. The Zanesville Gazette published a letter of a local volunteer who
assured his readers that the men always left camp in groups of four or five and carried their rifles "with plenty of ammunition." To be fully prepared "against the straggling Mexicans who are prowling about the country," added the private, "we would arm ourselves with a brace of pistols, and bowie-knife...." And from Matamoras, an Ohican wrote: "Another American was stabbed dangerously day before yesterday in the street."77

Private Frank Hardy initially placed full responsibility for the tension which existed between soldier and citizen on the Mexicans. They "are almost without exception snakes in the grass," he wrote. The Latins professed friendship to the army "merely for the purpose of being protected and making money...." Yet, after being employed by the Americans at high wages and "getting rich in comparison to what they have been heretofore," he explained, the ungrateful Mexicans were using the money "to arm and equip men to fight against their benefactors."78 Interestingly, Hardy later presented a more objective explanation for the cause of uneasiness in the garrison. In Matamoras, he confessed, there were volunteers "who go out for the purpose of stealing." On numerous occasions, wrote Hardy, both American and Mexicans were killed and "the soldiers have mostly been the aggressors."79

Rumors likewise unsettled the Ohicans and heightened tension in the garrison. In Monterrey, the soldiers of the First Ohio were uncertain of General Scott's fate following his departure from Vera Cruz. "According to one rumor he had won a great victory near
Jalapa," wrote Dewitt Loudon, "but another claimed that his army was totally routed."

Loudon, himself, experienced the trauma that rumors caused when, on Christmas morning, 1846, word spread through the garrison at Monterrey that "the enemy was rapidly coming on us with a large force." General Worth, believing an attack to be eminent, ordered all the troops into town. "Everything was in confusion there," wrote Loudon. "The regulars were drawn up in the streets - the citizens were running in every direction - apparently in great consternation."

The troops were issued forty rounds of ammunition and two new flints. Everyone remained under arms until evening and even as they reposed it was in a spirit "prepared to rise at a moment's warning and participate in the strife of Death." However, the next morning proved the alarm to be false, stated Loudon, "for there was not any Mexican forces within fifty miles...."

This round of excitement was repeated two months later when rumor of a Mexican attack again swept through the ranks. Such talk began, wrote a volunteer, when "beacon lights were seen on the mountains at night" and "the inhabitants began to leave Monterrey."

The troops remained constantly under arms for five days. No period of more than twenty-four hours passed, wrote an Ohioan, "without the sounding of the long roll, or summons to arms under the full expectation of meeting the dark skinned gentry in battle." But, American vigilance again went for naught as word of the attack proved erroneous.
The anxiety and tension which resulted from tedious duty, hostile surroundings and disquieting rumors caused the Buckeyes, by the time their term of service expired, to advocate a change in American policy. "Many are in favor of prosecuting the war...upon different principles," wrote an Ohio volunteer, "and plunder, and ravage, and give them a taste of war in all its horrors.... As long as the war was fought on the generous principles of the American policy, the Buckeyes believed that Mexico would never want peace. The Mexicans "are used to perpetual war among themselves," wrote a member of the Third Regiment, "and have never been treated as well by their own people as they have been by us." They must come to know, he continued, "that there is an enemy among them severe and just, and an adjustment of our difficulties will soon be had." Even as the war drew to a close, William Sherman did not believe that the American policy would produce a lasting peace. The hostile Mexican character had not been tamed by severe enough war to make that nation respect a treaty. "They want and deserve richly a better whipping than they have got," he wrote, "and they will have to receive it before they are content." 

All of the Ohio volunteers were discharged in accordance with the terms of their twelve month enlistment. Those who embarked from Cincinnati in July, 1846, returned home in June or July, 1848. Generally, the troops were mustered out at New Orleans or Cincinnati.

The celebration which welcomed the returning soldiers differed little from the pomp and ceremony which had bid them farewell. "I should think there were more than a thousand people at the landing,"
stated an eyewitness at Cincinnati, "all shouting and cheering, and
the volunteers returning the compliment in the same manner." So
heavily did the crowd press against the dock that the ranks of troops
disintegrated as they attempted to march ashore. "I recognized so
many of my acquaintances," remembered one private, "that I did not
try to say much to them but just commenced shaking with both hands
and went till I got through." Overwhelmed by the enthusiastic greeting of family and friends,
Dewitt Loudon's reaction to the reception of Cincinnati was typical
among the troops. He wrote:

None but those who have experienced it can tell what
joy is given by the grasp of the hand, the silent but
meaning glance of a flashing eye. Such a reception
alone is worth a year's campaign.

Francis Collins also characterized an aspect of the soldiers' attitude in expressing great relief at being once again on his native
dirt. Never had he departed "any place with one half the pleasure"
as he left Mexico. Upon arriving home, Collins wrote, it seemed "for
the first time, in many days, as though my troubles would now find a
termination."

Certainly, the relief most desired by the troops was freedom
from the diseased environment of Mexico. "I am weak, exhausted, worn
out and not much better than a skeleton," admitted a veteran. But,
he added defiantly, "If I had been, or am now sick I have not
acknowledged it to myself." To a female eyewitness at Cincinnati,
the Ohioans looked sunburnt and "as though they had seen hard
service." A fateful prediction was made in her observation that
many, by appearances, "were not long for this world." Indeed, veterans continued to perish from disease contacted in Mexico long after they returned home while hundreds of others never fully regained the vitality they had enjoyed prior to their year of service.

The Ohio public, however, was preoccupied with celebrating the successes which crowned the soldier's campaign. Most counties organized community socials for their local veterans. Huge meals were prepared by the ladies' auxiliary and served on long tables set up in the courthouse lawn. Parades marched in honor of the returnees while cannon and fireworks enhanced the volume of the revelry.

Praises and honors were bestowed on the men from every source. Newspaper editors extolled the demeanor the service of the veterans. "Within the year," said the St. Clairsville Gazette, "they have passed from the buoyancy of youth, into the vigor of manhood, and to a dignity of deportment which is acquired only by severe drill in a military camp." They have "nobly discharged every duty," concluded the editor, "and we owe them a debt we can never cancel."

Commanders, too, gave praise to the Buckeyes. General John Wool expressed great satisfaction in the service rendered by the Ohioans under his command. Their "good discipline, orderly conduct, and fine military appearance" made them a credit to the country they served.

Colonel Samuel Curtis assured the assembly at Zanesville that he had found the men of the Third Ohio prepared for any occasion. "They have had difficult duties to perform" he stated, "and have executed them with great success and satisfaction." And, several Ohioans
received presentation sabres or rifles from their men in appreciation of the gallant leadership they offered during the Mexican campaign. Of particular note are the sabre presented to Major Luther Giddings of the First Ohio and a handsome rifle given to Lieutenant Francis Collins by the people of Butler County.99

Twenty-six years after the Mexican War - undoubtedly inspired by the formation of the Grand Army of the Republic - an Ohio chapter of the Mexican War Veterans' Association was formed. The organization met regularly from 1874 to 1914 by which time it boasted in having the oldest living war veteran, Frank Hardy.100 Unfortunately, few records of the chapter have survived; however, those which exist offer a glimpse at the veterans' thoughts on the consequences of war.

The Ohio veterans were certain that their military victories provided the dynamic which set the United States on the path toward becoming one of the great nations of the world. This dynamic, said General Thomas Young to the 1874 meeting of the association, was twofold: the acquisition of the rich agricultural and mineral lands of the West and, "the golden gates of the Pacific" which brought the United States into immediate trading relations with the republics of South America, the islands of the Pacific and "the Mongolian Empires of the East, China and Japan." The new lands and commerce, stated Young:

enabled us to found States on that far off shore, whose civilization is striding eastwardly with giant steps to meet ours in its westward course, over the waste and wilderness of our vast interior, striving to accomplish what is inevitably our destiny - the building up of the greatest and freest Empire ever known, or to be known in the world's history.101
Another consequence of the war, the veterans believed, had been a practical demonstration of the leadership which America offered the world. The bayonet was the "wand" that opened the mineral fields of the West, said George Morgan to the reunion of 1879, and "caused a greater material, moral, and intellectual development than had ever taken place in any two consecutive centuries of the world's history." If the crusades revived the civilization of Europe," argued Morgan, so did the war with Mexico throw forward the civilization of the world one hundred years. The Ohio Mexican War veterans watched with pride as the unstable, backward and undeveloped region they had conquered became transformed through American genius into an ordered, progressive and productive part of the Union.
Chapter 3

Footnotes


3. Luther Giddings, *Sketches of the Campaign in Northern Mexico by an Officer of the First Regiment of Ohio Volunteers* (New York, 1853), 82.


8. Ibid., 280.


12. Ibid., 72.


17. Ibid., 138.

18. Ibid.
19. Frank Hardy to Edward Hardy February 4, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).
21. ibid.
24. Daniel Ryan, *Ohio In Four Wars* (Columbus, 1917), 80.
26. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 103. President Pierce was himself a Mexican War veteran.
27. Ryan, *Ohio In Four Wars*, 80.
28. James Loudon to Dewitt Loudon March 1, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).
29. Dewitt Loudon to James Loudon January 14, 1847, ibid.
30. Lloyd Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant* (Boston, 1950), 115.
33. Carr White to John White September 29, 1846, Carr White (OHS).
34. Ibid.
36. Carr White to John White September 29, 1846, Carr White (OHS).
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
40. Carr White to John White September 29, 1846, Carr White (OHS).
42. Carr White to John White September 29, 1846, Carr White (OHS).
43. Dewitt Loudon to Alfred Loudon March 18, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

44. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 220.


46. Ibid.

47. Carr White to John White September 29, 1846, Carr White (OHS).

48. Eaton Democrat November 12, 1846.

49. Charles Dufour, The Mexican War: A Compact History, 1846-1848 (New York, 1968), 122 is an example of the superficial treatment given the Ohioans. In fact, the author has them attacking the wrong side of the city.

50. Carr White to John White September 29, 1846, Carr White (OHS).

51. No Ohioan letters were found describing the second day's fight at Monterrey. Therefore, it is probable that General Taylor did not send the Buckeyes back into battle on September 21, 1846, the day the city fell completely into American control. Also, it should be noted that while the military records show that the First Ohio Regiment lost 24 men killed, Dewitt Loudon wrote that at Monterrey the Regiment's losses were 60 out of 370 engaged. Journal, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

52. Ryan, Ohio In Four Wars, 74.

53. Marine is located between Monterrey and Cerralvo.

54. Dewitt Loudon to Adaline Loudon March 2, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

55. Ibid.


57. Ibid.

58. Irwin was attacked in mid-February and Giddings on March 8, 1847.

59. Ryan, Ohio In Four Wars, 72-73; Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion and the Mexican War, 12 vols. (Norwalk, 1895), 12, 585-597.
60. The sabre is now owned by a collector in eastern Pennsylvania who called me to find out more about Giddings. The sword is one of the ten most expensive presentation sabres made for an officer of the Mexican War.


63. Jacob Schneider to C. Schneider November 24, 1847, Schneider Family (OHS).

64. William T. Sherman to Philemon B. Ewing April 16, 1848, Philemon B. Ewing Papers (OHS).

65. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

66. Grant, Personal Memoirs, 1, 102.

67. William T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing March 12, 1847, William T. Sherman Family Papers (OHS). General histories of the war overwhelmingly support the view that the American army indeed did protect the citizenry of Mexico.

68. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

69. Frank Hardy to Amos Hardy August 22, 1846, Ibid.

70. Giddings, Sketches of the Campaign, 91.

71. Grant, Personal Memoirs, 1, 118.

72. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

73. Ibid.

74. Grant, Personal Memoirs, 1, 118.

75. William T. Sherman to Philemon Ewing February 2, 1848, Philemon B. Ewing Papers (OHS); William T. Sherman to John Burton September 6, 1848, William T. Sherman (OHS).

76. Zanesville Gazette September 23, 1846.

77. Columbus Ohio State Journal October 29, 1846.

78. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

79. Frank Hardy to Amos Hardy January 10, 1847, Ibid.
80. Dewitt Loudon to James Loudon May 9, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

81. Dewitt Loudon to Elizabeth Loudon January 9, 1847 and Dewitt Loudon to James Loudon January 14, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

82. Dewitt Loudon and Fyffe to Friends February 28, 1847, Dewitt C. Loudon Papers (OHS).

83. Eaton Democrat April 15, 1847.

84. Frank Hardy to Horace Hardy October 23, 1846, Frank Hardy (OHS).

85. St. Clairsville Gazette February 19, 1847.

86. William T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing May 28, 1848, William T. Sherman Family Papers (OHS).


