

"Breaking Up, and Moving Westward": The Search for Identity in Post-Colonial America, 1787-1828

Bethany Harding
Marquette University

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“BREAKING UP, AND MOVING WESTWARD”: THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY
IN POST-COLONIAL AMERICA, 1787-1828

by

Bethany Harding, B.A., M.A.

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ABSTRACT
“BREAKING UP, AND MOVING WESTWARD”: THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY
IN POST-COLONIAL AMERICA, 1787-1828

Bethany Harding, B.A., M.A.

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This dissertation approaches the early national United States as a post-colonial state, and draws new connections between the country's westward development and Americans' ability to detach from their colonial past. At the conclusion of the American Revolution in 1783, the new United States became the first nation built on the ruins of a British colonial foundation; its citizens faced the colossal task of forging an independent national consciousness without being able to draw clear racial or ethnic lines of distinction between themselves and the former mother country. White Americans of the founding generation occupied a unique and tenuous position: in a world of empires and colonies, they were “settler-subjects.” As settlers, they had acted as proud agents of the imperial flag, but they were concurrently second-class citizens living on the wild peripheries of England's empire. The legacy of this dual identity remained in the post-revolutionary period.

Although the founding generation in the Atlantic colonies had rejected monarchy, it retained a respect for and a dependence on British political principles. Thus eastern Americans held a position of power in a boundless continent, but were simultaneously left with little idea how to define themselves independent of England's laws and philosophies of governance. Easterners modeled British examples even to the extent of creating an imperial state in the West. Ultimately, and counterintuitively, distinguishing themselves from the mother country required a process wherein white Americans embraced rather than rejected their ethnic roots and the colonial role of “settler.” Easterners and westerners alike ceased to be “subjects” as well only by creating their own unique imperial process and crafting a national identity that exalted rather than marginalized the frontier. Part One of this project examines the post-colonial position of the founding generation using Philadelphia as a primary reference point. Part Two turns west, analyzing the imperial nature of federal territorial policies and the colonial relationship between East and West. Part Three illustrates how changes in that colonial relationship helped break the patterns of post-colonialism, with special emphasis on the War of 1812 and the racialization of American continental imperialism in the nineteenth century.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- FHS Filson Historical Society
HSP Historical Society of Pennsylvania
INHS Indiana Historical Society
LCP Library Company of Philadelphia
OHS Ohio Historical Society
- AHN America's Historical Newspapers, Readex Archive of Americana
CLC *Circular Letters of Congressmen to their Constituents*, vol. 1, *First Congress to Ninth Congress, 1789-1807*
EAI Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, Readex Archive of Americana
SCP *The St. Clair Papers*, vol. 2
TPUS *Territorial Papers of the United States*, vols. 1-3

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation approaches the early national United States as a post-colonial state, and draws new connections between the country's westward development and Americans' ability to detach from their colonial past.¹ At the conclusion of the American Revolution in 1783, the new United States became the first nation built on the ruins of a British colonial foundation; its citizens faced the colossal task of forging an independent national consciousness without being able to draw clear racial or ethnic lines of distinction between themselves and the former mother country. White Americans of the founding generation occupied a unique and tenuous position: in a world of empires and colonies, they were "settler-subjects."² As settlers, they had acted as proud agents of the imperial flag, but they were concurrently second-class citizens living on the wild peripheries of England's empire. The legacy of this dual identity remained in the post-revolutionary period. Although the founding generation in the Atlantic colonies had rejected monarchy, it retained a respect for and a dependence on British political principles. Thus eastern Americans held a position of power on a boundless continent, but were simultaneously left with little idea of how to define themselves independent of England's laws and philosophies of governance. Easterners modeled British examples most strikingly by creating an imperial state in the West. Ultimately, and counter-

1. This project uses the hyphenated post-colonial purposefully to indicate that it is much more of a temporal designation than one might use for societies that decolonized in the twentieth-century and are thus exposed to the neo-colonialism that accompanies modern globalization. Because the primary goal of this project is historical analysis, temporal categories have more value here than they might to a scholar working in the fields of literary analysis or cultural studies. Thus the periodization implied in the terms colonial and post-colonial should be taken at face value.

2. For a more in-depth description of settler colonies, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 193.

intuitively, distinguishing themselves from the mother country required a process wherein white Americans embraced rather than rejected their ethnic roots and the colonial role of “settler.” Easterners and westerners alike ceased to be “subjects” as well only by creating their own unique imperial process and crafting a national identity that exalted rather than marginalized the frontier.

Placing the United States within the framework of post-colonial analysis is problematic for a number of reasons, not the least of which is a long-standing resistance within the field to the inclusion of a modern superpower alongside less powerful former colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The scope of post-colonial studies *has* broadened dramatically since Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) first drew attention to the overarching power structures inherent in colonialism’s binary between East and West.³ By identifying the methods through which colonizers constructed differences between the colonized and themselves (which Said labeled “discourse”), *Orientalism* opened the floodgates for writers, activists, and academics who sought a better understanding of what colonialism entailed and how it impacted societies long after formal decolonization. Almost as soon as Said’s work laid out this theoretical framework, other theorists began expanding, contesting, and qualifying the definitions he articulated in his seminal work. Scholars questioned Said’s assumption of the totality of colonial discourse, and argued for the ability of colonized peoples to affect that discourse and maintain an existence outside of the imperial texts that describe them.⁴ In turn, other critics emphasized that to attribute too much agency to colonials, or “subalterns,”

3. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978; 1979).

4. For example, Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994): 121-131.

minimized the destructive impact of colonization.⁵ As the field developed over the last quarter of the twentieth century, it generated a variety of ideological debates: what is the relationship between post-colonialism, post-modernism, and post-structuralism? Can individuals educated within the western academy (including Said himself) properly address “Third World” issues from their “First World” perspective?⁶ How can one define a place or people as “post-colonial” when globalization has allowed western powers to keep formerly colonized nations in a state of economic and political subservience? Throughout all of these discussions, the United States most often appears in its capacity as a superpower of the post-World War II era, the most visible culprit of neo-imperialism.⁷

One debate that helped make room for the United States in post-colonial studies centers around the place of “settler colonies.” Traditionally, the term post-colonial is applied to colonies of occupation: parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Settler colonies, by contrast, are those colonies in which a majority non-indigenous population (made so through the marginalization or extermination of native peoples) acts as resident

5. For example, Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 271-318.

6. The terms First and Second World were originally used to distinguish between dominant western powers (including the United States) and the Soviet Union during the 1950s. “Third World” referred to those nations not clearly aligned with either side in the Cold War. The use of “Third World” evolved to apply more generally to underdeveloped countries, and many scholars now consider it a pejorative term. In more recent scholarship, “Second World” is used to refer to settler colonies. Ashcroft et. al., *Key Concepts*, 212-213. I use these terms only as part of an overview of the evolution of post-colonial studies.

7. This term, meaning “new imperialism” or “new colonialism,” was coined in the mid-1960s by Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah. Its usage typically refers to ways in which superpowers continue to manipulate the cultures and economies of decolonized peoples through methods of indirect control (international monetary bodies, multinational corporations, and various types of non-governmental organizations). For scholars and activists who see global capitalism as a means by which imperialism continues to dominate certain parts of the world, the United States has become the most visible culprit (particularly due to America’s relationship with organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and its modern crusades against communism and terrorism). Ashcroft et. al., *Key Concepts*, 146-148.

agents of the imperial state.⁸ This definition accurately applies to the British colonies in North America. Some scholars criticize references to these settler-subjects as “colonists” and stress settlers’ complicity in imperial subjugation of non-whites. Others, however, argue that settler-subjects are “defining examples” of the ambivalence and complexity that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized. In a 1995 essay, scholar Alan Lawson pointed out the shortsightedness of dismissing settler-subjects as entirely imperial, thus excluding them from post-colonial analyses. As a solution, Lawson proposed carving out a niche for these settler societies by ceasing to equate post-colonialism with the Third World, instead arguing that scholars should acknowledge a “Second World.” According to Lawson, settlers in these Second World colonies, “caught between two First Worlds,” offer an important perspective on the process of power and identity negotiation in colonial discourse.⁹ Also utilizing the term “Second World,” scholar Stephen Slemon argues in favor of including texts and cultural productions from ex-colonial settler societies in post-colonial studies. Focusing on “literary resistance,” Slemon cautions us against “jettisoning” literature produced by white settlers, or assuming that it automatically represents the imperial rather than the colonial perspective. On the contrary, he insists, writing from the Second World portrays post-colonial ambivalence at its most extreme: because they are simultaneously imperial agents and marginalized colonials, “the *illusion* of a stable self/other, here/there binary division has *never* been available to Second World writers.” Thus, settler-subjects occupy an entirely ambivalent space because they internalize the object of resistance.¹⁰

8. Ibid., 193.

9. Alan Lawson, “Postcolonial Theory and the ‘Settler’ Subject,” *Essays on Canadian Writing*, issue 50 (Fall 1995): 20.

10. Stephen Slemon, “Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World,” *World*

These analyses of post-colonialism in settler societies typically focus on Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa; however, some scholars have used this framework for new perspectives on the United States.¹¹ Writing in 1992, Lawrence Buell described America's "literary renaissance" during the nineteenth century as a post-colonial phenomenon, arguing that the "cultural colonization" Americans experienced was even greater than that of India under the British empire.¹² Similarly (although more cautiously), Edward Watts contends that the framework of settler colonialism reveals early American authors as individuals in search of a "national voice" while laboring under the "inevitability of British tradition."¹³ These attempts at incorporating American literature into post-colonial theory have not gone unopposed, because scholars tend to find work that equates the experiences of whites in settler colonies with those of racially marginalized colonists in the Third World "hard to swallow."¹⁴ Scholar Anne McClintock, in fact, strongly condemned the inclusion of the United States among the ranks of post-colonial nations. In a 1992 article, McClintock derided efforts to place American writers on the same plane as the likes of Salman Rushdie, and attributed inclusion of the United States to a "fiat of historical amnesia."¹⁵ Even in the face of such

Literature Written in English 30, no. 2 (1990): 30-41. Quotes on pp. 33, 38. Italics in original.

11. Lawson and Slemon both consider these regions in their seminal essays on settler colonialism and post-colonial studies but neglect the United States.

12. Lawrence Buell, "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon," *American Literary History* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 411-442. His comparison between India and America occurs on p. 415.

13. Edward Watts, "Settler Postcolonialism as a Reading Strategy," *Early American Literature* 45, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 448. Following Buell and Watts's advice, a number of other literary scholars have looked at American writing through the lens of post-colonialism. See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 16. The editors cite the process of creating American literature as "the model for all later postcolonial writing." See also Chapter One, note 17.

14. Pal S. Ahluwalia, *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory: African Inflections* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 4-5.

15. Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism,'" *Social Text*, no. 31/32, Third World and Post-Colonial Issues (1992): 84-98. This essay argues that the term post-colonial is "premature and celebratory." Regarding America, McClintock declares that including it in post-

arguments, however, scholars such as Peter Hulme (along with Watts, Malini Johar Schueller, and others) continue to make the case for “including America.” In his 1995 essay by the same name, Hulme disagreed with scholarship that treats post-colonialism as a “badge of merit.” Defined appropriately as a complex process of removing the state and its people away from a multi-faceted “colonial syndrome,” Hulme asserted, post-colonialism may certainly be applied to the United States.¹⁶

“‘Breaking Up and Moving Westward’: The Search for Identity in Post-Colonial America, 1787-1828” supports Hulme’s conclusions. The United States must be considered in post-colonial studies. As author Ania Loomba explains, post-colonialism “is a word that is useful only if we use it with caution and qualifications...[it] ‘is (or should be) a descriptive not an evaluative term.’”¹⁷ No nation or people experiences colonialism or post-colonialism in exactly the same way as another, and there is always a need for qualification in any scholarship that deals with these issues. This project makes no attempt to place the very different realities of colonialism in the Second and Third Worlds on the same plane; rather, it seeks to acknowledge that certain aspects of colonialism and its effects on the people classified as colonists can be seen in both of those “worlds.” The United States does stand apart from more broadly accepted post-colonial states, because almost simultaneously with their liberation from empire, white Americans at the highest and lowest levels of society participated in their own imperial enterprises. However, Americans could be at once settlers and subjects. Such “oxymoronic simultaneities” may be unpleasant to scholars with a Manichean

colonial studies insults Native Americans, and she accuses the United States of being a neo-imperial power guilty of repeated “fits of thuggery” towards other nations. *Ibid.*, 87, 90-91.

16. Peter Hulme, “Including America,” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 26, no. 1 (January 1995): 119-120.

17. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 21. Loomba quotes Hulme, “Including America,” 120.

understanding of colonialism that demands a clear (and often racial) binary between colonizer and colonized, but nation-building is “messy.”¹⁸ If one accepts that settler-subjects’ treatment of indigenous peoples after independence was an *outgrowth* of their experiences under colonialism, it is possible to understand them as more than simply hypocritical imperialists in their own right. From the beginning of the colonial era, British-Americans struggled to reconcile their proximity to dark-skinned “savages” with their desire to be considered as civilized as their counterparts in London. Post-revolutionary Americans faced the same challenge, along with the additional task of creating their own imperial policy.

The majority of previous efforts to include America in post-colonial studies deal with U.S. literature and literary culture; historians, on the other hand, have done little work on the subject.¹⁹ One reason for this may be that post-colonial theorists wish to avoid the “hegemonic power” of western historiography. Scholars searching to recover the voice of the subaltern often find themselves at odds with existing sources for writing history.²⁰ Thus far, the fields of American Studies (particularly literary and material culture) and Borderlands Studies, have proven most useful in merging post-colonial

18. Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts, eds., *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 2, 9. Manichean is an established concept in post-colonial theory, and is defined as something characterized by a dualistic contrast, or a conflict between opposites.

19. Russell Jacoby has remarked that post-colonial theorists simply “poke about” in, rather than truly engage, the history of colonialism. Accusations that the field is riddled with too many “isms,” along with moves to make it more inclusive across space and time, have led Jacoby and others to label post-colonial theory as a whole “ahistorical.” Ahluwalia, *Politics*, 4; Ella Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” *Social Text*, no. 31/32, *Third World and Post-Colonial Issues* (1992): 99. Of the scholars whose work has paved the way for the United States in post-colonial studies, only Sam W. Haynes and Kariann Akemi Yokota act primarily as historians. Alan Lawson, Stephen Slemon, Edward Watts, Peter Hulme, Malini Johar Schueller, and Lawrence Buell all have academic backgrounds in English and Literature.

20. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, eds., *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 25-26. Theorists like Gayatri Spivak have tried to counter histories of colonialism that present it as a “coherent Western narrative.” *Ibid*, 25.

theory and American history.²¹ Two recent works in particular paved the way for more serious historical analysis of the United States as a post-colonial nation: Sam W. Haynes's *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (2010) and Kariann Akemi Yokota's *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (2011). Both of these historians emphasize post-Revolutionary Americans' relatively unsuccessful struggle to "unbecome" British.²² For Haynes, continuing tension between the United States and Britain throughout the nineteenth century demonstrates Americans' deep ambivalence towards the "transatlantic inheritance" of their colonial past.²³ Similarly, Yokota argues that the transatlantic network of goods (and American consumption of those goods) reinforced Americans' inferior position relative to England; citizens of the new nation only became secure in their own civility by defining themselves in opposition to racialized Others.²⁴ Although Yokota and Haynes differ in their source material and methodology, both of them make what is essentially the same argument: to become American, citizens underwent a difficult process of "unbecoming" something else.²⁵ Yet neither scholar goes far enough

21. Borderlands, in relation to post-colonial studies, are defined as settled areas adjacent to the frontier (the line marking the extent of European settlement). As zones of contact where the nation-state is not fully established, borderlands play a significant role in our understanding of colonial/post-colonial cultural exchange. See Ashcroft et. al., *Key Concepts*, 25-26; Singh and Schmidt, eds., *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, ix-xi, 4-8.

22. Sean Goudie also makes the case for a process of "unbecoming" in his analysis of the early republic's complex relationship with the West Indies, and Americans' unease with their identity as new-world creoles. Sean X. Goudie, *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Goudie (whose work blends post-colonial studies, American Studies, and Caribbean Studies) uses the term "paracolonialism" to describe the new nation's own imperial impulses, which developed alongside European colonialism.

23. Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

24. Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

25. Haynes focuses more on political and economic relations between America and Great Britain (for example, American resentment of Britain's economic imperialism, the international abolition movement, and continued geopolitical disputes in Florida, Maine, and the far North and Southwest). Yokota's book is a study of goods and cultural productions; she weighs material culture much more heavily than Haynes,

beyond the concept of negative self-definition (i.e. defining themselves according to what they were *not*) to discover what aspects of American politics and culture post-colonial Americans clung to as anchors in the absence of “Britishness.” One cannot define oneself in wholly negative terms.

This project thus argues that the early national West is the key to understanding both America’s post-colonial limitations and its positive self-definition – what Americans became *after* they “un-became” British colonists. Taking this next analytical step will add nuance to post-colonial historical studies and broaden our understanding of American exceptionalism.²⁶ Contrary to Haynes, this study treats the War of 1812 as an event that had a pronounced impact on the phenomena that marked the new nation as a post-colonial one: a sense of profound inferiority, and, most significantly, an unshakeable tendency to replicate Britain’s imperial structures rather than create its own domestic precedents with regard to its territories and the people that lived in them. Haynes begins his study of British-American relations in the year 1815, a date that he denies is a “watershed moment” for the republic.²⁷ Certainly Haynes is correct in pointing out that the habit of “bearding the British lion” continued throughout the nineteenth century, and no one date or year may rightly be identified as ending the ambivalence of the British-American relationship. While the nation’s suspicions of Great Britain did not disappear in 1815, the post-War of 1812 era (a time in which second- and third-generation Americans

examining topics such as cartography and the exoticization of American nature by the transatlantic scientific community.

26. The concept of exceptionalism has dominated historical discussions of American politics and culture. Scholars have traced this idea from the Puritan “city on a hill,” through nineteenth-century expansionism, to the aggressive foreign policy of post-World War II America.

27. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 5. Haynes admits that the war invigorated American nationalism, and that Americans “seemed to have made their peace with Great Britain” in the post-war years. Yet, he argues that Americans did not lose their “anti-British feeling,” which reemerged later in the nineteenth century. *Ibid.*, 7.

increasingly took the reins from the founding generation) was a time of great change in the context of a *post-colonial* process of identity formation. The fact that the nation's "center of gravity" swung away from the seaboard, as Haynes admits, changed American nationalism from what post-colonial scholar Partha Chatterjee calls "nationalism as a political movement" against colonial rule, into "a cultural construct which enables the colonised [*sic*] to posit their autonomy."²⁸ The West allowed such autonomous self-discovery.

This project joins the ongoing historical debate about the role of the frontier in the formation of American identity – a field that is currently undergoing significant reexamination. Largely dismissed with the growth of the New Western History after 1987, the frontier's significance as a concept as well as a physical space is now part of developing scholarship on transnational history, borderlands, and American culture. Historians such as William Cronon, Patricia Nelson Limerick, and Richard White are re-engaging this debate, and my work adds a unique perspective by incorporating the complexity of post-colonial processes.²⁹ Scholars have called Frederick Jackson Turner's articulation of the Frontier Thesis in 1893 a milestone in America's long history of triumphalism and disregard for the unflattering realities of continental expansion.³⁰ The

28. *Ibid.*, 6; Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 159.

29. Although the work of all three scholars is closely identified with the New Western History's rejection of Turner's mythical frontier thesis, they continue to reassess the validity of the frontier as a concept. See "Fifty Years: Reflections on the Past and Future of Western History," The Presidential Session of the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Western History Association, C-SPAN, October 13, 2011, viewed April 16, 2012.

30. See for example, William Appleman Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review* 24, no. 4 (November 1955): 379-395. Williams calls Turner a "young messiah of American uniqueness and omnipotence." For just a few works that challenge the idea of the West as a mythical process rather than a place filled with real people and problems, and open up Turner's frontier history to women and minorities see, Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987); Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of

aspect of Turner's famous thesis that this project endeavors to explore, however, is not its controversial assumption of *terra nullius* or its neglect of women and minorities; rather, I am struck by Turner's repeated emphasis on the way in which the *American* frontier differs from those of the Old World *and* the Atlantic Coast. "The American frontier is sharply distinguished from the European frontier," Turner wrote, and the Atlantic coast was "the frontier of Europe in a very real sense." He identified the value of the West's distance from the seaboard's "consumer's wharfs," where the legacies of colonial-era mercantilism kept Americans in a state of continued subordination. Turner's biggest leap in defining the American character was from the Atlantic coast to the "Great West." That leap was decades in the making, one that no member of the founding generation, including visionaries like Thomas Jefferson, could make. Viewed in this light, Turner's observations about the significance of the frontier make him a post-colonial theorist attempting to articulate identity in the face of a colonial past. He recognized the frontier as a place *and* a process that had the power to eradicate the cultural, economic, and political hegemony of Great Britain.³¹ Anti-colonial movements "challenge dominant ideas of history, culture, and representation," and citizens of the new United States did this by rejecting the mother country's portrayal of the frontier as a peripheral place, a source of weakness and shame.³² When Americans embraced the West as a source of strength and integrated the idea of frontier into their definition of national identity, it represented a culmination in the process of decolonization.

Oklahoma Press, 1991); Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*, Yale Western Americana Series, 35 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

31. As Turner pointed out, the wilderness finds American emigrants "european [*sic*] in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel and thought." Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920, 1921), 4.

32. Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 39.

History, rather than theory, is the driving force behind this project. Many of the ideological debates and disagreements in the field of post-colonial studies stem from the complexity of twentieth and twenty-first century intellectual developments: modernism/post-modernism, structuralism/post-structuralism, globalization theory, dependency analysis, and world-systems theory, just to name a few. The American overthrow of British imperialism, and the founding generation's struggle to build a new nation on the ruins of a colonial foundation pre-date these modern ideological frameworks. A historian's primary job is to reconstruct, not deconstruct, and therefore this project attempts to analyze early national Americans' experiences *as they lived them*, based on evidence. For the historian, post-colonial theory supplements, rather than overrides, evidence-based analysis. Historians walk a fine line between fact and theory; often the two intersect, but at times they do not. In a way, historians do automatically what post-colonial scholars do laboriously – thorough and objective historical analysis *assumes* an inquiry into the underlying motivations of the actors involved, a critical reading of texts or statements, and a search for more complex power structures at work within legislation, cultural attitudes, and literature. Done correctly, then, historical research co-exists easily with the methodology of colonial/post-colonial studies.

...

Part One of this project examines how citizens of the new nation experienced and shaped their post-colonial process. The lingering dominance of imperial power long after formal decolonization is a central premise in post-colonial theory, and for citizens of the new United States the continuing hegemony of the former mother country was a fact of life. While the cultural manifestations of post-colonialism in the United States have been

well-documented (and thus are covered only briefly here), the political ramifications remain relatively under analyzed. In order to more fully understand the post-colonial position of the founding generation, however, it is important to acknowledge that the “cultural bequest of British colonialism” was not the only parting gift Americans received after the Revolution.³³ In fact, the legacies of colonialism loomed over every aspect of early national political life. Using the late eighteenth-century economic and political center of Philadelphia as a primary reference point, and focusing particularly on legislative debates, this section explores the ambiguity of the founding generation’s position as revolutionaries who retained a deeply-ingrained respect for British customs and political structures. Unable to reconcile their desire for independence with their reliance on English models, post-colonial Americans perceived their nation as weak and unstable. Rather than formulating a cohesive national identity, they interpreted local political developments through colonial-era frameworks and situated themselves within recognizable colonial-era allegiances. Part One concludes with the most significant embodiment of the founding generation’s political post-colonialism: its replication of British imperial policy in the territories.

Part Two then turns west, analyzing the imperial nature of federal territorial policies and the colonial relationship between East and West.³⁴ Although the federal government’s imperialism in the early national West seems to contradict revolutionary ideals, it also demonstrates the extent to which the founding generation relied on British policy after the Revolution. Unable to detach from colonial-era precedents, legislators

33. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 11.

34. In this project, “East” includes the original thirteen seaboard states, while “West” refers primarily to the trans-Appalachian territory (Kentucky, the Northwest Territory, the Southwest Territory, and the states that came from those territories).

and citizens alike failed to develop a unique approach to the people and places on the nation's peripheries. I will argue that despite superficial policies that anticipated statehood and full citizenship for the territories, the founding generation in the East viewed the territory west of the Appalachian Mountains (the Northwest Territory, the Southwest Territory, Kentucky, and even western Pennsylvania) as colonies to be settled in a supervised manner. Eastern Americans marginalized whites in the West using colonial discourse that portrayed them as uncivilized and inferior. Thus, while the frontier settlers were ostensibly "American," their position relative to their contemporaries in the East resembled that of the previous generation's relationship with England. While Philadelphians argued over titles or the prudence of standing up to Britain on impressment and shipping rights, the people of the frontier remained in what Richard White has called a "Middle Ground." Far from the struggle with post-colonial identity taking place to the East, these individuals lived as subjects in a peripheral world where the authority of the U.S. government contended with the presence of French, Spanish, British, and Indian influences. Chapter Two looks at the imperial nature of territorial policy and draws parallels between territorial governance and that of the British government in its American colonies prior to the Revolution. It also examines the ways in which eastern cultural perceptions of westerners created and reinforced a colonial relationship between the two regions. Chapter Three illustrates how the replication of British imperial policy limited the role that western Americans could play in national politics and culture. I argue that by neglecting to establish true sovereignty in the western borderlands and by not integrating frontier residents into the nation, the founding generation in the East failed to break the bonds of post-colonialism; they re-created their

own colonial experiences in the West instead of embracing it as a uniquely American space. In Chapter Four, I examine how the founding government's Indian policy fit into this process. Federal authorities rooted their policy in the British tradition of "consolidation and peace," prioritizing those goals above the interests of white settlers. Here too, they remained bound by colonial experience and may have overlooked an opportunity to use western issues to craft independent policy and strengthen national identity.

Part Three illustrates how the peripheral place of the West in American political culture changed over time. While the founding generation's policies and attitudes made western territories into colonies following the British model, subsequent generations integrated the frontier into the nation more fully and discovered new ways to distance themselves from the colonial past. Chapter Five provides an overview of the ways in which the divides between East and West began to shrink during the early nineteenth century. As Easterners became increasingly aware of the value of the West, and westerners integrated further into the national polity, the "colonizer/colonized" relationship began to shift; and the War of 1812 changed that relationship permanently. Chapter Six shows how this Second American Revolution brought unprecedented attention to the western borderlands. I argue that the War of 1812 not only gave Americans a new sense of strength, it moved the West from the margins to the center of American life. The war helped break the pattern of post-colonial dependence by refocusing Americans' search for national identity away from the seaboard. The final chapter of this project considers how changes to the founding generation's unoriginal Indian policy fit into subsequent generations' attempts to define themselves independent

of the colonial past. Chapter Seven identifies some of these policy changes, and argues that the racialization of American imperialism in the nineteenth century was a key step in ending post-colonial dependence; it allowed Americans to create a new type of empire and draw unique distinctions between themselves and an internal Other.

PART ONE: A POST-COLONIAL UNITED STATES

Chapter One “The Tender State”

By 1783, the American Revolution had ended, and Americans were left to set their own course for the first time. “We have it in our power,” Thomas Paine had written in *Common Sense*, “to begin the world over again.”¹ This was a bold vision in 1776, but by war’s end the country and its people were spent and weak. Even after a new Constitution allowed the founders to shore up the government by 1789, Americans remained unprepared for dramatic breaks with their past. In his *Essay on the Seat of the Federal Government*, Philadelphia merchant and statesman Pelatiah Webster explained to his fellow citizens that, although the United States possessed a number of advantages, “yet their population and civil establishments, are both young, and as yet, in the tender state, and small beginnings.”² In the new United States, as in subsequent post-colonial societies, the end of *de jure* colonization did not automatically eradicate all aspects of the parent state’s *de facto* domination. Post-revolutionary Americans, like other settler-subjects, do not fit neatly into colonial/post-colonial studies. The founding generation was composed of individuals who came into adulthood before the conclusion of the Revolution, and who carried with them a dual identity: British subjects and citizens of a brand new republic. Although they understood that the Revolution cemented a political break with England, the legacy of two hundred years of colonial rule did not disappear overnight. These Americans were, in fact, post-colonial.

1. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense; addressed to the inhabitants of America...* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by W. and T. Bradford, 1776; New York: Bartleby.com, 1996, 1999), accessed February 19, 2015, www.bartleby.com/133/.

2. [Pelatiah Webster], *An essay on the seat of the federal government...* (Philadelphia: Printed by Francis Bailey, at Yorick’s-Head in Market Street, 1789), in *Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800* [Electronic Resource]; [New Canaan, CT] : Readex ; [Worcester, Mass.] : American Antiquarian Society, [2002]-, Document no. 22262 (filmed). (Hereafter cited as EAI).

Lacking an independent sense of self, Americans in Philadelphia, the newly minted capital, failed to “begin the world anew”; rather, their world was one of ambiguities, ambivalence, and dependence on the customs of the parent state – customs that remained familiar to Americans from decades of use.³ As people with a “British” heritage, the founding generation did not set out to rebel fully against England’s principles of government. Although they virulently rejected monarchy, post-colonial Americans venerated other aspects of English politics and culture, including representative government and common law. As historians Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood have demonstrated through painstaking research, American opposition writers inherited many of their revolutionary ideas from an English Whig intellectual tradition. When they began to rebuild their post-colonial world, the founders looked to familiar forms, except for the ones that privileged government by bloodlines. As such, American legislators obsessively compared their own policies with those of the former mother country while at the same time trying to assert America’s uniqueness. These contradictory impulses left the founding generation awash in self-doubt. Citizens questioned the durability of their fledgling political system, evinced a lingering sense of shame over U.S. vulnerability to British power, and clung to old-world imperial affiliations as a port in the storm. Most importantly, in the incomplete transition to political and cultural independence, the East became an imperial state. Trying to prove themselves to the world, members of the founding generation in the original eastern seaboard states championed republican political ideals, such as balanced government and

3. This phrase comes from a title of a book by historian Bernard Bailyn. Although Bailyn acknowledges the “groping, unfinished, and tentative” nature of the founders’ innovations, he does assert their special ability to “create a new political world.” Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the Founding Fathers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 1.

sound economic policy, but also modeled an imperious approach to their own settler-subjects in the West.

Even after the end of formal colonial rule in 1783, Great Britain continued to exert a great deal of influence over the United States. The lingering political, cultural, and economic hegemony of imperial powers is most obvious in today's globalized society. Modern technology and global capitalism have made it easier for "First World" nations to infiltrate "Third World" societies without traditional structures for direct rule.⁴ Yet even without modern avenues for neo-imperialism, the new United States experienced many of the same issues as decolonizing nations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: inherited infrastructures and philosophies of governance, continued European cultural dominance, and the inability to become economically self-sufficient in the aftermath of mercantilist colonial policies. Although Americans had created viable local governing bodies before the Revolution, colonial assemblies developed and operated within the context of British political ideologies and governing precedents.⁵ Culturally, literature, art, and theater originating in England continued to overshadow American productions. American purchasers demanded luxury items and other manufactures from British

4. For an introduction to some of these topics, see Bret Benjamin, *Invested Interests: Capital, Culture, and the World Bank* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalization of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997); Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London: Verso, 2004); Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 3: 627-658; Y. Z. Ya'u, "The New Imperialism and Africa in the Global Electronic Village," *Review of African Political Economy* 31, no. 99 (March 2004): 11-29. On the terms "First" and "Third" Worlds, see Introduction, note 6.

5. The significance of colonial assemblies has been explored at length; for an overview, see Alison G. Olsen, "Eighteenth-Century Colonial Legislatures and Their Constituents," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 2 (September 1992): 543-567. The extent to which one can compare British and colonial American political structures has been debated, but as Paul Lucas concludes, Americans "traveled English highways" as they developed local governing bodies. Their assemblies "followed the way of the seventeenth-century House of Commons." Paul Lucas, "A Note on the Comparative Study of the Structure of Politics in Mid Eighteenth Century Britain and its American Colonies," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (April 1971): 302.

commercial centers, and the royal fleet's domination of maritime trade ensured that citizens in the new nation remained dependent on mostly British imports. From a variety of perspectives, then, what scholar Simon During has called "imperial residue" stained the early republic.⁶

As a major urban center and the temporary seat of the new government, Philadelphia (and New York before it) experienced the ambiguous nature of decolonization first-hand.⁷ Although citizens of the newly created capital did believe that they possessed independent philosophies of governance and a distinct culture, they had also spent most of their lives identifying themselves as British and following English customs and traditions. Philadelphia, founded by William Penn in 1682, had a long colonial history during which English influences predominated in the city. Philadelphia's colonial-era government was a closed corporation on the English model, "oligarchic and plutocratic."⁸ As a major colonial port, Philadelphia was central to the British Empire's mercantilist economy; in exchange for American primary exports, Philadelphia's merchants accepted shiploads of manufactured goods and finery from London. And while some of the most important milestones on the road to independence took place there, including the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia was also an occupied city during the Revolution: from 1777 to 1778, the British army under Generals Howe and Clinton took up residence. They were greeted by a community of elites with

6. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, eds., *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 19. Simon During describes this residue as the continuing influence of the parent state's culture, language, and ideology on a former colony.

7. Philadelphia was the recognized seat of government from 1790 to 1800.

8. Keith T. Krawczynski, *Daily Life in the Colonial City* (Santa Barbara, CA: The Greenwood Press & ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2013), 37, Google eBook. The elitist nature of the Corporation led the Provincial Assembly to give many of its duties to auxiliary officers outside of the Corporation between 1740 and 1776.

strong economic and cultural ties to England.⁹ The war did not sever these ties, and the political leaders who moved to Philadelphia when the city became the temporary capital in 1790 encountered reminders of British hegemony at every turn: English material goods continued to arrive in the Port of Philadelphia on the Delaware River, the Library Company of Philadelphia regularly imported English books and periodicals, and the Chestnut Street Theater performed British plays.¹⁰ The city was flooded with post-colonial uncertainty. The fact that many of the lawmakers who took up residence in Philadelphia had been prominent figures in the Revolution did not mean they had cast off all reliance on England's governing apparatuses. Like other revolutionaries-turned-political leaders who came after them, these men "had been educated to perceive themselves as potential heirs to European political systems and models of culture."¹¹ Thus the influence of British governing customs dominated the legislature as it sat in Congress Hall from 1790 to 1800. Lawmakers and citizens alike struggled to conceive how the young government could function without the stabilizing elements of monarchy, common law, and constitution.

Despite rhetoric about beginning the world anew, then, Americans and their political leaders lived in a world of ambiguity and continuing reliance on British modes of life. Historian Kariann Akemi Yokota points to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello for

9. At the time of the occupation, the city's most ardent revolutionaries had fled, leaving a substantial Tory community behind, along with a large population of Quakers attempting to retain neutrality. Philadelphia's businessmen had reason to welcome the British, for the arrival of English ships in the harbor that winter enlivened the city's economy and filled its larders. Prominent local Tories aided the occupiers in both official and unofficial capacities. See Darlene Emmert Fisher, "Social Life in Philadelphia During the British Occupation," *Pennsylvania History* 37, no. 3 (July 1970): 237-260.

10. On the importation of British books, see William Reitzel, "The Purchasing of English Books in Philadelphia, 1790-1800," *Modern Philology* 35, no. 2 (November 1937): 159-171. The Chestnut Theater's first run after opening in 1794 featured a string of British productions. See Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theater from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 76.

11. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 56.

evidence of Americans' uncertain position as residents of the New World still very much attached to the Old. Jefferson possessed a seemingly incongruous mix of imported European luxuries and artifacts attained during surveying expeditions in North America.¹² Elites like Jefferson, as well as common citizens in places like Philadelphia, prized British cultural productions because they feared that domestic versions of the same items were somehow substandard. These fears were not unfounded; even after independence, British commentators and writers like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle continued to assign America certain cultural "signifiers" of colonialism, such as backwardness and naiveté.¹³ In the face of such criticism, post-revolutionary Americans prized foreign goods that might indicate to the rest of the world their sophistication and material wealth. Imports, especially luxury items, provided a tangible way of proving connection to and membership in the civilized Atlantic world.¹⁴ Thus Americans relied on British textbooks in their schools; they imported European wines, ordered fabrics from British textile mills, and ate using crockery, china, and silverware purchased from London merchants.¹⁵ Critics like textbook author and lexicographer Noah Webster wondered how Americans could create a new nation in the midst of such hypocritical imitation:

Nothing can be more ridiculous than a servile imitation of the manners, the language, and the vices of foreigners. For, setting aside the infancy of our government and our inability to support the fashionable amusements of Europe, nothing can betray a more despicable disposition in Americans than to be the apes of Europeans...Why, every fashionable folly is brought from Europe and adopted without scruple in our dress, our manners, and

12. On the importation of material goods after the Revolution, see Kariann Yokota, "A Culture of Insecurity: Americans in a Transatlantic World of Goods," in *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 62-114.

13. Ashcroft et. al., *Key Concepts*, 42.

14. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 8-9.

15. *Ibid.*, 37, 71. Part of this reliance on imports was an underdeveloped manufacturing sector as a result of colonial-era mercantilist policies. However, Americans preferred British luxury items even when similar products were available from American manufacturers, whose wares were "neither as refined nor as durable" as imports. *Ibid.*, 70.

our conversation. All our ladies, even those of the most scanty fortune, must dress like a dutchess [*sic*] in London; every shopkeeper must be as great a rake as an English lord...In politics, our weakness will render us the dupes of their power and artifice; in manners, we shall be the slaves of their barbers and their coxcombs.”¹⁶

American literary culture also bore the marks of post-colonialism.¹⁷ Early national writers like Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, Susanna Rawson, Timothy Dwight, Joel Barlowe, and James Kirke Paulding exhibited characteristics of the post-colonial settler-subject such as ambivalence and “simultaneity.” As settler writers, they “[sought], at once, authority as legitimate authors by the standards adopted and imposed in Britain, and authority by giving voice to the imagined community of the decolonized nation.”¹⁸ Thus suspended between two cultural worlds, the founding generation struggled to form an independent sense of self.

As in any post-colonial society, the fear of re-colonization “haunted” the early republic. Federalist administrators in particular perceived their nation as a “weak, secondary force in a post[-]imperial balance of power.”¹⁹ Thus the *Annals of Congress*

16. Noah Webster, *Sketches of American policy. Under the following heads: I. Theory of government. II. Governments on the eastern continent. III. American states; or the principles of the American constitutions contrasted with those of European states. IV. Plan of policy for improving the advantages and perpetuating the union of the American states* (Hartford: Printed by Hudson and Goodwin, [1785]), in EAI, Document no. 19366 (filmed).

17. A number of scholars have analyzed early national and antebellum literature as post-colonial. See Lawrence Buell, “American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon,” *American Literary History* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 411-442; Edward Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998); Laura J. Murray, “The Aesthetic of Dispossession: Washington Irving and Ideologies of (De)Colonization in the Early Republic,” *American Literary History* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 205-231; Jennifer Rae Greeson, “Colonial Planter to American Farmer: South, Nation, and Decolonization,” in *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies*, ed. Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003): 103-120; Jon-K Adams, “Family Relations and the American Revolution,” in *The Construction and Contestation of American Cultures and Identities in the Early National Period*, ed. Udo J. Hebel (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999): 67-76.

18. Edward Watts, “Settler Postcolonialism as a Reading Strategy,” *American Literary History* 22, no 2 (Summer 2010): 453.

19. This “constant anxiety” over one’s colonial origins is the “hallmark of the postcolonial condition.” Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism*, 2; Edward Watts, “‘If Indians Can Have Treaties, Why Cannot We Have One Too?’: The Whiskey Rebellion and the Colonization of the West,” in Watts and Schueller, *Messy*

contain a litany of hand-wringing over Britain's superior position, particularly in matters of the economy. Legislators pointed out the impotence of America in the face of the British trade juggernaut. Representative William L. Smith of South Carolina, for example, reminded the House in 1790 that Britain's administration was more stable than America's, giving England the ability to "cripple our commerce exceedingly from one Congress to another."²⁰ During a debate on increasing duties on tonnage, New York Representative John Laurance cautioned against passing duties that offended Great Britain. He reminded his colleagues that while England was "long established... we are, as it were, the creatures of yesterday, unable to stand such competition."²¹ During another discussion of the same topic, Virginia's John Page scolded colleagues in the First Congress for being "timid" and shuddering at the mere thought of British retaliation for the increase. "These fears," Page reminded them, "would scarcely become us in our old Colonial capacity; they are highly unbecoming in our present independent situation, and are extremely impolitic."²² Despite such objections, British economic prowess loomed larger than life. Addressing the legislature about tax policy in 1789, James Madison spoke of Britain having a "vortex" into which American commerce was pulled. His tone and language implied that Britain possessed an overarching ability to control the domestic economy across great distances; he warned dramatically, "the productions of our most distant climes, consumed among us, are tributary to her revenue."²³ These insecurities among the founding government continued into the nineteenth century;

Beginnings, 81; Peter S. Onuf, "'Empire For Liberty': Centers and Peripheries in Postcolonial America," in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, ed. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York and London: Routledge, 2002): 302.

20. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,629.

21. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 245.

22. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,633.

23. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 213.

Congressman John Claiborne of Virginia wrote to his constituents in 1806, that commercial relations with Great Britain “produced...greater anxiety than any other subject” in the capital.²⁴ Long after the Treaty of Paris ended America’s formal period of colonization in 1783, an overwhelming sense of British power remained.

Instead of displaying the boldness and certainty of Thomas Paine when he envisioned the future republic in 1776, members of the founding generation replicated elements of colonial discourse that portrayed the new nation as weak and inexperienced. Most notably, they continued to ascribe the characteristics of youth and childishness to the United States in a negative way; rather than interpreting youthfulness as a source of strength or vitality, post-revolutionary observers presented it in connection with instability or as an excuse for cautious legislation and continued subordination to Great Britain. Philadelphian Pelatiah Webster, writing as “A Citizen of Philadelphia” in 1789, described the state as “young” and “ignorant,” and emphasized that the instability of American politics (what he called “derangements”) since the Revolution weakened the United States in the eyes of foreign nations.²⁵ Warning his colleagues not to ignore states’ expectations with regard to proposed constitutional amendments that same year, South Carolina Representative Thomas Tudor Tucker told the House that the American government was “but in embryo, or at best but in its infancy.”²⁶ Alexander Hamilton used a similar rationale to support the Jay Treaty in 1795. Writing in defense of the treaty, Hamilton described the new nation as a “weak state” and the “embryo of a great empire.” This language goes beyond infantilization to place the United States back into the womb

24. *Circular Letters of Congressman to their Constituents*, ed. Noble E. Cunningham, vol. 1, *First Congress to Ninth Congress, 1789-1807* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg, VA, 1978), 460. (Cited hereafter as *CLC*).

25. [Webster], *An essay on the seat of the federal government*, 13.

26. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 787.

of its more powerful parent state.²⁷ In addition to retaining the discourse of infantilization, some legislators in the founding government also feminized the new nation. Virginia congressman William Giles, for example, described the new government as “in a state of puberty,” where it could either “preserve...simplicity[,] chastity, [and] purity” or “prostitute herself” to the artifices of monarchical forms of rule.²⁸ The use of this imagery shows that Americans internalized colonial discourse, a fact that mitigated the founding generation’s ability to bring Paine’s vision to life.

Yet the biggest impediment to the creation of a new world was the ambivalent nature of revolutionary politics, for although Americans rejected monarchy and rule by bloodlines, they retained a great deal of respect for other British political traditions, a habit formed over years and decades. As revolutionaries, Americans had been immersed in the ideology of England’s Whig tradition, and they continued to rely on these forms when building their post-colonial nation. Historian Bernard Bailyn has argued that the goal of the American revolutionaries was “not the overthrow or even the alteration of the existing social order but the preservation of political liberty.” Their definition of political liberty came directly from European intellectual traditions, most notably radical political and social theories from seventeenth-century English opposition writers. The influence of this “country” tradition in America may be seen throughout the eighteenth century, and

27. [Alexander Hamilton], “The Defence No. II,” [July 25, 1795], in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold C. Syrett, vol. 18, *January 1795–July 1795* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 493–501, Founders Online, National Archives.

28. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 548. For a discussion on the imagery of child versus adult and feminine versus masculine in another post-colonial context, see Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) or Jo-Ann Wallace, “De-scribing the Water-Babies: ‘The Child’ in Post-Colonial Theory,” in *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality*, ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 171-184.

American revolutionaries used English writers' theories to justify rebellion.²⁹ Thus the founding generation entered its post-colonial period with strong ties to long-established British political principles. A 1794 Circular Letter to the Democratic Society of Philadelphia reflected on the limitations this fact imposed:

Educated under the administration of the BRITISH CONSTITUTION, the American citizen too often involuntarily feels a blind attachment to its principles...his former associations retain an ascendancy in his mind, and impede independence and originality of reflection. The same devoted attachment to his preconceived opinions, that so often has proved fatal to the improvement of the sciences, will long retard our approach to that perfection in government, which the progressive nature of man is capable of attaining.³⁰

Presented with the opportunity to build a new nation, the men who had led the independence movement declined to take it.

Americans did not wish to renounce inherited political structures and ideologies that had stood the test of time – a valuable attribute for citizens in a completely untested republic. As Pennsylvania Senator William Maclay unenthusiastically concluded in 1789, “[w]e were a new nation, it was true, but we were not a new people. We were composed of individuals of like manners, habits, and customs of the European nations. What, therefore, had been found useful among them came well recommended by experience to us.”³¹ While presiding over the Senate that same year, Vice President John Adams stated that he might not have drawn his sword in the Revolution had he known a wholesale rejection of British governing practice might be the result. In response to such

29. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Enlarged Edition (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967, 1992), 19, 34.

30. [Democratic-Republican Society of New York], “Circular Letter to the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania, 1794,” in Eric Foner, ed., *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 188.

31. William Maclay, *The Journal of William Maclay: United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1927), 70.

conservative declarations, Maclay, who loathed his peers' fondness for British forms, concluded dramatically:

...that the motives of the actors in the late Revolution were various can not be doubted. The abolishing of royalty, the extinguishment of patronage and dependencies attached to that form of government, were the exalted motives of many revolutionists...[y]et there were not wanting a party whose motives were different. They wished for the loaves and fishes of government, and cared for nothing else but a translation of the diadem and scepter from London to Boston, New York, or Philadelphia; or, in other words, the creation of a new monarchy in America, and to form niches for themselves in the temple of royalty.³²

Maclay's great agitation over his colleagues' attachment to British political traditions – even the trappings of royalty – may not have been misplaced. When the Senate took up the question of how much power should be vested in the office of the president in July 1789, Maclay recorded the extent to which the British monarchy loomed large over the debate. Commenting on a speech by Maryland's Charles Carroll, Maclay expressed dismay at the “[m]any allusions to the power of the British kings. *The King can do no wrong*. If anything improper is done, it should be the Ministers that should answer.” Maclay found it strange that Carroll, a delegate to the Continental Congress and a signatory to the Declaration of Independence, had “transformed” into someone who cited the monarch for precedent.³³ Similar transformations took place among other former revolutionaries during the extensive congressional debates over titles and other formalities for officeholders. Shortly after the Senate convened for the first time, Maclay complained that the chamber's minutes referred to an address from President Washington as “His most gracious speech.” He told Senate President John Adams that such titles imitated those that prefaced the speeches of British monarchs and reminded those present

32. Maclay, *Journal*, 12.

33. *Ibid.*, 110-111. Italics in original.

that Americans had lately fought a war against kingly authority. The most striking aspect of Maclay's account, however, is the *absence* of outrage from most of his colleagues.

"Every countenance seemed to wear a blank," he noted, "I must speak or nobody would."

Adams himself voiced the most clear evidence of reversion: he "expressed the greatest surprise that anything should be objected to on account of its being taken from a practice of that Government under which we had lived so long and happily formerly."³⁴

While many in Congress recognized, as Maclay did, that imitative forms hindered rather than helped their mission to build a new kind of republic, Americans still possessed a sense of reverence for Britain's long history. When the House discussed the proper procedures for taking up old business at the beginning of its second session in January 1790, Alexander White insisted that old issues be taken up *de novo* at the commencement of each new session. "[T]his had been the invariable practice of Parliament through the period of their existence," he said. "If, then, it had been found advantageous by so enlightened a body, for a period of five hundred years, their experience was sufficient to satisfy his mind of its propriety; and nothing but solid and substantial objections would induce him to deviate from that principle."³⁵ As a former colonial, White and many of his colleagues in the founding government retained a sense of respect for British institutions that had been bred in them from birth. Whereas England's government stood on centuries of history, citizens of the United States had yet to craft *any* history outside of their role as inferior colonials on the margins of the British Empire. Although some members thought the legislature should find more examples from the states upon which to rely, even those individuals reverted back to Britain for

34. *Ibid.*, 10.

35. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,085. His colleagues from Virginia John Page and Richard Blank Lee both expressed similar sentiments during this debate.

legitimacy in the end.³⁶ While North Carolina's John Steele, asserted that "our own experience was the best instructor" during a 1789 debate on increasing the ratio of representatives, he capitulated to the trend of comparisons almost immediately. "As European examples had been recurred to," he decided to mention British voting districts to "[confirm] the justice of his remarks."³⁷ Even William Maclay, who almost universally opposed any measure in Congress that even vaguely resembled British custom and who criticized President Washington for "wish[ing] everything to fall into the British mode of business," could not buck the trend. He quoted parliamentary practice to make his own point regarding Senate procedure in 1789, and again in 1790 during a debate on the military establishment.³⁸ That even the most vocal opponents of imitation cited Parliament to lend their arguments legitimacy demonstrates that veneration for Britain's historic governing principles was pervasive in Congress.

Ascribing great value to the authority of Britain's time-tested political traditions, legislators displayed a constant need to compare and contrast American political and judicial proceedings with those of Great Britain. At the same time, however, many of them fervently sought ways to prove America's uniqueness. These contradictory impulses – deference and disobedience – plagued the founding generation as they did subsequent post-colonial societies. Senators and representatives encountered many new questions about how the federal government should function during the founding decades. Instead of working diligently toward originality in government, however, political leaders reverted to British examples (for support *or* as an oppositional reference)

36. Maclay, *Journal*, 238.

37. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 183-184.

38. Maclay, *Journal*, 172, 159.

during debates on almost every topic, including the proper use of power and titles in office, the mechanics of governance, judicial and legal issues, finances and the economy, and international relations. The comparison between British and American policy became, in the words of the recording clerk, an “oft repeated analogy.”³⁹ The historical sense of belonging within, rather than standing apart from, the metropolitan government in London constituted only one part of the problem. Delaware’s George Read articulated another, equally significant, aspect of Americans’ post-colonial predicament. He reasoned, “[i]f we chose to object to words because they had been used in the same sense in Britain, we should soon be at a loss to do business.”⁴⁰ The founding government *had* no other basis for their own actions; in order to function at all, legislators had to rely on old-world models.

As a result, legislators looked to the *Lex Parliamentia* for trivial quotidian matters (whether or not to have a sergent-at-arms in the chamber or to publish House proceedings, whether the Senate should stand or sit during a visit from the president, or what type of imprint the currency should bear), and regarding more weighty concerns (congressional salaries, how to transfer business from one session to the next, the location of the seat of government, how to increase representation as the population grew, state versus federal jurisdiction, member resignation, and separation of powers).⁴¹ In every instance of reversion to British tradition, however, a competing drive for originality appeared as well. Questions of formality and conduct in the chambers of Congress often drew both the most passionate citations of British practice (because these issues touched a nerve among Americans long-accustomed to being considered uncouth and

39. Maclay, *Journal*, 17-18; *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 3rd Sess., 1,926.

40. Maclay, *Journal*, 11.

41. The *Lex Parliamentaria* was a manual for members of Parliament.

unmannered) and the loudest condemnations of imitative forms (because formality reeked of aristocracy). When the Senate considered whether or not to stand when George Washington addressed them on April 30, 1789, Vice President John Adams and several members of the legislature grew agitated and fell back on British examples for guidance. William Maclay recounts the scene:

Mr. Lee began with the House of Commons (as is usual with him), then the House of Lords, then the King, and then back again...Mr. Izard got up and told how often he had been in the House of Parliament. He said a great deal of what he had seen there....Mr. Adams got up again and said he had been very often indeed at the Parliament on those occasions, but there always was such a crowd, and ladies along, that for his part he could not say how it was. Mr. Carrol [*sic*] got up to declare that he thought it of no consequence how it was in Great Britain; there were no rules to us, etc.⁴²

Another debate over how the Senate should receive communications from the House clerk interrupted the disagreement over the president's speech. "Mr. Lee brought the House of Commons before us again," and lamented that the Senate lacked a sergent-at-arms, making it impossible to replicate the "ceremonious way of doing business" used by English Lords. These discussions on seemingly inconsequential matters of formality continued for an hour and ten minutes, until the arrival of the president at the chamber door.⁴³ Senators *cared* about where they stood and who received messages in what way. These things indicated steps in the important progression from uncivilized colonial to full participant in civilized society, a goal that kept the founding generation focused on the perplexing question of imitation versus originality.

These competing desires influenced Congress throughout debates on the mechanics of governing. On one hand, Parliament stood as the pinnacle of enlightened representative government, yet deference to that body's customs insinuated that America

42. Maclay, *Journal*, 7-8.

43. *Ibid.*, 8.

was unexceptional. Maclay, much annoyed, recounted sitting on one Senate committee in 1790 whose members drew on “much parliamentary stuff.”⁴⁴ When the Senate debated the appropriate method for sending bills to the House, senators “were plagued again with the House of Lords and Commons, and ‘parliamentary’ was the supplementary word to every sentence.”⁴⁵ On the seat of the government, Virginia’s Alexander White reminded his fellow representatives in the House that “modern policy has obliged the people of European countries, (I refer particularly to Great Britain) to fix the seat of Government near the centre [*sic*] of trade.” White argued that American legislators ought to look at the British example and act the opposite.⁴⁶ During a House debate on increasing the number of representatives to reflect recent census data in 1791, North Carolina’s John Steele complained, “[g]entlemen have called our attention to the House of Commons of Great Britain, and the National Assembly of France; but God forbid that we should draw our precedents from such examples as may be cited from European representation.”⁴⁷ But while legislators vociferously insisted that the United States and Great Britain were “in all respects...essentially different,” they also found it difficult to overcome the sense of historical inferiority that accompanied their position as former colonials.⁴⁸

Legislators also fell back on British judicial traditions because, like classical and Enlightenment thinkers, England’s great legal theorists and the common law they created figured prominently in the rhetoric of the American Revolution. The founders revered English laws and legal history as “legitimizing precedent, as embodied principle, and as

44. *Ibid.*, 179.

45. *Ibid.*, 17-18.

46. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,717.

47. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 170-171.

48. *Ibid.*, 183-184.

the framework of historical understanding.”⁴⁹ Yet this deference to British precedent again deeply disturbed some legislators and their constituents. As they did on other issues, Americans felt ambivalent about whether or not common law should apply to their “new” society. Legislators like New Hampshire’s Samuel Livermore cited the “universal practice of Great Britain” as reason enough to approve of any aspect of American jurisprudence, and “quoted the election laws of Britain...as the only precedents that could enable Congress to form a judgment.”⁵⁰ Supporting a clause that required a variety of disclosures from defendants in court, Connecticut Senator Oliver Ellsworth, “in a most elaborate harangue,” cited the British judiciary: “[N]ow in chancery, now in common law, and now in common law again, with a chancery side. He brought forward Judge Blackstone, and read out much of him.”⁵¹ Judges too imitated English forms. One Philadelphian writing under the pseudonym “Russell” complained about the clothes local judges wore. After happening by the courthouse in August 1792 and seeing judges in scarlet cloaks, “Russell” wrote to the *Federal Gazette* angrily that “such dress...is borrowed from a country we are but too ambitious to copy, though we were lately so fond of disdaining.”⁵² Like “Russell,” leaders like William Maclay disliked that the common law had been “received” from Great Britain intact. When the Senate debated the extent of the federal judiciary’s jurisdiction, Maclay noted with frustration that “the twelve judges of England in the Exchequer Chamber were held up to view during the whole

49. Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins*, 31. Revolutionary literature frequently cited Sir Edward Coke, Henry Spelman, Thomas Madox, Robert Brady, William Peyt, and of course William Blackstone.

50. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 478.

51. Maclay, *Journal*, 90.

52. “For the Federal Gazette. On the Dresses of the Judges,” *The Federal Gazette, and Philadelphia Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), August 25, 1792, America’s Historical Newspapers. (Hereafter cited as AHN).

harangue.”⁵³ Maclay wished fervently that “we were not always to be trammelled with the fetters of English jurisprudence,” and hoped that American legislators “would show [that] we had judgment and would act for ourselves, independent of any forms.” Was the federal government, he wondered, “always to be considered as empty bottles, that could contain nothing but what was poured into them[?]”⁵⁴ Yet some Americans did feel that their nation resembled an empty vessel. As New Jersey’s Isaac Smith admitted during a 1796 diatribe against reverting to common law, “[w]e seem to consider ourselves as bound by the rules and usages of common law...[h]ere there is no preceding law, and therefore, whatever we have done, or shall do, is a mere nullity.” Although Americans like Smith fought post-colonial dependence vigorously (he challenged the House to “assert [its] privilege and make its own legal rules and usages”), independence left a political and cultural vacuum; a void existed where the metropolitan center had previously dictated standards, and the founding generation could not find ways to fill it.⁵⁵

That void was also painfully obvious in matters of finance, particularly taxes and the Bank of the United States, and lawmakers remained acutely conscious of their relative inexperience in economic stewardship. As Massachusetts Representative Elbridge Gerry told the First Congress in 1789, compared with Europe, “we had hitherto but little experience in this science [of finance], and perhaps not more than one man is qualified to fill such an important station as financier.” Gerry concluded that, “defective in documents to guide us on our way...we are going on blindfolded.”⁵⁶ The blindfold to which Gerry referred stemmed directly from the nation’s colonial past; always subject to financial

53. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 782; *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 189; Maclay, *Journal*, 212, 85.

54. Maclay, *Journal*, 96.

55. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 189.

56. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 345.

policies formulated in the metropole and applied by imperial agents, the founding generation had limited ability to envision a distinctly American system of finance. When the First Congress debated the issue of duties in the spring of 1789, comparisons with Britain dominated the discussion. Speaking against a duty on imported molasses, Benjamin Goodhue of Massachusetts pointed out that England also tried to tax molasses with little success. Americans ought, Goodhue claimed, “to draw our lesson from experience. You have heard that Great Britain, with all her power, was unable to obtain a duty of three pence a gallon; learn wisdom from her; she reduced it to one penny, and succeeded in the collection.” Although Goodhue encouraged his countrymen to rely on experience, he pointed them to British, not American, sources. South Carolina’s Thomas Tudor Tucker thought also that Americans should pay special attention to British experience because of their nation’s relative weakness; he proposed a system of moderate duties to prevent smuggling, a problem for Britain’s “very powerful government” that would certainly plague “ours, which is only in its infancy.”⁵⁷ In turn, other legislators in the capital decried reliance on English policy for precedent. Connecticut’s Roger Sherman observed that on the subject of tax collection, some of his colleagues “refer us to what was done under the government of Britain: in my opinion, the comparison does not hold good. It was thought lawful by the people of America to evade those duties, because they were unconstitutionally laid.”⁵⁸ While the hypocrisy of imitating British financial policy in the wake of the Revolution was not lost on legislators, they found themselves forced to accept English precedents by virtue of the sheer volume of the comparisons being made. As New Jersey’s Elias Boudinot told the House during the

57. *Ibid.*, 304.

58. *Ibid.*, 317-318.

debate on duties in 1789, “[i]f...we are to have the measures of the Parliament of Great Britain hung about our necks in all our public proceedings, and observations from their practice perpetually sounding in our ears, that practice ought to be defined and established.”⁵⁹ For many in the founding government, fighting their affinity for British customs became more trouble than it was worth.

Perhaps no issue evinces post-colonial Americans’ ambiguous position more than that of titles and formalities for officeholders. As an element of aristocratic society, titles should have been shunned per revolutionary rhetoric. Having long been excluded from such superficial trappings of elite metropolitan society, however, Americans coveted the prestige that titles implied. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate struggled to determine what, if any, role official titles should have in the new nation. Many, like William Maclay, believed titles to be odious appendages that harkened back to British royalty and the aristocratic appointees in charge of colonial governance. Yet, as Maclay bitterly observed after a disagreement with several other senators on the issue in September 1789, many of his colleagues remained “amazingly fond of the old leaven.”⁶⁰ By Maclay’s account, these included Vice President John Adams, and Senators Richard Henry Lee (Virginia), Oliver Ellsworth (Connecticut), Ralph Izard (South Carolina), and William Patterson (New Jersey). In the House, Virginian John Page complained that his fellow representatives stood and addressed each other as “the honourable gentleman.” So did a “vast number” of other citizens according to Georgia’s James Jackson; he remarked unhappily that “[a]s soon as a man is selected for public service, his fellow

59. *Ibid.*, 377.

60. Maclay, *Journal*, 164.

citizens, with liberal hand, shower down titles on him.”⁶¹ Even George Washington himself actively encouraged a “quasi-royal” political culture: the president hosted social gatherings called “levees,” a term also used to refer to receptions in the royal court; he wore formal clothing made from expensive materials like silk; he powdered his hair and bowed as opposed to shaking hands.⁶²

This fondness for the “old leaven” stemmed from Americans’ desire to achieve parity with Great Britain, and from their inability to create an independent lexicon for designating certain individuals as politically important. On the surface, debates over superficial issues like titles (or the appearance of federal buildings) seem like frivolous disputes among American elites who desired the trappings of aristocracy. Seen through the interpretive lens of post-colonialism, however, these issues reveal a founding generation whose simultaneous desire for independence and approval from the parent state dictated political discourse long after the Revolution. When Vice President John Adams told senators in the First Congress that the word “right” should precede “honorable” when the minutes referred to members of the Senate directly, he spoke not as a haughty elitist, but as a man in limbo between being a “colonial” and being truly independent. According to observer William Maclay, Adams “said it was of great importance. If we took the title ‘honorable,’ it was a colonial appellation,” Adams argued, “and we should disgrace ourselves forever by it.”⁶³ Although Maclay and others who shared his dislike of titles found Adams’s intensity laughable, the vice president’s appeal shows a keen awareness among men at the highest level of government that the

61. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 331, 336.

62. Simon P. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 50; Simon P. Newman, “Principles or Men? George Washington and the Political Culture of National Leadership, 1776-1801,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 485.

63. Maclay, *Journal*, 63.

stigma of colonialism remained. As the Senate pondered what title it might give the president to prevent his being laughed at by foreign peoples (a particular fear of Vice President John Adams), Maclay raised a key question for any post-colonial people. Certainly America might borrow English terms, but “will [the British] thank us for the compliment? Would not the plagiarism be more likely to be attended with contempt than respect among all of them?”⁶⁴ Groups who stridently opposed titles and other vestiges of court etiquette were not necessarily less constrained by ties to the colonial era; rather, they interpreted imitation as a sign of weakness the new nation could not afford in its vulnerable state. Their anger over titles stemmed not from a sense of independence that men like John Adams lacked, but from fear and disappointment that federal officials made no symbolic show of strength for the Old World. The Democratic Society of Pennsylvania expressed this in 1794:

...we differ in opinion from those who imagine that the rulers of a republic may conciliate the favour [*sic*] of monarchs and despotic courts, by assuming the courtly forms, etiquettes and manners...the mimicry of their absurd pomp by the citizens of a free commonwealth, serves but to make [foreign governments] despise those whom they before only hated.⁶⁵

Ambivalence motivated the Society, as it did political elites; its members desired to eradicate vestiges of imperial rule, but ultimately sought foreign approbation.⁶⁶ Members of the founding government wanted to create labels that brought American elites the respect they had lacked as colonials within the larger empire, but they had no idea how to do so without parroting the former parent state.

64. *Ibid.*, 27.

65. “Minutes of the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania,” January 9, 1794, in Foner, ed., *Democratic Republican Societies*, 71.

66. Ambivalence may be defined as simultaneously wanting something and wanting its opposite, or, in Homi Bhabha’s terms, a “complex mix of attraction and repulsion.” Ashcroft et. al., *Key Concepts*, 10-11.

Because the founders longed to both imitate and innovate, their domestic political structures seemed incomplete, and thus became a potential source of embarrassment. Legislators took note of every aspect of their domestic institutions that might earn international disdain. Speaking about a proposed duty on molasses in 1789, Connecticut Representative Jeremiah Wadsworth compared American abilities to enforce such a tax with those of Great Britain during the colonial era and found the new government wanting. “If we attempt a thing that is impracticable,” he warned, “we shall expose our weakness, without effecting any one good purpose.”⁶⁷ In 1796, Representative Abraham Baldwin of Georgia expressed similar embarrassment over the nation’s infrastructure, telling the House, “there [is] nothing in the country...of which we ought to be more ashamed than our public roads.”⁶⁸ The language of shame saturated political discussions during the founding era. In 1797, Virginia Representative Anthony New told his constituents, “[u]pon the whole I consider our country in a situation by no means enviable – insulted and abused by foreign nations – our commerce declining – our produce falling in value – our public debt increasing – our councils divided – an insidious and powerful British party in our interior.”⁶⁹ Complaining of Americans’ unwillingness to war with France that same year, former Massachusetts Representative Fisher Ames told Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott, Jr., “[w]e, the people, are in truth more kickable than I could have conceived.”⁷⁰ The feeble nature of America’s infrastructure, and the lack of confidence exuded by its leadership was not lost on the people. One Democratic-Republican Society made a grim assessment of the nation’s condition in 1794: “America

67. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 202-203.

68. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 314.

69. *CLC* 1:93.

70. Fisher Ames to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., April 24, 1797, in George Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, Edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1846, 1971), 1:498.

now ranks as a nation, but such is the incapability of her councils, imbecility of her laws, and the want of energy in her government, that unless some alteration is speedily effected, she will be a derision to every wise and enlightened nation.”⁷¹ Having vacillated between a reverence for and rejection of British institutions, the founders failed to inspire confidence in or unity around their own government.

Searching for stability, Americans clung to colonial-era allegiances to make sense of the world around them. Instead of creating an original political discourse, members of the founding generation in the capital interpreted domestic political decisions as an either-or between France or Great Britain, not as pertaining solely to American affairs. William Maclay, for example, cautioned his fellow Senators against offending the French in the winter of 1791. He believed that “[s]hould we differ with France, we are thrown inevitably into the hands of Britain.” Either there would be “confidence between us and France” or the nation would go “back to the fish-pots of British dependence.”⁷² In his 1796 letter to George Washington, Philadelphia journalist William Duane echoed Maclay’s statements, warning that if the United States disregarded its treaty obligations to France, the nation would “throw ourselves into the arms of Britain.”⁷³ These men assumed that, outside the protection of French *amitié*, the nation fell immediately under British control. Such sentiments implied that the United States needed a benefactor; without one old-world power on which to depend, it reverted automatically to the other. The concerns that Maryland Representative Uriah Forrest voiced in the House in 1794

71. “Address to Friends and Fellow Citizens from the Democratic Society of the Borough of Norfolk,” June 9, 1794, in Foner, ed. *Democratic-Republican Societies*, 350.

72. Maclay, *Journal*, 395, 369-370.

73. William Duane, *A Letter to George Washington, President of the United States: Containing Strictures on his Address of the Seventeenth of September 1796, Notifying his Relinquishment of the Presidential Office* (Printed at Philadelphia: For the Author and Sold by the Booksellers, 1796), 38, Internet Archive.

indicates the pervasiveness of this belief. During a debate on commerce, he “observed, that we should avoid letting our former prejudices, or those arising from recent transactions, influence our judgments. We should not regard the favoring of the French or British nation, but study to do that which would tend to the promotion of our own commerce and the interest of our own navigation.”⁷⁴ That same year, Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott, Jr. expressed a similar desire in a letter to his father. Writing about increased public enmity towards Britain at the time, the treasury secretary deplored Americans’ “disposition to meddle with foreign affairs, and to love and hate nations without reason.” He felt it unfortunate that the consequence of those sentiments did not “make us love our country the better” or “make all parties desirous of strengthening our resources.” Rather, it weakened U.S. stability by “induc[ing] a more intimate connection with foreign nations and dependence on them for support.”⁷⁵ Figures like Forrest and Wolcott, Jr. made these arguments in favor of the independence of American interests because so many of their contemporaries found that concept difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend.

Instead, many Philadelphia residents felt the weakness of the new nation so keenly that they could not envision the United States even *existing* independent of one or the other ally. In 1797, Virginia Representative John Clopton wrote of a possible rupture of good relations with France: “language is hardly yet invented, by which to give an adequate representative on the evils, that in all probability would then await the United States. I know not from whence could be derived a ray of hope that such an event would

74. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 1st Sess., 227.

75. Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Oliver Wolcott, Sr., January 2, 1794, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:125-126.

be in any shape whatsoever other than destructive or calamitous!”⁷⁶ This echoed William Duane’s fears in his 1796 letter to George Washington that without France the United States would be left in a terrible condition. “From whom could we expect succor,” he asked. In response to those who cited America’s recent victory in the Revolution as proof of the country’s durability, Duane declared that the nation’s position was yet “precarious,” for during the Revolution “all the world was with us” and the French navy had “protected us.” Duane’s letter shows a sincere belief that the United States could not survive at all if the French buffer between America and Britain fell away.⁷⁷ Oliver Wolcott, Jr., observed the popularity of this belief when he told his brother Frederick, “[b]y a strange kind of reasoning, some suppose the liberties of America depend on the right of cutting throats in France.”⁷⁸

The French sympathizers of which Wolcott, Jr. repeatedly complained understood their own fortunes as inextricably tied to those of France precisely because they did not perceive their Revolution as an independent event. Although they supported the French revolutionaries as fellow travelers on the road away from monarchy, the almost fanatical reverence for the French Revolution that many Americans displayed was also an outgrowth of post-colonial anxieties. While the founding generation stalled in a half-way transition from colony to nation, a second (and more unambiguous) revolution against a long-established European king reassured them that the American Revolution was not a fluke, but part of a legitimate and ascendant political movement. Writing against titles in July 1791, one article in the *Federal Gazette* declared proudly that “[t]he people of the United States and of France have led the way” in dismantling such trappings of

76. *CLC* 1:76-77.

77. William Duane, *A Letter to George Washington*, 37.

78. Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Frederick Wolcott, December 15, 1792, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:85.

aristocracy. Popular toasts reliably linked patriots in the two countries, and citizens perceived attacks against French revolutionaries as attacks against America (and republicanism overall). As one editorial republished in the *Gazette of the United States* asked of the war in Europe: “[a]re not our liberties at stake?”⁷⁹ If Great Britain waged war on France, it also endangered the survival of the fragile new nation. And although many Americans took little interest in the Fourth of July during the early 1790s, the French Revolution (and Washington’s controversial declaration of neutrality in the war between France and Britain in 1793) “energized” festival culture; these early Independence Day celebrations often featured slogans and symbolic dress associated with the French, rather than the American, Revolution.⁸⁰ One young New Englander, Benjamin Tappan, viewed his own participation in a 1794 civic festival to celebrate the French Revolution as his first real political stand, and Virginia Representative Samuel J. Cabell called the French Republic “the grand rallying point of the equal rights of man.”⁸¹ The colonial past had taught Americans that local political events were secondary to those of Europe; thus marginalized, their own political events could not be a rallying point for others.

Not yet stable enough to accept internal divisions as part of their political process, Americans fell back on imperial affiliations to explain their differences. For Federalists, this meant that their affinity for Great Britain became the most prominent element of the

79. “Mr. Fenno,” *Gazette of the United States and Daily Evening Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), January 6, 1794, vol. 5, issue 21, AHN.

80. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, 91. In New York in 1794, for example, celebrants marched to the “Marseillaise.” Celebrations also featured scarlet caps and tri-color (rather than the traditional black) cockades. *Ibid.*, 95, 152.

81. *Ibid.*, 9. Newman cites this as an example of the growing importance of public political culture (versus voting or membership in a party) in the early republic. Interpreted as a manifestation of post-colonialism, however, Tappan’s understanding of his own actions demonstrates to what degree Americans depended on imperial affiliation for their own political identity; *CLC* 1:69.

party's various political stances. As Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott, Jr. complained in a letter to President John Adams in 1797, a vocal faction of Anti-Federalists "asserts the existence of a British influence in the public councils. It is constantly affirmed that Mr. [John] Jay and other estimable characters, are of a British party."⁸² Americans who found fault with the Federalist administration accused its members of hiding their "prescriptions of [a]ristocracy" behind a "masque of Federalism."⁸³ Imagining a mask in this way helped Americans who disliked the ruling administration to translate unfamiliar political designations into recognizable ones. In turn, Federalists highlighted their opponents' pro-French sympathies. Writing about the True Republican Society of Philadelphia for the *Gazette of the United States* in 1800, for instance, "An Observer" recounted how he "attended the meeting of the Jacobins."⁸⁴ Accusations of Jacobinism subverted these groups' political identity to one associated with a foreign entity; this allowed Americans to place the platforms of Democratic-Republicans into colonial-era political frameworks. Rather than lampooning Thomas Jefferson for his opinions on issues of American governance, his opponents skewered the future president as a "French partizan [*sic*]."⁸⁵ Oliver Wolcott, Jr. referred to James Madison as a member of the "French party" and said of Virginians, "[they] hate the English...[and] love the French from consanguinity of character."⁸⁶ Pro-French or pro-British labels overshadowed alignment with domestic

82. Oliver Wolcott to the President [John Adams], April 25, 1797, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:383-384.

83. "Minutes of the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania," March 13, 1794, in Foner, ed., *Democratic-Republican Societies*, 72-73.

84. "'An Observer' to the *Gazette of the United States*," in *Ibid.*, 112. Another newspaper contributor in New York echoed this sentiment, saying of the local Democratic-Republican Society, "I shall hereafter regard them as self-creators, as a branch, perhaps, of the Jacobin Society of Paris." "'A Friend to Good Government' to Mr. M'Lean" [of the *New York Daily Gazette*], February 21, 1794, in *Ibid.*, 154. "Jacobin" and "Jacobinism" referred specifically to a political club in revolutionary France, but these terms also applied more generally to radical elements of the French Revolution as a whole.

85. Oliver Wolcott, Sr. to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., December 12, 1796, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:409.

86. Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Alexander Hamilton, March 31, 1797 in *Ibid.*, 487; Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to the President [John Adams], April 25, 1797, in *Ibid.*, 507; Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Oliver

political parties, making it impossible for Americans to truly understand themselves as exceptional.

The controversy surrounding the “Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation,” also known as the Jay Treaty, in 1795 and 1796 provides a case study in the political manifestations of post-colonialism in the United States. First, it showed the founding government’s conflicting impulses with regard to British examples; legislators used England as a model for treaty-making policy, but simultaneously wished for independence. Because the Constitution’s dictates regarding the legislature’s role in treaty making remained largely untested, the House of Representatives found itself unable to make decisions without looking to the parent state for guidance. During a debate on whether or not George Washington and John Jay had the right to conclude the treaty in the first place, Virginia’s John Nicholas “again adverted to the power of control that the House of Commons have over [t]reaties; and contended, that that provision of the British Constitution had been accurately copied in our own.” He asked his colleagues, “shall it be said, that we have borrowed only the form from Great Britain, and not touched the substance?”⁸⁷ In response to such logic, Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts queried, “[b]ut why attempt to divert our attention from a construction of our own Constitution, to the vague uncertain customs and practices of other countries? Why compare the President and Senate to the King of Great Britain? In what was there a resemblance? In nothing. Why, then, perplex the subject by the introduction of irrelative [*sic*] matter?”⁸⁸ Connecticut’s Nathaniel Smith similarly questioned his colleague’s reversion to parliamentary practice, demanding, “why introduce this by way of precedent

Wolcott, Sr., January 18, 1794, in *Ibid.*, 127.

87. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 445.

88. *Ibid.*, 522.

to guide us in construing our own Constitution?...He said the two Governments were completely dissimilar; why, then, introduce the practice of that Government as a guide for this?" Smith, unlike so many representatives, announced himself "well suited with the Constitution of America, and wished not to assimilate it to any foreign Constitution, and he hoped it would not be warped and twisted to become like them."⁸⁹ As with other issues, however, most of the gentlemen in the House had trouble making such definitive statements; they felt dissatisfied with continued deferrals to British standards, but looked in vain for solutions to the problem. Pennsylvanian Albert Gallatin "hoped [the two constitutions] would not be assimilated more than they really were. But, he contended, as to the Treaty-making power, they were in fact, perfectly similar."⁹⁰ John Williams "was unwilling to quote precedents from a Government not similar to ours," yet in the same breath he "read the observations of different members of Parliament" when the king had laid a treaty before them.⁹¹ A lifetime of colonial rule left these men in the habit of referencing Parliament, the British Constitution, and common law, and wishing the practice out of existence did not make it so.

The Jay Treaty debate also highlighted the destabilizing and divisive effect of the founders' ambivalence. Writing in April 1796, as the ratification debate raged in the capital, Connecticut Representative Chauncy Goodrich described the situation of the country as "critical." "[C]onfidence in the government is vanishing fast," he wrote, "and immense evil is already done."⁹² Citizens wondered, if the executive could circumvent

89. *Ibid.*, 454-455.

90. *Ibid.*, 469. Gallatin proceeded to quote from Blackstone to show that treaty-making power functioned the same way in England, thus supporting his argument that the House had every right to be involved.

91. *Ibid.*, 643.

92. Chauncey Goodrich to Oliver Wolcott, Sr., Philadelphia, April 20, 1796, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:331.

the legislature in this instance, what prevented the president from disregarding the most fundamental elements of republican government? “What security have we,” Virginian William Giles asked, “that he will not agree with Great Britain, that is she will keep an Army of ten thousand men in Canada, he will do the same here?...A Military Establishment may be instituted for twenty years.”⁹³ For Giles and many of his colleagues, the leap from a treaty of amity and commerce to a two decades-long dictatorship was not difficult to make; by highlighting moral and technical gray areas within governing apparatuses, the treaty made elected officials doubt their own capacity to control politics in the new nation. Philadelphia’s citizens felt a similar sense of foreboding at the time. As that city’s Democratic-Republican Society asked in a union-wide circular letter opposing Jay’s appointment, “[i]f, while our feelings are still warm with the contest against British usurpation, we tamely submit to have the citadel of our liberties undermined, we may soon expect, as the Revolutionary enthusiasm is fast on its decline, to submit to its explosion, with all the sang froid [*sic*] of men who had never tasted freedom.”⁹⁴ The treaty opened old wounds among the people out of doors, and inspired outrage at what they perceived as American leaders’ continued subservience to Britain. They reacted by reverting to revolutionary behavior. As Oliver Wolcott, Jr. described to the president in July 1795, “[t]he treaty was thrown to the populace, who placed it upon a pole; a company of about three hundred then proceeded to the French minister’s house, before which some ceremony was performed. The mob then went before [British minister George] Hammond’s house and burnt the treaty with huzzas and

93. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 512.

94. [The Democratic-Republican Society of Philadelphia], “[From a circular letter addressed to all the Democratic-Republican societies in the Union],” [May 20, 1794], in Foner, ed., *Democratic-Republican Societies*, 81.

acclamations.”⁹⁵ Faced with proof that Britain still held the power to dominate them, Philadelphians re-enacted the colonial-era opposition movement against imperial power. Uncertain of the future, they slipped back into old patterns very easily.