89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.


92. Ibid.

93. Smith and Judah, Chronicles of the Gringos, 449.

94. A.A. Graham, History of Fairfield and Perry County (Chicago, 1883), 104-105 relates specific examples of veterans dying soon after their return. Thomas Irey also discusses the impact of the Mexican campaign on death by disease in the peace-time army in "Soldiering, Suffering and Dying in the Mexican War," Journal of the West, 11 (April, 1972), 298.


96. St. Clairsville Gazette July 2, 1847.


98. Zanesville Gazette February 17, 1847.
99. *A History and Biographic Cyclopedia of Butler County, Ohio, with Illustrations and Sketches of Its Representative Men and Pioneers* (Cincinnati, 1882), 199-207.

100. John Fisher to Frank Hardy April 9, 1914, Mexican War Veterans' Association (OHS). An overview of the veterans' organization is presented in Wallace Evan Davies, "The Mexican War Veterans as an Organized Group," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 35 (September, 1948), 221-238.

101. Thomas Young December 15, 1874, Mexican War Veteran's Association (OHS).

102. George Morgan February 22, 1879, ibid.

103. Ibid.
Chapter 4

Buckeye Statesmen and the War

While the troops endured the rigors of war in Mexico, on the home front Ohio statesmen struggled with the issues of the conflict. The balance of power in Ohio tipped slightly in favor of the Whigs through the war years. They won the gubernatorial elections of 1846 and 1848. Also, while seats were evenly distributed in the state legislature when war broke out, the Whigs gained a majority in both houses in the 1847 state elections. That same election reduced a thirteen to eight Democrat advantage among Ohio congressmen to an equal distribution of eleven seats per party. Each faction was represented by one senator. During these years, voting patterns generally remained constant. The Whigs demonstrated their traditional hold on the Western Reserve, coupling that with equally solid voting in the west-central and south-central regions of Ohio. Democratic voting dominated the northwest and southwest corners of Ohio and showed strength in the east-central area.

Whig opposition to the Mexican War was especially potent in Ohio for the party was inspired by two of the war's most outspoken critics. Joshua Giddings emerged as the leader of opposition to the war in the House of Representatives. He was convinced that the war was brought on by President Polk and the slavocracy of the South with
the sole purpose of extending slavery into the territories. No more clearly was Giddings leadership manifest than in the House vote on the war bill. "I saw that I must lead off or stand hearty alone," wrote the Congressman to his wife.\(^1\) Calling his May 12th speech perhaps "the most important one I ever made," Giddings assailed the administration for provoking an unjust war of conquest. Inspired by example and assisted by their paladin in the preparation of their speeches, four other Ohioans spoke out against the war bill - Columbus Delano, Joseph Vance, Daniel Tilden, and Joseph Root. While the bill's opponents easily went down to defeat in the House vote (174-14), there is no doubt that Giddings along with his Ohio colleagues composed the bulwark of the "immortal fourteen.\(^2\)"

Senator Thomas Corwin became an outspoken opponent of the war, despite voting in favor of the war bill. Like other Whigs, he protested against the preamble which stated "whereas, by the act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists..."\(^3\) but felt compelled to approve the measure "under the circumstances in which it was presented to the Senate.\(^4\) He voted for the bill "not with a view to make war on Mexico, but for the rescue of our little army from its perilous position.\(^5\)"

Corwin gave a full revelation of his views on the war in a lengthy address presented in the Senate chamber February 11, 1847. In his oration, which became widely accepted as the statement of Whig opposition to the war, Corwin attacked the unconstitutional actions of the President, assailed Democratic colleagues with his barbed wit, and rebutted every cause, intent and justification made in defense of
the war. The address brought great notoriety to Corwin. "The speech of Corwin is very much admired here by the Whigs," wrote a party member from Columbus, "and meets with a favorable response generally." A wave of enthusiasm advocating the Ohio Senator as a presidential candidate developed in the months immediately following the oration and Whig successes in the 1847 state elections were recognized as an endorsement of Corwin's anti-war position.

Although the nomination never materialized, the Senator's February 11th address remained the most powerful Whig Indictment of the war.

Much of the debate surrounding the causes and purposes of the war centered on President James Knox Polk. Indeed, the Ohio Whiggery based its denunciation of the war on the premises that Polk's justifications for the conflict were rife and fallacy and that the President, himself, was the prime investigator of hostilities.

The President always contended that the Rio Grande River was the proper boundary between Texas and Mexico. His evidence was twofold. First, he believed that originally "Texas constituted a portion of the ancient Province of Louisiana, ceded to the United States by France in the year 1803." The real western border of that province, explained Polk, had been the Rio Grande (Messrs. Monroe and Pinckney used the phrase "Bravo River"); however, American diplomats negotiating the Florida Treaty (1819) settled on the Sabine River as the Boundary, in essence ceding Texas to Spain. To correct this error, Polk accepted as part of his party's 1844 platform "the re-annexation of Texas." Too, Polk used the Constitution of the Texas Republic to prove the legality of the "Bravo River" boundary.
The document showed that the left bank had been concluded in the congressional districting of Texas and stated unequivocally that the Rio Grande marked that country's border with Mexico. Because the first incident of combat occurred when Mexican troops forded the river and exchanged shots with American regulars, Folk charged that Mexico had "invaded our territory and shed American blood on American soil."\(^{12}\)

Interestingly, the Ohio opposition party did not deny that originally the Louisiana boundary might have extended to the Rio Grande. And, they could not disbelieve the fact that the Texas Constitution claimed the river as that republic's border. Instead, they based their arguments on the premise that Texas never exercised real authority over any part of the region south of the Nueces River.\(^{13}\) "It was printed on paper," said Joshua Giddings in reference to the Texas Constitution, "and that was the only mode in which Texas ever extended her jurisdiction over the Mexicans in the valley of the Rio Grande."\(^{14}\) Also standing before the House of Representatives, Daniel Tilden related a history of expeditions sent to establish Texan authority in that river valley, noting that all were repelled or captured. He believed that Corpus Christi, a port located 150 miles north of the Rio Grande, designated the southern limit of real Texan authority. Here, both the land office and the customs house for the disputed region were located.\(^{15}\) Thomas Corwin, likewise, took the President to task asking, "why did not General Taylor hear something of those Texans hailing the advent of the American army" when he marched south of the Nueces? It was only
reported by the military that the population fled as the army approached. "In God's name I wish to know if it has come to this," probed the Senator in sardonic fashion, "that when an American army goes to protect American citizens on American territory, they flee from it, as if from the most barbarous enemy?" What a "ridiculous assumption," shouted Corwin, to pretend that on the left bank of the Rio Grande "there were Texas population, Texan power, Texan laws and United States power and law!"  

Another controversial statement made by the President was his assertion: "War exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself...."  This marked the first time in United States history that a president informed Congress that war existed before a declaration of war had passed by the legislature; nevertheless, from Mr. Polk's position, the statement appeared logical and just. He reminded Congress of the many attempts made by both his predecessors and himself to peacefully negotiate a settlement of differences between the two countries. In his own case, Polk had commissioned John Slidell with full powers "to adjust every existing difference" between the two countries and sent him to Mexico as late as November, 1845. But, the Mexicans proved intransigent. General Arista, said Polk, who on April 24, 1846, "communicated to General Taylor that 'he considered hostilities commenced and should prosecute them.'"  

The Ohio Whigs were not convinced that the President had negotiated in good faith as he intimated in his message, nor did they believe that the Mexicans were responsible for the first shots being
fired along the Rio Grande. Daniel Tilden admitted that Polk "started out with a very commendable resolution to waving all ceremony, and taking the initiative in opening the negotiation." Yet, after conducting meetings for a time and showing the prospects of success, the President terminated them on the mere question of a technicality. Why, asked Tilden, when "Mexico had agreed to receive a commissioner to treat with her exclusively upon the question of boundary," did the President suddenly become uncompromising and demand that a Minister Plenipotentiary be accepted? If the American envoy could not be styled as Minister and so accredited, said Thomas Corwin in his February 11th address, the President had determined that "we must fight, and not negotiate for a boundary." In the spirit of his instructions, argued Corwin, John Slidell's imperious, haughty behavior as much as told the Mexicans:

You shall receive me now; you shall receive me as minister, and not as commissioner; you shall receive me as though the most pacific relations exist between the two countries. Thus, and not otherwise, shall it be.23

Although the road to peace seemingly was open through negotiation, the Ohio Whigs believed that Polk's inflexible diplomacy forced Mexico into war.24

Moreover, in the view of the Ohio Whigs, the initial act of war had been committed months before the clash of arms between Mexican and American troops. The war was begun, argued Elias Drake before the Ohio House, by President Polk's "unnecessary and unconstitutional" act of ordering General Taylor into territory then in possession of the Mexican Republic.25 How could the American
people "not dare give utterance to our indignant condemnation of his unconstitutional acts!" exclaimed Governor William Bebb in his Inaugural address. The Constitution gave Congress alone the power to declare war, Bebb explained, yet the nation had watched as Polk trampled "that sacred instrument in the dust, deliberately, and without the advice of Congress then in session involved the country in a foreign war of conquest...." "Where is the man who does not know and feel that this Mexican War is a presidential war!" bellowed the Governor.26

Joshua Giddings too asserted that the conflict was "an Executive war." It was begun by Polk's orders, alleged the Whig firebrand, for he had "directed our army to leave Corpus Christi, to enter the Mexican settlements; and to take a position upon the Rio Grande, Without advising with Congress."27 If the army had remained on the Nueces, wrote Judge John McLean in a "position" paper on the war, "we should still have been at peace. But, Taylor was ordered into disputed territory "and this, as everyone expected, provoked a conflict." The fact was "so palpable," stated McLean, that no illustration could make it more clear. The President was responsible "as the order was given by his authority."28

Ohio Whigs scan closely the actions of the Executive and soon became convinced that a scheme, planned by Polk and his southern cohorts, lay behind the President's fastidious diplomacy and aggressive use of the military. The design of the administration, argued State Representative Samuel Russell, was "to extend the area of human slavery" and the plot had begun with the annexation of
Texas. Congressman Tilden concurred. The President, he said, had "preferred the interests of Texas to the interests of the Union." Negotiations intentionally were allowed to fail in order that more territory, "that good land between the Colorado and the Rio Grande, said to be the best in Texas for the products of slave-labor," might be acquired. To carry out this "most wicked scheme of acquisition," charged Tilden, the President had stifled the public conscience "by declaring war and awakening the national prejudices against Mexico." Giddings echoed the sentiments of his colleague. "The war in which we are engaged," he stated, "is but a consequence of our efforts to extend slavery by the annexation of Texas." Everyone who examined the issues carefully, argued the Congressman, knew "annexation and war to be identical." He was fully convinced that "the millions of money...squandered" and "the thousands of lives...sacrificed" were the consequences of the administration's endeavors to extend slavery.

In an official statement following its meeting in the summer of 1847, the Whig State Central Committee stated candidly that the Ohio Whigs blamed a southern conspiracy for causing the war. The committee concluded:

We charge that the causes which led to the War with Mexico, were conceived for the purpose of advancing the slave power, and for perpetuating human slavery in our own country. The incipient steps which involves us in the War, were taken by slaveholders....

With fervor equal to the spirit of their assault against the war, Ohio Whigs launched a campaign opposing the extension of slavery. The view expressed by Columbus Delano in a letter to
Giddings was a foretaste of the position many Whigs would assume. He wrote:

The free states ought in my opinion now to take this position openly & avowedly. "Unyielding opposition to the acquisition of territory by any means unless freedom is guaranteed & slavery prohibited; and the like opposition to the admission of any further Slave State."

Whigs in the state legislature concurred with Delano. Elias Drake asserted by resolution that "Ohio opposes and protests the extension of slavery." He stressed that the state's congressmen be instructed "to insist that any treaty, act or resolution that is used as a means to acquire territory shall unalterably declare that slavery should not be allowed in said territory." Samuel Russell, also was outspoken on the issue. Slavery, he argued, was "repugnant to reason, opposed to christianity, anti-republican and a falsehood upon that fundamental axiom of our Government which declares 'that all men are created equal.'" Like Drake, Russell propounded that if any territory was to be ceded by Mexico, Ohio Congressmen should oppose its reception unless the treaty "forever expressly prohibits the establishment or continuance of slavery."