The treaty certainly called attention to the new nation’s weakness relative to the former mother country, and reminded residents of the capital of their inferior position during the colonial era. During a House debate on the treaty in March 1796, New York’s William Cooper pointed out that:

...[the British] are an old and powerful nation, and as America is young, and unable to meet them, they insult and misuse them on that account...[t]wenty years hence, he said, their voice would have a more manly sound, and although they may feel now as men will feel then, yet it would be imprudent for them to act now as it would be proper for men to act then.⁹⁶

Not only did Cooper reveal a deep sense of powerlessness, he infantilized and feminized the legislature by denying its manliness and maturity. Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott, Jr. considered the unpopular treaty “as favourable [*sic*] as could be obtained, or as we had a right under all circumstances to *expect*; perhaps when the nature of our government and the defenceless [*sic*] state of our commerce are calmly considered, it may be affirmed that it is as favourable [*sic*] as we ought to *wish*.” As a former colonial, Wolcott had internalized the mindset that Americans might not be quite capable of handling too much independence: “[i]t is a much more doubtful point than is commonly imagined,” he wrote, “whether it be for the true interest of this country to attain...a free and unlimited commerce in our own vessels in the world...I am not clear, that we ought at this time to wish to scatter our wealth and our citizens over every part of the world, and thus expose

95. Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to the President [George Washington], July 26, 1795, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:217.

96. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 542.

both to the caprice and injustice of even weak nations.”⁹⁷ His father, Oliver Wolcott, Sr., agreed, saying that the English “have nothing to fear from America; they can plunder our commerce at once.”⁹⁸ For both men, the new nation had its proper place, and that was subordinate to the British Empire.

The much-debated ability of the House of Commons to judge the merits of royal treaties emphasized how comparisons with British precedent undermined the respectability of the U.S. legislature, a major concern for post-colonial Americans. Gallatin pointedly asked, “are [we] to be in a worse situation than Great Britain...shall [the House of Representatives] be ranked below the British House of Commons[?]”⁹⁹ Citing Britain in a disagreement with one Vermont representative who worried that House opposition to the treaty might lead other nations to distrust U.S. diplomacy, William Smith of North Carolina announced, “the British House of Commons possesses the same power [to refuse to fund a treaty].” “[S]hall it be said,” he exclaimed, “that the Representative Assembly of the United States does not possess a privilege enjoyed by the English House of Commons! He hoped not.”¹⁰⁰ The legislature’s actions on this issue became a referendum on its legitimacy, and, as individuals striving for international recognition, representatives took that very seriously. The House of Commons, as the equivalent body in the parent state, set the bar and elicited deference typical of the colonial subject. Even lawmakers who opposed comparisons with the British Parliament still displayed a sense of respect for the long history of the imperial power’s legislative body, which dwarfed the short existence of Congress. Pennsylvania Representative

97. Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Noah Webster, August 1, 1795, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:221-222. Italics in original.

98. Oliver Wolcott, Sr. to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., April 25, 1796, in *Ibid.*, 332.

99. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 472.

100. *Ibid.*, 450-451.

Thomas Hartley dissented from the men who made analogies between the U.S. House and British Commons, but this did not stem from an objection to comparisons in general. Rather, he asked, “why have not those ingenious gentlemen discovered a single instance where the British House of Commons have had the instructions given by the Executive to the negotiating Minister laid before them.” He did not argue that the American president and his minister Jay had blazed a new path; instead, he deferred (if somewhat sarcastically) to the superiority of the Parliament: “[i]f there was such a power, no doubt that body would at some period have exercised it; for no men on earth have extended the power of privileges which they had further than the members of the House of Commons of Britain.”¹⁰¹ Hartley’s grudging and near-mocking tone, even while admitting the young nation’s inexperience relative to Britain, evince post-colonial ambivalence.

The lack of agency implied by imperial affiliation also appears in the treaty debate. Critics of the treaty censured President Washington for “ratifying the treaty under the influence of a British faction.”¹⁰² Massachusetts Representative Benjamin Goodhue referred to opponents of the treaty in his state as “Boston Jacobins”¹⁰³ Fisher Ames, also of Massachusetts, told the Treasury Secretary that anti-treaty protesters “seem[ed] resolved to go to extremities, perhaps because their French paymasters require it of them...we may look for French patronage of the disorganizers here.”¹⁰⁴ The Treasury Secretary’s father, Oliver Wolcott, Sr., seemed unable to decide *which* old-world power was behind popular opposition to the Jay Treaty. He told his son that King George III had given “secret order...to irritate the Americans” against the treaty, but also thought that the

101. *Ibid.*, 475.

102. William Cobbett, *A New Year’s Gift to the Democrats; or Observations on a pamphlet, entitled, ‘A vindication of Mr. Randolph’s resignation.’ By Peter Porcupine* (Philadelphia: Published by Thomas Bradford, 1796), in EAI, Document no. 30216 (filmed).

103. Benjamin Goodhue to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., August 1, 1795, in Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs* 1:221.

104. Fisher Ames to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., September 2, 1795, in *Ibid.*, 230.

intense dislike of the treaty “must in some measure be owing to the zealous friendship of the French.” Americans themselves he deemed “sagacious idiots” willing to “help” foreign influencers with their “design[s].”¹⁰⁵ Whatever hegemonic force was at work, it originated from a European fountainhead. This assumption stemmed directly from an internalization of colonial discourse, which painted colonists as passive and easily influenced.

...

One aspect of the Jay Treaty that Americans unequivocally supported was a provision that compelled Britain to evacuate posts it held in the American West; however, exchanging Red Coats for American troops made little difference in the policies that governed the territories.¹⁰⁶ The founders’ incomplete transition to political and cultural independence led them to create an imperial state in the West based on British structures and ideologies. Nations entering the temporal space of post-colonialism often retain internal inequality, applying the “fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly.”¹⁰⁷ This problem is especially prevalent in settler colonies, where “mimicry” of the parent state’s discriminatory policies “is a necessary and unavoidable part of the repertoire of the settler” and is indicative of his “unavoidable ambivalence.”¹⁰⁸ Settler-subjects, historically “complicit in colonialism’s territorial appropriation of land, and voice, and agency,” are far more prone to replicate imperial structures after decolonization “even at those moments when they have promulgated their most strident

105. Oliver Wolcott, Sr. to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., April 25, 1796, in *Ibid.*, 332.

106. Article Two stated that the king would withdraw all British troops from territory that belonged to the United States per the Treaty of Paris (1783). It forced Britain to evacuate a string of posts in the Northwest Territory, the continued occupation of which had caused diplomatic tension between the two nations since the Revolution.

107. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 16.

108. Alan Lawson, “Postcolonial Theory and the ‘Settler’ Subject,” *Essays on Canadian Writing*, issue 56 (Fall 1995): 20.

and most spectacular figures of postcolonial resistance.”¹⁰⁹ One such figure of resistance, Patrick Henry, saw this potential for replication in the Constitution itself; he accused its supporters of attempting to craft a social order in which certain classes reverted to the position of pre-revolutionary subjects. The result, in Henry’s view, was “colonizing – appropriating and rearranging – other parts of society to serve the needs of a centralized metropolitan capital.”¹¹⁰ Henry’s fears came to fruition on the early national frontier.

As they formulated territorial policy, political elites in the capital – typical authors of resistance turned post-independence leaders – recognized that the state had an interest in the acquisition and control of the West. Thus they “sought to assimilate, absorb, and consume” western lands, and the people who resided on those lands became part of that process.¹¹¹ Historian Peter Onuf has argued that the divide in early national America over the issue of westward expansion provided a window into Federalist and Republican views on imperialism. While anti-expansion Federalists possessed a “modern” viewpoint by concluding that empire had no place in the current age, pro-expansion Jeffersonian Republicans retained an “antique imperial vision.”¹¹² Whatever their differences of philosophy, however, both groups were equally limited by a post-colonial perspective: Federalists and Democratic-Republicans evaluated westward expansion and territorial governance through the lens of Great Britain’s imperial example, just as they did other issues. Although Federalists accepted the British model of consolidation (and thus feared

109. Stephen Slemon, “Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World,” *World Literature Written in English* 30, no. 2 (1990): 38.

110. Watts, “Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic,” 2-3.

111. Watts, “‘If Indians Can Have Treaties,’” 87. Watts uses the federal response to the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 to illustrate the burgeoning colonial relationship between the West and the national government.

112. Onuf, “‘Empire For Liberty’: Centers and Peripheries in Postcolonial America,” 303. Onuf begins his study with the debate over the Louisiana Purchase in 1803; this project seeks to bring the preceding fifteen years into the discussion.

an over-extension of the new nation) and Jeffersonian Republicans believed in territorial imperialism without England's "centralized style," each group displayed an inability to interpret America's trajectory independent of the colonial past. Elected officials from both parties replicated British imperial policy in the West, and their eastern constituents applied colonial discourse to marginalize the people who lived there. Although the imperial nature of American policy as it related to Native Americans is widely recognized, the founding generation intended, like Britain, to make subjects of whites in the West as well.

In her study of American post-colonialism, historian Kariann Yokota points out that there is a difference between establishing "statehood" and achieving "nationhood."¹¹³ The process of crafting a coherent national identity cannot be undertaken by a people beholden to British customs and traditions as the founding generation was. Formal independence did not negate the colonial past, and as settler-subjects Americans retained particularly strong attachments to their roots as members (albeit secondary ones) of the great British Empire. After the Revolution, reminders of Britain's continuing dominance remained everywhere: the American economy was subject to England's trade policy and powerful navy, British practices and productions governed Americans' cultural consumption, and, most importantly, English political ideologies dominated the legislature. Caught between a desire to emulate the revered traditions of the former parent state and a wish to "begin the world over again" as Thomas Paine had challenged them, Americans in the founding generation remained indecisive and uncertain. They seriously questioned the nature and durability of their political system and worried about their

113. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 10.

continuing inferiority despite attempts to achieve parity with Britain. No longer colonial but not truly independent, Americans in the seaboard states struggled to craft a cohesive and distinct national identity. The founding generation might have looked to the West for inspiration, as future generations did. Sparsely settled, the frontier did not bear the scars of colonialism that marked the seaboard states. Britain enjoyed no hegemony there; rather, it was home to a multiplicity of cultures and colonial pasts. But the founding generation interpreted the value of the territories according to frameworks it inherited during the colonial era and formulated its policy accordingly.

PART TWO: THE AMERICAN DOMINION,
1787-1812

Chapter Two “The Colonial Yoke”¹

From 1787 through the War of 1812, the founding generation in the East replicated British imperialism and applied it to the western territories; federal policies and public perceptions all limited the role that the frontier and its inhabitants could play in American political and cultural life. America’s post-colonial condition left easterners feeling inferior and rudderless. Unconvinced of the nation’s viability, they clung to British culture and politics as ports in a storm. This was especially true when faced with the difficult question of how to deal with the western territory and the people who lived there. As further proof of the founders’ inability to actualize Paine’s new world, lawmakers and the public created settler colonies that mirrored their own British-American experiences before the Revolution. In fact the penchant for replicating British models reached its penultimate form in eastern Americans’ treatment of the West; for in the frontier environment, the U.S. government could not afford to dilute the old colonial structures as they could in the East. Having ascribed to imperial rhetoric that used the wildness of the New World to justify paternalism and conquest, the founding generation encountered a paradox in the West. Although revolutionary ideology called for representative government, the environment ostensibly demanded authoritarian rule.² After the Revolution, the founding government faced a situation almost identical to that which Great Britain confronted after the end of the French and Indian War. At the end of

1. John Smith to the President, Chillicothe, November 9, 1802, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter, vol. 3, *The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1803* (New York: AMS Press, 1793), 255. (Hereafter cited as *TPUS* 3).

2. Richard A. Brisbin, Jr., “Before Bureaucracy: State Courts and the Administration of Public Services in the Northwest, 1787-1830,” *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 149.

the century, Congress responded to that plight by turning western territories into colonies based on the British model: the Northwest Ordinance (1787) created imperial structures for governance; Congress approached the territories as a land bank ripe for exploitation; territorial officeholders replicated royal officials' misbehavior prior to the Revolution; and the federal government used violence against its own citizens on the periphery. In turn, eastern cultural perceptions reinforced and rationalized the colonial relationship between East and West: frontier dwellers filled the role of children in the colonial parent-child dichotomy, and eastern rhetoric portrayed westerners as uncivilized, ungrateful, and almost savage. All of these qualities made western Americans, like British-American colonials before them, a potentially dangerous population in need of a strong hand for guidance. Having thus replicated the British-American colonial relationship on their own periphery, Americans in the founding generation allowed post-colonialism to inhibit the creation of a cohesive national culture.

In 1783, the new U.S. government found itself in a position very similar to that of Great Britain after the Seven Years' War. Consider historian Merrill Jensen's description of the crisis confronting the British government under George Grenville when he became First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1763: Grenville inhabited a world of "innumerable problems." His government faced a post-war depression, crushing debt, and political instability, including a domestic revolt against a cider tax that same year. The nation suddenly possessed vast new territories, far flung from the seat of government. That land was "inhabited by Spaniards, Frenchmen, and hordes of hostile Indians." A population of colonists who "seemed...unwilling to obey the laws," and who "expected benefits from the mother country but were unwilling to yield anything in

return” added to Grenville’s difficulties. In response, between 1763 and 1776 the British government passed a variety of measures to make its American colonies more profitable – the Sugar Act (1764), the Currency Act (1764), the Stamp Act (1765), the Townshend Duties (1767), and the Tea Act (1773); and to better control unruly colonials – the Proclamation Line (1763), the Quartering Act (1764), and the Coercive Acts (1774). These acts, passed *on* American colonials rather than *by* them, inspired resistance and ultimately revolution.³

British strategy for exerting increasing control over their American colonies throughout the eighteenth century emphasized centralization of power in the hands of royally appointed officials who operated within a tightly controlled hierarchy. After 1660, England’s Privy Council transformed colonies into royal governments one by one, each with appointed governors, judges, and legislators.⁴ By 1763, the crown controlled six of the thirteen colonies, and corporate and proprietary colonies had become a minority. Royal governors oversaw not only executive functions, but also a myriad of duties that would have devolved onto a secretary of state, treasurer, or military commander in a non-colonial context. The governor’s job description was a catch-all, and his ability to call and prorogue assemblies gave him a potentially dictatorial strength. Governors possessed veto powers and oversaw all manner of nominations and appointments, making local officeholders beholden to them for their livelihoods.⁵ The

3. Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 41-42.

4. *Ibid.*, 20. Just as the British government found it difficult to create real centralized control on the ground, the American government struggled to exert its technical jurisdiction over the borderlands, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

5. Ian K. Steele, “The Anointed, the Appointed, and the Elected: Governance of the British Empire, 1689-1784,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2001), 110. Steele admits that gubernatorial power, despite what it looked like on paper, was often mitigated by the lack of troops to enforce unpopular decrees or

king and Parliament designed this administrative model to ensure control and order; the early national U.S. government had the same goal in its western territories.⁶

Although many of the men who held national office in the 1780s and 1790s participated in the very revolution that defied Grenville's policies and dictatorial structures of royal governance, Congress and cabinet members like Henry Knox seemed bent on traveling the same path with regard to the territories. They expected the colonies on the frontier to generate revenue to help pay down America's post-war debt; they also treated the territories as a proving ground for federal authority, which sometimes resulted in the use of strong-arm tactics. Instead of implementing a far-reaching set of new taxes (as Britain had), the federal government found other ways of financially exploiting the territories, and rather than controlling smuggling merchants through Navigation Acts, it came down hard on squatters whose activities prevented the government from getting much-desired revenues from large land sales. In July 1789, Pennsylvania Representative Thomas Scott cautioned Congress against replicating the mistakes of other empires like Rome or Great Britain. While he hoped that the United States authorities had learned enough from their own experience to avoid the same imperial pitfalls, his conclusions reveal that truly foregoing the center-periphery dynamic they had experienced under Britain would be difficult. For if the people of the West should ultimately decide they did not like the guiding hand of the federal government, "it would be good policy in us to get as much as we can from them first."⁷ The ambivalence that crippled innovation on so

actions, and the need to compromise with other appointees. *Ibid.*, 110-111.

6. These colonies included the Northwest Territory (present-day Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin) and the Territory South of the Ohio River (a cession from North Carolina that became present-day Tennessee). Their founding documents were the Northwest Ordinance and the Act for Governing the Territory South of the Ohio River, respectively. The Northwest Ordinance assumed three to five states would emerge from the Northwest Territory, and set loose geographical boundaries for each.

7. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 651-652.

many other issues also impacted the relationship between East and West; despite the apparent hypocrisy of following British examples in the wake of the Revolution *against* colonialism, Eastern leaders could not resist the urge to imitate. They had too much grudging respect for England's long history, and too little regard for their own ability to innovate to do otherwise.

The federal government crafted its blueprint for American colonialism in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.⁸ After the Treaty of Paris (1783), Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe formulated land ordinances relating to the territories. Along with their colleagues in the Confederation Congress, they expected to impose order on the Northwest Territory and prevent it from becoming the “sordid mess” already evident south of the Ohio River.⁹ The Northwest Ordinance, a detailed guide for territorial governance, dictated the method of appointment for officials, set terms of service, distributed various political and military powers, and laid out strict conditions and instructions for progression to statehood. Like the royal charters that had created British-American colonies along the seaboard, the Ordinance did not reflect the will of the people who lived under its terms. The individuals actually resident in the territories

8. Jack Ericson Eblen, *The First and Second United States Empires: Governors and Territorial Government, 1784-1912* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), 13. Eblen describes the ordinance as “the ‘cornerstone of American colonialism.’” Eblen’s goal in this book is a “general overview” of American imperialism, which he divides into four general phases: 1787-1848, 1848-1890s, 1890s-1920, and 1920 to the time of publication. The core of Eblen’s argument is that more attention should be paid to the period 1787-1848 (particularly the formation of governmental structures in the Old Northwest) because understanding patterns and policies in that phase is essential for any analysis of subsequent imperial phases.

9. Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 197. Thomas Jefferson’s Ordinance of 1784, while less specific in terms of imposing governmental structure on the territories, still limited the westerners’ independence. It dictated that the territories must remain subject to the national government and could not decide to separate from the United States. It made them subject to congressional permission to conduct the most basic of legislative processes, required that they share in federal debt, and was generally restrictive in terms of who could become a citizen and how they could govern themselves. As Andrew Cayton notes, the pre-1787 ordinances were a declaration of authority rather than a plan of government. See Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 104; Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson’s Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 15.

outside of the thirteen original states really had no role at all in the documents that laid out boundaries, laws, and procedures for the north and southwest territories. Settlers had no representatives in the legislature, and no voice in the debates over the passage of the Ordinance in the spring and summer of 1787. The Confederation Congress ignored the interests of farmers, traders, and missionaries, and crafted ordinances that appealed to land speculators who wished to establish settlements in the region.¹⁰ The first territorial governor, Arthur St. Clair, made it clear that in his opinion the Northwest Ordinance was designed as a charter for a colony rather than a state on equal footing with the rest.¹¹

The Confederation Congress appointed St. Clair in 1787, and he proved a quintessential representative of the imperial mindset. A veteran who had achieved some prominence in his home state of Pennsylvania, St. Clair was typical of the men who occupied power positions under the Northwest Ordinance. He and his colleagues in the territorial administration from 1787 to 1802 had much in common: close in age, they all served in the Continental Army during the Revolution, and most hailed from the New England or Middle States, had a university education, and held local office before accepting positions in the West. Although the territorial secretary and judges often disagreed with St. Clair (especially when he used his power to overrule them), these men all had similar worldviews. All of them had grown up identifying as British or British-American; they had staked their futures on the patriot cause, and their self-interest was tied up in the success of the Federalist administration and its plan for consolidating power

10. Walter T. Durham, "The Southwest and Northwest Territories, a Comparison, 1787-1796" *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 188-196.

11. See "Address of the Governor to the Legislature," in William Henry Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair, Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress, and Governor of the Northwestern Territory, with his Correspondence and Other Papers* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 2:356. (Hereafter cited as *SCP* 2).

in the West.¹² The governor and his colleagues all had backgrounds that made them ideal agents of empire for the founding government.

America's Northwest Ordinance of 1787 effectively gave St. Clair "dictatorial powers" over present-day Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.¹³ Like earlier royal governors, St. Clair (as well as the secretary and judges) was appointed rather than elected; his term lasted up to three years, although Congress reserved the right to truncate that service at its pleasure. The governor had to reside in the territory (the Ordinance guaranteed him a substantial freehold), and the Ordinance specified that he work in conjunction with three territorial judges to lay out civil and criminal laws. Otherwise, gubernatorial power had few limitations. The governor commanded the militia, and held ultimate authority over appointments, land sales, Indian relations, and the creation of counties. He possessed the power to overrule his colleagues on matters of law. Most importantly, like England's royal governors, he held the power to call or dissolve the assembly that the Northwest Ordinance promised when there were five thousand free white males in the territory. His acknowledgment being necessary to establish the number of inhabitants, St. Clair could (and did) delay the initiation of the electoral process.¹⁴

The inclusion of the process by which they could officially become states did make the new nation's territorial policy unique; however, the founding generation's own

12. St. Clair (b. 1736 – some sources state 1737 or 1734 – Scotland) retained the governorship until 1802, when President Jefferson removed him amid scandal surrounding the governor's opposition to the Enabling Act of 1802, which hastened Ohio's statehood. His primary subordinates were Secretary Winthrop Sargent (b. 1753, MA), Judge Samuel Holden Parsons (b. 1737, CT), Judge James Varnum (b. 1748, MA), Judge Rufus Putnam (b. 1738, MA), Judge George Turner (b. circa 1750, England), Judge John Cleves Symmes (b. 1742, NY), Judge Return Jonathan Meigs, Sr. (b. 1740, CT) and Judge Return Jonathan Meigs, Jr. (b. 1765, CT) – the only member of this cohort who achieved adulthood *after* 1776.

13. Eblen, *First and Second United States Empires*, 2; Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780-1825* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 26.

14. R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 272-276.

colonial experience inspired a top-down approach to its western possessions, evident in even these sections of the Ordinance. Per sections nine through twelve, once a territory's population reached five thousand "free male inhabitants of full age," it entered the second stage of development and could convene a general assembly and send a non-voting delegate to the House. A population of 60,000 free inhabitants initiated the statehood process. By including these elements in the Ordinance, its author and the members of Congress who approved it did depart from the British example. However, this departure only extended so far. James Monroe, who authored the document, based the second stage of government almost entirely on the structure of royal colonies in the British imperial model.¹⁵ Even when the population reached sufficient levels to call the general assembly, territorial residents elected only members of the lower house; the upper house consisted of five men selected by Congress from a list that the assembly submitted. The governor still possessed the power to set requirements that restricted who among the western population could be eligible to become a delegate in the assembly, and he did exercise that right in 1798-1799 when he finally had to admit that the time had come for convening the local legislature.¹⁶ Additionally, the self-determination of the future western states was circumscribed: articles four and five of the 1787 Ordinance effectively dictated the sizes and boundaries of the new states, and declared in no uncertain terms that they would remain part of the United States "forever." The former leaders of the Revolution would tolerate no revolutionaries in their own western colonies. As Governor St. Clair explained in a 1795 letter, the Northwest Ordinance had laid out its terms, and

15. Eblen, *First and Second United States Empires*, 32.

16. Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, 276.

those who accepted them by moving west “ceased to be citizens of the United States and became their subjects.”¹⁷

Like the British government in the 1760s and 1770s, Congress viewed its territorial possessions as a means to a financial end. While Parliament had tapped colonial citizens via a series of taxes and trade restrictions, congressional policy targeted the western lands as a bank from which the government could draw to pay down the large national debt. In theory, if the colonial bank could be made to produce enough funds, it might settle the important and divisive issue of establishing a system of public credit that plagued the First Congress. Hoping for just that end, Representative James Jackson of Georgia encouraged legislators to consider the resources at their disposal in February 1790:

Let us endeavor to discover whether there is an absolute necessity for adopting a funding system or not. If there is no such necessity, a short time will make it apparent; and let it be remembered what funds the United States possess in the Western Territory. The disposal of those lands may perhaps supersede the necessity of a permanent system of taxation.¹⁸

For many, the usage of lands to pay the public debt necessitated the sale of large tracts to investors with the ability to lay out significant sums of cash. In the instances where congressmen proposed the land be surveyed and sold in smaller tracts, their goal was not necessarily to make the process more accessible to the average citizen; rather, the terms of the discussion continued to be about exploiting value. For example, when the topic of the western lands came up in the House in May 1789, Thomas Scott of Pennsylvania lamented that selling only large tracts of land made it harder to find companies able to purchase. By shrinking the acreage for sale, Congress could “make the sales more certain

17. Governor St. Clair to Oliver Wolcott, Esq., Secretary of the Treasury, [No Date], 1795, in *SCP* 2:383.

18. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,182.

and numerous; and, consequently, increase the public income.” In addition, with smaller tracts sold from a land office that made grants according to the desire of the purchaser, the sales would “be conducted without expense, which will be fixed on the purchaser, so that the whole money the lands may bring will come into the treasury without deduction.” If people chose to settle on the lands without legal claim, “[w]hat then will be the case? They will not pay you money.”¹⁹ Any thought of the settlers themselves entered congressional debates only as possible sources of revenue.

Much like British policymakers had clung stubbornly to exploitative policies despite their ineffectiveness, American legislators had trouble detaching themselves from this approach to the West as the 1790s progressed. Although squatter settlements sprouted up and popular resentment of speculation intensified, New York’s John Laurance informed the Congress during its third session at the end of 1790 that “the people have a great dependence on the Western territory as a fund to extinguish their debt; it therefore becomes the duty of the Government to obtain the best price for it.” Georgia’s James Jackson agreed that the lands remained a “fund for sinking a great part of the public debt...[and] he wished not to lose sight of this object.”²⁰ That object indeed continued to be of primary importance for most congressmen: as Pennsylvanian John Swanwick stated in a debate on a land office for the Northwest Territory in February 1796, “[i]t is immaterial to us who buys the lands so [long as] we get a good price for them.” For Swanwick, arguments about making the lands suitable to emigrants themselves raised moot points. The periphery existed to add *value* to the metropolis, in this case of a purely financial nature.

19. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 428-429.

20. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 3rd Sess., 1,882, 1,884.

Congress also valued the West as a receptacle for excess populations that could become useful subjects for the federal government. At the dawn of Great Britain's imperial age, Richard Haklyut wrote *A Discourse on Western Planting* (1584); this early work articulated the British philosophy that colonies provided an outlet for excess populations, and "deliver[ed the] commonwealthe [*sic*] from multitudes of loyterers [*sic*] and idle vagabonds."²¹ Discussions about settlement in the western territories used similar language and logic, yet eastern Americans tended to look on the westward movement of people with more skepticism than Haklyut. Congressman Thomas Scott of Pennsylvania believed that the Northwest Territory's size and position, to say nothing of the fact that it contained fertile soil, meant that it "must command inhabitants, and will be peopled." Scott, however, bemoaned the inconvenient fact that the settlement of the western lands would occur no matter what the legislature decided, because the Spanish government offered such attractive terms for settlement on its side of the Mississippi. Congress simply *had* to sell its own lands, whatever the advantages or risks. Unfortunately, Scott warned, "[n]obody will emigrate...but a certain description of men, and they will go whether you hold out this encouragement to them or not." Settlement by its nature required "men of enterprising, violent, nay, discontented and turbulent spirits." Such an unwieldy population was already making its way west. Scott concluded that, although he thought "the thing wholly impracticable," it was nonetheless in "the immediate interest of Congress to direct emigration to a proper point."²² He resolved that the government in Philadelphia should do everything in its power to impose order on this

21. Richard Haklyut, "A Discourse on Western Planting, written in the year 1584," *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, Maine Historical Collections, 2nd ser. (Cambridge, MA: Press of John Wilson and Son for the Maine Historical Society, 1877), 36, Internet Archive.

22. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 649.

“object of concern.” Although Scott appreciated the “healthy and agreeable” environment the territory offered (making his comments predictive of the value ascribed to the West’s landscapes and physical attributes in the nineteenth century), he still spoke of its worth in commercial terms rather than in the romantic language that later generations used in discussing the frontier.²³ Such pragmatic and exploitative discourse had roots in British imperial philosophies like that which Haklyut first articulated in the sixteenth century.

The influence of British policy in the post-colonial United States appeared in the first U.S. government’s “imperial” take on speculation in the West.²⁴ Speculation began before the ink dried on the 1787 Ordinance. As early as April of that same year, Secretary of War Henry Knox informed Congress that if it did not set aside lands in the territory specifically for soldiers of the late war, veterans would have little hope of ever competing with rich speculators; any refusal to dedicate specific land for veterans inevitably pitted those “unfortunate men” against the rich.²⁵ Knox knew that the wealthy held advantage over families of modest means when it came to land policy in the territories. During a debate on establishing an office for western land sales during the First Congress, Pennsylvania Congressman George Clymer pointed out that many individuals had already purchased large tracts from the Confederation Congress. Speculators who bought

23. Ibid., 646-647. Scott did express some sense that the western lands were important in upholding America’s honor; however, whereas later generations romanticized the West in various ways and connected its landscapes and inhabitants with a distinct national identity (discussed in Chapters Five and Six), Scott is focused on the fact that the lands offered the government a way of dealing with its debt and a means by which it could compensate the soldiers who had served so honorably in the Revolution. The Government could avoid having to “send them to the wilderness as outcasts” by creating an apparatus by which the lands were settled legally and with much oversight. Ibid., 648.

24. Kenneth P. Bailey, *The Ohio Company Papers, 1753-1817: Being Primarily Papers of the ‘Suffering Traders’ of Pennsylvania* (Arcata, CA and Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1947), vi. The Suffering Traders consisted largely of lesser-known individuals who had lost money and merchandise to hostile Indians in the early stages of the Company’s existence. They were not technically affiliated with the early national Ohio Company of Associates.

25. [Letter of Secretary at War respecting lands for the late army], War Office, April 26, 1787, in United States, Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. print office, 1904-37), 32:242.

big with the intent of parceling the land out for profit had already gained influence over government policy by the time Clymer spoke in 1789.²⁶

One such speculative entity was the Ohio Company of Associates (OCA), which became the post-colonial American government's instrument of choice for securing the Northwest Territory. The original Ohio Company had its roots in the British colonial government, having been "Britain's favored instrument for securing the Ohio Valley."²⁷ That first Ohio Company consisted of wealthy and powerful men as well as ambitious traders, acting with the authority of the royal government in order to acquire, survey, and settle western lands for a profit. Although the French and Indian War and then the Revolution prevented the original Ohio Company from achieving that end, in 1786 the American OCA formed with almost identical intentions. This second group sought preferred access to *purchase* lands as opposed to the former's desire for a royal grant. Like the original Ohio Company, however, the American business model was to acquire large tracts of land out from under less affluent potential purchasers (including frontier dwellers already hoping to retain lands on which they had made improvements long before the federal government had any clear control) and to sell them to settlers at a profit. Just as the London Company and the Plymouth Company before had both enjoyed the patronage of English royals and had organized to settle far-off lands for profit and the glory of the mother country, the Ohio Company of Associates acted as an agent of empire legitimized by preferential treatment from a Congress set on getting whatever value it could from the western lands.

26. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 431.

27. Bailey, *The Ohio Company Papers*, 7.

Most OCA members attempted to keep their business dealings private, indicating that regardless of how the Confederation Congress received their applications, the public might not approve.²⁸ They had good reason for such secrecy. Gaining the lands they sought from the government required “considerable maneuvering and less than honest or ethical dealings by many congressmen.” In granting the Associates 1.5 million acres in the Northwest Territory on October 27, 1787 for a set price of \$1.00 per acre, the Congress openly laid the groundwork for exploitative land speculation: it allowed the Associates to pay with government securities, much depreciated, and they ended up paying only about eight and a half cents per acre in the end.²⁹ As a result, large-scale landlords ruled significant swaths of territory in the West. Despite a variety of congressional rhetoric regarding equality of opportunity in land distribution, in reality the legacy of colonialism made this type of system all too familiar and easily justified. Manasseh Cutler, the OCA’s emissary to the federal government in 1787, told the Board of Treasury in New York that compliance with the company’s wishes offered the government an opportunity for securing and improving the value of the western lands, and few in the Confederation Congress would have disagreed with him.³⁰

The actual creation and layout of townships and counties in the Northwest Territory fell to the governor “as circumstances may require,” opening the process up to patronage and conflicts of interest similar to those which plagued British imperial administration.³¹ Prior to the Revolution, Englishmen responsible for representing

28. *Ibid.*, vi.

29. Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, 157.

30. Manasseh Cutler and Winthrop Sargent to the Board of Treasury, New York, July 26, 1787, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter, vol. 2, *Papers Relating to the Period of the First Stage of the Government of the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1791* (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 63. (Hereafter cited as *TPUS 2*).

31. “Text of the Northwest Ordinance,” *Archiving Early America*.

American colonists' views in Parliament often simultaneously held patronage posts in the New World; they acted in their own self-interest rather than zealously advocating for colonial interests.³² The men charged with exercising impartial jurisdiction over the western colonies in the 1790s also had clear conflicts of interest that the government in Philadelphia disregarded. Because the Northwest Ordinance provided the governor with almost unlimited power to control appointments, positions overseeing land sales and settling local land disputes were subject to the governor's whims. Yet Governor St. Clair himself expressed concerns over the possible conflicts of interest implicit in the land policy that the Northwest Ordinance outlined, made worse when Congress granted large tracts to speculators in the OCA. Writing to Thomas Jefferson from Marietta in 1794, St. Clair pointed out that the OCA and another speculative entity, the Miami Company, had already bought up the "principle settlements" in the territory. The leadership of both land companies, he thought, would be grounds for "endless disputes" because both General Rufus Putnam (the "active director" of the OCA) and John Cleves Symmes (the "principle, if not the sole, agent" in the Miami Company) served as judges in the territorial Supreme Court! The people clearly "ha[d] but a slender security for the impartiality of their decisions" when it came to any land disputes.³³ Other power brokers in the territorial administration also had conflicts of interest: Secretary Winthrop Sargent and Judge James Varnum both helped found the OCA. These men, all federal appointees, proved that the founding government replicated rather than renounced the cronyism of British imperial rule.

32. During the Stamp Act trouble in 1765, for example, the emissaries sent to advocate for the colonies regarding the Stamp Act were far from disinterested parties. Merrill Jensen details how each of the men charged with being delegates for colonial interests held patronage posts or had their own personal reasons for representing colonial interests less than vigorously and even recommended themselves for jobs enforcing the act once it was passed. See Jensen, *The Founding*, 61, 65.

33. Governor St. Clair to Thomas Jefferson, Marietta, December 14, 1794, in *SCP* 2:333.

Both tract size and land sales policies in the western American colonies favored wealthy speculators and friends of the administration, much like the royal land grant process in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most individuals and families who resided on the frontier when the 1787 Ordinance took effect had little hope of ever possessing the resources to purchase the lands they had lived on and improved for years or even decades. For both long-time and would-be settlers, access to the capital needed to buy the tracts that the government or speculative organizations like the Ohio Company of Associates offered was difficult if not impossible. Although some members of Congress argued in favor of smaller land tracts over the course of the 1790s, the need to make money from land sales overwhelmed any reservations they had about tract size. Laws respecting land sales repeatedly established tract sizes that were much too large for a frontier farming family to acquire, and certainly not within any short amount of time. The 1791 law for establishing a land office set the price for U.S. lands at \$.25 per acre but refused to issue credit for any quantity less than 23,000 acres. Even if one wished to take on a tract of such magnitude, a purchaser had to put down one-fourth of the price up front and “sufficient security (other than the land sold) given for the payment of the residue within two years.” Although settlers who made improvements did get the right to 640 acres, they had to pay the per acre price set by Congress, and of course such a sum of cash on hand was uncommon for the subsistence farmers living on the nation’s borders. A 1799 “Petition to the Congress by Citizens of the Territory” complained of a 1796 law in which “one Half of the said lands are directed to be sold in too large Tracts as they Contain 5[,]120 Acres exclusive of reservations.” Surely, the petitioners reasoned, Congress understood that “few persons will therefore be in a Situation to purchase any of

these Tracts on the terms they are to be sold.” The law that this particular petition denounced not only retained huge tracts, it required the highest bidder for a tract to make an immediate deposit of one twentieth the price and then half the total amount within thirty days. The law left no room for late payments or hard times, and so they concluded, “your petitioners see the impossibility of becoming purchasers on these terms.”³⁴

Congress did not initially envision the West as a haven for freeholders, but as a source of income from speculators who could afford large tracts, and so western grievances found few sympathetic ears in the capital.

Because authorities in the centers of power saw little reason to view the West as anything but a colony for generating revenue, those on the periphery suffered. Small-scale purchasers contended with unscrupulous speculators who, whether by design or due to confusion surrounding land survey and distribution, sold them a bill of goods. Spanish agents found many Americans on the frontiers willing to leave U.S. territory and actually move into lands under the control of a European monarch because speculation left so little for the average settler. Kentuckians in particular were hit hard and hit early. In 1789 Governor St. Clair warned President Washington that many Kentucky residents had been “disappointed in obtaining Land, by the monopolizing Spirit that seized the first Adventurers, and now hold it at Price beyond the reach of the Others.”³⁵ Even the imperious St. Clair sometimes took pity on families vulnerable to deception and currently considered squatters under the law. When he learned that territorial judge John Cleves Symmes had claimed and sold lands well outside the scope of his tract, leaving purchasers with meaningless deeds, St. Clair expressed outrage. What could be done, he

34. “Petition to Congress by Citizens of the Territory,” [no date], 1799, in *TPUS* 3:52-53.

35. Governor St. Clair to the President [August, 1789], in *TPUS* 2:210.

asked in a letter to Alexander Hamilton, but to publish a proclamation against further intrusions and hope for the best. “To remove those [settlers], if it could be done, would be ruin to them, and they are innocent, not willful, trespassers.” Those whom speculators hoodwinked had few options. St. Clair’s proclamation in this case informed settlers (now deemed squatters) that they were “liable to be dispossessed as intruders and have their habitations destroyed.”³⁶ The system for land distribution in the territories simply did not favor actual residents. As one petition to Congress explained, the policies of the federal government left the men and women who toiled on the frontier to scratch settlements out of the wilderness powerless to outbid the “unfeeling Land-Jobber or Speculator, who perhaps has been preying on the Vitals of his Country.” This vulnerability to exploitation left western settlers in a situation very similar to that of disenfranchised American colonists in the years leading up to the Revolution.

Westerners also experienced the founding government’s imperialism in the form of federal laws passed to govern the territories. The founding generation utilized a seemingly incongruous mix of approaches for controlling the West, but they all mimicked British imperial policy as it had evolved during the eighteenth century. On one hand, the new federal government applied an exploitative, supervisory, and authoritarian approach that resembled the more heavy-handed course Britain took in the years following the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. In other ways, however, American colonial policy in its nascent form replicated the more permissive and disinterested approach that characterized the “old” British Empire, in which the colonial relationship was one of simple economic convenience and salutary neglect.³⁷ The “old”

36. Governor St. Clair to Alexander Hamilton, Fort Washington, May 25, 1791, in *SCP* 2:210-211.

37. For a succinct description of the “old” versus “new” British imperial approaches, see Edward Watts,

style is evident in territorial officials' negligence and frequent absences; the more hands-on managerial style may be seen in the territories' lack of legislative autonomy, the dictatorial behavior of authorities like Arthur St. Clair, and the brutal tactics the U.S. military used for forced removal.

Like some royal colonial officials before the Revolution, territorial officeholders could be accused of lack of attention to their responsibilities in the West. During the British administrations of Robert Walpole and Thomas Pelham-Holles, the Duke of Newcastle (1721-1762), patronage dynamics heavily influenced British imperial policy creating an atmosphere of ambivalence and corruption among colonial officeholders in America. Royal governors often held power for a decade or more (Sir William Gooch of Virginia reigned from 1727-1749), and frequently ignored local duties because the best way to keep their patronage positions was to please interests in London, not the colonies. Many government appointees, from customs collectors to patent officers, remained in England and allowed deputies to carry out the quotidian charges of their office.³⁸ In direct response to this problem, George Grenville's policies in the 1760s attempted to abolish the practice of commissioners and other colonial officials holding posts for long periods of time without ever living in or even visiting British-America.³⁹ The founding American government confronted the same problem among those it charged with representing federal authority in the West.

Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 7.

38. Steele, "The Anointed," 117. While this period of "salutary neglect" is often identified as a time when colonial assemblies gained power and began operating more autonomously, it is important to note that the American colonies in the western territories did not even have the right to assemblies initially. The Southwest's first assembly convened in 1794, four years after its creation, and the Northwest Territory was not granted one by Governor St. Clair until 1799.

39. See Jensen, *The Founding*, 46-47.

Complaints about St. Clair, in particular, demonstrate that absenteeism plagued the territorial government. Various colleagues and subordinates charged him with a long list of offenses, one of which was “[w]anting application to his official duties, which lie neglected from year to year.”⁴⁰ Secretary Winthrop Sargent agreed with this assessment. As acting governor during the executive’s absences, the secretary expressed exasperation with the fact that St. Clair frequently went missing for long periods, and on occasion the two men did not know exactly who was where, or which of them was officially in charge at a given time. In 1794, St. Clair and Sargent, both chagrined, accidentally bumped into each other in Philadelphia.⁴¹ Others in the territorial administration acted similarly; the governor had to appeal to President Washington himself about the errant judges upon whom rested the progress of territorial legislation and judicial affairs. Washington made mention of the fact that the “absence of the Judges had embarrassed [St. Clair] a great deal” in a January 1791 letter, and knew that the governor had resorted to executive order after the judges failed to appear in Ohio’s Cahokia settlement at the appointed time for passing laws.⁴² Judges John Cleves Symmes and Rufus Putnam were both absent often and Judge George Turner had to be ordered back to his post several times in the fall of 1792.⁴³ By appointing Arthur St. Clair (a military man with a dictatorial leadership style and a tendency to spend more time in Philadelphia than at his post), and territorial judges with a similar penchant for lengthy eastbound excursions, Congress weakened American authority in the West and left its residents feeling neglected and resentful. In September

40. Judge Symmes to the President, [January 23, 1802], in *TPUS* 3:206.

41. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 45.

42. George Washington to Arthur St. Clair, Philadelphia, January 2, 1791, in Arthur G. Mitten Collection, 1755-1936, OMB 0080, Folder 18 (oversized items), INHS.

43. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 45.

1796 (from Wayne County in Detroit), Sargent complained bitterly to Secretary of State

Timothy Pickering:

I felt it, Sir, as a truth, severe, as extraordinary...whilst at Michilimackinac that the [B]ritish crown was actually then paying one Governour [*sic*] of the Island who is somewhere in England, Scotland, or Ireland – and the United States another [governor], absent; the Lord knows where, at the same time I was constrained without any, the smallest provision or consideration to exercise the functions and discharge all the duties of the same.”⁴⁴

Sargent’s exasperation reveals just how closely U.S. colonial policy resembled the late mother country’s example; much like royally-appointed officials before them, territorial administrators whose positions depended on having friends in the capital had little reason to spend time on the outskirts of the empire.

While salutary neglect redux did plague the West, authoritarian and arbitrary policy that mimicked British imperial rule after 1763 also featured prominently in territorial governance. For example, the territories had only negligible legislative autonomy; the Northwest Ordinance required them to conform to the legislative example set by their parent-states, leaving the governor and judges unable to adapt laws to the specific needs of the West. Just as requiring certain laws in the American colonies to pass through the English Privy Council allowed Britain to centralize legislative control, the federal government’s prohibition of laws without precedent kept a tight rein on its territories.⁴⁵ The government completely disregarded the fact that territorial status, lack of developed settlements and infrastructure, and the instability of the borderland might

44. Winthrop Sargent to Timothy Pickering, September 30, 1796, Detroit Wayne County, in Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Edition, Reel 1, OHS.

45. For a description of some legal measures taken to restrict colonial autonomy, see Jensen, *The Founding*, 20. In addition, cases from colonial supreme courts could be sent before the Privy Council for appeal and there could be royal review of acts passed by colonial legislatures. Laws in all colonies except Connecticut and Rhode Island were subject to royal veto. Similarly, British tactics for emphasizing the colonial status of Ireland in the eighteenth century also included the Declaratory Act of 1720, which gave London the authority to legislate for Ireland. Steele, “The Anointed,” 106, 111.

necessitate a set of laws tailored to the circumstances; instead, Congress required the territories to adopt only laws already on the books in eastern states. In 1788 Judges Parsons and Varnum wrote to St. Clair explaining that they had questions “of serious magnitude” regarding laws for the territory. Was it true, they asked, that they “were *literally* confined to the laws of the old States” in making their own local ones? They concluded, as many territorial residents did, that this decree was ill-advised. Varnum and Parsons argued that the states’ laws had undergone revisions since their “infancy,” and been “conformed...to their present situation.” How could Congress expect a new colony to make do with laws designed for developed eastern communities, the judges asked, rather than ones customized for borderlands issues like Indian relations, security, and maintaining resident loyalty?⁴⁶ Their dismay indicates how unrealistic it was for the government in Philadelphia to issue mandates requiring the West to march in lock-step with the East. Nevertheless St. Clair, a quintessential emissary of imperial authority, rose to the challenge with characteristic vigor. The Congress, he wrote back, would certainly not “suffer [them] to make new [laws.]” They were *only* a colony after all, and congressional paternalism came with the “kindest intentions.” Eastern laws, “stamped by experience” would prevent the colony from accidentally crafting legislation that “might not be ‘comformable [*sic*] to the Constitution of the United States; or inconsistent with Republican Principles.’”⁴⁷ Congress, St. Clair said, chose the laws it “thought proper” for its colonies, and westerners could rest assured they would be “attended to with the greatest care.” If territorial laws ever did become too “innovative,” Congress did not

46. Judges Parsons and Varnum to Governor St. Clair, Marietta, July 31, 1788, in *SCP* 2:69. Italics in original.

47. Copy of a Letter to the Judges [Parsons and Varnum], Expressing the Governour’s Sentiments upon what Ought to be the Governing Principles, in the Adoption of Laws for this Territory, Fort Harmar, August 2, 1788, in *TPUS* 3:276,

hesitate to repeatedly overrule them.⁴⁸ Like the British Parliament, the American legislature disregarded the realities of life in its territorial possessions and insisted instead on imposing law and order from above.

When Congress did leave territorial authorities free to exert control over their jurisdictions, Governor St. Clair often did so in an extremely imperious manner, issuing proclamations and infringing on the liberties of residents, thus reinforcing their dependent colonial status within the United States. Several laws passed in 1790 exemplify the autocratic nature of St. Clair's territorial government. A law to suppress gaming for money or other property went into effect; residents were barred from discharging firearms at certain times and in certain places; and St. Clair banned the use of intoxicating liquor. When the governor added judges to the court of Hamilton County in 1793, he arrogantly changed the language of their appointment to read that their tenure would endure not during "good behavior," but instead "during [his] pleasure."⁴⁹ In another instance, St. Clair passed a law forbidding the importation of untaxed spirits, effectively compelling territorial residents to help enforce the whiskey tax through embargo (even though he did not believe that the whiskey excise law extended to the territory as such). After all, it was his prerogative to implement legislation to punish recalcitrant subjects who had become the principle market for illegally distilled spirits: he wrote, "it is already time that the People of this Country should be put in Mind that they are not yet a part of

48. St. Clair reads backs from this address when he speaks to the first territorial legislature organized in 1795, reminding them of his feelings about the infant state of the territory. Address of the Governor to the Legislature, in *SCP* 2:357; Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 46.

49. Jeffrey P. Brown, "William McMillan and the Conservative Cincinnati Jeffersonians," *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 117-136, 121.

the Union, but dependent upon it.”⁵⁰ St. Clair’s language leaves no doubt that he saw himself as ruling over a colony.

By the time the Ohio Territory approached statehood, complaints about Governor St. Clair’s dictatorial behavior had piled up, leaving him open to criticism similar to that launched at Grenville in the 1760s. Territorial judge William Goforth complained to President Jefferson in January 1802 that the western governor possessed too much arbitrary authority, saying that St. Clair was “clothed with all the power of a British Nabob.” Goforth’s letter speaks volumes about the extent to which the American government had allowed their own colonial experience to overshadow territorial policy: “if any man or the friends of any man wished their country to be benefitted by his services either in the Legislative Council or as an agent to Congress, to use the old Colonial dialect, it would be prudent for him or them to be on ex[ceed]ing good terms with his Excellency.”⁵¹ Judge Symmes also wrote to Jefferson about the governor in 1802, bypassing a customary intermediary (Secretary of State James Madison) because his missive was of such a “delatory nature.” “By constitution a despot, as well as from long Imperious habits of commanding, [St. Clair] has become unsufferably [*sic*] arbitrary,” Symmes wrote. The judge’s letter paints a picture of a tyrannical magistrate: rather than caring for the prosperity of the territory under his control, the governor insisted that “his will is law;” he blocked measures that did not suit him personally or benefit his family or favorites; and “[h]e is at war with those who do not approach him with adulation on their tongue.” The judge called St. Clair illiberal, ungrateful, seditious, invasive of citizens’ rights, neglectful of his duties, and destructively conceited. Symmes’

50. Governor St. Clair to Alexander Hamilton, Cincinnati, County of Hamilton, August 9, 1793, in *SCP* 2:317-318 (also found in *TPUS* 2:458).

51. William Goforth to the President, [January 5, 1802], in *TPUS* 3:198.

pleas to Jefferson echo those of Americans who believed that their status as British citizens would earn the forbearance of Parliament: “[a]lthough in a colonial situation, the people are proud of the right they have, to resort to the general government, as they now do, for relief from...[this] oppressive and undue exercise of the executive power.”⁵² Much like British-American colonials existed as second-class citizens within the empire, however, the structures of territorial governance placed power in the hands of rulers like St. Clair and made westerners subject to his whims.

Although President Jefferson agreed with the accusations leveled against St. Clair and promised to advocate for Ohio’s statehood, the governor continued to antagonize frontier residents and his fellow administrators as the movement from territory to state progressed. The first general assembly in 1799 gave St. Clair veto power and the authority to call or prorogue the lower house of the legislature; he vetoed more than one bill that would have restricted his power. According to St. Clair’s enemies, he used his veto power to manipulate the creation of counties in a way that furthered his agenda of dividing the territory at the Scioto and Wabash rivers in order to delay statehood and retain a Federalist ascendancy. He even considered proroguing the assembly in 1801 if it called for statehood. Prominent Ohioans Nathaniel Massie and Thomas Worthington, who believed St. Clair to be a tyrant, worked diligently to discredit him throughout the territory. By the end of 1801 St. Clair, like Governor Thomas Hutchinson or any number of Stamp Act supporters in 1765, was being burned in effigy by angry residents.⁵³

52. Judge Symmes to the President, [January 23, 1802], in *Ibid.*, 205-207. There was long-standing bad blood between Symmes and St. Clair dating back to disagreements over Symmes’s disputed land purchase in the early years of settlement.

53. Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, 275-281. St. Clair continued in his belief that the territory was in need of colonial government well past the time when the Ordinance had prescribed progression toward equal statehood. He also benefited from his position of executive, something that would disappear when the colonial phase ended. He continued to lobby against statehood supporters to the last, trying to block votes

In addition to empowering arbitrary rulers, the founding government also replicated British imperialism in its willingness to forcefully restrict the movements of its subjects. To make the territories profitable, the West and its residents needed to be physically controlled. The British government had faced the same necessity. Prior to the Revolution, England sought to control colonists' movements and exert strict regulation over land acquisition to maintain a fragile peace with Indians and among rival interests in contested border regions. To do so, Parliament curtailed white westward expansion and reallocated control over Indian relations (*the* key issue on the frontiers) from the colonies to the metropolitan authorities. A 1763 proclamation forbade encroachments on Indian land and required that land sales be made only with royal permission rather than through local offices. The proclamation ordered all colonists who had already settled on lands placed out of bounds ““forthwith to remove themselves.””⁵⁴ The founding government in the United States, confronted with the same problems and harboring an identical desire for peace at almost any cost, employed similar strategies.

The federal government's tactics for restricting westerners' movements could be even more authoritarian than those of Britain before the Revolution. While British troops “[o]ccasionally...drove [illegal settlers] east of the mountains” in the wake of the 1763 proclamation, the founding American government consistently exerted strong-arm tactics

at the November 1802 constitutional convention and attempting to convince the delegates that most Ohioans did not even want statehood. *Ibid.*, 281.

54. Jensen, *The Founding*, 58. British regulars had also been employed in putting down the tenant farmer uprisings in New York in the mid-1760s, and royally appointed Governor Tryon helped crush the backcountry Regulator movement in North Carolina (though he acted with the support of low country American leaders and this was not simply an external imperial mandate to control the rebels). Like St. Clair to some degree, Tryon sympathized with the complaints of the Regulators about court corruption, speculation, and the rich amassing land and wealth at the expense of the poor; but also like St. Clair he had a job to do, and, when he could not reform the problems, led an armed force against them. *Ibid.*, 29-31.

against the frontier people in the early years of settlement.⁵⁵ Even before the 1787 Ordinance, the federal government used force to control its colonial subjects who circumvented the official land grant process. On June 1, 1785, General Josiah Harmar wrote to Secretary of War Henry Knox from Fort McIntosh in Pennsylvania, requesting further instructions regarding the numerous illegal settlers already residing on U.S. lands west of the Allegheny Mountains. Frustrated by the slowness of Congress (something that became a habit for the legislature when it came to addressing western issues), Harmar complained:

I have written, some time since, upon the subject, requesting particular orders how to conduct myself, as it is out of my power to sweep them further than the distance of one hundred and twenty or one hundred and fifty miles from hence. This is a matter of so much importance, that perhaps you may judge it necessary to remind Congress of it.⁵⁶

Four months later, Harmar wrote again to recount that he had successfully removed the intruders from the public lands. Sufficiently intimidated by Harmar's military presence, the settlers "sent up to [him] a most humble representation in behalf of the whole, purporting that they were convinced that they had behaved disorderly." The petitioners begged him for a "last indulgence," to allow them to stay long enough to gather their crops after which they promised to leave immediately. "Lenity," he "thought to be out of the question, and...directed Captain [John] Doughty, on his way down [river from Fort McIntosh] to burn and destroy any remaining cabins between McIntosh and Muskingum." If settlers had the audacity to return, which he doubted, Harmar was

55. Eblen, *First and Second United States Empires*, 42; Jensen, *The Founding*, 59. Although the British Commissioners of Trade authorized the forceful removal of colonists who had migrated west of the Alleghenies illegally, those orders had "little effect" according to Jack M. Sosin. The British troops were unwilling to use brute force to evict squatters; when they evacuated settlers from Red Stone Creek near the Monongahela River, they did so without resorting to physical violence. Jack M. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 108-109.

56. Colonel Harmar to the Secretary of War [Knox], Fort McIntosh, June 1, 1785, in *SCP* 2:6-7.

hopeful that he could drive them out again from his position at Muskingum.⁵⁷ Although British authorities had occasionally pursued harsh strategies to check Americans' movements, Captain Doughty's ruthless assault and Harmar's hardness are striking.⁵⁸

Even as the new nation acquired its Constitution, and eastern citizens struggled to distinguish their society from that of England, the federal government continued to assault its western subjects just as Britain had exercised force against recalcitrant Bostonians in the 1770s. Having overestimated the impression he had made on the "intruders" in 1785, Harmar wrote again to Henry Knox in 1786 that a parcel of illegal settlers had taken up unsanctioned residence elsewhere in the Ohio Country. Harmar dispatched Captain John Francis Hamtramck posthaste with orders to "make diligent search for them, and destroy their dwellings."⁵⁹ Harmar's communications made their way to Congress. Knox gave a report in 1787 predicting that usurpers of public lands could cause severe harm to the nation; he recommended action in no uncertain terms. The "supreme authority" had to "inflict the calamities, necessarily attendant on an abrupt and forcible removal of men, women, and children."⁶⁰ That same year the Committee on Indian Relations issued a report that explained government measures to forcefully regulate the white settlers' dealings with natives in the territory. Anyone found entering the Northwest Territory without a proper license to be among the Indians would "be arrested by the officers commanding the federal troops, confined not exceeding [eight] days, and sent to the frontiers of one of the States and for a second or third offense shall be liable to be Whipped not exceeding forty stripes." The British government had

57. Colonel Harmar to the Secretary of War, Philadelphia, October 22, 1785, in *Ibid.*, 12. Fort McIntosh was in far western Pennsylvania. Doughty's path of destruction would have taken him southwest, from the fort toward the Muskingum River in east-central Ohio.

58. Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 44.

59. Colonel Harmar to the Secretary of War, Ft. Pitt, July 12, 1786, in *SCP* 2:14.

60. Report of the Secretary at War Relative to Intruders on Public Lands, in *TPUS* 2:27.

attempted to implement law and order within the same area by a similar provision in the Mutiny Act of 1765.⁶¹ Operating within the habits of a post-colonial state, America's founding government chose the same path as its former mother country to solve the same problems along its frontiers twenty years later.

The federal government struggled desperately to create the stable and well-regulated West envisioned in the ordinances of the 1780s; but reminiscent of British soldiers in Boston in the 1770s, American policies actually diminished order in the borderlands. The people who had been violently evicted by the military remained in the territory, creating a discontented populace with tenuous attachment to the United States. After the troops "burnt the cabins, broke down the fences, and tore up the potato patches, but three hours [later]...[the settlers] returned again, repaired the damage, and...settled on the land in open defiance of the authority of the Union."⁶² As territorial judge Rufus Putnam warned President Washington in February 1791, it "must not be forgot that numbers of these [western] people were driven off by the federal Troops at the point of the Bayonet, their houses burnt & corn destroyed." When, not if, those people and others "of like principles...return like a flood & Seize the country to them Selves" the United States would have to expend a good deal of time and money bringing them to obedience.⁶³ The brutal tactics to which Putnam referred are shocking from a government composed of former colonial revolutionaries. The founding government not only replicated imperial Britain's methods for restricting Americans' movements, it took brute force further by attacking its citizens when no state of war or open rebellion existed. In

61. Report of Committee: Indian Relations, July 26, 1787, in *Ibid.*, 57, n. 53.

62. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 430.

63. Judge Putnam to the President, Marietta, February 28, 1791, in *TPUS* 2:339. Putnam warned specifically against government failure to check the Indians and begin protecting the settlers instead of harassing them. The government's unwillingness to really solve the Indian issue in favor of white settlers rankled many and will be discussed further in Chapters Three and Four.

this respect, the new nation's colonialism more closely resembled the harsh repression England exercised against another colonial possession, Ireland.⁶⁴

Thus early national territorial policy reflected the founding generation's post-colonial status. Instead of valuing the West as a place where Americans could affirm their independence and craft a national identity, eastern leaders and territorial officials simply reproduced British imperial policy and applied it to their own peripheries. Many members of the founding government, having lived under British colonial rule, did not have the experience or the insight necessary to reject the former mother country's example; they could not anticipate that a developing backwater with no metropolis and uncouth residents on the outskirts of the nation would invert the colonial dichotomy. Eastern authorities understood the West in colonial terms because they had not yet learned to speak outside the parameters of that discourse. As Washington wrote in 1785:

There is nothing which binds one Country, or one State to another, but interest. Without this cement, the Western inhabitants (which more than probably will be composed in a great degree of Foreigners) can have no predeliction [*sic*] for us; and a commercial connection is the only tie we can have upon them.⁶⁵

In Philadelphia, the seat of the young government and the center of a settler society stretching its wings, the West was valuable as a source of revenue, a receptacle for population, and a buffer zone against other European powers on the continent. Americans on the frontiers in turn understood that they were in a colonial state, and the idea of an

64. During the 1560s and 1570s, multiple British expeditions attempted to solidify control over parts of Ireland. To assert sovereignty over regions considered strategically significant and populated by what were termed "unreliable" Gaelic Irish, force was the instrument of choice. Legal title trumped squatters' rights in the logic behind this colonization strategy as well. Residents could be painted as "trespassers" and "could be forcibly removed with impunity." Irish were driven from their homes and left to freeze or starve to death, and in some cases slaughtered in large numbers. See Nicholas Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (October 1973): 575-598. Quotes appear on pp. 579-580.

65. George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, Mount Vernon, August 22, 1785, in *The Papers of George Washington*, Founders Online, National Archive.

imperial center applied more accurately to cities along the eastern seaboard, not London.⁶⁶ Consequently, the problem of detaching from the former mother country that plagued the founding generation in Philadelphia and elsewhere was a non-issue for westerners who remained subject to distant and disinterested republican masters still. Federal policy confirmed that fact; eastern condescension emphasized it; the divergence of eastern and western interests was the outgrowth of it.

Mother States, Infant Communities, and Adopted Children

Cultural perceptions bolstered the colonial relationship between East and West. The founding generation's understanding of what it meant to be colonial was complex. As settler-subjects, they had filled a dual role within the British empire, they were simultaneously the valued agents of imperial power and distant second-class citizens with questionable loyalties. As scholar Linda Colley states in her study of eighteenth-century Britons, people at the imperial center found it very difficult to identify with their colonial brethren, even if they retained English heritage, language, and folkways. Americans, geographically remote, perched precariously near the edge of civilization in proximity to a wilderness populated by "savages," were "mysterious and paradoxical people...engagingly similar yet irritatingly different." While residents of England might construe these qualities as intriguing in some instances, they also thought Americans had

66. Edward Watts, "Margin or Middle-Border?: Hamlin Garland, Henry Lawson and Post-Colonialism," *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 150. Watts finds evidence of post-colonial malaise in Midwestern writers of the late-nineteenth century like Hamlin Garland and Henry Lawson. If this is correct, one possible cause would be the fact that the "frontier" of myth that became so central to American identity moved beyond the Midwest quickly after the conclusion of the War of 1812. The Midwest was left behind, a region that had endured the founding generation's emulation of British colonial structures before the reverence for westward movement and pioneering gripped later generations after 1815.

“an element of menace,” and posed a vague undefined threat.⁶⁷ Colonial discourse that portrayed Americans as inferior and uncultured continued to be a source of shame even after independence. The founding generation in the East viewed westerners in a similar way, not because easterners were hypocritical, but because they had a limited frame of reference for how to treat colonized persons, and because casting *others* as uncivilized helped lessen the sting of British disdain. Instead of romanticizing the simplicity and individualism that characterized the frontier spirit, therefore, many Americans in the period 1787-1812 took a dim view of those qualities: westerners took on the role of children in the colonial parent-child relationship; eastern observers portrayed settlers as incompetent, uncivilized, and a liability rather than an asset; the image of the “white savage” revealed that the founding generation replicated British methods for distinguishing civilized citizens from primitive subjects. Settlers themselves confirmed their colonial status by acknowledging that they had become dependents within an American empire. Thus post-colonial cultural perceptions limited the role westerners could play in national identity formation in the decades immediately following the Revolution.⁶⁸

Frontier dwellers became children in the colonial parent-child dichotomy while eastern authorities took on the role of the paternalistic adult, thus replicating rather than

67. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 134.

68. Kariann Yokota discusses the cultural marginalization of frontier residents as something that developed in the nineteenth century. To support this assessment, however, Yokota cites statements from Timothy Dwight (b. 1752) and Jedediah Morse (b. 1761), two men of the founding generation who were elderly by the time she quotes them (Dwight was actually dead by the time the cited volume one of *Travels in New England and New York* was published in 1821). Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 237-238.

rejecting the relationship Great Britain had formed with her American colonies.⁶⁹ The notion that British-Americans were children in the care of a benevolent parent state existed from the beginning of new-world colonization and intensified when the colonists rebelled in the 1770s. Britain's Earl of Sandwich referred angrily to the colonists as "ungrateful and undutiful children" when he spoke in the House of Lords in 1776, and his colleague the Earl of Carlisle expounded on the obligations those "base and unnatural children" owed to "the parent state." The Earl of Manchester deplored the "saucy freedom of high-minded sons" and "American children."⁷⁰ The words of these members of Parliament show that the colonial relationship the founding generation experienced was a familial one in which both the metropolis and the periphery had set roles and responsibilities. After the Revolution, American legislators and cultural commentators in the East needed to distance themselves from the weak position Americans had occupied as children within the British empire. Unable to assert themselves independently, however, easterners found another group to take on the role of child, thus creating a new binary in which they held all the power. If authors and legislators presented the American West as childlike, then the East appeared mature and adult by contrast; if the frontier was a wilderness filled with persons in need of supervisory governance, it stood to reason that

69. The colonial "child" or "children" is a discursive construct. In colonialism, the figure of the child simultaneously represents an innocent being in need of protection and an ignorant dependent in need of discipline. The colonial child has the potential to evolve, yet he is primitive relative to his parent. Jo-Ann Wallace, "De-scribing the Water-Babies: 'The Child' in Post-Colonial Theory," in *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality*, ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 171-184.

70. *The Parliamentary Register; Or, History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Lords; Containing an Account of the Most Interesting Speeches, Motions, Protests, Petitions, & c. During the Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great Britain: with a list of the Acts Passed in this Session*, vol. 7 (London: Printed for J. Almon, 1776), 2, Google eBook; *The Parliamentary Register; Or, History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Lords; Containing an Account of the Most Interesting Speeches, Motions, Protests, Petitions, & c. During the Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great Britain: with such Petitions to the King, as relate to the Proceedings of the House; And a list of the Acts Passed in this Session*, vol. 5 (London: Printed for J. Almon, 1776), 259, Google eBook.

the eastern power structures represented ordered civilization dutifully shepherding a vulnerable flock in an unpredictable environment.

Because a lack of order characterized frontier settlements in the early years of territorial government, easterners could presume that westerners, like naïve children, needed a strong hand. As Pennsylvania Representative Thomas Scott explained to his colleagues in 1789, the simple people of the frontier “wish for [American] government and laws, and will be gratified with the indulgence.”⁷¹ While drafting a version of the Ordinance of 1787, James Monroe described the territorial government he proposed as “[c]olonial,” and linked its necessity with his experience with the people there after he traveled to the region. Having made western tours, he was “well acquainted with the problems of an area he considered to be quite poor...Both [Thomas] Jefferson and Monroe believed that the westerners would require time to develop virtues through which they could govern themselves”⁷² Such a notion mirrored statements about the American colonists prior to the Revolution; English politician Charles Townshend, for example, had supported the Stamp Act in 1765 by saying that Americans were ““children planted by our care, nourished up by our indulgence...and protected by our arms.””⁷³ American officials repeated this rhetoric because they relied on the British example, furthering the colonial relationship between East and West.

71. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 429. As Edward Said states, the assumption of colonialism is that “subject races [do] not have it in them to know what [is] good for them.” If their political history or current state of affairs at any given time was undesirable, it was simply the outgrowth of inherent flaws in their nature. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978, 1979), 37-38.

72. *The Writings of James Monroe, Including a Collection of his Public and Private Correspondence Now for the First Time Printed*, ed. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, vol. 1, 1778-1794 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1891), 142; Brisbin, Jr., “Before Bureaucracy,” 150.

73. Quoted in Jensen, *The Founding*, 63. That language was challenged by at least one person, Colonel Isaac Barré, who had spent time in America. However, he did not object specifically to use of the word “children.” *Ibid.*, 63-64.

One prominent image of colonial Americans in the British mind had been that of “uncorrupted children of a promised land,” and similar imagery regularly appeared in eastern Americans’ language and literature about the West.⁷⁴ In particular, the metaphor of the innocent baby featured prominently in the rhetoric of territorial authorities. The “Laws Governing the Territory Northwest of the Ohio River” classified frontier settlements as infant communities, and Arthur St. Clair informed territorial residents in his first address at Marietta that the system of governance imposed on them was “suited to [their] infant situation, & to continue no longer than that State of Infancy shall last.” Their laws should be selected for them, he declared, and taken directly from the “Codes of the Mother States.”⁷⁵ Territorial judges Parsons and Varnum indicated that the infant West needed parental guidance and protection when they complained about the statute requiring them to take laws from existing states. They told Governor St. Clair in 1788 that the laws of states at that time could not really apply to the territories because current laws had not governed those states “in their infancy.”⁷⁶ Pennsylvania’s Thomas Scott expanded on the familial roles of East and West; while westerners relied entirely on the parent state, in turn the government “act[ed] as kind protecting fathers to their people.”⁷⁷ This rhetoric of paternalism simply reproduced the British-American colonial relationship and reapplied it westward.

Settlers in the territory, whatever their feelings on the subject, also used language suitable to the parent-child relationship. During the summer of 1788, as territorial residents learned of their status as per the Northwest Ordinance, they wrote to Governor

74. Colley, *Britons*, 135.

75. “Journal of Executive Proceedings in the Territory Northwest of the Ohio River,” in *TPUS* 3:264.

76. Judges Parsons and Varnum to Governor St. Clair, Marietta, July 31, 1788, in *SCP* 2:69.

77. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 650.

St. Clair about the importance of good government since they were “far removed from the country, that gave us birth.” They immediately infantilized themselves in relation to the eastern states, and St. Clair supported them by referring to the government (and himself as its emissary in the West) as paying the people “paternal attention.”⁷⁸ In a heartfelt memorial to the governor in June 1790, Father Gibault (a priest previously appointed vicar-general of Illinois by the Bishop of Quebec) asked St. Clair to take pity on his parishioners in Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, and Cahokia. They were, of course, humble applicants, and “venture[d] to hope that the paternal goodness of your Excellency towards your adopted children will induce you to present their humble supplication to the honorable Congress.”⁷⁹ Gibault (and many of his fellow petitioners) had lived for many years under French, British and American imperial control; his language shows that they did not expect their position as dependents to change because the new U.S. government professed to be republican.

The colonial parent-child relationship between the East and West continued even as the Ohio Territory moved through its phases of development and neared statehood. This continuity indicated that although policy left a route to full citizenship, cultural perceptions lingered. In 1801 the “[i]nhabitants [and] Settlers between the great [and] Little Miami Rivers [and] Northward of the patent of John Cleve [*sic*] Symmes” petitioned the House and Senate for a discounted price per acre for the lands they had improved and an extension of time for payment. In humblest terms they expressed a “full faith in the paternal regard of the Legislature of the United States to extend her fostering

78. Inhabitants on the Muskingum to Governor St. Clair, July 16, 1788, in *TPUS* 2:132-133; “Journal of Executive Proceedings in the Territory Northwest of the Ohio River,” in *TPUS* 3:264.

79. Memorial of Father Gibault and Others to Governor St. Clair, June 9, 1790, in *TPUS* 2:280.

hand to [their] relief and support.”⁸⁰ That paternal regard was not, however, always magnanimous. After seven years as secretary of the Northwest Territory, Winthrop Sargent came down hard on the children of the West. In chastising the inhabitants of Vincennes for asking Congress to recognize lands they themselves had acquired in deals brokered with local Indians, Sargent denied their right to have made any such transactions independent of the parent government. If the settlers had grievances, he said, or tales of suffering he would certainly represent such pleas to the Congress. Their land claim request, on the other hand, would undo any goodwill they had accumulated with the Congress and prove the claimants “weak[,] ungrateful[,] and inconsistent – not Men, but Children.”⁸¹ Sargent assumed that settlers should beg and send supplications; making independent decisions about land purchases and then questioning Congress about it, however, hurt their cause. He made this assumption because frontier people had a role to fulfill in the colonial family dynamic: they were to be dutiful, compliant, humble, and entirely dependent. In a word, they were children.

As British observers deemed their American children ungrateful in the 1760s and 1770s, so too did Eastern culture look down upon their unappreciative dependents in the West after the Revolution. Territorial officials declared that westerners, in constant need of correction and a strong hand, should have more control from outside rather than less or else the frontier would be “ruined” by its own misguided elements. Indeed territorial authorities informed their superiors in the national capital that westerners lacked the skill and civility required for positions of leadership. When territorial judges George Turner and John Cleves Symmes suggested that western localities have some legislative

80. Petition to Congress from Citizens of the Territory, [No Date], 1801, in *TPUS* 3:189.

81. “October 28, 1797 at Vincennes,” in *Ibid.*, 492. Underline in original.

independence, Secretary Winthrop Sargent replied that even under strict regulation such power should not be given. It was imprudent to do so, for the proposed power would get in “the Hands of designing or ignorant Men” and “produce a multitude of evils & be made [use] of as a Sanction to very mischievous purposes.” Sargent later confided to Thomas Jefferson that at the time he could not even recommend a replacement for a vacant judgeship because he “[knew] not a suitable Character[;]” instead he recommended “a man more National than territorial or at least quite as much so – amongst us there is not I believe a suitable person.”⁸² Local authorities under St. Clair’s supervision often frustrated him with their conduct, and goaded him into repeatedly revealing a deep disdain for his deputies. After failing to get local courts to convict settlers for murdering Indians in 1796, he proposed that a pecuniary fine might do some good, for “it is often seen that the Minds of Men little tinctured with Justice or humanity have a pretty strong sympathy with their pockets.”⁸³ Both the governor and his secretary had little to no faith in the locals, whom they believed could not be trusted even if federal authorities themselves chose territorial leaders. Representative Thomas Scott of Pennsylvania echoed those doubts in the House in 1789: “when people, from their necessities or inclinations, are determined to emigrate, in order to mitigate their distresses, they think little on the form of Government; all they care for is relief from their present or approaching wants and troubles.”⁸⁴ Like children, Americans in the territories could hardly be trusted to prioritize larger ideas and principles above immediate gratification. The mistrust of local leadership, and a preference for men with

82. Copy of a Letter to the Judges [Turner and Symmes], Vincennes, July 25, 1790, in *Ibid.*, 322-323; Acting Governor Sargent to the Secretary of State, August 14, 1797, in *TPUS* 2:622. Underline in original.

83. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State, January, 1796, in *Ibid.*, 543.

84. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 650.

“national” rather than regional interests bolstered eastern cultural assumptions about the overall integrity of westerners.

Western Americans, like all colonials, resided far away from the centers of government and had less access to European-inspired culture; because frontier settlers lived outside the established communities of seaboard states (and close to or even inside Indian territory), easterners viewed them as lawless and uncivilized. Men at the highest levels of the federal government and the military revealed a general prejudice and condescension toward westerners. George Washington, for example, referred to frontiersmen as a “parcel of lawless banditti” in 1783 and army officer Josiah Harmer claimed the people moving west into Kentucky in the late 1780s were “almost feral.”⁸⁵ Some eastern observers even looked upon the territorial government with disdain: Secretary of State Edmund Randolph remarked in a letter to President Washington in January 1794 that the proceedings of the executive in the Northwest Territory were “little more, than a history of bickerings [*sic*] and discontents, which do not require the attention of the President.”⁸⁶ In some ways, the western people could really take no course that would win them a positive assessment from eastern authorities. They were either dangerous (if they began to grow and thrive) or lazy and useless. St. Clair commented to the president in 1789 that settlers would likely become economic rivals of the East if given free navigation of the Mississippi, but that if access to that waterway continued interdicted “they will become Idle, restless and unsatisfied.”⁸⁷ Even when territorial

85. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 7; Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 188. Washington’s terminology was an exact replication of the language Thomas Gage had used in frustration when describing land-hungry American colonists to British Superintendent of Indian Affairs Sir William Johnson in 1766. See Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 107.

86. The Secretary of State [Edmund Randolph] to the President, Philadelphia, January 4, 1794, in *TPUS* 2:472.

87. Governor St. Clair to the President, August 1789, in *Ibid.*, 209.

residents went out of their way to show they were truly American, they made little headway with condescending officials. In his journal from the Fourth of July in 1793, Winthrop Sargent spoke contemptuously about the people of Pittsburgh and their celebration. It was “upon the greatest scale within their ability. The people are fast increasing in numbers but not very much improving in manners and I feel that I shall leave this day without any of those regrets impressable [*sic*] upon quitting the accomplished and hospitable circle.”⁸⁸ For the western colonials, even demonstrations of patriotism earned little respect.

Although nineteenth-century culture portrayed the frontier as an exciting land of adventure, eighteenth century observers saw a backwater peopled by the dregs of society – a cultural impression characteristic of an imperial mindset. As one gentleman wrote to a friend from Philadelphia in 1792, the people of that city did not wish to “meddle” with western lands, and he himself would “ever disapprove of our laying out a single shilling on back lands.”⁸⁹ In 1785, Josiah Harmar wrote to the president that many people with whom he had conversed during his travels thought that unless Congress came up with a good way to control the population, the Ohio country would “soon be inhabited by a banditti whose actions are a disgrace to human nature.”⁹⁰ Washington himself echoed those sentiments in 1795, and others followed suit throughout the 1780s and 1790s. In a February 1796 letter to his home state’s governor Oliver Wolcott, Sr. about the land office bill then before Congress, Connecticut’s Chauncey Goodrich remarked disgustedly that “[p]ast experience of the expense attendant on the rude, unsocial and discontented

88. Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], Friday, July 4, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 4, OHS.

89. Colonel [Frederick?] Johnson to unknown addressee, Philadelphia, March 1, 1792, Armstrong Papers, Box 2, Folder 14, INHS. Underline in original.

90. Colonel Harmar to the President of Congress, Fort McIntosh, May 1, 1785, in *SCP* 2:4.

inhabitants of the new country, makes no impression” on those in favor of public sale of lands.⁹¹ Observations such as these reinforced the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized, in which one side is civilized and cultured while the other is, by default, uncivilized and lacking culture.⁹² Territorial residents did not stand to become respected members of the national populace upon statehood either. Army officer and later scoundrel James Wilkinson held out little hope for the people of Kentucky when their home became a new state. He wrote to prominent judge Harry Innes that he was hardly surprised to hear about the “contests and discontents” taking place there, “for it is impossible to reduce to due order [and] proper subordination, the individuals of a community, who have long lived in a habit of contempt for all distinctions of society without exciting disgusts and fermentations.”⁹³ Ohioans nearing statehood fared no better. Their longtime governor was still describing the bulk of them as a naïve and “uninformed multitude” at the end of 1801.⁹⁴ Colonialism was alive and well in the Ohio Territory, where governors acted like the crown-appointed ministers so hated in colonial America.

91. Chauncey Goodrich to Oliver Wolcott, Sr., Philadelphia, February 21, 1796, in George Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, Edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1846, 1971), 1:303.

92. Edward Said argues in his study of Orientalism that the production of knowledge about a group or region allows the producer to create a “political vision of reality whose structure promote[s] a binary opposition between the familiar...and the strange.” Said, *Orientalism*, 43. The beings of the Orient, for example, were presented as exotic, their landscapes haunting, their experiences remarkable. This distinguished them from their western imperial masters. For a more general discussion of colonial discourse, see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed. (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), 42-52.

93. James Wilkinson to H[arry] Innes, Ft. Washington, July 20, 1792, Northwest Territory Collection, Box 2, INHS. Wilkinson confirmed the notion that the western regions were colonies as America had been under Britain by saying that similar dregs of society had risen to the top in the settlement of the “infant republic.” Wilkinson, an officer in the U.S. army at various times from the Revolution through the War of 1812, was also implicated in plots to join Kentucky with Spain, or have that state set up as an independent entity during the early 1790s. See Andro Linklater, *An Artist in Treason: The Extraordinary Double Life of General James Wilkinson, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army and Agent 13 in the Spanish Secret Service* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2009).

94. Governor St. Clair to Paul Fearing, Chillicothe, December 25, 1801, in *TPUS* 3:187.

The founding government also resembled British ministers in its view of westerners as a liability rather than an asset, problem children instead of equal and valuable members of society. England's Superintendent for Indian affairs William Johnson had warned that the colonists would bring trouble to the frontiers in the 1760s, and American officials harbored similar fears. Congressman Scott, for example, predicted that settlers would either become a dangerous white indigenous population that only added to the "Indian problem," or defect into Spanish, French, or even British jurisdiction and become treacherous neighbors.⁹⁵ St. Clair gave voice to this common sentiment in his letter to Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay in December 1788:

It is always my Fear that our western Territory instead of proving a Fund for paying the national Debt, would be a Source of Mischief and encreasing [*sic*] Expence [*sic*] – but the Expence [*sic*] is not the worst part of it. It has given such a Spring to the Spirit of Emigration, too high before, that tho' it is pregnant with the most serious Consequences to the Atlantic States, it cannot be held back and the Spaniards are also trying to turn that Spirit, with great Industry to their Advantage – so that those States not only lose their People and sink the value of their Soil for the present, but are laying the foundation of the Greatness of a rival Country.⁹⁶

Secretary of War Henry Knox agreed. Because he viewed the possession and distribution of western lands as a purely financial venture, Knox easily concluded that perhaps the value of those lands did not justify the effort required to control them. Knox told President Washington in a December 1790 report, "the expence [*sic*] of protecting such distant settlements greatly exceeds the value of them, whether considered as purchasers of the Land, as consumers of articles contributing to the revenue, or as constituting a

95. See for example the argument of Mr. Scott in *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 428-429, 432. On Johnson's concerns, see Chapter Four.

96. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs [John Jay], Fort Harmar, December 13, 1788, in *TPUS* 2:168.

strength of any real use to the empire.”⁹⁷ Knox’s cost-benefit analysis is symptomatic of the exploitative relationship between East and West at that time; settlers drained the nation’s coffers without adding political, economic, or cultural value, making them more trouble than they were worth.

Legislative discussions in the House also frequently approached the western population as a potential liability, thus further entrenching the imperial relationship. This attitude featured prominently in debates about Indian relations and funding for troops in the border regions. After Congress resolved to protect Indians from the lawless banditti of the frontier, the representatives discussed whether the House would offend westerners with the language some congressmen used. Although a vote ultimately resulted in the offensive language in question being removed from the resolution, Representative Uriah Tracy of Connecticut objected. At the very least, he argued, the resolution should clarify that the Indians were indeed in need of protection from *Americans* in the territories and not some other entity. Surely, he said, Congress was not resolving to protect Indians from the Spanish or other hostile tribes; “[i]f, then, it was not against the frontier people,” he concluded, “the resolution had no meaning.”⁹⁸ Of course several congressmen emphasized the impropriety of insulting westerners; however, the discussion clearly shows that they had become a problematic population in the context of congressional debates. Because they lived in a border state with an unsettled frontier, the people of Kentucky fared similarly in congressional discussions after their state joined the Union in 1792. When a Senate bill for adding stripes to the national flag in honor of Kentucky (and

97. Report of the Secretary of War to the President, December 10, 1790, in *TPUS* 2:313.

98. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 151-152. In his state of the union address, the president had raised the issue of “wanton murders” of Indians in the Southwest Territory, and explained that the government could feel positive about the situation of the western borders with the exception that more needed to be done to protect Indians from lawless persons.

fellow border state Vermont) came before the House of Representatives two years later, Benjamin Goodhue of Massachusetts called it a “trifling matter” that should not have occupied the attention of the House and his colleague George Thatcher (also of Massachusetts) agreed. Even Massachusetts representative William Lyman and New Jersey’s Elias Boudinot, both of whom supported the measure, emphasized the importance of keeping the citizens of those frontier states “in good humor,” rather than the value of the new states or their equality with the original thirteen. Westerners emerged as delicate, foolish children who had to be placated and parented.⁹⁹

These frontier dependents lacked civility to the extent that eastern observers drew few distinctions between “white savages” and their Indian counterparts; this cultural construct revealed a reliance on British methods for separating citizens from subjects. Although racial hierarchies ultimately led to American officials’ poor treatment of Indians in the nineteenth century, first-generation Americans in the East had not yet solidified those racist structures. Rather, they often treated white colonists on their peripheries in much the same way they treated Indians. This attitude, evident in both policy and culture, grew out of the post-colonial dependence on British examples. In the British imperial system as the founders had experienced it, colonials were colonials because they lacked the ability to self-govern, their settlements had no cultural refinements to speak of, and they were geographically remote.¹⁰⁰ These characteristics all applied to white as well as Indian groups that dwelled along the new nation’s peripheries.

99. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 1st Sess., 164-165.

100. To be sure British imperialism as it developed in the nineteenth century became much more focused on the racial “otherness” of English subjects in places like India. However, post-revolutionary Americans had been part of an Empire that up to that time consisted almost exclusively of *white* settler-subjects in North America and the West Indies. As Chapter Four will show, England had not made any serious attempt to colonize Native American groups, and the founding government in the new United States replicated that example for several decades before they implemented their own brand of racially-driven internal colonization.

Thus the concept of the white savage as it existed in American culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries grew out of the larger post-colonial identity crisis.

In the years following the conclusion of the American Revolution, white residents of the backcountry and their Indian neighbors had much in common. As scholar Richard White explains in his treatment of the Great Lakes region, from 1785-1795 villages on both sides of the Ohio River contained “young men [who] remained beyond the effective control of higher authorities.”¹⁰¹ These frontier dwellers co-existed in a culture of fluid borders, long-standing hatreds, and uncontrollable revenge killings. Brutal practices such as eye gouging and other methods for removing an opponent’s body parts during the course of brawls remained commonplace along the frontier at the turn of the century.¹⁰² Eastern commentators and territorial authorities observed this culture and evaluated the behavior of whites accordingly. Indian Commissioner Samuel Parsons referred to the men and women in the territories as “our own white Indians of no character.”¹⁰³ Their lack of character certainly exempted them from the public virtue that the founding generation considered integral to actual citizenship, placing westerners outside the bounds of full membership in the American polity. Army officer Josiah Harmar stated at one point that the Indian chief Captain Pipe was “much more of a gentleman than the generality of these frontier people,” and an observer of the people around Marietta in the Ohio Territory called those territorial residents a “sett [*sic*] of tenants ruder than the

101. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2011), 416.

102. Elliot J. Gorn, “‘Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch’: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry,” *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (February 1985): 18-43.

103. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 8.

savages themselves.”¹⁰⁴ Such comparisons indicate that these individuals saw no reason to distinguish between whites and Indians in the West based on race alone.

Eastern observers believed frontier settlers exhibited a lack of self-control, a shortcoming expected of colonists within the British imperial system. Not only did western whites resemble Indians in their rusticity and manners, they exhibited even *less* ability than the natives to resolve disputes. John Matthews, a surveyor from Massachusetts, commented that whites on the frontier were incapable of solving their disagreements with Indians in any useful way. “The truth is,” he sighed, “they are both savages [*sic*].”¹⁰⁵ Indeed it proved difficult for many in the East to distinguish who was to blame for frontier violence because many of the stories they heard implicated whites rather than Indians. Philadelphians who read the April 23, 1789 issue of the *Independent Gazetteer* found out that some Spaniards had begun calling western Americans “Blanca Savago” after some persons had “[handled] the tomahawk pretty freely” during a disagreement with Spanish authorities over shipping along the Mississippi.¹⁰⁶ An editorial in one 1795 issue of the *Philadelphia Gazette & Universal Daily Advertiser* referred to westerners who had participated in the Whiskey Rebellion as “the savage inhabitants of the frontier” and the *Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal* told readers about “white savages” committing murders and depredations against the Indians. That article placed violent whites alongside “yellow savages” (white speculators in western lands who took advantage of weak or unclear Indian treaties) on a sort of sliding scale of

104. Brigadier-General Harmar to the Secretary of War, Fort Harmar, March 9, 1788, in *SCP* 2:42; Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 262.

105. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 9.

106. “George-town, April 16,” *Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 23, 1789, America’s Historical Newspapers. (Hereafter cited as AHN). The letter in which this term appears was also published in the *New-York Daily Gazette*, the *Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal*, Connecticut’s *Litchfield Monitor*, the *New-Hampshire Recorder*, and the *Weekly Advertiser*, and the Massachusetts *Essex Journal & New-Hampshire Packet*.

bad behavior.¹⁰⁷ These periodicals, meant for consumption by the eastern public, show that the concept of the “white savage” had entered the popular lexicon.

As doubts about the unruliness of colonists relative to Indians had influenced England’s policy decisions after the Seven Years’ War, so too did assumptions about westerners’ capriciousness have an impact on discussions in the American legislature. Secretary of War (and overseer of Indian policy) Henry Knox reported to Congress in 1787 that “at present the disputes between the [I]ndians and whites seem to be involved in such a reciprocity of injuries and murders that it may be difficult for the public to judge impartially which is in the wrong.”¹⁰⁸ During a debate on a bill for reducing the military establishment that came before the House in January 1793, Connecticut’s Jeremiah Wadsworth insisted that regular troops and not local militia should maintain peace on the frontier:

It is hard to determine which are the greatest aggressors – the settlers on the frontier or the Indians. The murder of the Moravian Indians, the proclamation of Congress against our own people, all show that the Indians have ground for complaint. Here Mr. W. recapitulated the affairs of the banditti at Fort St. Vincennes; the representations of Judge Innes, of Kentucky, from 1783 to 1790, respecting the people there who could not be restrained from the commission of crimes against the peace of the country.¹⁰⁹

Maryland’s William Vans Murray stood firmly behind his own references to the frontier people as semi-savages in February 1795. When another congressman complained about such language, Murray affirmed that he had indeed used the terminology and “felt the expression not inapplicable.” Perhaps the expression could be confined to those who

107. *Philadelphia Gazette & Universal Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 9, 1795, vol. 12, issue 1965, AHN; “Philadelphia, August 10,” *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal* (Boston, MA), November 28, 1791, issue 1939, AHN.

108. Report of the Secretary at War to Congress, July 10, 1787, in *TPUS* 2:34-35.

109. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 2nd Sess., 774.

“lead an unstationary [*sic*] life...and live the life of savages without their virtues,” but he had no intention of retracting his statement.¹¹⁰ When legislators expressed opinions such as these on the floor of the House of Representatives, they blurred the lines between white and Indian subject and thus shaped federal policy.

Bad behavior from one western race bled into eastern perceptions of the other, strengthening the cultural image of *all* people on the frontier as inferior and uncivilized. As Secretary Sargent struggled to keep order in Cincinnati amid militia misconduct, night firing, and raucous drunkenness, he complained of loud yelling which he likened to that of savages. In fact, whites did such a good job echoing “savage” noises, Sargent feared that some Indians would “seize a favourable [*sic*] opportunity” and launch a night attack that no one would be ready for because all simply assumed it was just the *white* savages carrying on.¹¹¹ There could be no distinction between races when it came to dealing with the unsettled borderland in the territorial period. An order from Governor St. Clair issued in the spring of 1790 reveals this prejudice; he forbade the inhabitants of Cahokia to entertain “any strangers, White, Indian, or Negroe [*sic*].”¹¹² Decrees such as this denied any implicit assumption that whites held a moral high ground as a result of their color. In fact, the expectation could sometimes be just the opposite. While Indians belonged in the wilderness, easterners inferred that whites in the territories (especially those who were not in the larger more permanent settlements) purposefully *chose* to move thither because they were “induced by its remoteness” and wished “to be as free as the Natives.”¹¹³ When clashes between whites and Indians on the frontier escalated throughout the 1790s despite

110. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,266-1,267.

111. Winthrop Sargent to Judge John Cleves Symmes, Cincinnati County of Hamilton, January 13, 1793, in Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

112. Order of the Governor, April 25, 1790, in *TPUS* 3:301.

113. Acting Governor Sargent to the Secretary of State, Cincinnati, January 20, 1797, in *TPUS* 2:587.

government attempts to keep the peace by various methods, territorial officials like Winthrop Sargent continued to paint all the participants with a broad brush. Writing to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering from Cincinnati in May 1797, Sargent explained that if the eastern authorities did not intervene and help resolve the frequent disputes between settlers and Indians, peace would never come. The “white as well as red, savages” longed “most ardently” for war, he warned.¹¹⁴ Even as Ohio neared statehood in late 1801, Governor St. Clair called the inhabitants “wretched” individuals with “scarce a habitation to be seen better than [I]ndian wigwams.”¹¹⁵ Thus easterners had no need to marginalize Indians based on skin color; with lifestyles and conduct no better than the Indians, white westerners fit the role of wild and wooly colonial perfectly.

Westerners themselves were very much aware of this cultural marginalization, and in acknowledging their secondary status (even by objecting to it), residents of the West reinforced their position as settler-subjects within a new American empire. As such, they held an identity quite similar to that which gave rise to the rebellion against Great Britain. The language western leaders like Kentucky judge Harry Innes used when complaining about the government’s treatment of people in the territories strongly resembled the American colonists’ grievances over their status as second-class members of the British polity. Innes huffed in a 1787 letter that, “Congress do[es] not mean to give us that protection which as part of the Federal Union we are entitled to.”¹¹⁶ In settling the territories, westerners (like colonial British-Americans before them) believed

114. Sargent to the Secretary of State, Cincinnati, May 23, 1797, in *TPUS* 3:469. The Secretary of State’s reply indicates a tendency to approach white and Indian claims with equal credulity; he says that unless the chiefs are convinced that their braves had committed the crimes of which they had been accused (in this case stealing horses) then Sargent was *not* to deduct from the tribute said tribes were getting (see *Ibid.*, 469, n. 5).

115. Governor St. Clair to Paul Fearing, Chillicothe, December 25, 1801, in *Ibid.*, 187.

116. Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 195.

that they did their nation a great service, and that the country benefited from their efforts as much as they did individually. As one article that appeared in the *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* put it, “in colonizing this distant and dangerous desert, [westerners] always contemplated the free enjoyment” of rights they prized, such as free navigation of the Mississippi River.¹¹⁷ Like the descendants of the men and women who first colonized the East Coast, people west of the Appalachians understood that, although they were “subjects,” they were also “settlers” who tamed a wild land that those in power subsequently used for their own enrichment.

Consequently, those settlers found much to complain of during the territorial period as British-Americans had before Revolution. Anonymous author “Vitruvius” wrote in the September 20, 1794 issue of the *Centinel* that, “oppressive operations of government” functioned in the West. In case anyone had failed to notice, “Vitruvius” reminded readers that a distant legislature passed all the laws under which they lived without their consent. The fact that the appointed officials who ruled westerners answered to virtually no one, the requirement that settlers live under “rusty statutes” of eastern states, and the sheer “chimerical theory” at the base of the Ordinance of 1787 all signaled tyranny. “Vitruvius” was “sorry to say, the subjects (for I call them so) of this territory have felt [the system’s] baneful effects.”¹¹⁸ While Congress seemed bent on taking up the role of a high-handed and distant court, residents also found it easy to portray territorial authorities with which they did interact as “would-be aristocrats,”

117. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 25 (May 3, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS. The piece was republished from the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, and its authors hailed from the western Pennsylvania county of Washington.

118. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 45 (September 20, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

largely due to the dictatorial policies described previously.¹¹⁹ Settlers loudly opposed what they considered “imported” candidates for any executive appointment, indicating first that they perceived some distinct separation between themselves and non-territorial Americans, and second that they resented implications that federal authorities considered local candidates sub-par.¹²⁰ Westerners also took issue with the far-reaching arm of the military’s presence in the territory (except when troops arrived with the explicit purpose of Indian fighting). During his journey to the Wabash in 1792, missionary John Heckewelder wrote that although the military wished to govern, “the city insists upon its rights under the constitution, and in consequence frequent quarrels ensue.”¹²¹ All of these disputes and grievances served to create an atmosphere of hostility between East and West reminiscent of the dysfunctional relationship that developed between Britain and her colonies by 1776.

As American colonists had decried “taxation without representation” within the British imperial system, territorial residents criticized the far-reaching legislative oversight and lack of equal representation embedded in the Northwest Ordinance. “Vitruvius” pointed out that even though the Northwest Ordinance provided for phases of colonial development and promised the people a representative in Congress, this did not guarantee legislative independence or the rights of full citizenship. The fact that the governor could give his “negative absolute” to legislation duly passed by a majority meant that, whatever illusions some harbored, the legislative power remained “solely

119. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 65.

120. Eblen, *First and Second United States Empires*, 123.

121. John Heckewelder, M.C. Sprengel, Clara Frueaneff, and H. Knox, “Narrative of John Heckewelder’s Journey,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 12, no. 1 (April 1888): 42.

vested in the governor, notwithstanding this farcical assembly.”¹²² “Vitruvius” also dismissed the congressional representative that allegedly came when territories achieved sufficient population. No one, he hoped, would “stoop to the low drudgery of sending a member to Congress, whose tongue shall be tyed [*sic*], and who would not be suffered even to say ‘aye’ or ‘no’! – Of all the principles in politics, I take this to be the most preposterous[,] farcical[,] ridiculous and unprecedented.”¹²³ The author scathingly referred to the promised representative during the second phase of government as “our pantomimic harlequin in Congress” and crushed any optimism about the future, saying he “can be of no use to us.”¹²⁴ With language such as this, westerners like “Vitruvius” and his readers also supported the imperial relationship with the East by accepting the role of disaffected subjects.

Westerners who reacted with submissiveness rather than bitterness and complaints also affirmed cultural assumptions about the inferior status of frontier citizens relative to citizens in established states. Much of the language used in communications from people in the territories was dutiful, humble, and deferential in a way befitting colonial supplicants. When the inhabitants on the Muskingum River in Ohio wrote to Governor St. Clair in July 1788, they expressed gratitude for the government that the Northwest Ordinance bestowed upon them. They did not object to the imperial nature of the Ordinance; rather, they filled the role of subject by speaking reverentially to the new governor. They assured St. Clair that his “precepts [and] example” would be their guide, and when the “well-regulated colonial government” eventually gave way to statehood, his

122. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 46 (September 27, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

123. *Ibid.*

124. *Ibid.*

Excellency the governor would “still be revered as the first of all citizens!”¹²⁵ Perhaps there is no better evidence of the colonial identity Americans in the West held than the 1796 Fourth of July speech of territorial judge William Goforth, one of Columbia’s original settlers and a delegate to the convention to write the Ohio State Constitution. After he lauded the glories of the Revolution and expounded on why the territory’s citizens deserved to enjoy the rights of membership in the government along with the “Atlantick [*sic*] States,” Goforth then highlighted the real inequality that existed instead. Unfortunately, the territorial government could never “meet with the wishes of any man who had a knowledge of his rights as an American citizen.” He continued: “[i]t is high on the colonial order and in some Instances surpasses those systems imposed on the American colonists while under the tyranny and domination of great-Britain, from which, the soul of [A]merica revolted.” The governor, secretary, and judges the Northwest Ordinance provided were “in every sense...rendered independent of the people,” and the citizens themselves lacked even the most basic elective powers. Yet despite his eloquent critique of the colonial nature of their situation, Goforth instructed his listeners on the necessity of being loyal and obedient subjects. However objectionable the people found their status, Congress had ordained it so, and by becoming a resident in the territory each and every one of them had “impliedly assented to it.” They had a “duty” to endure, he concluded, until the time came for a legal change in their status within the empire. Until then, their only obligation was to display gratitude for their very existence.¹²⁶

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125. Inhabitants on the Muskingum to Governor St. Clair, July 16, 1788, in *TPUS* 2:132-133.

126. “Speech of Judge William Goforth on the 4th of July,” Armstrong Papers, Box 3, Folder 12, INHS. The speech appears to have been given at the behest of the Columbian Patriotic Society. The year 1796 is given for the speech based on a remark within the document, and the brief biographical detail on Goforth also comes from notes added to the document by the INHS archivists.

Throughout the period 1787-1812 both the founding government and the eastern public continued to look upon the West and its residents as inferior, wild, and outside the bounds of full membership in the ordered republic they envisioned. For self-conscious easterners who wished to cast off the shame of being “only a colonial” after the Revolution, distancing their own culture from all things primitive became a necessity; to do so required the creation of cultural distinctions between their world and that of the western frontiers. In doing so, legislators and cultural commentators fell into the patterns of imperialism, justifying undemocratic and repressive governance by crafting a rhetoric in which the western colonies were exotic, untamed places filled with childlike people in need of the paternal attentions of a stable parent state. Certainly the provisions in the Northwest Ordinance for future statehood served to make the concept of American colonies in the West more “palatable to former ‘radicals.’”¹²⁷ There is no question, however, that the former revolutionaries who presided over the government in the East did not believe that their western subjects were anywhere near ready for full membership in the Union. That they found it difficult to distinguish between indigenous subjects and subjects with the same skin color as their own when casting judgment on frontier affairs is a testament to the fact that this first generation of Americans had yet to solidify the notion that all outsiders were marked by racial distinctions rather than their distance from the cultured and civilized centers of government. Westerners in turn reacted in ways that often mirrored the responses that such high-handedness had elicited when Americans had identified as British subjects just two decades earlier. They were isolated and marginalized, and they knew it. As a result, this West remained not the epicenter of

127. Eblen, *First and Second United States Empires*, 28.

American identity or a place in which national advancement could be made, but a land apart.

Chapter Three

“Another Planet”: Divisions Between East and West and the Failure of American Sovereignty

From the beginning of the territorial period in 1787 through the War of 1812, the American West remained a peripheral part of the nation both politically and culturally; in failing to integrate the frontier early on, the founding generation missed an opportunity to break post-colonial patterns and use the West to help formulate a national identity. The imperial structures for governance and cultural marginalization described in the previous chapter grew out of the new nation’s dependence on the mother country’s examples and resulted in an almost complete divergence between East and West. Post-colonial Philadelphians, fixated on their position relative to the Old World, failed entirely to realize what subsequent generations would: that their western frontier and the people who lived there could transform the notion of what it meant to be “American.” Had eastern Americans of the founding generation been concerned with integrating the West into the nation rather than colonizing it on the European model, western issues and the well-being of frontier residents might have played a larger role in discussions about policy and culture taking place in the capital. Instead, East and West remained, in essence, two distinct regions with few common interests – a rift resembling the earlier divide between Great Britain and her American colonies. This distance cemented the colonial relationship between East and West after the Revolution. Westerners, physically isolated from the seaboard, took little interest in the issues that occupied easterners and the federal government. In turn, eastern Americans possessed little knowledge of life in the western colonies, and that ignorance led the federal government to neglect a series of key issues for settlers along the frontiers. As a result, the colonial West remained a place of blurred

boundary lines outside the effective jurisdiction of national authorities. Lawlessness plagued the region, and its residents were a potentially disloyal population with no clear sense of belonging to the new nation. The continued presence of Europeans in the West only exacerbated this problem. Ultimately this cleavage between East and West stands in stark contrast to the increasing prominence of the frontier in American politics and culture after the War of 1812.

In May 1790, territorial governor Arthur St. Clair concluded a letter to Henry Knox with a desperate plea for the secretary of war to send word about what transpired in the capital; “[f]or pity’s sake,” he wrote, “send some newspapers.” Isolated in the territory, the governor sought information about national affairs, rather than the local news he received at his post. St. Clair’s entreaty for eastern newspapers, which he had taken for granted previously but which would “be a great treat” as he wrote from Cahokia in Illinois, demonstrates the isolation of the territories during the first decades after independence. St. Clair even referred to himself as a “poor devil banished to another planet.”¹ Having made two “western tours” in the years preceding the Northwest Ordinance, James Monroe explained that the territory needed a colonial government in part because it was “poorly integrated with the rest of the nation.”² The West was simply too distant from the centers of government, and lacked the infrastructure that allowed Americans along the seaboard to communicate and travel more easily. Via modern highways, Marietta, Ohio is over four hundred miles from Philadelphia, nearly five

1. Governor St. Clair to Alexander Hamilton, Cincinnati, County of Hamilton, August 9, 1793, in William Henry Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair, Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress, and Governor of the Northwestern Territory, with his Correspondence and Other Papers* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 2:317-318. (Hereafter cited as *SCP* 2).

2. Richard A. Brisbin, Jr., “Before Bureaucracy: State Courts and the Administration of Public Services in the Northwest, 1787-1830,” *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 150.

hundred miles from New York City, and more than three hundred miles from Washington, D. C. Traveling such distances in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries required one to go overland by horse or on foot, and getting to remote settlements in the territories often necessitated that overland travel be punctuated with travel by boat to avoid hostile Indian tribes. Territorial judge Rufus Putnam's 1792 journey from Philadelphia to Fort Washington in Cincinnati took six weeks.³ Within the territories themselves, short distances by today's standards seemed quite large to early national frontier dwellers. Captain John Hamtramck, situated at Fort Wayne in June 1799, found it difficult to get news from "[b]elow" (meaning locations as close by as Cincinnati and Kentucky), and begged his correspondent to send word, thus indicating just how physically remote the territories were, even from each other.⁴

This isolation limited westerners' access to administrative resources that easterners used quite easily and left the frontier people without effective governance. Already prevented from creating laws adapted to their specific circumstances, territorial authorities could not even obtain copies of legal codes from established states. In 1795, the territorial judges had to draw from the statutes of Pennsylvania because those were the "only set...available."⁵ The Northwest Ordinance made no provision for westerners to access the federal courts when the local judiciary's decisions came into question (a serious problem given the potential conflicts of interest for territorial judges described in Chapter Two). Governor St. Clair asked former Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson to consider prescribing some method for rectifying that situation in 1794, but as late as 1800

3. General James Wilkinson to John Armstrong, Fort Washington, July 3, 1792, Armstrong Papers, Box 2, Folder 16, INHS.

4. [Captain John] Hamtramck to Major Kingsbery [or Kingsberg], Fort Wayne, June 14, 1799, Northwest Territory Collection, Box 3, INHS.

5. Brisbin, Jr., "Before Bureaucracy," 152-153.

congressman William Claiborne wrote to his constituents in Tennessee that the judicial system still created “particular inconveniences” for people in western states.⁶ Distance held up the day to day affairs of the territories, and regional authorities lacked certain practical powers needed for efficient administration. St. Clair, for example, asked that Attorney General Edmund Randolph give territorial officials the ability to confer titles of confirmation for officeholders because of “the very great distance that country [the land along the Mississippi] is and ever will be from the seat of government.”⁷ The absence of easy communication among a highly fluid population complicated simple legal matters such as wills and inheritances. For example, army officer John Armstrong, stationed at a garrison along the Ohio River, was unable to get a copy of a will that he wanted in 1789 owing to the fact that the deceased in question had originally drafted the paper in the Illinois country and then left there in the early 1780s. Armstrong’s apologetic correspondent, located in Montreal, explained that he failed to procure the will because Illinois was “so remote that [he could not] correspond there,” leaving Armstrong to find a resident of Illinois who might provide the needed document.⁸ Logistical difficulties retarded the development of local bureaucracy, reinforcing eastern assumptions that the West was a faraway and primitive place.

Geographic distances and the elements slowed the transmission of letters, newspapers, and other communications, leaving westerners ignorant of national political

6. Governor St. Clair to Thomas Jefferson, Marietta, December 14, 1794, in *SCP* 2:333. It is unclear what St. Clair hoped to accomplish by going through Jefferson, who had retired from his cabinet position in 1793; *Circular Letters of Congressman to their Constituents*, ed. Noble E. Cunningham, vol. 1, *First Congress-Ninth Congress, 1789-1807* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg, VA, 1978), 200. (Hereafter cited as *CLC* 1).

7. Governor St. Clair to the Attorney-General, Philadelphia, [no date], 1790, in *SCP* 2:163-164.

8. J.F. Perrault to John Armstrong at the garrison on the rapids of the Ohio, Montreal, February 12, 1789, Armstrong Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, INHS.

developments and cultural trends; this accentuated their status as outsiders. Weather often delayed travel in the territories, or between the seaboard and the frontiers. When major waterways like the Ohio froze in winter, certain courier routes became impassable. Even if weather permitted a trip, one could not simply set out from one settlement bound for another. Safe travel required supplies for a trip of weeks or months, as naturalist William Bartram discovered when he began a trip through parts of the Southwest. Replacement mounts, pack animals, equipment for water transport, gifts in case one encountered Indians, and adequate guides all had to be procured and organized before setting out. A party carrying periodicals, letters, or official papers might be delayed for weeks or months waiting for the right environmental circumstances for departure. Quartermaster General Samuel Hodgdon, for example, found himself completely unable to send letters or supplies between Forts Washington and Hamilton in Ohio in December 1791 due to lack of an escort.⁹ One letter from Philadelphia to a recipient in the Northwest Territory responded to a complaint about the lack of communication from the capital by saying that at least six letters had been written in the past nine months prior, all of which apparently disappeared in transit. The “circumstantial...news both European as well as American” in the missing letters never reached the frontier, and similar interruptions in the transmission of national affairs were commonplace.¹⁰ When Winthrop Sargent complained about the scarcity of communication he received from Philadelphia in 1797, his correspondent Samuel Hodgdon (who oversaw military stores in the capital at the time), told the

9. William Bartram, “From Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Choctaws,” in *The First West: Writings from the American Frontier, 1776-1860*, ed. Edward Watts and David Rachels (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29; Samuel Hodgdon to John Armstrong at Fort Hamilton, Fort Washington, December 2, 1791, Armstrong Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, INHS.

10. Colonel [Frederick?] Johnson to unknown addressee [presumably John Armstrong, commandant at Fort Hamilton from 1791-1792, who refers to papers and magazines in a later letter to Johnson], Philadelphia, March 1, 1792, Armstrong Papers, Box 2, Folder 13, INHS.

territorial secretary that he should not “expect to receive letters in the woods, or at uncertain places, and times at the extreme borders of the United States.” This letter shows that the most basic information – in this case the secretary had asked for the results of the 1796 presidential election – reached the West only after extreme delays, if at all.¹¹

This fact, combined with the differences between westerners’ quotidian concerns and those of easterners in established states, meant that westerners viewed national issues from their own distinct perspective. In reality, most ordinary people living on the nation’s western borders had little time to debate matters of party, worry about Washington’s neutrality proclamation, or fret over the British influence in American politics and culture. Troops in western garrisons actually went hungry at times during the 1790s, creating a “critical and alarming situation,” and John Armstrong remarked in a letter to General Knox that unscrupulous contractors “left [western troops] many days at a time without bread, [and] at other times without beef.” While Philadelphians debated international neutrality in 1793, the people of Kaskaskia in Illinois worried about starving to death.¹² In many areas of the borderlands, residents lived in an atmosphere of heightened defense characteristic of a state of war. One ad for packet boats sailing from Cincinnati to Pittsburgh reassured potential passengers that “every person on board will be under cover, made proof against rifle or musquet [*sic*] balls, and convenient port holes for firing out of. Each of the boats are armed with six pieces carrying a pound ball,” and muskets would be on board along with armed hands.¹³

11. Samuel Hodgdon to Winthrop Sargent, Philadelphia, February 7, 1797, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

12. General Wayne to Colonel Kirkpatrick, Headquarters, Greenville, May 14, 1795, Northwest Territory Collection, Box 2, INHS; John Armstrong to General Knox, February 21, 1791, Armstrong Papers, Box 2, INHS; William Leclair to Winthrop Sargent, Kaskaskia, August 28, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

13. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 2 (November 16, 1793), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

In such circumstances, the debates that gripped post-colonial Philadelphia received little interest in the territories. One letter from “Dorastus” in the *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* brought up the issue of titles; yet the missive, which decried the use of “esquire” as too reminiscent of the English system of nobility, addressed a topic that was already five years old in Philadelphia by the time “Dorastus” wrote in late 1794. His letter fixated on a minor title because the grander titles that Philadelphians had debated, such as that of “Elective Majesty” or “elective highness” for the president, were beyond the experience of westerners who had no persons who might realistically command such appellations. The risk that titles and the “fooleries, fopperies, fineries, and pomp of royal etiquette” posed simply did not exist in 1790s frontier society.¹⁴ Contests between Federalists and Anti-Federalists meant little to many frontier settlers, especially in the earliest years of territorial settlement; St. Clair indicated as much when he described the extreme gratitude Kentuckians displayed after the federal government paid the militia in 1791. While Kentucky residents appreciated “the notice the President took of that country” in a congressional address and “the means taken for the protection of the frontiers,” they “had been little affected by abstract political considerations.” The governor decried such ignorance of national and international affairs in a May 1790 letter to Henry Knox. “[W]e seem to be in another world that has no connection with the one

14. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 2, no. 5 (November 29, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS. For eastern debates over titles, see William Maclay, *The Journal of William Maclay: United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1927), 17, 22-24. There was no collective outrage in agreement with Dorastus’s letter, and there are almost no letters contributed to the *Centinel* during the whole of 1795-1796 that address any national political issues whatsoever. Although the paper did frequently publish the proceedings of the House, impassioned reactions from the paper’s readership are practically nonexistent.

we lately left,” he wrote, “[o]f what is passing in your quarter, or in the European world, we know as little as the man in the moon.”¹⁵

Where the interests of West and East did overlap, frontier residents prioritized regional concerns over larger national issues; this accentuated the parochial nature of western colonials relative to their more metropolitan neighbors to the east. Thus when the *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* became the region’s first periodical in 1793, printer William Maxwell informed his readers that the paper would try to better inform them on national affairs. The transactions of various states, however, and more specifically that of “our own territory” would remain the newspaper’s primary concern. So while the *Centinel* occasionally printed news from London, New York, or Philadelphia, its issues more often carried local stories – and those most frequently centered on Indian problems, *the* issue for western readers.¹⁶ One worry people in the Northwest Territory shared with the government and eastern public in the early 1790s was the troubling fact that the British retained several military posts in the West despite the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1783). The common interest ended, however, when it came to the exact nature of the problem. The British presence annoyed the public in the Atlantic states, and symbolized a continued snubbing from the former mother country. For the federal government, England’s hold on the western posts compromised border security and represented a diplomatic weakness. Westerners, however, saw the issue in a completely different light. As historian Patrick Griffin points out, frontier residents’

15. Gov[ernor] St. Clair to the Secretary of War, Cahokia, May 1, 1790, in *SCP* 2:136-140; Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 195-196; General St. Clair to the Secretary of War, Fort Washington, May 26, 1791, in *SCP* 2:214. Over time, the western regions did become associated with Jeffersonian Republican politics; however, any importance westerners could have as a voting bloc in national affairs was greatly delayed due to territorial status, which lingered until 1803 for Ohio and until after the War of 1812 for Indiana, Mississippi, and Illinois.

16. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 1 (November 9, 1793), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

worries “did not center on national honor or even territorial dignity. Such concerns mattered only insofar as they demonstrated once again the failure of easterners to address western concerns.”¹⁷ Instead, settlers focused on the potential of British agents at the disputed posts to incite Indians to violence and supply hostile tribes with weapons and ammunition. Thus even on a common issue, eastern and western interests diverged. In the end, westerners wanted their land. They wanted the government to guarantee law and order in their communities. They wanted free navigation of the Mississippi, and above all they wanted the government to protect them from Indians. The fact that the federal government and the eastern public repeatedly dismissed all of these items confirmed the subordinate position of the frontier colonists before the War of 1812.

Neither the executive nor Congress placed territorial governance high on the list of priorities after the Revolution. In January 1799, John Rice Jones of Kaskaskia, Illinois wrote a petition to Congress; he included a “short sketch” of the situation in which many Kaskaskians found themselves because there were, “perhaps, but few members of Congress acquainted with the local circumstances of the country.”¹⁸ Jones assumed correctly. Suffering under a near-obsession with British slights and the nation’s position vis à vis the Old World, eastern leaders focused on myriad issues that had nothing to do with their western colonies. In this, the founding government again took after its former parent-state. The American colonies had been low on the priority list while Britain dealt with the Glorious Revolution in 1688 (which interrupted nascent attempts by the Stuarts to pay more attention to colonial affairs), dynastic instability, and a series of international

17. Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 192.

18. John Rice Jones to [Unknown Recipient], Kaskaskia, January 10, 1799, Northwest Territory Collection, Box 3, Folder 3, INHS.

military conflicts that culminated in the Seven Years' War.¹⁹ Similarly, the new United States struggled to deal with a plethora of problems that faced the young nation just emerging from its colonial past. Politics in the 1790s shifted and evolved constantly. Although the First Congress contained a strong Federalist majority, sharp divisions that resembled the "court" and "country" persuasions in England emerged immediately.²⁰ Federalists and Republicans presented competing visions of the ideal republic and agitation and factionalism often won out over calm debate. These rival political parties clashed over domestic issues such as the creation of a national bank, neutrality in European wars, the military establishment and the question of militia versus a standing army. Revolutionary War debt strained the nation's finances, and the legislature debated revenue and tariffs *ad nauseam*, all while receiving endless petitions from veterans and their families about compensation for losses suffered during the war. Events abroad frequently reminded the United States of its weak international position. In particular, violations of Americans' shipping rights rankled both congressmen and the eastern public. The failure of emissary John Jay to secure a treaty with England that adequately redressed these insults in 1795 forced Congress to ratify an unpopular treaty that highlighted the new nation's diplomatic impotence and enraged many of its constituents.²¹ The XYZ Affair (1797-1798), the Quasi-War (1798-1800), and continued

19. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 135.

20. For a description of these two persuasions, see Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 13-30.

21. For evidence of how each of these issues occupied Congress (to the detriment of frontier issues), one need only look to the *Annals of Congress*. For detail on the intense debate over the Jay Treaty in the Spring of 1796, see Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 150-188. British relinquishment of a string of forts along the northwestern frontier was a condition of Jay's "Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation." However, redress on this issue held relatively little value for its detractors (who emphasized its lack of reciprocity and its negative effect on U.S.-French relations) or its supporters (whose praise for western cessions was lost in a sea of other eastern-centric arguments).

attacks on American vessels in the years leading up to the War of 1812 all commanded the attention of Congress at the expense of frontier agenda items.

Questions about land titles and boundary disputes, key issues for settlers, often went unaddressed. Congress certainly spent time discussing the issue of land, but most of those conversations focused on designing laws that allowed maximum extraction of value with minimum investment of resources.²² The letters of frontier petitioners like Bartholomew Tardiveau, a western merchant of French origin, reveal the legislature's lack of interest in the concerns that occupied settlers. Writing to Governor St. Clair on behalf of the residents of Post Vincennes and the Illinois country in March 1788 to request some guarantee of their lands, he explained that they had already sent several petitions and memorials to the Confederation Congress, none of which had yet elicited a reply. His complaint highlights one root of congressional inattention to western land title issues: at the end of every legislative session there was a significant amount of turnover. When new delegates arrived in New York, Tardiveau wrote, there would be "a necessity of going thro' the whole business over again. And if [congress's] attention was taken up with matters of greater moment...as it is probable it [s]hall, interests, it is fear'd, will be laid aside." In this particular case, Tardiveau was only partly correct. A congressional committee did ultimately address their petition, but its resolution simply passed the ball back into the regional court. They elected to push the question off onto Governor St.

Furthermore, leaders like Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton considered the potential dangers of maritime disagreements much more serious than those arising from a British presence in the West; they assumed that British power on the frontier would decrease without any overt attention to the issue from the government. Jerald A. Combs, *The Jay Treaty Debate: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1970), 73-74. Finally, as this chapter shows, the evacuation of the forts did not mean that the federal government was able or willing to devote adequate resources to assert American sovereignty in fluid border regions.

22. See Chapter Two.

Clair, leaving him wholly in charge of surveying and verifying ancient claims of settlers present in the territory long before the United States officially acquired it.²³

Discussions about territorial land offices and titles in the House of Representatives were sporadic, and often resulted in motions that simply put the business off for another day or shuttled the issue from committee to committee. As one 1792 letter explained, “the multiplicity of business before congress this session” meant that “it is probable the opening of a land office will not [merit] their attention.”²⁴ Congress debated the parameters of public land sales at length, but found the business of sorting through poor farmers’ historical or right of improvement claims far less engaging. Two days before Christmas in 1790, President Washington sent papers respecting territorial land grant cases that required the “interference” of Congress. The papers were read, and the packet immediately forwarded to the Senate “for their information.” The House spent no time in debate and took no action. Yet when the question of disposal of the public lands (i.e. those that could be sold for a tidy profit) came up four days later, the legislature spent the better part of the day in debate. They resumed the discussion the following day, and again on January 4, 1791 when a variety of resolutions on the issue came to a vote.²⁵

23. B[artholomew] Tardiveau to Governor St. Clair, March 20, 1788, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter, vol. 2, *Papers Relating to the Period of the First Stage of the Government of the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1791* (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 100. (Hereafter cited as *TPUS 2*). For the resolution of Congress granting control to St. Clair see “Report of the Committee: Petition from Post Vincennes and the Illinois Country,” [May 5, 1788], in *TPUS 2*:105-108. The Congressional Committee did not believe that the claimants had any evidence at all to warrant their petitions. See [Report of Committee on the address of the inhabitants of Post St. Vincents], in United States, Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. print office, 1904-37), 34:83.

24. Copy of a Letter to Colonel Johnston [or Johnson], Unsigned, Fort Hamilton, March 29, 1792, Armstrong Papers, Box 2, Folder 13, INHS. The House might reach the point of a vote on smaller matters that did not resolve the major problems with westerners’ claims, such as amendments regarding lot size for sale through land offices. For example, *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 345-349.

25. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 3rd Sess., 1,873-1,890. There were exceptions – a petition from French residents of Gallipolis regarding congressional confirmation for their Scioto Company purchases was presented on February 9, 1793 and actually addressed and passed by February 22nd. See *Annals of*

Robert Rutherford of western Virginia tried to inspire congressional interest in settlers' claims. He explained to the House in March 1796 that land policy as it existed left the people on the frontiers in a precarious position, and advocated a measure requiring absentee landowners to forfeit their purchase back to the government. Because land policy allowed wealthy speculators to buy up acreage that they did not actually occupy or farm, the frontier people "cast their eyes about them for assistance, and see nothing but large unoccupied tracts of land, whose owners, perhaps, are living secure in some large city. This, [Rutherford] said, was distressing to them."²⁶ Yet in 1797 St. Clair was still trying to impart the necessity for more attentive, clear, and comprehensive policy in the Northwest Territory:

Congress has not as yet turned their attention to that quarter, nor prescribed any rule whereby their titles are to be judged or their possessions confirmed. I was in hopes to have received instructions for extending the jurisdiction of the Territory to that quarter, and that Congress would have taken titles into consideration – neither of which has happened. It has, however, appeared to me that they were requisite, and I flatter myself with receiving them when there is leisure from business of more importance.²⁷

St. Clair decided to call for residents in the Detroit area to bring their claims to him instead of Congress. With the metropolitan government far away and uninterested, western colonials, like British-Americans before them, had to create local administrative procedures that functioned independent of the federal authorities. This also held true for the maintenance of law and order along the frontiers.²⁸

Congress, 2nd Cong., 2nd Sess., 869-895.

26. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 410. Rutherford spoke highly of frontier residents, saying they were like the best fish that rose to the top of the water. His speech, however, is an exception that proves the rule. His sympathy is sparked by the lack of it among others.

27. St. Clair to the Secretary of State, Potts Grove, September 11, 1797, in *SCP* 2:421-422.

28. St. Clair also reached into his own pocketbook to cover administrative expenses. In 1795 he notified President Washington that he had spent most of his own money and taken on considerable debt while carrying out Indian negotiations at the behest of the government, yet nothing had been done to reimburse him. He had presented his accounts to the Treasury Board and Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton as

Parliament had required the American colonies to cover the cost of their own defenses, and the founding government learned from that example; few congressmen had a mandate to vote in favor of expenditures for policing the frontiers. As Henry Knox explained in response to an application for more troops around Marietta, Ohio, “[i]t seems to be a pretty prevalent opinion among the members of the eastern States that the expences [*sic*] for the Western territory should be rather lessened than enreased [*sic*].” Knox feared that fulfilling such requests might agitate the eastern public.²⁹ In the legislature, pressure from constituents retarded the progress of bills for governing the West. As Senator William Maclay wrote in his journal on April 7, 1790, he supported bringing a bill regarding the territory south of the Ohio River before the Senate; however, he informed his colleagues that “they must make it stand alone.” He “wished to avoid all expense [and] had no notion of salaries to Governor, judges, etc.”³⁰ If the government did authorize an increase in publicly funded personnel along the frontiers, caveats abounded. In 1790, for example, the War Office instructed various lieutenants in counties throughout the Northwest Territory that they could call forth “scouts.” Strict regulations, however, limited the lieutenants. The number of scouts could not exceed the number typically authorized in the state of Virginia (again forcing the colonial territories to follow the example of mother states), and under no circumstances could the force called exceed eight individuals. The scouts had to be employed only temporarily, and would be dismissed when the “exigencies” that required their employment were deemed over. The scouts could not be paid more than Virginia had previously allowed for similar personnel,

well. Still no appropriation had been made. When St. Clair applied to Hamilton about the oversight, the secretary openly admitted he had forgotten about it. Governor St. Clair to the President, Philadelphia, [no date], 1795, in *SCP* 2:392-393.

29. The Secretary at War to Acting Governor [Winthrop] Sargent, New York, November 9, 1789, in *TPUS* 2:221.

30. Maclay, *Journal*, 227.

and ultimately their pay would be regulated by the “lowest price in the respective counties in which the service may be performed.” Clearly, the War Office intended to recruit minimal manpower at the lowest economic cost in order to address western complaints about lack of protection.³¹

Frontier residents had their own economic priorities, and those also ranked low on the federal government’s priority list after the Revolution. For many westerners, survival and possible future wealth depended heavily on their access to river shipping, making the free navigation of the Mississippi River essential. Unfortunately for westerners, they needed the federal government to obtain and then safeguard their navigation rights.³² Legislators and their eastern constituents had little incentive to care about these issues, especially considering that each of the original states already had access to either an ocean port or an alternate path to Atlantic shipping routes. Army officer Josiah Harmar reported on the prevalence of the issue during a brief visit to Kentucky in 1787. “The Inhabitants to the westward of the Alleghenies,” he wrote, “are unanimously opposed to [the Mississippi] being closed. If such a measure should take place, they will look upon it as the greatest of grievances, as the prosperity of the Western world depends entirely on

31. “Letter to the Lieutenants of the Counties of Harrison, Randolph, Ohio, Monongahalia, and Kenhawa, Dated April 13, 1790. From the War Office. The Same to the Lieutenant of [Russel] County April 29th, 1790,” in James McHenry Letterbook, 1789-1790, Northwest Territory Collection, Box 1, Folder 29, INHS. A similar letter was sent to the lieutenant of Washington County in Pennsylvania, although without as detailed instructions (April 13, 1790 from the War Office), and instructions to Harry Innes, Esq., District Judge of Kentucky, indicated that maybe even four scouts would be “satisfactory” but left it to his discretion (also dated April 13, 1790).

32. Although the Treaty of Paris had technically secured free navigation, Spain had rejected that article of the treaty. In 1784, Spanish authorities closed the Mississippi to American shipping completely and displayed no intention of budging on the issue. Spain also denied the boundary between Florida and Georgia that the Treaty of Paris established. Both contentious and highly regional concerns were not dealt with directly until Pinckney’s Treaty of 1795. Interestingly, one attempt at securing navigation in the years between 1785 and 1795 used the argument that Americans had the right of navigation not as a sovereign nation by the treaty of 1783, but as *British* persons as of the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War in 1763. See Frederic Austin Ogg, *The Opening of the Mississippi: A Struggle for Supremacy in the American Interior* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904), 447.

this outlet.”³³ Harmar warned that if Congress refused the right, westerners would “force [the] trade.”³⁴ This sentiment existed both north and south of the Ohio River, and states with western borders such as Georgia and Kentucky also joined in holding this right paramount. Yet what constituted a sacred right for westerners was simply a peripheral provincial issue from an eastern perspective.

The economic independence of colonists had no place in the colonial relationship. In 1785 diplomat John Jay, having been charged with forging a Spanish-American treaty, tried to get congressional agreement for a compromise that closed the Mississippi to Americans for the following twenty-five years.³⁵ A closure of that duration was anathema to westerners, as Josiah Harmar’s letter indicates. However, New England and the middle states had no reason to object to the closure of the Mississippi because western access to markets only threatened seaboard merchants with competition from the interior, and a successful treaty of commerce with Spain could only add to their wealth. Southern states did oppose the measure, but for self-serving ends as well. States like Virginia only supported free navigation of the Mississippi because by the mid-1780s, the people on its western borders had begun agitating for their own separate state. Residents of what became Kentucky even threatened to remove from the Union if the Virginia state legislature and Congress did not secure interior shipping rights. Consequently, some prominent politicians like James Madison emphasized the importance of Mississippi

33. Colonel Harmar to the Secretary of War, Fort Harmar, May 14, 1787, in *SCP* 2:20.

34. *Ibid.*

35. J. C. A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish-American Frontier, 1776-1821* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 31-32. Jay did not get the votes he needed. Only seven states were willing to vote away the rights for that extent of time (nine were needed), and Stagg says the divide was sectional. New England states proved willing, while southern states refused approval.

access; however, they also knew that Congress would never pass measures that authorized the use of force to obtain that access.³⁶

The debate over free navigation as it played out over the 1780s and 1790s exemplified the secondary status of western issues in a legislature focused on an old-world agenda. In the summer of 1786, John Jay informed the Confederation Congress that navigation of an interior waterway was not “*at present* important, nor will probably become much so in less than twenty-five or thirty years, [thus] a forbearance to use it while we do not *want it*, is no great sacrifice.”³⁷ It is clear that the “we” in Jay’s communication did not include western settlers, who had explicitly demanded river access repeatedly. The founding government, focused on its post-colonial position relative to England and other European powers, prioritized maritime issues, particularly the irksome tendency of his majesty’s fleet to hold open season on American vessels (a problem which intensified throughout the 1790s due to the protracted war between France and England). Commercial concerns like the exclusion of American goods from ports in the British West Indies and seizures of American cargo also plagued the early national government. Whatever lip service some in the East may have paid to westerners’ desire for free navigation of the Mississippi, few cared enough to place that agenda item ahead of those concerning maritime rights. Like any colonial matter that contended with metropolitan affairs for attention, efforts to push the government about Mississippi access met with “opposition and indifference.”³⁸ It was not until the passage of the Pinckney

36. Stagg, *Borderlines*, 28-29.

37. *Journals of the Continental Congress* 31:481. Italics in original. The Continental Congress had no enthusiasm for free navigation, and had actually asked Jay to back off from that issue when treating with Spain during the Revolution. James A. James, “Oliver Pollock and the Free Navigation of the Mississippi River,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 19, no. 3 (December 1932): 331; [Report of Committee on the Mississippi question], September 15, 1788, in *Journals of the Continental Congress* 34:527.

38. Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 190.

Treaty (1795) that western Americans gained open commercial navigation and the right to the tax-free deposit of goods in New Orleans.³⁹ In the meantime, however, Spanish troops continued to threaten settlers' access to the river. As late as January 1798 Winthrop Sargent wrote that recent fortifications to Spanish garrisons along the waterway had raised much alarm and a "general Disaffection" among frontier dwellers who "believe[d] themselves neglected."⁴⁰ The Louisiana Purchase (1803) eventually secured free navigation of the Mississippi, and the War of 1812 helped make that waterway a symbol of the might and majesty of America's interior. Prior to that time, however, the river and those who traded along it remained undervalued.

The long and convoluted struggle to have their demands on this issue met without representation proved to westerners that their relationship with the federal government too closely resembled that of the American colonies with Great Britain before the Revolution. Just as burdensome taxes impaired British-American merchants prior to 1776, federal disinterest on the Mississippi issue prevented frontier families from prospering. "Aristides," a contributor to the *Kentucky Gazette* whose missives were republished in the Northwest Territory's *Centinel*, bemoaned the fact that America's "[w]estern country [was] sacrificed to local policy and British influence," and frontier people suffered under a conspiracy "to render [them] an unimportant people."⁴¹ In Kentucky, locals understood that without free navigation, their lands would remain underdeveloped and western commercial wealth would be stifled; gentry and small

39. Thomas Pinckney had come to the point of demanding his passports before Spain finally capitulated in October 1795. Ogg, *The Opening of the Mississippi*, 456.

40. Winthrop Sargent to Judge Symmes, Cincinnati Hamilton County, January 14, 1798, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter, vol. 3, *The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1803* (New York: AMS Press, 1793), 498. (Hereafter cited as *TPUS* 3).

41. "Aristides," "To the Inhabitants of Western America," *Kentucky Gazette* (Lexington, KY), January 11, 1794, vol. 7, no. 17, Kentuckiana Digital Library.

landholders alike “railed” against the government.⁴² Worse still, the government exposed its dependents to the whims of a foreign power: another contributor to the *Centinel* complained that while western issues languished in Congress, “a whole American colony [was] compelled to bend the knee to the creatures of Spanish despotism.”⁴³ Even Britain had not abandoned her colonists to Spanish or French attacks, he pointed out. “Hoodwinked as you are,” asked the western author who called himself “an old fashioned republican,” “[i]s there one solitary passive creature among you, who after contemplating the history of this business, can have any faith in the intentions of Congress?” He concluded, “[f]rom Government we have nothing even to hope. They never intend, nor will they ever invest us with this right.”⁴⁴ This call for independent action on the part of westerners in the face of such treatment echoed the language of the Revolution.

The legacy of colonialism certainly played a role in the break between East and West on the question of the Mississippi. National leaders’ reluctance to invest time and energy into acquiring navigation rights for westerners stemmed from America’s status as a former colony (with little diplomatic leverage), the small size of the standing armed forces, and a reliance on old-world imperial theory. Geopolitics prevented a weak nation like the United States from decisive shows of force when it came to the Mississippi, and legislators were well aware that antagonizing Spain over that issue could damage the fragile relationship with France and thus leave more room for Britain to “meddle” from its bases in Canada. With such concerns at hand, the demands of backcountry farmers in

42. Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 116-117.

43. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 21 (April 5, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

44. *Ibid.*

the distant borderlands could hardly be paramount.⁴⁵ Going to war and risking the nation's international position for western acquisitions was a luxury that the founding generation could not afford. Because westward expansion and frontier mythology did not have the cultural value that it acquired in the post-War of 1812 United States, the eastern government drifted and stalled. As Jay had said, the nation did not need nor want the navigation enough to break with Spain over it; any person living in the territories or border states would have passionately disagreed with such a statement, but the East held the power to make this decision, and regional interests did not align before 1812.

Logic inherited from British colonial theory also inspired federal policy. As historian Daniel Boorstin has pointed out in his study of the American colonial experience, British authorities had harbored concerns in the 1760s that acquiring full control over Canada and removing “the French menace” from North America might “make the colonists less dependent on the mother country.” The economic advantages derived from dominating a colonial market only continued so long as Americans remained subjects of the crown dependent on trade with the mother country; colonies with thriving agriculture, domestic manufacturing, and unrestricted access to international markets competed with rather than complemented the parent state's economy.⁴⁶ The United States government displayed similar hesitation about removing Spanish control over the Mississippi and the port at New Orleans. As St. Clair stated in a letter to President Washington, the “productions” of the frontier people would likely be the same as those of farmers and manufacturers in established states. “Should the

45. Stagg, *Borderlines*, 28-29.

46. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Random House, 1958), 361; Colley, *Britons*, 70. Colley points out that, despite this assumption, Americans did remain dependent on British goods long after the war.

navigation of the Mississippi be open to them they would soon become Rivals, and look upon each other with all the Malevolence that usually attends such a Situation.”⁴⁷ One western writer castigated the federal government for considering John Jay’s proposed twenty-five year hiatus on navigation rights in 1785: “the parliamentary acts which occasioned our revolt from Great Britain were not so barefaced and intolerable.” The complainant clearly recognized the similarity between Britain’s exploitative mercantilism and behavior of federal officials on the Mississippi issue. He believed congressmen from the New England states supported plans like Jay’s in order to monopolize domestic and international commerce with their own products. That was a hopeless aspiration, he wrote, for the regions west of the Alleghenies possessed sufficient resources to produce vast quantities of goods. If the federal government persisted in its imperialist path, however, Spaniards and not Americans would be the ones to benefit commercially. Nor would easterners enhance their dictatorial control over emigration into the West by choking off access to the waterway; reflecting on this notion, the *Centinel* contributor seethed, “vain is the thought, and presumptuous the supposition.”⁴⁸ Westerners correctly identified ties between the lingering influence of Britain’s exploitative example and easterners’ neglect of Mississippi navigation rights.

Westerners took nothing more seriously than Indian violence and frontier security, and no other problem better shows the federal government’s detachment from western concerns prior to the War of 1812.⁴⁹ Territorial news and conversation often

47. Governor St. Clair to the President, [August, 1789], in *TPUS* 2:209. Of course, *Spanish* ministers in America were actually willing to deal with the westerners and give them terms to promote commercial relationships between them and Spanish along the river and at New Orleans. It was precisely because this relationship could be very profitable for both of those parties, but not for eastern American interests (nor for the government) that the issue was not entertained with much enthusiasm east of the Alleghenies.

48. Quoted in Ogg, *The Opening of the Mississippi*, 435-437.

49. On this issue, early national policy followed trends that pre-dated the Revolution in some respects.

focused solely on conflicts with Indians along the frontiers, the frequency of which increased as white settlements expanded into lands that Indian tribes viewed as their own. The *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* featured stories about Indians on an almost daily basis, and Winthrop Sargent's 1793 travel journal recounts how settlers regaled the secretary with tales of Indian depredations at almost every stop on his journey from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Fort Washington in southwestern Ohio. That same year in Knoxville, the *Gazette* reported seventy-one white deaths at the hands of Indians in seven months. On average, one person died every ten days within a ten miles radius of Nashville in 1789.⁵⁰ Incidents like the massacre at Big Bottom near Marietta (1791), in which Delaware and Wyandot Indians attacked a settlement and killed eight residents, caused alarm throughout the territories, and created a growing conviction among those in both the North and Southwest that the government had little interest in defending them.⁵¹

In general, national leaders and legislators followed the unsuccessful, economically-motivated example of the former mother country's Indian policies during the 1760s and 1770s. These policies, discussed in detail in the following chapter, prioritized peace and stability far above the demands of white colonists. Like the British government in the 1760s, Congress found itself heavily in debt after the Revolution, and could not risk inciting a costly war with frontier tribes. American authorities, therefore, preferred to negotiate with potentially hostile tribes, rather than make a show of force. Consequently, most U.S. congressmen opposed bills that allocated substantial funds or

Colonial leaders along the seaboard in places like Pennsylvania and South Carolina were traditionally loathe to dedicate resources to frontier defense. See Jensen, *The Founding*, 26-30.

50. Tom Kanon, "The Kidnapping of Martha Crawley and Settler-Indian Relations prior to the War of 1812," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 14.

51. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* (November – December, 1793), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS; Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], Sunday, October 13, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 4, OHS; Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 207-209.

personnel to fight Indians in the West. One motion on the table in early 1792, for example, met with opposition because it proposed raising three additional infantry regiments and a squadron of light dragoons. Multiple representatives supported a motion to strike out that proposal, arguing that Indian wars taking place at that time had been “unjustly undertaken” and instigated by white as well as Indian depredations. The legislators who opposed levying additional troops echoed British Indian Superintendent William Johnson; they blamed the white colonists for encroachments, not the Indians for retaliating. “To persevere in hostilities would be wasting the public money to a very bad purpose indeed,” they said, when much more progress could be made through the use of “justice and moderation.”⁵² When the government sent federal troops into the Northwest Territory in 1787, it intended to legitimize American control over the settlement of Vincennes, evict “squatters,” and respond to Wabash raids on Kentucky; riding to the aid of settlers did not figure into the plan. In fact, General Josiah Harmar (who led the 1787 expedition) spent much of his time treating with the Wabash Indians rather than antagonizing them.⁵³

The founding government’s preference for treaties over troops created an enormous disparity between eastern policy and western demands, an all too familiar schism that resembled disagreements over westward expansion after 1763. There can be no doubt that federal authorities knew of territorial residents’ repeated calls for adequate

52. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 337-338. The House secretary did not identify specific speakers during this debate. The provision for augmenting western forces did have its supporters, who contended that the Indian wars were not for conquest, but for aiding vulnerable neighbors, and that peace treaties would not be an effective strategy long-term. Only two speakers argued for the troops: Alexander White and Andrew Moore, both of whom were from Virginia. White hailed from what became West Virginia and Moore from an interior county. *Ibid.*, 343-348.

53. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2011), 429. Troops went north under Josiah Harmar, who, according to White, did wish to intimidate rather than conciliate the Indians when he treated with them.

protection from Indian raids and more forceful military offensives throughout the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As *The Causes of the Existing Hostilities between the United States and Certain Tribes of Indians North-West of the Ohio* (1792), a collection of documents published at the behest of President Washington, explained:

...the complaints of [the frontier's] inhabitants...of the pacific forbearance of the government, were loud, repeated, and distressing – their calls for protection incessant – till at length they appeared determined by their own efforts to endeavor to retaliate the injuries they were continually receiving, and which had become intolerable.⁵⁴

The report tried to make a case for equality between the demands of frontier citizens and those of people living on the “Atlantic Frontier.” The gap in perspective between full citizens in established eastern states and that of frontier colonials, however, remained insurmountable. What westerners viewed as the duty of the government to come to their aid, many in the East saw as inciting an “[I]ndian war.” Compared with frontier settlers, easterners in general had little experience with Indian violence in their day to day lives and no motivation to expend resources and lives waging a war in distant territories. Their representatives in government knew that. During the debate on funding troops for the Indian wars in 1792, some congressmen pointed out that sending regular troops (as opposed to frontier militia) to fight Indians made little sense since such men were “collected in the heart of populous cities, where the face of an Indian is seldom seen, [and people] hardly know whether the Indian and the horse are not the same animal.”⁵⁵ Thus distanced from the realities of white-Indian relations, legislators and their constituents could not empathize with westerners’ demands.

54. “The Causes of the Existing Hostilities between the United States and Certain Tribes of Indians North-West of the Ohio,” January 26, 1792, in *TPUS* 2:362.

55. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 341. The House secretary did not provide specific names when he recorded this debate.

St. Clair's infamous defeat in the Battle of the Wabash (1791) confirms the overall indifference of the federal government. The governor marched against a force of Indians from the Western Confederacy in present-day western Ohio in September 1791, having been unable to begin the campaign in the summer months because of troop and supply delays. His poorly supplied and disorganized force (much depleted by desertion) did not even encounter its targets until November 4th when a surprise attack thoroughly routed the American troops. All but three of the officers among them were killed, more than 600 soldiers perished, and 279 more were wounded. Soldiers abandoned thousands of dollars worth of equipment on the field and left behind prisoners and wounded who were tortured to death after the battle.⁵⁶ As word of the defeat reached Congress, legislators reacted by blaming St. Clair and initiating a formal inquiry into his failures. The "Report of a Special Committee of the House of Representatives on the Failure of the Expedition Against the Indians," issued on March 27, 1792, conceded a lack of effective attention and resources from the central government. One of the principle causes for the failure, in fact the first item Congress listed in its report, was the "delay in furnishing the materials and estimates for, and in passing the act for the protection of the frontiers, the time after the passing of which was hardly sufficient to complete and discipline an army for such an expedition, during the summer months." The report also mentioned the slowness of quartermasters and contractors hired to deal with the troops' supplies.⁵⁷ Henry Knox even remarked to President Washington that he had "foreborne

56. Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 157-161; General Knox to the President, War Department, October 1, 1791, in *SCP* 2:244.

57. "Report of a Special Committee of the House of Representatives on the Failure of the Expedition Against the Indians," March 27, 1792, in *SCP* 2:299.

[sic] troubling” the executive with St. Clair’s communications from the front in October 1791, at the very time the governor’s forces marched toward catastrophic defeat.

Yet few government officials appeared interested in making Indian fighting a more central part of federal policy in the wake of the disaster. In a visit with President Washington on October 13, 1793, Winthrop Sargent expressed surprise that the talk between the two avoided politics:

I am a little disappointed, coming from the western country now the theatre of war and having borne some considerable part in the unfortunate campaign of General St. Clair which is still a subject of public discussion that the President did not avail himself of the information I might have reasonably been supposed to be capable of imparting.⁵⁸

The legislature displayed no more interest than the president. Even when Washington and his secretary of war visited the Senate chamber to discuss treaty negotiations with the southern Indians, the noise from carriages on the street outside was so loud that Senator William Maclay reported that, although he could tell there was “something about ‘Indians’” being said, he “was not master of one sentence of it.”⁵⁹

In turn, western colonists resented the indifference of the metropolitan government in the East, and viewed it as evidence of the government’s continued subservience to Great Britain. One contributor to the *Kentucky Gazette* argued that a commercial cabal secretly controlled the “wily politician[s] of the East.” Slaves to British trade, eastern merchants pressured legislators to overlook Indian violence because to do otherwise might offend England, whose agents encouraged natives to attack. Treaty making, the author declared, purposefully denied “advantage and prosperity [to] the

58. Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], Sunday, October 13, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 4, OHS.

59. Maclay, *Journal*, 125. Eventually the window sash was pulled down and, after a special request, the paper was read again. Although Washington and Knox had come with clear intention of getting a rubber stamp for several articles, Maclay and others managed to put off the articles one by one, leaving the issues in the hands of a committee and postponed for another day.

western country...either by giving an improper direction to affairs or retarding them by vain and fruitless negotiations.”⁶⁰ Federal authorities committed a sin of omission by turning a blind eye to British-Indian duplicity on the frontier and appeasing Indians at the expense of white settlers, whom they chose to criticize and vilify. This created a “deep and irreparable” rift between East and West. As historian Craig Symonds explains, when General John Sevier and a band of Tennesseans attacked the Cherokee town of Etowah in northern Georgia in 1793, “Sevier was proud of his accomplishment, territorial Governor William Blount was embarrassed and apologetic, Secretary of War Henry Knox was outraged, but no one should have been surprised.”⁶¹ When people in the Northwest Territory heard about Sevier’s extralegal expedition, they were enthusiastic rather than remorseful or concerned about his flouting of federal authority. If the government in Philadelphia would not take the trouble to check the Indians, one of their own could and should “teach the faithless nation” a lesson.⁶² Although easterners had yet to embrace this stubborn independence as an important part of the American character, westerners themselves already valued these attributes as part of a regional identity.

The divide between eastern and western priorities reflected the significant differences between the realities of daily life in the two regions. In the 1790s, the worldview of a frontier settler was as different from that of a Philadelphian as a Virginian’s might have been from a Londoner during America’s colonial period. For that reason, issues that westerners considered paramount seemed entirely peripheral to federal officials and their constituents, and vice versa. Western settlers, well aware that their

60. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 15 (February 15, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

61. Craig Symonds, “The Failure of America’s Indian Policy on the Southwestern Frontier, 1785-1793,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 29.

62. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 5 (December 7, 1793), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

demands garnered little attention from Congress or the president, began constructing an “us versus them” dialogue reminiscent of the language used to justify the recent American Revolution. This cleavage between established states and the colonies to the west meant that, just as Britain’s control over her new-world possessions had unraveled after 1763, the new American government had only a tenuous hold over its own territories. As the “old fashioned republican” who wrote for the *Centinel* concluded in his 1794 letter, achieving western goals depended “solely on ourselves; and this my fellow-citizens is the critique [*sic*] moment.”⁶³ With this mindset, settlers all along the frontiers took matters into their own hands, with utter disregard for the dictates of a distant and nebulous legislature in Philadelphia or Washington, D.C. As long as seaboard citizens continued to replicate patterns of British imperialism in their treatment of the West, they bred revolution in their own dominion.

The Problem of Sovereignty

Establishing definitive sovereignty (meaning both the authority and the ability to govern) in the western borderlands was something that the founding government failed to do between 1787 and 1812. In August of 1789, Governor St. Clair wrote a concerned letter to President Washington, expressing doubts about the practicality of colonizing too large a part of the western territory so soon after the Union had been established. Although the “spirit” of expansion had already attracted a wave of settlers to the West, St. Clair asked Washington to consider whether peopling the region offered any great advantage to the United States when weighed against the cost of protecting and policing

63. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 21 (April 5, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

distant settlements. “[T]he influence of the general Government will not be much felt amongst the People, from the great Distance they are removed from the seat of it,” he wrote; “neither will their connection with, or dependence upon it, be very apparent.” Not only did distance and isolation weaken federal influence in the territories, the situation of the western country necessarily raised the issue of loyalty and jurisdiction. As the governor pointed out, “[w]ith the English Colonies on one side and the Spanish on another, [westerners] will be exposed to the Machinations of both those Governments, and in Case of a War with one or both of them...they might be tempted to throw off all Connection with the Parent States.”⁶⁴ St. Clair’s assessment highlighted the key barriers for any government that desired to control remote colonies while maintaining an unbalanced, imperial relationship with the people who resided there. Declaring dominion over the early national West did not guarantee sovereignty there for the founding government. Despite the fact that the United States government ostensibly had jurisdiction over the Northwest Territory and (after 1803) all of the land west to the Rocky Mountains, the new nation held little *de facto* control over the border regions.⁶⁵ Colonial administration proved as problematic for the American government as it had for British ministers prior to the Revolution, and with similar consequences: westerners acted like colonists instead of citizens, disgruntled, unreliable, and ripe for rebellion. Although frontier residents *wanted* to be part of the polity, their desires had no more impact on their situation than the demand for parliamentary representation had had on Americans’ status in the 1760s and 1770s. Historical and familial ties could not offset the distance

64. Governor St. Clair to the President, [August, 1789], in *TPUS* 2:209.

65. As Richard White notes, the young republic was “but one of a group of powers competing for the region.” He refers specifically to the *pays d’en haut* in the late 1780s and early 1790s. White, *The Middle Ground*, 417.

(geographical, political, economic, and cultural) between East and West. Westerners' property rights and legal status as American citizens remained uncertain; the basic ability of the federal government to assert its jurisdiction over the borderlands it legally owned was in doubt; most frontier areas were in a state of lawlessness; the loyalty of westerners to the nation was weak; and the presence of Europeans continued to blur lines of identity and nationality. For all of these reasons, America's colonies in the West could not participate in the debate about American identity and detachment from the colonial past, precisely because they lived in a colonial present complicated by the ambiguity that characterized every aspect of their lives.

Ambiguous boundaries leftover from America's colonial period made territorial administration difficult. Although the Treaty of Paris had spelled out the post-war boundary lines between the United States and Great Britain, the border relationship between the new nation and her former parent state remained a contentious one. From 1783 until the ratification of Jay's treaty in 1796, the continuing British occupation of a string of valuable forts along the northwestern border (at Detroit, Michilimackinac, Fort Erie, Niagara, Oswego, and Oswegatchie, among others) was a major source of tension. The British believed that the treaty's boundary lines left their still legal Canadian posts completely isolated and valueless; maintaining the lucrative fur trade in that region required possession of the forts in question. British politicians also realized belatedly that giving up the posts left England's ships defenseless on the Great Lakes.⁶⁶ Even after Britain officially vacated the posts in 1796, the northwestern borders remained fluid and problematic. Americans came and went across the Canadian line, and historian Alan

66. Combs, *The Jay Treaty*, 4-5. British opponents of the Treaty of Paris generally resented the territorial concessions that had been granted to the United States, and decried the abandonment of Indian allies and loyalists to American abuses.

Taylor puts the average rate of emigration from the United States into British Canada at approximately 2,500 persons per year through 1811.⁶⁷ Only the Detroit River separated the Michigan Territory with coveted Fort Detroit (in American control after 1796) from British Canada; Forts Erie, Niagara, and Oswego stood on the shores of the Great Lakes whose waters defied the placement of clear national boundary lines.⁶⁸ Large tracts on the northern fringes of the Northwest Territory and present-day Maine also remained in dispute through the War of 1812. In the middle and southwestern borderlands, boundary lines and the question of rights and restrictions proved equally troublesome for the new United States. Until the Pinckney Treaty (1795) spelled out the boundaries between Spanish America and the United States more clearly, the lines between the two empires were quite blurred. Spain and the United States both claimed portions of present-day Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Georgia's Bourbon County, created in 1785 by the Georgia Assembly, stood between the 31st parallel and the Yazoo River – territory that Spain still claimed.⁶⁹ Similar disagreements plagued the entire border region along the Mississippi River until the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Within the territories, invisible boundaries leftover from more than two centuries of changing jurisdictions, competing claims, and land treaties concluded between various nations with numerous Indian tribes left settlers' titles and identities in doubt. Consider Vincennes in present-day Indiana as a case in point. A hypothetical family living in

67. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 56. These consisted of actual British nationals (a smaller percentage of the total) and American loyalists. Taylor argues that these travelers had few political loyalties; however both made for *potentially* dangerous neighbors in the eyes of the founding generation, and added to the lack of clarity in national identification in the region.

68. The Treaty of Paris had created imaginary lines running through the middle of Lakes Erie, Superior, Huron, and Ontario. The exact location of the "middle," however, remained a point of contention, and the two nations argued over islands within the disputed areas as well. The disagreement continued until the Treaty of Ghent (1815) required commissions to finalize boundary lines once and for all.

69. Stagg, *Borderlines*, 31.

Vincennes at the time of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787 would technically have been under French, British, Virginian, and finally American control at different points during the preceding forty years. When the Northwest Ordinance went into effect, the real life inhabitants, largely French in heritage, found themselves dependent upon the mercy of Congress for legitimization of their land claims. An earlier treaty with local Pianquicha Indians had become defunct when the settlers appealed to Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. As their petition explained, their experiences under other “[s]overeigns and Governments” had not caused Vincennes residents to feel any need to solidify their land claims. Finding themselves suddenly under American jurisdiction, they “began to be sensible of the real value of lands.”⁷⁰ This type of problem cropped up throughout the Northwest Territory. When Governor St. Clair made a tour of that territory in 1791, he informed Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson that many settlements he visited possessed no discernible record of land titles and no plan of the town. At Cahokia in Ohio and Kaskaskia in Illinois, he had to commission a new survey himself, and although he undertook to obtain proof of ownership of lands that people had improved, most had simply “built upon the Lands...in a contiguous, but irregular, manner,” with almost non-existent record keeping. Without records, many claims that might have been legitimate under the right of preemption became invalid according to standing U.S. law. Winthrop Sargent had found similar problems when he went to work resolving land claims in the Northwest Territory in 1790. Although much of the oral testimony he heard regarding titles seemed to be truthful, there was “scarcely one Case in twenty where the Title [was] complete.”⁷¹ In Kaskaskia, multiple entities made land grants between the beginning of

70. Petition of the Inhabitants of Post-Vincennes, July 26, 1787, in *TPUS* 2:58-59.

71. “Report of the Proceedings of Winthrop Sargent upon the Land Claims of the Settlers of Vincennes

the Revolution and the enactment of territorial ordinances that articulated new procedures for establishing claims. Those grants existed in an administrative limbo. The governor of Virginia had appointed one Mr. Todd to oversee such business in 1778; a person by the name of De Numbrun then made numerous grants in Todd's absence after he left the country; finally, the civil courts of the area had also assumed the right of making grants, claiming that Todd had empowered *them* (an assertion that Arthur St. Clair doubted was true).⁷²

Trying to assert authority over a region that already bore the marks of multiple colonial administrations proved troublesome for American officials. Secretary Sargent's 1790 report to Congress about his attempts to resolve land claims in the Northwest Territory reveals the extent of the problem. In addition to the "desultory" business dealings of many in the area, Sargent had to wade through original concessions from French and British authorities which were generally recorded on a "small Scrap of Paper" kept in a notary office where the record keeping left much to be desired. They had, Sargent complained, "committed the most important Land Concerns to loose Sheets which in Process of Time have come into the Possession of Persons that have fraudulently destroyed them – or, unacquainted with their Consequence, innocently lost, or trifled them away." Sargent recounted that one French royal notary in the region had actually run off with land title documents in the past, and at another period the forgery and fraud involved in titles was so severe that records from that time had to be deemed useless for determining the validity of current claims.⁷³ Authorities found comparable

– Under a Resolve of Congress of August the 29th 1788 – in a Letter to the President of the United States," Vincennes, County of Knox, July 31, 1790, in *TPUS* 3:324-325.

72. "Report of Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State," [February 10, 1791], in *TPUS* 2:323-327.

73. "Report of the Proceedings of Winthrop Sargent upon the Land Claims of the Settlers of Vincennes

cases throughout the northwest as they tried to incorporate the territories into a new nation already struggling to create a coherent national identity after the Revolution. The southwest experienced similar problems. In a 1799 letter, Anthony Hutchins, a founding settler in the Natchez area of the Mississippi Territory, described the predicament there as very “disagreeable,” because residents had no idea whether old British grants would be considered legal, or “whether Spanish grants on the same land will not bear the greatest weight.” These competing imperial influences both weakened U.S. sovereignty in the region, and ensured that the colonial past remained a part of westerners’ day to day lives.

In addition to the lack of clarity stemming from the legacy of multiple European empires, various American states’ claims muddied the waters even further. Uncertainty regarding which entity held claim to what lands, and who had rights to cede and sell tracts sometimes worked to the advantage of speculators and settlers alike, but could also leave them empty-handed with little recourse if claims were called into question. In 1791, Governor St. Clair expressed sympathy for the plight of settlers whose titles came under scrutiny. Having been granted the land by the lieutenant governor of the Illinois country while the region was still under the control of Virginia, the residents of Kaskaskia:

...not doubting the authority of the Courts which they saw every day exercised...applied for Lands and obtained them, and made Settlements in consequence, distinct from those of the [F]rench; but having removed into that Country after the Year 1783 they do not come within the Resolution of Congress which describes who are to be considered as ancient Settlers, and confirmed in their Possessions.⁷⁴

One petition to the Congress from the Illinois country explained that the inhabitants were surprised to hear proclamations forbidding settlement on the public lands in the territory,

– Under a Resolve of Congress of August the 29th 1788 – in a Letter to the President of the United States,” Vincennes, County of Knox, July 31, 1790, in *TPUS* 3:324-325.

74. “Report of Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State,” February 10, 1791, in *TPUS* 2:325.

and could not conceive that such laws applied to them. “We did not come hither in defiance to the laws of our country,” they wrote, “but under the protection of the State of Virginia then Sovereign of this territory.”⁷⁵

These problems lingered for years, impairing the founding government’s control and influence over the West as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth. In 1800, the inhabitants of Wayne County wrote to Congress regarding similar difficulties with their land titles. With many petitioners descending from original settlers in the area (making them ancestrally French), the subsequent rules of first Britain and then the United States left many doubts about ownership. The King of France had promised his subjects one thing, his Britannic Majesty another, and the paperwork regarding ancient (and in many cases even recent) claims had often disappeared. While the Revolution raged to the East, and then while the new nation formulated its territorial policy, residents had negotiated titles and purchases with Indians on their own.⁷⁶ St. Clair had a difficult time communicating to these settlers that the federal government had sole authority to legitimize land titles and considered their claims precarious at best; many of the “citizens” he encountered did not even speak English thanks to the legacy of French imperial control.⁷⁷ Attempting to impose new restrictions on ancient claims alienated settlers. The inhabitants of the Scioto in the Ohio Territory explained in their 1798 petition that many of their neighbors, “in a state of despondency[,] have Accepted of the

75. Petition to Congress from the Illinois Country, in *Ibid.*, 69.

76. Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Wayne County, September 2, 1800, in *TPUS* 3:103-104. Needless to say, such persons had a lot of options for where to direct their loyalties, which they also indicated to Congress. Spanish and British presence offered alternatives to those who were spurned by the legislature.

77. See Governor St. Clair to the President, “Report of the Official Proceedings in the Illinois Country from March 5th to June 11th, 1790,” in *SCP* 2:167. St. Clair had similar problems communicating with the Indians he wanted to make proclamations to, and sometimes had to employ a French interpreter to make his announcements.

offers of the King of Spain...and are daily removing from their own country. This fact is too notorious to be denied.”⁷⁸ The inability or unwillingness of the federal government to protect westerners’ property rights undermined its authority, leaving the territories in a jurisdictional vacuum.