Various proposals were made by the Buckeye Whigs in their attempt to stop the spread of slavery. Using the heritage of their own state as a model, some statesmen favored applying the anti-slavery provisions of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance to any newly acquired territory. The ordinance proved, argued Representative Rober Schench, that a clear precedent had been established for Congress to control slavery in the territories. "From the glorious
ordinance of 1787...down to the present time," he argued, "there has been no exception in this history." In the Ohio Legislature, a House joint resolution, "declaring that so much of the ordinance of 1787 as relates to slavery should be extended to territory acquired from Mexico," was presented for debate. It passed by a vote of 23-6 in the Senate and by a 48-12 margin in the House. All of the opposition votes were cast by Democrats.

The Wilmot Proviso, too, was much discussed by Ohioans as a means of stopping the extension of slavery. Giddings was the most avid Ohio supporter of the measure, for he believed it presented the ideal means of ending the war. He admitted to his friend, Oran Follett, that Whigs lacked the necessary votes to withdraw the army from Mexico; however, he wrote, if "we make the extension of slavery the issue and attach the Wilmot Proviso to our appropriations, the army will at once withdraw and the war [be] ended." Giddings' plan worked to perfection in the House where the proviso was twice passed as an addendum to an appropriations bill, but the measure never received Senate approval. Delano told the House of Representatives that he believed President Polk had used executive patronage "to purchase traitors now, and prevent the passage of Wilmot's proviso...." The Knox Countian warned the "doughface" congressman that they would "find the indignation of their constituents too hot for their political existence" if they continued to sell themselves at the expense of freedom and the rights of the free states.

Working in the Senate, Thomas Corwin knew the proviso did not have the necessary support for passage; hence, he became an advocate
for the "no territory" position. In his stinging speech of February 11, he questioned the Democrats' pretense for expansion. "With twenty millions of people, you have about one thousand millions of acres of land," said Corwin to his audience, "inviting settlement by every conceivable argument...." Yet, expansionists like Lewis Cass of Michigan, stated Corwin, argued that "we will be two hundred millions in a few years and we want room." Then, in the most frequently quoted lines of his address, Corwin sneered:

If I were a Mexican I would tell you, 'Have you not room in your own country to bury your dead men? If you come into mine we will greet you with bloody hands, and welcome you to hospitable graves.'

The Democrats' only logic for expanding, said Corwin, was that the Bay of San Francisco was "the best harbor on the Pacific!" The Senator confessed that he had never before "heard a thief, arraigned for stealing a horse, plead [as his defense] that it was the best horse that he could find in the country!"

Later in 1847, Corwin added to his arguments against territorial expansion. If the President secured any territory not a part of Texas and "the Wilmot Proviso should be a question pending at the next Presidential election," reasoned Corwin, "I feel confident that we shall fail in electing any Whig." He was convinced that the Whigs of the South would "not sustain any man in favor of the proviso" and those in the North would "not vote for any man who is opposed to it." Consequently, said Corwin, there was a need to take "early & strong grounds against any further acquisition...." Settle on that
position, he argued, and "the Wilmot Proviso dies, & with it dies every political topic connected with the subject."\textsuperscript{44}

In the end, Corwin's position was adopted by most Ohio Whigs. Elías Drake was convinced that no new territory could be annexed to the United States "without involving the agitation of domestic difficulties, begetting sectional animosities, and weakening the ties that connect us together."\textsuperscript{45} In a joint resolution presented to the Ohio House, Aaron Perry of Franklin County, asserted "that the State of Ohio neither seeks nor advises the acquisition of further territory by conquest or purchase...."\textsuperscript{46} And, the Whig State Central Committee boldly asserted after its June, 1847 meeting: "We are opposed to the acquisition and annexation of territory in any manner and under any pretense whatever...."\textsuperscript{47} The Whigs in Ohio truly became a party of non-expansion.\textsuperscript{48}

Being fully convinced of the slave power scheme, Ohio Whigs looked askance on Polk's contention that American forces were fighting a defensive war. The President said the army had been sent to the southwest to "repel any Invasion of the Texas territory" which might be attempted by the Mexicans. The Latins, explained Polk, held firmly to the "refuted pretension" that Texas was not an independent state, but a "rebellious province" and he was certain that Mexico's purpose in commencing the war "was to reconquer Texas and to restore Mexican authority over the whole territory - not to the Nueces only, but to the Sabine."\textsuperscript{49} Polk said that the decision to send the American army into Mexico was not made with "a view to conquest," but emanated from a belief that the war must be "prosecuted with vigor as
the best means of securing peace." By vigorously prosecuting the attack, reasons the President, the United States could obtain an honorable peace and "secure ample Indemnity for the expenses of the war, as well as to our much-injured citizens, who hold large pecuniary demands against Mexico."50

Simply stated, Ohio Whigs never believed Polk. Joseph Root questioned the true nature of the war, for the President had said that no captured towns or provinces would be surrendered until the Americans received remuneration. Everyone knew that Mexico "had only her territory to pay with," exclaimed Root, "and yet this was not a war for conquest. Oh, no!" To Thomas Corwin, the idea that the war should be prosecuted "till Mexico pays us" seemed utterly preposterous. "I have no patience with this flagitious notion of fighting for indemnity," Corwin told his colleagues in the Senate, "and this under the equally absurd and hypocritical pretense of securing an honorable peace." What an incredible proposition, exclaimed the Senator, that young men should be enlisted and marched two thousand miles "to fight a people merely to be paid for it in money!" The method of establishing peace was simply to stop fighting, argued Corwin. "Conquer your insane love of false glory, and you will 'conquer a peace.'"52

The army had overrun Matamoras, Camargo, Monterey, Saltillo, Tabasco, Tampico, Santa Fe and the whole of California, said Giddings, and had "stormed their strong fortresses, bombarded their cities, and involved their defenseless women, helpless children, and decrepit aged, in scenes of human butchery." Yet, stated the
Congressman disdainfully, we profess to be "acting in defense of our own people." Such an absurdity defied argument. Giddings summarized well the Ohio Whig position on the character of the war when he told the House of Representatives:

This war is waged against an unoffending people, without just or adequate cause, for the purposes of conquest; with the design to extend slavery; in violation of the Constitution, against the dictates of justice, of humanity, the sentiment of the age in which we live, and the precepts of the religion we profess.

Many Ohioans became convinced that the only way to combat Polk's belligerent use of the military and put an end to the "unnecessary war" was to withhold supplies from the military. Columbus Delano was not willing to sanction a doctrine which suggested that there was no means of halting "the effusion of blood...'If it be the Executive will that it shall continue to flow'. . . ." Such a maxim made the President independent of Congress. "The object in withholding supplies," explained the Congressman from Knox County, "is to stop the administration in its career of error and mischief. Joseph Root reached the same conclusion as Delano when he challenged the gentlemen in Congress who said that they "did not feel at liberty to withhold any supplies which the Executive would ask for in a time of war." What was the result of such thinking? "It came to this," said Root, "that if we should chance to have a wicked or a weak president, he had only to get the country into a state of war, and he should have absolute control of the treasury." Corwin raised the spirit of Whig protest to impassioned zeal when he dared his Senate colleagues:
Tell me, ye who contend that being in war, duty demands of Congress for its prosecution, all the money and every able-bodied man in America to carry it on..., who also contend that it is the right of the President...to march your embodied hosts to Monterey, to Yucatan, to Mexico, to Panama...tell me, I demand it of you, tell me, tell the American people, tell the nations of Christendom, what is the difference between your American democracy and the most odious, most hateful despotism...?57

He demanded that the war party call the army home, saying: "I will feed and clothe it no longer."58

In an effort to lend legal justification to the Whig position, Giddings cited the actions of opposition members in the British Parliament during the American Revolution. British Whigs, led by Lord Chatham, Marquise of Rockingham and Edmund Burke, determined that they would not vote supplies for the military because the war against America was oppressive and unjust. "The Whigs of 1846 are the same as the Whigs of 1776," said Giddings. Like their predecessors, they should vote to withhold aid and force the army back to its own soil.59

Whigs in the Ohio Senate endorsed these efforts of their Congressmen. Controlling a majority of upper house votes, they drafted and passed the Report of the Standing Committee on the Judiciary, which repudiated as "degrading and pernicious" the dogma that "it is the perogative of the President to determine the purposes for which [war] shall henceforth be carried and the measure of its duration." Whig Senators believed that Congress possessed and should exercise the right to interfere with "this kingly attribute" for it was never the duty of that body to bow to "the dictates of Executive will." When war is perpetrated solely to wring territory from an
adversary, they wrote, it becomes the duty of Congress "to put a stop to the effusion of blood by withholding all supplies for the further prosecution of war...." This duty became doubly imperative, concluded their report, when a war was begun "for questionable objects" and "by the most palpable executive usurpation of power." 

However, in supporting such a measure the Whigs found themselves in a tenous position. To advocate the withholding of supplies in the midst of war, after many party members had voted in favor of the war bill, would make the Whigs appear as traitors to their country and betrayers of the men they called into the field. State Auditor John Wood told Judge McLean that he did not believe the party had "dealt fairly by the country." His reasoning was that while Whig politicians had so boldly denounced the President and the war, they had not offered precisely defined guidelines upon which men and money would be kept from the Executive.

McLean agreed with his friend. The party would be "utterly masticated" if it held back supplies after voting for war. Paraphrasing the maxim of Stephen Decatur, McLean was convinced that "for the honor of the country and the maintenance of its flag" the Whigs should "go for our country right or wrong." Although the party held the administration responsible for the war and its consequences, argued the Judge, the leadership could not be separated from the country. "We cannot disgrace the one with out disgracing the other," he wrote. Besides, asked McLean, "is there a Whig bosom that did not swell with emotion when the gallant Taylor with greatly inferior numbers vanquished the enemy?" That feeling of national pride
"permeates our country," asserted the Judge, "and no party can stand up against it." Moreover, to abandon the men in the field "would be treachery of the darkest character!" Only those who originally opposed the appropriations bills and the calling of troops, said McLean, "are consistent in voting against supplies."

Realizing the interference of their bold attack on the war, some of the most outspoken Whigs tempered their words to counter any duplicity of meaning. Delano, for example, sought to clarify his position by stating that he would "not withhold anything necessary to pay and protect our army and navy now in the field." They should have everything, he said, "which justice and their necessities require."

Others tried to protect their position by wedging statements complimentary to the troops, into their denunciations of the war. While attacking the administration, the Whigs State Central Committee praised the soldiers, stating: "We doubt not the patriotism of our gallant countrymen who have taken up arms." The Committee commended each man for the alacrity with which he responded to the nation's call and rejoiced "that our brave volunteers have shown to the world that American valor has not degenerated." Governor William Bebb claimed that "the brilliant exploits of General Taylor and his gallant army" alone had saved the Polk administration from the "utter disaster and public odium" of the war. These men, said Bebb, "had triumphantly upheld our national banner, and won for themselves imperishable renown and the gratitude of our country." Joshua Giddings, too, absolved General Taylor and the army from any
responsibility incurred "by obeying the orders of the President." "They were not permitted," stated the Western Reserve Congressman, "to judge of the propriety of those orders."66

Finally, the Ohio Whigs were genuine in their belief that this war - based on dubious reasoning the immoral purposes - held dire consequences for the nation. Due to the great expenses of the conflict, argued Congressman Root, the United States government would become "a beggar trying to barter away its rags among the Shylocks in Wall Street." The immense national debt resulting from the war would be "enough to grind the American people for half a century to come."67 Too, said Root, those who perpetrated the war must accept responsibility for the strife and misery which resulted. "The immense destruction of human life and the demoralization of our citizens," he asserted, "were far greater evils" than the financial burdens incurred. And, concluded Root, the gentlemen "who were so immovably prejudiced on the subject of color and complexion" surely understood that a consequence of their war was the admission of citizens from Chihuahua, New Mexico and Coahuila, "descendants of the old Spaniards with a pretty considerable dash of the negro and the Indian in them...."68

Ohio Whigs were also concerned about the effects of the administration's unconstitutional behavior on the nation's future. Alexander Harper predicted an end to the American system of government "if the course of Executive usurpation does not receive a timely and essential check...." The consequences of a government which prosecutes wars of conquest and annexes foreign states "under
whatever pretense," asserted Harper, could only be that "the hopes of the good and wise everywhere be extinguished forever, the liberties of the people destroyed, and the sum of our property and glory set in blood." Giddings saw an internal revolution resulting from the war. "What I mean by revolution," he told the House, "is, an unauthorized change of the essential element of government, — whether such change be effected by violence and bloodshed, or by peaceful measures." Examples of such changes were manifest clearly in Washington, argued Giddings: the President's arbitrary use of the military, Executive usurpation of Congressional power to declare war, and members seated in Congress "who, six months since, were citizens of a foreign nation." All were examples of recent fundamental alterations in the American system of government according to the Whig Congressman.