American sovereignty had little meaning for western settler-subjects if the federal government could not bring order into border regions. Federal legislators hesitated to support bills that channeled funds and personnel into the territories, and measures calling for increased numbers of troops met with strong opposition in Congress. Yet without a more significant administrative and military presence, the national government remained a nebulous entity, as distant to frontier residents as London and Parliament had been for British-American colonists in Boston or Charleston prior to the Revolution. Arthur St. Clair’s brother William wrote to him in 1793 to say that the Northwest Territory’s militia could neither stabilize the locals nor oppose Spanish encroachments without the assistance of federal troops. He complained that, “[t]here [had] not been a review [of the troops] these eighteen months past, so that it would appear we have no organized government whatever.” The lack of adequate staff and oversight undermined the effectiveness of judicial proceedings in the West, further diminishing federal control over the region. William St. Clair went on to describe the “deplorable state” of the territorial courts, saying that “no order is kept in the interior,” and in many cases courts were not held at all.⁷⁹ In 1798, Winthrop Sargent found himself again raising concerns about law and order directly to the territorial judges, writing to say that “the very existence of government has long been at extreme hazard.” In certain places intercourse with the

78. Petition to Congress from Inhabitants of the Scioto, February 1, 1798, in *TPUS* 2:639.

79. William St. Clair to Governor St. Clair, Kaskaskia, June 2, 1793, in *SCP* 2:317.

United States overall had “for a Series of years, been systematically barred...[and] a total Deprivation of our jurisprudence had [been] been obtained.” Even with this dire break in the implementation of jurisdiction over the territory, Sargent’s missive seems to have had little impact on the judges; the secretary wrote to them again within a month to demand that *someone* set out to bring jurisprudence into the counties in westernmost Mississippi.⁸⁰ The proximity of foreign powers only added to the disorder. It was far too easy for any person, Indian or white, American citizen or foreigner, to escape the jurisdiction of the United States. Without clearly defined borders, individuals who had run afoul of the authorities could pass easily into British or Spanish territory. All of these factors combined to minimize federal influence, and ensure that the region remained a colonial backwater rather than an integrated section of the national whole.

The federal government’s inability to establish its jurisdiction over the West, combined with westerners’ recalcitrance, resulted in lawlessness. Such behavior confirmed eastern cultural assumptions about the wildness of western colonists. Secretary Sargent often complained about the lawlessness of Cincinnati residents, writing in his journal on September 9, 1793 that the “extravagant conduct” of the night before had resulted in his own house and several others being fired into, with “two Rifle balls [hitting] near the bed [he] lodged in.”⁸¹ While Sargent attempted to impose order by punishing individuals who violated curfew and fired guns off during the night, Judge John Cleves Symmes, in a bid for popularity for his newly established settlement North

80. [Winthrop Sargent to the Honourable Judges of the Territory], Cincinnati, April 5, 1798, in *TPUS* 3:502.

81. Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], Tuesday, September 9, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 4, OHS.

Bend, publicized that shootings *would* be tolerated there.⁸² Writing to Symmes in 1793, Secretary Sargent alerted his colleague to a “considerable body of armed men” who roamed the territory intent on warring with Indians. Sargent explained that such conduct posed a serious problem, and was in “a supreme degree criminal to the present pacific intentions, and pursuits of the United States.”⁸³ Yet Sargent and Symmes could not change the fact that many of their disorderly colonists simply had little knowledge of the official plans being concocted by Congress for the West; either they did not care because such plans did not reflect their concerns, or they felt little compunction to obey distant eastern authorities who lacked the power to compel frontier people to do so. As St. Clair indicated to General Anthony Wayne when he replied to the general’s concerns about a band of armed Kentuckians threatening to incite Indian violence near Vincennes in 1795: “Parties from Kentucky, sir, with predatory designs against the Indians...cannot be prevented by any thing I can do from entering a country mostly uninhabited. All that can be done is to punish them after the act, if they can be apprehended.”⁸⁴ St. Clair’s remarks reveal an impotent government, claiming to control a vast territory to which it attributed little immediate importance, and for which it was unwilling to allocate any substantial resources. The territorial colonies quickly became a problem area, too far from a disinterested metropolis to be effectively controlled. This fact broadened the cultural gap between Americans along the seaboard and those west of the Alleghenies, and made the

82. Jeffrey P. Brown, “William McMillan and the Conservative Cincinnati Jeffersonians,” *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 121.

83. Secretary Sargent to Judge Symmes, Cincinnati, May 10, 1792, in *SCP* 2:301.

84. Governor St. Clair to General Wayne, Cincinnati, June 11, 1795, in *Ibid.*, 376. St. Clair made similar comments to Henry Knox regarding illegal actions on the part of various western residents who were involved with French agents in a plot to attack Spanish settlements: “it is impossible to prevent it by the militia...for the settlements are so distant from each other, and so weak in themselves, that the small numbers that could be collected would be inadequate, and most probably collected too late.” Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of War, [n.d.], in *Ibid.*, 321.

western colonists of the turn of the century a political liability much like their forebears had been during the 1760s and 1770s.

The sheer distance between most official governing posts and actual western settlements made it difficult to impose penalties or enforce laws. A 1798 letter from Secretary Sargent to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering detailed the precarious situation created by the great number of intruders on public lands. Many of them had fled one county to escape their creditors and now resided beyond the reach of the law simply because of the “remote situation” of any official to whom they could be held accountable.⁸⁵ St. Clair wrote that same year informing the president of the necessity of a government-funded printer in the territory. “People cannot be expected to pay Obedience to Laws they never heard of, or could hear of,” he pointed out. The governor found it impossible to spread the laws using handwritten copies, for it was logistically impractical and there were no funds for paying copiers to do the work; the Northwest Territory needed someone to print distributable laws.⁸⁶ In the Northwest Territory’s western and southernmost regions, the problem of distance continued even as parts of the Ohio country moved slowly toward stability and statehood. In 1800, a petition from residents of what is now southwestern Illinois informed Congress that while the “upper parts of the territory” had returned in some degree to their pre-revolutionary strength, they had “become poor and miserable” owing to the vastness of the territory. Being at a distance of six hundred miles from the civil and judiciary departments of the territorial government, the petitioners felt they had no hope of achieving any of the benefits of law and order,

85. Sargent to the Secretary of State, Cincinnati Northwestern Territory, January 8, 1798, in *TPUS* 3:496-497.

86. Governor St. Clair to the President, [August, 1789], in *TPUS* 2:208.

including resolution of land claims.⁸⁷ When proclamations did reach the people west of the Appalachian mountains, it was not uncommon for them to ignore official decrees, especially when those proclamations clashed openly with the particular concerns of westerners. The January 25, 1793 issue of the Northwest Territory's *Centinel* presented the large divide between eastern laws and what westerners were actually doing in the borderlands. In one column, St. Clair's official decree respecting American neutrality in the current European war told readers to make special note of the state of peace between the United States and Spain. The governor explicitly declared that any expeditions against Spanish settlements would be in overt defiance of the president and national law. Yet in the adjacent column, an open proposal for raising volunteers for "the reduction of the Spanish posts on the Mississippi" testifies to the inability of authorities to actually enforce national edicts on the frontiers.⁸⁸ The people had no incentive to follow orders that went expressly against their interests, and even if St. Clair had wanted to punish such blatant disobedience, he lacked the manpower to go after lawless bands in the territory.

The habits of certain territorial leaders exacerbated lawlessness on the frontiers; frequent jaunts eastward and a lack of clear communication among officials broke down existing structures for maintaining law and order. As Governor St. Clair revealed in a grumpy letter to Secretary Sargent in August 1796, absences resulted in confusion about who was in charge because power passed to the next in command whenever any officer of the government left the territory. In this case, St. Clair reprimanded the secretary for setting off on a trip to Detroit just when his superior was about to re-enter the territory.

87. Petition to Congress by the Inhabitants of the Illinois Country, [February 7, 1800], in *TPUS* 3:76.

88. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no. 12 (January 25, 1793), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS. The call for volunteers originated in Cincinnati and was spearheaded by George Rogers Clark, who was acting as a Major General in the French army at the time.

Upon his arrival, the powers of governor would revert to St. Clair, but since Sargent was already departed on what was likely official business, “it may, and probably will, happen that both you and me are discharging the functions of that office at the same time, and of course the acts of one must be void.”⁸⁹ Not only was St. Clair in the dark about what Sargent was doing in Detroit, he also had no idea where the secretary had left the official records of the territory, leaving the governor handicapped. He wrote to Sargent in September that he could not conceive the records had gone to Detroit, showing just how clueless the executive could become in this period of disorder and unclear jurisdiction. The secretary, who had indeed taken the records, remarked that there ought to be some provision in the law to prevent his own legislative acts being negated because St. Clair happened to arrive elsewhere in the territory. Unless Sargent ended up “acquiring some spirit of divination” for knowing when the governor set foot in the northwest, the people would continue to be inconvenienced by lack of effective governance.⁹⁰

Prior to the War of 1812, the legacy of multiple empires, the great divides between westerners and their government, and the lack of federal presence in the territories all undermined frontier colonists’ ability to identify as “American,” and this subverted their loyalty to the Union. Consider Laurent Bazadone, a successful trader in the Ohio River Valley known as the “Italian Merchant,” likely because of Genoan roots. Bazadone “was no ardent loyalist, and he may have had doubts about the merits of republicanism,” but a trader in a borderland had to remain flexible. He “probably felt comfortable with who[m]ever controlled the settlements, be it Virginian, Britisher,

89. St. Clair to Sargent, Pittsburgh, August 15, 1796, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

90. St. Clair to Sargent, Cincinnati, September 6, 1796, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS; Sargent to [unknown addressee, likely Secretary of State Pickering], Detroit, Wayne County and Territory Northwest of the Ohio River, September 30, 1796, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

Frenchman, or Spaniard.”⁹¹ Like his colleague at Vincennes, Francis Vigo (a Spanish soldier who became an established trader in the territories), Bazadone embodied the fluid nature of identity and loyalty in the West. Living in a border region where many of their neighbors were actually holdouts from previous empires, combined with their own colonial status in relation to the new American government, made it difficult for westerners to hold onto any distinct allegiances. As a new set of colonials in their own right, they could not consciously participate in the post-colonial struggle to craft a national identity taking place in the East. Thus isolated, the position of westerners during the founding decades contrasts sharply with the prominent role frontier figures came to play in national identity by the mid-eighteenth century.

Frontier settlers, beset on all sides and living in a subsistence situation on the edges of settled society, existed outside the boundaries of the American polity. Secretary Winthrop Sargent informed a colleague in October 1792 that he was “in the neighbourhood [*sic*] of a Set of men but little advanced from a State of Nature and owing no Subjection to this Government.” For this reason, army officer Josiah Harmar could report to the secretary of war that the people of the frontier preferred customs like the “tomahawk right or improvement, as they term it,” over waiting for the sanction of their nation’s leaders, to which they were “averse.”⁹² The fact that leaders like St. Clair felt it necessary to repeatedly emphasize that the men he recommended for appointments were “firmly attached to the Government of the [U]nited [S]tates” is telling. His reassurances to Timothy Pickering regarding the loyalty of local officials shows that there was no

91. John R. Wunder, “Constitutional Oversight: *Clarke v. Bazadone* and the Territorial Supreme Court as the Court of Last Resort,” *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 4, no. 3 (September 1978): 260-261.

92. Colonel Harmar to Secretary of War, Fort Harmar (at the Mouth of the Muskingum), August 4, 1786, in *SCP* 2:16, n. 1.

assumption of western attachment to the national government; rather, only certain men could be trusted amid the scattered and often discontented population.⁹³ As American laws could not effectively extend to areas not clearly under federal control, so American identity could not thrive where reality demanded a more basic, primal order.

The western colonists had no problem looking to foreign powers for support and protection in a way similar to British-Americans' willingness to ally with France when their relationship with the British government broke down. In 1789 Bartholomew Tardiveau, who often represented inhabitants of Illinois in messages to Congress, explained to Governor St. Clair that article six of the Northwest Ordinance, which outlawed slavery in the territory, disillusioned westerners who had "seen themselves for ten years neglected by that power from which alone they could expect protection, [and] now found that the very first act of attention paid to them pronounced their utter ruin." This, Tardiveau wrote, led many to "seek from the Spanish Government that security which they conceived was refused from them." He did not believe a "total desertion of the country" was beyond the realm of possibilities. The governor took Tardiveau's words to heart, warning President Washington in June of 1790 that at that time, "[g]reat numbers of people have abandoned the Illinois country, and gone over to the Spanish territory."⁹⁴ Fearing the overreaching power of an imperial government, settlers who *could* have been "greatly attached to the U.S." felt forced to seek aid from other nations. One letter to the governor of the Mississippi Territory in November 1798 informed him that residents, after hearing about "the recent example of the Northwest Territory" where

93. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State, Cincinnati, March 30, 1800, in *TPUS* 3:80-81.

94. Bartholomew Tardiveau to Governor St. Clair, Dansville, June 30, 1789, [Extract], in *SCP* 2:118-119. The Congress had not intended to confiscate slaves already in the territory and owned legally while under past French or British jurisdiction (see *Ibid.*, 119, n. 1); Governor St. Clair to the President, "Report of the Official Proceedings in the Illinois Country from March 5th to June 11th, 1790," in *Ibid.*, 173.

vacant lands sold at high prices to pay the public debt, realized they would be better off taking land grants from the Spanish government, and were “now emigrating” in the face of such gloomy prospects on the American side of the river.⁹⁵ William Maclay remarked in his journal that the “distressed state of Georgia” had affected senate proceedings; one of his colleagues “blazed away on this subject at a great rate; [and] declared over and over that Georgia would seek protection elsewhere if troops were not sent to support her, etc., etc.”⁹⁶ These threats made it clear that people along the nation’s western borders were willing to defect and actually attach themselves to a foreign rival if necessary.

No issue inspired more disloyalty than settlers’ resentment over the federal government’s neglect of western shipping rights on the Mississippi River. Brigadier-General James Wilkinson of the U. S. Army, for example, was on the payroll of the Spanish minister as Agent 13 for years as he attempted to negotiate better shipping access for Kentuckians. Following his example, a group of Tennesseans under Superintendent of Indian Affairs Dr. James White offered their services to the Spanish government, promising that it was only a matter of time before the western country left the United States to join with Spain and England in order to gain access to the Mississippi.⁹⁷ In 1795 a group of Kentuckians (including Harry Innes, a federal judge) wrote a statement declaring that they no longer held any hope that the federal government intended to intervene on behalf of western interests. Thus, “with unanimous consent” they determined to present themselves to Governor Gayoso in New Madrid. This group was

95. William Dunbar to Winthrop Sargent, November 30, 1798, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 2, OHS.

96. Maclay, *Journal*, 233. The isolation of peripheries like Georgia is also evident in this section of Maclay’s journal, as he details the opposition to sending assistance; even Georgians in the Senate like Colonel James Gunn denied any knowledge of a pending crisis between the region’s whites and Indians.

97. Kristofer Ray, “Land Speculation, Popular Democracy, and Political Transformation on the Tennessee Frontier, 1780-1800,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 164.

prepared to treat with the Spanish minister and come to terms with his Catholic Majesty completely independent of the American government. They also suggested that the Spanish colonies might benefit from receiving supplies from western Americans as opposed to eastern sources, showing a willingness not just to gain trade for themselves but to actively work to deprive the seaboard states of their share in it.⁹⁸ Such actions indicate that prominent westerners, displaying regional rather than national loyalties, had no problem circumventing the federal government and making a foreign alliance that could damage American interests.

Reminiscent of 1776, rebellion, or at least blatant disobedience, flared in the West. In 1788, for example, army officer Josiah Harmar warned the secretary of war of a possible plot among Kentuckians and Tennesseans who were tired of waiting for the legislature to secure their shipping rights. The alleged conspirators planned to seize Natchez and New Orleans from the Spanish.⁹⁹ The harsh imperial policies of the federal government turned U.S. officials into enemies rather than friends in the minds of westerners. One correspondent explained this mindset to Winthrop Sargent in 1798, when he informed Sargent that one new town in Ohio had formed its own extralegal militia. The purpose of the force was to stave off a presumably hostile federal government. The leader of the town militia stated openly that “in case any attempt was made on behalf of the United States to drive them from thence [they would] defend the place as long as he had a man able to fire a gun.”¹⁰⁰ Although Washington’s 1793 neutrality proclamation incited indignation throughout the country, the upstart French minister Edmond-Charles

98. Benjamin Sebastian, G. Nicholas, Harry Innes, and William Murray, Signed Statement, Kentucky, November 19, 1795, Benjamin Sebastian Papers, 1795-1807, INHS (SC 1728, OM 0084).

99. Brigadier-General Harmar to the Secretary of War, Fort Harmar, January 10, 1788, in *SCP* 2:39.

100. R. [Buntin ?] to Winthrop Sargent, Fort Massac [Massaic?], August 1, 1798, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

Genêt, who sought to bypass the president's authority, found some of his most enthusiastic supporters in frontier Kentucky. When several French emissaries, under orders from Genêt to organize an expedition against Spanish settlements, set out for the frontier from Philadelphia, they received aid from George Rogers Clark, who actually had a recent commission in the French military. Governor St. Clair privately remarked to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson that "circumstances and the state of the public mind are such as to enable any agent Mr. Genet may have in that part of the country to consummate a scheme of invasion."¹⁰¹ The "public mind" to which St. Clair referred clearly held no more reverence for executive proclamations than British-Americans had held for royal ones.

By the turn of the century, Westerners had learned to play their loyalties as a trump card in the ongoing battle to command the attention and respect of the nation. When the residents of an area on the east side of Ohio's Scioto River realized that existing laws offered them little protection and threatened their land claims, they informed the House and Senate that those honorable bodies would be wise to take a different approach. The western petitioners took great care to mention "the [f]acility of communication with the Spanish Settlements and the [e]ncouragement held out to such as [e]migrate [*sic*] to them and the numbers that do [e]migrate [*sic*] it is hoped afford a powerful argument" in favor of a change.¹⁰² The beleaguered residents of Fort Wayne held similar hopes. Their 1800 petition to Congress for redress of grievances pointed out that they were surrounded by other powers who all had competing interests; and because the U.S. government neglected them, the people could not resist those powers. "[T]is

101. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State, [n.d.], in *SCP* 2:327.

102. Petition to Congress by Residents on the East Side of the Scioto River, [August 22, 1799], in *TPUS* 3:62-63.

with regret,” the petitioners said, “we view the daily loss of industrious & valuable Citizens who are constantly emigrating from the different parts of the Union into the province of Upper Canada, where they find no obstructions to their procuring lands with good & sufficient titles.”¹⁰³ From the western perspective, partial citizenship demanded only partial patriotism, dependent on certain of their demands being met. “Patriotism, like every other thing, has its bounds,” read the May 4, 1794 issue of the *Centinel*, and “attachment to governments cease to be natural” when the burdens outweigh the benefits.¹⁰⁴ Another contributor to the territorial newspaper explained to his readers that expatriation was perhaps the “[o]ne ultimatum” that those in the frontiers had left to them in the face of imperial treatment at the hands of the general government.¹⁰⁵ The threat of desertion, even as a bluff, was a viable negotiating tactic so long as westerners remained subjects with only a limited stake in the nation’s success or failure.

The continued presence of rival European powers on the borders further weakened the imperial authority of the United States, especially in conjunction with the potential disloyalty of the western population. Prior to the conclusion of the War of 1812, the question of who reigned supreme in the western borderlands remained unanswered, despite what the young nation *legally* claimed according to the terms of the 1783 Treaty of Paris and later the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. In the wake of the Revolution, Britain, Spain, and France all maintained a presence on and around America’s interior frontiers, and after 1803 England and Spain still lingered to undermine U.S. sovereignty. Throughout the 1780s and 1790s, French traders and agents retained some of the influence they had accumulated as longtime figurative fathers and allies to the Indians of

103. Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Wayne County, [September 2, 1800], in *Ibid.*, 106.

104. *Centinel of the North-West Territory* 1, no. 25 (May 3, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

105. *Centinel of the North-West Territory* 1, no. 21 (April 5, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

the *pays d'en haut*, Britain maintained a military presence in the northwest, and Spanish posts loomed just across the Mississippi River. Disillusioned territorial colonists never had to travel far to reach a foreign land, and thus the borderlands remained a place of contested empires and not fully part of the new nation's struggles to define true independence in the eastern states.¹⁰⁶

Although historian Richard White correctly points out in *The Middle Ground* that the common world of old ties between French traders (and other whites of various backgrounds) and Indians “narrowed” as the United States embarked on territorial settlement, both Spain and Britain hovered on the peripheries of the nation, blocking clear identification of those regions as “American.”¹⁰⁷ The Spanish monarchy, through its New Orleans agents and ministers, frequently contacted individuals living within America's borders and convinced some of them to cross the great river in search of land and economic success. Senator William Maclay recorded as much in his journal on March 25, 1790, admitting that an “impolitic oppression of taxes...may detach the whole [western] country from us and connect them with New Orleans.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Spain took great advantage of the American federal government's neglect of its territorial subjects, and attempted to entice them away by promising more prosperity and freedom than they enjoyed in their situation as colonies of the United States. The residents of Kentucky maintained a “considerable trade” with Spanish New Orleans, and Spanish Governor Miro offered households of two to three persons 240 acres of land at no cost, with

106. White, *The Middle Ground*, 431.

107. See *Ibid.*, 430-433. White diagrams how spreading and uncontrolled violence dissolved the old ties of the common world of villagers in the northwest. French and Indian chiefs found themselves unable to contain young people set on asserting power and taking revenge. The growing presence of the United States (both in the form of unruly settlers and military officials bent on cementing American jurisdiction) further eroded old balances of power, forcing French and Indians alike to choose between throwing their lot in with the United States or removing into Spanish territory.

108. Maclay, *Journal*, 218.

households of four or more qualifying for additional acreage.¹⁰⁹ In 1795, the Spanish Baron of Corondelet wrote to Benjamin Sebastian of Kentucky to inform him that the king had agreed to open the Mississippi to the people of the West, and that his Majesty intended to pursue policies “most satisfactory” to them. Sebastian, the point of contact for several Spanish agents, became a conduit for arranging profitable trade relationships that allowed westerners to store and ship goods (particularly flour and tobacco) through the port of New Orleans, all with a tidy commission for the Spanish handler.¹¹⁰ Spanish proximity combined with metropolitan neglect allowed westerners to cultivate their own trade relationships independent of imperial oversight, much like British-American colonists had done throughout the Caribbean during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In some cases, the Spanish, British, or even French presence led national leaders to imagine elaborate conspiracies, revealing the uncertainties of a weak post-colonial government. When rumors spread about a plot in which Colonel John Connolly (a British agent) planned to incite the people of Kentucky to desert the United States in late 1788, St. Clair explained to Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay that such whispers should not be dismissed. The governor went on at length about elaborate plans to “tamper with the people” and convince them to “throw themselves into the arms of Great Britain” or incite them to attack Spanish territory in defiance of federal policy. St. Clair’s dire predictions hit a dramatic note when he described another scheme to ignite western defections:

109. “Proclamation by Governor Miro,” New Orleans, September 6, 1789, in *SCP* 2:122-123.

110. John Heckewelder, M.C. Sprenkel, Clara Frueanef, and H. Knox, “Narrative of John Heckewelder’s Journey to the Wabash in 1792,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 12, no. 1 (April 1888): 36 n. 2; The Baron of Carondelet [Spain] to Benjamin Sebastian, New Orleans Trdy, 86th 1796, Sebastian Papers, Transcripts, Box 1, Folder 4, INHS; J.J. Merieult to Benjamin Sebastian, [New Orleans, n.d.], Sebastian Papers, Box 1, Folder 4, INHS.

Thousands of people...have been tempted by the [a]ccounts published of its [Spanish America] amazing fertility to quit their ancient Settlements without having secured a foot of Land there and cannot obtain Lands, but at a Price that is beyond their reach. There is no doubt many of those will readily join him, for they have no Country, and indeed that Attachment to the natale Solum that has been so powerful and active a Principle in other Countries is very little felt in America.¹¹¹

St. Clair received warning of an organized effort whereby three persons of varying Irish and French backgrounds planned to travel a route from Pittsburgh, southward on the Ohio, through Kentucky, and on to New Orleans for the sole purpose of “encouraging the people of those parts to secede from the Union, and form a separate connection with a foreign power.”¹¹² Secretary Sargent attributed additional clandestine affairs to the Spanish in the southwest. The alleged sighting of some new Spanish posts being erected along the Mississippi in early 1798 led Sargent to speculate that their existence could be apocryphal; if real, no doubt the frontier dwellers would take full advantage of foreign influence. “It can be no difficult matter for designing and wicked men to convert Appearances to their own purposes,” he cautioned Judge Symmes. Such persons, having previously “formed Combinations, remaining to be investigated, and deemed pregnant with Evils to our Country, by being suffered to continue in Impunity, and at large,” could easily “have it most amply in their power to contaminate the minds of many amongst them, and perhaps produce a general Disaffection.”¹¹³

British positions and influence along the frontiers, especially in the northwest, reminded the founding generation that the former mother country still possessed the power to interfere in American affairs. The actions and presence of British persons on the

111. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs [John Jay], Fort Harmar, December 13, 1788, in *TPUS* 2:167-169.

112. James McHenry to Governor St. Clair, War Office, May, 1796, in *SCP* 2:395.

113. Sargent to Judge Symmes, Cincinnati Co. of Hamilton, January 14, 1798, in *TPUS* 2:498.

borders rankled a post-colonial generation that had just fought a long and costly war to break free of England. Still smarting from the slights of the colonial era, easterners became angrier still when Britain ignored treaty articles requiring it to relinquish western military posts; the founding generation fixated on the British menace in the West as an overarching threat to the nation's very existence. The lack of federal control over that region and its people only intensified suspicions. Eastern concerns about the danger of mixing British proximity with the unreliable nature of western residents dated back to the 1780s. Condemnations of Shays' Rebellion in 1786, for example, accused the perpetrators in western Massachusetts of "abetting Great Britain's efforts to divide and conquer America." From their posts in Canada, England could easily woo Americans in border regions with promises of land, and encourage intrigue among unruly elements.¹¹⁴ Commercial relationships in particular complicated matters of legality, ownership, and allegiance in the Northwest Territory. The Illinois and Wabash land companies both found their purchases during the 1770s called into question because, although members bought the land legally, British and not American authorities had overseen the original sale. In 1791 the companies petitioned the Senate, explaining that the "meaning and intention of the parties [involved in the sale] were interpreted and explained by persons duly qualified, of whom his Britannick [*sic*] Majesty's interpreter was one." Their deed of sale, "found to be authenticated by Hugh Lord Esquire, captain in the eighteenth [B]ritish Regiment & then commanding in that Territory...That further formalities (if, from the British Government, more were necessary to be obtained) were prevented by the

114. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 102; Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 32-33.

almost immediate rupture with Great Britain.”¹¹⁵ Easterners may have struggled to detach from commercial and cultural subservience to the mother country, but frontier residents found it impossible; they still remained in a limbo of sorts, where American and British oversight continued to actively clash.

English traders enjoyed free passage in and around the Northwest Territory despite the disapproval of provincial authorities, and many frontier settlers relied on these traders for their livelihoods, making it more difficult to clearly define the borderlands as an American arena. British agents based out of Detroit, Michilimackinac, and Niagara continued to profit from the lucrative fur and arms trade in the northwest, while English firms like Panton, Leslie, and Company operated in the southwest after the Revolution. Indian groups hostile to the new United States protected these entities as they passed through American lands on trading ventures.¹¹⁶ Arthur St. Clair complained in a letter to Thomas Jefferson in February 1791, that the inhabitants of the Illinois country carried on a regular illicit trade back and forth across the Mississippi, that was “almost entirely in the hands of the British.”¹¹⁷ The Secretary of State took heed, writing to the British minister later that year and listing among his chief complaints that England remained in forts all over the Great Lakes region, and that “British officers have undertaken to exercise a jurisdiction over the country and inhabitants in the vicinities of those forts.”¹¹⁸ So long as that situation continued, federal laws and trade regulations had as little de

115. The Illinois and Wabash Land Companies to the Senate, December 12, 1791, in *TPUS* 2:353-354.

116. J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Britain and the American Frontier: 1783-1815* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1975), 29-30.

117. “Report of Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State,” February 10, 1791, in *TPUS* 2:331.

118. Thomas Jefferson to George Hammond, Philadelphia, December 15, 1791, in United States, Department of State, *Authentic copies of the correspondence of Thomas Jefferson, Esq. secretary of state to the United States of America, and George Hammond, Esq....* ([London], 1794), 5, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University - Memorial Library.

facto control over westerners as Parliament's had had on American colonists in the run up to the Revolution.

Britain's trade with Indian tribes became the single most important factor in their continued intrusion into American territory after 1783; it underscored federal weakness in the territories and impaired the already fragile relationship between the West and the national government. As tribes in the Northwest Territory went about forming the Western Confederacy, which challenged U.S. expansion in the late 1780s, the British continued a rather ambiguous relationship with native allies like the Shawnee. While English officials based in Canada or the disputed western posts did not overtly promise military aid to the developing western confederation, they did provide covert aid and a stream of gifts and supplies, including ammunition.¹¹⁹ Henry Knox knew this, and he informed future territorial secretary Winthrop Sargent in 1786 that while the British sat in their posts and provided protection for recalcitrant natives, the United States could not expect a quiet relationship with the Indians within its borders.¹²⁰ Britain's material contributions to the western confederation only increased and became more explicit over time. Arthur St. Clair informed Secretary of War Knox in May of 1790 that the "pernicious counsels of English traders" was a key factor in the troublesome relationship between the United States and the Miami Indians of the Ohio country. With such powerful allies encouraging them, St. Clair prophesied that it would be near impossible to convince the Miamis to listen to terms without having to "effectually...chastise them." Such impotence, he feared, encouraged other currently peaceful tribes to defect, and

119. White, *The Middle Ground*, 434.

120. Henry Knox to Winthrop Sargent, New York, March 5, 1786, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

could result in “the entire loss of the affections of the people of the frontiers.”¹²¹ British interference with Indians also threatened the United States economically. Thomas Jefferson complained to British minister George Hammond in 1791 that England’s agents had muscled Americans almost completely out of the fur trade with the Indians in the northwest, thereby stealing “a commerce which had ever been of great importance to the United States.”¹²²

The United States had failed to assert its sovereignty over the interior, and this left the crisis in the northwest effectively the same as it had been during the Revolution. As the 1790s progressed, negotiations between the U.S. government and the western confederation broke down, leading to open warfare and eventually the complete “reabsorption” of the Algonquian tribes into the British alliance by 1794.¹²³ The movement of enemy agents like Alexander McKee and Simon Girty between Indian settlements and the British stronghold at Detroit underscored England’s obstinate refusal to abandon the western posts. In August 1794 Winthrop Sargent wrote in his journal that a Cincinnati man named Danint, formerly a prisoner of the Delaware, returned with tales of British duplicity. Danint “corroborate[d] the general Information of the British aiding and supplying the Savages and that they have a strong Garrison in ‘Rache de Bois.’”¹²⁴ And Although Governor St. Clair had predicted in 1790 that a treaty requiring the evacuation of the western posts might resolve the issue, the power struggle continued long after Jay’s 1795 treaty succeeded in dislodging the British. While Britain did

121. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of War, Cahokia, May 1, 1790, in *SCP* 2:136.

122. Thomas Jefferson to George Hammond, Philadelphia, December 15, 1791, in *Authentic copies of the correspondence of Thomas Jefferson*, 5, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University - Memorial Library.

123. White, *The Middle Ground*, 455.

124. Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], Sunday August 17, 1794, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 4, OHS.

officially relinquish the posts at Detroit, the Miami River, and Michilimackinac in compliance with the treaty, its interest in the region only increased after 1795. The evacuation of the forts occurred at a time when the loss of such strategic positions caused great concern for the British; because England was in the middle of a war against revolutionary France, dominating the American interior – a target for recruitment among French emissaries like Edmond Genêt – became more, rather than less, important. As a consequence, the period 1796-1803 saw renewed interest in Britain for projects to enhance the country's influence on America's borders (including increased cooperation with the Philadelphia government at certain points, and covert interference at others). This included instructions to royal officers John Graves Simcoe and Sir Guy Carleton to form relationships with prominent westerners and gently remind Indian groups that their old allies still held military and trading posts just over the border in Canada. In the midst of this, authorities in both London and Philadelphia speculated on the very real possibility that the western territories might actually separate from the parent state.¹²⁵

Tensions between the United States and England over frontier sovereignty continued to increase through the War of 1812; so long as easterners treated the West as a colony, fluid identities and the potential for colonial rebellion meant that the region weakened rather than strengthened the young nation. British settlements remained in close proximity to Americans' settlements on the farthest northwestern borders around places like Detroit. Locals deemed one such area "Smugglingburg," a fact that acting

125. Wright, Jr., *Britain and the American Frontier*, 103-105, 108-120. It was in Britain's interest to avoid explicit involvement in schemes and actions that alienated the U.S. Government. Stretched thin militarily, British forces could not actually dominate border regions by force, and thus Whitehall needed federal cooperation to keep French sympathizers along the frontier in check. Thus there were periods in the late 1790s that saw increased official cooperation between Britain and the United States, and American authorities were willing to lay more blame at the feet of upstart frontiersmen than on English orders or agents.

Governor Sargent used in his August 1797 report to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering to convince him of Britain's malevolent "[i]ntention[s]." ¹²⁶ That same year, several residents of Detroit attributed bad behavior and disloyalty among their neighbors to factions "under the denomination of British subjects, who [wished] to subvert all Government and oversett [*sic*] the present Constitution." ¹²⁷ In 1798 Winthrop Sargent forwarded the concerns of Detroit's James May, a military officer who had written repeatedly to the secretary complaining about an active British cabal working against the government in cahoots with some badly behaved members of the American garrison there. Sargent, passing May's concerns to General James Wilkinson, pointed out that "several persons in important appointments from the United States [at Detroit] are [B]ritish subjects." ¹²⁸ British interference among Indians also continued through the War of 1812; As Sargent emphasized to Wilkinson, traders in England's employ were "no friends to the United States." ¹²⁹ On April 30, 1799 Secretary of State Timothy Pickering even sent an official missive to the British minister complaining of the continuing "reprehensible" behavior of Alexander McKee. Territorial officials alleged that McKee, the British Agent for Indian Affairs in Canada, wanted to organize the Shawnee Indians to demand changes in the Treaty of Greenville. ¹³⁰

126. Acting Governor Sargent to the Secretary of State, Cincinnati, August 14, 1797, in *TPUS* 2:624.

127. Multiple Signers [Nathan Williams, James May, B. Beaufort, Joseph V[?], and one illegible] to Winthrop Sargent as Acting Governor of the Western Territory at Cincinnati, Detroit, March 23, 1797, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

128. Winthrop Sargent to General James Wilkinson, Cincinnati, February 10, 1798, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS. Wilkinson was not a logical recipient of such complaints given his dealings with Spanish representatives.

129. White, *The Middle Ground*, 511.

130. The Secretary of State to the British Minister, Department of State, Philadelphia, April 30, 1799, in *TPUS* 3:22; Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State, Cincinnati, July 1, 1799, in *Ibid.*, 28. Although McKee died not long after these accusations surfaced, this type of machinations on the part of an official representative of the British government was considered plausible enough to solicit serious inquiry by the State Department.

Although the transfer of Louisiana (including over 800,000 square miles ranging north and west from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada) from France to the United States in 1803 eased Britain's fear of the French menace, it did not put an end to British involvement along American borders. The Burr Conspiracy (1802-1807) offers one example. Aaron Burr, along with General James Wilkinson (then Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army) and other western co-conspirators, allegedly plotted with Britain to detach parts of the West from the Union. The conspiracy, which garnered headlines after Burr's arrest in 1807, clearly showed Whitehall's continuing ability to undermine American authority. Although the English government hesitated to give official aid to Burr's plan, the *Chesapeake* Incident in June 1807 fired Anglo-American tensions and led British ministers to take a renewed interest in exploiting American weakness in her border regions (especially northern Maine and the Gulf coast).¹³¹ Disagreements between the two nations continued and intensified as the first decade of the nineteenth century came to a close, and it became increasingly clear that the battle for sovereignty would be fought not only in the maritime arena, but in the wilderness of the contested American West.

...

Overall, the situation in the early national American West was, one of "failed sovereignty."¹³² The West remained peripheral, outside the bounds of American jurisdiction and populated with lawless persons of dubious loyalties, worked upon by European rivals on all sides. A letter from Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to his

131. Wright, Jr., *Britain and the American Frontier*, 137-150.

132. Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 178.

father in Philadelphia demonstrates the extent to which residents of the capital understood this crisis at the turn of the century:

Our western frontiers are threatened with a new Indian war. French and Spanish emissaries swarm through the country. There is reason to believe that a western or ultra-montane republic is meditated. A letter from Mr. Blount, a Senator from Tennessee, has been detected, which discloses a plan for exciting the Indians to hostility upon an extensive scale. It is certain that overtures have been made to the British government for support, and there is every reason to believe, short of positive proof, that similar overtures have been made to Spain and France. The British will not now support the project. The advance made by our people, shews, however, the profligacy of our patriots and the precarious tenure by which the western country is attached to the existing government.¹³³

In contrast to this failed sovereignty, American domination of the western borderlands after the War of 1812 signaled the end of post-colonial weakness and the beginning of a new era in which the West became the backbone of national strength and identity. The lands and peoples that reminded the founding generation of their country's vulnerability embodied something completely different for subsequent generations. Consider Daniel Boone who proved his lack of national loyalty when, in 1799, he moved to Spanish Missouri to escape his creditors (having been paid Spanish cash to settle there). He crossed into enemy territory with little compunction or difficulty.¹³⁴ Boone represented everything fluid and unstable in the early national West. Yet by the 1820s and 1830s, Boone had risen to the status of national folk hero. Boone's later fame, however, rested not only on his rugged frontier persona, but on his role as a violent Indian fighter. The West's movement from the periphery to the center of American politics and culture required not only an acceptance of western citizens and the elimination of foreign

133. Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Oliver Wolcott, Sr., Philadelphia, July 4, 1797, in George Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, Edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1846, 1971), 1:548.

134. Daniel J. Herman, "The Other Daniel Boone: The Nascence of a Middle-Class Hunter Hero, 1784-1860," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 434.

influences along the borders, but an American Indian policy that had been post-colonial in its slavish imitation of British methods had to undergo a drastic change.

Chapter Four **Consolidation and Peace:** **Post-Colonial Indian Policy and the British Model**

The founding government's Indian policy continued the pattern of post-colonial imitation, and confirmed that easterners initially envisioned an empire in which colonial status was based on cultural, rather than racial, criteria. Historian Colin G. Calloway has argued that the "real disaster of the American Revolution for Indian peoples lay in its outcome." According to Calloway, in deserting Britain's Indian allies, and ceding all of the lands east of the Mississippi to the United States, the Treaty of Paris (1783) sold Native Americans out to a new nation bent on violent retribution, duplicity, and exploitation.¹ These statements about the peace treaty are accurate, and white depredations along the frontier did continue after 1783. However, the policy line and intentions of the founding government should not be portrayed as a concerted, formalized attempt at race-based injustice. No *American* mandate for Indian abuse or removal emerged in the wake of the Revolution. Rather, the former revolutionaries quickly learned that prioritizing peace and consolidation over the interests of white settlers (as Britain had done) was the only pragmatic path. Clashes between frontier settlers and metropolitan officials over Indian policy date back to the 1760s, when colonial British-Americans living in western border regions angrily demanded the government use force against native tribes. In 1763, the Paxton Boys, a vigilante group based in western Pennsylvania, massacred a group of peaceful Conestogoe Indians and marched on Philadelphia in protest of provincial policies that seemed to coddle the Indians at the expense of white frontier interests. British officials denounced the Paxton Boys, and

1. Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 272-301.

Benjamin Franklin deemed them “white savages.”² That this terminology could still be applied to westerners in the founding decades demonstrates continuity in the contests over Indian policy before and after the American Revolution. When easterners labeled frontier residents white savages, they revealed their reliance on English imperial ideology. In the British colonial framework, Americans were marked as inferior by virtue of their distance from the capital and their cultural crudeness relative to residents of the imperial center, not necessarily by discernible racial markers. In applying the same methodology in the West, the founding government confirmed its reliance on English models, and its inability to create a unique, “American” approach to imperial growth.³

As a result, the Indian policy that the founding government generated, the one that enraged westerners throughout the period 1787-1812, did not reflect a hatred for Indians, nor did it indicate a generally-accepted assumption that Native Americans were innately savage and destined for removal or internal colonization. Rather, policymakers relied on British examples while crafting law regarding the native population in the borderlands; they had no other example to follow, and like other settler societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they struggled to craft independent policy regarding indigenous

2. Benjamin Franklin, *A Narrative of the Late Massacre in Lancaster County* (Philadelphia, 1764), cited in Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 48. For a description of the events in 1763, see *Ibid.*, 46-50.

3. British imperialism did incorporate theories about racial hierarchy, which were particularly prominent during the occupation of India (the British *Raj* began in the mid-nineteenth century); however, at the time of the American Revolution, Britain had *no* experience with colonizing a large, racially distinct, indigenous population. The imperial ideology with which American citizens would have been familiar, therefore, came from British colonial endeavors in the “Celtic fringe” of the British Isles. There, inferiority was signaled by behavior, not by racial markers *per se*. Culture (adhering to norms of conduct, dress, political or religious ideology, language), not race, marked a person as Other, threatening, and in need of imperial oversight. See Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 26-31. For a discussion of how these cultural markers for marginalization transferred onto race-based imperial ideology later in the nineteenth century, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 184.

populations.⁴ Consolidation and peace, the cornerstones of federal Indian policy before the War of 1812, came at the expense of white westerners who ranked no higher than Indians in the U.S. imperial system. Whatever brutal course future generations took with regard to Indian colonization and removal, authorities determining Indian policy in the decades leading up to the War of 1812 saw white violence against Indians as shameful, problematic, and possibly treasonous. In turn, westerners reacted like settler-subjects, resisting the centralization of Indian policy, and crafting an alternate narrative that laid the groundwork for the race-based colonialism of the nineteenth century. Moving beyond post-colonial imitation meant subsequent generations had to embrace westerners' race-based prejudices and create new Indian policy that left Native Americans on the path toward internal colonization while it welcomed white-skinned savages into full citizenship.

The founding government crafted Indian policy within a context very similar to that which British administrators encountered after the Seven Years' War. By the mid-1760s, Great Britain emerged from that war much impressed with the need to effectively secure the western borderlands and avoid future incidents in the region that might embroil the empire in larger international conflicts. Significant debts and a thinly spread military force meant that the British empire could not afford to allow colonial subjects to antagonize native tribes by stealing their land or attacking them and thereby encouraging Indians to seek protective alliances with other European powers. British leaders,

4. For examples one may look to Latin America, where white settler elites struggled to find balance between their own desire to emulate Europe and expand settlement and the problematic presence of native populations. Colonial monarchs and metropolitan policy was often much more sympathetic to the needs of indigenes than white frontier populations were, and the founding generation of revolutionary leaders tried (and failed) to emulate moderate polices during early independence. Richard Gott, "Latin America as a White Settler Society," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26, no. 2 (April 2007): 269-289, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

therefore, took measures to end land disputes and secure diplomatic relationships with Native Americans after 1763. During the war, ministers in Whitehall had placed military resources on the borders and appointed two superintendents in the northern and southern frontier districts to oversee relations with Indians. After hostilities concluded, it became the task of these superintendents, Sir William Johnson in the North and Edmund Aiken in the South, to stabilize the frontiers. Aiken and Johnson warned the ministry that Indian affairs could not be properly managed if left in the hands of the colonists.⁵ They, along with Massachusetts Governor William Shirley and Virginia's Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie, advocated for centralization, arguing that imperial authorities needed to oversee and sanction all political and economic relationships between white colonists and American Indians. Faced with similar problems, U.S. officials eventually came to the same conclusions.

As British policy was influenced by the experience of the Seven Years' War, so too did the Revolutionary War and its aftermath have an immediate impact on American legislation. Many of the Revolution's political and military leaders who stepped into office after the war were familiar with England's approach to Indian policy and its methods for controlling Indian-white relations in the West. In the midst of war, they chose caution over creativity. During the earliest days of the war for independence, Benjamin Franklin urged that the rebelling states' policy regarding the Indian nations take up where Britain's had left off. One draft of the Articles of Confederation reflected that desire, leaving land sales explicitly in the hands of the general congress and insisting that a treaty of alliance with the Six Nations be an immediate priority. Franklin, like

5. Jack M. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1670-1755* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 29-30. These orders were initiated in 1755.

many of the founders, “wanted to preserve the customary framework of interaction between colonial and Indian polities, not do away with it.” Franklin’s fellow Pennsylvanian John Dickinson agreed. He argued that within the context of revolutionary upheaval, the wisest course was to “recreate” borderlands diplomacy as it had existed in the colonial era, not re-invent the wheel.⁶ George Washington, of course, had been personally involved in British military operations on the northwestern frontier during the French and Indian War. After the war, he agreed with the colonial governors and superintendents who recommended a centralized system for dealing with Indian issues and preventing frontier conflicts.⁷ It is hardly surprising that he and his peers moved on a similar path when it came time to formulate the new nation’s official policy. In accordance with the founders’ traditional and cautious agenda, Secretary of War Henry Knox proposed a conservative policy after the Revolution, one designed to attach Indians to the national government, not to alienate or eliminate them from its jurisdiction.⁸

Because officials in both nations wished to avoid expensive military conflicts (and had little sympathy for whites who demanded expansion at any cost), American and

6. Leonard J. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 67-68, 88. Sadosky believes that the plans of Franklin and Dickinson were eclipsed by shifting American policy after 1777; however, it is clear that Knoxian policy continued the pattern of replication and reliance on the British model. Sadosky argues that as early as 1784, American leaders were imposing a “new set of norms on the political relationships between American settler polities and American Indian nations.” Yet they did so by insisting Indians had “suffered the same defeat as Great Britain” in the war – a tacit admission of the tribes as legitimate combatants rather than racially inferior subjects. They may have attempted to deal with these Indians as “subjects” on some level, but they were also doing the same thing with their white colonials in the region at this time. *Ibid.*, 120-121.

7. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 30.

8. Francis Paul Prucha, a leading scholar of federal Indian policy, attributes the reluctance of Knox and Washington to wage a war of subjugation against the tribes to their “high integrity” and experience in Indian affairs; however, such integrity and principles, if they existed, must be given much less weight than the imprint that observing British Indian policy (the context of any “experience” they had) made upon them as post-colonial statesmen. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, vols.1 & 2 Unabridged (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 89.

British Indian policy prioritized the same goals: “consolidation and peace.”⁹ For both nations, achieving these ends meant restricting white expansion and ending local control of Indian relations. After the Seven Years’ War, British colonial administrators feared that unjust treatment and fraudulent land dealings instigated by frontier whites jeopardized long-term prospects for peace, and thus over time the British became more concerned with preventing encroachments than with any legitimate or forceful defense of settlers’ claims.¹⁰ In 1758, the Treaty of Easton had created the first settlement barrier at the Allegheny Mountains. That same year, the proprietary government of Pennsylvania re-ceded lands that had been purchased four years earlier back to the Indians, and promised not to make land grants to white settlers in the future. British figures like Colonel Henry Bouquet, the commandant at Fort Pitt, pledged that the King had no intention of taking additional Indian possessions, and he formalized the crown’s commitment to upholding established boundary lines in a 1761 proclamation that explicitly labeled lands west of the Allegheny Mountains as belonging to the Indians. Bouquet also forbade colonial subjects from even entering Indian lands without permission from the commander-in-chief of the military in North America or a colonial governor. The British Board of Trade upheld that stance and codified it in the Proclamation of 1763.¹¹

A circular letter from the Commissioners of Trade to the colonial governors on July 10, 1764 further centralized Indian affairs. According to the letter, crown-appointed

9. Craig Symonds, “The Failure of America’s Indian Policy on the Southwestern Frontier, 1785-1793,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 29-30.

10. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 31-32. Imperial agents and colonial governors warned Whitehall of the complaints of native groups throughout the colonies in the post-war years. They emphasized the fact that whether white claims might be proved legitimate by some method or not, the Indians still viewed themselves as having been cheated. This, they stated in no uncertain terms, threatened to upset the peace.

11. *Ibid.*, 32-33, 42-43, 75.

officers had to supervise all commercial and political relations with Indians. Trade could only occur at prescribed locations (either Indian towns in the South or military posts in the North), and with licenses from colonial governors. The circular letter also called for royal superintendents to appoint justices of the peace to operate in Indian Country. It prohibited local interference and required the repeal of all existing laws related to Indian trade.¹² Despite occasional attempts to win local control between 1764 and 1774, the colonies repeatedly proved themselves incapable of effectively overseeing the Indian trade or of avoiding open warfare with the frontier tribes. One of England's last imperial acts before the outbreak of the Revolution, the Quebec Act of 1774, attempted once again to consolidate control over the entire north and southwest interior.¹³ By the time the British-American colonial relationship broke down, Whitehall had established a very clear policy trajectory, and despite the resentment that boundary lines and centralization caused between 1763 and 1776, the new U.S. government failed to make any meaningful revisions when it took control of the frontier after the Revolution.¹⁴

American Indian policy, like the Northwest Ordinance, reflected visions of those in Congress who intended to settle the West profitably and with minimal fuss. To that end, consolidation and peace also became the watchwords of the founding government's approach to native-white relations. If achieving those goals meant that laws guarded Indian rights as opposed to the desires and claims of its white citizens, so be it. Post-

12. *Ibid.*, 75-76.

13. *Ibid.*, 238, 241-242. For example, policy adjustments in March 1768 reduced the number of garrisons, provided for an extended boundary and some limited expansion, and de-centralized the regulation of trade with Indians. The ministry retreated from this accommodation policy by 1773 when the colonies failed to provide effective legislation and oversight for the Indian trade, and hostilities increased in response to the violation of established boundary lines. See *Ibid.*, 211-238.

14. *Ibid.*, 4.

colonial federal policy again emphasized profit over people in the West.¹⁵ Although historian Leonard J. Sadosky presents Henry Knox's Indian policy as a "new course for...United States' diplomacy with Indians," the novelty of Knox's approach is only in relation to the fragmented policy of the early confederation period; viewed beside the British imperial model, the secretary of war's plans simply reconstructed measures in place decades before independence. Henry Knox openly dismissed actions that deviated from Great Britain's established methods for dealing with Indians, white settlers, and questions about coveted lands along the frontiers. He insisted that the United States stop treating the Indians unjustly and instead "revive Sir William Johnson's system of accommodation, hoping to transform Indian culture over time by doing so." Within Knox's administrative framework, the federal government would "constructively engage" Indians and "regularize" commercial relations while avoiding war.¹⁶ This clearly echoed the philosophies of crown-appointed officials like Johnson and Aiken, who believed that Indian nations, settler colonies, and the metropole coexisted for the benefit of commerce and diplomacy; from their point of view, peaceful cooperation benefited all parties in the imperial relationship. Men like Knox and senior army officer in the West Josiah Harmar inherited this mindset: it would cost "unreachable" sums of money and an unjustifiable amount of manpower to subdue Indians on the borders. Thus they determined to avoid war even at the risk of enraging the white population.¹⁷

15. Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 198. Griffin ultimately argues that the Treaty of Greenville (1795) marked the time that the federal government came to agree with westerners on the necessity of removal. *Ibid.*, 248-252. However, as described in the following pages, federal policy maintained a fairly steady commitment to restricting white settlement and protecting Indian claims well into the nineteenth century.

16. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 157. If Knox sought to distance federal policy from any destructive precedent, it was from that of the individual states, not from the British model. Britain too had attempted to limit the freedom individual colonies had over Indian relations. What Sadosky labels "Knoxian" is really British policy resurrected.

17. *Ibid.*, 40; Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 201.

There can be no denying that the central government did intend to exploit and manipulate the Indians in the West; despite overtures about peace and protection of their land titles, federal authorities often ignored or reneged on treaties, and sales concluded between federal agents and Indian tribes became defunct when they proved inconvenient.¹⁸ As Francis Paul Prucha concludes, “[t]he policy of the United States was based on an assumption that white settlement should advance.”¹⁹ Thomas Jefferson wrote to William Henry Harrison early in 1803 explaining that while the goal for that time was peaceful coexistence, the long-term objective was to bring Indians into the American agricultural model. One way of doing this was for the government to push trade relations with Indians that would run them deep into debt, making native peoples more likely to cede their hunting lands to satisfy creditors.²⁰ Controlling troublesome borderland populations by financial manipulation was not, however, uniquely applied to Indians during the territorial period. Federal policy also empowered land speculators who deprived white frontier residents of their lands and livelihoods, and the military used violence to oust non-compliant whites in the same way it applied force to recalcitrant Indian groups. Jefferson shared with others in the founding generation a policy plan heavily colored by the examples set by Great Britain and other European empires: they

18. This strategy, however, was not unique. As Robert M. Owens points out, the practice of fraudulent and exploitative land sales/treaties was common to European policy in the colonial period. See Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 32. Thus prioritizing peace at the expense of white colonials in the West and the earliest forms of official abuses of Indian rights *both* show how the post-colonial U.S. government mimicked the practices of the former mother country.

19. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 114. Prucha couples white advancement with Indian withdrawal at the end of this conclusion. Based on the evidence in this project, that assumption of withdrawal – some knowledge that Indians would be literally removed from the white frontier – materializes largely in hindsight. The policy line described here, and the many statements of congressmen must outweigh the assumption of some vague ability to see into the future that has often been attributed to founders like Jefferson.

20. Owens, *Jefferson's Hammer*, 76.

would work with the Indians through compromise and subtle, slow manipulation rather than overt colonization.

Gift giving and federal land policy demonstrated this overt reliance on the examples of British Indian agents like Sir William Johnson. Johnson had set that precedent during his tenure as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the North (1756-1774), for he believed in gift-giving to affirm the paternalism of the central government and thereby win the loyalty of Indian “children” (a ploy he himself copied from the French example).²¹ In 1801 William Henry Harrison, then governor of the Indiana Territory, told the secretary of war that giving gifts to the tribes had been a highly successful strategy for Great Britain, and he suggested the propriety of mimicking that tactic. Federal land policy also recognized Indian rights in the same way British authorities had. When government emissaries discovered early on that many Indian groups on the frontiers had no intention of vacating their ancestral lands willingly, legislators chose to recognize native land rights. Purchasing the lands and subsequently “claiming sole right of preemption rather than initial ownership...seemed both more humane and cost-effective than conquest.” This decision tacitly acknowledged federal willingness to accord Indians not only human rights, but the rights of sovereign nations that surrendered their property only through voluntary sale via treaties with legitimate government representatives.²² During the early 1790s, federal authorities backed away from any notion that England

21. Moses Dawson, *Historical Narrative of the civil and military services of Major General William H. Harrison, and Vindication of his Character and Conduct as a Statesman, a Citizen, and a Soldier. With a Detail of his Negotiations and Wars with the Indians Until the Final Overthrow of the Celebrated Chief Tecumseh and his Brother the Prophet. The whole written and compiled from original and authentic documents furnished by many of the most respectable characters in the united states. By Moses Dawson, editor of the Cincinnati Advertiser* (Cincinnati: Printed by M. Dawson at the Advertiser Office, 1824), 11, FHS; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2011), 310.

22. Owens, *Jefferson's Hammer*, 16.

had a right to cede the Indian lands, and also “conceded that the United States had not conquered the Indians during the Revolution and did not have title to their lands by right of conquest.”²³

Just as Britain’s Board of Trade prioritized consolidation, centralizing control over commercial relationships with native groups figured prominently in federal plans; this included maintaining vise-like control over the purchase and distribution of Indian lands and asserting federal influence over trade. As army officer Josiah Harmar surveyed western communities in the Northwest Territory and observed their habits in the late 1780s, he saw the need for federal control. His conclusions were seconded by men like Illinois resident Bartholomew Tardiveau, who had witnessed how Britain and France conducted their Indian affairs. Tardiveau reasoned that the *only* way to bring order out of the chaos and lawlessness he saw among frontier residents was to fall back on the European model. Lax control and leaving the “dealings between white [and] red men” in the hands of locals should be replaced with “a more absolute government” that would bring the Indian trade into a coherent, well-regulated system.²⁴ These sentiments filtered back to Philadelphia, where Henry Knox helped promote the need for tighter regulation of the Indian trade. The idea gained traction in Congress, where supporters of federally-run Indian trading houses pointed out that it “tended to conciliate the affections of a distressed and unhappy people” and might prevent a costly war; “France, Britain, and Spain, had adopted this policy, and found the good effects of it.” In some ways, the founding government had to replicate British commercial policy with Indians because, as Pennsylvania Representative William Montgomery argued, the U.S. government could

23. *Ibid.*, 16.

24. Quoted in Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 139.

never make allies of the natives as long as they traded with England and not the United States; Indians had to be wooed away from the British trade with equally attractive commercial policies. Without centralized regulation of the Indian trade, the federal “frontier policy [would] be unsystematic and despicable.”²⁵

In consolidating control over commerce with Indians, legislators prioritized peace and the interests of natives over those of white settlers just as Britain had in the 1760s. When the House took up debate on a bill for the regulation of Indian trading houses in January 1796, New Jersey’s Jonathan Dayton immediately objected to a part of the bill that allowed individuals who sold goods to Indians to also procure or purchase those same goods. He warned against the potential abuse of power, showing that his first thought went to both the corrupt nature of white dealers and the need of Indians for government protection. Although one committee member, Virginian Josiah Parker, explained that the president’s oversight power provided an automatic check against abuses, his fellow Virginian William Giles also believed it necessary to interdict combined sale and purchase power. The House motion to do so received approval in a committee of the whole House. Legislators who supported expenditures for government-run Indian trading houses revealed again how far profit ranked ahead of the wishes the American colonists in the West. Mr. Parker argued that it cost far less to “conciliate the good opinion of the Indians than to pay men for destroying them.” Investing in trade, under the responsible management of federal officers, employed public resources much more profitably than funding Indian wars. Parker also felt a keen sensitivity for the

25. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,262. Josiah Parker of Virginia quoted. The bill was ultimately thrown out. The inability of the House to focus on the issue indicates once again how little real attention was paid to western issues within the metropolitan government at this juncture. The issue was raised again the following December, when there was some confusion as to whether or not any law had been passed the previous year. A special committee of seven was appointed to look into the issue. See *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 152-153.

“distressed situation” of Indian peoples since the arrival of Europeans, and longed for commercial oversight to bring “perpetual tranquility.” James Hillhouse agreed: money sunk into Indian wars was lost forever, while if invested in trade it would not be lost at all.²⁶ This equation dismissed the desires of frontier settlers just as the British ministry had prioritized financial pragmatism over its colonials’ demands.

The House debate in January 1796 also reveals that conversations about Indian policy involved larger ideological struggles: would the young nation involve itself with Indian commerce as Great Britain had, or could it set a different course? Centralizing control over Indian trade signified that the federal government planned to pursue top-down imperial policies not just with regard to those commercial relationships, but in its overall treatment of westerners. It implied a belief that the federal government alone could (and should) monopolize and dictate the frontier economy. Those in favor of the bill pointed out that American traders did not have the ability to exert enough influence over the trade to counterbalance the strong presence of British-Canadians. Only federally backed merchants could do so. Opponents of the bill pointed out that the business “was highly improper for Government to embark in” because the central government had no place in local or regional economies.²⁷ That type of imperial economic behavior on the part of Britain had been financially deleterious to colonial residents in the end. Nevertheless, the importance of exercising enough influence over Indian trade relations to counterweigh and hopefully overpower British-Indian commercial relationships won out over reservations. In the spring of 1796, both the House and Senate passed an Indian

26. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 229-232, 240-241. Representatives Isaac Smith and Aaron Kitchell joined Parker and Hillhouse in their preference for trade with an end goal of peace over allocations for war.

27. *Ibid.*, 229-232.

Trade Act. That law empowered the president to establish trading posts at his discretion and to appoint agents (who were barred from negotiating individually with Indians outside of their capacity as federal employees); it provided for the regulation of prices and of which types of goods could pass through the posts, and authorized the withdrawal of \$158,000 annually for maintenance of the trade and salaries. The 1796 trade act followed a 1790 law that required persons trading with Indians to be licensed by a federally appointed superintendent, and another intercourse act in 1793 that further expanded federal power.²⁸ The basic structures of these laws remained intact until the 1820s.

Tightly centralized control over any military engagements with native groups also mirrored the British agenda. Although the Articles of Confederation left Indian relations in the hands of the individual states, this became a clear diplomatic weakness after the Revolution.²⁹ As English authorities had learned during their struggle to maintain peace throughout the 1760s, leaving too much power in the hands of armed locals presented a plethora of problems. Frontier settlers did not respect invisible boundary lines, lacked the diplomatic experience to treat with Indian tribes, and did not have the physical and emotional distance necessary to negotiate dispassionately about lands and titles. First-hand knowledge of violent clashes between whites and Indians also gave westerners much stronger racial biases than officials appointed by the central government. After Georgians sent armed bands into Indian territory in the mid-1790s, the House proposed a bill that made it a crime to be “found in arms” in Indian Country, punishable by a fine

28. As Prucha indicates, the temporary nature of these measures (the 1790, 1793, 1796, and 1799 bills all carried an explicit statement that they would be in effect for two years only) was indicative of a government “feeling its way.” This lack of commitment reinforces the argument that the founding government lacked certainty in its post-colonial state, and explains why a reversion to structures modeled by the former parent nation was so common. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 90.

29. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 120.

and prison time. The bill also authorized the United States military to apprehend vigilantes and prosecute them under federal rather than local law. When representative Abraham Venable of Virginia suggested that individuals be permitted to exact retribution for “actual” Indian depredations, James Hillhouse challenged him. Hillhouse doubted the practicality of expending millions for frontier defense if the federal government intended to allow any private citizen to pass Indian boundary lines and “do what was to all intents and purposes carrying on war[.]” He suggested that if national authorities intended to allow such decentralization of Indian relations, they might as well recall all the federal troops and “leave [westerners] to fight for themselves.”³⁰ Unfortunately for westerners, while the federal government jealously guarded the right to handle disagreements with Indians, it proved slow to react when conflicts did arise.

When Kentuckians sought federal support for a defensive campaign against allegedly hostile Indians in the mid-1790s, for example, their governor met a wall of congressional indifference. Insisting to Henry Knox in 1794 that the existing protection the federal government provided was woefully inadequate, Governor Isaac Shelby practically begged the secretary of war to relinquish some of his and the national legislature’s control over military action on the Kentucky frontier. That January he wrote, “it is a universal opinion in this state that the system of warfare which is pursued at present by the United States will never humble the Indians or induce them to consent to make a lasting peace.” Shelby remarked that his constituents “also believed that the citizens of this country are fully competent to that task if they could be properly employed in it.” He made it abundantly clear that he and “the citizens of this country alone” were willing to “engage to attack and defeat any part of the Indian Tribes north

30. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,259-1,260.

west of the Ohio against whom the President may think proper to direct our operations.” Should the central government consent, Shelby was “fully persuaded that the Indians would immediately after the first expedition, either apply for peace on terms the United States might think proper to impose, or abandon [their attacks] altogether.”³¹ Despite this willingness among Kentuckians to take up arms against Indians on their own initiative, Shelby’s requests ran headlong into a rather stingy Congress. Like British lawmakers after the Seven Years’ War, American legislators faced too much debt and instability to enter into Indian wars lightly. Shelby’s force struggled to acquire ammunition, tools for building batteries, equipment to cross waterways, and a myriad of other supplies for the mounted volunteers and militia that Shelby proposed to raise once he got permission from Philadelphia. He wrote again exactly one month later to update the secretary of war about several more murders of white persons on the Kentucky frontier, and to ask again that he be empowered to call volunteers for the state’s defense. However, his suggestion that a special board be instated to “make any arrangements at the expence [*sic*] of the Union that may appear necessary,” and his request that more officers be called forth to lead were not likely to go over well with Knox or the legislature, all of whom faced the same need to minimize such expenditures that had prompted Britain to prioritize peace over western colonists’ demands before the Revolution.³²

Reluctance among eastern Americans to dedicate funds or personnel to the protection of western settlements rested on the same logic that drove British decision making after the Seven Years’ War. Both Great Britain and the United States struggled to convince individuals who had no reason to fear Indians to support expenditures on

31. Isaac Shelby to Major General Henry Knox, Secretary of War, Kentucky, January 10, 1794, FHS.

32. Isaac Shelby to Major General Henry Knox, Secretary of War, Kentucky, February 10, 1794, FHS.

defense. Matters of economy distracted the Board of Trade in 1765-1766, leading the ministry to stall on reconfiguring the Indian boundary line to more accurately reflect the situation on the ground in the West. The Commissioners of Trade deferred decisions about proposed changes to Indian policy despite demands from their appointed officials in the colonies. From the British metropolitan perspective as the 1760s and 1770s progressed, it made sense to focus most of their military efforts on quelling the rebellious behavior of American colonists.³³ American legislators had similar hesitations about whether or not the nation's limited funds should be spent on raising and maintaining military forces for the West. During the 1790s, representatives opposed bills for increasing the number of standing troops employed in waging Indian wars; they argued that if Britain conducted Indian relations and retained garrisons with fewer than one thousand men, why then should the United States need a force any larger to keep the Indians in check? Members of Congress resisted the expenditure of millions because they did not understand "for what reason the [Indian] war has been carried on." From Great Britain's experience, leaders in the new nation knew that raising taxes to fund Indian wars could be disastrous and exacerbate tensions over what was already unpopular policy in the East.³⁴ Legislators ultimately came to resent westerners' constant demands for more protection. Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts informed the Third Congress that he was "personally extremely hurt at the constant complaints of the inefficiency of the defence [*sic*] afforded the frontier, which cost annually so much to the government."³⁵ Yet westerners had much cause for complaint; not only was the federal government as

33. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 70, 106.

34. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 342.

35. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,260.

stingy as the former mother country on frontier defenses, federal policy systematically excluded western colonials in the same way Britain had prior to the Revolution.

American policymakers designed laws relating to Indian trade and diplomacy in a way that marginalized individuals who actually lived in close proximity to Indian Country. As subjects, territorial residents had no more right to participate in Indian affairs than colonists had under British imperial rule. British Indian Superintendent William Johnson had recommended that Parliament do everything in its power to limit the participation of American colonists in Indian affairs after the Seven Years' War, and federal officials in the new United States took a similar course with regard to their own colonial population. Secretary of War Henry Knox did not perceive that frontier citizens should have any active role in negotiating with their Indian neighbors, and even attempted to isolate them to the same degree he would a foreigner or spy. The instructions Knox issued to General Anthony Wayne when Wayne went to conclude a treaty with the Northwestern Indians in April 1794 explicitly requested that he keep white citizens out of all negotiations unless they were actually employed in the public service. This placed American westerners in the same boat as another banned group – British agents.³⁶ Knox even kept Governor St. Clair, a dutiful representative of the central government and the effective superintendent of Indian affairs in the Northwest Territory, in the dark. St. Clair complained to President Washington in 1795 that for a very long time he had “never been made acquainted with anything respecting [Indian affairs].” Orders from Philadelphia “called [Indians] to the seat of Government...by persons employed by the Secretary of War, without the slightest intimation to me,” the governor

36. [Henry Knox], “Instructions to Major General Wayne on Holding a treaty with the North Western Indians – and form of the treaty,” April 4, 1794, Northwest Territory Collection, Box 2, INHS. British agents had been blamed for all manner of covert abuses on the borders including stirring Indian unrest.

grumbled. St. Clair suspected that federal authorities had sent various persons to live with the Indians “in public characters” without his knowledge, let alone his active agreement. No one supplied him with the names of such deputies, nor was he told where to find them. St. Clair finished his list of grievances with the fact that when the Treaty of Greenville (1795) concluded the latest Indian war, the first notice he had had was seeing a proclamation by General Wayne in the newspaper. No one had seen fit to involve or even inform the person to whom the Congress shuttled responsibility for Indian issues much of the time.³⁷ Removing westerners’ agency when it came to Indian relations confirmed their colonial status. When Winthrop Sargent scolded the inhabitants of Vincennes so harshly and called them children in 1797, he did so because they had dared to make ostensibly legal land deals with local Indians. The reason for Sargent’s harsh refusal of the settlers’ request to take their claims to Congress for legitimation was that America, like the British and French sovereignties, had never recognized the right of individuals, companies, or associations to hold lands by lease or gift or any other method.³⁸ The new nation, weak and uncertain, took no steps to depart from those European examples.

Legislators, both British and American, excluded colonists from the process of purchasing lands from Indians; these identical policy lines demonstrated the federal government’s ill-advised replication of imperial policies that had failed Britain just decades earlier. When England’s Board of Trade wanted to centralize control over Indian

37. Governor St. Clair to the President, Philadelphia, [no date], 1795, in William Henry Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair, Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress, and Governor of the Northwestern Territory, with his Correspondence and Other Papers* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 2:391. (Hereafter cited as *SCP* 2).

38. [Winthrop Sargent’s reply to the inhabitants of Vincennes], [October 28, 1797], in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter, vol. 3, *The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1803* (New York: AMS Press, 1793), 491-492. (Hereafter cited as *TPUS* 3).

relations after the Seven Years' War, it prohibited private (i.e. colonial) land purchases in a 1764 order. In doing so, the Board intended to restrict local interference and put a stop to native complaints about "colonial mismanagement and mistreatment."³⁹ The U.S. made similar provisions with the exact same goals in mind. To eliminate the influence of "obstreperous whites" in the West, Congress (at the repeated behest of the executive) passed several important trade and intercourse laws. Section Four of the 1790 Act to Regulate Trade and Intercourse with the Indian Tribes invalidated all land sales made to individuals or states (regardless of any perceived right of pre-emption) without a "duly executed" treaty "held under the authority of the United States." Another act upheld the centralization of land sales when that law expired two years later. The 1793 intercourse law also banned "the irregular acquisition of lands" by allowing only purchases "made by a treaty or convention entered into pursuant to the constitution." Section Eight of the 1793 law made it a misdemeanor for persons not employed by the federal government to negotiate land treaties or purchases.⁴⁰ In 1795 the Third Congress urged President Washington, who sent a message to the legislature regarding the disposition of Indian lands in Georgia, "not to permit treaties for the extinguishment of Indian titles to any lands to be [beholden] at the instance of individuals or of States." The House also proposed a resolution prohibiting individuals from making claims of pre-emption or treating with Indians whenever federal land treaties already existed. It recommended that private claims from frontier Georgians be "postponed." Furthermore, should western Georgians attempt to violate federal land treaties in the Southwest, Congress encouraged

39. White, *The Middle Ground*, 309. The plan also banned the rum trade, relegated other trade to specific posts, and empowered post commissaries as justices of the peace. With the exception of west Florida, it was never effectively implemented on the ground.

40. Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 15; Prucha, *The Great Father*, 90-91, 109.

the executive to “use all Constitutional and legal means to prevent the infractions,” in which efforts he was guaranteed the cooperation of the legislature. Intercourse laws passed in 1796, 1799, and 1802 upheld and affirmed this level of federal control over land acquisitions.⁴¹

In making provisions similar to Whitehall’s for central control over Indian affairs, the founding government also found that it ignited comparable tensions between its authority and that of local and state representatives. In a 1790 speech, Congressman James Jackson of Georgia complained that federal treaties gave the Creek nation thousands of acres rightfully belonging to Georgians, and ridiculed a federal law that allowed trespassers on Indian lands to be punished at the discretion of the tribes. “Such a circumstance was heretofore unknown, even under the British Government,” he insisted, pointing to the similarities between British policy and that of the government in Philadelphia. “God forbid,” Jackson concluded, “we should teach our citizens to revere that government more than our own!”⁴² Federal dismissal of Indian violence also inspired defiance. Governor St. Clair predicted that “the government would be laid prostrate” when Kentuckians marched on Indian Country themselves, and Governor William Blount of the Southwest Territory was so frustrated over the issue that he privately “remained open to outside sources of support,” and put out “not so quiet feelers” to the British about bringing part of the territory under their control.⁴³ As American Indian policy became

41. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,251-1,252; Prucha, *The Great Father*, 109. Again, although white settlers found many ways to violate these provisions and drive Indians from their lands, one should not simply assume that (in Prucha’s words) “Indians were ruthlessly dispossessed with nothing done to protect their rights.”

42. *Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 13, 1790, America’s Historical Newspapers. (Hereafter cited as AHN).

43. Governor St. Clair to the President, New York, September 14, 1789, in *SCP* 2:124. The threat of open desertion and humiliation of the government caught the attention of both the president and Congress; Washington was empowered to call forth a militia, though it is clear that Congress was equally if not more

even more oppressive than the unpopular methods of British imperial rule, resentment and rebellion among westerners was a foregone conclusion.

The negotiations at the Treaty of Colerain in 1796 serve as a case in point. The divide between local authorities representing frontier priorities and federal Indian agents rankled Georgians, whose grievances echoed those of frustrated colonial frontiersmen before the Revolution. As Leonard J. Sadosky explains in his overview of this treaty with the Creeks, federally appointed negotiators Benjamin Hawkins, Andrew Pickens, and George Clymer clashed with three commissioners appointed by the state of Georgia, showing the divergence of federal and local interests at that time. While Georgia's representatives insisted on upholding land cessions made in confederation-era treaties that neither the Creeks nor the federal authorities recognized as valid, Hawkins, Pickens, and Clymer pointed to regulations that prohibited "private citizens" from treating with the Creeks without the express permission of the federal commissioners. Citing Georgia's less than satisfactory record in maintaining peace with the Creeks during the preceding ten years (including many of the same complaints Sir William Johnson and others had made about local failures with Indians in the colonial era: dishonest land sales, dubious treaties, fraud, and "low-intensity" warfare), the federal commissioners used U.S. law and the Constitution to trump the Georgians' claims. Although the treaty made a small land cession in accordance with the state commissioners' desires, the national government had clearly overridden the locals.

concerned with maintaining their precarious peace with the Indians as with appeasing or showing empathy toward westerners. Kristofer Ray, "Land Speculation, Popular Democracy, and Political Transformation on the Tennessee Frontier, 1780-1800," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 170. Ray asserts that these and other rebellious activities were driven more by economic pragmatism than by actual disloyalty to the United States. However, the ability to treat with America's most loathed of enemies about actually defecting and creating a union with that foreign power, is certainly not something that could be undertaken by anyone whose loyalties were *not* tenuous.

Although Sadosky points to the treaty as evidence of the growing opposition to federalism on the frontiers, it is also revelatory of the extent to which post-colonial Indian policy exacerbated existing tensions between the center and peripheries in early national America. Favoring peace, and consequently Indian interests, over whites' desires for security and land made the federal government as unpopular among frontier Americans as British officials had been after the Proclamation of 1763. As Sadosky argues, the resultant treaty displeased the Georgians far more than it did the Creeks. Treaty making with other tribes demonstrated the same policy trajectory. When the House considered a 1796 appropriations bill for a treaty with Indians respecting contested lands in Tennessee and North Carolina, several members favored a Senate amendment that explicitly stated that those states should in no way assume that the federal treaty making process assigned legitimacy to their claims.⁴⁴ The door had to be kept open for the central government to decide Indian land policy at the expense of border states if necessary. As the British Board of Trade and its commissioners had before them, federal representatives considered it less risky to "alienate one or, at most, two states" than to allow frontier interests to run roughshod over Indian rights and incite armed conflicts.⁴⁵

All of the aforementioned facts confirm that the founding government's Indian policy was not driven by racial biases; rather, the federal government conformed to an old-world diplomatic model inherited from Britain. This model treated Indian tribes as sovereign entities, and adhered to the policy of "preemption," in which only one nation at

44. *Annals of Congress*, 5th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,059-1,060. The amendment that gave the federal disclaimer was retained by a vote of 48-46.

45. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 166-174. For Sadosky, the Treaty of Colerain was a microcosm that predicted the ensuing challenge to federalism on a national level, resulting in the Republican party's victory in the election of 1800. However, as Sadosky admits, the Republicans simply continued to use the "diplomatic machinery" of the federalist era, and that included Knoxian Indian policy in the West. *Ibid.*, 175.

a time had rights to negotiate terms with any specific tribe.⁴⁶ To participate in this European diplomatic system, the founding government began almost immediately to ground its Indian relations in the same principles England's colonial policymakers had initiated: it approached Indian groups as polities with whom the United States government had sole authority to treat, and whose commercial and diplomatic relationships with the colonies in the West would dictate whether peace or war reigned on the frontier.

The eighteenth-century European notion that the North American tribes constituted sovereign and legitimate polities colored many discussions about Indian policy at the federal level during the founding decades. British precedents on this issue influenced the new government. Henry Knox wrote to George Washington in July 1789 that “[t]he independent nations and tribes of Indians ought to be considered as foreign nations, not as the subjects of any particular state...the general Sovereignty must possess the right of making all treaties on the execution or violation of which depend peace or war.”⁴⁷ The rights of Indians (not as American citizens but as individual members of sovereign states) certainly impacted discussions in the legislature. As one 1796 House debate reveals, some Congressmen demanded that Indian rights take precedence over those of white squatters’ because Indians held fee simple to the lands while whites held only preemptive rights.⁴⁸ Though this position did not negate existing treaties, it certainly

46. *Ibid.*, 135. American officials first embodied these principles while treating with the Iroquois leadership at Fort Stanwix in October 1784. They acknowledged Iroquois rights to treat directly with the new nation per the Treaty of Paris, rather than the terms of that treaty automatically covering them in any way. The negotiations at Fort Stanwix also served as a first step in “[e]stablishing the preeminence of Congress” in relations, at least with the Iroquois. *Ibid.*, 134.

47. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 148.

48. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 894-895. In this instance, James Holland contradicted the notion of Indians’ fee simple rights that had been put forth on another day by James Hillhouse. Holland argued that neither his Majesty nor the U.S. government had admitted that right to Indians; according to the

prioritized Indian titles and abandoned settlers already living on lands ostensibly covered by the Treaty of Paris. Congress wanted to retain the right to purchase Indian lands in the future, but was willing to forego whatever preemptive rights they might have asserted, and to eschew any path that might require force to attain lands west of the Alleghenies.⁴⁹

While encouraging penalties for white encroachments on Indian lands, Connecticut Representative James Hillhouse argued:

...though the Indians were men in uncivilized life, and differed in their customs and habits from ourselves, yet they were justly entitled to the lands which they possessed...Indeed, this right and title to the lands had been expressly recognized by the United States in the Treaties they had made with them. The God of Nature had given them the land, and he [Hillhouse] was sorry to hear any gentleman on that floor call their right to it in question.

The Indians, as legitimate “proprietors” of that country before Europeans arrived, claimed their lands by “inheritance.”⁵⁰ The Indians, Hillhouse believed, deserved the legal, diplomatic, and moral justice the legislature might accord to citizens of a foreign state. Thomas Jefferson, acting as secretary of state, concurred. Confronted with demands from Creek leader Alexander McGillivray during negotiations over the Treaty of New York in August of 1790, Jefferson “acknowledged that the Creeks were for all intents and purposes sovereign,” and that they had the right to a voice regarding which Americans could trade within the Creek nation.⁵¹ Jefferson asserted the territorial sovereignty of Indian nations repeatedly during the early 1790s, and supported forcible removal of

theory of fee simple in British law, the king held all land titles by default and at best the Indians held a right of occupancy, which was not actually granted by the king as a fee simple was. After 1783 the state governments took over the privilege of the king, and the commitments to white citizens should be honored now that the general government had charge of the lands. Here again one can see the total reliance on British precedent in federal policy.

49. White, *The Middle Ground*, 457.

50. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 898.

51. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 159.

whites who violated that sovereignty.⁵² Although Jefferson's thoughts on Indians in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) and elsewhere have been described as providing the "moral and intellectual rationale" for removal in the nineteenth century, hindsight has allowed such arguments to overshadow the reality of the federal government's position vis à vis Indians. Prior to the Treaty of Paris, British and French imperial governments had accorded Indian nations some measure of diplomatic respect; as a post-colonial nation, weak and without domestic precedents upon which to rely, the United States complied with expectations set by their European predecessors.⁵³

Although historians have correctly criticized the federal government's record of dismissive, unjust, and outright abusive treatment of the Indian population throughout the nineteenth century, it is important to acknowledge that United States policy did not begin that way.⁵⁴ There is much evidence to show that in the early years of the territorial period, the eastern government approached frontier people, whatever their race, in much the same way. Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts went to so far as to openly equate Indian rights with those of whites in the same situation. In a 1796 debate on trade with Indians, he declared that "[w]herever the natives of a country had possession, there they had a right, and...their rights or their possessions were as sacred as the rights of civilized

52. *Ibid.*, 160.

53. This assessment of Jefferson's writing is taken from Peter S. Onuf, "'We shall all be Americans': Thomas Jefferson and the Indians," *Indiana Magazine of History* 95, no. 2 (June 1999): 104. As Prucha states in his work, Jefferson (whatever his personal philosophies) "saw no need to depart from the Indian policies of his predecessors." Prucha, *The Great Father*, 93.

54. For example, Richard White explains that only in "hindsight" does it seem inevitable that groups like the Algonquians would be defeated and removed by a strong United States. But there was much "complexity" in the balance of power and relations among Indian groups, the government, and American settlers during the 1780s and 1790s. White, *The Middle Ground*, 413. While historians working before the 1960s and 1970s tended to approach Indians as incidental barriers in the way of expansion, many more recent studies focus instead on Native Americans as active historical agents with a rich and resilient cultural history. These were often critical of federal policy, although some also highlighted the good intentions of policymakers. Reginald Horsman details some of this transitional historiography in "Well-Trodden Paths and Fresh Byways: Recent Writing on Native American History," *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 4 (December 1982): 234-244.

life.” Depriving them of that right “because they did not dress like us, were not equally religious, or did not understand the arts of civilized life” was unacceptable.⁵⁵ Arguments like Sedgwick’s demonstrate a surprising lack of racial animus. Legislation reflected this. The Senate passed a bill entitled “An act to prevent depredations on the Indians South of the River Ohio,” in the winter of 1795, and the House debated (and passed) resolutions for the protection of Indians on the frontier at some length in December of that same year. That either legislative body took time to craft and debate bills devoted to providing legal protections for Indians contradicts any assumption that the national government employed a race-based policy of violent discrimination against Native Americans at this early juncture. Congressional debates on these issues could be heated, demonstrating that passions ran high on both sides; some objected to language that might offend frontier residents, but no one denied the need for protective measures.⁵⁶

During the territorial period, government officials demonstrated little tendency to privilege whites on the basis of race when determining policy, or to automatically attribute wrongdoing to Indians by virtue of a uniquely “savage” nature. Many leaders took Indian concerns into account with equal or greater attention than that bestowed on white frontier settlers. As Governor Arthur St. Clair explained in his instructions to an agent meeting with Indians around Peoria in 1790, “the [U]nited [S]tates have their interest in view as much as that of the white people in taking pains with them.”⁵⁷

55. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 898-901. William Lyman of Massachusetts for one did not see that Indians held legitimate title; rather, their claim was that of a fisherman whose property rested upon a fishing bank – it belonged to the United States, which only suffered them to retain it. *Ibid.*, 900. The clause that said white encroachers forfeited their claims if they trespassed was ultimately struck out, but by a close margin of 33-28.

56. *Ibid.*, 151-152. The House rejected the Senate bill by a narrow margin of 43-37. The House resolutions discussion centered around language that explicitly identified frontier whites as the persons from whom Indians needed protection (as opposed to the Spanish or some other foreign enemy).

57. Arthur St. Clair to Captain John Baptiste [last name illegible], Cahokia, June 1, 1790, Winthrop

Assuring Indian tribes of this equal consideration would surely help maintain peace. This line of thought closely resembled the opinions of British Indian agents and colonial officials as Whitehall's Indian policy evolved after the Seven Years' War. Former Prime Minister William Petty, Earl of Shelburne, for one, insisted that so long as the ministry provided Indians with protection and guardianship, all would be well. The imperial system, as ministers like Shelburne interpreted it, "blamed the whites on the frontier, not the Indians or the imperial system of [trade and land] regulation, for the disturbances which threatened the peace of the wilderness."⁵⁸ Americans employed the same reasoning. When Henry Knox reported on violence between whites and Indians along the frontier in 1787, he suggested that "[e]ither one or the other party must remove to a greater distance, or Government must keep them *both* in awe by a strong hand, and compel them to be moderate and just." He had prefaced this statement by explaining that "deep rooted prejudices, and malignity of heart, and conduct reciprocally entertained and practised [*sic*] on all occasions by the Whites and Savages will ever prevent their being good neighbours [*sic*]. The one side anxiously defend their lands which the other avariciously claim."⁵⁹ In Knox's language, whites bore the brunt of responsibility for conflicts because they acted from avarice, while Indians' actions stemmed from anxiety and a desire to defend what they owned.

Rather than viewing Indian tribes as inherently inferior and destined for subjugation, many eastern legislators and observers praised the innate qualities of Indians, especially when compared with the behavior of whites in the borderlands. An

Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

58. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 123-124.

59. [Report of Secretary at War on Indian Hostilities], in United States, Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. print office, 1904-37), 32:327-332. Italics mine.

early Committee on Indian Affairs reported that the Indians appeared “to act a natural part for men in their situation.”⁶⁰ This acknowledged the humanity of the Indians, and empathized with the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves; they were men whose *natural* inclinations and responses did not differ from those of the men on the committee issuing the report. Winthrop Sargent, one of many federal officials who made no effort to hide his disdain for white savages, had high praise for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians with whom he treated in Cincinnati in the fall of 1793. Among them, he wrote in his journal, “is said to be made more and greater advances to Civilization and Improvement in some useful Sciences than with any other of the read [*sic*] people.” He described having observed these tribes in treatment of the sick, remarked on their attachment to animal magnetism and actually compared the philosophies of Indian doctors to those of American and European doctors who practiced in similar art forms.⁶¹ These advancements, in Sargent’s opinion, stood in stark contrast with the actions of frontier people, who held “ignoble sentiments” resulting in “licentious practices for the accumulation of property, thereby provoking the resentment of the savages.” One contributor to the Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, who praised the Indians for adhering to contracts, suggested that whites consider Indian actions “worthy of remembrance and imitation.”⁶² Sentiments such as these contrast sharply with the racism used to justify removal and internal colonization of Indians during the nineteenth century, when eastern Americans threw off British precedent and became much more sympathetic with the western viewpoint.

60. [Report of committee on Indian Affairs], August [9], 1787, *Journals of the Continental Congress* 33:479.

61. Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], Wednesday, September 10, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

62. “For the Federal Gazette,” *Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 18, 1792, AHN.

In the 1780s and 1790s, however, eastern accounts of frontier conflicts continued to mimic the observations of British officials; unable to embrace the West, the founding generation in the East colonized western whites using British methods, and consequently blamed them for frontier troubles using the same language and logic. English General Thomas Gage labeled frontier whites a “lawless banditti” long before George Washington or other American figures made the same assessment, and Governor Francis Fauquier of Virginia pointed to the frontiersmen as the instigators of any trouble in the borderland, deeming them guilty of “most publicly [*sic*] and notoriously’ violating treaties” the central government had concluded with Indian tribes. Sir William Johnson agreed with Fauquier, and both men found white settlers wholly responsible for whatever retaliations the aggrieved tribes might commit. Fauquier even concluded that if the imperial government could not remove the white offenders, perhaps they would be best left to Indian justice.⁶³ Americans in the East inherited this perspective and saw Indian behavior as logical reactions to white lawlessness. As author Susana Rowson asked in *Reuben and Rachel* (1798), “[w]hat could be expected from the untaught savage, whose territories had been invaded by strangers, and who perhaps had suffered, from the cruelty of the invaders[?]” Revenge, after all, was “a principle inherent in human nature,” and if the Indians had not the Christian moral imperative to turn the other cheek it was a shortcoming that could be understood.⁶⁴ Governor St. Clair wrote Henry Knox in 1788

63. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 107-109. While Whitehall was not willing to use brute force to remove the squatters or leave them to their fate, the federal government had no problem pursuing both of those options. The use of forced removal of whites is discussed in Chapter Two, and federal land laws and Indian treaties often stipulated that white encroachers would be subject to Indian justice as the offended tribe saw fit to apply it.

64. Quote taken from Eve Kornfeld, “Encountering ‘the Other’: American Intellectuals and Indians in the 1790s,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 52, no. 2 (April 1995): 296. Rowson was in some ways an example of the post-colonial American mind; she hailed from a loyalist family and therefore had split her time between America and England. Although many of her stories were set in America, her

that he doubted unrest among the Indians of western Pennsylvania could ever be lessened, “for though we hear much of the Injuries and depredations committed by the Indians upon the Whites, there is too much reason to believe that at least equal if not greater injuries are done to the Indians by the frontier settlers of which we hear very little.”⁶⁵ Multiple congressmen echoed this sentiment when they argued against sending more troops to the frontiers in January 1792. If the legislature prevented whites from expanding west rather than defending their “roving disposition” by force, the representatives said, then settlers would remain in peace for years, “neither invaded nor invading.”⁶⁶ Without offensive actions on the part of whites, Indians had no natural inclination toward violence against them.

Like British imperial officers before them, federal officials often coupled accounts of Indian violence with some immediate reference to whites’ misdeeds against native people. For example, Judge Rufus Putnam reported back to George Washington in the summer of 1790 that a white woman had been “taken neer [*sic*] the mouth of Buffaloe [*sic*] Creek, and was afterward murdered.” But, he qualified immediately, “this business was prefaced by the white people [*s*]tealing a number of Horses from the Indians and refuseing [*sic*] to deliver them up when demanded.”⁶⁷ Many congressmen came to similar conclusions, and their reluctance to fund Indian wars was not fueled solely by budgetary caution. A general debate on a bill for protecting the frontiers in 1792, for example, turned into a wholesale rejection of any military action on behalf of white settlers. The

viewpoints were greatly affected by her heritage and ties to both British and American culture.

65. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary at War, Philadelphia, January 27, 1788, in *TPUS* 2:89.

66. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 338. Individual statements are not attributed to specific representatives in the record. There were certainly individuals who did attempt to argue some amount of “innate thirst of blood” among Indians. It is hardly surprising that some hailed from states like Georgia that were in bitter disagreement with the federal government over Indian policy on many occasions. See *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,265.

67. Judge Putnam to the President, New York, July 24, 1790, in *TPUS* 2:293.

Annals of Congress document the general argument that warfare between the United States and Indians on the frontiers was both morally and practically insupportable:

It was urged...that the Indian war, in which the United States are at present involved, was, in its origin, as unjustly undertaken as it has been unwisely and unsuccessfully conducted; that the depredations had been committed by the whites as well as by the Indians; and the whites were most probably the aggressors, as they frequently made encroachments on the Indian lands, whereas the Indians showed no inclination to obtain possessions of our territory, or even to make temporary invasions until urged to it by a sense of their wrongs...The mode of treating the Indians in general was reprobated as unwise and impolitic...the sufferings of the white people [are] pathetically deplored, [but] these narratives, it was said, are at best but *ex parte* evidence – we hear nothing of the sufferings of the Indians.⁶⁸

Like British ministers, many congressmen believed that colonials needed to have their movements curtailed, for “if permitted to rove at pleasure, they will keep the nation embroiled in perpetual warfare as long as the Indians have a single acre of ground to rest upon.”⁶⁹ These conclusions reflected the founding government’s intention of following familiar British policy on the frontiers. This would change markedly, however, when second- and third-generation Americans made continental expansion an American mission.

If discipline needed to be applied to the frontier people, it would be applied broadly, crossing the lines of race in a sort of scatter-gun approach because federal authorities, like their British counterparts, believed the worst of their colonials.

Westerners were subjects under the jurisdiction of the federal government, whereas

68. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 337-338. Italics in original. Alexander White (VA) and Andrew Moore (VA) opposed that opinion, and supported a provision on the bill in question that called for the raising of an additional 3,040 men for defense against the Indians. They did try to argue that the Indian depredations were above and beyond any wrongs at the hands of whites, and committed despite various attempts at peace. Other congressmen, of course, felt that whites were not the bad guys. See for example, William Lyman (MA), Joseph McDowell (NC), or William Giles (VA) in *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,264-1,265. It is worth noting that these individuals were all Anti-Federalists as well, and thus had complex motivations for opposing the administration’s broadening powers.

69. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 338.

Indians remained “independent political agents” through the War of 1812.⁷⁰ It is easy to criticize federal policy for failing to distinguish between innocent and overtly hostile Indian groups; however, viewed in another light, the indiscriminate nature of federal castigation meant that whites experienced similar injustices. Leaders like Knox believed both races operated according to human nature; “Anglo-American and American Indian alike” could be tied to the nation-state by tapping into their common “human” nature (including human selfishness) and diverting that instinct into acceptable commercial and financial channels.⁷¹

In line with this reasoning, Governor St. Clair proposed a chain of posts to regulate the lawless behavior of white land usurpers and even a law that imposed additional penalties for killing an Indian (as opposed to that for murdering a white person).⁷² Knox’s 1794 report “Preservation of Peace with the Indians” emphasized that it would be a source of “conscious pleasure” if he could state that the authorities treated murders of Indians the same as they did murders of whites. He could not, however, state this because the trials took place too near the source of the passions that excited murders in the first place.⁷³ Various trade and intercourse acts (1790, 1793, 1796, 1799, 1802) and treaties made provisions for justice to be applied equally to the whites and Indians who violated the peace of the frontier. Some treaties even contained stipulations that white

70. This quote comes from White, *The Middle Ground*, 483-484. The extent of Indian independence is debatable. White explains that scholars like Eric Wolf have argued that Indians were independent agents into the nineteenth century. Other scholars like Francis Jennings, however, would contest that statement, arguing instead that dependency for Indians was a reality as early as the mid-eighteenth century. See *Ibid.*, n. 22. For White, a certain amount of political, social, and economic independence was retained, however precarious the hold, into the nineteenth century; however, their environment changed and made them more dependent with time. Game decreased, for example. *Ibid.*, 486-493. Prucha also points to the continuity of sovereignty in the punishment of crimes committed by Indians against other Indians – this was upheld until the mid-nineteenth century. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 108.

71. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 157.

72. “Report of the Secretary at War to Congress,” July 10, 1787, in *TPUS* 2:31; Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of State, “Report of Official Proceedings in the Illinois Country,” [No Date], 1796, in *SCP* 2:397.

73. *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., Appendix, 1,400.

offenders be punished in the presence of the Indians they had wronged.⁷⁴ Federal law also surrendered whites to Indian justice if they encroached on native lands without the proper paperwork; in both the North and Southwest the government treated Indian tribes as sovereign nations with their own legitimate laws. The Treaty of Greenville expressly stated that U.S. citizens who passed set boundary lines or settled on lands claimed by Indians would be considered “out of the protection of the United States” and that tribes could “drive off the Settler, or punish him in such manner as they shall think fit and because such settlements made without the consent of the United States, will be injurious to them, as well as to the Indians.”⁷⁵ This applied to tribes in the southwestern regions as well; early treaties with the Cherokee (1785), Choctaw (1786) and Chickasaw (1786) agreed that whites intruding on Indian lands could be punished as these tribes saw fit. Federal law viewed “[u]nprovoked outrages” against Indians along the southwestern frontiers “injurious and disrespectful to the authority of the union.”⁷⁶ Even in the context of open warfare between Native Americans and the United States, Indians remained, in the words of Winthrop Sargent, “under the protection of the laws of the land.” Sargent understood that if the new nation wanted to join the cadre of European states it was so anxious to emulate, its military needed to comply with the norms of warfare accepted in the Old World. Thus he emphasized that “the national dignity [was] interested in most amply affording” the Indians whatever protections might be accorded combatants from any belligerent nation.⁷⁷

74. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 102-104.

75. Treaty of Greenville, August 3, 1795, in *TPUS* 2:529.

76. United States, Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress* 34:369. Although it is clear that the federal provisions often failed to actually function in western regions where there was race-based violence and discrimination, this does not negate the significance of the policy line, which was consistent and viewed with seriousness by eastern authorities at the federal level.

77. Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], September 3, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform

The place of Indian fighters in American culture during the founding decades contrasts sharply with the exalted position given to whites who battled Indians in the nineteenth century; this is evidence of post-colonial dependence on British mores while the lionization of Indian fighters later on shows the growing cultural importance of the West in American identity. Prior to the Revolution, British culture held no reverence for officers who battled Indians, and in fact openly disdained violence against Native Americans. In fact one of the few British appointees to stray from the policy line of pacification and advocate offensive maneuvers against Indians and forceful acquisition of their lands, General Jeffrey Amherst, was called back to England and removed from his position as Governor-General.⁷⁸ As long as American leaders emulated British imperial policy, they also viewed Indian fighting as embarrassing, destructive, and even treasonous because that is exactly how England's Indian Superintendents and other colonial officials interpreted extralegal white aggression on the frontier. The founding government sought to distance itself from individuals known for race-based warfare. George Rogers Clark, for example, had been a hero of the Revolution after his successes against Indian and British allies on the frontiers; however, when he continued on that course against the Shawnee in the Northwest Territory during the 1780s, the Virginia state legislature and ultimately the Congress disavowed his actions. His supporters had all but disowned him by 1787, and Clark was neither paid for his efforts nor reimbursed for supplies he had purchased.⁷⁹ General Josiah Harmar (who had led brutal eviction

Reel 4, OHS.

78. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 138-139. Sosin writes that although some ministers considered Jeffrey (also spelled Jeffery) Amherst to be an expert on the issue of the American West, that confidence was misplaced because Amherst was wholly unsympathetic to Indian land rights and resented Native Americans.

79. John R. Wunder, "Constitutional Oversight: *Clarke V. Bazadone* and the Territorial Supreme Court as the Court of Last Resort," *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 4, no. 3

campaigns against white squatters) thought it a “mortifying circumstance” that the people of Kentucky had the “presumption to be forming expeditions” against local Indians.⁸⁰ Until Americans departed from British examples and pursued removal rather than appeasement, Indian fighting remained taboo.

The mindset that developed in the West during the same period, however, stands in sharp contrast. Throughout the post-revolutionary settlement period in the North and Southwest territories, frontier residents laid the groundwork for the race-based colonialism that was formalized after the War of 1812 and became a key element of American exceptionalism. While eastern authorities operated under the same imperial philosophies as their British predecessors, western voices crafted a dialogue that culminated in Indian removal by the mid-nineteenth century. Like other settler groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, frontier Americans’ identities depended on “retaining [a] sense of difference from the ‘native’ population.”⁸¹ Marginalized as uncivilized colonials living on the peripheries of the new nation, western whites searched for a way to assert power and claw their way out of second-class status. Although the eastern half of the nation blamed them for making trouble in the borderlands, settlers believed that Indian duplicity and the relationship (both real and mythical) between natives and Great Britain lay at the root of problems along the frontiers. They spent the decades before the War of 1812 trying to convince the rest of the nation that their

(September 1978): 266.

80. Brigadier-General Harmar to the Secretary of War, Fort Harmar, December 9, 1787, in *SCP* 2:37-38.

81. Ashcroft et. al., *Key Concepts*, 194. In other British settler colonies (Canada, South Africa, Australia), the granting of more rights to white settlers often meant “the restriction of indigenous freedoms and a reluctance, partly born of political fear, to extend political rights to the native peoples.” See Julie Evans, ed., *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous Peoples in British Settler-Colonies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), vii. The situation in the United States was the same: once the metropolitan government found itself extending more benefits of citizenship to whites it had formerly considered colonials (westerners), they in turn used their power to exclude indigenous peoples.

perception was accurate. Their eventual success signaled the end of America's replication of British Indian policy; when the War of 1812 removed the British enemy but conflicts with Indians continued, the illusion of the British puppeteer vanished, allowing Americans to fully commit to the rhetoric of the Indian as inherently evil.

By the time the Madison administration declared war on Great Britain in 1812, westerners had laid a thorough foundation for the assumption that Indian tribes, rather than being independent and sovereign entities, were mere puppets of a more recognizable opponent. "Aristides," a western author whose contributions to the *Kentucky Gazette* were republished in the *Centinel of the North-West Territory*, made the case:

The miserable instruments the savages are the weapons which that corrupt and fallen nation [England] employ to the destruction of thousands; and this in times of neutrality and peace. Without British incentives and more efficacious supplies, the Indians must and would yield to the arms of more desirable conciliatory measures of America...The mighty vengeance of America has been in vain directed against the defenceless [*sic*] inhabitants of the woods. The voice of humanity and the voice of reason and justice require that the arms of our injured country should be levelled [*sic*] against those with whom the contest really exist.⁸²

Such a charitable viewpoint could not, of course, withstand the overt alliance between Indian tribes and Great Britain during the War of 1812. In 1794, however, "Aristides'" opinion was a fairly common one. Westerners knew that they regularly found British supplies and arms among the Indian dead on the battlefields of the territories. The inability to distinguish between Indian interests and British influence originated in western dialogue and gained traction among easterners over time.

Western Americans worked diligently to remind easterners of the British-Indian connection, a campaign that deflected the blame for violence away from settlers and helped counteract eastern disdain. They reported a seemingly endless stream of real

82. *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* 1, no.14 (February 8, 1794), Microfilm Roll 18677, OHS.

incidents and rumors, and accused British agents of encouraging Indian hostilities, conspiring with native rabble rousers, and providing money and supplies to tribes intent on attacking American settlements. In the summer of 1785, army officer Josiah Harmar informed the secretary of war about a constant series of speeches being sent from the British in Detroit to the Indians since the Treaty of Fort McIntosh had been concluded. “I have good intelligence,” Harmar assured Henry Knox:

...that several traders have been among them, using all means to make them entertain a bad opinion of the Americans. One Simon Girty, I am informed, has been to Sandusky for that purpose. I have taken every means in my power to counteract their proceedings, and have directed the Indians not to listen to their lies, but to tie and bring in here any of those villains who spread reports among them injurious to the United States.⁸³

Territorial figures like Josiah Harmar reminded federal officers that London and its emissaries encouraged the Six Nations in their belief that “their lands were never ceded to the Americans by the King of Great Britain,” and speculated that so long as the British maintained a western presence, “all treaties held by us with the Indians will have but little weight with them.” Winthrop Sargent highlighted “the Continuation of old [B]ritish Attachments and influence operating very powerfully” among the Choctaw and Chickasaw; the secretary of war knew from reports that Britain’s agents “are constantly in their [Indians’] towns, conciliating their friendships and trade to the almost total exclusion of our people.”⁸⁴ General Anthony Wayne implied that if Americans had a “busy and bloody summer with the savages” in 1793, it was simply because Great

83. Colonel Harmar to the Secretary of War [Knox], Fort McIntosh, June 1, 1785, in *SCP* 2:6. Of course Simon Girty himself demonstrated how muddled identity and loyalties were in the West at this time. An American colonial, Girty had been raised among Indians, served both sides at times during the Revolution, and continued to act as a British agent in the contested borderlands prior to the War of 1812. In many ways he epitomizes the close connections drawn between Indian savagery and British duplicity.

84. Colonel Harmar to the Secretary of War [Knox], Fort McIntosh, July 16, 1785, in *SCP* 2:8; Sargent to the Secretary of State, Cincinnati Co. of Hamilton, September 13, 1794, in *TPUS* 3:424; Captain John Doughty to the Secretary of War, Ft. McIntosh, October 21, 1785, in *SCP* 2:10.

Britain, unoccupied with any “intestin [*sic*] or other broils,” seemed bent on assisting the savages. British agents, Wayne said, “have certainly suggested [and] stimulated the Indians to insist upon the Ohio, as the boundary line or to continue the war.”⁸⁵ All of these observers assumed an inextricable connection between Indian misdeeds and British influence. Thus while in principle Indian policy approached tribes as sovereign and firmly insisted on their ability to understand property rights, individuals who spent time in the West constantly undermined those notions by asserting that British maneuvering and not native agency lay at the root of Indian territorial grievances.

Indians themselves occasionally exacerbated the impression of British control by their own admission. Using British agitation as an excuse in discussions with Anthony Gamelin (Governor St. Clair’s emissary to the Indians), the Wabash and Miami pleaded innocence, saying that they could not prevent their braves from fighting with settlers. According to Gamelin’s journal, one chief stated it was “impossible to do it, being constantly encouraged by the British,” while another confessed “that we accepted the axe, but it is by the reproach we continually receive from the English and other nations, which received the axe first, calling us women; at the present time, they invite our young men to war.”⁸⁶ The Six Nations also employed the same tactic. In a speech delivered at a meeting with Josiah Harmar at Fort Pitt in July 1785, an Indian spokesman named Allface said that “it was the great King, our father [Great Britain], who provoked us to all the mischief we have done, but now we take no advice from him, and wish to sit in council with the Americans as we formerly did.” Another Indian speaker, Gioshuta, told the Americans, “[b]rothers...you may reflect on us for the past troubles we have occasioned, but you must

85. General Anthony Wayne to Sharp Delaney, Esq., Legionville, February 22, 1793, Northwest Territory Collection, Box 2, INHS.

86. See the excerpt from Gamelin’s journal in *SCP* 2:155-160, n. 1.

blame the great King.” Later during the same meeting, Cornplanter also blamed Britain’s claims for the disagreements between Americans and Indians over territory; “the English have told our people that the great King never sold our lands to the Thirteen Fires,” he stated, implying that the tribes acted on English assurances alone when they insisted on their rights to contested lands.⁸⁷ Although Indians typically used such declarations to mask the fact that they fought for their own interests, in claiming the English king as an original parental figure who guided his children’s decisions, native leaders inadvertently contributed to the circumstances in which they became internal enemies after the War of 1812. Once the United States defeated the British on the periphery, it could assert a more complete ownership and control over these petulant children, now no longer influenced by the “older” parental figure of the “great King.”

While early concerns about British-Indian conspiracies tended to get more play in the West than among people in eastern centers like Philadelphia and New York, the issue gradually grew to the proportion of a national problem as relations between the United States and Great Britain deteriorated in the years prior to the War of 1812. Even in the 1780s Henry Knox had been successfully convinced that the “auspices of the [B]ritish officers” contributed to Indian discontent and that any threat of Indian war stemmed from covert actions out of England’s posts. Reports trickled in, like that of Thomas Rhea, whose affidavit asserting that a British officer at a post on the Great Lakes had given Indians weapons and supplies at the time of Josiah Harmar’s failed 1790 expedition was taken so seriously that the secretary of war submitted it to the president.⁸⁸ Leaders like St.

87. “Account of the Speeches made in a Meeting at Fort Pitt,” July 11, 1785, in *SCP* 2:7-8, n. 4.

88. Henry Knox to Winthrop Sargent, New York, May 21, 1786, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS; General Knox to General Butler, War Department, July 12, 1791, in *SCP* 2:224. While Knox took the accusation most seriously, he still asserted that it was not the time for retribution.

Clair also communicated regularly with the capital, and his assertions that the “pernicious counsels of English traders” impeded relations with tribes like the Miami must have made an impression. As the 1790s progressed, consumers of eastern papers like the *Philadelphia Gazette* read reports that tribes such as the Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, and Wyandot had long been “deceived or led astray by the bad white men at the foot of the rapids [meaning British influences in the area of Fort Miami].”⁸⁹ Stories like that of territorial judge Rufus Putnam circulated; he wrote that a reliable source had told him a tale in which the Chippewas refused to join other tribes in war against the Americans, claiming that only a call from their Father (the King of Great Britain) would incite them. Hearing this, the warring tribes hesitated until “a British emissary whispered in their ear,” telling them to frighten the Chippewa with stories about the injustices Americans had already done to them. The Chippewa immediately agreed to join what they now considered a defensive war.⁹⁰ Although Putnam’s story is most likely apocryphal, this type of tale helped make the British-Indian cabal seem very real. One New York pamphlet in support of the Jay Treaty even argued that removing the British from the western posts would eliminate Indian wars entirely. Claiming that the point was “generally admitted by all sides” in the treaty debate, the author stated that “the great complaint had always been that those wars originated, *entirely*, from the detention of the posts by the British.”⁹¹ These claims mounted, setting the stage for great disappointment

89. Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of War, Cahokia, May 1, 1790, in *SCP* 2:136; “To the Delawares, Shawnese, Miamis, and Wyandots, and to Each and Every of Them and to All other Nations,” *Gazette of the United States and Daily Evening Advertiser*, (Philadelphia, PA), October 2, 1794, vol. 6, issue 96, AHN.

90. Rufus Putnam to General Knox, Fort Washington, July 8, 1792, in *SCP* 2:302-303.

91. William Loughton Smith, *The Eyes Opened, Or The Carolinians Convinced, [Microform] : By An Honourable And Eloquent Representative In The Congress Of The United States, In The Following Well Received And Candid Examination Of The Objections To His Excellency Governor Jay’s Late Treaty With Great-Britain; And Which Has Been Ratified By President Washington, At The City Of Philadelphia* (New-

when trouble with Indians persisted long after Britain turned over the posts in question and removed into Canada.

This inflated notion of the British-Indian connection also made inroads in Congress, and despite legislators' reluctance to stray from the status quo on Indian policy, many of them did accept the argument that Britain pulled the strings. Both sides of a debate over sending additional troops to the Indian wars discussed the British-Indian relationship. Opponents of the troop increase argued that as long as Britain retained a presence in the West, the United States had no hope of victory against the Indians anyway, nor could any American misfortunes in that arena be traced to any source other than the British: "[i]t is only exposing our arms to disgrace, betraying our own weakness, and lessening the confidence in the General Government, to send forth armies to be butchered in the forests, while we suffer the British to keep possession of the posts within our territory." Without Great Britain's continued influence, "the Indians could not carry on their operations against us with the same degree of vigor as they now do; for it is from those forts [Britain's western posts] that they obtain their supplies of arms and ammunition." Representatives who supported the troop increase also accepted that British troops "[kept] the Indians in awe" from their illegal bases on American soil.⁹² The British-as-puppeteer mantra gained renewed momentum throughout the 1790s. In the spring of 1799 Secretary of State Timothy Pickering complained to England's ambassador about the conduct of Alexander McKee, the British Agent for Indian Affairs in Canada. He charged that McKee had been encouraging the Shawnees to organize and agitate for changes to the Treaty of Greenville. Pickering (who had predicted in 1795 that

York: : Printed for, and sold by J. Rivington, no. 156 Pearl-Street., [1795]), 10, Raynor Microcards, Z-99 Card 29535.

92. *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., 337-342.

the Jay Treaty would dispense with the problem of British interference) had to ask the British minister to intervene with the “proper authority.”⁹³ After the turn of the century, as relations between the United States and England devolved toward war, it became even easier for easterners to believe that British agents were behind Indian violence. From 1805 to 1809, as the Shawnee Prophet Tenskwatawa worked to reform growing tribal alcoholism and infighting, Americans harbored “widespread suspicion...that the prophet was a British agent.”⁹⁴ That belief simultaneously stripped the Shawnee leader’s movement of legitimacy in U.S. eyes and removed responsibility for the tribe’s recalcitrance from land-hungry western colonists. On the eve of war, the nation was primed to cast off British traditions in which Indians retained agency and white settlers bore the blame for frontier violence.

...

As Richard White explains, although whites eventually justified taking Indian lands by crafting a narrative in which natives were innately savage, they also needed to paint the British as puppet-masters pulling the strings, because inherent savagery did not explain why Indians specifically targeted Americans.⁹⁵ While White states that the Indian became the “ultimate Other” so Americans could “press the war” against them in the early 1790s, Native Americans could not truly fill that role until much later. At a time when the rest of the nation did not share the interests of westerners (particularly their focus on Native transgressions), many eastern Americans did not feel compelled to vilify the Indians as their forebears had during the colonial “frontier” era. Although they

93. The Secretary of State [Pickering] to the British Minister, Department of State, Philadelphia, April 30, 1799, in *TPUS* 3:22. Pickering had written to St. Clair in 1795 to say that the negotiations with Britain would lead to an end of agents stimulating Indians to hostility. Timothy Pickering to Governor St. Clair, War Office, Philadelphia, March 25, 1795, in *SCP* 2:338-339.

94. White, *The Middle Ground*, 510.

95. *Ibid.*, 458.

rejected that element of westerners' narrative, easterners proved more sympathetic to frontier settlers' portrayal of the British as scapegoats; that enemy was one that *all* Americans could recognize. On the eve of war in April 1812, Thomas Jefferson wrote that Tenskwatawa's proselytizing posed little danger until the British stepped in and exerted their influence. "His followers increased," Jefferson concluded, "till the English thought him worth corruption and found him corruptible."⁹⁶ The overt British-Indian alliance in the War of 1812 was simply the ultimate confirmation of a long-evolving connection in the minds of Americans that dated back to the Revolution. In the wake of the war, however, Great Britain emerged as a respected foe and fellow member of the international community, while Native Americans were left with the stigma of this treacherous association, forever "corruptible" and corrupted. Even in the aftermath of open war, ties of racial heritage bound Americans with the British; Indians on the other hand, occupied an untenable position – easily identifiable as racially "outside" the ranks of mainstream America and the last remnant of a time in which British influence disrupted the nation's march westward.

96. Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, VA, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 2:299.

PART THREE:
THE GLORY OF OUR WIDE DOMAIN,
1812-1828

Chapter Five “Breaking Up, and Moving Westward”

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, western border regions slowly came under clearer American jurisdiction, bringing the peripheries deeper into the national fold and changing the colonial relationship between East and West significantly. While the War of 1812 was a watershed moment in that process, other, more gradual shifts in policy and public perceptions during the early nineteenth century augmented the momentous changes that the war ushered in. Recognizing the cultural and political value of the West, its residents, and the idea of frontiers helped second- and third-generation Americans to break post-colonial patterns and form an independent national identity. Of course negative assessments of western manners did not simply disappear, nor did easterners cast off their wariness of expansion or their dismissive attitude toward borderlands issues overnight.¹ Gradually, however, the circumstances that had made the territories peripheral and kept their residents on the margins changed: easterners and westerners alike found it easier to acknowledge their shared stake in an expanding nation as the strategic value of the region became more evident. The West also offered up a setting for domestic legal and political precedents unencumbered by the colonial past. As the nation took control of its western borderlands, the frontier (as both a concept and a physical space) gained newfound cultural significance, and its inhabitants took on the role of the quintessential “American” by embodying characteristics like ruggedness, daring, adaptability, and simplicity. By 1818, British traveler Morris Birbeck, an eventual

1. Observers like Daniel Chapman Banks, a New Englander who traveled from Connecticut to Louisville, Kentucky in 1815-1816, still objected to the lack of neatness, the profane language, the violence, and “roudy” [*sic*] behavior prevalent in western culture. See Daniel Chapman Banks, Journal, November 22-23, December 3, December 25, 1815, FHS.

transplant to Illinois, was able to say with certainty that the American West was the only part of the country where English emigrants might have a decent hope of beginning a new and better life; “[o]ld America,” he declared, was “breaking up, and moving westward.” Everything new and exciting lay west of the seaboard states, and all that set America apart from Great Britain was rooted in the vast lands beyond the Ohio.²

The Louisiana Purchase (1803) was one of the first developments that signaled the West’s future political and economic significance. While the free navigation of the Mississippi played second fiddle to eastern maritime concerns in the 1790s, the importance of that waterway increased in the context of Thomas Jefferson’s purchase. In the winter of 1804, just after Congress approved his acquisition, Jefferson prominently displayed two bottles of water from the great river on his dining room table while entertaining a group of Federalist politicians. As Jefferson moved into a second term after the election of 1804, the Louisiana Purchase continued as a main feature of his political platform giving the West a place of prominence in national politics. While Jefferson’s second inaugural address spent little time on European diplomacy compared with addresses from previous administrations, he did dwell on the Louisiana Purchase as well as the government’s relations with Native Americans.³ Eastern observers began to see the “intrinsic” economic value of western resources in the context of Jefferson’s purchase.

2. Morris Birbeck, *Notes on a Journey in America: from the coast of Virginia to the territory of Illinois*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Severn & Co., 1818), 31, First American West Digital Collection, Digital ID icufaw bbc0019. Birbeck wrote with disdain about the Virginia slaveholders and Washington, D.C. elites, describing the capital as decidedly *not* American. The West, on the other hand, was a “land of plenty” where he found a variety of things that distinguished Americans from Englishmen, including their affinity for travel, the urbanity of even those settlements remote from large cities, and the ability of a farming family to achieve a freehold (rather than a rented farm, as was the case for poorer British families). *Ibid.*, 34, 36-37, 57.

3. Leonard J. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 177, 181. Sadosky says this was a political statement meant to highlight Jefferson’s great accomplishment in completing the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

One editorial in Philadelphia's *Aurora* assured eastern readers that the purchase would restore in great part the mercantile capital that had been lost to British, French, and Spanish "spoliations" since the early 1790s. As for the advantages to be gained in terms of free navigation, the author expounded on the fact that rival countries like Great Britain and Spain desired control over the Mississippi, and would have paid the same amount for the same rights of ownership. Gaining control over so much territory was a geopolitical coup for the new nation; it guaranteed that Great Britain could not treat American rights on the "noble and important" Mississippi "as she treats our natural right to the St. Lawrence, which is shut to us with the utmost severity[.]"⁴ Writer Moses Dawson captured the significance of the Louisiana Purchase as a historical event. Writing in 1824, he proclaimed:

Heavens! [H]ow unlike the policy of European potentates, who, to add a few acres to their domains, or a few hundreds to their slaves, rivers of blood must flow, thousands of women and children be left widows and orphans, and the sum of human misery augmented to its acme...How different was the policy pursued by the respected, venerated Jefferson, who, without the loss of a single life, obtained an immense accession of territory, as much to the advantage of its inhabitants as to the general interest of the United States.⁵

The Louisiana Purchase revealed the extent to which western advantages mitigated American weakness in the face of British maritime power, and highlighted key differences between Americans and Europeans.

4. "From the *Aurora*. Arguments in Favor of the Louisiana Purchase, Drawn from a Federal Authority," *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport, RI), September 17, 1803, vol. 3, issue 155, America's Historical Newspapers. (Hereafter cited as AHN); "Political Miscellany. [F]rom the *Aurora*," *New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), August 9, 1803, vol. 28, issue 34, AHN.

5. Moses Dawson, *Historical Narrative of the civil and military services of Major General William H. Harrison, and Vindication of his Character and Conduct as a Statesman, a Citizen, and a Soldier. With a Detail of his Negotiations and Wars with the Indians Until the Final Overthrow of the Celebrated Chief Tecumseh and his Brother the Prophet. The whole written and compiled from original and authentic documents furnished by many of the most respectable characters in the united states. By Moses Dawson, editor of the Cincinnati Advertiser* (Cincinnati: Printed by M. Dawson at the Advertiser Office, 1824), 72 [note], FHS.

Although the West remained well outside the effective jurisdiction of the central government and residents drifted in a land of mixed loyalties after the Revolution, the great divides between the center and periphery began to shift as the nineteenth century got underway. While westerners continued to be indignant at the neglect of the federal government, they grew more inclined to reject what the middle ground bred: intrigue with foreign powers, lax attitudes toward national loyalties, and a jurisdictional vacuum in which settlers could attach themselves to whatever empire best met their needs. For example, the Burr Affair in 1806-1807 prompted the Kentucky General Assembly to go on the offensive and make a declaration in support of national unity. They deemed such a publication expedient because the “sentiments of the people of Kentucky, may be misunderstood by those who, from their remote situation, have not an opportunity of judging of the disposition which the citizens of this state entertain towards the general government.” The broadside spelled out in no uncertain terms that Kentuckians “feel the strongest attachment to the federal government and consider a dismemberment of the union as the greatest evil which could befall them.”⁶ Residents of St. Clair and Randolph counties in Ohio also went out of their way to send a remonstrance to Congress clarifying their wish for protection against the threat of “[i]nternal growing Treason against the Union” in the context of the Burr affair.⁷ The authors of that document asked openly that the government shield them from those who used unclear jurisdiction for personal gain; they sought to be brought further into the fold instead of taking advantage of federal weakness in the West. In fact, the Burr Conspiracy and the public outrage that

6. [Kentucky General Assembly], “Broadside for Kentucky General Assembly supporting national unity, January 7, 1807,” First American West Digital Collection, Digital ID icufaw blf0005. Burr was charged with treason for his alleged involvement in a plot to detach some areas of the southwest from the Union and set up an independent state.

7. Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 132.

accompanied its exposure in 1807 revealed that attitudes and assumptions about the loyalty of westerners were evolving at that time. North Carolina Congressman Marmaduke Williams demonstrated this shift in a letter to his constituents in February 1807: “The prompt and decided manner in which our sister states, west of the Allegany [*sic*] mountains, have acted – the zeal and patriotic spirit which the people of [the] western country have shewn, in co-operating with the wishes of the Executive, do them great credit,” he gushed. Their response to the conspiracy “evinced to the world, their warm attachment to support the Union – that intrigues of designing men can have no influence on their minds...their minds stand firm, and are shielded with that republican spirit and thirst for liberty, which secured our independence.”⁸ Such statements of loyalty show the early nineteenth century as a transitional time. Easterners still doubted westerners enough to make such statements necessary, but individuals from each region had begun contradicting old assumptions about frontier attachments to the United States. The middle ground “died in bits and pieces,” and this slow transition applied to the muddled relationship between western whites and the central government as much as it did to the broader white-Indian relationship.⁹

Because second- and third-generation Americans were less accepting of the founders’ British-style colonialism, they eliminated many aspects of early territorial policy that evinced replication. As the eighteenth century became the nineteenth,

8. *Circular Letters of Congressman to their Constituents*, ed. Noble E. Cunningham, vol. 1, *First Congress-Ninth Congress, 1789-1807* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg, VA, 1978), 503. (Hereafter cited as *CLC* 1). Similar logic was applied in the case of the Mississippi Territory. Supporting an inquiry into that territory being admitted as a state even if it was short of the 60,000 required inhabitants in December 1810, Mr. Poindexter (their non-voting representative) argued that when Spain had invaded their borders, 250 militia were immediately upon them and that the residents had proven they would rally around the standard of the Constitution in such cases. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 3rd Sess., 475.

9. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2011), 517.

objections to the imperious activities of St. Clair and his misuse of the broad powers implicit in the 1787 Ordinance grew louder. In January 1802, Ohioan Thomas Worthington and some supporters charged the governor with misuse of office and called him “an open and avowed enemy to a republican form of government, and an advocate for monarchy.” Worthington sent his letter straight to the president.¹⁰ The fact that Jefferson did not take action against St. Clair, but instead advised him to back away from some of his most egregious offenses indicates that change would occur only slowly, and that it would not necessarily receive its strongest pushes from aging members of the founding generation. For his part, St. Clair (now referred to as “the old man” by Ohioans of the next generation) still wrote of the territories being “in a colonial state” and complained about his loss of influence in Congress.¹¹ While St. Clair, Jefferson, and others continued to overlook the hypocrisy of treating the territories as colonies on the British model, the territorial legislature in Ohio formed, proposed large amounts of its own legislation in its first session in 1799, and pushed back against St. Clair’s continued paternalism during its second session in 1800.¹²

As the 1790s came to a close, more and more legislators saw the impracticality of opening the territory to the speculation and exploitative policies that treated actual settlers with disregard. As William Findley of Pennsylvania had explained to his colleagues in

10. Thomas Worthington to the President, City of Washington, January 30, 1802, in William Henry Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair, Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress, and Governor of the Northwestern Territory, with his Correspondence and Other Papers* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 2:565-570. (Hereafter cited as *SCP 2*).

11. Nathaniel Massie gave St. Clair that moniker in a February 8, 1802 letter. Nathaniel Massie to Thomas Worthington, Chillicothe, February 8, 1802, in *SCP 2*:572; Governor St. Clair to M. De Luziere, Cincinnati, March 4, 1800, in *Ibid.*, 494; Governor St. Clair to Thomas Jefferson, Cincinnati, February 13, 1802, in *Ibid.*, 573-574.

12. See “Speech of Governor St. Clair to the Legislature on the Day of their Adjournment,” December 19th [1799], in *SCP 2*:476-477. This shows that the governor attempted to block much of the first session’s legislation. The “Address of the Legislative Council and House of Representatives to his Excellency Governor St. Clair,” [n.d.], in *Ibid.*, 515-516, shows the response of the second session.

1796, western lands only added value to the nation as a whole if *actual* emigrants bought and farmed them.¹³ The Land Act of 1800 took a huge step away from the land policy that characterized the West's colonial period. Under the new law, land offices would be better staffed and run more efficiently; most importantly, the law established a credit system that was friendlier to small-scale purchasers. The price of western lands per acre remained \$2.00, but purchasers got a more forgiving and flexible schedule for paying off their debt. Whereas the 1791 land law gave two years for payment of the whole, the act of 1800 allowed forty days for one-quarter payment, two years for the next quarter, and four years before payment was due in full. In addition, while a 1796 land law had continued the minimum tract size of 640 acres set forth in 1791, the Land Act of 1800 dropped that minimum to 320 acres, and another bill in 1804 lowered it even further to 160 acres. By 1818, the smaller parcels and more flexible purchase terms meant poorer emigrants could obtain reasonably sized tracts with just one quarter down and the remainder due in installments spaced out over five years. Observer Morris Birbeck remarked that settlers who bought on those terms typically succeeded in paying off their debt, and that the business was "conducted with great exactness, on the principle of checks, which are said to prevent the abuses formerly prevailing among the land-jobbers and surveyor."¹⁴ Large scale landowners, of which the federal government remained one, continued to have a presence in the West, particularly as the United States acquired larger swaths of territory during the nineteenth century; however, the policies of the post-revolutionary colonial period were a thing of the past. Congress continued to be

13. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 413.

14. Birbeck, *Notes*, 60, 69. Birbeck does note that the lands were first put up at public auction before being sold at the set price. It was still possible for speculators to drive up the price of land at auction, but that tactic also left them with high-priced lands that could be sold at a loss.

responsive to the demands of real people for land laws sympathetic to their needs. Both the Land Act of 1820 and the Relief Act of 1821 kept small-scale purchases realistic.¹⁵

In addition to a settler-friendly land policy, other western issues gained more attention in the national legislature during the early nineteenth century. Protection of Americans' access to the interior port of New Orleans, for example, "occupied much of the attention of the executive and both houses" during the Seventh Congress in early 1803. Kentucky Representative John Fowler assured his constituents that, although some persons attempted to "misrepresent and mislead" the public on the issue, they could rest easy knowing that the federal government was giving it the proper level of attention. Robert Williams and John Stanly of North Carolina both echoed Fowler's sentiments, and Stanly joined in raising the issue of navigation rights in front of the legislature.¹⁶ In 1810 congressman P. B. Porter spoke out in favor of funding infrastructure to create collaborative relationships between eastern merchants and western producers. He argued that the system as it stood made frontier dwellers enemies of a sort, or at least potential enemies. Their indebtedness to the government and eastern entities alienated them, and Porter suggested that Congress instead find ways to bring them into the fold. Porter's stern words to his colleagues left no doubt of westerners' potential importance:

If you neglect to avail yourselves of the opportunity, which this system affords, of securing the affections of the Western people – if you refuse to extend to them those benefits which their situation so imperiously demands, and which your resources enable you...there is great reason to fear that our Western brethren may soon accost us in a tone higher than that of the Constitution itself. They might remind us (as the people of this country once [reminded] another Power, which was regardless of their

15. The 1820 law brought the acreage minimum down again to eighty acres and lowered the price to \$1.25 per acre. The Relief Act allowed Ohioans who were unable to pay off prior purchases to return land to the government for a refund without penalty. The 1821 law also extended the repayment period for struggling owners.

16. From John Fowler, February 28, 1803, in *CLC* 1:323; *Ibid.*, 352-353.

interests) of the rights with which the God of nature has invested them, by placing them in possession of a country which they have the physical power to defend; and which it is to be feared, they would defend against all the tax-gatherers we could send among them, supported by all the force of the Atlantic States.

Porter, a second-generation American born in 1773, reveals a much more thorough understanding of western interests than many of his predecessors in the legislature. He identified the trend of neglecting western issues, and insisted that the time had come for change. “If you would attach the affections of the Western people to your Government,” he concluded, “you must attach them by their interests. You must appear among them, not in the light of their creditors merely, but as their guardians, their protectors, as the promoters of their welfare.”¹⁷ This language demonstrates that, although a paternalistic attitude remained, the need for correcting the cleavage between western concerns and federal policy had the attention of Congress going into the War of 1812 era.

The sort of infrastructure that Porter encouraged helped mitigate the isolation westerners had experienced during the 1780s and 1790s. In February 1810, Ohio Representative Jeremiah Morrow prompted the Eleventh Congress to lay out roads guaranteed in an earlier treaty, and the House considered a road between Vincennes, Indiana and Dayton, Ohio shortly thereafter.¹⁸ Congress authorized the National Road beginning in Cumberland, Maryland in 1816, which, by the end of the 1830s, crossed all of Ohio, Indiana, and part of Illinois. With the first federally funded road running straight through the heart of the former Northwest Territory, the days of this region as a backwater were far in the past. Instead, western infrastructure set the pace for internal improvements elsewhere in the nation. In January 1812, Henry Clay laid a resolution

17. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,399-1,400.

18. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 3rd Sess., 414, 487, 595.

from the Ohio Legislature before the House; it declared that the federal government ought to bear the cost of a proposed canal connecting the Great Lakes and the Hudson River because it was a “project of national concern.”¹⁹ The federal government began dedicating time and resources to developing interior transportation routes in Indiana as well. By the end of the 1820s, Congress had granted over half a million acres for canals and roads in the state. These developments shrank distances throughout the former territories, integrating those populations further into national networks. During his travels, Morris Birbeck commented that he encountered people claiming they moved west at a rate of forty-five miles per day, completing the journey from Philadelphia to St. Clairsville, Ohio in just eight days.²⁰ Postal roads spread and post offices sprouted up. Land offices proliferated, and they were well-staffed. The people of the frontier now felt the presence of the federal government in their daily lives.²¹

By 1815, the colonial policies of the founding government toward western territories seemed truly antiquated and embarrassing. As Philadelphia’s *Democratic Press* argued in January of that year, those sorts of policies were relics suited only to such outdated elements as the old Hartford Convention and its New England Federalist adherents:

What will this intelligent, free and moral nation say to a proposition from a Rhode Island convention man to hold the present free white population of the territories (which is probably double their own) in a servile, unenfranchised [*sic*] condition...contrary to the proffered and recorded conditions of 1787, under which the territorial citizens of eastern, middle,

19. *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 1,013.

20. Birbeck, *Notes*, 55. For travel between similar locations in the 1790s, see Chapter Three.

21. In Indiana, for example, two land offices before the War of 1812 increased to seven by 1833. Each office was staffed with a register and receiver. Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1996), 264-265. Ohio’s postal roads spread out from state capitals in Chillicothe, Zanesville, and finally Columbus. R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 374.

and southern American birth, bought their landed and civil freeholds? Our countrymen will not listen to so liberticide [*sic*] a proposition.²²

In hindsight, the author forgets the imperious elements of the Northwest Ordinance, while the promise of full citizenship embedded within it moved to the fore. Gone too were the days when frontier communities waited for indefinite periods of time for the federal government to attend to their claims or install the bureaucratic machinery necessary to sort out their complaints. When Morris Birbeck passed through Vincennes in 1817, he described the government in the area as “efficient.” When residents there detected some irregularities in the dealings of the land office, a “confidential individual from the federal city made his appearance at the land office there, with authority to inspect and examine on the spot.”²³ This offers a stark contrast with the colonial period, when petitions to Congress went unanswered from one session to the next, and the legislature passed off such issues to local officials.

As policies toward the West changed, so too did the relationship between western residents and the government. The simple fact of having representatives in the national legislature did much to mitigate the detachment of western citizens. Even during the territorial period, non-voting delegates bridged the divide to an extent. William Henry Harrison, for example, brought western issues to the eastern stage when he proposed revising public land laws to favor western farmers, chairing the committee for the bill and overseeing its passage in the House. The Land Act of 1800 (also called the “Harrison Land Law of 1800”) speaks to the slow integration of western legislators into federal

22. “Old England Disappointed; or, The Triumph of the Union and its Principles,” *The Democratic Press* (January 13, 1815), LCP. The author signed himself “A Friend of All States.”

23. Birbeck, *Notes*, 111.

politics.²⁴ Of course the non-voting status of territorial representatives made them impotent to some degree, and many of Harrison's regionally-oriented legislative goals garnered little interest in Congress. Yet non-voting representatives such as George Poindexter of the Mississippi Territory did participate in debates on occasion. During the Eleventh Congress, Mr. Poindexter spoke at length on the admission of the Mississippi Territory, and went so far as to call veteran Massachusetts representative Josiah Quincy to order during a discussion about admitting the "Orleans Territory" into the Union in January 1811.²⁵ The Indiana Territory's Jonathan Jennings laid his constituents' petitions for admission to the Union and to elect their own sheriffs before the House, while also presenting their complaints about the governor's arbitrary conduct.²⁶ Non-voting representatives from the territories played a crucial role in keeping regional priorities in front of the national legislature; they raised issues such as the creation of land offices and post roads, and pressed the House of Representatives for increased rights for territorial legislatures.²⁷

As states, former territories like Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee sent voting representatives to Congress, eliminating the halfway citizenship that non-voting representation implied. Western representatives could force discussions about frontier issues that their colleagues might have neglected in the past. Kentucky's Richard M. Johnson, for example, made a long impassioned speech about the rights of territories to enter the Union in the same debate that pitted Poindexter against Quincy in 1811.²⁸

24. Jo Tice Bloom, "The Congressional Delegates from the Northwest Territory, 1799-1803," *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 2, no. 1 (March 1976): 8-9.

25. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 3rd Sess., 474-476.

26. *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 607, 846.

27. Indiana's Jonathan Jennings, for example, presented resolutions to the House calling for the Indiana legislature to be given a portion of land for use as a seminary of learning and a seat of justice. *Ibid.*, 750.

28. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 3rd Sess, 525-526; *Ibid.*, 520-524.

Ohio's Jeremiah Morrow kept the price of public lands (in Ohio and the Louisiana and Mississippi Territories) in front of the legislature, and John Rhea of Tennessee made speeches on issues ranging from suffrage for Indiana residents to the Bank of the United States. He also raised regional questions about items like the government of the Louisiana Territory and American jurisdiction over crimes committed in Indian territory.²⁹

Congressmen who had western sympathies and ties also emerged from older states with frontier borders. For example, Robert Rutherford of Virginia (the first Virginia delegate from a district west of the Blue Ridge Mountains) spoke out alongside Kentuckian Christopher Greenup against exploitative speculation in western lands in 1796.³⁰

Representatives from frontier regions of established states also did much to alter the presumption that westerners were potential traitors with little attachment to the national government. Virginia Congressman John G. Jackson hailed from a part of the state that is now in West Virginia, and spent time as a surveyor in the Ohio territory. His stance during the Eleventh Congress on extending the payment period for frontier debtors presented western settlers as long-suffering devotees of the federal government. "[T]here is no people in any part of the country more disposed to obey the laws of the Union," he proclaimed. "They will submit to their lands being sold, though to their utter ruin, because they are not able to pay for the land which they purchased in a state of nature. They will not resist the laws, though thousands should be turned from their property, whose only dependence for subsistence is on the land."³¹ Jackson's remarks took no notice of the contentious relationship between settlers and the federal government during

29. Morrow's speeches in *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 3rd Sess., 390, 458, 478; John Rhea in *Ibid.*, appendix p. 46; 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 356, 349-350.

30. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 328-329.

31. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 2,004.

the late 1780s and 1790s, during which time armed forces burned frontier families' homes and farms and settlers squatted in repeated defiance of authorities. This power struggle seems to have been water under the bridge by the time Jackson made his argument in the spring of 1810.³²

The central government came to understand the strategic importance of western borderlands over time; relocating the center of power away from the seaboard took Americans' focus off the young nation's weakness in the face of British maritime power. In 1790, one forward-thinking congressman, William Smith of Maryland asked, "[i]f invaded, shall we look to the navy for protection? No, sir, to the agricultural interest – to the hardy sons of the West – to the American yeomanry we shall appeal, and we shall there find support."³³ Yet few of Smith's colleagues agreed with him. Although eastern Americans never wanted to lose frontier territories to a foreign power, preceding chapters have shown that the strategic value of the West eluded many of them during the founding decades. Unclear loyalties and clouded boundaries on the frontier led legislators to dismiss the problem of sovereignty in the West as either too complex or too much the product of bad behavior among the second-class citizens who had settled in the area. However, after the Revolution, American leaders had little luck asserting national sovereignty on the eastern front: Great Britain continued to violate American shipping rights, and both France and England bullied the new nation in maritime commercial relationships because, on some basic level, they could. As one Philadelphia gentleman explained in 1794, Great Britain possessed the power to "annihilate" America's maritime

32. Even though squatters on lands remained a problem, and James Madison threatened to remove illegal settlers by military force if necessary during his administration, the threats were empty. Arguments against such treatment of fellow citizens were strong enough to get congress to pass legislation allowing them squatters' rights with the option to purchase without leaving. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 265-266.

33. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,618.

trade.³⁴ Despite England's status as "mistress of the ocean," circumventing the powerful former parent state by looking to the interior did not seem feasible while the West remained a colonial backwater. Rather, people urged eastward-looking solutions. The Philadelphia gentleman who spoke about British power, for example, thought that fortifying ports and laying in arsenals might convince Britain to respect America on the high seas.³⁵ A distinct sense of the West as an alternative did not develop until the nineteenth century.

Eastern Americans also began to re-interpret the economic value of the western lands, a shift that helped break the pattern of dependence left over from colonial-era British mercantilism. Whereas the founding generation viewed the territories as a way to fund government debt (an exploitative framework based on British models), subsequent generations better understood how western lands could fit into a large, *self-sufficient* national economy. In an article entitled, "The Cultivation of the Interior" (1815), an anonymous contributor to Philadelphia's *Democratic Press* argued that it was "impossible for the United States to be too deeply impressed with the immense momentary importance of cultivating and improving their interior, while the yet unbalanced power of the British navy suspends the commerce of all the nations of the world with the American seaports."³⁶ Whether the focus fell onto the far-western frontiers or simply on interior regions of established states, the argument acknowledged that easterners could not plan to establish themselves as equals with the former mother country through maritime trade based along the seaboard. During his travels westward

34. *Letter from a Gentleman in Philadelphia, to his Friend in Alexandria* (Philadelphia: Printed by R. Folwell for Matthew Carey, 1794), 6, 8-9, in Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800 [Electronic Resource]; [New Canaan, CT] : Readex ; [Worcester, Mass.] : American Antiquarian Society, [2002]-, Document no. 47098 (filmed). (Hereafter cited as EAI).

35. General Knox to Governor St Clair, War Department, September 14, 1790, in *SCP* 2:181.

36. "The Cultivation of the Interior," *The Democratic Press* (January 11, 1815), LCP.

from the Virginia coast, Morris Birbeck predicted that “the time [was] fast approaching, when the grand intercourse with Europe will not be, as at present, through eastern America, but through the great rivers which communicate by the Mississippi with the ocean, at New Orleans. In this view, we approximate to Europe, as we proceed to the West.”³⁷ This belief gained adherents as the new century progressed. By the 1820s men like Thomas Hart Benton argued that only by moving toward the Pacific rather than the Atlantic could the United States get out from under England’s thumb and find its own lucrative trade routes to command. Long vulnerable to British bullying when it came to maritime trade based out of commercial centers on the seaboard, the new nation could finally put an end to subservience and humiliation if only easterners would redirect their economic energies westward instead.³⁸

Turning their attention westward also allowed Americans to see that the development of former territories created the domestic precedents the young nation needed to break free from reliance on British examples. While the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was largely imperial, it also included a process by which the colonial relationship ended and statehood began. When Governor St. Clair addressed the people of Marietta in July 1788, telling them that the system under which they would live was “suited to [their] infant Situation, & to continue no longer than that State of Infancy shall last,” he revealed something beyond the blatant paternalism evident in his language.³⁹ Whatever the colonial overtones of St. Clair’s address, his oration demonstrated that the federal

37. Birbeck, *Notes*, 84.

38. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 22-24. Benton referred to the east coast as “the English seaboard.” *Ibid.*, 23.

39. “Journal of Executive Proceedings in the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio,” [July 9, 1788, St. Clair addresses the people assembled at Marietta], in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter, vol. 3, *The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1803* (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 264. (Hereafter cited as *TPUS* 3).

government's approach to its western colonies would be truly distinct from that of the former mother country on a very basic level. Although St. Clair spoke down to the "children" of the territory, he also made an implicit assumption that the child *could* grow into an adult, and that such growth did indeed warrant a legal change in westerners' status. The British colonial model contained no such framework for advancement; colonists remained so, regardless of how developed their settlements became. In exchanging the British view for one of their own in which white colonial children could become adult political equals (while only dark-skinned individuals remained in a permanent state of infancy) the United States found stable footing for an independent identity. By embedding a mechanism for change in the Northwest Ordinance, the founding government laid the groundwork for ending post-colonial replication. When subsequent generations followed through on the promise of full membership in the polity, they enacted a separation from the British imperial model that the founding generation could only envision.

The process by which colonies became states created a plethora of domestic precedents that set the young nation apart from its former parent country. This is true both in terms of crafting legislation that provided a pathway to statehood, and in terms of the actual transition from territory to state, which was a learning experience. The Southwest's transition in 1794-1796, for example, demonstrated the possible "pitfalls" that lay within existing legislation on the process. Based on the experience there, Congress understood that the legislation it drafted for the Northwest Territory had to be more precise and lay out procedures more clearly than it had for the Southwest. As Tennessee (1796) and Ohio (1803) completed the process of becoming states, legislators

could view it as proof that they had crafted a system dramatically different from that of the British empire. These early additions to the Union established a pattern, and the deluge of new states in the wake of the War of 1812 – Louisiana (1812), Indiana (1816), Mississippi (1817), Illinois (1818), Alabama (1819) – confirmed that the pattern worked. It affirmed that America would not “collapse into empire” because the orderly growth of a republic on a totally new model was indeed possible.⁴⁰ In offering an opportunity to reenact settlement on a uniform national pattern, western development allowed Americans to correct errors laid down during the colonial past. During a debate on opening a land office in the Northwest Territory in 1796, North Carolina’s Robert Goodloe Harper pointed out that “the most important differences which had arisen betwixt the different States in America, was owing to the different methods adopted in their original settlement.”⁴¹ This fact, Harper explained, should convince his colleagues to take more interest in devoting resources to orderly settlement in the western territories. If strife among existing states stemmed from their colonial-era settlement, then the nation now had a chance to pursue a new path; by simply organizing the frontier territories with order and consistency, the United States could grow in ways that the British colonial model never allowed, and avoid future disharmony in the expanding Union.⁴²

At the turn of the century, Ohio became a test case that moved the country farther away from British patterns, thus contributing to the creation of a more unique national identity. During one House debate on admitting the Ohio country to the Union in 1802, Connecticut’s Roger Griswold made a forceful argument against any metropolitan

40. Walter T. Durham, “The Southwest and Northwest Territories, a Comparison, 1787-1796,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 195.

41. *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st Sess., 352.

42. Any hope for harmony dissipated as sectional strife radiated into the territories during the 1840s and 1850s. Yet in the first decades of the nineteenth century, it was possible to believe that new additions to the Union could be made in a uniform manner.

interference in the process; he claimed that hindering or manipulating the process in any way would have broad ramifications. “What is the condition of the people of the Territory,” he asked. Though they were not a complete state by some standards, “they have a complete legislature, as fully competent to legislate as the legislature of Maryland, or any other legislature in the Union.” Griswold warned that if the national legislature felt free to “go abreast” of that local governing body, then there was no reason why Congress could not do the same to the legislature of Maryland or any other long-established state. If Congress could “legislate for these people before they are admitted into the Union, you may also legislate for them afterwards. If you do not like the Constitution they now form, you may pass a law for another constitution.” He compared such behavior to the practice of “other countries,” and hoped that the United States could avoid making the same mistakes. Griswold’s point shows that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, legislators had begun to resist the sort of deterministic power that federal authorities exercised over the western colonies in the 1780s and 1790s. Many were not willing to accept that an area could be considered as anything but a state or in a temporary situation on the way to becoming a state. Although the 1787 Ordinance made that an *assumed* potential, Ohio and Tennessee before her turned that assumption a concrete precedent.⁴³

As western territories became states, frontier residents joined the polity and brought fresh perspectives that changed national political dynamics. To begin with,

43. “Remarks of Mr. Fearing and Mr. Griswold in the House of Representatives on the Report of the Select Committee Respecting the Admission of the North-Western Territory as a State into the Union, March 31, 1802,” in *SCP* 2:577-579. Ultimately Congress did not strike out the resolution that Griswold objected to (which empowered Congress to call a constitutional convention in Ohio before it could be admitted as a state). When the people of Ohio learned of this, they declared the resolution “an act of legislative usurpation of power properly the province of the territorial legislature, bearing a striking similarity to the course of Great Britain imposing laws on the provinces.” *Ibid.*, n. 1, p. 581. Thus, although this period is clearly one of incomplete transition away from British-influenced policy toward the West, the stakes were well understood.

government structures in these new states developed without the same weight of the founding era's Federalist/Anti-Federalist divisions. Despite the fact that incorporation into the Union brought some eastern political squabbles closer to home for frontier dwellers, the backward-looking divisions that impacted the East during the founding decades did not mark their state and local governments in the same way. As the fictional frontiersman Major Willoughby in Samuel Woodworth's *Champions of Freedom* (1816) proudly states in response to inquiries about his own party loyalties, his life in recent years "has been passed in a wilderness" and thus he did not take part in the "follies" of political squabbling. Far from the seaboard, Willoughby "found much to commend, but still more to condemn in the measures of both" parties. He cautioned his young son during a residence in Boston, "[p]reserve your independence...and never suffer yourself to become the slave or the tool of a sect or a party."⁴⁴ The relatively fresh perspective evident in Willoughby's comments meant that when territorial residents achieved full citizenship they changed national political dynamics.

When frontier voters did align themselves with national parties, they changed the old balance of power by accelerating the decline of the Federalist Party. Associated with pro-British political culture, aristocracy, and an attachment to too many remnants of the colonial past, Federalists gained few supporters in the West. In the Southwest, many Tennesseans aligned with Jeffersonian Republicans early on, and the same was true in Ohio as that territory moved toward statehood at the turn of the century. Although the two political parties did vie for positions and power within the newly formed state

44. Samuel Woodworth, *Champions of Freedom, Or, The Mysterious Chief, A Romance of the Nineteenth Century, Founded on the Events of the War, Between the United States and Britain, Which Terminated in March, 1815* (New York: Printed by Charles N. Baldwin, Bookseller, 1816), 43-44, 87, Hathi Trust.

legislature in Ohio, for example, observers commented that the Ohio constitutional convention consisted of thirty-five members, but “ha[d] but seven Federalists in it.”⁴⁵ This was because certain aspects of the Jeffersonian Republican platform appealed particularly to western interests, and treated the West as “a source of conceptualization for building the new nation.”⁴⁶ Many of the settlers who migrated into the Ohio country during the 1790s identified as Democratic-Republicans because they favored that party’s ideology of individualism versus the model of order imposed from above that Federalists had implemented in the 1787 Ordinance.⁴⁷ It was no accident that when Thomas Jefferson and James Madison warned Americans about a descent into an armed monarchy after the Alien and Sedition Acts, they put their resolutions first “in the heart of the Republican West.”⁴⁸ Although Federalists tried to revive their ailing party during the 1808 election, they continued to falter, partly due to their failure to carry western states like Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, all of which voted in a solid block along with the South.⁴⁹ Carrying New England no longer tipped the scales in national elections because western states altered the balance of electoral power.

As western territories and states developed, frontier voters created a crucible in which popular democracy was forged and tested. Frederick Jackson Turner recognized this in his observations about the significance of the frontier in 1893. “[T]he frontier

45. Joseph Darlington to the Secretary of the Treasury, Chillicothe, November 17, 1802, in *TPUS* 2:256-257.

46. Kristofer Ray, “Land Speculation, Popular Democracy, and Political Transformation on the Tennessee Frontier, 1780-1800,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 170. Kentucky and Tennessee gave all of their electoral votes to Jefferson in the elections of 1796 and 1800; Ohio joined those two states in electing Jefferson in 1804, and giving all electoral votes to the Democratic-Republican candidate in 1808, 1812, 1816 (Indiana joined the list) and 1820 (Illinois joined as well).

47. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 57. There were splits among the Republican coalition in Ohio almost immediately after statehood, however. *Ibid.*, 81-94.

48. Matthew Q. Dawson, *Partisanship and the Birth of America’s Second Party, 1796-1800: “Stop the Wheels of Government”* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 101.

49. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 118.

regions,” Turner wrote, “have exercised a steady influence toward democracy.” Turner traced that frontier-forged democracy back to seventeenth-century Virginia, and followed a “belt of democracy” that moved westward with settlement. What Turner could not fully appreciate was the significance of this western democratization in disrupting imitative political patterns in the founding generation.⁵⁰ The seaboard states had the legacy of both colonial-era local government, and revolutionary-era republicanism to contend with; these were rife with paternalism, elitism, and an innate caution about putting power in the hands of common Americans. Western influences set the pace for breaking down the fear of popular sovereignty embedded in the founders’ worldview. In Indiana, as Governor William Henry Harrison observed the approach of the second phase of government (when he would have to work with a popularly elected legislature), it was clear that while older French inhabitants did not seek representative government, the “popular sentiment for democratizing measures” grew with every American who settled there.⁵¹ One of the Northwest Territory’s first delegates to the House of Representatives, William McMillan, carried instructions from the territorial legislature to ask Congress for a law widening suffrage for territorial residents. His successor, Paul Fearing had the same mandate when he went to Washington for the Seventh Congress. Whatever the reluctance in Congress regarding expanded democracy, westerners themselves pushed for change at the earliest

50. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920, 1921), 248. Turner interpreted political divides as between people from the “interior” and the “dominant classes of the coast.” But he did not fully appreciate the connection between that “coastwise aristocracy” and post-colonial dependence on British social, political, and economic structures. *Ibid.*, 249-251.

51. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson’s Hammer*, 75. Andrew Cayton writes that Harrison himself favored the patronage and power politics that went along with colonial governance, and that Indiana’s second phase of government was “not much of an advance in representative democracy.” *Frontier Indiana*, 238. Yet imperious policies (such as the appointment power retained by the governor) embedded in the progression toward statehood do not negate popular support for more democratic procedures.

opportunity.⁵² The state constitution that Ohio's first convention wrote in late 1802 differed radically from the Northwest Ordinance. It gave vast powers to the legislature while leaving the office of governor weak, especially in comparison with the dictatorial position St. Clair had enjoyed. Most significantly, the executive was subject to election every two years, making a long-reigning disinterested governor on the colonial model a near impossibility. The constitution also empowered individuals of townships to select their own justices of the peace, while the state assembly would elect other judges. This counteracted the problem of appointed judges who had conflicts of interest and little time to attend to their duties in more remote areas.⁵³ The state government functioned according to the philosophy that the power belonged "to the people on the local level." It was a "democratic revolution."⁵⁴ As such, it stood as an example to the rest of the nation.

Methods of local governance that broke away from British examples had their first run in western territories. Whereas seaboard states were "weighed down by decades of living within Britain's imperial structures," the West was open to "new philosoph[ies] of state."⁵⁵ The Northwest Territory, for example, tested administrative methods that departed from the British "judicially-oriented" model. To cast off the judicial model, the federal government had to try out new strategies that impacted how bureaucracy developed. In Ohio, the second phase of government was a trial run for transitioning from a judicial model to a republican government with "mixed legislative-executive institutions."⁵⁶ Methods proven viable during the territorial phase then became the

52. Bloom, "The Congressional Delegates," 15.

53. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 77.

54. *Ibid.*, 78.

55. Richard A. Brisbin, Jr., "Before Bureaucracy: State Courts and the Administration of Public Services in the Northwest, 1787-1830," *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 141-142, 151.

56. *Ibid.* In the judicial model judges and justices of the peace implemented various social controls and

foundations upon which state governments in Ohio and Indiana based more permanent administrative structures. Western state governments went on to create domestic precedents on a variety of issues, and the federal government relied on these both before and after those regions became fully incorporated into the Union. As early as 1791, some legislators looked to the territorial government to ground their decisions. In a debate about who would fill a vacancy in the executive if such a need should ever arise, Georgia's Abraham Baldwin "quoted the precedent established in the Western Territory – there the Secretary is to succeed the Governor."⁵⁷ Frontier precedent also established the authority of Congress to comment on presidential actions in the legislature's addresses to the executive. While debating whether or not Congress should approbate the president's having cut off communication with the British minister in 1809, New York's Jonathan Fisk stood up and supported the measure, pointing to a previous House discussion about Indian policy to strengthen his argument. According to Fisk, Congress had the authority to approbate the president's action based on a precedent set during the Fifth Congress. That body explicitly commented on executive policy toward foreign agents among the tribes, and instructed that, "[n]o means in our power should be omitted of providing for the suppression of such cruel practices, and for the adequate punishment of their atrocious authors."⁵⁸ In this case, a stand taken in reference to the American West and its inhabitants established precedent that future legislatures could follow.

wielded vast power over courts, punishments, wages, trade, the poor, weights and measures, and a myriad of other things that affected daily life.

57. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 3rd Sess., 1,912. Mr. Sherman did contradict him, pointing out that the western government was a "subordinate one." At this early juncture, most legislators dismissed the West as a setting for establishing precedents because it was, as James Madison said, a "case of *sui generis*." *Ibid.*, 1,985.

58. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 889.

Territorial policy also created a domestic precedent for congressional exercise of power over areas where states' powers were noticeably lacking, mitigating the founders' tendency to look to British precedent on the mechanics of governance. Early on in the debates over the first national bank, at least one representative looked west for examples upon which the legislature could draw without relying on Great Britain. Arguing in support of a congressional right to make decisions regarding a national bank, Fisher Ames of Massachusetts "adverted to the authority of our own precedents. Our right to govern the Western Territory is not disputed. It is a power which no State can exercise; it must be exercised, and therefore resides in Congress." Although the Constitution did not explicitly provide that power to Congress, the case of the territories demonstrated that it flowed from "the nature and necessity of the case." What happened beyond the Ohio provided an "analogy" that could guide Congress, and for the first time that reference remained completely divorced from any policy or precedent set by the former mother country.⁵⁹ Congressional oversight of the status of slavery in any new areas of the Union also had roots in territorial legislation. This precedent, first set in Article Six of the Northwest Ordinance (which outlawed slavery in the Northwest Territory) and codified again with acceptance of slavery in the cession act for the Southwest Territory, shaped national political discussion for generations to come. Both of these provisions "indicated the existence of a national consensus that Congress could determine the free or slave status of federal territories that would supply the future growth of the country." The Ordinance of 1787 was also the first charter of governance to guarantee the sanctity of private contracts.⁶⁰ Another frontier event, Arthur St. Clair's disastrous defeat at the

59. *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,957.

60. Walter T. Durham, "The Southwest and Northwest Territories, a Comparison, 1787-1796,"

hands of Indians in 1791, incited the first congressional investigation in U.S. history. This created a domestic precedent for congressional jurisdiction when, in 1810, the legislature debated whether or not they had the right to make an inquiry into the conduct of James Wilkinson and his connections with Spanish intrigue along the border. Rather than citing previous action by the British House of Commons as some of his colleagues were wont to do, North Carolina's Joseph Pearson argued that they had their own precedent in this case:

It would be recollected that in 1793 a committee was appointed by the then Congress to investigate the causes of the failure of the expedition under the command of General St. Clair. If they had power to inquire into the failure of a military expedition, had they not the same power to inquire into the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief...[t]he power which Congress then exercised had not been questioned.

In fact, several congressmen emphatically condemned comparisons between the House of Representatives and the British House of Commons in this case, showing that discussions such as this, occasioned by western events, helped legislators define their own powers outside the parameters of British models. Representatives John Rhea and James Holland both scolded colleagues who dwelled on House of Commons examples, insisting they let the Constitution be their guide.⁶¹

Although the territories remained susceptible to the reliance on British judicial precedent (particularly on English common law) that prevailed in the East, western regions were often first to depart from that safe path and create new patterns of lawmaking because they had no local judicial entities that pre-dated independence. In

Tennessee Historical Quarterly 49, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 188, 190.

61. Owens, *Jefferson's Hammer*, 17; *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,729, 1,747. Nathaniel Macon joined Pearson in this citation. The congressional inquiry into St. Clair's defeat was also cited to support investigations into the progress of the War of 1812 in the North and West in 1813. *Annals of Congress*, 13th Cong., 1st Sess., 416.

1798, Peter Audrain, the prothonotary at Detroit, wrote Governor St. Clair about a request from British magistrates in Canada regarding their power to seek extradition. Audrain reminded St. Clair that “this is a national question, the first since the organization of our government in this country, your decision will establish a precedent, which in future, will be a rule for our justices.”⁶² His prediction proved accurate; Ohio officials in particular blazed a lawmaking trail for the young nation. In 1805, Governor Tiffin of Ohio sought to repeal the common law originally passed during the territorial phase. The Ohio General Assembly supported that repeal in January of the following year. Also in 1806, Ohio judges Calvin Pease and George Tod contested common law practice when they opposed an act increasing the jurisdiction of the justice of the peace.⁶³ Distant from the established federal and state governments along the seaboard, westerners looked closer to home when crafting laws and judicial precedents, leading the way toward casting off the colonial reliance on British legal precedents. Upon the nullification of common law in Ohio, local politician Samuel Huntington wrote to Thomas Worthington that doing so finally removed “the disgraceful badge of remaining Servitude by being bound by British Statutes.”⁶⁴ Even if these departures had limited immediate effects, they initiated the important process of moving away from post-colonial replications of the former parent state.

Western legal questions also helped push the federal courts to move past colonial examples because there was often no prior instance in British common law on which they could rely. In the case of *Clarke v. Bazadone* (1803), for example, George Rogers Clark

62. Peter Audrain [prothonotary in Detroit] to Governor St. Clair, Detroit, March 23, 1798, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

63. Brisbin, “Before Bureaucracy,” 156-157. Civil action in Ohio courts continued to follow common law.

64. Samuel Huntington to Thomas Worthington, December 10, 1805, quoted in Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 98. Both men went on to become governors of Ohio.

ultimately appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn a territorial court judgment in favor of his opponent, Laurent Bazadone. When Clark brought his case before the Marshall court in 1802, it forced several major legal questions: did the federal court hold jurisdiction over the territorial one, and could it issue a writ of error overturning the original verdict in favor of Bazadone? What were Bazadone's personal and property rights under the Constitution given that he was of foreign descent? When the Marshall court refused to issue a writ of error overturning the original verdict, it displayed an ability to deny British models and establish new ones when pushed. Despite the fact that Clark's attorney John T. Mason attempted to raise the specter of English precedent to argue in favor of the Supreme Court's right to issue the writ, Marshall and his colleagues refused. By doing so they not only crafted domestic legal precedents without recourse to the common law, they also pressured congress to deal with the "question of federal control over its own colonial enterprise." When confronted with the complexity of frontier issues, Congress too was compelled to turn its attention to the question of federal jurisdiction. Congress ultimately passed legislation allowing writs of error to be issued against territorial rulings in March 1805.⁶⁵

Western leaders also set the example for the rest of the nation for how to use enhanced territorial sovereignty as the federal government's power increased during the nineteenth century. The formerly contested border regions became the first proving ground for an assertion of Americans' stronger diplomatic position after the War of 1812 ended in 1815. In those regions, England gradually began to deal with the United States as a legitimate nation-state with rights under international law. British officers in

65. John R. Wunder, "Constitutional Oversight: *Clarke v. Bazadone* and the Territorial Supreme Court as the Court of Last Resort," *The Old Northwest, a Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 4, no. 3 (September 1978): 259-284. The court clerk added the erroneous "e" to Clark's name.

Canadian posts, for example, had to accept U.S. jurisdiction over lands that were once contested and over Indian tribes with whom England once treated. Western Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan took the lead in asserting this newly acquired authority; his approach to dealing with the American-British-Indian relationship in 1815 set the example for the rest of the country. In October of that year Cass refused to send an American accused of murdering an Indian traveling from U.S. territory to the British side of the channel. His dismissal of British protestations and threats, and his insistence that the American judicial system held jurisdiction over the matter set a precedent that had been lacking during the founding decades. The western leader “reject[ed] the mixed and overlapping sovereignties of an Indian borderland,” and instead demanded clear distinctions between Indians within U.S. jurisdiction and any British authority still in North America.⁶⁶ British authorities along the northwestern frontier also acknowledged American sovereignty in the Great Lakes, and stopped boarding the young nation’s ships there. This set a precedent that the Royal Navy subsequently followed in the Atlantic. The power struggle as it played out in the borderlands was pivotal; while the United States could not definitively crush the nagging issue of impressment through war, and even failed to get clear satisfaction at the peace negotiation at Ghent in December 1814, post-war standoffs in places like the Michigan territory did bring closure.⁶⁷ Cass’s actions demonstrated that not only could Americans actually stand up to the British in tangible ways on the frontiers versus the seaboard, they could also exert visible dominance over an Indian population that had long symbolized Britain’s continued ability to effect Americans’ lives and property.

66. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 432-433.

67. *Ibid.*, 435.

In addition to helping break many of the patterns of political post-colonialism, the West's integration into national culture provided a new point of origin for American identity. The British imperial framework called for the marginalization of the periphery and its residents as outside the bounds of civilized culture. While the founding generation conformed to this view by disparaging westerners and imitating (or importing) British culture, subsequent generations embraced western landscapes and the frontier persona as quintessentially "American." Scholar Richard Slotkin writes that American mythogenesis does not recognize "those eighteenth-century gentlemen who composed a nation at Philadelphia" as true founding fathers. Rather, national myth-making exalted "rogues, adventurers, and land-boomers; the Indian fighters, traders, missionaries, explorers, and hunters who killed and were killed until they had mastered the wilderness." But if these individuals became the archetypal Americans, when and why did this develop? Slotkin cites the colonial Puritan captivity narrative as evidence of Americans' need to make themselves a bridge between men of the wilderness (i.e. Native Americans) and civilized individuals; but within this format, their identity as British-Americans served as an anchor. Americans' sense of belonging to the ranks of a civilized empire allowed them to toy with their proximity to an unsettled land where men remained in a primitive and natural state. They were "Americanized Englishmen."⁶⁸ In the wake of the Revolution, that anchor suddenly disappeared. Americans did not automatically embrace the rogues and adventurers of the West in the face of this loss. Instead, they sought to distance themselves from these characters, heaping disdain on them and treating them as colonial subjects. Operating under the post-colonial assumption that peripheral settlements should

68. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 4, 189.

have the same status as the American colonies had under British rule, easterners relegated frontier residents to the category of inferior, uncivilized, second-class citizens. This changed only over time, as the generation to which those stately eighteenth-century gentleman belonged retired in favor of subsequent generations of Americans whose experiences were not so colored by the colonial past. In addition to the roster of heroic westerners that emerged from the War of 1812, the figure of the average frontier resident rose to new heights in American culture as the nineteenth century progressed. In the end, the character of the pioneer settler replaced the Americanized Englishman as the cornerstone for American identity.

If Daniel Boone ultimately became the “most significant, most emotionally compelling myth-hero of the early republic,” then a significant *volte-face* occurred as second- and third-generation Americans replaced the founding generation. At some point, the figure of an Indian-fighting backwoodsman living on the edges of civilization became the “American hero.”⁶⁹ Boone in particular offers an interesting case. Boone’s conduct during the late 1790s exemplified westerners’ fluid identity, and he might rightly be labeled a traitor to the United States after he fled to Spanish territory to escape creditors and accepted money from Spanish authorities upon settling there.⁷⁰ Yet Boone benefitted from a cultural evolution in the nineteenth century that moved the backwoods American from the periphery to the center. Barely literate, Boone was a transient who by most accounts resembled an Indian in his physical appearance and dress. His activities and acquaintances would not have been labeled respectable by colonial standards.⁷¹ He was,

69. *Ibid.*, 21-22.

70. See Chapter Three.

71. Daniel J. Herman, “The Other Daniel Boone: The Nascence of a Middle-Class Hunter-Hero, 1784-1860,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 434.

in other words, exactly the type of man who earned westerners the moniker “white savage,” and upon whom eastern disdain might be heaped with impunity. Yet manners and appearances that made one a white savage by 1790s standards became quintessentially “American” by the 1820s and 1830s. Boone was “[b]uoyed to respectability” by rhetoric that made the buckskin hunting shirt many frontiersmen wore a national emblem and the very essence of patriotic dress. Such cultural developments helped Boone and others like him go “from crude, threatening, liminal men into nature’s noblemen.”⁷² The cultural success of a figure like Boone “trickled down from the city” as much if not more than it was promoted along the frontier. Nineteenth-century easterners did not need to look down upon figures like Boone as inferior and uncouth, because they did not experience the same need to broadcast disdain for colonials in the West as Americans in the previous generation did. Instead their Boone could be “a symbol of progress wrapped in a blanket of tradition – or at least a blanket that appeared to be tradition.”⁷³ During the first decades of the nineteenth century, new generations busily built their own traditions, ones that rested firmly on the presence of western figures like Boone.⁷⁴

Daniel Boone was not the only manifestation of a growing cultural fascination with the frontier dweller. James Kirke Paulding’s *The Backwoodsman* clearly demonstrates how the public perception of certain “frontier” characteristics evolved by the time of its publication in 1818. Paulding utilized language and descriptors that would

72. *Ibid.*, 454.

73. *Ibid.*, 432.

74. The specific elements of the Boone narrative differed by region as sectionalism intensified in the mid-nineteenth century. Richard Slotkin argues that presentations of Boone from western writers emphasized his strength, while northeastern and southern writers struggled more with his proximity to “savages.” See “The Fragmented Image: The Boone Myth and Sectional Cultures (1820-1850),” in *Regeneration Through Violence*, 394-465.

have been explicitly negative when applied to western Americans during the 1790s, but ascribed intrinsic value in the nineteenth century. He described his subject, the backwoodsman, as:

The lowliest of the lowly rural train,
Who left his native fields afar to roam,
In western wilds, in search of a happier home.

Paulding admitted that his tale was “[s]imple,” his muse “humble,” and her verse “weak.” His muse, he stated unapologetically, offered no tales of knights, glorious deeds, and royal heroines. His writing did away with these things very purposefully, for he identified them as “servile, [and] imitative,” modes far beneath the muse of the western clime. His muse, by virtue of her simplicity, forged a “path that leads to every heart.”⁷⁵ Paulding understood that the literature Americans needed to provide them with a stronger independent cultural identity could only be created by tapping into the West as inspiration and setting. The figure of the backwoodsman was the primary vehicle by which American cultural heroes could be made truly distinct from European literary characters.⁷⁶

To create an American version of the courtly gentleman or even the satirized foppish dandy, was to act out the colonial relationship over again. Such characters, even if explicitly American in origin and residence, could never be anything but lackluster versions of European entities. In the same way, presenting more humble American characters as ignorant yokels on the margins of respectable society simply fell back into

75. James Kirke Paulding, *The Backwoodsman: a poem* (Philadelphia: M. Thomas, 1818), 7-8, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

76. American writers were able to create a different type of pioneer character in part because they had access to new, evolving material from the frontier itself as it moved and changed. Europeans, on the other hand, retained more static forms of the symbolic frontiersmen in their literature. See Richard Slotkin, “Society and Solitude: The Frontier Myth in Romantic Literature, 1795-1825,” in *Regeneration Through Violence*, 369-393.

colonial patterns, replicating the disdain for rusticity that marked the uneven relationship between London and the North American colonists. Paulding repeatedly expressed praise for the backwoodsman in direct conjunction with the fact that the hero was “[u]nknown among old Europe’s hapless swains.” “Unlike the sons of Europe’s happier clime,” he writes, America’s humble heroes:

...never died to music’s melting chime,
Or groan’d, as if in agonizing pain,
At some enervate, whining, sickly strain;
Nor would they sell their heritage of rights,
For long processions, fetes, and pretty sights,
Or barter for a bauble, or a feast,
All that distinguishes the man from beast...
Among them was no driv’ling princely race,
Who’d beggar half a state, to buy a vase,
Or starve a province nobly to reclaim,
From mother Earth, a thing without a name.”⁷⁷

Paulding’s heroes do not fall into the pattern of wasteful and authoritarian imperialism that European princes exhibited over their provinces. The frontier hero also solved the perennial problem of slavish impersonation of British refinements; he could easily forego ostentation, titles, and what another American author called the “gew-gaw glare” of European finery without a hint of apology and no sense of inferiority as a result.⁷⁸

The figure of the American westerner defied any comparison with the English peasant as a possible counterpart. Paulding’s characters find relief from the trials of the European peasant by virtue of westward movement, and Morris Birbeck noted during his journey from the Virginia coast to the Illinois country that, despite their rudeness of manner, the frontiersmen he encountered stood quite distinct from the poor class of the

77. Paulding, *The Backwoodsman*, 11, 82-83.

78. Daniel Bryan, *The Mountain Muse: comprising the adventures of Daniel Boone; and the power of virtuous and refined beauty* (Harrisonburg: Printed for the author by Davidson & Bourne, 1813), 123, First American West Digital Collection, Digital ID icufaw bbc0051.

former mother country. “[I]n their manners and morals, and especially in their knowledge and proud independence of mind,” he wrote, “they exhibit a contrast so striking.” Birbeck concludes that any person with an accurate understanding of the westerners’ character would be glad to settle among them.⁷⁹ Finding true distinctions between an American “peasant” class and that of England was just one way of strengthening independent national identity.

Politically, portraying oneself as a frontiersman became a profitable campaign tactic by the 1820s. “A Foot-race,” a cartoon depicting the 1824 election, provides an early example. Andrew Jackson, shown in a military uniform with a sword to capitalize on his reputation as the hero of New Orleans, is supported by an individual dressed in frontier garb and carrying a crude powder horn. Henry Clay’s supporters are identified not by their adherence to his political philosophies, but by their western origins; they cheer him on with “old Kentuck’.”⁸⁰ Even those who did not come by the western persona naturally found it a profitable character to take on. William Henry Harrison, for example, was born into a prominent Virginia gentry family with substantial wealth, and considered himself a genteel individual even after he relocated to the Northwest Territory in 1796. Harrison “cast his lot” in with westerners, marrying the daughter of a territorial judge, serving with western forces throughout his military career, and taking on various territorial political positions.⁸¹ By the time he ran for national office in 1836 and 1840, he actively cultivated a rugged frontier persona for himself. The log cabin candidate and victor of Tippecanoe, Harrison *chose* to ally himself with western imagery rather than tap

79. Birbeck, *Notes*, 98.

80. David Claypoole Johnston, “A Foot-race” [Boston, s.n., 1824], LCP.

81. Owens, *Jefferson’s Hammer*, 51. In fact, many of Harrison’s western constituents had come to view him as old fashioned and elitist in 1809-1810, when they labeled him and his supporters as “Virginia Aristocrats.” *Ibid.*, 150. This fact makes the log cabin campaign and the persona he created for himself of a yeoman farmer all the more remarkable.

into his real roots as a descendant of prominent revolutionary-era Virginians. His supporters also saw the value in this tactic. In an address delivered to New Hampshire voters in 1840, one campaigner applauded Tippecanoe's "interest for those who were obliged to live in 'log cabins,' drink 'hard cider,' and labor for daily support, instead of gratifying the schemes of the speculator."⁸² Clearly politicians running for national office saw political capital could be gained by identifying as western.

As more settlers moved to the interior, the West as a landscape took on new meaning in American culture; taking clear control of formerly contested physical spaces was integral to overcoming the sense of inferiority that accompanied the post-colonial state. During the 1780s and 1790s, legislators did have some sense of the value of western lands. Their experiences under colonialism, however, very much limited their understanding, and they saw monetary rather than cultural value. In the founding generation's mercantilist point of view, the benefits of land sales in the territories should accrue exclusively to the advantage of established communities in seaboard states; profits could fund the national debt and eliminate the necessity for a permanent system of taxation. Yet legislators who supported schemes for government-backed land sales did not perceive that the physical space west of the Appalachians might become the focal point of Americans' national identity. This awareness developed after the turn of the century, much aided by the War of 1812, which drastically altered the position of rival European powers along the borders. After the war ended in 1815, Americans moved in with a vengeance, and bound western lands up into the evolving dialogue about the nation's destiny. Nineteenth-century Americans claimed ownership over physical space

82. William Wyman, *An Address Delivered to the Voters in Manchester, N.H.: June 25, 1840: in View of the approaching presidential election* (Lowell [Mass.]: Printed at the Literary Souvenir Office, 1840), 5, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

through mapmaking and surveying that differed from cartography during the founding decades. After the Revolution, American mapmaking focused on delineating boundaries that could mitigate territorial disagreements among the various states. In typical imitative fashion, early national mapmakers “transplanted the idea of their new nation on top of the plan initially determined by British imperial structures,” forming states out of former colonies.⁸³ Although this fact highlights the developmental delay in post-colonial geographic representation, it is important to note that the existence of the western borderlands pushed American cartographers toward a more independent management of national space. Many of the territorial disputes that this fledgling domestic map production attempted to resolve involved swaths of land west of the Alleghenies, and clarifying ownership over these regions forced new surveys and maps. Local production of physical images of the United States might not have differed from colonial-era versions of the same had it not been for the need to organize the territories; in negotiating and laying out these western boundary lines, American cartography grew out of the confines of colonial precedent.

Ownership of western spaces made the once weak nation seem all but indestructible. In 1812 Henry Clay insisted that although English tourists might criticize the young nation, its sheer size made it far more durable than European states. There, “the fall of Paris or London is the fall of the nation. Here are no such dangerous aggregations of people. New-York, and Philadelphia, and Boston, and every city on the Atlantic, might be subdued by an usurper, and he would have made but a small advance in the accomplishment of his purpose.” If an invader overpowered the seaboard states, “the

83. Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

liberty of the Union would still be unconquered. It would find successful support from the west.”⁸⁴ American poetry embraced the fact that their nation was “Earth’s broadest realm.”⁸⁵ In some sense, it was by virtue of the large spaces to which they had access that the American traveler could be distinguished from his British counterpart. Englishman Morris Birbeck observed one characteristic that set Americans apart from their former countrymen in England. He explained that they “will start on an expedition of three thousand miles by boats, on horseback or on foot, with as little deliberation or anxiety, as we should set out on a journey of three hundred.”⁸⁶ Another traveler, Henry Fearon, made similar observations on the unique role that movement played in Americans’ culture. “Emigration in this country is always in motion, and forever changing in the points of its attraction,” he wrote. Emigrants might set out for Ohio one day, and then move on towards Alabama or Missouri not long after.⁸⁷ Not only were Americans unique because they were always “on the move,” that movement was clearly westward motion.

American culture departed from its old-world roots when it embraced the western landscape. European works like George-Louis Leclerc, the Comte de Buffon’s *Histoire Naturelle* had created an impression that the natural environment in the New World was “primitive, [and] noxious,” breeding “underdeveloped, listless” inhabitants.⁸⁸ Rather than

84. “Legislative/Legal Proceedings from Congress in the House of Representatives,” *The Alexandria Herald* (Alexandria, VA), January 13, 1812, vol. 1, issue 75, AHN. Not everyone agreed with Clay. William Widgery of Massachusetts, for example, insisted that the “strength of the country lay in the New England States.” *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 603.

85. Solyman Brown, *An Essay on American poetry with Several Miscellaneous Pieces on a Variety of Subjects, Sentimental, Descriptive, Moral and Patriotic* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, 1818), 68, LCP.

86. Birbeck, *Notes*, 102.

87. Henry Fearon, *Sketches of America. An narrative of a journey of five thousand miles through the eastern and western states of America; contained in eight reports addressed to the thirty-nine English families by whom the author was deputed, in June 1817, to ascertain whether any, and what part of the United States would be suitable for their residence. With remarks on Mr. Birbeck’s ‘Notes’ and ‘Letters’* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 214, First American West Digital Collection, Digital ID icufaw bb0072.

88. Eve Kornfeld, “Encountering ‘the Other’: American Intellectuals and Indians in the 1790s,” *The*

fall into the colonial pattern of approaching the wilderness with fear and suspicion as their parents had done, second- and third-generation Americans adopted the western wilds as an integral part of national strength and identity. They believed, for example, that Daniel Boone “claimed the continent,” setting the American pioneer apart from older doctrines like “*vacuum domicilium*.” That concept, rooted in Enlightenment philosophies as well as the Bible, held that farmers could justly take “vacant” lands and possess them by virtue of cultivation. Boone, on the other hand, “claimed the continent...by engaging deer, bear, and Indian in chivalrous combat.”⁸⁹ In this way, Boone embodied Americans’ distinct understanding of expansion and growth. Conquering physical space and taming a wild landscape was a common colonial endeavor, but the *way* in which Americans understood that process set them apart from the former mother country and other European powers. Daniel Bryan’s poem *The Mountain Muse* (1813) portrayed Daniel Boone the adventurer, who passed up the “city’s pomp,” the “blaze of polish’d Art,” and the “turrets, spires and steeples crown’d” in favor of “Ohio’s cane-cloth’d plains” and the great “[i]mperial River[s] of the West.”⁹⁰ In this instance, the western landscape itself emerges as imperial, rather than the government or its agents. The West drew Americans with it; the landscape itself called to them. This defining feature of American imperialism over the continent created a crucial distinction between the new nation and Great Britain. The American model was not a grand adventure undertaken for crown and country. Rather, it was something more organic, borne of a mystical connection between

William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series 52, no. 2 (April 1995): 299. Buffon’s work was a multi-volume encyclopedia of the natural world composed and published over several years (1749-1804), with some volumes published posthumously.

89. Herman, “The Other Daniel Boone,” 432.

90. Bryan, *The Mountain Muse*, 133-136. Both the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers appear as “imperial” waterways.

Americans and the landscape itself – an idea articulated in the theory of “Manifest Destiny” by the mid-nineteenth century.⁹¹

American culture usurped the notion that the New World was a primitive one, and made of the environment something pure, rather than noxious. While the founding generation inherited the European belief that the physical environment in the New World bred savagery and a devolution into heathenism, that idea changed during the nineteenth century. Perhaps the environment operated on Indians in a way that made them savage, but for whites the unsettled nature of the western landscape was a source of inspiration, a challenge that the intrepid American could meet. Whereas Eli Lewis’s poem *St. Clair’s Defeat* (1792) presented a western landscape covered in darkness, haunted and impenetrable, this same landscape and its native inhabitants proved less daunting for the western hero of the nineteenth century. *The Mountain Muse* depicts a wilderness that, while still intimidating, exists solely to be conquered. Heathens and prowling beasts remained part of the landscape; however, while St. Clair and his contemporaries had suffered terrible defeat in that setting, Daniel Boone and his ilk evaded those threats. If they did get caught, a heroic escape typically followed.⁹² Other poems also presented the West’s “happier climes” as a virtual Garden of Eden. Frightening woods gave way to “shady coverts,” “fragrant groves,” and “sunny hills,” while the Great Lakes and the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers gently bathed the shores.⁹³ Even observers who continued to view frontier residents as rude and unmannered had to admit that the natural landscapes in

91. Henry Nash Smith writes that western expansion fit into both a European, and a newer American style of empire. It achieved maritime empire by gaining Americans access to the Pacific, and a land-based agrarian empire by building the “Garden of the World.” Smith, *Virgin Land*.

92. Bryan, *The Mountain Muse*, 115-119, 133-134.

93. David Humphreys, *Poems by Col. David Humphreys, late Aide-de-Camp to his Excellency General Washington*, Second Edition with Several Additions (Philadelphia: Printed by Matthew Carey, 1789), 15, 17, in EAI, Document no. 21897 (filmed).

which those individuals lived made up for such shortcomings. One author whose observations appeared in the *New England Palladium* in 1812, declared that although the residents of Vincennes were “the meanest part of creation” he had ever seen, yet “[n]ature [had] been profuse in her gifts [there].”⁹⁴ Similarly, John Hay Farnham wrote to his father in New England in 1814 and spoke highly of the richness and “great superiority” of the land itself. Farnham, a Massachusetts lawyer who eventually settled in the Indiana Territory, admitted to his family in the East that westerners had comparatively little education and rough manners; the land, however, was “naturally a far richer country possessing natural advantages with which N[ew] E[ngland] can never compete.”⁹⁵ The landscape functioned as a valuable resource for the nation even if the people did not quite meet East Coast standards. Writers could imbue the landscape itself with the quality of “refinement,” something that many self-conscious Americans valued. *The Mountain Muse* placed “[r]efinement’s golden temple” over the expanse between the Alleghenies and the Pacific coast, finding it specifically in the Great Lakes, and on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.⁹⁶

In literature, inanimate natural elements in the American West became sources of power, vitality, and pride. Poems in the *American Patriotic Song-book*, published in Philadelphia in 1813, celebrated the mighty oaks that the mountains yielded.⁹⁷ Those oaks, and the woods from which they issued, became the wellspring of American power

94. “Vincennes – Indiana,” *New England Palladium* (Boston, MA), January 14, 1812, vol. 39, issue 4, AHN.

95. John Hay Farnham in Woodford, KY to his father [William Farnham] in Newburyport, MA, May 14, 1814, John Hay Farnham Letters, 1791-1833, FHS.

96. Bryan, *The Mountain Muse*, 43-44.

97. “The Constitution and Guerriere” and “American Sailors and Conquerors,” *The American Patriotic Song-book: A Collection of Political, Descriptive, and Humorous Songs, of National Character, and the Production of American Poets Only (Interspersed with a Number Set to Music)* (Philadelphia: W. M’Culloch, 1813), 11, 87, LCP.

in the context of the War of 1812. As one tune in the *National Songster* put it, liberty was then a “Nymph of the Wood,” and “American oak broke the British asunder.”⁹⁸ The heroes of the West, as they emerged in the celebratory culture after the War of 1812, were tied to the environment from whence they came; they issued from the “deep forests” and were, “like their own Mississippi, impetuous and strong.”⁹⁹ Western waterways in particular came to occupy an important place in Americans’ growing sense of strength. The Mississippi, once considered a peripheral river over which the United States half-heartedly competed with Spain, became a “Monarch” in American literature. Authors compared the Mississippi with the Thames, concluding that England’s great river “would hardly swell [the Mississippi’s] tides.”¹⁰⁰ A poem published in the *Alexandria Herald* in 1817, agreed. “Let [the] Thames...To Mississippi’s nobler flood resign,” its author demanded, going on to call the Mississippi the “Father of floods.”¹⁰¹ These pieces show that this great American waterway not only replaced the natural symbols of power in the former parent state, it also absorbed and redirected the parent-child imagery so integral to colonialism. Author James Kirke Paulding predicted that when “native bard[s]” finally understood the real significance of the “[s]weet river of the West,” it would signal that a shift had taken place. At that time, the era when Americans “crouch[ed] before old Europe’s crest” and “[c]herish[ed] her old absurdities as new” was officially ended.

98. “American Perry. Tune – Abraham Newland,” *National Songster; or, a Collection of the Most Admired Patriotic Songs, on the Brilliant Victories, achieved by the naval and military heroes of the United States of America, over equal and superior forces of the British* (Hagers-town, Maryland: Printed by John Gruber and Daniel May, 1814), 20, LCP.

99. [“Song, For the Fourth of July. Composed by Mr. J. McCreery of Petersburg, Vir[ginia]”], *The Shamrock* (New York, NY), August 3, 1816, vol. 1, issue 45, AHN.

100. Brown, *An Essay on American Poetry*, 61, LCP.

101. [“River Mississippi”], *The Alexandria Herald* (Alexandria, VA), October 24, 1817, vol. 8, issue 1,098, AHN.

Breaking that “rusty chain” of colonial slavery could only be accomplished when native artists and writers recognized the value inherent in western landscapes.¹⁰²

Paulding’s dream came true as the nineteenth century progressed; literature that focused on western landscapes and inhabitants proliferated. Post-colonialism marked American writing in the founding decades. As authors struggled to create bodies of work without giving in to the shameful tendency to replicate European examples, they were in turn mocked by the Old World’s literati.¹⁰³ After the turn of the century, however, American popular culture displayed the nation’s growing fascination with frontiersmen, the wilderness that made up their environment, and the exploits that defined frontier living.¹⁰⁴ British travelers who visited the United States in the antebellum era still wrote about the “crude, ‘uncouth’ frontiersmen, who emerged larger than life” in their published accounts. For some self-conscious individuals, this served as “proof” of Britain’s continuing cultural superiority; however, not all Americans lowered their heads in shame because writers like Frances Trollope and Basil Hall lambasted the behavior of the western pioneer. In fact, American-made literature steadily gained in popularity, and, in focusing on western themes, American writers finally ceased to be caged in by post-colonial imitation of old-world culture. This literature sometimes originated from western locales; for example, newspapers in places like Detroit published a good deal of territorial verse. However, much of the material that featured western settings and characters came from eastern authors and found eastern audiences. *The Backwoodsman*, for example, was published in Philadelphia, and the poem “Ontwa: The Son of the Forest” (1822) was

102. Paulding, *The Backwoodsman*, 54-55.

103. For a discussion of this issue, see Sam W. Haynes, “Who Reads an American Book,” in *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 52-76.

104. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 237.

produced in New York.¹⁰⁵ By 1826, the American public had widely embraced two of James Fenimore Cooper's frontier novels, *The Pioneers* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, and he was showcased as "the American novelist."¹⁰⁶ In pursuing frontier themes, Cooper became a symbol of cultural independence. Attendees at one of George Washington's levees during the 1790s would have been out of place in Cooper's world, where, according to one reviewer, "the moment [the reader] set[s] foot in a fashionable drawing room, we find the gentry there so abominably stiff in their manners, and with so much vulgar good breeding, and so dull, or flippant, or affected in their discourse, that we are heartily glad to escape from elegant society." Cooper's readers, the reviewer writes, become convinced that they would rather "take a walk with our author in the woods, or step over to the neighbouring [*sic*] inn, where we are very likely to meet with somebody who can talk to the purpose in his own way."¹⁰⁷ This indicates a sizable shift in the cultural value attributed to the free-spirited and folksy frontier dwellers in Cooper's novels. What the American public defined as national literature by the 1820s was far from its post-colonial roots, where heroes had imitated British standards of refinement. Over the three decades in which Cooper wrote his *Leatherstocking* series, a plethora of works tapped into the nation's growing fascination with the West: John Neal's *Logan: A Family History* (1822), Cooper's *Red Rover* (1827), Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of*

105. Lawrence R. Dawson, "Harps in the Wilds of Freedom: Territorial Verse from the Detroit Gazette, 1817-1830," *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 180. "Ontwa" author Henry Whiting was living in Michigan by this time, however he was originally from Massachusetts and only relocated west in 1816 while serving in the military. "Ontwa" was published in New York by Wiley and Halsted.

106. "Cooper's Novels," *The North American Review* 23, issue 52 (July 1826): 151, *The Nineteenth Century in Print: Periodicals*. The reviewer did not think much of Cooper, and did not find him an outstanding author. Nevertheless, he had to grudgingly admit that Cooper was a great favorite of the reading public. Sam Haynes states that Cooper wrote within the shadow of British author Sir Walter Scott. Yet Cooper's exchange of the "American primeval forest" for Medieval England and "American buckskin" for chain mail, maligned by critics as servile imitation of British style, was an important trade. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 60.

107. "Cooper's Novels," 154.

the Woods; or, the Jibbenaineasay (1837), and *The Oregon Trail* (1847, 1849) by Francis Parkman all serve as examples.¹⁰⁸

The wildness and vastness of the American West allowed self-conscious citizens to invent a justification for a variety of shortcomings with which they had to come to terms in the nineteenth century. Explaining Americans' relative lack of high culture, home-grown literature, scientific thinkers, and political philosophers had been a problem for the first generation of Americans who judged everything by a British or European measuring stick. Subsequent generations found a way to transform the dearth of high culture into a point of pride using the frontier as a vehicle: rustic environments demanded that old-world concerns be set aside, and pioneers did not have time to become scientists and philosophers because they had much better things to do. Development in the West redefined what was meant by "arts" or "scientific improvements." The underdeveloped state of the frontiers provided a setting for an American brand of "improvements" that blended arts, sciences, and manufacturing. One article from the *Western Spy* (Cincinnati, Ohio) contended that the establishment of steam ships on the "western waters" was actually evidence of America's "ripeness and ingenuity in every branch of human pursuit."¹⁰⁹ Because they started with nothing, Americans needed only to construct basic infrastructure to consider themselves innovators. Solyman Brown's *Essay on American Poetry* reminded readers that true American poets had sung the praises of "[n]ature's scenes...where Science never shone." The grand transition from this wilderness first to the hamlet and then to cities and empires, was the main reason mankind should admire

108. Richard Gray, *A History of American Literature*, 2nd ed. (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2012), 99-100. These stories typically depicted noble (or ignoble) savages and their often tragic interactions with white frontier society.

109. ["From the Aurora. The American Arts"], *Western Spy* (Cincinnati, OH), January 25, 1812, vol. 2, no. 72, OHS.

the United States.¹¹⁰ When Frederick Jackson Turner articulated his frontier thesis in 1893, he incorporated this rationale into his grand celebration of the frontier. He detailed a variety of things that individuals sacrificed so that they could undergo the process of settlement and craft the American character. Along with the loss of intellectualism and the development of some materialism and waste, westering Americans surrendered art, literature, science, “the social conventionalities, and even the higher skills in government,” all in the interest of the most basic and heroic development, what Turner called a “titanic labor.”¹¹¹

In a similar way, the development of western markets helped Americans find a way to view their domestic economy with pride, something that helped temper the nation’s fondness for foreign imports. According to British traveler Henry Fearon, who passed through Pittsburgh in 1817, it was westerners whose purchasing power fueled home-grown manufactures. The demand for Pittsburgh’s glassware, he declared, “lies *in the Western States!* [T]he inhabitants of Eastern America being still importers from the ‘Old Country.’ What interesting themes of reflection are offered by such facts to the philosopher as well as to the politician!” Fearon emphasized the significance of the fact that these frontier regions, so recently settled, “now present to the traveller articles of elegance and modes of luxury which might rival the displays of London and Paris...The rapid and unexampled progress of this country, presents a valuable and an extraordinary political lesson to the world at large.” Such an observation from a British national indicates the extent to which western development could counteract any sense of

110. Brown, *An Essay on American Poetry*, 43-44, LCP.

111. Kenneth V. Lottick, “The Western Reserve and the Frontier Thesis,” *The Ohio Historical Quarterly* 70 [January 1961]: 47. Lottick believes that the Western Reserve did not actually fit Turner’s description, and was hardly a wilderness even in its frontier period.

economic inferiority left over from the colonial period. While many seaboard areas continued to struggle with dependence on British luxuries, domestic production of *American* luxury goods was taking place in what he identifies as western states. In fact, Fearon was more impressed with the production of luxury goods in these areas because they had so recently been completely unsettled. As a result, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, and western Pennsylvania provided an example of forward movement in Fearon's opinion, while eastern America remained backward-looking.¹¹² Thus the untamed nature of the frontier became an economic virtue because it made dramatic change a possibility. Americans could proudly point to the frontier as the center of progress.

In addition to paving the way for the future, the western borderlands provided a space in which Americans could create a sense of their own past independent of British history. In June 1787, George Turner (soon to be appointed judge in the Northwest Territory) wrote to Winthrop Sargent from Philadelphia requesting information on the original inhabitants of Muskingum in the Ohio country. Turner was particularly interested in some ancient mounds allegedly located there, which he believed were the sole way of gaining knowledge about the original inhabitants and the cause of their "decay." He hoped that the history of these native Americans would prove that their continent's indigenous people were *not* descended from Europeans:

I am not one of those who implicitly believe that America was indebted to the Old World for its people. In the course of...innumerable [*sic*] ages, might not America have seen...and perhaps in succession...[here too] the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Empire? Might she not have fostered the arts and sciences while the non-enlightened parts of the Earth were covered with barbarians? - and may not the last period of her perfect

112. Fearon, *Sketches of America*, 204-205. Italics in original. Daniel Chapman Banks concurred, saying of Pittsburgh that "[n]o part of the world perhaps make[s] more elegant glass vessels of any description." Journal of Daniel Chapman Banks, November 23, 1815, FHS.

civilization be too remote in antiquity for the most durable of her monuments to have withstood the levelling [*sic*] hand of time?¹¹³

Although white Americans' ties to England and western Europe were undeniable, the West in this case allowed for the possibility of an independent creation story, an ancient history not indebted to the Old World. By presenting the "American" indigenes and their continent's distant past as wholly distinct from that of Europeans, Turner exhibited a drive to find a uniquely American history. He also took the proximity of Indians, a source of self-consciousness for colonial Americans, and overturned assumptions that such proximity hindered the development of civilization on the continent. Ohioans themselves engaged in similar behavior; Winthrop Sargent describes an incident in which Cincinnati residents, after finding various artifacts including figurines and copper items, commissioned drawings of those discoveries for their own philosophical and historical societies.¹¹⁴ Taking ownership of these types of "curiosities" gave Americans a better sense of control over a past that had little to do with their roots in the British colonial system. America entered into the course of world history through the gateway of the West, through the stories and artifacts of ancient civilizations once found along the frontiers. The nation's own history began not with the arrival of the crown's adventurers, but with the "superintending spirits" who presided over the "western wild" at a time when it was occupied by beasts and Indians.¹¹⁵

113. George Turner to Winthrop Sargent, Philadelphia, June 15, 1787, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 1, OHS.

114. Journal of Winthrop Sargent [transcript], August 30, 1793, Winthrop Sargent Papers, Microform Reel 4, OHS.

115. Bryan, *The Mountain Muse*, 22.

...

Because the idea of “Manifest Destiny” and the worship of frontier heroes became such prominent features of American identity and culture by the end of the nineteenth century, it is easy to assume that this westward focus was built into Americans’ sense of self from the nation’s beginning. Yet one need only look at the concerns of members of the founding generation like George Clymer to see that westward movement was by no means automatically an integral part of the nation’s present or future following the Revolution. As Senator William Maclay recounted in 1790, Clymer was extremely agitated over the notion that western-moving persons were “lost to the United States,” making expansion a losing proposition both politically and economically.¹¹⁶ Many things had to change for westward expansion and the figure of the frontier settler to become not just a positive part of American national culture, but *the* key element through which Americans understood themselves as a distinct and independent people. The western territories, formerly the target of European-style colonization attempts by many in the founding generation, ultimately became the driving force behind a stronger, more unified national identity during the nineteenth century. They drove the creation of domestic precedents, so crucial for combatting the climate of constant comparisons with British or colonial examples; the western landscape and its inhabitants became sources of pride that distinguished what was “American” from what was “British,” and turned colonial assumptions about rusticity and wilderness upside-down. In the West, Americans built not colonies but settlements with exceptional and wholly domestic histories. Despite the wrong-headed start that the founding government made in colonizing its frontier

116. William Maclay, *The Journal of William Maclay: United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1927), 218.

territories, the region evolved to represent everything that made Americans not only unique, but strong and second to none.

Part of this was generational. Many of the legislators who sat in Congress during the 1790s spent a significant portion of their adult lives considering themselves part of the British empire; thus they manifested a post-colonial identity even after America officially severed ties with the mother country. As one prescient contributor to the *Federal Gazette* wrote in 1791, only by electing *young* men to office could Americans “accelerate useful innovations” and become “unshackled by the slavish habits or opinions of their once monarchical and British fathers.”¹¹⁷ Local political dynamics in Ohio at the turn of the century serve as a case in point. Arthur St. Clair, born in 1737, was able to reconcile his position as a de facto colonial governor over the Northwest Territory (despite having actively participated in the Revolution) because his worldview accepted settler colonies under the control of a guiding parent state as the norm. Born into another generation, and having come of age after the British-American colonial relationship had broken down, St. Clair’s political adversaries Thomas Worthington (b. 1773) and Nathaniel Massie (b. 1763) challenged that worldview. The generation to which men like Worthington and Massie belonged did not struggle to identify as independently American in the same way that the founders did; they also had less patience with any form of governance that rested on a British imperial model. They were indeed “younger and in a hurry.”¹¹⁸ Most importantly, second- and third-generation Americans were better able to incorporate the western territory into their understanding of the nation’s future, and less apt to cling to the seaboard-centric focus on maritime power – a constant source of

117. *Federal Gazette*, published as *The Federal Gazette*, and *Philadelphia Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), October 14, 1791, AHN.

118. Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 68.

insecurity during the founding decades. Taking the helm in time to shepherd the nation through its “second revolution” in 1812 only confirmed their sense of independence and entrenched the notion that the West was the true source of American strength.

Chapter Six
“A Babe Against an Hercules”: The War of 1812, The West, and the Evolution of Post-Colonial Identity

The War of 1812 permanently altered the post-colonial position of the United States and catapulted the West from the periphery to the core of American life. Scholars have approached the War of 1812 from a variety of angles. Many works have fought an ongoing battle to dispel impressions of the conflict as an obscure or unimportant war that had little impact on American history.¹ Within the context of the young nation’s struggle to detach from its colonial roots, the War of 1812 was certainly a significant turning point: it had far-reaching implications for the ongoing process of national identity formation, and it dramatically altered the colonial relationship between East and West. For easterners who had struggled with the ambiguity of post-colonialism for a generation, victory over the British at New Orleans and the favorable terms secured at Ghent as a result of that battle, helped cement the War of 1812’s significance as a “second revolution.” As such, it served as a much-needed confirmation that the first Revolution had not been a fluke. No longer childlike or in an early stage of development, the post-War of 1812 United States possessed the strength to stand equal among the nations of the Old World. The war moved American politics further away from the classical republican principles of the founding government, shaped ongoing shifts in the balance of power

1. See Donald R. Hickey, “The War of 1812: Still a Forgotten Conflict?” *The Journal of Military History* 65, no. 3 (July 2001): 741-769. Hickey’s *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989, 2012) stimulated a flurry of publication on the subject, much of which was focused on the verity of Hickey’s subtitle. Much has been done on the military history of the war (see, for example, works by Reginald Horsman, Harry Coles, John Mahon, J. Mackay Hitsman, Robert S. Quimby) and scholarship on the war was largely political and often nationalist in approach. With the bicentennial in 2012, works by Alan Taylor and Nicole Eustace approached the war as having significant political and cultural implications. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); Nicole Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

between political parties, and contributed to changing understandings of what it meant to be a responsible and patriotic participant in American government. Finally, although the increased pace of post-war westward expansion did highlight national divisions over slavery, it is important to recognize that the war's immediate impact was one of unification. All of these developments changed the post-colonial patterns of imperial affiliation and weak national identity that so marked the founding generation. Second- and third-generation Americans, seeking to distance themselves from the founders' slavish imitation of British precedents, ascribed significant cultural and political value to the conflict. Wartime losses and defeats diminished in American memory, while the war as a larger historical event became a milestone to which following generations could point. It confirmed the nation's value, demonstrated its power, and gave birth to a new cadre of leaders who represented everything the men and women who had lived in a colonial past never could.

Most importantly, the War of 1812 accelerated the integration of the West into national politics and culture, giving Americans a new point of origin for national identity. Events in the western theater of the war created mutual interests between easterners and westerners by putting regional (rather than just maritime) issues on the national agenda. The federal government finally began to invest resources in asserting American sovereignty in the western borderlands. These changes helped put an end to the West's colonial period. Battles in frontier regions also launched western figures to prominence, and made national landmarks out of what had been colonial backwaters during the founding decades. Participation in the war provided an opportunity for westerners to prove their citizenship rather than live as subjects. As historian Alan Taylor writes, the

war itself “pivoted on the contentious boundary between the king’s subject and the republic’s citizen.”² The very existence of such a contentious boundary at the time of the war is tied inextricably to both the federal government’s imperial policies in the West, and the unanswered question of who actually held sovereignty over the borderlands. Citizens along the American frontier did much more than reject the role of “British subject” when they took up arms in the War of 1812; westerners who fought for the United States also renounced the subject status that the *American* government had assigned to them. Combatants in the western theater of the war were indeed choosing to be American after having lived in a space where national allegiances and identities had meant very little during the decades that followed the first revolution. Having made that choice in the dramatic context of the war, westerners became gilded heroes who represented everything that set Americans apart from their colonial past.

In many ways the American Revolution was an unfinished conflict that left the new nation in a state of political and cultural limbo. This is clearly evident in the founding generation’s post-colonial uncertainty and continuing dependence on British models. Benson J. Lossing paints a picture of this difficult situation for later generations of Americans in his *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812*, published in 1868. Lossing explained that, although Americans were not “the legal subjects of a monarch beyond the seas, yet the power and influence of Great Britain were felt like a chilling, overshadowing cloud.” Americans, according to Lossing, “felt their weakness; and from many a patriotic heart came a sigh to the lips, and found expression there in the bitter words of deep humiliation – We are free, but not independent.”³ The ambiguity of this

2. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 4-5.

3. Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812; or, Illustrations by Pen and Pencil*,

position became more frustrating in the context of continued power struggles with Great Britain leading up to the War of 1812. As John Armstrong wrote when considering the causes of the war in 1836, the treaty that concluded the Revolution “was, on the part of [Great Britain], virtually a truce, not a pacification; a temporary and reluctant sacrifice of national pride to national interest; not a frank and honest adjustment to differences.”⁴ Such an inconclusive end, coupled with the founding generation’s willingness to take political and cultural cues from England, created an environment ripe for some reenactment of the basic conflict, some second opportunity for the child to stand up to the parent and achieve more definitive independence. For Britain too, it took another war to truly move beyond the imperial-colonial relationship and cease harboring ambitions about re-colonizing the United States. Before the war, for example, English officials viewed the country’s posts and settlements in Upper Canada as “a forward base for recovering the lost thirteen colonies,” but reconciled themselves that their holdings in Upper Canada were only “defensive bastions” after 1815.⁵ Until that time, however, Americans remained in many ways rebellious children playing at statesmanship, while Great Britain nursed resentment over unfinished business and stubbornly insisted on belittling its former colonies at every turn.

The War of 1812 had implications beyond the obvious immediate events that had led to the outbreak of hostilities; Americans drew a direct link between the unfinished revolution and the outcome of the latest conflict. In September 1811 the *Georgetown, Kentucky Telegraph* republished an editorial from a New York paper in which the author

of the History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the Last War for American Independence. With Several Hundred Engravings on Wood, by Lossing and Barritt, Chiefly from Original Sketches by the Author (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1868), 18, Open Library.

4. John Armstrong, *Notices of the War of 1812*, 2 vols. (New York: George Dearborn, Publisher, 1836), 1:9, Internet Archive.

5. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 443.

expounded on the need for war and indicated that nothing less than the legacy of independence was at stake. “This is but a second edition of what occurred previous to our Revolutionary War,” he wrote of the behavior of Britain toward the United States. If Americans did not completely follow through on the decision to extricate themselves from Britain’s reach, they ran the risk of “ceas[ing] to respect and emulate the bravery of former times” and could revert to despotism as a result.⁶ In the political cartoon “Bruin Become Mediator, or, Negotiation for Peace” (c. 1813), a proud female figure representing the United States towers over a portly and bull-horned Great Britain, who kneels abjectly and begs for Russia to mediate on his behalf. The American figure wears a tiara or crown that prominently displays the number “76.” The towering Columbia, whose dress clearly signifies she is of the first revolution as well as the second, refuses to treat with John Bull until he is “safe bound to the stake.”⁷ In this image, the United States of 1813 is able to rectify whatever weakness it may have displayed in its diplomatic relationship with Britain (and other international powers) during the founding decades. In his memoirs in 1825, William Hull reflected, “this was the first war in which our country was engaged with a civilized nation, after the war of the revolution...[i]t was the first experiment of your constitution, for the preservation of those rights, which had been acquired by the valour [*sic*] and blood of the few who now survive, and many of your Fathers, who rest in their tombs.”⁸ The War of 1812 harkened back to questions that had

6. “New York, September 4,” *The Telegraph* (Georgetown, KY), September 25, 1811, issue 10, America’s Historical Newspapers. (Hereafter cited as AHN).

7. [William Charles, etcher], “Bruin Become Mediator, or, Negotiation for Peace” [Philadelphia: c.a. 1813], LCP Print Department. Charles was a native of Great Britain who only came to the United States in the early nineteenth century. As such his caricatures may be seen as both reflections and satires of American culture.

8. William Hull, *Memoirs of the campaign of the North Western Army of the United States, A.D. 1812, in a series of letters addressed to the citizens of the United States, with an appendix containing a brief sketch of the revolutionary services of the author* (Boston: True & Green, 1824), 5, FHS.

been left unanswered in the wake of the Revolution, and the ties between the second revolution and the issues left unresolved by the first colored Americans' memories of the more recent conflict.

Tying the War of 1812 directly to the glory of the Revolution allowed Americans to bypass the years of post-colonial weakness and uncertainty between the two conflicts.

Samuel Woodworth's "Ode 2" (1818) provides one example of how this imagery worked:

Ye Heroes who once so impregnable stood
 'Gainst Britain's whole prowess, and scorn'd to bend under,
 Once more you are call'd, by your countryman's blood,
 To wreak your revenge and proclaim it in thunder;...
 Yet be it declared
 That Britain has dared
 To strike at the fabric which Washington rear'd;
 But the sons of Columbia have sworn to be free...
 Arise, injur'd freemen, again grasp the spear,
 And hurl on aggressors the vengeance they merit,
 The blessing preserve which you value so dear,
 The blessing our fathers have bid us inherit.
 Indignant arise, / Britain's lion despise,
 And swear by the Ruler of earth, sea, and skies,
 That the Sons of Columbia will ever be free,
 And their arms shall maintain what their voices decree.⁹

Those who participated in the war accepted a torch directly from their fathers, and in doing so cemented what had only been achieved in part by the previous generation. As one editorial in Philadelphia's *Democratic Press* put it, "[that] the war has given the United States a proud and commanding station among the Nations of the earth is indisputable. 'I am an American citizen' will hereafter be not only a passport of safety

9. Samuel Woodworth, *The Poems, odes, songs, and other metrical effusions, of Samuel Woodworth* (New York: Published by Abraham Asten and Matthias Lopez, 1818), *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

but a pledge of valor.”¹⁰ The appearance of cultural items such as *The American Patriotic Song-book* (1813), which explicitly designated in its full title that the songs included were “the production of American poets only,” contrast sharply with the imitative and deferential literature of the founding generation. The War of 1812 era was a time in which creating distinctions between American-born culture and that of Europeans increased in importance.¹¹ Poems celebrating the war while it was ongoing sometimes took on a gloating tone, directly comparing American and British entities. While comparisons to the mother country in the founding decades typically stemmed from a lack of confidence in domestic productions, the war helped shift this pattern.

American leaders who emerged from the War of 1812 also created bridges between the first and second revolutions, further diminishing the imperial trauma of the intervening years. Because the leaders of the first generation failed to definitively set aside the trappings of colonialism and thus retained a dual identity, it was important that the War of 1812 brought figures to the fore who could elicit similar loyalty but who lacked the worrisome reliance on European political and cultural examples.¹² William Henry Harrison served as the perfect example. One young soldier, Daniel Curtis, could reasonably compare Harrison with the great George Washington in 1812, yet Harrison also belonged to a new era and represented a very different persona than the patrician first president.¹³ Harrison originally hailed from Virginia (creating continuity with leaders like Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe), but rose to fame as a

10. “Peace,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 13, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

11. *The American Patriotic Song-book: A Collection of Political, Descriptive, and Humorous Songs, of National Character, and the Production of American Poets Only (Interspersed with a Number Set to Music)* (Philadelphia: W. M. Culloch, 1813), LCP.

12. Aristocratic dress, behavior, or titles for national leaders and legislators, for example. See Chapter One.

13. Daniel Curtis [soldier at Fort Wayne during the siege] to Colonel Kingsbury, September 21, 1812, Indiana Territory Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, INHS.

territorial figure who presented himself as a frontiersman and man of the people. Born in 1773, Harrison was not an aging member of the revolutionary generation; yet his father had been a delegate to the Continental Congress and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. His pedigree rooted him firmly in the revolutionary tradition, but he clearly belonged to the next generation and his cultivated frontier persona allowed him to reach across both time and space. Andrew Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, also became a bridge between the two revolutions. As the end of Jackson's second presidential term neared, Boston diplomat Alexander H. Everett delivered an address commemorating the general. Jackson, Everett declared, "was about to give the world a second example of a character almost unknown till the time of Washington, the successful soldier contented with the glory of the patriot citizen. His heart is already at the Hermitage among the fair fields and untamed forests of his own Tennessee."¹⁴ Despite the fact that five other executives had stepped down from that office voluntarily in the interim (three of them after a second term), as a military-civilian leader emerging from another war with Great Britain Jackson connected with Washington across generations. This language tied the two wars together in an unbroken line, a tactic that helped second- and third-generation Americans forget the uncertainty and weakness of the intervening years.

The second revolution also provided an opportunity to re-marginalize and re-label Americans who continued to demonstrate colonial-era attachments to England long after the first revolution had ended. One 1808 political cartoon depicted an editor of a New York paper who opposed the ongoing embargo (a response to British abuses against

14. Alexander H. Everett, *Address Delivered at Salem, on the Eighth of January, 1836, at the Request of the Democratic Young Men of that Place, in Commemoration of the Victory of New Orleans* (Boston: Beals & Greene, 1836), Microform Edition, Raynor Memorial Libraries, Marquette University.

American ships) as a tory. In the image, the editor begs a group of American sailors, “[d]on’t go to war with the mother country! Don’t go to war with good old England!” In response, the tars call him an “English dishclouth [*sic*]” and confirm aloud that they know their duty as American seamen.¹⁵ The American who revealed an affinity for the mother country became an object of ridicule; he was not just a tory, but actually English in identity, and set apart from the tars who understood that being American required them to cast off old allegiances. This was especially evident in the intense lampooning of anti-war Federalists in poetry and political cartoons. In one print, “The Hartford Convention, or Leap No Leap” (1815), Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island are portrayed as contemplating jumping into the arms of England. The timid and shaking figures share the stage with a rotund King George III, who beckons to his “yanky [*sic*] boys” to join him.¹⁶ The symbolism is clear: those who stood opposed to the second revolution were essentially the same as Tories from the first. In this way, the War of 1812 opened a path for labeling obsolete and even traitorous those people and ideas that bore the marks of post-colonialism. This helped forge a path for a more independent identity.

That independent identity relied heavily on the sense of nationalism Americans gained from the war; militarily, even small victories helped remove the stigma of colonialism by inflating the nation’s sense of its own martial prowess. In an editorial on the burning of Washington, D. C., Philadelphia politician Samuel Breck speculated that it was sheer embarrassment in the face of American strength that drove England to such uncivilized conduct. Their “vindictiveness” stemmed “from the sorrow, sad sorrow and

15. [William Charles, etcher], “The Cat Let Out of the Bag” (New York: s.n., 1808), LCP Print Department.

16. [William Charles, etcher], “The Hartford Convention, or Leap No Leap [Philadelphia: s.n., c. 1814-1815], LCP Print Department.

wounded pride, our own repeated superiority at sea has occasioned; - It is the strong and undeniable proof so often given of their inability to stand alongside of our ships, gun to gun and man to man.”¹⁷ After decades of having to accept the status of a weaker nation, especially in maritime matters, Americans finally had cause for pride. Breck gleefully noted in his diary that the U.S. militia had defeated Britain’s “crack troops” in the Battle of Lake Champlain, and even created an entire chart entitled “the superiority of our gunnery.” In the context of these military events, Breck could adopt a swaggering attitude about other things; he sarcastically remarked on British travelers, who he felt had misrepresented the United States, causing serious distress and indignation on more than one occasion. The decisive victory at New Orleans and the Treaty of Ghent simply put icing on the cake. Breck concluded: “It is certain that we have got out of this war with considerable credit.”¹⁸ That credit cannot be located within the actual military gains from the Battle of New Orleans, which were negligible, nor can it be found in the terms of the treaty, which did not resolve hot button issues like impressment in any meaningful way.¹⁹ Rather, the credit was almost intangible. It existed in the political and cultural capital gained by *not losing*.

The war had changed America’s position in the world from that of former colony to legitimate nation and the victory lent respectability to the young government.

17. [September 1814 entry], Samuel Breck Papers, series 1, vol. 3, Diary, 1814-1827, HSP. Breck’s notations indicate that this is an excerpt from an article in the *True American*. Breck himself wrote articles for that paper, some of which he pasted into his diary, and it is fair to assume that he authored this piece as well.

18. [Entries from September 17, October 25, and December 3, 1814 and February 13, 1815], Samuel Breck Papers, series 1, vol. 3, Diary, 1814-1827, HSP.

19. The British did suffer grossly disproportionate losses (more than two thousand captured, killed, or wounded versus just seventy-one American casualties). Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 420. Eustace, however, concludes that the victory at New Orleans “had no impact whatsoever on the formal outcome of the war.” Eustace, *Passions*, 214. Indeed, the terms of the treaty had already been decided before the Battle of New Orleans even took place. The maritime issues of neutral shipping, impressment, and fishing rights were neglected entirely in the final treaty. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 417-419.

Whatever military failures occurred (and there were many, including the Army's failure to take Canada and William Hull's embarrassing surrender of Detroit), a few key victories were sufficient to alter the uncertainty and hesitation the founding generation struggled with. As one Williamsburg correspondent wrote to Kentuckian Norborne Beall Booth at the end of the war, the "brilliant close" of the conflict at the Battle of New Orleans "ought to make us proud. The effects abroad on our character will be such, as to place the United-States on the highest ground of respectability."²⁰ Another prominent Kentuckian, Major Isaac Gwathmey, received a communication with similar sentiments from an acquaintance in Boston. His correspondent, Mr. Spooner, had not approved of the declaration of war, yet he wrote glowingly that "it has given an opportunity to the bravest [and] most enterprising people in the world to evince their real character [and] literally to fight themselves into respect with the nations of the old world." Spooner had no doubt that the war had eliminated much of the uncertainty that plagued the founding government by teaching "our true course of policy in many instances in which we did not know it, [and] in many others in which we doubted."²¹ An editorial originally published in the *Boston Patriot* at the close of the war in 1815 declared that the world would see that Americans were "decidedly superior" to the British, and the country now held a "distinguished rank" among the nations of the world.²² These statements contrast sharply with the uncertainty that the founding government displayed when evaluating America's position in the world.

20. [Robert] Saunders at Williamsburg to Norborne Beall [Booth] at Spring Station, March 13, 1815, Beall-Booth Family Papers, 1778-1956, Folder 52, FHS.

21. W. Spooner Jr. in Boston to Major Isaac Gwathmey in Louisville, March 7, 1815, Gwathmey Family Papers, 1811-1902, Folder 2, FHS. Underline in original.

22. "From the Boston Patriot," *Northern Centinel* (Burlington, VT), March 3, 1815, vol. 5, issue 9, AHN.

Americans used the war as a chance to craft new language and imagery that usurped elements of colonial discourse and turned it to their advantage. In December 1809, as the House discussed President Madison's desire to cut off communication with the English minister, the weakness inherent in the post-colonial parent-child dichotomy permeated the debate. Laban Wheaton, a Federalist representative of the founding generation, cautioned against such a "hasty...injudicious step." The United States in his view was in no position to take offense at British insults, for in the event of a war they would suffer for their presumptions; "[o]ur experienced warriors, though eminent, are few; the rest remain to be trained to the art, and perhaps to be born. The timber for rearing up an important navy is yet in our forests, and perhaps in the acorn." Britain, on the other hand, had made war her pursuit for centuries and could exact a great toll.²³ Wheaton's timidity is palpable, and his language clearly reflects the sense of fetal weakness and dependence inherent in the colonizer-colonized relationship. Youth was a liability and not a strength; American power, if it existed in theory, remained in "acorn" form and thus was negligible.

Yet there is a definite contrast between this view, expressed by an aging member of the post-colonial generation, and the views which grew up out of younger Americans' experience with the war once it arrived. Poetry and other wartime literature referred to England as "old mother" in an irreverent tone.²⁴ In a poem detailing English offenses against America after the Revolution, the author inverts the structure of age that characterized the colonial parent-child relationship. He wrote that this new generation would "make old England's children know" that they were about to be defeated by the

23. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,792-1,794.

24. See for example, ["The Recess"], *New-Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), January 3, 1815, vol. 6, issue 36, AHN.

descendants of those who had “flogg’d their fathers so” in the war for independence.

“What has our infant country gain’d, / By fighting that old nation,” the poem asked.

America gained the ability to detach, and finally put an end to colonial dependence:

Now in ourselves we can confide,
Abroad we are respected,
We’ve checked the rage of British pride,
Their haughtiness corrected.”²⁵

Such language acknowledges a passing of the torch from the founding generation to the next, while turning the tables on “old” England.

A David and Goliath framework for celebrating the war enabled American writers to acknowledge Britain’s strengths while still using it to the cultural advantage of their own nation. One could allow for England to retain her position as “the mistress of the ocean,” as one poem in the *Carlisle Gazette* did, while still adding to the prestige of the United States; for an “infant navy,” the cultural and political value of “snatch[ing] the trident of Neptune” from the “mistress of the ocean” was much higher than any victories achieved over weak or inconsequential foes. A “babe against an Hercules” commanded much more respect than an equally positioned foe in a fair fight.²⁶ In the same way, when one carriers’ address extolled the “thund’ring arms” that England had utilized throughout Europe and Africa and her navy, which “rul’d the world,” it was only to lay the groundwork for just how impressive it was that the United States could “rout” those British “heroes.”²⁷ While being portrayed as an infant caused discomfort and self-

25. John Gregg, “History of the American War: A New Song on the Late War with G[reat] B[ritain], composed by [S.] Ballou, recorded in book on October 23, 1825 [dated in his hand at end of poem],” Gregg Family Papers, 1808-1943, Folder 10, poetry book, FHS.

26. “[Liverpool; July; American Independence; American; Gen. George Washington; Firm],” *Carlisle Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), July 17, 1817, vol. 32, issue 1696, AHN.

27. “New Year’s Address of the Carriers of the Evening Post to their Kind Patrons” [United States: s.n., 1815], LCP.

consciousness for the founding generation, the War of 1812 helped subsequent generations craft imagery that attributed extraordinary powers to that infant, making him an anomaly to be admired rather than a vulnerable entity in need of parental guidance. One poem in the Georgetown, Kentucky *Telegraph* invoked the old imagery of Britain as John Bull or a bull but emphasized that, though smaller in stature, American forces possessed superior qualities. Referring to an American vessel, the poem declared that “Our little WASP of mettle full, / Fear’d not the roaring of a bull.”²⁸ Rather than being a source of shame or weakness, the diminutive size of the insect representing the American navy mattered very little. Britain’s navy actually captured the *Wasp*, a fact that demonstrates how defeats as well as victories became a source of pride; if David failed to slay Goliath, at least he could be commended for taking on such a colossal task in the first place. After this second revolution, Americans embraced the fact that Britain was more powerful and possessed superior resources; in fact, they turned what might previously have been a source of shame into a source of pride. Andrew Jackson was referred to as the American David, a simple man who had humbled the “boasting giant” and “made Goliath bleed.”²⁹ In the dialogue that American writers created to celebrate the war, England’s age and size earned her recognition as a worthy adversary, but one whose strength only served to confirm Americans’ boldness and stamina.

The patriotic literature that came from the war retained the passive respect due to ancestors or older relatives, but lacked the deference expected of a colonial subject. This eased the transition from settler-subject to fully independent American, a leap that the founding generation failed to make. One 1815 poem in Utica, New York’s *Patrol*, for

28. “Poetical,” *The Telegraph* (Georgetown, KY), July 22, 1813, vol. 1, issue 42, AHN.

29. [Ode], *Washington Whig* (Bridgeton, NJ), October 2, 1815, vol. 1, issue 11, AHN.

example, declared “Yes, ‘Rule Britannia.’” England’s patriotic mantra was acceptable, however, what immediately followed was the qualification, “but not *here* she rules.” “[O]ld Mother” still retained her position as an elder, but her offspring had become fully self-aware of their own capabilities. As the poem pointed out, “yankee tars were taught in better schools,” and capable of giving old mother a “mighty shock.”³⁰ In a carriers’ address issued that same year, the “old mother” transformed into a formerly angry parent who was somehow placated by the conclusion of the war. Peace brings an about-face in the relationship: “Britain, once our angry Mother, / Meets us with smiles, and stops her [b]other.”³¹ In the wake of the Battle of New Orleans, another carriers’ address described British commander Pakenham as a “mighty victim to the young in arms.”³² Although youthful America defeated him, Pakenham remained a robust opponent. The war had made a compromise between respect and subservience possible.

The War of 1812 affected political, as well as cultural, reminders of the nation’s colonial past. While the increasing political integration of western regions during the early nineteenth century helped initiate changes in the founding generation’s classical republicanism, the war accelerated and intensified that process. In the context of the war, legislators and citizens reconsidered certain questions of governance and came to new conclusions. The concept of a standing army serves as an example. As historian Bernard Bailyn has noted, a near obsession with limiting governmental strength and a fear of institutionalized power run amok were defining features of the founding generation’s

30. “‘Britons Strike Home!’ Old Song by Wm. C. Foster,” *Patrol* [Published as *The Patrol*] (Utica, NY), March 23, 1815, vol. 1, issue 12, AHN.

31. *New Year’s Address of the Carriers of the Evening Post to their Kind Patrons* [United States: s.n., 1815], LCP.

32. *Address of the Carriers of Relf’s Philadelphia Gazette, to its Patrons, on the Commencement of the Year 1816* (Philadelphia: Printed by Samuel Relf, 1815), LCP.

republicanism.³³ As former colonials, many officeholders in the 1780s and 1790s had inherited the philosophies of English Whigs and classical republicans regarding standing armies: the militia, not a standing army or navy, could best protect a democratic society while safeguarding the rights of the individual against autocratic rule. After the Revolution, the issue became a hotly contested one. Although the Constitution recognized the possible necessity of a standing army (by giving Congress the power to raise and fund such a force), the founders bickered about the details throughout the ratification process and long afterwards, and the concept remained “anathema” to the public in general.³⁴ As the War of 1812 approached, Americans found themselves revisiting the issue in a new context. In March 1810 Congressman Elisha R. Potter predicted that the clamor for a stronger military in the midst of growing tensions with Britain would alter the republicanism upon which the nation had been founded. During a debate on authorizing a detachment of militia, Potter denounced the progressive increases in the size of the military establishment during the lead up to the war:

Now we are to have a large volunteer and detached militia army, a little better armed and more energetic. If this should be found not to answer the expectations of military men, and should hereafter have a President of more military habits, the next change will be a large standing army. And this is the way that republicanism gradually slides into military despotism.³⁵

33. In his seminal work, *The Ideological Origins of the Revolution* (1967), Bailyn highlights how inherited political philosophies about the inherent conflict between liberty and power led American colonists to believe in a “comprehensive conspiracy against liberty” (xiii). One of the most chilling embodiments of that conspiracy was the standing army, as described in the popular *Short History of Standing Armies in England* (1698) by British writer John Trenchard. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Enlarged Edition (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967, 1992).

34. William S. Fields and David T. Hardy, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 35, no. 4 (October 1991): 393-431, quote p. 422. A variety of conflicts over the issue during British colonial rule left their mark; the founders saw standing armies and the violation of individual rights through quartering as inextricably linked.

35. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,590. Potter was not alone. Barent Gardenier of New York reminded his colleagues that there had been a clamor to retain the army after the Revolution and

Potter's prediction came true as the hero of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson, gained prominence. The War of 1812 reminded political leaders and citizens alike that relying solely on a militia could be disastrous. It ignited support for a stronger American military to protect the nation's borders, and figures like Jackson helped craft an "American war myth."³⁶ Americans also reconsidered whether the United States should invest the resources necessary to build and maintain a navy. As one editorial explained, U.S. naval power was "a question which has never yet been fairly met by the national legislature; but which ought no longer to remain in suspense."³⁷ The war forced the issue, pushing the nation out of indecision over things that seemed unnecessary or even dangerous in the wake of the first revolution.

The War of 1812 produced a new brand of military-civilian leadership, embodied in the figure of Andrew Jackson, that was unthinkable for the founding generation. In his article, "Andrew Jackson as 'Military Chieftain,'" historian Matthew Warshauer argues that the discussion of Jackson's military record during the 1824 and 1828 presidential elections indicates historians should "rethink" our analysis of revolutionary republicanism.³⁸ Rather than rethinking our interpretation of revolutionary republicanism,

warned that there was nothing to stop a similar effort in the event of another war. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 960.

36. The ideological opposition to standing armies borne of the founding generation's classical republicanism remained until the War of 1812 was imminent. Forced to rely on militia, Congress and President Madison quickly realized that the absence of adequate military forces could pose as much danger to a republic as the presence of a standing army. Serious failures of the militia in battles such as Queenstown in 1812 underscored the problem. While Congress remained unwilling to institute a draft, and the general interest in military size waned at war's end, the Monroe administration and future national leaders like John C. Calhoun initiated a permanent move away from revolutionary-era military ideology. Lawrence Delbert Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 172-177. See also, Reginald C. Stuart, *War and American Thought: From the Revolution to the Monroe Doctrine* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1982).

37. "The Navy," *The Telegraph* (Georgetown, KY), September 25, 1811, issue 10, AHN.

38. Matthew Warshauer, "Andrew Jackson as 'Military Chieftain' in the 1824 and 1828 Presidential

however, we should acknowledge the great divide between the founders' post-colonial republicanism and that of successive generations. Those who had not experienced the colonial era and the Revolutionary War were less inclined to fear a martial figure like Jackson, who had a demonstrated tendency to view his powers broadly.³⁹ As a westerner, Jackson was already part of the regional shift away from classical republicanism, and his prominence as a wartime hero made it easier for Americans in other parts of the country to make that change as well. The arguments of Jackson's supporters in favor of his militarism, his role as "chieftain," and his wartime application of martial law in New Orleans all signaled that the revolutionary-era understanding of the delicate balance between liberty and power had drastically changed by the 1820s. Concepts such as freedom, tyranny, and the role of standing armies still featured in political debates, but they had taken on new meanings as political culture evolved during and after the war. The fact that Jacksonian Democrats could argue that expanded military power under a martial executive might actually protect liberty is proof of that evolution.⁴⁰ Vocal Jackson supporter John Eaton went so far as to claim that the act of declaring martial law in New Orleans demonstrated the devotion of the general to the nation's laws *because* that act had been unconstitutional. Jackson so loved his country and its people, according to Eaton, that he was willing to "impair" the Constitution. Jackson's supporters continued to employ this tactic of "juxtapos[ing] unconstitutional acts with patriotism" throughout

Elections: The Ramifications of Martial Law on American Republicanism," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1998): 5-6.

39. Jackson himself did experience the Revolution, but he was a teenager at the time. Born in 1767, Jackson was too young to be included among the adult members of the founding generation who had grown up under colonialism and whose identity as such influenced early national political culture.

40. Certainly the idea of liberty versus power was evident in debates about Jackson during his presidential bids, yet the fact that Jackson won two terms in the White House indicates that the importance accorded those traditional republican ideologies was waning.

his tenure as a national political figure.⁴¹ This campaign strategy stands in stark contrast with the founding generation's worship of the patrician George Washington, whose relinquishment of martial power and self-conscious effort never to overreach in his position as executive were seen as marks of the highest republican virtue. Yet, by 1824 Eaton could ask, "where...is there a republican like ANDREW JACKSON?" The hero of the second revolution did not need to cultivate the persona of an American Cincinnatus; more distance from the colonial past, a second war with Britain, and the growing influence of westerners in politics all allowed Americans to embrace figures who represented a more confident national identity. They could be forceful without being tyrants, and they could be martial without becoming military dictators. Jackson, rather than being a Cincinnatus, was a man capable of making difficult choices and using the strong arm of the military for the good of the nation. He did not need to step out of his role as military chieftain to step into that of executive. Meekness, after all, had led previous administrations to put up with British violations of American sovereignty in the decades prior to the War of 1812. Jackson's proponents continued to support this line of thinking throughout the 1820s, while at the same time managing to make rhetorical connections between their candidate and Washington. In doing so, they assuaged post-colonial fears that "liberty was at the mercy of an ever encroaching power – especially in the form of standing armies and despotic military officers."⁴² In fact, the process by which the hero of New Orleans achieved and held political power is evidence of exactly how much the war changed the way Americans understood the meaning of patriotism and the qualities that should define "American" leadership.

41. Warshauer, "Military Chieftain," 13-14.

42. *Ibid.*, 17.

Because the war seemed to resolve a lot of philosophical debates that had occupied the nation after the Revolution, new political questions emerged after 1815. In a letter to Kentuckian Isaac Gwathmey in March of that year, one Boston resident named Mr. Spooner concluded that a new political era had begun. “Hitherto we have been divided by great questions of the general policy of government, such as those upon the expediency of a navy, of direct taxes, of a permanent army,” he wrote. But the war had shifted the terms of political debate and changed the issues that needed to be considered. “Now these [and] some others like them will be put to rest; we shall hereafter [hear] more about measures than principles, more about the men who should administer the government, than about the policy upon which it should be administered.”⁴³ From Spooner’s perspective, the War of 1812 had settled basic questions about the structure of government. While the founding generation logically battled over principles and policy foundations (and more often than not reverted to British examples to settle such disagreements), those debates no longer needed to be had time and time again. A new political era was begun and new questions would craft new directions for various branches of that political movement.

Despite the fact that conflicting opinions on the war underscored the Federalist-Republican divide early on, the conflict heralded an end to the first party system.⁴⁴ John

43. W. Spooner, Jr. in Boston to Major Isaac Gwathmey in Louisville, March 7, 1815, Gwathmey Family Papers, 1811-1902, Folder 2, FHS.

44. Alan Taylor argues that the conflict would “bitterly divide the nation” in *The Civil War of 1812*, 131. This bitter divide Taylor describes surely existed on some levels; certainly the Hartford Convention is evidence that the war further cleaved the existing political parties, and there was much difference of opinion with regard to tactics, as Taylor points out. Yet the serious disaffection of the Hartford Convention Federalists ultimately served to minimize some of the old dividing lines by further marginalizing an already weakened Federalist Party. With the death knell of the Federalists, the nation could move beyond an old party system in which one side was openly aligned with the former colonial master and the other was pigeon-holed by its association with pro-French elements. The war also proved that the internal political divisions that British observers like Sir George Prevost sought to exploit simply did not translate into massive domestic insurrections against the government; they could not be exploited to break apart the

Hay Farnham, for example, admitted that he had his own political affiliations and did not approve of the war's genesis, but he pitied any man who did not look upon its outcome and feel a rapturous pride in the country's "honour [*sic*] and greatness." Although he had personal political opinions, he wrote, he "prefer[red] the once degraded but now glorious title of American to that of either [Federalist] or [Democratic-Republican]."⁴⁵ Mr. Spooner ended his 1815 letter to Isaac Gwathmey by confirming the rightness of American policy. The War of 1812 had "diminished our subjects of dispute," and, he hoped, "allay[ed] the rancor of our party contests." Although Spooner concluded that the war did not eliminate all of the "bad passions" that previously divided the nation, he was certain that "the grounds of our disputes were considerably narrowed by the experience derived from the war." Of course political disputes continued, but only "little men" and "interested demagogues" would exploit old wedge issues to excite domestic disturbances. Perhaps the lion was not ready to lie down with the lamb, as Spooner admitted, but with regards to party factionalism, "we shall see better days than those which have gone by."⁴⁶ Although political divisions would continue, the basis of many of the founding generation's political disagreements changed as a result of the war

During the war, the reappearance of Britain as a real and concrete foe, as opposed to a theoretical foil with whom the United States engaged in passive-aggressive foreign relations, worked wonders for diminishing the significance of domestic disputes and fostering a cohesive nationalism across east-west axes. Popular pieces such as publisher Matthew Carey's *The Olive Branch* urged people on different sides of internal political

Union.

45. John Hay Farnham in Woodford County to his father in Newburyport, MA, May 6, 1815, FHS.

46. W. Spooner, Jr. in Boston to Major Isaac Gwathmey in Louisville, July 21, 1815, Gwathmey Family Papers, 1811-1902, Folder 2, FHS.

disputes to set aside their squabbles in the interest of national defense. Writing to both Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, Carey urged unity, and many of his acquaintances noted the importance of his efforts. William Slade of Vermont, for example, wrote that he could not help but think “that an extensive promulgation of the work will, more than anything I have seen, tend to remedy the disorders of the body politic and give a correct tone to publick [*sic*] sentiment.”⁴⁷ At a time when it was well within the realm of possibilities that the Federalist-Republican divide could actually cleave the nation in two, the war (although a factor in that cleavage) served as a timely glue that prevented rupture. As Philadelphian Samuel Breck wrote in his diary on July 24, 1814, “[w]hether the war be just or not, expedient or inexpedient, it is not when the enemy stand on the threshold of our beloved soil that I will stop to enquire. Federal or Democrat, if we are Americans it matters not, our aim must be to occupy ourselves with arms and not politicks [*sic*].”⁴⁸ The realization that the British were exploiting internal divisions made the War of 1812 a wake-up call to many. As one song published not long after the war ended explained, Americans who might have allowed divisions to overshadow their national loyalties before realized in the context of war that such a state of affairs would benefit no one. According to one verse:

The [axe] was laid by,
 The musket pois’d high,
 The farmer, and tradesman, with duty comply,
 And soon the rich sentiment spreads thro’ the land,
 Divided we fall, but united we stand.”⁴⁹

47. See Edward Gardiner Carey Collection, 1673-1949, Series 5, Box 22, Folders 1-10, HSP. Slade’s letter appears in Folder 9.

48. Samuel Breck Papers, series 1, vol. 3, Diary, 1814-1827, HSP.

49. “Song,” *The Green Mountain Farmer* (Bennington, VT), August 21, 1815, vol. 7, issue 2, AHN.

Kentuckian William Kennedy Beall wrote in his journal that British boasting often relied on their assumption that Americans were easily pitted against one another and thus easily defeated: “indeed they depend more upon party divisions and disturbances among our people than they do on their own strength.”⁵⁰ In the presence of such opinions, the War of 1812 imbued the issue of national unity with an importance it had not had since party strife had first riven the founding government following the Revolution. Although new divisions and party lines replaced the old Federalist-Anti-Federalist (and later Democratic-Republican) split, it is significant that the war ended the period of founding-era divisions and ushered in a new political age.

The experience of the second revolution provided much-needed reassurance that the American system would not crumble under pressure. In the founding decades no one could be certain that faction and party were not signs that their noble experiment was destined to fall apart amidst domestic squabbles. The experience of the War of 1812 did much to allay those fears, even among the founding generation. Richard Rush wrote to John Adams on September 25, 1813:

The glory of a nation is, and must be, the nation’s property, not a party’s. History, poetry, and the canvass [*sic*], are of no party. Fifty years hence, the victories which we have gained, and the greater ones which I trust we will gain, will be celebrated in orations, in histories, in songs, in the epick [*sic*], with the pencil, neither as democrattick [*sic*] or federal victories, but as American, as national triumphs and the sources of our national glory.⁵¹

Kentucky Senator John Pope expressed similar sentiments in a speech he delivered at the outset of the war. Pope opposed the war, yet he declared, “we are at war, and whatever

50. Journal of William Kennedy Beall, [n.d.], [49], FHS.

51. Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, September 25, 1813, Richard Rush Letters, 1811-1822, HSP. Rush also displayed the lingering problem of comparing the United States to Britain by pointing out that the English surely did not look back at the Battle of Agincourt and reflect on party opinions of that time.

difference of opinion may exist about the policy or necessity of it, every American ought to put his shoulder to the wheel, to redeem our country from the dangers and difficulties which menace it.” The senator took a long view and acknowledged the great implications the conflict had for the American system of government. “[A] war commenced upon principles calculated to inspire confidence and produce union, might have a good effect upon ourselves.” Pope predicted that it would be “a triumph for the republican system of government” and a chance “to prove itself competent to carry on a war with energy, without outraging the constitution, the laws, or the rights of individuals. We should remember that we all have a common interest in this country; that the government under which we live belongs not to those only who declared war, but to all.”⁵² The war tested the nation’s infant system, and by emerging intact, the nation could move beyond its post-colonial self-consciousness and into a new phase of development.

For a country struggling to unify in the wake of colonialism, the War of 1812 provided a much needed reason to rally around the central government. As the author of a piece in the *Chillicothe Fredonian* explained, the longer the war raged, the more the nation gathered strength. “Among a brave and virtuous people, such a war would not be the greatest of evils,” he wrote. “It would, we believe, eventually produce union at home...The American people will, in case a continuance of the war becomes unavoidable, rally around their government [and] constitution, the ark of their political safety, and will undoubtably [*sic*] come off conquerors, whatever may be the danger of the contest.”⁵³ If states had been out of step with what was considered the national agenda, the war ushered

52. John Pope, “Mr. Pope’s Speech” [Lexington, KY: s. n., 1812], First American West Digital Collection [no longer available online].

53. *Chillicothe Fredonian* (Chillicothe, OH), Tuesday, April 19, 1814, vol. 5, no. 24, Microfilm 17204, OHS.

them back into the fold. Maryland, for example, appeared in a “poetical” selection in the Trenton *True American*; the state, “late by the wicked and blind, / To the misrule of faction and folly consigned, / Has broken their fetters, and now hand in hand, / Unites with the gallant Republican band.”⁵⁴ As a “grateful child would support the tottering limbs of an aged parent,” wrote one Washington City resident to a friend in Ohio, so it was “never...more necessary for the individual states to rally round the general government.”⁵⁵ Necessity in the form of a renewed threat from a common foe reignited a commitment to unification that had not been firmly established in the wake of the first revolution.

The war significantly altered the founding generation’s reliance on old-world allegiances, a major obstacle to the formation of an independent political identity after the Revolution.⁵⁶ Whereas America had relied on French allies during the first revolution, the second had been won independently. Nineteenth-century American writers frequently emphasized the fact that the nation stood alone in the War of 1812. The author of one editorial in the Georgetown, Kentucky *Telegraph* declared, “[I]et the lawless Corsican [Napoleon], as well as the prowling Lion, know, that we shall defend [the Declaration of Independence] against them both.” And although foreign assistance *could* be acquired, for the cause was a just one, the author explicitly stated that America did not require any European aid.⁵⁷ The piece that appeared in Philadelphia’s *Democratic Press* in February 1815, shows that Americans recognized the difference: “In the war of the revolution we

54. Poem republished in *The Telegraph* (Georgetown, KY), December 22, 1813, vol. 2, issue 65, AHN.

55. Daniel Clendenin to Peter Hitchcock in Chillicothe, OH, Washington City, February 12, 1815, Arthur G. Mitten Collection, 1755-1936, Box 2, Folder 5, INHS.

56. The tendency to align the national interest with either France (as America’s ally in the Revolution) or Great Britain (as a parent state) was a feature of the founding generation’s reliance on European examples in the wake of the colonial period. See Chapter One.