Whigs were convinced that the acquisition of territory was sure to heighten sectional tensions and produce internal strife. No greater calamity could befall the nation, said Joseph Root, than for the United States to acquire a vast stretch of Mexican territory. "We should get the territory," he argued, "and with it would come domestic strife, that bitterest curse of free governments." Corwin, likewise saw the impending crisis. "Should we prosecute this war another moment or expend one dollar in the purchase or conquest of a single acre of Mexican land," he asserted, "the North and the South are brought into collision on a point where neither will yield." Rightly considered, stated Corwin, it was treasonous to promote the acquisition of territory from Mexico. "We stand this
day," said the Ohio Senator, "on a crumbling brink of that gulf - we see its bloody eddies wheeling and boiling before us - shall we not pause before it be too late!"

And, the Whigs believed that Mexican War was undermining the virtues of the American system. The basis of the United States government, Delano asserted, was the theory and practice that all power rests upon the consent of the people. "When we force by conquest a foreign people to join this Confederacy... we violate the great principle of consent which is the foundation of this republic," he argued. If the United States conquered by war and annexed by treaty, said Delano, "the seeming consent is but the acquiescence of compulsion, not of volition." Such a practice violated the spirit of American institutions. By engaging in a "war for plunder," stated Delano, "we desert our destiny." One conquest would only give rise to the desire for another. "The present manifest propensity to acquire territory," claimed the Ohio Whig, "will be kindled into a burning passion" by ambitious demagogues who "will seize upon those rash propensities, feed them and give them fury in order to gratify their own pride, and satisfy their lust for power." Victories on the battlefield, warned Governor Mordecai Bartley, must not raise "the ardor of public feeling" to a point that the country could forget "its high position in regard to the great and immutable principles of justice and the rights of men." A desire for military fame and conquest for "an overweening spirit of aggrandizement," stated the Governor, "have been fatal to republics in ages past."
An overview of the Ohio Democracy's position on the Mexican War is found readily in the actions of Senator William Allen and Congressman Jacob Brinkerhoff. Allen, described by one journalist as "the Thraso of the war party," was an ardent proponent of the Mexico campaign.76 His biographer, Reginald McGrane, wrote that the Senator's "hatred for England, his desire for expansion, and his natural loyalty to his land, caused him to advocate a vigorous war."77 Convinced that Congress was lethargic in prosecuting the conflict, Allen introduced resolutions calling for additional troops with which to mount a second Invasion of Mexico. In January, 1847, he told his colleagues in the Senate:

...it seems to me high time that the Congress of the United States should have done something by which the people of this nation, the army now in Mexico, and Mexico herself, should understand that is intended; whether it is intended to prosecute this war like a powerful nation, or let it dwindle away dishonorably.78

Like Allen, Jacob Brinkerhoff advocated an aggressive war which would "compel the conclusion of an honorable peace - a permanent peace."79 A defensive war, he argued, would be expensive, vexatious, and inconclusive. It is "no part of my duty to inquire how this war originated nor wherefore," he stated before the House. Rather, his duty was, "as a man confessing an ordinary share of patriotic consistency, to know that it exists; and...to arrive at the conclusion that our only course is to conquer peace by vigorous prosecution of the war once commenced."80 Too, Brinkerhoff was representative of the Democratic Free Soil politicians in Ohio. He was a leading advocate in Congress for the Wilmot proviso and, in
fact, confided to Salmon Chase that he was the resolution's originator.81

Allen and Brinkerhoff both characterize the strained relations which existed between the Ohio Democracy and President Polk. This state of affairs began with the 1844 election when Ohio's electoral votes went to Henry Clay. Polk made only a brief stop at Cincinnati on the way to his inauguration and, once in office, refused to use Ohio Democrats as appointees. Brinkerhoff became an outspoken critic of the President when his application for an army paymaster position was rejected. Polk's explanation, that he was not eligible for the position because it was "not strictly a military office," did not mollify the Ohio Congressman.82 Before the House, Brinkerhoff charged the President with favoritism in the use of patronage and complained that the Ohio Democracy was not receiving its share of offices.83

Polk's decision to settle with Britain on the forty-ninth parallel as the Oregon boundary greatly dismayed Allen. From the chairman's seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he had led the "all of Oregon" movement. Believing that the President had been personally dishonest with him, Allen resigned his position.84 He apparently tried to maintain an amenable relationship with the White House, however, for he is mentioned often in the President's Diary as an evening visitor.85

Despite this tension between the Buckeye Democracy and the President, Ohio Democrats generally gave enthusiastic support to Polk's position on the war. They believed he had every justification
for sending the troops to the frontier. In the words of Clement Vallandigham, the President had done "no more than from the circumstances of the case he ought to have done, and by the Constitution and his oath of office he was bound to do" in ordering Taylor to the east bank of the Rio Grande. Texas was a sovereign state in the Mexican union, argued Representative Joseph McDowell, and it left that republic "with all the powers it possessed upon entering." The boundary was "the Rio Grande," continued the Congressman, "the same as that with which we acquired Louisiana from France - and which it had maintained until its annexation to the United States." McDowell was confident that the President had managed the boundary affair "very prudently." Certainly, neither Polk nor Taylor could have known that an attack was forthcoming from the Mexicans. The troops were sent to Texas "with the express view of preventing war," argued Allen. "It was not imagined," said the Senator, "that the Mexicans would be so short-sighted and so stupid as to cross the Rio Grande." His only explanation was that Great Britain secretly supported the Latins. By what other means could the Mexicans have been made so "insensible of their own weakness" and our "physical and moral strength?" he asked. The army had been sent to the Rio Grande, said the Senator, in response to the "absolute necessity, the urgency, the instant need there was of providing for the defense of the country." The President, insisted Allen, had rightfully anticipated a breach of public peace and order.

In the Ohio Senate, Democratic members of the Committee on the Judiciary went so far as to assert that no question of boundary was
Involved in the commencement of the war. The opening acts of hostility resulted, they said, from "the jealously of Mexico toward this government, in consequence of the annexation of Texas." Hostilities were commenced by Mexico in "an attempt to invade the territory of the State of Texas." The committee members from the Ohio Democracy concluded that if "both governments claimed territory on the east bank of the Rio Grande, under the circumstances of a threatened invasion of Texas, the President was justifiable in making the military demonstration on that noted stream."90

Democrats on the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Relations likewise defended Polk's leadership. They asserted that annexation was "an act of sovereignty" on the part of Texas and the United States. The war was begun by the Mexicans, said the Senators, and must be prosecuted "until a just and honorable peace is obtained."91

The great exception inside the Ohio Democracy to this strong support for Polk came from the Free Soil faction. Ohio Democrats who were part of that movement agreed with their Whig counterparts that the war had had a dubious beginning and that a southern scheme was afoot. To Salmon Chase, who became Ohio's Democratic Senator in 1848, "the question of slavery seemed paramount in importance to the question of war...."92 He was never convinced that the claim of Texas to the land between the Nueces and the Rio Grande "was any thing more than one of the bold pretensions by which the slaveholders have so often imposed on the acquiescent spirit of the North and extended their own dominion."93 Thus, Chase agreed that sending troops into disputed territory was a misuse of Executive authority
and that the commencement of hostilities was never justified. Before
the House, Brinkerhoff lamented that the southern faction had
controlled Congress so long that "ambitious politicians have learned
to look more to the compliance of the South than to the wishes of
their constituents." "It is time to awake public sentiment in the
free States," asserted the Congressman, "and it will awake." He was
convinced that the North would not allow "the patronage, the arms,
and the blood of this nation...[to] be used to propagate slavery over
a free soil...."

In conjunction with portraying themselves generally as advocates
for the President and an aggressive prosecution of the war, Ohio
Democrats made a full fledged assault on the positions assumed by the
anti-war party. State Senators expressed their disgust with the
"claptrap" terms "presidential war," "kingly attribute," and
"dictates of executive will" which were constantly part of the Whig
jargon. Such phrases, said Charles Reemelin, were "the mere raw-head
and bloody-bones of disappointed political demagogues." The
President and Congress both received their power from the people,
reasoned Reemelin. Throughout the crisis, he said, both were
performing their respective tasks necessary "to maintain the
permanence of the Union" and sustain "the true republican basis of
the government." The manner in which the Whigs had arrayed themselves against the
war was, to the Democrats, clear evidence of the party's
non-patriotic spirit. They predicted disastrous consequences, dwelt
on the war costs, and depicted soldiers "prostrated by disease and
dying with pestilence," said Congressman Allen Thurman. It seemed a
strange way of supporting the country, stated Thurman facetiously, to
accuse the President of wickedly producing the war and referring to
the conflict as "aggressive, unholy, unrighteous, and damnable."

What would be the effect of such talk? The Whigs, said Thurman,
were sure "to destroy as far as possible the moral force of the
Government in the struggle, and hold it up to its people and the
world, as the aggressor that merits their condemnation." David
Starkweather agreed with Thurman. To tell the troops that the war
was "unholy" and "unjust" was certain "to dampen all their ardor and
make cowards of brave men." Moreover, such talk was to infer that
American soldiers would willingly fight such a war. Referring to the
volunteers from his own district (Stark County), Congressman
Starkweather felt confident that they would not participate in a war
they believed to be unjust. They were "his equals in morals, in
intellect, and in education, and they would not enter the field to
fight against God and the laws of justice."

Thomas Corwin was especially chastized by the Democrats for his
willingness to "starve home the troops" by withholding supplies.
State Senators who were members of the Standing Committee on the
Judiciary resolved that the war was "protracted by reason of the
treasonable course of the Hon[orable] T[h]o[m]a[ma]s Corwin...." He was
the enemy of his country, said the Democracy, in that he gave "aid
and comfort" to the Mexicans "through the agency of public speeches,
and by otherwise embarrassing the government in the vigorous
prosecution of the war...." They determined that Corwin should
resign his seat and the General Assembly be allowed to elect another individual "who will not misrepresent the patriotic citizens of Ohio, by opposing the present war with the Republic of Mexico."\(^99\)

Also characteristic of the Buckeye Democracy was its special concern for the men who answered the call to arms. Congressman James Faran proposed the House resolution of thanks which was adopted in honor of Zachary Taylor. In part, the resolution expressed gratitude for the General's service and leadership in defending the nation's honor and vindicating its rights "assailed as both had been by repeated and flagrant acts on the part of Mexico..."\(^100\)

The Ohio Democracy was part of the vanguard advocating generous compensation for the troops. Senator Allen said that he "knew of no better use that could be made of the public domain than to reward the brave and patriotic men who had volunteered to serve in this war." He thought that "great liberality" should be demonstrated by the government toward the citizens in regard to "the uncultivated soil of this country."\(^101\) John Cummins took a special interest in providing land warrants for the troops. He drafted a series of proposals aimed at revising the warrant system to provide fair distribution, protect the rights of widows and orphans, and prevent speculators from cajoling land from imprudent grantees.\(^102\) Joseph McDowell joined other Democrats in advocating an increase in the soldiers monthly salary to $10. "The service of the soldier is the hardest service performed by any other set of men in the employment of the Government," said McDowell. The additional pay, with a land bounty,
he thought, "would approximate to something like justice towards these men."103

In the end, the Whiggery of 1846 appeared to the Democrats as nothing more than a regeneration of the Federalists of 1812. Allen Thurman found incredible similarities in the words of the two. He read before the House excerpts from speeches and newspaper articles written by Federalists, then remarked:

Between the language of the 'peace party' of that period and the anti-war party of the present day, there is a wonderful similarity. It is hardly too much to say that they are almost identical.104

Thurman was confident that if Columbus Delano sent his speech to the Ohio press, men who were old enough to remember the previous war would say:

Oh, my good sir, we have heard all that before...The only difference is, that you use the words 'Mexico' and 'Mexican' instead of 'Britain' and 'British;' and in the place of 'Madison,' you say 'Polk.'105

William Sawyer, Representative from Mercer County, made the same attack on Joshua Giddings. He too read paragraphs from Federalist writings and alleged that his colleague "had copied almost verbatim, in his tirade against the President, the language formally used against Mr. Madison by the Federalist party."106

Concerning the issues of expansion and slavery, Buckeye Democrats were more preoccupied with the former than the latter. Democrats in the Ohio House asserted that the party's position on expansion was what most distinguished them from the Whigs. "A democrat always desires the extension of freedom," they explained. Such politicians gladly would embrace within the bounds of freedom's
"benign influence, every human being, if compatible with our position." On the other hand, stated the House Democrats, a Whig "always wishes to circumscribe the limits of freedom." Congressman Isaac Parish expressed the sentiments of many Ohio Democrats when he stated: "I go for acquiring from Mexico...the greatest amount of territory that can honorably and justly be attained...." Yet, herin lay the rub of the matter for the Democracy - the pro-expansionist position necessitated an articulate solution to the extension of slavery controversy.