57. “New-York, September 4,” *The Telegraph* (Georgetown, KY), September 25, 1811, issue 10, AHN.

had allies – in arms, reinforcements from abroad on our soil, and the wishes of all Europe on our side. But in the late conflict we stood single handed.”⁵⁸ An 1815 poem, “American Independence Revived,” also indicates the connection Americans made between the relinquishment of imperial affiliations and the War of 1812:

Cease, America, from quarrels,
Faction, discord, and despite;
Whilst our heroes wear their laurels,
Bow to freedom and unite.
Valient [*sic*] troops have they commanded,
And to conquest did advance;
They have gain'd it single-handed,
Without any help from France.⁵⁹

Participation in the war both reasserted Americans’ willingness to stand apart from England, and removed the stigma of dependence on foreign aid that overshadowed the legacy of the Revolution, particularly after the United States failed to repay the favor by supporting French republicans in their own revolution less than a decade later. The notion that the United States owed something to France plagued the founding generation and contributed to considerable domestic disputes during the early 1790s; the War of 1812 became an important forum in which American writers and political thinkers could produce arguments to resolve that historical indebtedness. For example, one 1813 piece in the *Georgia Republican and Evening Ledger* explained that while Americans might have needed to take sides between Britain and France in the past, that was no longer the case. When asked to praise Britain or France, the author states, “I’ll neither do, so none offend...To love one country I’m content.” If the United States had occasion to fight with

58. “Substance of Mr.Ingersoll’s Observations on the Passage of the Resolutions Expressive of the Thanks of Congress to General Jackson &c.,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 24, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

59. “American Independence Revived. Composed Shortly After Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson’s Splendid Victory at New Orleans,” *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), March 30, 1815, vol. 15, issue 758, AHN.

either European power, his loyalty fell with America in equal measure, regardless of the opponent. If the United States had to battle France, then he “hope[ed] she’ll make the Monsieurs [*sic*] dance,” and because Britain was the current target of American arms, the author expressed confidence that John Bull would be similarly treated.⁶⁰ The United States did not owe any nation anything. Rather, it stood independent.

While the war might be better described as a draw than an American victory, the impact of the War of 1812 on American memory during the nineteenth century was anything but tepid. Writers and artists celebrated victories (big and small) and even losses with great vigor after 1815. The Battle of New Orleans in January 1815, perhaps the most symbolic of American success during the war, was memorialized in literature, song, and iconography. The engraver hastily produced the first print depicting the battle the same year, and within two years reworked the plate and added copious amounts of embellishment and detail to it. He strengthened the image by adding figures to the scene and including more dead and wounded men. He filled sparse sections with depictions of activity, made billowing smoke more dramatic, enhanced the sky with more tone and color, and gave the men portrayed more complete features. One officer who was originally shown weeping into a handkerchief no longer wept in the reissued version, but rather appeared with a finger pointing outwards. The engraver also made a “final triumphant gesture” by making the Union Jack appear bullet-ridden and torn. This reworked print indicated in no uncertain terms just who the victor had been.⁶¹ Engravers and publishers produced commemorative prints of the battle in abundance for five years

60. “The Newsboy to his Patrons,” *Republican and Evening Ledger* (Savannah, GA), January 1, 1813, LCP.

61. Library Company of Philadelphia, *Made in America Printmaking, 1760-1860: An Exhibition of Original Prints from the Collections of the Library Company of Philadelphia and The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, April-June 1973* (Philadelphia: The Library Company, 1973), 20-21, LCP.

following the conclusion of the war, and its enduring significance is borne out by the fact that a second proliferation of prints memorializing the battle came out in the context of Jackson's pending retirement in 1837. Philadelphia engravers issued and reissued even more commemorative prints in the 1850s, including "Perry's Victory on the Lake" and "The Battle of New Orleans." Even twenty years after the war's conclusion, printers continued to find a market for 1812 memorabilia. The timing of these later runs is also significant; issuing these prints at a time of great national division shows that the unifying power of the war in American memory still resonated. Perhaps northern publishers hoped that resurrecting the surge of nationalism that the War of 1812 brought with it (while conveniently forgetting about the divisions embodied in the Hartford Convention of 1814) could stave off the looming threat of civil war.

Americans believed the war, and particularly Jackson's victory at New Orleans, altered the historical course of the United States and fundamentally changed American identity. Philadelphia's *Democratic Press* published a piece that elucidated the larger significance of that event in February 1815. Had American forces failed, its author wrote, the British occupation of New Orleans would have endured for years and extended the war, fundamentally altering American character and changing the political culture of the nation. A longer war "would have indurated the American national character with a permanent, inveterate military propensity." Yet, he wrote, "[Britain's] failure in this, the utmost scope of their aggression, forever will...teach them the impossibility of gaining a foothold on our possessions, much less dismembering or subjugating any part of them." He believed that in teaching England a lesson about "the extreme impolicy [*sic*]...of persisting in hostilities" against the United States, the war did away with circumstances

that made Americans a “warlike instead of a commercial people.”⁶² From this author’s perspective, the war’s course and outcome determined exactly what kind of people “Americans” would be. It also changed the way Americans understood the connection between their own identity and the concept of continental power. While the years following the Revolution saw U.S. jurisdiction challenged along every possible northern and western boundary line, the War of 1812 cleared the way for sovereignty on the frontiers. Having achieved victory in the second revolution, Americans found the confidence to assert national control over the borderlands; in the process, the West evolved from a proto-colonial fringe area to the proving ground for American identity.

The War of 1812 had enormous implications for the relationship between East and West and the role of the West in national life. During the founding decades, the federal government treated western territories as colonies; eastern Americans viewed frontier residents as second-class citizens at best and white savages at worst; and there was a serious divergence between eastern and western issues when it came to policy formulation. As a result, the “American” West existed in name only prior to 1815. Britain and Spain competed for supremacy along the borders and found many ready recruits among a population with tenuous ties to the distant and imperious metropole, and little attachment to a national culture that held them in low esteem. The War of 1812 changed all of these factors. The frontier and its inhabitants acquired a political and cultural significance they had never enjoyed before thanks to the existence of a western theater in the war. The central government finally had to recognize the strategic value of the borderlands and invest resources in cementing American sovereignty there, ending the period in which eastern and western issues diverged and the loyalty of frontier Americans

62. “Washington City, Feb. 5, 1815,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 8, 1815, LCP.

was seriously in question. Westerners from Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan territories took great pride in the role they played throughout the war, and finally felt themselves an important part of their country's survival. For the first time, heroes emerged from the frontier who could be celebrated on a national scale. All of these changes initiated a long-term evolution of the place of the West in American politics and culture.

The war brought the West into focus for easterners who had dismissed frontier issues in the past. For one thing, western forces absorbed a large proportion of British and Indian land assaults, lessening the burden placed on the seaboard states, and this fact was not lost on eastern observers. One letter published in the *Democratic Press* reminded Philadelphians that every battle waged in the interior "make[s] an effectual diversion of that Enemy from the Atlantic coast of the old states. That common Enemy is manfully and generously met by the people of the interior, southern and western sections of our country." There was no longer any room for dismissing frontier issues, nor to doubt the immense importance of expanding the nation's borders. "While a few narrow people in two or three of the Eastern states are murmuring at the introduction of Vermont, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and Louisiana, as members of our Union, those youngest states are meeting the Enemy, in the most gallant style, at Plattsburgh and Erie, near Detroit, at Pensacola, Mobile and New Orleans." In the context of the war, frontier issues ceased to be distinct from those of the East, for "[e]very Briton, put *hors de combat* [out of a capacity to fight], in those places, is prevented from assailing and plundering [eastern states]...The people of all those places have the truest and deepest interest in the repulse

or crippling of the Enemy in Louisiana.”⁶³ When Bostonian William Spooner wrote to congratulate Kentuckian Isaac Gwathmey on the Battle of New Orleans in March 1815, he noted that the event, “for us who live on the seacoast,” had come as a “welcome visitant.” According to Spooner, events in the western theater of the war “relieved us from all the anxiety which the events of the last autumn had taught us to apprehend from the return of spring, when the enemy by measure of his naval superiority would have been able to keep us in a continual state of embarrassment, uncertainty, [and] alarm.”⁶⁴ Spooner clearly understood the battles fought on the western front saved him and his eastern brethren a lot of sacrifice and bloodshed. Thus the war transformed areas that easterners had previously perceived as insignificant and remote sections of the Union into key strategic locations; victories there meant salvation for the eastern seaboard.

The War of 1812 created a confluence of interests between East and West by proving the strategic importance of the western borderlands. The war imparted the lesson that locations in the West could be as important if not more so than many along the seaboard. While England successfully invaded and set fire to the capital, battles in northwestern and southwestern locations gave Americans something to celebrate.⁶⁵ Richard Rush told John Adams in no uncertain terms that President Madison and he both considered the Great Lakes of the utmost importance as early as summer 1813. Rush found it “lamentable” that the United States did not have clear command of those northwestern waters at the time, and told Adams that the president believed “if the British

63. “The People of the Interior and Louisiana Fighting the Battles of all our Ports,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), January 14, 1815, LCP.

64. W. Spooner, Jr. in Boston to Major Isaac Gwathmey in Louisville, March 7, 1815, Gwathmey Family Papers, 1811-1902, Folder 2, FHS.

65. See Chapter Five.

built thirty frigates upon them we ought to build forty.”⁶⁶ Although Congress downplayed the need for allocating military resources westward during the founding decades, by 1816 Secretary of War William H. Crawford insisted that the security of western settlements was a national priority. He wrote to New York Governor Daniel Tompkins in January of that year to say that, in light of a possibility of future wars with Britain, reinforcing connections between Ohio and Michigan settlements was “an object of first importance.”⁶⁷ Thus the War of 1812 triggered an increased awareness of the West as a border that could be a source of strength or weakness, depending on the level of attention federal authorities chose to bestow on securing it.

While the federal government had been slow to respond to westerners’ complaints about border security and Indian hostilities in the past, the War of 1812 marked a change in that attitude. This change did take place slowly. During the war, officers serving along the northwestern frontiers such as William Hull complained bitterly about having received inadequate forces and supplies. Yet the logic of Ohio militia commander John Sloane, who remarked to Governor Meigs in 1813 that “[e]verything depends on the N[orth] W[estern] army[,] should it fail the national character is down,” became more broadly accepted over the course of the war.⁶⁸ Sloane argued emphatically for a national army in the West, and leaders like James Madison came to agree. His plan of attack (sending one force to Montreal, a second toward Canada via the Niagara River, and a third eastward into Canada from Detroit) acknowledged that troops and supplies had to be concentrated along the northwestern borders. Madison’s decision to divide an already

66. Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, June 29 [and July 15], 1813, Richard Rush Letters, 1811-1822, HSP.

67. Quoted in Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 424.

68. John Sloane to Governor Meigs, Canton, January 1, 1813, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 3, Frame 15-16, OHS.

weak American force into three parts at the outset of the war may seem strategically unsound; however, it also indicates the growing significance of western concerns in the context of the war.⁶⁹ The three-pronged attack plan brought frontier interest groups to the fore: an army based out of Detroit “please[d] the Ohio and Kentucky Republicans, especially Henry Clay,” while the force traveling to Canada via the Niagara River “soothe[d] the western New Yorkers.” Targeting a third Canadian stronghold, Montreal, was the single element designed to “appeal to Northeastern Republicans.” Frontier priorities dominated Madison’s decision-making process and devoting resources to the western theater was “a political imperative” from the outset of the conflict.⁷⁰

The West’s value as one setting of the second revolution must be understood in the context of how the war played out in the eastern theater. While the United States achieved some victories on the high seas, those successes had no decisive impact on the war overall; the young nation’s maritime prospects against the mighty British navy were not comforting.⁷¹ By April 1814, the British had successfully blockaded much of the eastern seaboard, keeping America’s exports bottled up in her harbors and terrorizing coastal towns with hit-and-run raids. In August of that year, British forces sailed into the

69. Walter R. Borneman, *1812: The War that Forged a Nation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 59.

70. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 157.

71. The victory of the *USS Wasp* over the *HMS Frolic* in September 1812, for example, was so short-lived as to be negligible; the *Wasp* and *Frolic* were both overtaken by the *HMS Poictiers* just a few hours later. Victories on the high seas did receive a lot of press, especially early in the war when losses at Detroit and Fort Dearborn (both in August 1812) and the failure of the Niagara campaign (November-December 1812) depleted morale nationwide. Events such as the *USS Constitution*’s capture of the *HMS Guerrière* in August 1812 offered consolation, but did not sway the course of the war and ultimately faded in comparison with both high profile land victories (at the Thames and New Orleans) and naval victories (Perry’s triumph on Lake Erie in September 1813) in the interior. Whereas the war did impact America’s position in the North and Southwest, it did nothing to change the power relationship in the Atlantic. Britain “emerged from the conflict with total command of the oceans and broad experience in blockade and amphibious operations.” Jeremy Black, “A British View of the Naval War of 1812,” *Naval History Magazine* 22, no. 4 (August 2008): [1]. Initial histories of the war focused on land campaigns, and only in the 1880s and 1890s did the significance of naval battles come front and center in historical analyses. See Mark Russell Shulman, “The Influence of History upon Sea Power: The Navalist Reinterpretation of the War of 1812,” *The Journal of Military History* 56, no. 2 (April 1992): 183-206.

Chesapeake Bay and marched on Washington, D.C. The American government fled, leaving the capital to the British, who pillaged and burned the White House, the Treasury building, and the State and War Department buildings. The royal navy also took Fort Washington on the Potomac River. Desperate to keep stores out of British hands, American troops set fire to the Washington Navy Yard and some of their own ships under construction.⁷² In addition to being strategic losses, these events were a devastating blow to the American ego. As Samuel Breck wrote in his diary that August, he and an “immense crowd” of Philadelphians were transfixed by the news of what had happened in the capitol. After learning about the destruction in and around the capital, Breck lamented that “[t]he disgrace of this expedition will forever attach to the nation. The culpable neglect of the government is such as to stain our national character with the deepest die [*sic*] of infamy. [N]o American can hold his head up after this in Europe or at home[.]” Wartime events on the seaboard became a source of dishonor, an “indelible stain upon [the] national character.”⁷³ As the war progressed, newspapers like Ohio’s *Chillicothe Fredonian* rightly asked whether or not it had ever made sense to “contend, single-handed, for free-trade and sailor’s rights, and the freedom of the ocean with a nation, whose immense naval power has annihilated the commerce, and destroyed the fleets of almost every other people.”⁷⁴ With such defeatism at hand regarding maritime prospects, the nation looked inward for strength for the first time, and even small victories in the frontier theater became doubly significant.

72. Borneman, *1812*, 216-217, 230-231.

73. [Entry, August 27-29, 1814], Samuel Breck Papers, series 1, vol. 3, Diary, 1814-1827, HSP.

74. *The Chillicothe Fredonian* (Chillicothe, OH), Tuesday, April 19, 1814, vol. 5, no. 24, Microfilm Roll 17204, OHS.

The war in the West made it clear that focusing on the interior gave the new nation a way to overcome the insecurities that plagued the founding generation. While fighting seaboard-centric battles over and over again kept the United States in a weak and subservient position, the young nation could more feasibly assert a strong and independent national presence in her interior. Events during the War of 1812 made this abundantly clear. As William Hull explained in an 1812 letter requesting a fleet on Lake Erie in anticipation of war with a British-Indian alliance, “[i]f we cannot command the ocean, we can command the inland lakes of our country.”⁷⁵ After a series of defeats at the outset of the war, a decisive American victory in the Battle of Lake Erie (1813) bore out Hull’s prediction. Such achievements, combined with successes at other interior locations like New Orleans, forced easterners to question where exactly America’s strength lay. In one 1815 poem celebrating America’s successes, the burning of Washington and the attempted invasion of Baltimore stand in direct contrast with subsequent stanzas, which explicitly identify New Orleans as the setting for victory and the victorious troops as “Tennessee [*sic*] Boys and Tuckahoes.”⁷⁶ Looking back on the war that same year, Treasury Secretary Alexander James Dallas explained that “[i]t was [in Canada] alone, that the United States could place themselves upon an equal footing of military force with Great Britain.”⁷⁷ Although the invasion of Canada failed, by the end of the war it was clearer than ever before that America needed the West. So long as Americans continued to focus

75. Hull, *Memoirs*, 21. The government did not acquiesce to Hull’s request at that time; Hull laments in his memoirs that instead of a fleet he received 1,500 troops, mainly Ohio militiamen. Nevertheless, he did feel that a “lesson of experience” had been learned, and that “since that period, we have been taught how important the command of those waters are to successful operations against the country.” *Ibid.*, 32-33.

76. “The British Sine Qua Non,” *Western American* (Williamsburg, OH), February 25, 1815, vol. 1, issue 30, AHN.

77. Alexander James Dallas, *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War with Great Britain* ([London]; Washington [D.C.] : Printed ; London : Reprinted and published by W. I. Clement, 181563, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

on the British navy as the enemy, the United States remained an inferior force forever at the mercy of the former mother country. The West, by contrast, represented a place where Americans could not only compete with British might, but actually overpower it.

Although maritime issues like impressment and violation of American shipping rights helped spark the War of 1812, events in the borderlands were pivotal to the onset of hostilities, and the conflict brought frontier issues national attention.⁷⁸ Perhaps no event was more instrumental in pulling the frontier into the national spotlight and making the War of 1812 a fight for the interior than the Battle of Tippecanoe. On November 7, 1811, William Henry Harrison, the Governor of the Indiana Territory, and a force of nearly one thousand volunteers engaged with a group of Shawnee warriors at Tippecanoe Creek near what is now Battleground, Indiana. When the Indians retreated, Harrison's force advanced and burned the enemy settlement at Prophetstown.⁷⁹ This battle triggered more than just westerners' martial zeal in the months leading up to the declaration of war. Although critics of the Madison administration faulted William Henry Harrison for provoking the natives by engaging them at Tippecanoe, the president and the Republican press portrayed the battle as "a great and glorious victory over bloodthirsty brutes armed by the British," as a means of building popular support for the forthcoming war.⁸⁰ It worked. Letters published in eastern papers from soldiers at the front described how the British plied Indians with gold, and that large numbers of savages had been "liberally supplied with arms and munitions" in the wake of the battle; one of the first reactions in

78. Alan Taylor argues that one cannot definitively identify one cause or another that led to the war. Rather, he asks that scholars examine the "interaction of maritime and frontier issues in producing the profound alarm for the republic which drove the Republicans to declare war." Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 134.

79. Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 214-218.

80. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 127.

the House of Representatives was a resolution to inquire whether subjects of a foreign power had indeed excited the Indians to violence.⁸¹

Tippecanoe turned the eyes of the nation westward on the eve of its second revolution and brought an abrupt end to the era of eastern disinterest in frontier defense. In Maryland, revelers gave toasts to honor the “gallant heroes who fell at the battle of Tippecanoe,” the date of the battle, the militia, and Governor Harrison. A report from one committee in the House of Representatives applauded the gallantry of the “raw troops” who took part in the action.⁸² One editorial in the *Farmer’s Repository* of West Virginia declared that whatever people thought about how the president or Governor Harrison had acted, “all applaud the bravery of the soldiers.”⁸³ Thus the events at Tippecanoe weakened the position of those who opposed the administration and denounced the approaching war with Great Britain. The poem “Battle of Tippecanoe,” published in multiple papers along the East Coast in early February 1812, called readers “[t]o arms! To arms!” These periodicals presented the battle as a first warning that “the foe [was] nigh.”⁸⁴ At the time this call to arms occurred, the House was busy debating a bill to establish a uniform and effective militia for national defense, and later that month it took

81. See for example “By the Mails, Indian Affairs,” *New-Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), November 19, 1811, vol. 3, issue 32, AHN. Copies of this letter were published in multiple newspapers that month; “From the National Intelligencer. Detroit, M.[I]. Feb. 11, 1812,” *The Native American* (Norwich, CT), March 18, 1812, issue 3, AHN. The letter accused certain persons within the pay of the British government of having the blood of the fallen at Tippecanoe on their hands; *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 557.

82. “Hagers-Town Gazette. Tuesday, March 3, 1812,” *Hagers-Town Gazette* (Hagers-Town, MD), March 3, 1812, vol. 3, issue 147, AHN; *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 698-699. It must be noted that at least some of the Kentuckians who took part in the engagement were dissatisfied with the compensation they received from the government for losses incurred at Tippecanoe.

83. “Lexington, December 3. The Wabash Expedition,” *Farmers Repository* (Charles Town, WV), December 27, 1811, vol. 4, issue 196, AHN.

84. *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport, RI), February 5, 1812, vol. 3, issue 45, AHN. The foe in this case was the “savage,” however, the connection between aggressive Indians and British arms and encouragement was a well-established part of the dialogue at this time.

up a resolution for authorizing President Madison to raise a provisional army.⁸⁵ Few incidents could support those types of provisions more effectively than the battle at Tippecanoe, as representatives admitted with chagrin that only hastily recruited militia made up the force that fought there. When the nation finally did begin “active preparations for a state of war,” the “consecrated field of Tippecanoe” enflamed Americans’ martial zeal throughout the country. The battle made a national cause out of what was really a regional issue; Indiana and Kentucky volunteers made up the majority of Harrison’s troops, and the great general himself was more a western figurehead than a national one at that juncture. Yet readers in Philadelphia and New York saw editorials calling Tippecanoe “an example for public virtue and valor of America, and the honor of the American nation.”⁸⁶ In 1814, poet Samuel Woodworth noted that his own “feeble attempt to celebrate its hero” could hardly do justice to the battle itself, which thousands believed “was the most daring adventure in which the pride of our country has yet been called to participate.”⁸⁷ Nearly thirty years later, Harrison’s presidential campaign still relied on the political and cultural capital he had gained as the hero of Tippecanoe.

Tippecanoe was just the first in a stream of frontier events that inspired patriotism and support for the war, captured the imagination of the country, and laid the groundwork for a mythology about the war that celebrated western heroes. A decline in the founding generation’s post-colonial weakness and increasing interest in the West converged.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1812, national focus remained on the northwestern

85. The resolution authorizing Madison to raise an additional 20,000 men as part of a provisional army was negated on February 18, 1812, 58 nays - 49 yeas. *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 1,069. The resolution to arm the militia passed on February 21, 1812. *Ibid.*, 1,084-1,085.

86. “Philadelphia, Aug. 26. The Battle of Tippecanoe,” *Public Advertiser* (New York, NY), August 29, 1812, vol. 6, issue 1813, AHN.

87. Samuel Woodworth, *The Heroes of the Lake: A Poem, in Two Books* (New York: Printed and Published by S. Woodworth & Co. War Office, 26 Chatham Street, 1814), 103, n. 5, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

frontier. The Battle of Brownstown in August drew attention to the Michigan territory, as did the surrender of Detroit that same month, and news of the Battle of Fort Dearborn put Illinois front and center.⁸⁸ The siege and subsequent relief of Fort Harrison in Indiana in early September 1812 was deemed a significant victory for American forces: New York's *Columbian* newspaper happily reported that both Fort Harrison and Fort Wayne "[had] not fallen under the savage tomahawk or British bayonet." Gallant troops, the newspapers reported, bravely defended the forts from a scene of "fury and horrors."⁸⁹ Americans in both East and West could celebrate and romanticize the defense of these western posts from a group of Indians that allegedly outnumbered the Americans ten to one. Newspapers throughout the country republished commanding officer Zachary Taylor's written account of the incident, including descriptions of the odds against him.⁹⁰ According to one Pennsylvania paper, the brave soldiers who withstood the siege and the western militia who had come to their rescue "covered themselves with never fading laurels."⁹¹ Almost simultaneously, events at Pigeon Roost, Indiana brought additional attention to that part of the western frontier. News of the murder of over twenty residents of Pigeon Roost on September 3, 1812 reached eastern papers later that same month; although technically unrelated to the war, it is clear that the incident intensified American anger over the British-Indian alliance. Accounts of the Pigeon Roost massacre frequently appeared under the same headlines as news of troop movements, and the event sparked interest in Harrison's need for additional troops to "save the western frontier of Indiana

88. Papers all along the seaboard published and re-published news from the western front. New York's *Commercial Advertiser*, for example, published details about Brownstown that September.

89. "[Fort Harrison; Fort Wayne; British; Taylor; Intelligencer]," *The Columbian* (New York, NY), October 3, 1812, vol. 3, issue 909, AHN.

90. "[Fort Harrison; Indians; Thursday; Colonel Wm. Russell; Vincennes; Illinois; Rangers]," *The Courier* (Washington, D.C.), October 3, 1812, vol. 1, issue 23, AHN.

91. *Greensburgh & Indiana Register* (Greensburgh, PA), October 8, 1812, vol. 5, issue 36, AHN.

from the greatest distress.”⁹² Accounts of all of these incidents in the fall of 1812 kept Americans engaged in the war and sparked national interest in western locales that had gone unnoticed for decades.

The Battle of Frenchtown, also known as the River Raisin Massacre, was another frontier event that caught the attention of the seaboard and inspired patriotism in the early phases of the war. Westerners, in this light, were no longer white savages. Troops under General James Winchester engaged a British-Indian force near the River Raisin in the Michigan Territory in January 1813. The battle resulted in an American defeat in which Indians under British command killed and scalped retreating Kentucky militiamen. The news of the battle arrived in eastern cities and towns in early February, and immediately newspapers began publishing the details of the “HORRID DISASTER.” Readers heard a tale of slaughter in which Kentuckians fell victim to Indian savagery.⁹³ Winchester, reports stated, had his “body mangled in the most horrid manner by the Indians,” and bloodthirsty Indians pursued, “tomahawked and scalped” retreating American troops.⁹⁴ Cries of “Remember the Raisin” easily rallied western troops to the cause of the war, but the event also energized eastern audiences. Readers understood that the battle annihilated a significant part of the northwestern forces, that it was “disastrous,” and that it put the

92. “Events of the War. Latest from the Army. Frankfort, Sept. 12,” *The Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), October 8, 1812, vol. 13, issue 629, AHN.

93. Initial reports consisted of an account originally published in the *Chillicothe Supporter* on February 1-2, 1813, and additional information arrived quickly. Handbills with a description of the battle were circulated in Chillicothe, and reached eastern locations in the hands of travelers. See “The Great Battle, Another Account,” *The National Advocate* (New York, NY), February 10, 1813, vol. 1, issue 48, AHN. Accounts appeared in papers in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Richmond, Baltimore, New Haven, Newark, and Providence.

94. “By the Mails. Ohio. Chillicothe, Feb. 2,” *Baltimore Patriot* (Baltimore, MD), February 11, 1813, vol. 1, issue 35, AHN. Other dramatic descriptions explained that his body was “mangled in a manner so shocking to civilized feelings” that the author forbore to describe it. See “From Washington, Feb. 13,” *Baltimore Patriot* (Baltimore, MD), February 15, 1813, vol. 1, issue 38, AHN. In fact, Winchester was not killed, but was taken prisoner.

western country in a very precarious position.⁹⁵ While some felt the defeat simply confirmed that the war was ill-advised, many others felt a renewed commitment to defeating the British.⁹⁶ “The voice of lamentation is loud and deep,” proclaimed one newspaper article, “but the ardor of the people is not damped. – You witnessed the emotion of all ranks after the shameful surrender of Hull. I need only say, the same spirit prevails at present.”⁹⁷ Eastern readers knew that British officers had allowed the murder and mutilation of fleeing men and defenseless prisoners of war in the course of the engagement, and this caused outrage: “our blood curdles in our veins...[t]he inhuman butchers! [T]he monsters in the form of men.”⁹⁸ One editorial from the *Buffalo Gazette*, excerpted in other papers, asked, “[t]rue hearted Americans, how long will you remain quiet at your homes? [C]annot the sacred spirits of our murdered brethren rouse you into action, to take ample vengeance for our wrongs[?]”⁹⁹ Another account argued that “[i]f the vengeance of our country can sleep after such an act as this, then indeed may we weep over the ruins of the republic!”¹⁰⁰ By eliciting such emotion, this western incident

95. “Defeat of Gen. Winchester Confirmed,” *Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), February 16, 1813, vol. 16, issue 92, AHN; “Army of the North-West,” *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), February 16, 1813, AHN.

96. One contributor to a New Hampshire newspaper, for example, stated that the events at the Raisin showed the “downright incapacity which characterizes all the measures of administration and their agents in reference to this wicked, offensive war.” *The Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), February 22, 1813, vol. 11, issue 21, AHN [appears to be excerpted from the *U.S. Gazette*].

97. “Baltimore, Feb. 17,” *New-Hampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), February 27, 1813, vol. 14, issue 726, AHN.

98. In fact, many of the officers who survived the “massacre at Frenchtown” met at Erie, PA in late February 1813 and determined that their fellow countrymen should all be informed about what had happened. They published a statement regarding the conduct of the British officers who had left American prisoners to be slaughtered, “tomahawked, and...burned alive.” “Massacre at Frenchtown. Meadeville, (Pa.) Feb. 20,” *The War* (New York, NY), March 9, 1813, vol. 1, issue 38, AHN; *American Watchman and Delaware Republican* (Wilmington, DE), March 3, 1813, vol. 5, issue 373, AHN. News of the death of prisoners was spreading by early March. This paper’s account was reacting to descriptions of the event received from “southern mails.”

99. “Winchester’s Defeat, and Humanity Outraged by Britain & Her Allies,” *Green-Mountain Farmer* (Bennington, VT), March 3, 1813, vol. 4, issue 36, AHN.

100. “From the Pittsburgh Mercury of February 25. Gen. Winchester’s Army,” *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), March 8, 1813, vol. 1, issue 57, AHN.

intensified eastern support for the troops, particularly volunteers from frontier regions. It also helped confirm British complicity in native violence for easterners who might have believed published denials of such behavior.¹⁰¹ As this battle took on the mythic quality of a tragic and unjust massacre, it inspired the country to dig in and make additional sacrifices for victory. As Thomas H. Meriwether instructed fellow Kentuckian Isaac Gwathmey (on a visit to Connecticut) in March 1814, “when any of them [anti-war Tories] says politics to you[,] point to the river Raisin, and show them the history of the American Revolution; and I’ll lay a wager that their mouths are shut.”¹⁰² Meriwether at least believed that the massacre at the River Raisin carried equal weight with the entire Revolution; it was the Boston Massacre of this second revolution, it occurred in a frontier setting, and it featured the most pivotal of all western issues, British-Indian cooperation.

Western voices, in addition to western events, fueled national support for the war effort bringing East and West closer together. Representatives of eastern constituencies had less incentive to support hostilities with Britain than did their western counterparts. As New York’s Barent Gardenier stated on the floor of the House in December 1809 (while debating the president’s having cut off communication with English minister George Jackson), “‘God’s chosen people’ in the Northern and Eastern States” depended on intercourse with England, and would “not abandon it on light ground.”¹⁰³ This dependence made easterners far more likely to retain the submissive position appropriate to a colonial people. In contrast, individuals from borderland states and frontier

101. *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), March 3, 1813, vol. 1, issue 53, AHN. The paper argued that a document issued by the British government in response to the American declaration of war was discredited, in part, by the events at the Raisin, which showed that her denials of complicity in Indian savagery were false. The *Baltimore Patriot* called the Raisin “horrid evidence of the hellish fact.” March 5, 1813, vol. 1, issue 54, AHN.

102. Thomas H. Meriwether to Isaac R. Gwathmey, March 15, 1814, Gwathmey Family Papers, 1811-1902, Folder 1, FHS.

103. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 958.

settlements tended to favor the administration's measures against Great Britain in the lead-up to the war. As Kentucky's Henry Clay stated in December 1811, if "some gentlemen" found the topic of war with Britain "improper to discuss publicly," he had no patience with them. Clay advocated an increase in the army and spoke specifically about an invasion of Canada long before the United States declared war.¹⁰⁴ During the lead-up to the declaration, John Rhea of Tennessee spoke strongly in favor of a resolution supporting the president's decision to cut off communication with England's ambassador, and George Poindexter (a non-voting congressman from Mississippi) rose and supported the same resolution at length on December 30, 1810.¹⁰⁵ Representatives from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio frequently voted as a block in favor of agenda items that agitated the status quo with Great Britain. Every voting representative from these three states opposed postponing the debate about cutting off communication with the British minister on January 2, 1810.¹⁰⁶ When the resolution approving the president's action came to a vote, every member present from those states voted in favor.¹⁰⁷ The majority of representatives from the western states supported the bill restricting commercial intercourse with Britain that same month in 1810, and voted again as a block to oppose senate changes that weakened the bill.¹⁰⁸ The majority also voted to authorize President Madison to raise a volunteer military on January 17, 1812, and in support of arming the militia that February.¹⁰⁹ Although scholars have debated whether or not a coalition of

104. *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 596-602. Clay served in the Senate in 1806-1807 and again in 1810-1811 before leaving to join the House in March 1811.

105. Poindexter admitted he typically did not speak out, but that this specific issue was of great importance. This topic occupied the House for weeks. Attempts were made to postpone the issue indefinitely, and all were voted down. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 755-756, 988-1,032.

106. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,089.

107. *Ibid.*, 1,151-1,152.

108. *Ibid.*, 1,354, 1,701.

109. *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 1,047. Henry Clay and Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky

“War Hawks” existed in the Twelfth Congress when it declared war on June 4, 1812, there can be no denying that every single voting representative from the western block voted in favor of that declaration.¹¹⁰

Americans in the interior had few reasons to oppose measures that might anger the former mother country, and much motivation for favoring them, namely that to war with Britain was to finally ““extinguish the torch that lights up savage warfare.””¹¹¹ In the years before and during the war, westerners *made* the conflict with Britain a territorial conflict by inserting allegations about British-Indian villainy into the dialogue about the offenses England committed against American shipping rights and freedom on the high seas. The relationship between American settlers, native groups, and British traders and military personnel along the frontiers was a troubled one from the start; as discussed in previous chapters, westerners often held English agents responsible for Indian misbehavior, and the evacuation of the contested western posts in 1796 did not eliminate

did not vote, while Joseph Desha and Anthony New of Kentucky voted “nay.”

110. See Reginald Horsman, “Who Were the War Hawks?” *Indiana Magazine of History* 60, no. 2 (June 1964): table on p. 136. Historians such as Horsman and Roger H. Brown have debated the existence of a set of Republican legislators who were “bellicose and eager for war” in 1812. Horsman identifies a western and southern block of about thirty members of the House, while Brown finds no true evidence of a war hawk coalition, arguing that in truth no Republicans really wanted war in 1812. Alexander DeConde, “The War Hawks of 1812: A Critique,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 60, no. 2 (June 1964): 152-153. The evidence shows that western speakers like Mississippi’s George Poindexter identified pro-British and anti-war speakers not only as Federalists, but as regionally affiliated with “the north.” See *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 990, 1,002. Although Horsman emphasizes the importance of representatives from the South Atlantic states, he does so because they provided the largest number (twelve) of active speakers in favor of war measures. However, the states with western borders generally represent the most cohesive block. In the Senate, voting members from Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky were more divided: of five frontier senators present for the vote on June 17, 1812, three voted in favor and two against the war. See tables in Leland R. Johnson, “The Suspense Was Hell: The Senate Vote for War in 1812,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 65, no. 4 (December 1969): 65-66. Johnson explains that Senators Thomas Worthington (OH) and John Pope (KY) were afraid that their states would be too vulnerable in the event of a war. He identifies both gentlemen as part of a group that he labels “mavericks” because their votes were “unpredictable and almost inexplicable.” *Ibid.*, 250. John Pope’s vote against the declaration was so at-odds with the wishes of his constituents that it “spelled ruin” for his career, at least temporarily (he did not hold office again until 1816, and was burned in effigy upon his return home from the Twelfth Congress). James Wallace Hammack, Jr., *Kentucky and the Second American Revolution: The War of 1812* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 13-14.

111. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 128.

this problem. An open and honest war with England had the potential to draw national attention to the issue (which it did) and force the federal government to apply sufficient resources to solving it. Western representatives made certain to insert British-Indian intrigues into their arguments in favor of expanding the armed forces and preparing for war. Felix Grundy of Tennessee added such offenses to his list of complaints when he supported raising more regular troops in December 1811. His mind, he said, was “irresistibly drawn to the West,” where British “baubles and trinkets” spurred the Indians to violence. The war, according to Grundy, had already begun; blood had already been shed, and “the whole Western country is ready to march.”¹¹² Kentucky’s Richard M. Johnson defended sending armed forces into the borderlands with similar rhetoric. Those who “objected to the destination” simply needed to realize the gravity of the situation there. “[U]pon our borders,” Johnson explained, “our laws are violated, the Indians stimulated to murder our citizens, and...there is a British monopoly of the peltry and fur trade.” Johnson, like other westerners, viewed open warfare with England as a stand not just against Britain’s maritime transgressions, but against her machinations in the West as well.¹¹³

As the war developed, the interior remained central as a setting for the bulk of the major engagements that took place; from the Great Lakes, along the northwestern frontiers, through Indian Country into the southwestern borderlands, the war shifted national focus to the West. In the first year of the war, British naval forces spent little

112. *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 425-426. Kentucky’s Richard M. Johnson also supported the measure and used similar points. Offenses on the Wabash, he said, stood beside those on “our territorial sea.” *Ibid.*, 456. Randolph dismissed such claims, insisting that Indians remained “red brethren.” *Ibid.*, 445-446.

113. *Ibid.*, 457.

time targeting the New England coastline.¹¹⁴ Rather, the interior became the central factor in the strategic plans of both sides. For the United States, the invasion of Canada became the “prime” piece of policy after embargo failed to sway the British.¹¹⁵ While the invasion of Canada ultimately proved too difficult, this strategy reveals the extent to which plans to assert America’s position as an independent power on the eastern or seaboard stage had failed. In the context of the war, Americans found themselves looking West for a new venue in which to prove themselves. Eastern readers began seeing accounts of a British siege at Ohio’s Fort Meigs in the spring of 1813, and followed what happened there via letters. They read how American forces at Fort Meigs stood strong against “hordes of savages...and bands of the civilized enemy, more cruel than the savage,” and residents of seaboard states celebrated when Harrison’s troops “repulsed the enemy.”¹¹⁶ Naval battles in the interior made Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, and Captain Oliver Hazard Perry part of headline news.¹¹⁷ Newspapers up and down the seaboard published General Harrison’s account of “complete victory” at the Battle of the Thames in late October 1813, much needed good news at a time when the British blockade was taking a toll on the eastern states. Boston’s *Independent Chronicle* reported that it was “on the Thames, where our victories will have their effect, in reducing to reason and justice the tyrants of the ocean.”¹¹⁸ These battles confirmed “the efficiency of the *western militia*,”

114. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 182. Taylor posits that this was some sort of reward for Federalist strongholds that were home to anti-war governors and constituencies.

115. *Ibid.*, 119.

116. “Fort Meigs,” *Baltimore Patriot* (Baltimore, MD), April 15, 1813, vol. 1, issue 89, AHN; “[Philadelphia; Pittsburg; Gen. Harrison; Repulsed; Enemy; Fort Meigs],” *Baltimore Patriot* (Baltimore, MD), May 17, 1813, vol. 1, issue 116, AHN.

117. Nicole Eustace explains that “the capital indeed hungered for some signal that the U.S. war effort would succeed” at the time Perry’s account of his “signal victory” over the British on Lake Erie arrived in fall 1813. Eustace, *Passions*, 76.

118. “Harrison’s Victory,” *The War* (New York, NY), October 26, 1813, vol. 2, issue 19, AHN; “[General Proctor; London; Thames; General Harrison’s Ocean],” *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), October 28, 1813, vol. 45, issue 3396, AHN.

and helped gain support for government employment of those troops.¹¹⁹ Harrison's success in defeating the Indian leader Tecumseh (who was killed in the battle) also marked an end to organized resistance among the northwestern tribes, a development that further cleared the way for American expansion. General Andrew Jackson's victory over the Creeks in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (1814), and at the Battle of New Orleans, the final in a series of engagements throughout the nation's interior, kept American attention riveted on the western borderlands. Many commentators rightly viewed it as a turning point that gave the United States leverage in the treaty negotiations at Ghent. By 1815, in a dramatic shift away from the time when easterners dismissed western regions, the entire nation understood that enormous stakes rode on the outcome of events far from the seaboard.

While one might reasonably term the war in the Old Northwest a "largely...disastrous enterprise," it is important to take into account that many contemporaries strongly believed otherwise.¹²⁰ Militarily, many of the battles in the northern and western theaters were indeed losses and even victories like that at Fort Meigs resulted in heavy casualties for the American forces; nevertheless, even technical defeats could be sources of valor and pride. When Vermont Representative William C. Bradley asked the House about failures on the frontiers in 1813 for example, Virginia's John G. Jackson immediately contradicted him, insisting that he had no idea what Bradley even meant. "Was there a failure of our arms at Fort Meigs," Jackson queried, going on to ask, "to what, then, does the gentleman refer in speaking of the repeated

119. "From the National Advocate. Battle of the Thames," *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), December 24, 1813, vol. 2, issue 145, AHN. Italics in original.

120. Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780-1825* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 110. Cayton's statement is based on the failure of the invasion of Canada, and the lack of commitment to organized military expeditions.

failures of our arms in the West?” If they had failed in some instances, it was not owing to lack of bravery and obedience in the western soldiery.¹²¹ The surrender of Detroit in August 1812 was another terrible loss along the frontiers. Yet while the embarrassing defeat led to outrage, lowered morale among the troops, and provoked accusations of cowardice for the surrendering general William Hull, it also had the unexpected effect of stimulating patriotic shows of support for the war. One poem published in Georgetown’s *Federal Republican* explained that while Detroit was lost:

‘twill do good,
By rousing of our people’s blood.
It is a fact, though you’d scarce think it,
That valor rises as you sink it,
In strict proportion to the pressing.
This drubbing often proves a blessing.¹²²

At Detroit and other places, such as the River Raisin, Americans parleyed losses and embarrassments into a sense of vengeance and reinvigorated support for troops fighting on the frontier.

A number of battles and events in the frontier theater featured prominently in cultural artifacts that commemorated the war after its conclusion. A five-act play about the Battle of New Orleans immortalized that engagement almost immediately following the war’s conclusion, and songs such as Samuel Woodworth’s “Hunters of Kentucky; or, the Battle of New Orleans,” and memorial addresses like the one published in the capital on the anniversary of the battle in 1816 all celebrated Jackson’s famous victory.¹²³ The poetry compilation *The Court of Neptune[,] And The curse of liberty...*(1817) included

121. *Annals of Congress*, 13th Cong., 1st Sess., 416.

122. *Federal Republican, and Commercial Gazette* (Georgetown, District of Columbia), November 11, 1812, vol. 7, issue 890, AHN.

123. Eustace, *Passions*, 221-222, 233-235. “Hunters of Kentucky” was also subtitled “Half Horse and Half Alligator”; Thomas Kennedy, *Poems* (Washington City [D. C.]: Printed by Daniel Rapine, for the author, 1816), *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

selections on the Massacre of the Raisin, and the Battles of Lake Erie, Chippewa, Niagara, Fort Erie, and New Orleans. Naval battles on Lake Erie and Lake Champlain were the focus of Benjamin Whitman's *The Heroes of the North*, published in 1816, and the events at the River Raisin took up three out of the ten cantos in *The Fredoniad, or, Independence preserved: an epick [sic] poem of the late war of 1812*, published in 1827.¹²⁴ The imagery of Tippecanoe continued to figure prominently in mid-century political campaigns. Tippecanoe Clubs played a key role in William Henry Harrison's 1840 presidential campaign, and were resurrected again when his grandson Benjamin ran for president in 1888.¹²⁵ Engravers produced commemorative images of the Battle of the Thames, in which Tecumseh died, as late as 1857, and the Battle of Chippewa, which took place on the Niagara front, as late as 1860. The print depicting Chippewa prominently featured a buckskin-clad frontiersman in a fur cap alongside uniformed soldiers.¹²⁶ All of these cultural artifacts demonstrate the ongoing significance not just of the war, but of wartime events throughout the borderlands.

The establishment of American sovereignty enabled this burgeoning cultural embrace, and cleared the way for the West to move to the center, rather than the periphery, of American life. The war's outcome removed many of the circumstances that made the north and southwestern frontiers a middle ground after the Revolution. Many territorial questions remained unresolved up until the outbreak of the war. The Spanish

124. *The Court of Neptune. And The curse of liberty: with other poems on subjects connected with the late war* (New York: Van Winkle, Wiley, Printers, 1817), *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library; Benjamin Whitman, *The Heroes of the North, or, The Battles of Lake Erie and Champlain: two poems* (Boston: Barber Badger, 1816), *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

125. "Tippecanoe Club," *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=TC3>.

126. [W. Wellstood, engraver], "Battle of the Thames – Death of Tecumseh. From the original picture in possession of the publishers" ([New York: Johnson Fry & Co., 1857]), FHS; F[elix] O[ctavius] C[arr] Darley, "Colonel Miller at the Battle of the Chippewa" (New York: Virtue & Co., 1860), LCP.

continued to present an economic roadblock in the Southwest; Florida remained a contested territory, and a Spanish presence in Texas meant that American shippers in the port of New Orleans were still “precariously squeezed” between territories under foreign control. Both Spain and Britain continued to vie for influence in the Gulf Coast region throughout the duration of the war.¹²⁷ In the Northwest, British proximity and the fluidity of boundaries continued to complicate matters of jurisdiction, and British-Indian intrigue (both real and imagined) intensified in the early nineteenth century.¹²⁸ The War of 1812 definitively resolved many of these issues. During the war, American forces established a foothold in Florida, and this, combined with victory in the battle of New Orleans, placed a martial seal of approval on American control over the valuable Gulf region.¹²⁹

American victories over the Red Stick faction of the powerful Creek tribe effectively eliminated a long-standing problem of Indian resistance along the southwestern frontier – the middle ground in which Indians and whites vied for power disappeared, and any

127. Borneman, *1812*, 137. Florida had passed from Spain to Great Britain at the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. Twenty years later, Britain ceded Florida back to Spain, and it remained under Spanish control until it was formally ceded to the United States in 1821. At the time that war broke out in 1812, both Spain and England harbored a desire to see American influence in the region weakened, in addition to viewing each other as rivals. The United States claimed West Florida (the area south of the thirty-first parallel between the Mississippi and Perdido Rivers) as part of the Louisiana Purchase, while Spain denied any such cession. James Madison officially annexed parts of West Florida in 1810. Spain disputed these actions vigorously, while England continued to eye the Gulf region as a base for attacking America, leaving the entire region in dispute when the war began. Frank Owsley, Jr., “British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida during the War of 1812,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (October 1967): 111-123.

128. See Chapter Three.

129. Troops under General James Wilkinson occupied Mobile and the surrounding area in the spring of 1813 and Andrew Jackson’s Tennessee volunteers seized West Florida’s capital Pensacola on November 7, 1814. Borneman, *1812*, 140-141; James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2007), 301-305. These incursions, in addition to Madison’s annexation of parts of West Florida in 1810, enabled American settlers to gradually encroach on Spanish territory in the Floridas. As Cusick notes, the War of 1812 had long-term effects on Spanish Florida. American influence over parts of Florida that began during the war ultimately resulted in “hegemony” over the region, followed by the cession of Florida in the Adams-Onís Treaty (1819).

possible alliances between the Creeks and other European powers became impossible.¹³⁰ Finally, while the Treaty of Ghent did restore both nations' pre-war possessions, it removed any doubt as to American jurisdiction over its northwestern borderlands. Articles six and seven of the treaty provided for a commission to make final decisions regarding boundary disputes on the Great Lakes. Article nine, in which both parties agreed to cease hostilities with Indian tribes and return to them all possessions retroactive to 1811, was an unfulfilled promise. Yet in agreeing to that article, Britain effectively washed her hands of her Indian allies, and removed herself from the complex equation of alliances and negotiations that maintained the middle ground in the Northwest.

Where the frontier had been a land of muddled loyalties, contested boundaries, and unclear jurisdiction while the post-colonial founding generation focused on maritime concerns, it became possible to see expansion as an American right after the War of 1812. This is borne out by the fact that as early as November 1813, Hosea Smith wrote to his father from Gibson County, Indiana remarking on how the “prospect of peace” had sent “people...a pushing from Different parts in search of good lands with great eagerness.”¹³¹ Although peace remained a long way off when Smith made his

130. Although the Creek War was not technically part of the War of 1812, this conflict in 1813-1814 occurred simultaneously with the more formal war. Borneman, *1812*, 143-152. See also Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, 1997), 131-132. The Treaty of Fort Jackson, which ended the war in August 1814, required a cession of over twenty million acres of land in both Georgia and Alabama. It “marked the end of any immediate Indian resistance south of the Ohio” and forbade relations with powers like Britain or Spain – interactions that helped create a middle ground. Not only was the treaty restrictive, most of the hostile Creeks had fled to Florida anyway, leaving the southwestern frontier in the hands of groups who would cooperate with authorities rather than force a middle ground through resistance and negotiation. None of the treaty's terms, including the land cessions, were overturned as a result of the Treaty of Ghent, despite its stipulation that antebellum Indian possessions be restored.

131. Hosea Smith to his father, Gibson County, White Oak Springs, November 27, 1813, FHS. There is no doubt that many people coveted western land in the years prior to the war; however, as previous chapters demonstrated, many in the East were aware of the circumstances that mitigated the desirability of settling in the West, and some even viewed added territory as a liability rather than an asset. One study of migration after the war concludes that the majority of War of 1812 veterans remained in their home states,

observation, the mere prospect of jurisdictional clarity and an end to borderlands violence sent land agents west in droves. Once peace came, American sovereignty over the western lands became reality. At a military dinner in Burlington, Vermont in February 1815, revelers gave a toast in celebration of victory. “The Western States,” they cheered, “[y]esterday a wilderness, rude, and solitary, gloomed by the howling of beasts and the yell of savages, to day, cultured and blossoming with industry, the *envied home of heroes and patriots*.”¹³² Given just weeks after the Treaty of Ghent was signed and the Battle of New Orleans put the finishing touch on the war, the toast reveals the extent to which Americans understood that the second revolution cleared the way for American control over the West; almost overnight, the howling wilderness was replaced with a civilization made up of national celebrities. As the *Niles Weekly Register* proclaimed in September 1815, glorious victory and an honorable peace meant that, “[e]verywhere the sound of the axe is heard opening the forest to the sun, and claiming for agriculture the range of the buffalo...the sound of the spindle and the loom succeeds the yell of the savage or screech of the night owl in the late wilderness of the interior.” The nation would flourish, the author proclaimed, with a large portion of the growing population “found westward of the Alleghenies [*sic*], having emigrated from the [E]ast.”¹³³ In the Great Lakes region especially, the war provided confidence that Americans finally had definitive control. As one 1815 poem put it, the war, particularly the Battle of Lake Erie, left Americans the

however those who did move tended to migrate to the Old Northwest and Old Southwest. James W. Oberly, “Westward Who? Estimates of Native White Migration After the War of 1812,” *Journal of Economic History* 46, no. 2 (June 1986): 432-433. Land offices in Indiana, for example, were “overwhelmed” after the end of the war, with sales increasing by 425% at Vincennes. Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 265.

132. “Military Dinner,” *Northern Centinel* (Burlington, VT), February 24, 1815, vol. 5, issue 8, AHN. Italics in original.

133. “From Niles’ Weekly Register. ‘the Prospect before Us,’” *The Albany Argus* (Albany, NY), September 19, 1815, vol. 3, issue 277, AHN.

“lords of the lakes.” This middle ground became the setting for a decisive ownership of space, while the sea remained contested; the interior was home to “liberty’s ocean,” while the seaboard stood exposed.¹³⁴

As the war brought frontier issues more to the fore, it also greatly impacted how the nation viewed western Americans. Whereas easterners once considered the West a distant land filled with irresponsible squatters, westerners became exemplars of true patriotism as the war got underway. The active role of western troops in early battles mitigated the overall impression of westerners as uncouth and inconsequential second-class citizens. The Battle of Tippecanoe launched westerners into prominence, and their status as patriots only increased as the nation prepared for open war with England in the summer of 1812. That same July, as calls went out for volunteers to fight, papers pointed to “the thousands already in arms in the western country” for inspiration. While the “heroes” of Tippecanoe were saluted as they marched through places like Newport, Massachusetts, Salem’s *Essex Register* asked eastern city dwellers to look to those westerners and “rise with indignation from their slumbers, and to emulate the virtues of their brethren who have breathed a purer air.”¹³⁵ Kentuckians in particular became gilded heroes of mythic proportions after the defeat at the River Raisin. Newspapers published accounts that eulogized such “noble spirit[s]” cut down in the “Flower of [their] youth.”¹³⁶ Georgetown’s *Federal Republican* mourned the loss of so many “murdered” men, “unfortunate and gallant.” Even those that viewed the Raisin as proof that the war

134. “The Battle of Erie” and “American Perry,” *National Songster; or, a Collection of the Most Admired Patriotic Songs, on the Brilliant Victories, achieved by the naval and military heroes of the United States of America, over equal and superior forces of the British* (Hagers-town, Maryland: Printed by John Gruber and Daniel May, 1814), 17-21, LCP.

135. “Essex Register. Salem, Saturday, July 4, 1812,” *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), July 4, 1812, vol. 12, issue 54, AHN.

136. “Army of the North-West,” *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), February 16, 1813, AHN.

was wrong lauded the “reputable, substantial yeomanry of the western country.”¹³⁷

Kentucky and Tennessee volunteers also had a celebrated role in the Battle of New Orleans. The *Democratic Press* spoke in highest praise of Tennessee and Kentucky farmers in arms:

These brave and hardy mountain militia, always ready to march when called on by their government, either to go to the frozen regions of Canada, or to the western wilds of the upper Mississippi, or the south western swamps of their far distant Louisiana to New Orleans...At New Orleans the enemy had to contend with the hardy yeomanry of Kentucky and the western country and the mountains, who are an undivided people – that is, of one party – all republicans, zealous and devoted adherents to the cause of their injured country and its government, and most of them expert riflemen, inured to the fatigues of their fields and woods – good farmers.¹³⁸

The paper demanded there be no more “abuse of Louisiana, that thrice-glorious sister of the union,” which had caused her “elder sisters to blush” in the course of the war.¹³⁹

By the end of the war, western warriors had evolved from uncivilized colonials to the defenders of the nation. One toast given at a celebration held by the Philadelphia Democratic Republican Society in 1815 cheered, “[t]he Western Militia – American backwoodsmen have conquered the boasted legions of the boasted conquerors of Europe.”¹⁴⁰ That same year Philadelphia’s *Democratic Press* noted that “[t]he gallant and generous inhabitants of the west flew to arms” during the conflict. “It was not their fire sides which they had to defend. It was in many cases a thousand! - in all more than five

137. “The Drawing Room,” *Federal Republican* (Georgetown, District of Columbia), February 17, 1813, vol. 7, issue 931, AHN; *The Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), February 22, 1813, vol. 11, issue 21, AHN [appears to be excerpted from the *U.S. Gazette*].

138. “The Latest, Extract of a Letter dated New Orleans, January 14, 1813,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 11, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

139. “‘Demonstration’ on New Orleans,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 6, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

140. “An Oration Delivered Before the Democratic Republican Society of the Northern Liberties & Penn Township, on their Anniversary, 4th March, 1815 by Peter Hay, a Member of the Society,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), March 11, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

hundred miles from home they were to seek the scene of their exploits. They went with an immortalizing alacrity of patriotism. Every man of them is entitled to a panegyric.”¹⁴¹ This exultation continued long after the war’s end. A commemorative account of the battle published in New York in 1827 specifically hailed the “noble... patriotic heroes” from western states for marching to the defense of New Orleans when “from their insulated position, they themselves could never be reached by the British” forces in the Gulf region.¹⁴² Westerners’ isolation in the interior had gone from something that made them outsiders to a factor that enhanced the value of their contributions in the context of the war. Even those who remained skeptical about the refinements of western Americans had to admit that at least their wartime actions deserved recognition. Henry Cogswell Knight, in his *Letters from the South and West* (1824), insisted that while refined easterners could still look upon westerners as relatively lowly, no men “were braver in the last war.”¹⁴³ For those who threw only crumbs of respect toward frontier citizens, it was their wartime conduct alone that necessitated that grudging appreciation.

In some ways, the War of 1812 inverted the position of East and West in terms of perceived patriotism and loyalty. As one Richmond newspaper declared while praising an act of the Ohio legislature authorizing William Henry Harrison to extend the term of militia service and pay a bounty to volunteers who stayed on, the “young state of Ohio...[put] to shame some of her elders.” Rather than being a backwater government in

141. “Substance of Mr. Ingersoll’s Observations on the Passage of the Resolutions Expressive of the Thanks of Congress to General Jackson &c.,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 24, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

142. William Peter Van Ness, *A Concise narrative of General Jackson’s First Invasion of Florida, and of his Immortal Defense of New-Orleans: with Remarks*, 2nd ed. (NY: Printed by E.M. Murden & A. Ming, Jr., 1827), 9, Google eBook. Van Ness was an ardent Jackson supporter, and so his praise for Tennesseans must be viewed as part of a larger political agenda as well.

143. Henry Cogswell Knight [pseudonym Arthur Singleton, Esq.], *Letters from the South and West* (Boston: Published by Richardson and Lord, 1824), 92, First American West Digital Collection, Digital ID icufaw bb0042.

primitive stage of development, the Ohio General Assembly became a forward-thinking example for sister states in the East: “[l]et all but imitate her example and we would very soon expel from the continent the red and white savages who have so long infested our frontier.”¹⁴⁴ An excerpt from a New York paper republished in Vermont’s *Columbian Patriot* agreed. After reporting on the victory at New Orleans and praising the Tennessee and Kentucky troops at length, the author castigated those who had doubted America’s ability to win the war. In contrast, “the alacrity and courage displayed by the citizens of Tennessee and Kentucky speak a lesson which ought to be felt and revered in every part of the union. What an example is here for the eastern states!”¹⁴⁵ At the conclusion of the war, toasts celebrated the western states, while ridiculing the eastern states as “politically desolate,” and home to the “minions of a Crazy Monarch.” The East’s heroes were “the pride of other times,” indicating that the time when the seaboard represented the center and the interior represented the periphery was a thing of the past.¹⁴⁶ The stench of unpatriotic behavior lingered over the East in the aftermath of the war. One letter extracted in Philadelphia’s *Democratic Press* scolded New Englanders for falling far short in comparison with the hardy volunteers of Kentucky, Ohio, and the “Upper Territories.” While the letter praised westerners’ courage in coming to the aid of New Orleans, the passage is marked with an asterisk and note that chides, “[t]hink of this ye men of Massachusetts! - Ye men of Massachusetts, think of this!”¹⁴⁷ Presumably an addition of the paper’s editor, the remark chastises New Englanders and insists that they can learn a lesson from the people of the frontier. Looking back on the eve of the 1828

144. “Army of the North-West,” *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), February 16, 1813, AHN.

145. “Latest from New-Orleans. New-York. Feb. 7,” *Columbian Patriot* (Middlebury, VT), February 15, 1815, vol. 2, issue 25, AHN.

146. “Military Dinner,” *Northern Centinel* (Burlington, VT), February 24, 1815, vol. 5, issue 8, AHN.

147. “[Extract of a letter dated January 5-6, 1815],” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 6, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

election, Jackson supporter William Peter Van Ness railed against the East as a whole by associating that region with the Hartford Convention and corruption. Van Ness lampooned the other western candidate Henry Clay for being in cahoots with eastern interests, his “co-adjutors [*sic*] in corruption.” Having lacked the patriotism necessary to stand up to Great Britain in 1812, Van Ness now dared this eastern band to “boast of their victory over the subdued spirit of the WEST!” While that cowardly cabal would have gladly “sold or betrayed” the frontier to the enemy, westerners represented true dedication and national loyalty.¹⁴⁸ This completely inverted the 1790s dialogue that presented frontier dwellers as embarrassing ruffians in comparison with the steadfast residents of stable communities in eastern states.

Just as the war changed previous assumptions about the loyalty of frontier Americans, it also put an end to the region’s sense of detachment and isolation from the rest of the country. While a series of maritime insults might have done little to engage frontier residents, the land war fully captured their interest because it put regional concerns like Indian violence and territorial expansionism on the national agenda. In drawing westerners into a national cause, the War of 1812 served to create a more pan-American identity across east-west axes. One observer in Athens, Ohio wrote that the “spirit of patriotism...seems to invade the breasts of the people.” There was no doubt in his mind that efforts to raise a volunteer company in the wake of Hull’s surrender of Detroit would meet with great and immediate success.¹⁴⁹ This type of confident observation stands in sharp contrast with the evaluations of loyalties in these regions discussed in previous chapters; the war, a British invasion on their own soil in

148. Van Ness, *A Concise narrative of General Jackson’s First Invasion*, 9.

149. Silas Bingham, George Ackley, Edmund Dorr, Daniel D. Armstrong, and Artimas Sawyer to Governor Meigs, August 17, 1812, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 1, Frame 506, OHS.

conjunction with Indian allies, brought the peripheries into sync with the center and vice versa. In Rhea County, Tennessee, resident David Campbell wrote to an acquaintance in Natchez that war fever had risen in that country, and enlivened the locals' interest in foreign relations:

There is nothing in this country now but war talks. The spirit of the government is infused into every individual. The British have made themselves justly odious to every good citizen by pushing on the Indians to war against us. Governor Harrison's letter is a proof that this is the case. Felix Grundy, a Representative in Congress from the state of Tennessee, speaks my sentiments on the subject of our foreign relations.¹⁵⁰

The forces that drew the nation to war also bridged the divide between eastern and western interests; finally westerners could identify with a national cause. When the *habitants* of Frenchtown near the River Raisin found themselves being bullied by both British and Indian forces, they made a decisive declaration. Asked to take up arms alongside British troops and pledge allegiance to England, they “refused, instead sending to American General James Winchester. They referred to themselves as Americans.”¹⁵¹ The War of 1812 forced a turning point in the lives of these westerners. French by ancestry, they embodied the mixed nature of the midwestern middle ground in the decades following the Revolution, but with the war came the need to make choices and declare loyalties. Perhaps no incident pulled westerners into the conflict more than the massacre at the River Raisin. If there had been hesitation among potential recruits in Ohio, John Gano assured Governor Meigs that events at the River Raisin changed all that. Having received a request to organize a battalion to march out of Cincinnati, Gano wrote to Meigs in early February 1813 that, “[t]he late sad disaster at the River Raisin has had a

150. David Campbell in Rhea County, TN to Colonel John Steele in the city of Natchez, January 13, 1812, Arthur Lee Campbell Papers, Folder 30, FHS.

151. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 211.

great effect upon the feelings of all classes of citizens, and the publick [*sic*] mind is so agitated that the men will march with more alacrity, and I think there would be no difficulty in augmenting the force [as] necessary.”¹⁵² Events like the battle at River Raisin changed the feelings of isolation and marginalization that kept westerners out of national politics during the founding decades.

Westerners understood very well that their role in the War of 1812 did a great deal to enhance their status in the eyes of the seaboard states. They jumped at any opportunity to celebrate the extent of their service, and jealously defended their wartime record if it was maligned in any way. When Andrew Jackson questioned the conduct of Kentucky troops during the Battle of New Orleans after the war, General John Adair exchanged a series of letters with Old Hickory in which he zealously argued that the Kentuckians’ actions were above reproach.¹⁵³ That Adair took such pains to defend these troops shows how important it was for westerners to have their service recognized; they knew that a meritorious record in the late war was their ticket to crafting a better reputation within the Union. Some Kentuckians even felt that they were entitled to special compensation in return for such distinguished service. The state legislature petitioned on behalf of the Kentucky militia in 1813-1814, asking for a higher rate of compensation for lost horses, and although the Committee on Military Affairs did deny the request, such an inquiry indicates that Kentuckians at least believed the war had ended their tenure as second-class citizens.¹⁵⁴

152. John Gano to Governor Meigs, February 5, 1813, Return Jonathan Meigs, Jr. Papers, Roll 3, Frame 124, OHS.

153. John Adair, *Letters of Gen. Adair and Gen. Jackson relative to the charge of cowardice made by the latter against the Kentucky Troops at New Orleans* [Lexington, KY: 1816], FHS.

154. United States, House, Committee on Military Affairs, *Report of the Committee on Military Affairs on the Memorial of the Legislature of the State of Kentucky, Relative to the Compensation and Pay of the Militia of that State, in the Service of the United States, February 3, 1814* (Washington: A. & G. Way,

Not only did the War of 1812 remove the colonial stigma from frontier Americans, it was integral in creating the figure of the *western* hero. Cultural items celebrating the war explicitly named western troops as the heroes of the day. A song published in the New York *Shamrock* portrayed the “sons of the West, like a dark cloud of night.” They emerged:

from their deep forests throng;
Their death tubes of terror prepar'd for the fight,
Like their own Mississippi, impetuous and strong.¹⁵⁵

It became a point of pride that the “rude assaults” of backwoodsmen had felled the great Pakenham and his seasoned army at New Orleans. While British troops in one poem entered the scene with boasting and confidence, they soon yielded “to the men of the West.” The verse, about the Battle of New Orleans, continues:

Tennessee – Louisiana – Kentucky all hail,
Your glory is bright as the sun,
And whenever invaders our coasts shall assail,
May we serve them as you now have done.

The piece pits British troops against Americans explicitly identified as “woodsmen” whose primitive “mud walls” the enemy ultimately failed to scale.¹⁵⁶ By embracing that rustic figure as a main character and featuring a crude method of defense that actually succeeded, this poem co-opts imagery that might have been used to degrade Americans in the past. The war’s woodsman hero was a “hunter,” capable of felling the British beast.¹⁵⁷ Frontier dwellers’ distance from the center of government and their hardscrabble lives

Printers, 1814), 3, FHS.

155. “Song, For the Fourth of July. Composed by Mr. J. McCreery of Petersburg, Vir[ginia],” *The Shamrock* (New York, NY), August 3, 1816, vol. 1, issue 45, AHN.

156. “The New Orleans Victory, A Song,” *Kline’s Weekly Carlisle Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), March 3, 1815, vol. 30, issue 1571, AHN; *The Address of the Carriers of the Political and Commercial Register, to their Patrons, on the Commencement of the New Year* (Philadelphia: Printed by William Jackson, 1815 [-1816]), LCP also utilized the image of a “Woodsman warrior.”

157. This quote comes from Jonathan M. Scott, *Blue Lights, or, The Convention* (New York: Charles N. Baldwin, 1817), 83, LCP.

became a point of pride rather than a shortcoming. One letter published in the *Democratic Press* explained that this special breed of American defeated Britain's hardened veterans "at the remotest and weakest corner of the United States of America."¹⁵⁸ No figure excelled in this periphery more than Andrew Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, who was clearly and immediately identified as a western figure even though he was born in the Carolinas. One poem in a New York paper even presented the uncouth action of swearing as a point of pride when speaking about Jackson.¹⁵⁹ The war inspired writers to glorify the rusticity of Americans in general; qualities that embarrassed the young nation in the wake of colonialism became sources of cultural pride.

The pairing of martial prowess and western simplicity that the War of 1812 enabled had a long-term impact on American political culture, one that altered the post-colonialism of the founding generation. The political personas that both Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison cultivated attest to this. In 1824, 1828, and 1832 "Old Hickory" and his supporters celebrated the frontier persona Jackson displayed during the war, and his opponents also crafted imagery in which the candidate, his frontier background, and his military role were all inseparable.¹⁶⁰ Although Jackson's political opponents used his background and wartime behavior to cast him as a crude thug in an attempt to discredit the general in the eyes of voters, such tactics failed to keep the hero of New Orleans out of the White House. Like Jackson embraced the rusticity of his "Old

158. "Washington City, Feb. 5, 1815," *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 8, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

159. "The Retreat of the English [from the New Orleans Gazette]," *The Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 22, 1815, issue 3995, AHN.

160. Cartoons often portrayed Jackson in military uniform and featured frontier imagery. See for example, David Claypoole Johnston, "A Foot-race" [Boston, s.n., 1824], LCP; James Akin, "Caucus Curs in fur yell, or a war whoop, to saddle on the people, a pappose [*sic*] president" (1824), Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Prints and Photographs Online Catalogue.

Hickory” sobriquet, Harrison willingly presented himself as “old Tippecanoe,” a log cabin candidate and wartime hero. In 1840, Harrison’s bid for president received some musical support in the form of a patriotic tune called “The Log Cabin Quick Step.” The sheet music for another pro-Harrison song, “General Harrison’s Tippecanoe Grand March,” prominently featured the log cabin in its illustration. Harrison and his supporters cultivated the persona of the log cabin general for a reason. In the decades following the War of 1812, having a rustic simplicity was not as shameful as it had been in a post-colonial culture still attempting to replicate the refinements of Europe. By the mid-nineteenth century, Harrison could present himself as *both* an accomplished leader and a man of simple virtues and rugged independence. On the jacket of “The Log Cabin Quick Step,” we see the image of the plain frontier cabin coupled with symbols of military bearing: flags, drums, swords, bayonets, and cannon. Amid all these items, Harrison himself stands in a simple black suit. The “Tippecanoe Grand Slow March” showed Harrison in a military uniform, but he sat on his horse surrounded only by his log cabin and a simple, pastoral landscape (and other versions of the march showed only a tranquil log cabin in the woods).¹⁶¹ Both Harrison and Andrew Jackson accomplished what George Washington could not; they were martial leaders with civilian virtue, but they also presented as “men of the people” unencumbered by aristocratic airs that resurrected images of imperial Britain. In *Kabaosa; or, The Warriors of the West: A Tale of the Last War* (1842), the author asks, “Where is he, - the great, the good, the invincible – the Father of one portion of our country, as his brother-in-arms the immortal

161. “The Log Cabin Quick Step: dedicated to General Wm. H. Harrison” (Baltimore: G[eorge] Willig, Jr., c.1840), FHS; Henry Dielman, “General Harrison’s Tippecanoe Grand March” (Baltimore: Published by Geo[rge] Willig Jr., 1840), FHS.

WASHINGTON, was of the other?"¹⁶² Although the author does not explicitly name the military leader to which she is referring, she clearly understands that the late war was not won by just another Washington, but a Washington of the *West*, regionally identified and at least partly responsible for bringing that part of the country more fully into the Union.

...

William Hull's memoir of the campaign of the northwestern army under his command in 1812 described a force of undisciplined and destitute troops, dressed in rags and ill-equipped for the task before them.¹⁶³ Kentuckian Captain Thomas Joyes also recalled seeing ragged western troops threaten to disobey orders unless their demands for various items, including tents, kettles, and even cash money, were met.¹⁶⁴ Yet later images commemorating the war and the pivotal role of western forces carry no trace of this reality. Second- and third-generation Americans interpreted the War of 1812 as a major victory, a re-enactment of the Revolution that confirmed the independence and durability of the new United States. In this way, the war became an opportunity to cast off much of the weakness and insecurity that marked the founding generation. As Americans began anew after their "second revolution," they did so at a time when the West and western Americans were beginning to play a larger role in American political and cultural life. While the West's move from periphery to center began as a slow evolution, the War of 1812 was a watershed moment in that process. Frontier battles

162. Anna L. Snelling, *Kabaosa; or, The Warriors of the West: A Tale of the Last War* (New York: Printed for the Publisher by D. Adee, 1842), iii [dedication], *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Raynor Memorial Library. The dedication is dated 1841, and Snelling is very likely referring to William Henry Harrison, who died that year.

163. Hull, *Memoirs*, 34, FHS.

164. Joyes Diary and unsigned letter written in Louisville, October 1, 1817, Joyes Family Papers, 1780-1871, FHS. Despite these observations, Joyes vehemently defended the Kentucky troops, who he claimed took no part in such dishonorable conduct. In this Joyes reveals how important impressions of their heroism were to westerners after the war.

focused national attention on the interior, and the soldiers of the West became giants in the American mind. Benjamin Lossing's *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* (1868) serves as an excellent example of the connection between a nascent mythology of the American West and the war. He writes that the war actually began years before the federal government officially made a call to arms. "While statesmen and politicians were arranging the machinery of government," an effort he acknowledges was an unsuccessful struggle against continued subservience to Britain, ordinary citizens made the war a foregone conclusion by moving west:

...the people...had already begun to comprehend the hidden resources and immense value of the vast country within the treaty limits of the United States westward of the Allegheny Mountains. They had already obtained prophetic glimpses of a future civilization that should flourish in the fertile regions watered by the streams whose springs are in those lofty hills that stretch, parallel with the Atlantic, from the Lakes almost to the Gulf, across fourteen degrees of latitude. Pioneers had gone over the grand hills and sent up the smoke of their cabin fires from many a fertile valley irrigated by the tributaries of the Ohio and Mississippi.¹⁶⁵

Over time, the War of 1812 had become completely intertwined with westward movement, a driving force behind the unification of the frontier and American identity in national culture. The war in memory asserted the nation's true independence from its colonial past and triggered Americans' drive to craft a continental empire in the West. By the election of 1828, it was clear that the West moved aggressively forward while the East lumbered along; the first political cartoon lithographed in the United States immortalized this re-centering of American power. The "new map of the United States with the additional territories..." (1829) depicted Andrew Jackson and his constituents riding a voracious alligator triumphantly westward, while John Quincy Adams and his ilk remain aboard a sluggish tortoise, still looking toward the Atlantic. In the background, a

165. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 35.

group of Winnebago Indians caper innocently. Now the only colonials left, they wonder “Who is our father now?”¹⁶⁶ The United States soon answered that question in a way all its own.



Figure 1: A new map of the United States with the additional territories: on an improved plan, exhibiting a view of the Rocky Mountains surveyed by a company of Winebago [sic] Indians in 1828. New York: Lithography of Imbert, [1828?]. (Courtesy of Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, catalogue no. 2008622050)

166. Allen Nevins and Frank Weitenkampf, *A Century of Political Cartoons: Caricature in the United States from 1800-1900* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), 34-35, LCP.

Chapter Seven

“Congenial Blood”: Race and Imperialism in Post-Colonial America

During the nineteenth century, in an attempt to define themselves independent of old colonial identities without negating the racial value of a European heritage, Americans crafted a unique brand of race-based colonialism. Once the nation found a way to absorb rather than marginalize white westerners and their culture, Americans became fully committed to a new colonization process that differed sharply from old-world models. White settlers who would have become colonial subjects within Britain’s imperial framework instead carried the flag westward as fully integrated citizens of an expanding and mobile republic. Nineteenth-century American culture replaced “settler-subjects” with “pioneers” and “backwoodsmen.” These harbingers of civilization did not, however, set out into an empty continent. Unfortunately for Native Americans, redefining American identity independent of the colonial past meant moving away from more passive Indian policy based on British precedents, and casting Indians as an internal “Other” in order to seize native lands and continue to unite an increasingly diverse and scattered population. At the same time that Americans considered questions about the place of black slavery in their growing republic, racist assumptions about Indians’ inherent savagery that dated back to the seventeenth century re-emerged with new consequences. While discrimination based on skin color did not originate in the nineteenth century, full-scale expansion into Indian Country created additional opportunities to make race a factor in who could be considered “American.”

Whiteness became an “imported commodity” that self-conscious Americans used to signal civility and belonging to the Old World.¹ Race-based identity also helped create a cohesive identity across the east-west axis. The War of 1812 was a major turning point in this process. The war pulled frontier conflicts into mainstream national politics, and the status of natives in the borderlands commanded the attention of easterners who had scarcely considered the issue during the late eighteenth century. When various Indian groups allied themselves with Great Britain in the war, these natives seemed to confirm what westerners had been telling the rest of the nation all along: Indians could not be trusted. After the war, Americans in both the East and West tended to view British soldiers as uniformed combatants from a legitimate nation-state, but looked upon Indians as a fifth column – potential enemies lurking within the nation’s borders, identifiable by the color of their skin. Native Americans living on U.S. soil found themselves isolated, and tribes that attempted to negotiate with the United States after 1815 encountered unfamiliar policies and attitudes. In place of the founders’ imitative Indian policy, which treated tribes as sovereign polities and white settlers as intruders, new legislation prioritized expansion and denied native groups the diplomatic rights of independent nations. Lawmakers and their eastern constituents, not just frontier settlers, began considering the idea of removal. In the end, breaking the pattern of post-colonial imitation required the creation of a new brand of American imperialism that had no place for Indians as traditional colonial subjects. Removal, therefore, was a necessary precondition of a truly American nineteenth-century identity.

1. Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 239.

The relationship between race and national identity in post-colonial societies is a complex one, especially within former settler colonies, where subjects share ethnic ties with the parent state. Far from the cultured centers of the Old World, the civility of American settlers was in question from the earliest days of the colonial era. Beginning in the seventeenth century, European colonists in the New World felt the need to prove their “Englishness” by emphasizing the differences between their civilization and “Indian barbarism.”² Striving to show that they were not degenerating or falling into savagery, white Americans crafted the narrative of the Indian “Other,” a dark-skinned beast with whom they had nothing in common. White Americans’ position became even more ambiguous after independence: they remained “[p]rivileged by race,” yet “rendered uncertain by their geographic location.” Without membership in the British Empire ensuring them a place (albeit a secondary one) among civilized nations, citizens of the new United States had to work even harder to draw lines between themselves and “those other Americans.”³ Already laboring under a post-colonial inferiority complex, Americans found European observations that closely identified them with their Indian neighbors deeply disturbing. One way of dispelling any doubts about their civility was to emphasize race as a cornerstone of American identity. Americans used whiteness to signal membership in a community that they were desperate to join. The importance of whiteness increased as the West moved to the center of American politics and culture. Having accepted westerners as full members of the polity rather than colonial “white savages,” Americans had to redefine both savagery and subjecthood as purely racial in

2. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 21.

3. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 6. For a general description of “Othering” see Eve Kornfeld, “Encountering ‘the Other’: American Intellectuals and Indians in the 1790s,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 52, no. 2 (April 1995): 287-289.

nature. This necessitated a significant break with old-world imperialism in which both savagery and subjecthood were tied to culture, behavior, and geographic location, as well as race. Focusing American identity formation on the frontier, where European and indigenous cultures came together, required very clear lines of demarcation between white and red. Race, therefore, became a “foundational symbol of national belonging in postcolonial America.”⁴

Once eastern Americans embraced the West as the nexus of American identity, the nation was less conflicted about its historical ethnic connection to Great Britain. In many post-colonial societies, race is an easily visible marker that distinguishes decolonized peoples from their former parent state; Americans, however, could not use racial lines to divide themselves from people in Britain (nor did they wish to). Historian Kariann Yokota argues that Americans ultimately chose *not* to identify with their European heritage, instead focusing on “whiteness” to prove they belonged as equals among the civilized nations of the world.⁵ In fact, the nineteenth-century emphasis on whiteness worked in conjunction with Americans’ increasing comfort with their European heritage. After 1815, Americans found themselves *more* rather than less able to embrace their ties with the British soldiers they had only recently classified as enemies. Paradoxically, the experience of the War of 1812 left Americans with a sense of camaraderie with and an increased respect for their opponents.⁶ The founding generation

4. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 218, 239, 225.

5. *Ibid.*, 18. Edmund S. Morgan makes a similar argument in *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975). He concludes that the enslavement of a black labor force created cohesion among whites of various classes during the colonial era. Yokota’s use of race as a unifying factor is more expansive, and places it within the complicated context of post-colonialism and transnational culture. Her focus is on how Americans used race to influence *outsiders’* perceptions of their nation as well as their own, and to affirm their position in an *international* hierarchy of civility.