During the war years, much of this debate among Ohio Democrats revolved around the Wilmot Proviso. The resolution's self-proclaimed author, Jacob Brinkerhoff, admitted that his idea germinated from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and, hence, the amendment should have been known as the "Jefferson proviso." In defense of the measure, Brinkerhoff argued vehemently that it was not abolitionist. The resolution, he asserted, infringed upon no "vested rights" or "vested wrongs," nor did its advocates propose "to abolish slavery or to interfere with it where it exists...." What was being proposed, said Brinkerhoff, was "that the treasure, and the influence, shall not be used to plant slavery where it does not now exist, and where it cannot exist except by the act of this Government." Also, the Ohio native noted that the proviso had nothing to do with the prosecution of the war. No Congressman had supported with "greater zeal, promptness, or fidelity" every necessary measure recommended by the administration "than had the friends and advocates of the resolution." They brought the measure forward in the House
and attached it where they believed it properly belonged, said Brinkerhoff, "to what the Administration claim[ed] to be a peace measure" - the Three Million Bill.111

President Polk believed that the proviso's advocates attacked the resolution to the bill not so much because they favored the resolution's provisions, but rather because they wanted to embarrass the administration and defeat the appropriations measure.112 His assessment, as related to Ohio Democratic Congressmen, was essentially correct.113 In his book, *The Triumph of Sectionalism*, Stephen Malzlish shows that much of the Buckeye support of the proviso resulted from dissatisfaction with the southern dominated leadership of the Democratic party. Intra-party hostility, earlier discussed, played an important role in causing Ohio Democrats to oppose the Three Million Bill unless it included the Wilmot Proviso.114

Democrats who argued against the proviso were more concerned with the interests of the Democratic party nationally than with slavery. Isaac Parrish and William Sawyer were opposed to the divisive tendencies of the proviso and spoke out especially strong against the free soil position.

Parrish, from Morgan County, considered the proviso "negative and uncalled for." He contended that it was "a well settled rule of international law" that when territory passed from one government to another it went to the acquiring government "with its existing laws and institutions, and so remains unchanged by subsequent legislation." Consequently, argued Parrish, "if slavery does not
exist now...it can only exist there when it shall be hereafter authorized by Congress." The only term required for a state, province, or department to enter the Union, said Parrish, was that the territory adopt a republican constitution. Slavery, then, charged the Morgan County Democrat, was not an issue "because the Federal Constitution imposes no other terms than republican form; and slavery, by the Constitution, is not anti-republican." Therefore, he held that the principle of the proviso could "have no binding obligation" and the measure was "wholly unnecessary."  

Parrish continued his attack by posing a question to the proviso supporters:

Suppose the slave states had numerical strength on this flow, as the free States have, and they should be here insisting that slavery should exist in all the territory to be acquired, and that none should be obtained unless it was exclusively slave territory, what would be the course of the gentlemen from the free States?  

Their duty would be to "withdraw from this House," he said, and make an appeal to their constituency, an action that would be sustained by the people of the North. "If such a course would be necessary and justified by the free States," asked Parrish, "what less than or different should the slave States do?"  

The proviso, asserted the Ohio Congressman, was serving only to divide the nation. When one section of the Union is arrayed "by geographic lines against another," said Parrish, "then comes the verification of that eternal principle, that 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.'" The Ohio Democrat was convinced that the American people loved their government and that they were "fully
impressed with the spirit of compromise which brought it into existence...." By this means he believed the issues should and must be resolved.\textsuperscript{118}

William Sawyer opposed the proviso for reasons both political and practical. The proposition, said the Mercer County native, "came from a quarter which he did not consider as friendly to the administration." The men who fixed the resolution on the Three Million Bill did so with a purpose "of defeating the bill, of stopping the war, of embarrassing the administration, and especially of embarrassing certain Democrats here by making them show their hands." As for himself, Sawyer was ready "to show his hand at any time." Four hundred slaves from John Randolph's estate in Virginia had been settled among the farmers of Mercer County. Believing that it was the aim of certain Ohio politicians, like Joshua Giddings, to let the freed Blacks enter public schools and receive the power to vote, Sawyer openly charged that he had no intention of letting this happen in his district. He opposed enslaving mankind, but "if he must either take this surplus black population into the bosom of his State, or let the South have territory on which to send them, he chose the latter." Sawyer confessed that he was willing to "consent to almost anything" to keep the Blacks out of the free states, "for they are the most degraded of the human race."\textsuperscript{120}

In an effort to maintain the unity of the party, most Ohio Democrats supported proposals for solving the expansion-slavery controversy which reflected an attempt at compromise between North and South. Many accepted the doctrine of popular sovereignty, a
solution formulated by Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan. Congressman Clement Vallandigham supported this doctrine and while attending county Democratic conventions discovered that it had wide appeal in Ohio. Isaac Parrish accepted the arbitration that had already been made on the issue and was willing "to extend the principles of the Missouri compromise." If, as a result of the 36°30' line slavery should exist "in a fourth, a third, or a half of such territory," stated the Congressman, "it is but just and sanctioned by the conservative principles of the Constitution, and the past administration of the Government." The acceptance of either position was common among Ohio Democrats for they generally were opposed to anti-slavery agitation and committed to settling the sectional controversy through compromise.

There can be no doubt that the Mexican War had a disquieting effect on Ohio politics. The Whigs' preoccupation with the extension of slavery kept them united against the war, but left them in the untenable position of advocating either free soil or no territorial expansion. Either position was bound to destroy the party's national appeal. By emphasizing territorial expansion, the Ohio Democracy maintained the strength of their party nationally; however, the extension of slavery controversy was beginning to show signs of undermining their solidarity.

In the summer before the 1848 elections, Joshua Giddings believed he saw the emergence of a new party, one which favored a total separation of the federal government from the support of slavery. "The old issues between parties are lost sight of," said
Giddings. Politicians no longer spoke of the protective tariff, the national bank, or harbor and river improvements. "The old organizations are in a degree broken up," contended the Whig leader, and "the old lines of demarcation have become obscure and uncertain...." Giddings was convinced that no power could "again unite either whig or democratic parties in any measure to extend slavery, or to uphold it."\textsuperscript{124}

The results of the 1848 presidential election in Ohio proved that Giddings assertion about the political parties was true. The Whig State Council Committee warned party members that "the casting of Whig votes for Van Buren most certainly tends to the election of Cass\textsuperscript{125} Their fear was realized. Martin Van Buren, the Free Soil candidate, polled 35,523 votes, thus allowing Lewis Cass to defeat Zachary Taylor by 15,126 in Ohio. One historian estimates "as many as forty percent" of the voters who supported the Whig gubernatorial candidate voted, in the presidential contest, for the Free Soil nominee.\textsuperscript{127} Leaders of the state Democracy realized that they must accommodate free soil sentiment if they were to maintain party unity. At the meeting of the 1848 General Assembly, Salmon Chase, a man determined to form a broad anti-slavery coalition, was elected Democratic Senator. The war years, then, witness a major breakdown in traditional party ties and present abolitionist sentiment as an emerging force in state political affairs.\textsuperscript{128}
Chapter 4
Footnotes

1. Joshua Giddings to Laura Giddings May 17, 1846, Joshua R. Giddings Papers (OHS).

2. Joshua Giddings to J. Addison Giddings May 20, 1846, Ibid. On Giddings' career see James Stewart, Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics (Cleveland, 1970).


4. Ibid., 29th Cong., 2nd sess., February 13, 1847, 543.

5. Ibid., 544. For Corwin's explanation see also Thomas Corwin to Horace Greeley July 16, 1847, Thomas Corwin (OHS).


7. Francis Weisenburger, The Passing of the Frontier: 1825-1850 (Columbus, 1941), 457.


10. Ibid., 482.

11. Ibid., 483.

12. Ibid., 442.

13. This was the proper Texan boundary according to Mexico.


15. Ibid., July 14, 1846, app., 763-764; 29th Cong., 2nd sess., February 4, 1847, app., 170.
16. Isaac Strohm (ed.), *Speeches of Thomas Corwin with a Sketch of His Life* (Cayton, 1859), 335.

17. Richardson (ed.), *Messages and Papers*, 442.


20. Ibid., 438.

21. Ibid., 441.


28. Essay dated April 19, 1847, John McLean Papers (OHS). This essay by McLean was published in Ohio Whig Papers. He was "testing the waters" for the 1848 Whig presidential nomination.


33. *Norwalk Huron Reflector* June 29, 1847.

34. Columbus Delano to Joshua Giddings August 25, 1846, Joshua R. Giddings Papers (OHS).


36. Ibid., January 4, 1848, app., 28-29.

38. Journal of the Senate of the State of Ohio, 46th General Assembly, February 24, 1848, 659-661; Journal of the House...Ohio, 47th General Assembly, March 19, 1848, 129.


41. Bochin, "Western Whig Opposition to the Mexican War," 104.

42. Strohm (ed.), Speeches of Thomas Corwin, 343.

43. Ibid.

44. Thomas Corwin to John J. Crittenden September 2, 1847, Thomas Corwin (OHS).


46. Ibid., January 17, 1848, 282.

47. Norwalk Huron Reflector June 29, 1847.


49. Richardson (ed.), Messages and Papers, 484-485.

50. Ibid.


54. Giddings, Speeches in Congress, 200.


56. Ibid., February 5, 1847, 331.

57. Strohm (ed.), Speeches of Corwin, 357.

58. Ibid.


62. Essay dated April 19, 1847, Ibid.


64. *Norwalk Huron Reflector* June 29, 1847.


68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., 205.


74. *Chillicothe Scioto Gazette* June 25, 1846.

75. Documents, including Messages and other Communications made to the 45th General Assembly of the State of Ohio (Columbus, 1847). 11, pt. 1, 6.

76. *Cleveland Plain Dealer* June 25, 1846.


79. Ibid., 29th Cong., 1st sess., May 11, 1846, 792.

80. Ibid., 791-792.

82. Milo Quaife (ed.), *The Diary of James K. Polk* (4 vols., Chicago, 1910), 1, 466.

83. Ibid., 497.


85. Quaife (ed.), *Diary*, 2, 352; 3, 312, 324.


88. Ibid., June 2, 1846, 907.

89. Ibid., May 19, 1846, 959; McGrane, *William Allen*, 121.

90. *Journal of the Senate...Ohio*, 46th Gen. Assembly, January 6, 1848, 42-47.

91. Ibid., 47.


93. Salmon Chase to James H. Smith January 8, 1849, Ibid.


97. Ibid.

98. Ibid., 29th Cong., 2nd sess., June 19, 1847, 218.


101. Ibid., January 14, 1847, 172.

102. Ibid., January 27, 1847, app., 173.

103. Ibid., January 26, 1847, 262.

104. Ibid., 29th Cong., 1st sess., May 14, 1846, app., 930.
105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., 29th Cong., 2nd sess., December 28, 1846, 89.


110. Ibid., 379.

111. Ibid.

112. Qualfe (ed.), *Diary*, 2, 75.

113. Brinkerhoff, himself, was accused of supporting the proviso only because of his feud with Polk.


116. Ibid.

117. Ibid., 342.

118. Here, Parrish was expressing the sentiments of the President. Polk always contended that slavery was not an issue in the Mexican War crisis.


120. Francis Weisenburg, *The Passing of the Frontier: 1825-1850* (Columbus, 1941), 455.


124. Whig Circular dated August 19, 1848, Berman Gates (OHS).


126. Ibid.

127. Ibid. Referring to the arise of abolitionism in Ohio, Maizlish call this year the "Revolution of 1848."
CHAPTER 5

OPINION INSIDE THE STATE

When considering great historical events, the immediate scene of action and the leading statesmen generally dominate an individual's attention. Too often it is forgotten that the masses, themselves, played a role in national affairs and that their personal lives were effected by contemporary events. In the United States, where the voice of the people is the quintessence of government, the response of the citizenry to any national crises should be given particular notice. Through newspapers, essays, diaries, and personal correspondence a record of public reaction in Ohio to the Mexican War was written.

 Debate among the Ohio newspapers rivalled the heated exchange which took place among the state's politicians. The loyalty of each editor to party position and doctrine demonstrates clearly the close alignment of the press with the political factions. In articles spiced with wit and sarcasm, each paper claimed the highest degree of patriotism and, at the same time, questioned the validity of the opposition's arguments. Of greatest importance, however, is the fact that the newspapers informed the Ohio citizenry of the position taken by the state's political leadership and presented a forum for the discussion of war issues.
Of course, the Democratic press staunchly defended the leadership of President Polk. He had "waived all forms of etiquette," wrote the *St. Clairsville Gazette*, and offered "to send a Minister to Mexico with full powers to adjust all difficulties." But, because of Mexico's intransigence, exclaimed the writer, the war must "be prosecuted with the utmost vigor, by land and sea!" That the President "is engaged in a 'damnable war' and wants to 'rob Mexico of territory,'" said the Gazette, is "false as hell!" Moreover, the press argued that Polk's decision to advance the army into disputed territory was sustained by the military leadership of the country. Editors printed the dispatches of General Taylor to demonstrate that "Old Rough and Ready" concurred with his instructions from Polk concerning "the proper line to be occupied by our troops." After receiving his orders, stated a democratic editor, "General Taylor writes back that he is pleased to find 'he had not anticipated the wishes of the President in taking a position West of the Nueces,' &c. and on the 'Rio Grande!'"

Too, the Democratic press strove to convince its readers that the war was founded on causes justified by Mexican belligerence and purposes aimed at avenging the country's honor. "We would mention numerous instances of murder, aggression, and outrage committed upon the persons and property of our citizens," stated the *Eaton Democrat*. The offended Americans had asked their government for aid in acquiring indemnification from the Mexican authorities; however, the requests and entreaties of the United States had "been disregarded and treated with a contempt deserving the most trivial matter." Under
headlines exclaiming "To Arms! To Arms!!," and editor from Belmont County, in no uncertain terms, proclaimed his support for the war. He stated:

In defending ourselves as a People, against Mexican perfidy, we have taken up arms to redress a long list of grievances and injuries, conjoined with perfidy, and the crime of murder. In declaring war, our government has acted righteous, for if it had not done so, to vindicate our national honor, and put an end to the barbarities of a horde of fiendish and superstitious savages, and brutes in human form, it would have the contempt and indignant rebuke of every patriot at home, and civilized government of the globe.4

Indeed, some Democratic papers went so far as to make the war symbolic of a struggle between political freedom and despotism. "We fight for American Republicanism," stated the Cleveland Plain Dealer, "and against tyranny in all its forms."5

The Whig press, on the other hand, left no doubt in the reader's mind that it considered the war completely unjustified. "What are we fighting for?" asked the Cincinnati Gazette. The Polk administration had offered so many contradictory excuses "that no man can tell which is correct or what to believe."6 The Whig papers generally asserted that the war was "founded on false pretenses put forth by the Executive to induce his countrymen to yield their support to a war impolitic, and unconstitutionally commenced."7

The boundary issue was one such fallacy to the war's opponents. Reports from the army of occupation revealed that all the inhabitants south of the Nueces River were "loyal citizens of the Mexican Government."8 And, the administration's contention that the Texan border could not be negotiated lost credence in light of the peaceful boundary settlement with Great Britain. In Oregon, said the Ohio
State Journal, our "unquestionable title" to the land became so questionable that it was "a fit subject for negotiation." But in Texas, the President chose to march the army into disputed territory, foregoing arbitration. The Journal challenged its readers to compare the two cases and "say whether the administration has not placed us in a position unworthy of a great and magnanimous people."®

Equally pretentious to Whig journalists was the President's oft-repeated argument of fighting the war to indemnify American claims. To the administration's opponents, the only fiscal matter really at issue was the great expense incurred from a military campaign. The Zanesville Gazette estimated the conflict would "cost the United States blood and treasure enough to have improved all the roads and harbors in the Union."10 "Competent persons," said the Huron Reflector, believed "that Polk's war with Mexico will cost, if continued one year, at least one hundred millions of dollars." And for what was this great expense? The Reflector felt certain the administration's plan was to "gain a little political capital by robbing Mexico of a portion of her territory" to replace what "Polk gave up to Great Britain in the settlement of the Oregon question."11

Most Whig newspapers concluded that annexation was the real cause of the war and, therefore, the United States had "been aggressors in all this proceeding."12 Whig prophecy in the matter had been "verified." While Polk always asserted that Texas annexation would be bloodless, Henry Clay had spoken for all his party when he said "Annexation and War with Mexico are Identical."3 Having perpetrated one wrong, asserted the Ohio State Journal, "but
we must allow the country to be in war, in order to extend our boundary beyond any point at which Texas ever maintained a force or upheld her flag. The true purpose of this campaign, argued the Columbus based paper, was "to conquer, and add to the Union more slave land." If the scheme succeeded, warned the Journal, "the balance of power in all time to come, is placed in the hands of the south" leaving the freemen of the north to be "governed by a representation based upon slavery." Readers of the Journal were asked to put aside party "madness" and "blindness" and seriously consider "the precipice which we are approaching."

To counter the Whig allegation that they were willing accomplices in a southern conspiracy, Democratic journalists waged an aggressive campaign against the war's opponents. A Whig, said one editor, "feels more interest for the success of his party than he does for his country." He will "say and do everything he can against the war, for the express purpose of operating against the Administration, for that is the object to be gained...." The intent of the Whigs, continued the writer, was "to build up a hobby to ride into power, the approaching presidential campaign."

Whig opposition to the war, argued the Democratic press, amounted to giving "aid and comfort" to the enemy. This could be the only consequence of sympathizing with Mexico, "solemnly asserting that their cause is just," while predicting that the United States would "ultimately be covered with shame and disgrace." By their outspoken dissent, stated one Democratic editor, the Whigs had given Mexico "an assurance that a portion of the United States is friendly
to their arms, and wish[es] them success. Also, the Whigs were blamed for the war's "continuance." The knowledge that an anti-war faction had an opportunity to gain control of the country in the upcoming election was inspiration enough to keep the Mexicans fighting.\(^\text{20}\) The editor of the Eaton Democrat compared Whigs to the man who "was friendly to everyone, excepting to the members of his own family."\(^\text{21}\)

Democratic editors were disgusted especially with the role Ohio's statesmen assumed in opposing the war. The St. Clairsville Gazette, in reporting the war bill vote, referred to Giddings and his followers as "Five miserable reprobates from Ohio!" "Shame on the vipers," wrote the editor, for they "basely misrepresent their constituents."\(^\text{22}\) Corwin, after making his well publicized denunciation of the war, fell under special attack from the Democratic newspapers. More repugnant to the press than the fact that Corwin advocated withholding supplies from the military was his use of the phrase "mercenary army" to describe the American expedition in Mexico. "'Mercenary!' Great God, Is it so!" exclaimed a journalist, that Thomas Corwin "declares that army which the government has in the field, is a 'Mercenary Army' - and that their object is pay, and not patriotism!" The Senator was asserting that Ohio's volunteers, men "from the most respectable families of Democrats and Whigs, have gone to Mexico for Hire - for Plunder alone!"\(^\text{23}\) When the troops read the speech, a "general burst of indignation" was heard and the "Traitor was burnt in effigy," reported the press, "aided by the officers and incited on." The St.
Clairsview Gazette published a letter from a soldier of the Third Ohio regiment which claimed that 650 men from both parties participated in the affair and "that many of the whigs who entered the army have turned Democrat."24

In a satirical attack, one Democrat editor suggested that Corwin was "the descendent of a Tory." Admitting that he did not know for certain, the journalist said he only thought Corwin's "Grandfather was a Tory, and we believe that he was rode on a rail for taking part against his country during the war of the Revolution." This belief, stated the writer, resulted from "the discovery of a kindred spirit in the young Corwin, we are led to suppose that is hereditary."25 Another editor wrote a mock letter from Corwin addressed to the "ranchos and electors of Mexico." The note had Corwin presuming on the favorable consideration of Santa Anna and offering himself as "a candidate for the second office in your gift." His qualifications were listed as "experience in low intrigue, stump humbugs, and my unremitting assiduity." The letter was signed "Thomas Corwin, a disgraced member of the U.S. Senate."26

Whig journalists, throughout the war, were quick to support the actions of their party's leadership. The Scioto Gazette prompted praise for Corwin by asking: "When did nature ever make such an orator, full fledged from her laboratory of true eloquence?" Let everyone read his addresses, said the Gazette, "and then say whether any other statesmen, great or humble, known or unknown, has made so bold, so beautiful, so true, so honest, a speech since the waging of the war against Mexico."27 The press explained that Corwin and other
Whigs had voted for the war bill only because the ballots were cast "under very peculiar circumstances." The army was believed to be in danger and in need of immediate relief; moreover, it was not known at that moment "that the war was to be prosecuted for conquest - for acquisition of territory." Once the Whigs understood the war's purpose, realizing it was "unjust, treasonable, and destructive to the best interest of the nation," they "voted, in the most effectual way, against continuing the war, by withdrawing the means." In taking this dissenting position, said the Huron Reflector, Whig statesmen had "acted as American patriots, obeying only the belief of their judgments and the pure dictates of their consciences."

To make certain that the public understood their opposition to the war was aimed solely at the Polk administration, Whig newspapers became rabid advocates for the volunteers. The soldiers' salary was ludicrous, argued the Ohio State Journal, "when contrasted with the pay of the members of Congress themselves, or contrasted with the ordinary return of labor in the common pursuits of life." Where the citizenry and soldiers were concerned, accused the Lancaster Gazette, the Democrats were "willing to be as economical as you please, but when it reaches their own pockets they are mute on the subject." Volunteers were receiving eight dollars per month, said the Gazette, "while these Locofoco economists are receiving eight dollars per day and then refuse to travel to and from Congress without recompence for every mile they go over." Whigs in the House of Representatives, reported the Scioto Gazette, proposed raising the soldiers pay to ten dollars per month and giving them
each one hundred sixty acres of land, but "It Was Voted Down By The Locofoocos!" "Patent Democracy is a very fine thing, doubtless, to swell the pauses in an electioneering speech," stated the Gazette, "but it seems to us too thin a garment for the soldier's widow and too tough an edible for his children's subsistence."^32

Too, the war's opponents expressed despair at the reported abuses of the military leadership on the noble young volunteers. "It appears," wrote a Whig editor, "that they are mere marching machines in the hands of others, poorly paid, poorly clad, to shoot and be shot at."^33 Indicative of the troops low station was a communication from the army that the casualties of a particular skirmish included "Seventy five horses and sixteen privates killed, and thirty six privates wounded."^34 If a horse kills a rider, one journalist wrote, a town is "petrified with horror," or should a steamboat explode killing the passengers, Congress "will enact penal laws." But, said the writer, "a thousand fathers, sons, and bothers may be butchered and maimed in battle, and they are 'merely numbered with the dead horses!'"^35

In addition, the Whig newspapers lamented the impact of campaign life on the physical and moral well-being of the volunteers. They reported that the worst fears of the country concerning the effect of the southern climate on the men were being realized. Hospitals were said to be overcrowded and the "well in some regiments are not strong enough to take care of the sick." Many troops only recently arrived at the seat of war were on their way home "enfeebled by disease and with broken constitutions."^36 Likewise, the press grieved that a
military camp was "not a fit school of morality." "The evils, which are engendered there," stated the Lancaster Gazette, "will cause a wound upon the virtue of the country, which it will take years of toil for the moralist to heal up." To substantiate the claims of his fellow press agents, a Whig journalist in Mount Pleasant pointedly described the scene after the troops disembarked. T.B. Wolff wrote:

Physically a number of them are but the scattered fragments of what they once were; and morally, they have not improved, if we may judge by the scenes which transpired on the day of their return...What do we behold? Scenes revolting to the human mind, and disgraceful in the lowest degree. Swearing, drinking, and carousing were the order of the day...even the Captain of the company, I am informed, ere he left, became considerably intoxicated.

Battlefield glories and war enthusiasm, warned the Whig press, "efface the other side of the picture and we are apt to shut our eyes to the views, the evils and the sorrows, of a campaign."

Democratic journalists used the candid Whig denunciation of the war to portray their rival as apostates of the nation, commonly ranking them with dissenting groups of America's previous wars. The editor of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, in an essay titled "Mark the Traitors," wrote: "Those who seek to embarrass the free action of Government at such a time as this, aid the enemy by weakening our power, and are as much traitors to their country, as if found in the Mexican camp with arms in their hands." The St. Clairsville Gazette called them "Tories and Mexican Allies." Whigs, exclaimed the editor, exhibited "the same unhallowed spirit that, in the revolution, made a traitor of Arnold, and held a midnight conclave
with its 'damnable orgies' at Hartford last war! And, a detailed comparison between the Federalists of 1812 and the Whigs of 1846 was made by the editor of the Eaton Democrat in a lengthy essay titled "The Parallel - The Last War and the Present." Democratic journalists generally were puzzled by the Whig defense of Mexico. After all, said an editor, the war was being waged against "a vile, degraded race, ignorant as slaves, tho passionate as savages." Under an engraving which maliciously depicted a Mexican "ranchero," the Cleveland Plain Dealer stated:

he is a sort of half Spanish, half Indian Mexican, and as savage and cowardly a being as ever cut a throat or picked a pocket. He is a villainous compound of all that is vicious in the character of man; - an anomalous crossbreed of vanity and villainy. He has no idea of chivalry or mercy - he is always in an attitude of fighting, but never attacks an enemy in the open field or in the open day; ...he fights, not for honor or his country's good, but for plunder and to gratify [sic.] his malicious nature.

Mexican history had proved, said the Plain Dealer, that they were a people "fit only for anarchy and spoil." In contrast, the Democratic press portrayed the United States as the leader of a new era. American intelligence and enlightenment was destined to dominate the continent. American military successes were a sign that the nation was coming of age and the manner in which the war was being conducted proved the country's virtue. When the Yankees captured a Mexican town, said a journalist, running stage coaches to different places, organizing packet and steamboat lines upon the rivers and getting up hotels...." Thus, the American were making themselves "generally useful to their new neighbor."
The *St. Clairsville Gazette* summarized particularly well the sentiments of the Ohio Democratic press. "We are becoming eminently prosperous, powerful, and enlightened," said the *Gazette*, "and derive great advantages in our physical resources, over other lands." The expansionist emphasis of the Democrats is readily apparent in the editor's contention that the annexation of Texas put the "lever in our hands which is to overturn the exploded dogmas of kingcraft in this hemisphere." Exhibiting a special insight into the impending turmoil of Europe, the St. Clairsville editor wrote: "The Germanic States, Russia, France, and Spain, are on a rocking volcano and the ignorance and stolidity of that past are waning away before the newborn Ideas of transmitted republicanism." The United States was, of course, the source of that transmission, but these were pivotal days for the nation. American successes in Mexico, said the editor, would prove the nation's fortitude and "leave the worn out despotisms and monarchies of the world to follow us in the race of glory, power, and riches." When world events again calmed, the *Gazette* was confident that the United States would be standing proudly erect, ready to "unfold our genius for the benefit of all, our sympathies to the downtrodden, and our prowess for all who refuse the olive of peace." 47

While the Democratic editors clearly demonstrated a preoccupation with the outreach of America, Whig journalists were obsessed with the country's internal condition. To the Whigs, the "question of Territory or no Territory" was "in spirit the question of Union or Disunion." The decision on the first issue, said the
The thought of slavery being extended into the territories was anathema to Whig writers and they would not be appeased with the Wilmot Proviso. Under any terms, the principle behind expansion remained the same - dispossessing "by fraud or force" a nation "of what rightfully belongs to it." Besides, stated the Sandusky Clarion, everyone knew that the proviso was "a mere sound, without substance, used in many instances by demagogues for party purposes only." The Whigs always had been the opponents of slavery, said the Clarion, and now they were advocating no more territory "because through the actions of the Locofocos..., they know that any newly acquired territory will be converted into slave territory.

Although the war's advocates claimed the conflict was being prosecuted to bring peace and stability, the Ohio State Journal claimed that the result would be to "bring into the Union an element which is sure to produce discord, and will endanger the Union itself." History will affirm, stated the Huron Reflector, "that a republic never yet grew out of Conquest, and that every republic which has been destroyed will point to the spirit of Conquest among its citizens, as the first and final cause." The President had said it was necessary to prosecute the war to "conquer a peace." There would be peace in Mexico, admitted the Sciotto Gazette, after "the sword and faggot" had "done their perfect work," after "the fanes [temples] of religion" had been dispossed, and "the last armed upholder of Mexican nationality shall have gone to his final
account." Yet, claimed the *Gazette*, "there will be any thing but peace among the conquerors."

The true patriots, argued the Whig journalists, were those who would do all in their power to promote the prosperity of their country. If a patriot believes his country "to be in the right," stated the *Ohio State Journal*, "he will labor to keep her so; and if he believes her to be in the wrong his first effort will be to bring her into the right." Knowing that the war was unjust and convinced that territorial expansion, by increasing the slave power, would "eventuate the downfall of our free institution," the editor of the *Journal* confessed that he would be "guilty of moral treason, if I do not do all in my power to arrest the war, and so avert calamity." The editor of the *Ohio Repository* concurred. Treason was not the result of speaking against the war, because it was the business of the people to discuss the issues. After all, stated the *Repository*, the citizens were the ones "fighting the battles" and "paying the war expenses." However, argued the editor, if the country "is in the wrong and I know it, and hold my peace, then I am guilty of treason - moral treason."

The patriotic defense of American honor and a justified defense of national territory characterized the general public's response when the war news first reached Ohio. A historian of Butler County wrote that the citizens there, "informed as to the reasons that should induce them to fight or refrain from fighting," determined the only important issue to be "that Mexico was in conflict with us, and that our flag must be sustained." In Drake County, the aggregate
which assembled for the calling of volunteers adopted a series of resolutions that also manifest a patriotic fervor. The citizens expressed their satisfaction at "the promptness with which our Congress has drawn the sword" to establish by force what had been "Insolently refused - a peace with Mexico and peace with Texas." They admonished their fellow Americans to "cast off the shackles of party" and unite in this armed venture. And, the assembly rejoiced at the occasion to fulfill "our duty as soldiers" and "In the opportunity afforded of defending our country!"^58

The private manuscripts of Ohioans emphasize the same themes. Joseph Brady, a Miami University student during the war years, reveals his thoughts on the war in a daily journal. On May 19, 1846, he wrote:

The Mexicans made an attack upon our camp in the absence of Gen[eral] Taylor and were thus spiritedly met by our brave troops....Our territory has been invaded, our citizens have been captured, our troops murdered, and we must repel the aggression....the Mexican government lays claim to a large portion of our territory and declares her intention to maintain it at the point of their bayonet. In execution of this threat they have already invaded our soil, killed some of our men, imprisoned others, and surrounded our General upon our own territory.59

Alexander Boys, a lawyer and prominent resident of Chillicothe, too, looked on the conflict "as just and necessary." He believed that, according to the rules of international law, Texas had been fairly annexed into the American Union. The boundary issue, Boys admitted, was a more difficult matter. Writing to his friend, John Trimble, the lawyer concluded that the only manner to dispose of the issue was "to adopt the rule that when any important number of men
from adjacent territory [i.e., Texans living south of the Neuces River] have assisted in the struggle they & their property, should be
included in the new Gov[ernmen]t.60

Accompanying this spirit of enthusiasm was an equally genuine
fear and concern of family members for loved ones joining the
campaign. Benjamin Tappan frankly advised his son against
volunteering. Writing to Eli in May, 1846, Tappan explained that
there was no purpose in enlisting as "you can do no good without a
skillful [sic.] commander." General Scott, said Tappan, "is to have
the chief command of the army, he is a fool & many a brave man will
be sacrificed before this fact will be so demonstrated so that he
will be set aside." Brave men had no chance "to serve with honor
under any such cattle," wrote Tappan. His recommendation was that
Eli stay out of the army until "some Jackson of a chief" should rise
to conduct the army.61

Within a month, Eli took a leading role in the publication of
the Ohio Press, a Columbus based Democratic newspaper, and his father
assured him that his responsibilities lay there. "You are already
enlisted in a very important service," wrote Tappan to his son, "&
have taken the bounty." In his opinion, Eli could not "desert" his
new enterprise "even if you could refund the money which has been
advanced."62 In the end, Tappan's fatherly advice and metaphorical
phrases proved academic. The state's quota was filled before Eli's
company, the "Steubenville Greys," could be mustered in.63

Mary Sherman admitted being quite relieved that her son was
stationed in California. "I have all ways been thankful you was not
at the seat of war," she told William T. Sherman. Surely "many valuable lives has been lost in this Mexican War," she lamented, "and I fear many more before it is over as I see no prospect of peace."

The parents of Dewitt Loudon were deeply disturbed when they learned that their son and several of his friends were contemplating re-enlistment. "Now I hope none of the Brown County boys will be soft enough to be (as the Irishmen would say) after taking up with any such invitation," wrote James Loudon to his son. The volunteers, said the senior Loudon, had done all that was expected of them by their country. The Mexicans had been repelled, he wrote, driven "from the soil of freemen back to their mountain fortresses and at the Battle of Monterey taught...a lesson that they will not soon forget." While admitting that there were many in the Ohio volunteer corp "who would as soon be in the army as any other situation," Loudon admonished his son "not to think of such a thing for one moment." Much to the relief of his parents, Dewitt Loudon accepted their advice and safely returned home in June, 1847.

However, in the case of Abraham R. Johnston, a family's worst fears were realized. At the battle of San Pasqual, the first encounter between General Stephen Kearney's expedition and Mexican forces in California, the young Captain was killed. The family learned of his death through a letter from Mrs. Thomas Sword, the wife of Johnston's closest friend and fellow officer. Major Sword, in relating the tragic news to his wife wrote:

Our dear friend was shot - perhaps the first one...I assisted in bringing him in, and you may imagine my feelings when I saw him stretched upon the ground;
nothing but the necessity of attending to the charge
entrusted me prevented me from giving way to the full
force of my agony.66

John Johnston, who resided in Piqua as Federal Indian Agent, was
consolated at the loss of his son "by the universal sympathy expressed
by all those with whom he was associated in the service." Too, he
took solace in the fact that the young officer "feared his God."
"Never did he forget the early training of his intelligent, devoted,
faithful and pious mother," wrote the saddened father.67 Abraham's
brother, Stephen Johnston, also was distraught at the tragic news.
However, he told his father he was gratified that in his brother's
"untimely death, there was no dodging danger." Everything about
Abraham's death, Stephen noted, "was high toned, chivalrous, and
becoming a soldier," all traits characteristic of the deceased.
"That he went off like a gallant soldier," wrote Johnston to his
father, "should certainly be a source of melancholy satisfaction to
his relations who mourn his fate."68

Private manuscripts also give a unique perspective on the
reaction of the local citizens to the conflict. The outbreak of war
was proof positive to Elijah Hayward that southern interests
completely controlled the country. Writing to a lawyer friend,
Joseph Larwill, Hayward stated: "There cannot now be a doubt that
Mr. Polk has thrown himself into the arms, and submits to the
influence, of the Calhoun-Benton factions, to the exclusion of the
more solid and permanent Democracy." Besides leading the nation into
war, said Hayward, southern manipulation of the government had
resulted in making the Ohio Democracy "a mere dependence or an
Incident of this administration." Party members like himself, wrote Hayward, had never been "an integral part, nor a participator in its councils, or its benetits." He lamented the fact that "the patriotic example of Jackson" had soon been forgotten by the party leadership.

After hearing the state Whig leaders address the war issues at a rally in Lebanon, Samuel Walker became fully convinced of the conflict's unjustness. He was impressed most by one particular oration of the day. "Corwin made a greater speech than he ever made before," wrote Walker to his wife. During the two hour address, the Ohio statesman "was sober grave, profound and beautiful, mourning the audience to tears." The Senator "anticipates civil war between the northern and slave states," said Walker, and the "picture he drew was so do[le]ful that it almost choked his utterance." At the end of the day, remarked Walker, the assembly "arose and immediately retired home, with but one mind and one feeling of written detestation for this most abominable & accursed pro slavery war." And, he concluded, "Tom Is greater than any other living man in these United States."70

Uriah Health, a minister in the Methodist Evangelical church, was dismayed greatly by the war excitement. Pastoring near Xenia, he saw "much wickedness shown among the people" during the rally for volunteers. And, though he had "some liberty in preaching," Pastor Health wrote that the congregation "seemed to be occupied too much with the novelty of surrounding circumstances to be much affected by anything I could say."71
The absence of the volunteers, according to some residents, had a positive effect on the local communities. A "local wag" remarked that the Butler County town of Hamilton "was more peaceable than it had ever been before" due to the departure of thirteen young lawyers. And, in Zanesville, the owner of a dry goods store wrote that, since the company of volunteers had embarked for the war, the downtown merchants "have not been troubled so much with loafers...."

Interestingly, there is evidence that Ohioans speculated in soldiers' land warrants, an opportunity which accompanied the early American wars. George Hoadly Jr. and James Cleveland formulated the scheme and financed their venture through a mutual friend named Mastick. Hoadly was to buy the warrents in Cincinnati, "a good place to purchase [them], on account of the influx of the volunteers." Cleveland, who lived in Cleveland, believed he was in an ideal location to sell them "as it is the route of Emigrants." He was confident the warrents could be sold "at One Hundred Twenty Dollars" and suggested to Hoadly that "If they can be purchased at Cincinnati for One Hundred & Ten the profit will be fair." Cleveland was optimistic about finding buyers and expressed confidence that by scattering advertisement "through every boat that leaves Buffalo" he could sell six or eight warrents per week. "Germans & Englishmen here who have acquaintances coming on soon wish to procure them," wrote Cleveland, "& will take them as soon as they come." 

Popular discontent with the war also is manifest in the records of the Ohio public. in true Whig fashion, Joshua Swayne and James
Kilbourne addressed the issues of the day in essays undoubtedly intended for the press. Swayne's essay, "Patriotism," gave a definition of its title word in terms which any Whig editor would have found acceptable. A true patriot should appose the war, wrote Swayne, because its effect "will be such as is calculated to retard the progress of truth, peace, and universal harmony, which should pervade throughout our glorious republic, and political institutions." Everyone had a duty, said the author, "to remonstrate against any political course or action which is not perfectly consistent, or purely virtuous in itself."76

In a second essay, "A Piece of Reflection," Swayne expressed his belief that the Mexican War clearly proved the country's virtues were being undermined by the national leadership. The war was "perverse & unjust," stated Swayne, and fought for an "unrighteous and infernal purpose." At the center of Swayne's argument was a conviction that if the United States had demonstrated as much "kindly feeling to enlighten them" as there had been "envy and suffering" to "exterminate them," a peaceful resolve of the issues with Mexico could have been made.77

In his essay "Remarks on the Extension of Slavery," Kilbourne presented an indictment against the spread of an institution marked with, in his words, "injustice, oppression, and dishonor." Using as evidence the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Kilbourne argued that a legal precedent had been set for Congress to stop the spread of slavery. He admitted that the United States had owned slave territory at various times and cited
Louisiana, Florida, and Texas as examples; however, these territories had been slave prior to coming under American ownership. To no part of the United States "which came into our possession a Free Territory...", wrote Kilbourne, "has the curse of slavery been extended." There was no example, he asserted, "no begin[nin]g place for Congress, or any other branch of government...to extend this enormous, this leaven-draining system...beyond its present limits."78

The Ohio public protested the war and its expected ramifications by petitioning elected officials. Residents in Putnam, Clinton, and Washington counties were discontent with the protracted hostilities and asked that Congress "use its constitutional powers to bring the war to a speedy close...."79 Other citizens urged that the state legislature instruct Ohio Congressmen to "remove from the President all official power and authority" for the remainder of the war and "appoint official commissioners to settle impending difficulties with Mexico."80 And, it is reveling indeed that during the war years five petitions calling for a dissolution of the union between the slave and free states were sent by the Ohio citizenry to the state legislature.81

Concerning the response of the American citizenry to the Mexican War, Frederick Merk, in his monograph *Manifest Destiny and Mission In American History*, stated:

The truth is, public opinion in the Northwest was sharply divided. Society was compartmentalized. Counties in southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois were settled by people Southern in origin. Counties in the north were settled from New England....On all issues
The concept for this dissertation was formulated from the above quotation. Was public opinion on the war sharply divided in Ohio? Does a line dividing the state into northern and southern halves accurately indicate regions of anti and pro war sentiment?

Indeed, public opinion about the cause, nature, and purpose of the Mexican War was sharply divided. Ohio politicians and journalists who band together according to party especially characterize this division. What the Democrats claimed was American soil, the Whigs argued was foreign territory inhabited by loyal Mexican citizens. Where the Democrats charged that Mexican intransigence prevented a peaceful settlement, the Whigs accused President Polk of insolent behavior. When the Democrats stated that the army merely was defending American property and protecting American rights, the Whigs pronounced the real aim to be territorial conquest and that for the extension of slavery. Patriotism, to the one party, meant a vigorous and bold prosecution of the war. A successful campaign, resulting in American dominance of the continent and the acquisition of harbors on the Pacific, was essential to the fulfillment of the nation's destiny. To the other party, it was "moral treason" to advocate an unjustified war being fought to advance an immoral institution. Territorial expansion, claimed the Whigs, was bound to divide rather than strengthen the Union. The true patriot, they argued, was the man who sought the best for his country by trying to correct its course when he discovered it to be in the wrong.
These sharply contrasting sentiments, however, were not confined to particular areas of Ohio. Young men from every region volunteered for service in Mexico. Democratic newspapers from Cleveland to Cincinnati announced the opening of hostilities, reported the latest correspondence from the army, and praised the government for boldly leading the nation into war. Even the Whig press noted the general public's enthusiastic response to the call to arms. Ohioans generally accepted the premises which President Polk advanced in this war message. They were convinced that Mexico had provoked the United States to war, first, by refusing to negotiate and then, attacking Taylor's army on the east bank of the Rio Grande. As the letters of the volunteers candidly reveal, Ohioans believed that the honor of the nation must be sustained against this Mexican attack and the patriotic duty of each able-bodied man demanded that he tender his services. Too, the opportunity to acquire western land was appealing to Ohio's citizenry as, with only one exception, the communities which held a Federal Land office were enthusiastic participants in the war.

On the other hand, if any particular region of Ohio was opposed adamantly to the war, it was the Western Reserve. Although volunteers came from the area and the Democratic press were active there, the influence of Joshua Giddings and the Whigs still was paramount. Giddings unequivocal position against the war and the spread of slavery was sustained throughout the war by the citizenry of the Reserve. Equally important in explaining the sentiment of this area is Professor Merk's suggestion that "memories and habit"
determined public response to the war. The vast majority of Western reserve people were settlers from New England and, hence, enthusiastic supporters of traditionally northern sentiments. Indeed, the region became the seedbed of abolitionism in Ohio.

Ohio's enthusiasm for the war, like that of the nation, was at its peak when hostilities began and from that point steadily declined. The months following the war declaration gave Whig politicians and editors an opportunity to indoctrinate the public with arguments which undermined the President's appeal through the magic words "patriotism" and "national honor." Also, war spirits were cooled when reports from the volunteers mentioning poor camp conditions and a "sickly climate" filtered home. The petitions of Ohio citizens to their elected officials perhaps are the greatest indicator of this change in public sentiment. They, indeed, stand in marked contrast to the war fervor which characterized the call to arms.

Whether "justified" or "unrighteous," no one can doubt that the territorial expansion resultant from the Mexican War was essential in making the United States a leading nation in the world community. Paradoxically, this war likewise set the nation on the pathway leading toward a dreadful internal crisis.
2. Ibid., July 31, 1846.
3. Eaton Democrat February 25, 1847.
5. Cleveland Plain Dealer May 25, 1846.
6. Cincinnati Gazette June 24, 1847.
7. Ibid.
8. Columbus Ohio State Journal May 23, 1846.
9. Ibid., May 21, 1846. A followup article on the same theme appeared in the Journal's June 20, 1846, issue.
11. Norwalk Huron Reflector August 11, 1846.
13. Chillicothe Scioto Gazette June 4, 1846; Norwalk Huron Reflector September 7, 1847.
15. Ibid., February 2, 1847.
17. Ibid., February 25, 1847.
18. Ibid., May 20, 1847.
19. Ibid., July 29, 1847.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., December 31, 1846.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., June 18, 1847.
27. *Chillicothe Scioto Gazette* October 14, 1846.
32. *Chillicothe Scioto Gazette* June 11, 1846.
33. *Lancaster Gazette* July 24, 1846.
34. Ibid.
35. *Chillicothe Scioto Gazette* July 9, 1846.
36. *Columbus Ohio State Journal* October 1, 1846.
37. *Lancaster Gazette* June 12, 1846.
38. *St. Clairsville Gazette* September 10, 1847.
40. *Cleveland Plain Dealer* November 17, 1846.
41. *St. Clairsville Gazette* July 31, 1846.
42. *Eaton Democrat* June 3, 1847.
43. *St. Clairsville Gazette* May 22, 1846.
44. *Cleveland Plain Dealer* May 21, 1846.
45. Ibid.
46. *Cincinnati Cist's Weekly* June 1, 1847.
47. *St. Clairsville Gazette* June 18, 1847.
49. *Sandusky Clarion* October 5, 1847.
50. Ibid.
51. *Columbus Ohio State Journal* February 13, 1847.
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55. Ibid.
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57. *A History and Biographic Cyclopedia of Butler County, Ohio, with Illustrations and Sketches of Its Representative Men and Pioneers* (Cincinnati, 1882), 199-207.
60. Alexander Boys to John Trimble June 1, 1846, John Trimble Papers (OHS).
61. Benjamin Tappan to Eli Tappan May 16, 1846, Benjamin Tappan Papers (OHS).
62. Benjamin Tappan to Eli Tappan June 12, 1846, Ibid.
63. Benjamin Tappan to Lewis Tappan June 22, 1846, Ibid.
64. Mary Sherman to William T. Sherman September 1, 1847, William T. Sherman Family Papers (OHS).
65. James Loudon to Dewitt Loudon March 1, 1847, Dewitt Loudon Papers (OHS).
66. Mrs. Sword to John Johnston April 27, 1847, John H. Patterson Papers (OHS).
67. John Johnston to Mr. Defrees May 4, 1847, Ibid.

69. Elijah Hayward to Joseph Larwill August 18, 1846, Larwill Family Papers, (OHS).

70. Samuel Swann Walker to Joseph Larwill August 18, 1846, Walker Family Papers, (OHS).

71. Journal May 30, 1846; June 6, 1846, Uriah Heath (OHS). A study of the reaction of church denominations to the war is offered by Clayton S. Ellsworth "The American Churches and the Mexican War," *American Historical Review*, 45, (January, 1941), 301-326. He concludes that, despite their particular faith, churches in the West generally favored the war while those in the East opposed it.

72. A History and Biographic Cyclopedia of Butler County, 199-207.


74. James Cleveland to George Hoadly June 16, 1848, George Hoadly Papers (OHS).

75. James Cleveland to George Hoadly July 26, 1848, ibid.


81. Ibid., 45th General Assembly, January 14, 1847, 193-194; ibid., 46th Gen Assembly, January 4, 1848, app., 23.

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