6. As Sam W. Haynes details, international tensions did continue between the two nations throughout much of the nineteenth century. Competition over territory and trade, and ideological disagreements over

had been uncertain about emphasizing a common heritage with the former mother country, and wondered if the new nation could form its own political and cultural institutions while still identifying ethnically with the British. Subsequent generations, however, had enough distance from the colonial era to feel comfortable sifting through various aspects of the country's relationship with the Old World and selecting only those elements that worked for the young nation. With westward expansion and frontier culture safeguarding Americans' sense of exceptionalism, they could accept racial ties with England as a factor that enhanced rather than convoluted national identity. As a mark of civility and a symbol of a common past, that shared racial identity applied to Americans across different regions, political persuasions, and socio-economic situations. Whiteness connected even the most provincial of frontier settlers with London's (or Philadelphia's or New York's, or Washington, D. C.'s) elite.⁷

Americans who came of age in an independent United States did not have the same ambivalence toward their English heritage as the founding generation. Second-generation men like John Randolph of Virginia (b. 1773) did not have mixed feelings about their historical ethnic ties with Great Britain. Randolph posed the following to his colleagues in the Twelfth Congress: "Suppose we had been colonies of any other European nation – compare our condition with that of the Spanish, Portuguese, or French settlements in America. To what was our superiority owing? To our Anglo Saxon race."⁸

As other new-world colonies acquired independence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, American observers gained a sense of appreciation for their

abolition and slavery all strained relations. *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

7. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 219.

8. "Legislative/Legal Proceedings," *National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), January 14, 1812, America's Historical Newspapers. (Hereafter cited as AHN).

background relative to other settler societies. Wartime culture and post-war memorials presented the conflict between the United States and England as necessary, but also an aberration. By nature, the two countries were destined to be family, and only circumstances caused a temporary rift; as one poem celebrating the naval battle between the *Constitution* and *Guerriere* in 1812 stated:

When Yankee meets the Briton,
Whose blood congenial flows,
By heaven created to be friends,
By British outrage foes[.]⁹

“Congenial blood” tied the warring nations together on a more basic level, one that combined shared ethnicity, common ancestry, and what nineteenth-century Americans understood as a natural connection intended by God. This poem exemplifies the acceptability of political, cultural, and philosophical differences, and shows that such distinctions could even be considered beneficial as the nation worked to define itself in the wake of colonialism. An editorial that appeared in New York’s *Northern Whig* told readers that, “the causes of war being done away,” the “propinquity of blood” between the two nations should “kindle sentiments of cordial esteem between them.”¹⁰ With America’s position more established after the second revolution, fighting or worrying over the implications of a blood tie between the two nations simply became unnecessary.

In the context of the War of 1812, the relationship between the United States and the former mother country evolved into one that was more fraternal than parental, allowing Americans to join the European family as equals rather than subordinates. One 1813 poem, “On the Memorable Victory,” lamented:

9. “The Constitution and Guerriere,” *The American Patriotic Song-book: A Collection of Political, Descriptive, and Humorous Songs, of National Character, and the Production of American Poets Only (Interspersed with a Number Set to Music)* (Philadelphia: W. M’Culloch, 1813), 9-10, LCP.

10. “[Bonaparte; French],” *Northern Whig* (Hudson, NY), November 7, 1815, vol. 7, issue 45, AHN.

Alas! That it e'er war decreed,
That brother should by brother bleed.¹¹

Even though Americans deplored the fact that England dispatched a “hostile band” against them, the true crime lay in the fact that she planned to attack “her brethren.”¹² The imagery of John Bull (representing England) and Brother Jonathan (representing the United States) featured prominently in War of 1812-era poetry and political cartoons, and signaled the more congenial, informal familial relationship developing between the two nations.¹³ The poem “Lilli Bull-ero” in *The American Patriotic Song-book* (1813) used casual language to describe “Johnny Bull” and his “Yankee relation.”¹⁴ The *Baltimore Patriot* published a poem in the form of a friendly epistle from Brother Jonathan to John Bull; Jonathan refers to his English relative as “my John Joe” and “Johnny Bull my Joe.” The poem is a good-natured recounting of American shows of strength in the late war.¹⁵ The easygoing, colloquial relationship implied by such terminology resembles one of siblings or at least familial equals, versus the formal and deferential one of a parent and child. Citizens and soldiers on both sides assimilated that relationship and acted on it. During the war, at Black Rock in Buffalo, NY, British and American buglers competed

11. “On the Memorable Victory,” *The American Patriotic Song-book*, 26, LCP.

12. “[Poetry for the Alexandria Herald],” *Alexandria Herald* (Alexandria, VA), October 24, 1817, vol. 7, issue 925, AHN.

13. For example, “John Bull and Brother Jonathan or, The Seven Naval Victories,” *National Songster; or, a Collection of the Most Admired Patriotic Songs, on the Brilliant Victories, achieved by the naval and military heroes of the United States of America, over equal and superior forces of the British* (Hagers-town, Maryland: Printed by John Gruber and Daniel May, 1814), LCP; James Kirke Paulding, *The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Published by Robert Desilver, 1827), Internet Archive. Traditionally, John Bull headed the family, in which Jonathan was a son; thus, these figures continue the parent-child allegory to some degree. However, Paulding’s tale portrays “squire Bull” as a cantankerous fellow with a myriad of shortcomings, and Jonathan quickly equals and then surpasses the father’s strength. In this imagery, Jonathan was not just a son to John Bull, but “his alter-ego” who had grown up. Jennifer Clark, “John Bull’s American Connection: The Allegorical Interpretation of England and the Anglo-American Relationship,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 31.

14. “Lilli Bull-ero,” *The American Patriotic Song-book*, 19.

15. “[Poetical Department, From the Baltimore Patriot, Brother John’s Epistle to John Bull],” *The True American* (Bedford, PA), June 22, 1815, vol. 2, issue 46, AHN.

with each other, each side trying to one-up the other's repertoire. While cannonading each other, both sides cheered direct hits while the affected camp shouted in return to indicate they were no worse for the wear. These interactions had a jovial, fraternal quality, and stand in diametric opposition to the role of Indian sights and sounds at the same conflict: British officers deployed the savage yell to strike fear into enemy troops, and any hint of an impending Indian attack was enough to scatter the American forces.¹⁶

Long after the War of 1812, Americans' ability to balance their English heritage with their uniqueness continued to strengthen national identity. American geographer William Woodbridge demonstrated this balance perfectly in his *Rudiments of Geography* (1821). Woodbridge drew very clear distinctions between the class systems of the Old World and U.S. society; the Constitution, he emphasized, made no distinctions of rank, nor did it allow religious discrimination. On the other hand, Woodbridge quickly pointed out, "[t]he inhabitants of the United States are Europeans, or their descendants."¹⁷ A Fourth of July address delivered in Danville, Kentucky in 1834 openly referred to England as "the natural land of our fathers."¹⁸ Whatever lingering connections Americans retained with the former mother country were organic ones, occurring naturally rather than as a result of any obsequiousness on the part of the United States. As Americans accepted that they could never create lines of racial or ethnic distinction between themselves and the English, they necessarily became intensely aware of the racial chasm

16. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 332-333. Taylor presents this competitive bugling as efforts to gain a "psychological edge." Although that may be, trying to outdo one's enemy through songs and cheers hardly indicates hate-filled warfare.

17. William Woodbridge, *Rudiments of Geography: with engravings of manners and curiosities and atlas* (Hartford, 1821), 190-191, HSP.

18. George Robertson, "Address on Behalf of the Deinologian Society of Centre College; Delivered at Danville, Kentucky, on the 4th of July, 1834. By Hon. George Robertson, Chief Justice of Kentucky," FHS Rare Pamphlets.

between themselves and Native Americans. Americans coupled the positive incorporation of their English heritage with negative self-definitions; national identity depended not just on what Americans *were*, but on what they *were not*.¹⁹ As Woodbridge's *Rudiments of Geography* pointed out more than once, Americans and Europeans belonged within the same race, while Indians, Africans, and Asians remained distinct. Intended for use in the classroom, *Rudiments of Geography* hammered the point home for young students: a question section at the end of the book's coverage of Americans' racial background asked pupils to repeatedly draw connections between "us" and "them." After asking readers to describe the characteristics of the European race and the "peculiarities" of the Indians, Woodbridge demands, "[t]o which race do we belong?"²⁰ Having both their ethnic ties with Great Britain *and* their ethnic distance from indigenous people was extremely important for post-colonial Americans.²¹ Philadelphia merchant Samuel Breck expressed outrage at a work by Irish author Thomas Moore that failed to acknowledge the racial distinctions between white Americans and their dark-skinned neighbors. In response to a passage in Moore's poetry that lumped American "Christians, Mohawks, democrats and all" in the same group, and referred to the capitol building as a "wig-wam," Breck labeled Moore an "ungrateful puppy" who "thus slanders the people of this fine country."²² And although reliance on British policy precedents prompted the founding government to treat Indians with some modicum of respect, subsequent generations actually found ways to

19. Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 22.

20. Woodbridge, *Rudiments of Geography*, 46. This emphasis on Americans' racial ties with western Europe in the early nineteenth century coincided with nascent theories of scientific racism. These theories also dovetailed nicely with arguments in favor of slavery during the antebellum era.

21. The desire to believe in white Europeans' innate superiority affected elites and average citizens alike. For poorer Americans, it removed them from the bottom of the social hierarchy by placing black people and Indians on the lowest rung, and for elites, it provided security that they were not any less civilized than their aristocratic peers in Europe.

22. [Diary entry not dated, c. 1815], Samuel Breck Papers, series 1, vol. 1, Diary 1800-1827, HSP.

use their English heritage to justify denying Native Americans' land rights.²³ John Quincy Adams, who fought racial discrimination against African-Americans, argued against a British proposition for a permanent Indian hunting range between the Ohio River and the Great Lakes, saying that it ““was a species of game law that a nation descended from Britons would never endure.””²⁴ Made even as the war raged on, this statement by a prominent diplomat and future president shows how Americans' evolving sense of their racial ties to the Old World helped explain and excuse a policy of removal: their heritage demanded pride and fostered a culture that prized territorial control.

While the War of 1812 helped Americans resolve post-colonial ambivalence about sharing an ethnic heritage with Great Britain, the conflict and resulting racial rapprochement marked an end to the era of more cautious and tolerant Indian policy based on British models. To unify white Americans in the wake of war, and to move farther away from British precedents, the Indian needed to be formally marginalized. Most Americans did not recognize that Indian resistance to the United States had a variety of causes that predated the war (the most important of which was native anger over white encroachments on tribal lands), nor did they acknowledge that native groups fought on both sides. When a limited number of Indian tribes took up arms against the United States during the war, they seemed to confirm what westerners had been telling the rest of the nation for decades: Indians (a monolithic group from the perspective of frontier residents) had hostile intentions towards whites and could never be trusted to live

23. When Thomas Jefferson defended the innate abilities of North American Indians in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), he did so from a position of post-colonial defensiveness; the purpose of the piece was to counter European naturalists who believed in the New World's inferiority. Jefferson's overall view of Indians made him a believer in the noble vanishing savage. He sentimentalized them as children of nature, but felt resigned that they, like all peoples in a state of nature, must change entirely or disappear. See Peter S. Onuf, ““We shall all be Americans’: Thomas Jefferson and the Indians,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 95, no. 2 (June 1999): 103-141.

24. Quoted in Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 414.

peacefully within or near the nation's boundaries. American settlers throughout the north and southwestern borderlands expended much effort during the founding decades to convince their eastern brethren of the duplicity of Indians as a race; they sent warnings about the natives' propensity for violence and made dire predictions about British-Indian collusion. However, at a time when few easterners had any familiarity with Indians, many national legislators argued against institutionalizing the racial animus emanating from the West. The War of 1812 closed this gap between eastern and western perspectives, and seemed to show the accuracy of westerners' predictions. Despite the fact that only a limited number of tribes held any official connection with the British armed forces, Americans saw only "Indians" – the war brought more people in the nation around to the western point of view.

The nation's wartime narrative was a schizophrenic one in which Britain pulled the strings while Indians bore the blame for all of the resulting bloodshed. Reviving this theme of the Revolution reminded second- and third-generation Americans that the dangers of British-Indian alliances affected all of them. Although Britain's native allies joined the conflict on their own terms and for their own agenda, wartime narratives left little place for Indian agency and instead popularized the western mantra of the British puppeteer. Westerners dictated the terms of this conversation as they had before the war. Kentuckians believed that the British government initiated hostilities at Tippecanoe in 1811. In a December 1811 debate on foreign relations, Kentucky's Richard M. Johnson pointed to British influence as the cause of war along the Wabash in defiance of Virginian John Randolph's opposition to proposed troop movements before the Committee on Foreign Relations. Easterners came to agree. Robert Wright of Maryland

concurred with Johnson, saying, “we shall feel little hesitation in believing there was a British agency in the case of the massacre by the Prophet’s troops on Governor Harrison’s detachment.”²⁵ Looking back on the battle in 1814, one contributor to Maine’s *Eastern Argus* agreed that British influence was the “spirit that presided in the dark at Tippecanoe.”²⁶ Another article in New York’s *The War* reminded readers that, “while the British minister was professing peace at Washington, the savages were armed and incited to hostilities on the Wabash.” The Battle of Tippecanoe, the author declared was “fought under British auspices.”²⁷ Indeed overall the war convinced Americans living far away from the daily trials of frontier life that Native Americans were British possessions. Baltimore’s *Niles Weekly Register* acknowledged in 1812 that “[i]t is notorious that ever since the peace of 1783, the British agents in Canada have cherished and supported a hostile disposition in the Indians towards us.”²⁸ Journalists “recycled” stories of British agents giving bounties for scalps taken from American soldiers.²⁹ One republican club based out of Fredericksburgh, New York explained the situation to attendees at its January 1, 1812 meeting: “We see the infernal engines set in motion by the agents of Great Britain and the bloody tomahawk & Scalping knife suspended over our heads reeking with the blood of our Citizens.”³⁰ A patriotic meeting in Charleston, South Carolina also unanimously acknowledged that the British government had “[put] the

25. James W. Hammack, Jr., *Kentucky and the Second American Revolution: The War of 1812* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 11; *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 456, 470.

26. “The Indians,” *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), March 31, 1814, vol. 11, issue 550, AHN.

27. “For the War; to the Citizens of the United States,” *The War* (New York, NY), August 15, 1812, vol. 1, issue 8, AHN.

28. “Political News from the Niles Weekly Register,” *New Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), January 7, 1812, vol. 3, issue 39, AHN.

29. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 126.

30. An account of the speech at this meeting was forwarded to the president in a letter from New York congressman Ebenezer Sage. Ebenezer Sage to James Madison, February 8, 1812, Founders Online National Archive. This speech is also cited in Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 136, n. 38.

tomahawk into the hands of the savages, to murder indiscriminately” as part of their resolution in support of the declaration of war.³¹

In addition to journalists, officials of the federal government also promoted these ideas, adding increased legitimacy to western narratives. Americans read General Hull’s proclamation to the inhabitants of Canada published in their newspapers, including his accusation that British policy “let loose” the savages “to murder our citizens and butcher our women and children.”³² If eastern readers still doubted the veracity of westerners’ long-standing accusations on the subject, Richmond’s *Enquirer* assured them that it was “a fact...confirmed by the testimony of Governor Harrison, and which no one can doubt who knows the influence of the British over the Indian tribes.”³³ Treasury Secretary Alexander James Dallas expounded at length on British agency in his 1815 piece explaining the causes of the war. When the U.S. government published Dallas’s “An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War,” readers throughout the nation saw the official accusation that “British agency, in exciting the Indians, at all times, to commit hostilities upon the frontier of the United States is too notorious to admit of a direct and general denial.”³⁴ With such prominent authority figures behind it, what used to be a western obsession became a national belief that further stigmatized Indians and justified expansion onto native lands after the war.

31. “Patriotic Meeting,” *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), July 30, 1812, vol. 31, issue 10439, AHN.

32. Published, for example, in *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), August 1, 1812, vol. 41, issue 11135, AHN; the proclamation was republished in papers along the seaboard, in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Virginia, Rhode Island, Maine, and Connecticut.

33. “Spirit of the People,” *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), August 4, 1812, AHN. This article was also republished in other eastern papers.

34. “An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War with G. Britain,” *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), April 5, 1815, AHN.

Paradoxically, while the American narrative denied Indian agency throughout the conflict, it assigned almost all of the blame for wartime violence on natives supposedly controlled by British manipulation. This re-affirmed beliefs in Indians' innate bloodthirstiness and set the stage for a peace between the two white nations that never fully included native combatants. In accounts of wartime engagements, English and American troops retained a sense of familial affection and grudging respect, while Indians stood out. Kentuckian William Kennedy Beall, a quartermaster captured by the British at the beginning of the war, described the behavior of his white and Indian captors very differently. Imprisoned aboard a ship near Fort Amherstberg (also known as Fort Malden) in British-Canada, Beall recounted how British commander Thomas St. George warned his American captives about Indian hostility. Beall perceived St. George as civil and humane because the commander took measures to protect the Americans; in Beall's opinion, English troops treated the prisoners cordially. Describing a walk through the streets of the fort, Beal noted that "every white man bowed to us politely." "Crowds of frowning Indians," on the other hand, gathered ominously, and looked on the Americans "with the most savage ferocity."³⁵ At the Battle of Chippewa (1813), U.S. and British troops displayed a "generous intimacy" with each other, which Native Americans did not share. One lieutenant who recounted the post-battle parleys between the combatants observed that while "British officers treated their American counterparts with a new respect that intoxicated them...the good feelings did not include the irregulars on both sides, who continued to wage a brutal civil war."³⁶ These "irregulars" inspired fear in Americans that white men in red coats never could. In May 1813, two boatloads of

35. William Kennedy Beall, *Journal of William Kennedy Beall*, [11], FHS.

36. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 389-390.

American soldiers voluntarily surrendered to British naval officer John Richardson; they admitted to fearing the Indians waiting on the shores of Lake Ontario more than being prisoners of war.³⁷ Richardson's story illustrates that Americans may have resented British alliances with natives, but they recognized a distinction between their white and red adversaries. Literature in the War of 1812 era consistently referred to the English in positive terms, whereas Indian actors received negative descriptors (or none at all). American losses against British forces appear as unfortunate incidents against a respectable foe. "[B]old Britons with valour [*sic*] most true" fell against U.S. troops at New Orleans. Poems also described British troops as "proud."³⁸ One post-war poem depicted English troops as bold and brave in battle, yet treated Indians quite differently:

...our savage foes were beaten,
 Their naked bones were left to bleach,
 When wolves their flesh had taken.³⁹

Whereas white combatants retained honor and bravery in the face of victory or defeat, dark-skinned participants in the same conflicts lacked dignity even in death.

Even accounts of wartime events that treated *both* Englishmen and native warriors as savages subtly gave more credit to white combatants and implied that Indians were the real enemy, revealing how the war intensified anti-Indian feeling across the nation. When General William Hull landed near present-day Windsor, Canada in 1812, he issued a proclamation that referenced British policy, but attributed action to the Indians:

If the barbarous and savage policy of Great Britain be pursued, and the savages are let loose to murder our Citizens and butcher our women and

37. *Ibid.*, 203-204.

38. "The New Orleans Victory, A Song," *Kline's Weekly Carlisle Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), March 3, 1815, vol. 30, issue 1571, AHN.

39. John Gregg, "History of the American War: A New Song on the Late War with G[reat] B[ritain], composed by [S.] Ballou, October 23, 1825 [dated in his hand at end of poem]," Gregg Family Papers, Folder 10, poetry book, FHS. The poem refers to Great Britain as "barb'rous" [*sic*] only when its troops burned Washington, D.C.

children, this war will be a war of extermination. The first stroke with the Tomahawk, the first attempt with the scalping knife, will be the Signal for one indiscriminate scene of desolation.⁴⁰

From Hull's perspective, British policy consisted of little more than releasing the Indians like a pack of dogs, and the brutality of the war resulted from the tomahawk, not British guns. His promise to exterminate any Canadian found fighting alongside the Indians foreshadowed the zero-tolerance policy toward Indians that intensified after the war. Many Americans shared Hull's opinion, and most critiques of British conduct during the war really came back to the behavior of Native Americans. While Great Britain "employed" the savages, according to one article in Portland, Maine's *Eastern Argus*, the Indians "whose known rule of warfare is barbarous beyond description," were to blame for butchering "our defenceless [*sic*] citizens on our frontier settlements, and who actually did commence war and murder whole families." The wording implies that Britain may not have even expected their native "mercenaries" to "actually" butcher Americans.⁴¹ While Great Britain "called to its aid the savages of the forest," one paper claimed it was the Indians "whose delight is torture and whose pleasure is to deal in death."⁴² Philadelphia's *Democratic Press* insisted that "Britain indeed behaved infamously," yet the rationale for that declaration rested solely on their alliance with savages and the brutality of native warriors. Britain's true fault lay in the fact that it "create[d] an Indian war."⁴³ Two engravings depicting the Battle of Frenchtown in 1813 clearly illustrate this logic; the first (produced in London) showed Indians abusing American prisoners while British officers looked on with passive amusement, and the

40. "A Proclamation," *Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812*, ed. with an introduction by William Wood (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1920), 27, Internet Archive.

41. "Communications," *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), August 13, 1812, vol. 9, issue 465, AHN.

42. "[Great Britain; United States]," *New-Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), August 25, 1812, vol. 4, issue 20, AHN.

43. "His Majesty's Printers," *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), June 10, 1813, LCP Periodicals.

second (an American production) referred to the battle as a massacre and showed only a group of Indians killing and scalping prisoners. The American engraving contained no Red Coats at all, as if British complicity in the event simply did not exist.⁴⁴ Both productions made Native Americans the perpetrators of violence and limited England's accountability despite the existence of a British-Indian alliance. Another 1813 cartoon entitled "A Scene on the Frontiers as Practiced by the Humane British and their Worthy Allies!" mocked the British by sarcastically referring to them as "humane," but gave more censure to Indians. Although a uniformed officer is guilty of paying for scalps, which he accepts with a smile, only Indians perpetrate the actual violence; the image shows one warrior slicing a bloody scalp off of a fallen American soldier.⁴⁵ Indictments of "British Barbarities" hinged on the active behavior of Indians and the passive neglect of English commanders. North Carolina Representative Nathaniel Macon's strong condemnation of the events at the River Raisin in the House of Representatives in July 1813 called British troops to task for being "criminally indifferent" to the fate of American wounded and prisoners. Yet, while Macon castigated the English for sins of omission, his criticisms rested on a basic acknowledgment that England was a "civilized nation" that claimed a "sacred regard to the dictates of honor and religion." The crime itself was an Indian one – one that caused the "degradation of the character of the British soldiers."⁴⁶ American observers tried to vilify British troops as vigorously as they did Indians, but almost always focused more enmity on their dark-skinned enemies. Vilifying

44. The two images appear together in Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 209. Although the American engraving includes the fact that the "savages" were "under the command of the British Gen[eral] Proctor," the only hint of a British presence is an encampment and what looks like a British flag in the distant background.

45. [William Charles], "A Scene on the Frontiers as Practiced by the Humane British and their Worthy Allies!" ([United States: s.n., 1812]), Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Online Catalogue.

46. *Annals of Congress*, 13th Cong., 1st Sess., 490-492.

Indian warriors while absolving white ones kept Americans' beliefs in the innate superiority of their race intact.

British leaders encouraged Americans' illogical assumption that native rather than white duplicity lay behind the more brutal aspects of the war, reinforcing impressions that left Indians ostracized long after England and America reached peace terms. During the siege of Detroit in 1812, for example, General Isaac Hull intentionally played up the hostility of Indians under his command, warning the American commander that he simply did not know what the Indians might do once an all-out attack began. Another

English commander defending Fort Michilimackinac that same year deployed a similar tactic, telling American Porter Hanks that controlling the Indians would become impossible if they witnessed any violence against one of their own during the assault.⁴⁷ British officials stated openly that they discouraged massacre and scalping by offering rewards for live captives, and although many Americans doubted the veracity of that claim during the war, it did fuel speculation that Indian violence stemmed from an innate native barbarity absent among British regulars.⁴⁸ In a description of the British-Indian alliance, Portland, Maine's *Eastern Argus* referred to British and Indians fighting side by side, yet went on to explain that the "most efficient force of the enemy was his savage ally," the "wolf let loose upon the frontier [who] lapped up the blood of the women [and] children" and who tomahawked and scalped prisoners of war.⁴⁹ After the British capture

47. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 164, 153.

48. *Ibid.*, 241.

49. "The Indians," *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), March 31, 1814, vol. 11, issue 550, AHN. The author uses these facts as justification for America's use of Indian alliances by the end of the war.



Fig. 2. “A Scene on the Frontiers as Practiced by the Humane British and their Worthy Allies!” by William Charles, artist. [United States: s.n. 1812]. (Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Online Catalogue)

of Fort Niagara in December 1813, and a subsequent attack on the nearby village of Lewiston in which Indians mutilated dead bodies, America’s republican press “played up the atrocity” while British officials “insisted that they had done everything possible to restrain warriors who could not be restrained.” In truth, British commanders did frequently lose control over their native allies. After the battle of Detroit, for example, outnumbered English soldiers watched with shock and disapproval while Indians killed one American prisoner, yet did little to stop such violence. One officer described himself

and his troops as being entirely in the power of the Indians, and explained that he and his colleagues feared that “the war whoop may sound in our ears, if we act contrary to their ideas, which are as wild as themselves.”⁵⁰ James Simrall, an officer in a Kentucky regiment during the war, confided to his wife that British Commodore Robert Heriot Barclay (in command at the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813) had openly admitted that his native allies drove him to engage the American fleet by “threaten[ing] to massacre the whole of them.”⁵¹ Both armies supposedly dreaded “provoking the Indians,” and that shared sentiment created a sense of common cause among white troops from both nations despite the technical alliances in place.⁵²

Nineteenth-century Americans perceived British forces as sanctioned, uniformed combatants, whereas they looked upon Native Americans as illegitimate home-grown insurgents – a fifth column identifiable by their race. From the very beginning of the war, Americans had viewed Indians as interlopers operating outside the bounds of civilized warfare; in one 1812 broadside, Kentucky Congressman Henry Crist labeled Indian involvement “a most active *interference* in the existing war between the United States and Great Britain.”⁵³ In his address to the Shawnee people at the end of the War of 1812, William Henry Harrison referred to hostilities between that tribe and the United States as a “madness” caused by “some young men” who dug up a buried hatchet while dancing around a tree. This imagery hardly treats the Shawnee as combatants in a formal war.⁵⁴

Because this belief in native illegitimacy supported discriminatory policy and removal, it

50. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 255, 241.

51. James Simrall to Mrs. Rebecca Simrall of Shelbyville, September 26, 1813, Simrall Family Papers, 1812-1917, FHS.

52. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 167-168, 241.

53. Henry Crist, broadside letter to “Fellow Citizens,” September 5, 1812, Henry Crist Miscellaneous Papers, FHS. Emphasis mine.

54. United States, Congress, *American State Papers*, vol. 2, *Indian Affairs* (Buffalo, NY: W. S. Hein, 1998; Washington, D. C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832-1861), 20.

gained traction after 1815. Consider former Secretary of War John Armstrong's 1836 recollection of the joint British-Indian attack on U.S. forces at Frenchtown (Michigan) in 1813. Armstrong recounted how England's Colonel Henry Proctor addressed captured American commander General James Winchester. Proctor reasoned with Winchester about surrender and warned him that British forces had the power to destroy the town. "[W]hat will be the fate of the inhabitants, men, women and children, and of the American militia associated with them," he asked. "Such as may escape the fire of our musketry and cannon, will, unavoidably, fall under the tomahawks of our allies, whom it will be impossible to restrain in the heat of action." Proctor concluded by apologizing for the potential Indian violence. As a man, he said, such conduct horrified him, but as an officer, duty bound him to use the resources at his disposal.⁵⁵ In the end, Proctor could not control the Indians who slaughtered American wounded on the field. Armstrong's account presented Winchester's threat to destroy Frenchtown with musketry and cannon fire as a reasonable use of power, while casting the tomahawk as a weapon apart. Similarly, a poem about the Battle of New Orleans, published in Alexandria, Virginia's *Herald* depicted the uniformed troops of Great Britain as an organized and impressive force:

They form the line, in dreadful pomp display
 Their sun bright bayonets to the rising day;
 Their polish'd swords their leaders raise on high -
 Saying 'here we fight – here conquer – or here die!
 Shall Laurels won from Europe's vet'ran host,
 to raw recruits, in this new world be lost?'

This celebratory elegy then slips seamlessly into a description of the Indian forces in which British gallantry and polish have no place:

⁵⁵. John Armstrong, *Notices of the War of 1812* (New York: George Dearborn, Publisher, 1836), 1:74-75, Internet Archive.

‘Destruction marks their course through all the land,
And frightened females fly before their van;
The babe whilst sleeping on its mother’s breast,
By savage hands torn from its peaceful rest
Is basely murder’d by their red allies,
Whilst death sits swimming on the mother’s eyes.’⁵⁶

In these poems and in Armstrong’s account of the exchange between Proctor and Winchester, Indian warfare was depicted as devoid of honor, and the warriors themselves as completely lacking the accouterments of acknowledged warfare – battle lines, bayonets, swords, and laurels won. Instead, they appeared as murderers, guilty of infanticide.

This distinction between white and Indian warfare had roots in seventeenth-century Puritan captivity narratives. Perched precariously on the edge of a wild continent, white settlers throughout the colonial era emphasized the differences between their wartime conduct and that of Indians. They set up white morality in direct opposition to that of Native Americans. Indians’ alleged animal-like behavior during battle verified that they were degenerate, and it became important for the Puritans and their descendants to stridently condemn native combat practices in order to prove that whites in the wilderness had not devolved in the same way.⁵⁷ Anxiety over the possibility of degeneration on the frontier continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Post-colonial Americans, like their Puritan forebears, still felt the need to cast native warfare as outside the bounds of civility, and to emphasize that white Americans (even those on the frontiers) understood the customs of civilized war. Tales of Indian bloodlust during the War of

56. “[Miscellany: Battle of New Orleans],” *The Alexandria Herald* (Alexandria, VA), December 7, 1818, vol. 8, issue 1098, AHN.

57. Richard Slotkin, “A Home in the Heart of Darkness: The Origin of the Indian War Narratives, 1625-1682,” in *Regeneration Through Violence*, 57-93. Puritan interpretations of Indian wars were intertwined with their belief in the “City on a Hill” and an ongoing battle between good and evil. Thus their narratives tended to emphasize the danger of sliding into “Indian-like” behavior, and the role of God and government in pulling Puritans back from depravity. *Ibid.*, 92.

1812 originated from the western soldiery, in whose interest it was to revive fears of savage violence. Spreading these accounts reminded the rest of the nation that Indians operated independent of the recognized rules of war and peace.⁵⁸

Thus excluded from the formal aspects of the conflict, Indians became an elusive and monolithic threat to the Union, and that perception justified indiscriminate prejudices against the entire race. One anti-war “Wonderful Wiseacre,” whose satirical description of the pro-war mindset appeared in Boston’s *Weekly Messenger*, shed light on the broad conclusions Americans drew about Indians as a result of the conflict; his “Democrat” said, “I believe it is perfectly right...to hang every Indian found fighting with an Englishman, and every Englishman found fighting with an Indian.”⁵⁹ In western settlements, the war intensified residents’ fears of Indians, and eviscerated any middle ground in which peaceable local natives might be distinguished from hostile alien ones. As one correspondent wrote to Ohio Governor Return Jonathan Meigs, Jr. in 1812, the war made Indians “more treacherous to the U[nited] States,” and thus “the whole of the [I]ndians may with propriety be considered as enemies to us and that every [I]ndian should be a suitable mark for every American to shoot at.”⁶⁰ Reports from Benjamin Mortimer, a missionary to the Delaware Indians, in August 1812 confirm the pervasiveness of that type of belief. He explained that men called into militia service around Gnadenhutten in east-central Ohio believed that local natives became “more dangerous in time of war,” and “apprehended [that] hostile Indians might easily secret

58. Despite loud assertions to the contrary, whites often acted with savagery that equaled or surpassed that of natives both before and during the War of 1812. Settlers burned Indians alive at Fort Mystic during the Pequot War (1637), for example. During the War of 1812, white troops did take scalps and other trophies from Indian victims.

59. “Political Miscellany,” *Weekly Messenger* (Boston, MA), vol. 2, issue 2, AHN.

60. Moses [Ryshe?] to Governor Meigs, August 11, 1812, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 1, Frames 473-474, OHS.

themselves, and devise plans of mischief against the surrounding settlements.” Reports circulated that local Indians held covert nighttime assemblies, and whites declared that “if they see any strange Indian they will shoot him, and that they will also shoot any Indian who will take the part of such a one.” Some residents swore they planned to kill every single Indian in the area before they marched off to war. Mortimer assured his white neighbors that no hostile Indians existed among the peaceful Delaware population, yet the violent threat to kill with impunity made up “the prevailing sentiment in the county.”⁶¹ Once such sentiments gained momentum, it was only a matter of time before policy began to reflect the belief that whites and Indians could not coexist.

That idea did inform federal Indian policy after the War of 1812. Changes in Indian policy, which culminated in removal by the 1830s, were incredibly important to Americans’ process of post-colonial identity formation. First, legislation codified cultural beliefs about the inherent inferiority of natives, and a racialized definition of what it meant to be “American.” If, as Kariann Yokota writes, white citizens required Indians and blacks to become “structurally obligatory outsiders,” they needed formal structures to make that cultural campaign a political reality. In addition to functioning symbiotically with the cultural push to marginalize natives, evolving Indian policy signaled a dramatic change in the post-colonialism of American politics. While the founding generation had replicated British methods for gaining consolidation and peace, wartime experience inspired subsequent generations to depart from English precedents. Wartime alliances between Great Britain and some native tribes forged a permanent connection between a British enemy and native peoples in the American mind. However, while the United

61. Benjamin Mortimer to Governor Meigs, August 21, 1812, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 1, Frames 436-440, OHS.

States settled into a less contentious diplomatic relationship with Great Britain after 1815, Indian tribes lost credibility as sovereign nations. Competition among various European empires throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had created the middle ground in which Native American tribes could demand the respect due to foreign nations. After the war, however, the British Father abandoned his native allies, and without the ability to ally with other powers, tribes along the north and southwestern frontier lost the leverage they had prior to 1812. Convinced that Indians could not behave like legitimate combatants, and wishing to distance themselves from dark-skinned savages, Americans had little interest in Indian alliances. With the way cleared for continental expansion, eastern Americans became more interested in westward movement and less sympathetic towards Indian rights. The “Indian problem” became a national rather than a regional one, and American identity became tied up with taming not only the western landscape, but its troublesome native inhabitants as well. Consequently, post-1815 Indian policy ceased to prioritize native claims over those of white settlers, federal authorities moved away from legislation that treated tribes as sovereign polities, and the concept of removal (long favored by white westerners) gained traction in the capital. Removal accomplished three of Americans’ ultimate goals: the complete racialization of national identity, a definitive break with the founding generation’s imitative imperialism, and the opportunity to seize coveted Indian lands.

When the War of 1812 ended, the system in which Indians held bargaining chips in regions where Americans and European powers vied for dominance collapsed. In 1815, the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks occupied territory along America’s southwestern borders, while the Seminoles remained in proximity to

southeastern boundary lines. In the North, the remnants of Tecumseh's Confederacy remained, including the Shawnee, Wea, Kickapoo, Miami, Potawatomi, Delaware, Chippewa, Sauk, and Fox peoples. But, the "imperial contest over the *pays d'en haut* ended with the War of 1812," and the Treaty of Ghent "sounded the death knell of the British-Indian alliance." British agents and officers who remained along America's borders could not ply the Indians with gifts or retain trading relationships as they had before the war. The surrender of strategic trade routes in the war, coupled with logistical difficulties like the loss of supply ships on Lake Erie in 1816 and 1817 meant that the Indians could not rely on economic support from Great Britain any longer.⁶² Native Americans living on or near U.S. territory found themselves politically and economically isolated within a nation that viewed them possessively as, in the words of one Maine resident, "our Indians."⁶³ Americans knew that the war could place them in an unprecedented position of power along the frontier. At the outset of the war, Hartford, Connecticut's *American Mercury* informed readers that success would mean that Britain "will no longer have an opportunity of intriguing with our [I]ndian neighbors."⁶⁴ Ohio's *Chillicothe Fredonian* emphasized that the American peace commissioners at Ghent "[had] no authority to cede any part of the United States" for an Indian buffer zone, and "to no stipulation to that effect will they subscribe." Once the United States gained clear control over its western borderlands, the government no longer had any reason to negotiate and placate. Why, asked the *Fredonian*, would Americans relinquish a large

62. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2011), 517; Colin G. Calloway, "The End of an Era: British-Indian Relations in the Great Lakes Region after the War of 1812," *Michigan Historical Review* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 1, 10.

63. "The Indians," *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), March 31, 1814, vol. 11, issue 550, AHN.

64. "[Mr. Grundy's Speech, In Reply to Randolph]," *The American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), January 1, 1812, vol. 28, issue 1435, AHN.

swath of territory for Indians not exceeding twenty thousand in number?⁶⁵ In an indignant introduction for an 1815 pamphlet on the causes of the war, the editor of Philadelphia's *Aurora* ridiculed, "the extravagant pretensions of the British commissioners at Ghent, their assertion of a right to interfere with the territorial dominion established at the peace of 1783 – their attempt to assert that the Indians residing on our soil were entitled to form alliances, and be treated as a civilized people, under the laws of civil society to which the Indian tribes are strangers."⁶⁶ By demanding rights for their "allies" during treaty negotiations, the British commissioners confirmed American impressions that *all* natives should be classified as enemies, and hardened Americans' resolve not to treat the Indians as diplomatic equals.

In place of Indian policy that treated tribes as sovereign polities and white settlers as intruders, new legislation prioritized expansion and retreated from British-inspired policies that accorded native groups many of the diplomatic rights of independent nations. As Chapter Four suggested, between 1787 and 1812, federal leaders not only held the same priorities as British authorities, they also reproduced British policies to achieve peace at the expense of white colonials. American authorities did not succeed in getting tribes in the Northwest Territory to cede most of the Ohio country until the Treaty of Greenville (1795), and even then most Indian groups on the western frontiers still remained "independent political agents" through the War of 1812.⁶⁷ During the War of

65. *Chillicothe Fredonian* (Chillicothe, OH), December 20, 1814, vol. 6, no. 7, Microfilm 17204, OHS.

66. Introduction to Alexander James Dallas, *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War with Great Britain* (Philadelphia: Printed and Published by Thomas J. Manning, 1815), FHS.

67. This quote comes from White, *The Middle Ground*, 483-484. The extent of Indian independence is debatable. White explains that scholars like Eric Wolf have argued that Indians were independent agents into the nineteenth century. Other scholars like Francis Jennings, however, would contest that statement, arguing instead that dependency for Indians was a reality as early as the mid-eighteenth century. See *Ibid.*, n. 22. For White, a certain amount of political, social, and economic independence was retained, however precarious the hold, into the nineteenth century; however, Indians' environment changed, which made them

1812, the United States even employed Indian allies much like its former mother country.⁶⁸ Yet, as previous chapters have shown, the war marked a break with the founding generation's post-colonial reliance on English examples in a variety of areas, American Indian policy included. Had federal leaders remained beholden to British precedents after the war, they might have displayed a sense of duty to Native Americans as Great Britain had after the Revolution and during treaty negotiations at Ghent. Post-war Americans, however, had a new sense of independence and were therefore determined to create their own unique Indian policy.

American Indian policy took initial steps away from British models beginning in the first decade of the nineteenth century, before the war triggered a more emphatic shift. For example, U.S. treaties with native groups diverted away from traditional European treaties that looked upon land cessions as a "symbolic transfer of ownership." Treaties like that which William Henry Harrison concluded with the Sauk and Fox tribes in 1804 considered land cessions to be very real and permanent transfers of ownership; unlike European empires during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nineteenth-century Americans intended to occupy, not oversee, acquired territory.⁶⁹ By 1810, many Americans envisioned a sort of voluntary removal policy. Agreeable tribes would give up

more dependent with time. Game decreased, for example. *Ibid.*, 486-493. Francis Paul Prucha also points to the continuity of sovereignty in the punishment of crimes committed by Indians against other Indians – this was upheld until the mid-nineteenth century. Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, vols. 1 & 2 Unabridged (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 108.

68. By mid-1813, American military leaders realized that the public relations advantages they gained by shunning Indian alliances paled in comparison with the losses suffered for lack of warriors in battle. In western and central New York, U.S. forces allied with Seneca Indians. William Henry Harrison also had some Ohio Shawnee in his contingent when he marched north up the Thames River in Fall 1813. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 228-230, 244. Americans, however, took care to point out that they were "compelled" to accept Indian aid, and did not do so by choice as Great Britain had. See "The Indians," *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), March 31, 1814, vol. 11, issue 550, AHN.

69. Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 89.

lands in proximity to white settlements and relocate to regions acquired in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.⁷⁰ Extending American legislation over Indian Country also negated the founding generation's policy of treating that territory as the land of sovereign foreign entities. As early as November 1811, the House of Representatives considered applying U.S. laws in part of the nation where Indian titles still existed, in part because congressmen like Thomas Rhea of Tennessee objected to the Indian Country having become "an asylum" for criminals hoping to escape prosecution.⁷¹ Broadening the power of the federal government to include whites living in Indian Country constituted the first step onto a slippery slope. Despite this, the Knoxian agenda of consolidation and peace at all costs can still be seen in pre-war Indian policy. Knox himself had initiated the "civilization" project that Jefferson accelerated during his tenure in the White House. Even borderlands states like Tennessee followed the federal agenda of treating with Indians as sovereign entities and acquiring land only through legitimate purchase using federal intermediaries until the war disrupted established policy traditions.⁷²

As the War of 1812 pulled frontier conflicts into mainstream national politics, the official status of natives in the borderlands demanded the attention of easterners who had scarcely considered the issue during the eighteenth century. At the conclusion of the war, Philadelphia's *Democratic Press* introduced its eastern readers to just a few of the questions raised by the Treaty of Ghent's clause requiring the United States to restore natives' pre-war possessions, rights, and privileges: "[a]re those Indians, as to the United States, Aliens? Should any of the proprietors emigrate and die intestate would their

70. Leonard J. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 192.

71. *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess., 349-350.

72. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 182.

estates pass by descent? Or would such estates be escheatable [*sic*]?”⁷³ When eastern papers published information about British proposals at Ghent, the request for an Indian buffer zone called attention to the delicate and unresolved issue of Indian status relative to the United States now that the war had ended. The *Boston Gazette* explained to its readers that the British proposition about the savages was “the only question...which it is necessary for the American people to consider,” and rated all other issues “comparatively of secondary importance.”⁷⁴ Readers who might not have considered the issue important before then understood that it played a major role in war and peace. That did not mean they all automatically sympathized with westerners’ desire to retain the right to acquire Indian lands, and in fact some easterners preferred to have the Treaty of Ghent resolve what they knew would become a problematic issue. The *Boston Spectator* regretted that the treaty did not create a perpetual Indian buffer zone: “[i]t leaves an important point to be settled among ourselves, which we had hoped to see determined, by a treaty with a foreign country.”⁷⁵ A significant difference between British and American philosophies on the subject emerged in the wake of such discussions: Americans viewed Indians as “dependents living within a fixed boundary separating British from American sovereignty,” while England held that natives were “autonomous peoples dwelling in their own country *between* the empire and the republic.”⁷⁶ This subtle distinction meant

73. “For the Democratic Press,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), February 25, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

74. “Political Miscellany. For the Boston Gazette,” *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), November 7, 1814, vol. 41, issue 40, AHN. The authors of this piece determined that giving in to Britain’s request for a buffer zone was preferable to continuing the war. The language in the article makes clear, however, that the issue was the subject of debate, and that others had drawn connections between the refusal of Britain’s request and American honor.

75. “Indian Lands,” *Boston Spectator* (Boston, MA), December 10, 1814, vol. 1, issue 70, AHN.

76. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 126. Italics in original.

that the United States was prepared to cast off British colonial precedents to establish its own imperial policy.

As a result, after 1815 native groups began immediately to encounter legislation that treated them less as legitimate polities and more as potentially subversive colonials dependent on the nation's good graces. The War of 1812 constituted a "watershed" for America's treaty system, because decisive victories over Indians at the Battle of the Thames (1813) and Horseshoe Bend (1814) drastically altered the balance of power that existed in the pre-war years.⁷⁷ The negotiations at Ghent signaled that all Indians could expect a change in their status as America expanded westward. When the American peace commissioners refused point blank the British request for any treaty to cover their Indian allies, they indicated very clearly that they did not intend to apply traditional diplomacy to any tribes regardless of location, history, or future intentions. Messages dispatched to various tribes in frontier regions after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent were specifically designed to counter notions among the natives that they had in any way "acquired...a more independent political character than they possessed before" 1815.⁷⁸ National leaders, both those from the West and those who had gained sympathy for the western perspective during the war, openly questioned policy that treated native tribes as sovereign nations. Andrew Jackson told James Monroe that he viewed the established treaty-making process as an "absurdity." The United States did not need to negotiate

77. Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 129. Horseshoe Bend was part of the Creek War, which was intertwined with the War of 1812 by virtue of the fact that the Creeks and British planned to have a reciprocal relationship that became moot after this disastrous battle. Britain planned to rely on the Creeks as allies in a southern campaign during the War of 1812 in exchange for supplying that tribe. Although Jackson was commanding the Tennessee militia at the time and not federal troops, he was a federally appointed brigadier-general by the time he went to conclude the Treaty of Fort Jackson several months after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (March 1814).

78. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 82.

treaties with the Indians because it possessed the power to “‘carry into execution any measure called for by justice to them, or by the Safety of our borders.’” Secretary of War John Calhoun agreed with Jackson’s assessment, and explained to the general in 1820 that the same opinion had been communicated to Congress more than once. Although the treaty making *process* remained entrenched, any respect and deference previously accorded to native tribes deteriorated.⁷⁹

While many aspects of federal Indian policy retained the focus on centralization and peace that characterized the founding era’s legislation, laws passed after 1815 displayed increasing confidence in the government’s right to exert jurisdiction over Indian Country. Asserting “ownership” of the West strengthened American identity because it eliminated the ambiguity of the middle ground and brought westerners and their issues to the center of the national agenda.⁸⁰ Whereas British and other foreign traders could acquire licenses to trade with Indians on U.S. soil before the War of 1812, an 1816 law refused all trading licenses to non-citizens. As scholar Francis Paul Prucha has concluded, the War of 1812 “fully opened American eyes to the danger” of their previous policy because it convinced them that “it was through the influence of traders that the Indians fought with the British against the United States in the war.” In addition, any goods that foreign traders took into Indian territory became subject to seizure, as did any purchased peltries that were found on their persons. Even passing through the territory now required a passport. Initial provisions that gave the president some latitude

79. Jackson quoted in Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 153-155. Jackson was a transitional figure. A westerner and young member of the founding generation, Jackson equated the position of Indians with that of white residents of the territories: they were subjects and the government had the right to legislate on their behalf without formally consulting them. He did not hold with the British-turned-American tradition of treating tribes as independent polities, but he *did* exhibit the founders’ paternalistic view of white frontier dwellers at times.

80. Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire*, 207.

to grant licenses to reputable foreigners were unpopular and repealed the following year.⁸¹ Legislators clearly had a strong mandate to exert whatever control necessary to remove British influence over American Indians for good. Congress did away with the old government trading house system in 1822, and amended an 1802 intercourse law to allow more congressional oversight (the amendment required an annual report of trading licenses granted). Another 1824 law shrunk the number of federally approved trading sites to further enable supervision.⁸² Although many of these post-war legal adjustments retained a focus on controlling white traders, extensions of federal management assumed a greater right to dictate to the tribes. Tighter control over trade meant less consideration for the wishes of natives themselves. New and revised laws may have restricted white traders, but those traders were free to conduct business in other forums; Indians, on the other hand, found their access to basic goods and resources choked off in a federal stranglehold. As early as 1814, when Jackson dictated harsh peace terms to the Creek nation in the Southwest, American treaties began requiring Indians to forego all economic interaction with other nations. The Treaty of Fort Jackson forbade the Creeks from communicating with or admitting traders without U.S. licenses, especially those from British or Spanish posts.⁸³ Establishing a greater degree of control over a key means of livelihood hastened the internal colonization process, in which “periphery people are rendered dependent on the core through capture and control of production.”⁸⁴ The founding generation’s Indian policy had lacked that level of economic domination. But if

81. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 96. While Native Americans clearly had their own varied and legitimate grievances leading them to war with the United States, few white Americans recognized the independent agency of Indians at the time.

82. *Ibid.*, 97-98.

83. Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 131. Another set of treaties concluded with tribes along the Missouri River in 1825 required the Indians to seize and turn over unlicensed traders who sought to deal with them independent of the federal government. *Ibid.*, 144.

84. White, *The Middle Ground*, 483.

subsequent generations were to be “united by collective ownership” of western lands, national identity depended to a great extent on *complete* control of natives’ rights.⁸⁵

Enhanced military presence and judicial oversight accompanied this higher level of economic supervision. The era in which Congress neglected the security of the western borders ended in 1815. Although the Treaty of Ghent seemed to call for a return to the status quo, the war altered the position and role of the American military along the frontiers after the war.⁸⁶ Eastern legislators like Maryland’s Roger Nelson began recognizing a direct relationship between the size of the U.S. military and the need to oversee Indians. In an 1810 debate on reducing the size of the army, Nelson asked:

Are the Indians to be again turned loose on the inhabitants? Do you not suppose, if you withdraw your garrisons, that the scalping knife will again be drawn? Certainly, it will. Destroy your Western posts, and you will find them quickly at work. But gentlemen may say the Western people may go into forts and defend themselves. If the time which a man ought to employ in the cultivation of his farm was to be employed in doing duty in a fort, you would find the country was very slowly settled.⁸⁷

The federal government and its military assumed responsibility for what was no longer considered just a local problem. During the first year of the war, Secretary of War William Eustis issued instructions to Ohio Governor Return Jonathan Meigs, Jr. that demonstrated growing federal confidence. Eustis communicated the wishes of the president, that the tribes of the Midwest “remain quiet and pursue their usual occupations” for “their own sakes.” Madison wanted the Indians to know that he was “desirous of saving them from the destruction which would inevitably ensue in case of their hostility. The conduct of some of them would justify him in lifting his arm against

85. Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire*, 207. Smith-Rosenberg writes that relying on collective ownership for unity led almost automatically to a “thoroughly racialized sense of self” because it required the exclusion of Indians who already lived on that land.

86. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 80.

87. *Annals of Congress*, 11th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1,865.

them and destroying them, but...[h]e will not punish the innocent with the guilty.”⁸⁸

Eustis’s missive places the executive in the god-like position of passing judgment, separating the wheat from the chaff. Such imperious statements indicate the degree to which wartime realities intensified the federal government’s sense of righteous paternalism and weakened natives’ position as independent diplomatic entities. President Madison authorized \$20,000.00 for the procurement of gifts to help broker peace with Indian tribes at war with the United States in March 1815. The War Department began taking the staffing of frontier military posts more seriously than it had in the founding decades, and became especially interested in staffing posts and factories within Indian Country. After the war, U.S. troops occupied posts that Britain had evacuated and a string of federal forts were built from Lake Michigan to the Upper Mississippi River. These included Fort Howard at Green Bay (1816), Fort Crawford at the mouth of the Wisconsin River (1816), Fort Scott at the Flint and Chatahoochie Rivers (1816), and Fort Snelling (1819). Indian agencies accompanied most of these posts. Andrew Jackson emphasized the necessity of also maintaining posts along the Gulf of Mexico.⁸⁹ Congress did not cease to question large expenditures on the military, but the need for frontier defense mitigated long-standing prejudices against a standing army. The size of the standing army increased from 9,413 (1815) to 10,024 (1816), and from the end of the war through 1825 the army’s strength never dipped below five thousand. The arguments in Congress against reducing the army’s size in 1815 frequently focused on guarding against Indian wars, and public displeasure with a post-war troop reduction also focused on the savage

88. William Eustis to Return J. Meigs, Thomas Worthington, and Jeremiah Morrow, July 1, 1812, Arthur G. Mitten Collection, 1755-1936, Box 2, Folder 5, INHS.

89. Calloway, “End of an Era,” 7; Prucha, *The Great Father*, 81-87.

threat in the West.⁹⁰ The War Department under John C. Calhoun (1817-1825) doggedly continued to demand resources for frontier defense. As the nineteenth century progressed and the “Indian problem” did not disappear, the need for additional military strength on the frontiers became ever more obvious.

With the West further integrating into the nation, the mandate for judicial oversight in the region also grew. Easterners became more sympathetic to westerners’ insistence that Indians could not be trusted, and legislation reflected that. All through the 1790s and early 1800s, lawmakers focused on quelling the tide of white depredations against Indians along the frontier; however, in 1817 Congress passed a law providing for the prosecution of Indians who committed crimes against whites in Indian Country. This signaled a shift in policy that had focused on punishing whites for their violations of native rights. If the expansionist exploits of frontier Americans were to be a celebrated aspect of national identity, intrepid settlers had to be left free to pursue them. Past legislation had explicitly allowed Indian nations to handle white offenders in Indian territory as they saw fit, and upheld equal consequences for white and Indian lawbreakers. This congressional act chipped away at Indian sovereignty and asserted federal jurisdiction instead. Concurrently, the U.S. government became more diligent in invoking existing laws to have native lawbreakers handed over to federal authorities; if tribes refused to deliver up suspects, federal expeditions went into Indian Country to forcefully acquire them.⁹¹ American agents like those dispatched to help broker peace between tribes in the Northwest in 1825 extended the government’s reach to dictate

90. Edgar Bruce Wesley, *Guarding the Frontier: A Study of Frontier Defense from 1815-1825* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1935), 65, 68-71, 194.

91. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 104-105. Federal officials *did* insist that Indians be tried within the judicial system, and remained opposed to vigilantism. The 1817 Intercourse Act also continued to recognize the rights of native groups to punish Indian on Indian crime. *Ibid.*, 108.

intertribal boundaries. This expanded federal power further into Indian Country and stripped away even more sovereignty from the tribes involved.⁹² Each of these expansions of federal power took the U.S. government farther away from British precedents, and further committed the nation to a racially exclusive empire.

The balance of power implied in treaty making during the founding decades changed in the nineteenth century, and western leaders took the first steps toward altering the founding government's policy with regard to treaty making and diplomatic exchanges with native tribes. While treaties concluded between 1800 and 1810 did reflect a dominant position for the United States, native groups involved also profited by receiving much-needed goods and cash for paying debts owed to British trading firms.⁹³ As the War of 1812 drew near, western figures like Andrew Jackson and Tennessee Representative John Sevier advocated a different approach to settling conflicts with dissatisfied tribes. When Jackson set out to deal with hostile Creek Indians, some of whom had massacred whites at Manley Farm and subsequently abducted the soon-to-be-famous Martha Crawley in spring 1812, he told Tennessee Governor William Blount that his plans did not include traditional methods of negotiation. He promised to quell the Creeks ““without presents or annuities,”” explicitly setting his approach apart from existing federal policies. Instead of a diplomatic exchange, Tennessee Representative John Sevier promised ““[f]ire and sword.””⁹⁴ A new position of dominance eliminated the necessity for the more tentative federal procedures of the founding decades; the shared

92. Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 141; *The Great Father*, 107-108.

93. Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 128.

94. Tom Kanon, “The Kidnapping of Martha Crawley and Settler-Indian Relations prior to the War of 1812,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 5, 7. The second quote comes from a letter from John Sevier to Governor Blount, June 12, 1812.

circumstances that had made both the British and American governments cautious in their dealings with borderlands tribes simply disappeared.

As the American situation on the frontiers became increasingly distant from the British one that founding leaders had sought to emulate, new strategies and methods replaced those imitative of British precedents. Although Secretary of War John Armstrong desired federal appointees Thomas Pinckney and Benjamin Hawkins (the General Superintendent for Indian Affairs) to oversee the peace treaty after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend put an end to the Creek War, Andrew Jackson dominated the negotiations. The federal deputies wanted to offer a relatively conciliatory treaty that did not demand land cessions or require the Creeks to relocate. Jackson, however, denounced such a “military capitulation” and overruled them after a promotion allowed him to supersede Pinckney and Hawkins. The subsequent Treaty of Fort Jackson (1814) offers an example of the changing trajectory of Indian treaties. It was “punitive” by nature, and in it the United States laid out the rationale for stripping the Creeks of large amounts of their land based on their having taken up arms against America. The Treaty of Fort Jackson also included provisions forbidding the Creeks to communicate with British or Spanish posts or trade with anyone not licensed by the U.S. government. It demanded that Americans have free navigation within remaining Creek lands. Finally, it provided for reservations for “friendly chiefs.” Jackson, as representative of the federal government, refused to take into account that some Creeks had been hostile while others never took up arms. The time for such leniency had ended, and the war years brought an end to the era of negotiating with Indian groups as if they were legitimate sovereign nations with whom the United States had a coequal diplomatic relationship. When Britain

attempted a return to the status quo by including an article in the Treaty of Ghent that forced the restoration of pre-war tribal rights and possessions, the tactic failed. Unlike the founding government, which had settled back into patterns for Indian policy set by the mother country, this post-war administration openly ignored the article. The forceful dispossession as a penalty for military defeat that Jackson initiated through this treaty set the precedent for relinquishment of territory as a reasonable way of “paying indemnity” for native transgressions.⁹⁵ Between 1815 and 1829, the United States concluded thirty-nine treaties with tribes throughout the Northwest and trans-Mississippi regions and seventeen with tribes along the nation’s southwestern boundaries. These departed from pre-war policy by commonly including access to reserves or reservations in exchange for Indian lands, and had the ultimate goal of causing tribes to relocate west of the Mississippi River. American envoys continued to offer some presents and annuities as pre-war policy had dictated, but perpetual annuities became less common.⁹⁶

Thus it was only in the context of the War of 1812 that the process of removal could begin in earnest. Rather than purchasing native lands, or negotiating for cessions in exchange for currency or goods, U.S. envoys initiated a new process by which Indians gave up lands in the near West for other lands farther from American settlements. Land exchange initiated the process of overt removal with seemingly benign voluntary trades. Prior to the war, federal authorities typically purchased lands from native groups who ceded their rights (often under duress) by treaty and received state or federal annuities in return.⁹⁷ While federal officials in the founding generation only considered the idea of

95. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 198-199; Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 131-132.

96. Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 135-139.

97. In the Treaty of Fort McIntosh (1785), for example, the Wyandot, Delaware, and Ottawa Indians ceded all lands not specifically allotted to them; in return they received protection and goods. At Fort

voluntary removal via land exchanges, frontier leaders took the initiative in making real proposals for land swaps in the early nineteenth century. Tennessee's William Blount, for example, who thought it necessary that Indians "be led away from" white settlements, suggested that Chickasaw and Cherokee people living on the state's peripheries trade their lands for property west of the Mississippi River in December 1809.⁹⁸ The Congressional Committee on the Public Lands came to agree after the War of 1812 ended. On January 9, 1817 it issued a report that advocated relocating Indian tribes farther west, deeming that wiser than continuing unsuccessful policies pointed solely at curtailing white encroachments. Federal legislators looked at the frontier and saw "many assailable points...presented to an enemy," natives being the principle and most proximate threat. The committee assumed that leaving tribes too near (or within) the country's official borders left them in a position to become "depraved" because the savage was not "sufficiently enlightened to receive a favorable impression from the virtues of civilization, while he is exposed to the contagion of its vices." Like any colonial population, the Indians in this assessment were presented as simple-minded, naïve, and easily corrupted. The Committee insisted that Indians retained their sovereign right to possess lands, but clearly the national legislature believed it could dictate *where* the Indians exercised that right.⁹⁹ Specific provisions for land exchange began appearing in federal Indian treaties, the first being a treaty concluded with the Cherokee on July 8, 1817. In that agreement, the Cherokee ceded large tracts in Georgia and North Carolina

Finney (1786) the Shawnees agreed to cede lands east of the Miami River, and received allotted lands (although the actual relinquishment of most of these lands did not occur until the Treaty of Fort Greenville in 1795). In the Creek Treaty (1790) Indians were compensated for land cessions with goods and a \$1,500.00 annuity, and the Cherokee demanded an equal annuity for lands they gave up as part of a treaty in 1791. Continuing encroachment onto Indian lands led to increased annuities. *Ibid.*, 49-58, 83-88.

98. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 192.

99. United States, Congress, *American State Papers*, vol. 2, *Indian Affairs*, 123.

for a grant on the Arkansas and White Rivers. Despite initial fears at the War Department that the Senate might oppose this form of removal, the measure passed without a single dissenting vote.¹⁰⁰ Such unanimity indicates that the founding government's philosophical objections to violating native land rights no longer influenced legislation. The Senate also approved a highly disputed removal treaty with the Creeks in March 1825 without even reading it.¹⁰¹ A faction of the Choctaw people also agreed to land exchange in the Treaty of Doak's Stand (1820). The Chickasaw gave up their lands in Alabama and Tennessee in exchange for cash annuities rather than land grants elsewhere, and the Treaty of Moultrie Creek (1823) relocated the Seminoles to a limited area in central Florida.¹⁰² As the United States moved beyond British-style imperialism, colonization via treaty became a key part of America's unique brand of colonialism. Historian Francis Paul Prucha concludes that arguments against removal in the 1830s indicate that no "abrogation of old treaties or the abandonment of the process of treaty making" took place.¹⁰³ However, the preservation of treaty making as a tradition means little because the United States made that process into a systematic, legal method for relocating, colonizing, and subjugating domestic dependents.

The War of 1812 also accelerated fundamental changes in the approach of the federal government toward white encroachments on Indian lands and squatter settlements, moving policy away from the British precedents used by the founders, and

100. Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 146-147. An 1828 revision of this treaty explicitly promised that U.S. territory would never extend around or over a new land grant that pushed the Cherokee even farther west; Prucha states that this provision is a statement on the "political autonomy" of that tribe, but these empty promises do not contain the language on the independent sovereignty of the tribes present in the eighteenth-century discussions on Indian policy cited in Chapter Four.

101. *Ibid.*, 148-150. The Senate declared the disputed Treaty of Indian Springs null after large numbers of Creeks refused to abide by it. In the revised treaty which replaced it, however, the Creeks ended up ceding all of their Georgia lands anyway.

102. *Ibid.*, 148, 151.

103. *Ibid.*, 167.

codifying the cultural exaltation of white expansion at any cost. Already in 1798 federally appointed authorities like Governor St. Clair had begun wavering on their commitment to punish white intruders and protect Indian interests. In a letter addressing one white settlement that some believed to be illegally situated on Hopewell lands, St. Clair insisted that federal officials had no place forcefully punishing the offenders; he interpreted existing laws to mean that whites who encroached on Indian lands simply ceased to be under government protection, not that U.S. authorities had the right or obligation to pursue them and rectify the problem on behalf of the natives.¹⁰⁴ This sort of logic initiated a slow slide away from the consensus regarding white expansion described in Chapter Four. Rather than dealing harshly with illegal settlers and actively protecting Indian claims as the founding generation (or Great Britain) might have done, government officials created new rationale that limited federal responsibility – if the United States had not *explicitly* promised certain protections, then it had no obligation to interpret existing laws broadly. Both the War of 1812 and the Creek War of 1813-1814 “took the edge off the zeal of officers responsible for removing the intruders.”¹⁰⁵

Although government officials continued to view white encroachments as a problem, and to forbid them and issue threats, these wars weakened support for reprimanding encroachers, which came to be viewed as a trifling issue in comparison. Across the western frontier, the counterweights to American power and expansion with whom the Indian tribes had bartered for trade and allegiance, faded into the background. Conversely, the desires of westerners gained legitimacy as territories became states and

104. Governor St. Clair to James Wilkinson, July 16, 1798, in William Henry Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair, Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress, and Governor of the Northwestern Territory, with his Correspondence and Other Papers* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 2:427-428.

105. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 111.

colonials became citizens with voting rights and legislative representation. Thus President John Quincy Adams took requests like those of Ohio's senators and representatives for government-backed eradication of Indian land rights in 1817 seriously. In July of that year, at the behest of Ohio legislators, Adams authorized government agents to negotiate with Indians on lands in that state to extinguish their claims.¹⁰⁶

Many legislators and their eastern constituents retained a distaste for intrusions on native lands as evidence of white westerners' lawlessness, yet the threat of Indian war (which had driven the founders' cautious policy) seemed less serious in the wake of Indian defeats in the War of 1812 and in the absence of a real British threat after 1815. Indian participation in armed conflicts during the War of 1812 provided justification for white intrusion on Indian lands, and some eastern observers believed participants in the war from border states used the conflict as a vehicle for acquiring access to more Indian lands.¹⁰⁷ Petitioners from the Mississippi Territory, for example, told Congress in February 1816 that Creek depredations during the late war entitled the former to reparation in the form of land cessions.¹⁰⁸ Massachusetts' *New-Bedford Mercury* reported that the Kentucky legislature had formally resolved that Indian lands ought to be handed over to that state's "brave" volunteers.¹⁰⁹ Indian hostility during the war also won the intruding whites additional sympathy in the post-war legislature. In January 1816,

106. [George Graham to Lewis Cass and Duncan McArthur, May 19, 1817], in United States, Congress, *American State Papers*, vol. 2, *Indian Affairs*, 137.

107. For example, "New-York Evening Post. Thursday February 24," *The Evening Post* (New York, NY), February 24, 1814, issue 3605, AHN.

108. *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 1st Sess., 863. A review committee in the House determined not to grant the petitioners' request in this specific case to avoid having to extend the same considerations to the myriad other whites who would assumedly present the same demands with the same reasoning.

109. "[Mr. Widgery; Commerce; Mr. W.; Sir., Indian]," *New-Bedford Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), January 22, 1813, vol. 6, issue 26, AHN.

Kentucky's Richard M. Johnson argued against an imminent federal effort to expel illegal settlers from Indian lands, saying that westerners had "been of great advantage in defending the frontier during the late hostility of the northwestern Indians."¹¹⁰ New Englanders in particular continued to look askance at illegal settlements and overt violations of Indian boundary lines, and the federal government continued to take measures to keep squatters off of Indian lands; however, military forays against squatters had the tint of injustice after the role westerners had played in the late war. One officer who took part in a federal expedition to expel whites from some illegal settlements in Georgia described his job as "a difficult and disagreeable duty."¹¹¹

Ultimately, the government did not succeed in getting rid of or controlling white encroachments because it did not dedicate adequate resources and personnel to the problem, and because federal authorities were "sincerely interested in preventing settlement on Indian lands only up to a point."¹¹² Whatever the superficial intentions of the federal government with regard to enforcing restrictions on white movement into Indian lands, the fact remains that in adopting the policy of land exchange and relocation in the first place, federal authorities implicitly accepted the reality of white expansion. Ohio Senator Jacob Burnet's 1847 *Notes on the Early Settlement of the North-Western Territory* completely absolved American settlers for any involvement in conflicts over Indian lands. In his version of events, Indians committed depredations against emigrants' property and lives, and any fraudulent dealings on behalf of whites were perpetrated by "unprincipled, wandering traders, wholly unconnected with the pioneer settlers," or

110. *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 1st Sess., 453.

111. "Extract of a Letter from an Officer in the [United States] Army to one of the Editors, dated Fort Hawkins, April 15, 1817," *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), June 21, 1817, vol. 20, issue 7668, AHN.

112. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 113-114.

“persons in the employ of the British fur company.” Determining the real causes of Indian violence, Burnet concluded, “would probably be considered, at this day, as a useless waste of time.”¹¹³ Thus by the mid-nineteenth century, the founding era’s wariness of the dangers of white expansionism, inspired by British examples, disappeared completely. Americans’ increasingly “racialized sense of self,” in which Indians had no place, justified the takeover of native lands as a necessary part of claiming ownership over the West.¹¹⁴

Wartime events also changed how the nation as a whole viewed violence *against* Indians. Violence against Others, as historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues, is closely tied to nationalism in the United States. For Americans, the “pleasures of being included within a nation” are connected with “the drive to violently exclude others.” That urge was also connected with the new nation’s post-colonial position. Violence, along with arrogance and hubris, was a reaction to the country’s “marginality.” Whites became violent with Indians because native people reminded them of their ambiguous position between European civilization and new-world savagery.¹¹⁵ In the West, a land of frightening hybridity, this violence was part of daily life during the founding decades. Eastern Americans, however, viewed bloodshed on the frontier as largely the fault of greedy colonials – the white savages of the West. Consequently, they disapproved of violence against native people as evidence of westerners’ incivility and a threat to the peace. The War of 1812 broke that peace, and convinced many easterners that Indians were indeed the animalistic, bloodthirsty savages that westerners’ had claimed. Thus

113. Jacob Burnet, *Notes on the Early Settlement of the North-Western Territory* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.; Cincinnati, Derby, Bradley, & Co., 1847), 58, Google eBook.

114. Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire*, 207.

115. *Ibid.*, 1, 205; Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 239.

unified behind that narrative, and in the midst of war, Americans came to view violence against Indians as just acts that furthered the national agenda.

Before 1812, eastern observers condemned depredations against Indians as the extralegal activities of uncouth frontier whites, but during the war such assaults occurred under commissioned officers of the United States military with the approval of elected officials. An unnamed correspondent whose missives were published in Rhode Island's *Newport Mercury* alleged that Kentucky's governor had "ordered the whites to KILL EVERY INDIAN THEY SEE," and one volunteer militia company's determination to "kill every Indian they meet with" also appeared in eastern papers.¹¹⁶ In August 1813, a soldier in the western army wrote about an expedition under Colonel James V. Ball in which the "first Indian fell beneath the sword of the commandant," and subsequently, "every Indian was killed that the squadron could discover." The soldier took care to mention that two of the officers, Captain Hodges and Lieutenant Hedges, killed an Indian apiece.¹¹⁷ Andrew Jackson's troops committed atrocities at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend that included killing a five year old boy with the butt of a gun, shooting an unarmed elderly man seated on the ground, and cutting strips of skin from dead Creeks and forming them into bridal reins. These troops also caved in the ground over a hiding place containing some remaining Indians, burying them alive. Events such as these, and the subsequent Treaty of Fort Jackson were "harbinger[s] of things to come" for not only the southeastern tribes, but other groups who warred with the United States.¹¹⁸ Even Indians

116. "Indian War," *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), May 23, 1812, vol. 51, issue 2615, AHN. Capitalization in original. The same report appeared in other eastern papers; "Dayton, May 7," *Bennington News-Letter* (Bennington, VT), June 10, 1812, vol. 2, issue 62, AHN.

117. "Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in the Army to His Friend in Chilicothe, Dated Camp at Lower Senaca, Aug. 1, 1813," *War Journal* (Portsmouth, NH), August 27, 1813, vol. 1, issue 25, AHN.

118. Thomas Kanon, "'A Slow, Laborious Slaughter': The Battle of Horseshoe Bend," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 3, 9-11.

who allied with the United States had no safe conduct once the war began and the British-Indian alliance turned more Americans against indigenous people. During an official military meeting with commanding General William Henry Harrison in January 1813, an American ally named Black Hoof was shot in the face by an unknown assailant who fired a pistol through the chinks in the back of the chimney of a house in which the parley took place.¹¹⁹ As racial antipathy grew, even overtly friendly native groups found little room in which to move while in American territory.

Although laws enacted during the 1790s established strict penalties for whites committing crimes against Indians (the intercourse law of 1796 called for the death penalty for any white convicted of murder in Indian Country), frontier residents rarely brought charges against whites accused of violent crimes against natives.¹²⁰ During the War of 1812, authority figures also found themselves excusing white violence. In October 1815 Michigan Governor Lewis Cass flatly refused to surrender a white American accused of murdering an Indian from British Canada who had crossed into U.S. territory to hunt. In doing so Cass not only made a statement regarding America's power in formerly contested border regions, he also contradicted founding era policies that prioritized peace over the interests of white frontier residents. Threats like that of British commander Lieutenant-Colonel Reginald James to loose vengeful Indians against American settlements might have moved members of the founding generation to capitulate, but Cass stood firm. An American investigation cleared the accused murderer of all charges.¹²¹ Ohio politician and Brigadier-General Edmund Munger explained the

119. [Brigadier General] E[dward] W. Tupper to Governor Meigs, January 26, 1813, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 3, Frames 69-70, OHS.

120. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 104-106.

121. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 432-433.

actions of soldiers who killed two Indians near Greenville in the spring of 1812 by saying that the “party...had just before seen the [m]angled corps[e] of one of their fellow citizen[s], who had fallen an innocent victim to Savage Barbarity.” The sight “[e]xaspirated [*sic*] the men to such a degree, that it was very difficult to control them.”¹²² This excuse from a commanding officer tasked with investigating such occurrences shows how wartime events provided an expansive rationale for perpetrating extralegal violence against Indians. Revenge killings, once the province of lawless western settlers, now took place among the ranks of paid soldiery under the supervision of high-ranking military leaders.

Indian violence in the context of the War of 1812 hardened westerners resolve to overcome government hesitation and see the Indians eliminated. After the massacre at the River Raisin in 1813, Ohioan Abraham Edwards wrote to Governor Meigs that “if the Indians are not removed from Piequa [Piqua, near present-day Dayton, Ohio], the people will raise in a mass and drive them off.”¹²³ Moderation would no longer be tolerated. Ohioans in particular worried about the proximity of Indians and made consistent demands for their removal or effective colonization in some controlled environment. Militia commander Benjamin Whiteman wrote to Governor Meigs in September 1812 to inform him that he and his colleagues believed that local tribes “had better be removed considerably further from the frontier,” their arms taken and stored, and placed under the oversight of a “discreet man” who would “supervise their vitualing [*sic*]” and put them to

122. Edmund Munger to Return Jonathan Meigs, May 14, 1812, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 1, Frame 160, OHS.

123. A[braham] Edwards to Governor Meigs, February 2, 1813, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 3, Frames 109-110, OHS.

work.¹²⁴ The citizens of Miami County petitioned the governor in February of 1812, expressing anxiety over the proximity of the Delaware Indians. Being so near, the residents feared the tribe might carry off information about their settlement to the British and then take up arms against whites. Their proposed solution: “relieve us from a state of uneasiness and alarm, by having them removed into the interior of our state, whence from its population they will be awed into submission to the authorities having charge over them and supported at a much less expense.”¹²⁵ Another set of petitioners from Ohio asserted that:

In the present critical situation of our affairs, it would in the opinion of your memorialists be highly impolitic [and] dangerous to permit such a body of Indians, whose fidelity there is so much reason to doubt, to remain upon our frontiers, a situation which affords every facility for executing a scheme of treachery, where they can maintain a constant intercourse with the enemy and [can] operate in the most effectual manner with them against us. Your memorialists trust that your Excellency, by ordering the immediate removal of those Indians to some suitable place in the interior of the state will dispel the apprehensions so justly entertained respecting them by the people of the frontier.

The memorialists concluded that if the government did not remove the Indians, the settlers might feel forced to attack them.¹²⁶ If the government failed to take action, Benjamin Whiteman warned Governor Meigs, “I am well assured that unless the Indians are removed from our frontier that the people will rise en masse and remove them, if they cannot by gentle means, by force.”¹²⁷ Even if some of these frontier petitions actually suggested that Indians be moved farther *inside* U.S. territory rather than outside of it,

124. Benjamin Whiteman and William Ward to Governor Meigs, September 22, 1812 [September 18, 1812 written by archivist], Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 2, Frames 226-227, OHS.

125. [Various Citizens of Miami County], Petition to Governor Return Jonathan Meigs, February 3, 1812, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 1, Frames 248-249, OHS.

126. “To his Excellency R. Jonathan Meigs, Esquire, Governor of the State of Ohio,” [No Date], Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 5, Frames 65-66, OHS.

127. Benjamin Whiteman to Governor Meigs, August 22, 1813, Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 4, Frames 149-152, OHS.

such proposals assumed the authority of the government to move the Indians around like compliant wards.

The perspective of westerners on this issue permeated national policy during and after the war, pushing the U.S. approach to Native Americans toward violent exclusion on the grounds of a racial policy integral to national identity. As Francis Paul Prucha explains, removal did not simply appear during Andrew Jackson's administration in the 1830s, rather that policy "gradually gain[ed] momentum in government circles for nearly three decades." Jeffersonian theories that civilizing Native Americans might allow them to acculturate into American society lost credibility in light of the British-Indian wartime alliance and coinciding events like the Battle of Tippecanoe (1811) and the Creek War (1813-1814). As early as November 1812, the Philadelphia *Aurora* speculated on the necessity of a war of extermination to push the Indians entirely beyond U.S. borders.¹²⁸ Easterners in South Carolina, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut all read newspaper accounts of Indian violence at Pigeon Roost in 1812 that concluded, "[s]o much for Grand Councils, Big Talks, [etc.] with a parcel of vagrants and scoundrels who ought long since to have been driven entirely from our territories."¹²⁹ When John Quincy Adams refused to comply with British diplomat Henry Goulburn's proposal to create an Indian buffer zone during the treaty negotiations at Ghent, it signaled that the "Jacksonian" approach to Indian policy had already won out to some extent; Adams insisted that the United States be left to deal with Native Americans as the federal government saw fit, and the word "extermination" entered the dialogue as a possible

128. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 206.

129. "Frankport, (Ken.) Sept. 12[,] Latest from the Army," *The Investigator* (Charleston, SC), September 30, 1812, vol. 1, issue 34, AHN. The same article appeared in newspapers in Walpole, NH, Hartford, CT, and Pittsfield, MA.

consequence for continued Indian attempts to impede westward expansion.¹³⁰ The War of 1812 alerted more policymakers to the need for a concerted removal policy. At the beginning of James Monroe's presidency, both he and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun began working toward a permanent change in the location of larger Indian tribes.¹³¹ Violence during the war convinced Monroe, Calhoun, and other legislators that Indians and whites simply could not coexist as members of the same polity. Removal, the Committee on Public Lands concluded in 1817:

...is better calculated to remedy the inconvenience and remove the evils arising out of the present state of the frontier settlements than any other within the power of the Government. The removal of the Indian tribes from their lands surrounded by and contiguous to our settlements will give place to a compact population, and give strength to the means of national defence [*sic*].¹³²

By this logic, American sovereignty could only increase as that of Indian tribes disappeared.

Indian political autonomy received its death blow when Andrew Jackson authorized the removal of the remaining southeastern tribes via the Indian Removal Act (1830). The act declared that the president could grant Indian tribes lands west of the Mississippi in exchange for lands located within the borders of existing states. It institutionalized the treatment of *all* Indians as one monolithic group distinguishable by skin color, making no distinctions between hostile or indifferent tribes and those (like the Cherokee) that had assimilated by accepting agrarianism and consumerism.¹³³ Cherokee resistance to their removal rested on the basic principle that, as a nation, the treaties they

130. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 203.

131. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 183-184.

132. United States, Congress, *American State Papers*, vol. 2, *Indian Affairs*, 123. The committee emphasized that such relocation should be voluntary, and thus tread on a fine line in which Indians retained the right to possess the land but would simply do so in a different portion of the public domain.

133. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 207-210.

concluded with the United States were valid; in negating the legitimacy of those treaties, Jackson and the Act abolished Indian sovereignty.¹³⁴ The case of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, which brought the constitutionality of removal before the United States Supreme Court in 1831, was a final referendum on the founding government's policy. The contest in the Supreme Court questioned the basic legality of treaties concluded within the founding generation's British-inspired framework: were old treaties between the United States (or the state of Georgia) and the Indian tribes legitimate and constitutional? Did the existing treaties assign sovereignty to Indian nations? If so, then neither the Jackson administration nor the Georgia state government could unilaterally trespass upon that previously recognized sovereignty. Despite a Supreme Court ruling in favor of the Cherokee's rights to their lands, Chief Justice John Marshall's classification of the Indians as "domestic dependents" transformed their traditional position vis à vis other powers in North America. As Henry Clay explained in an 1834 debate on the rights of the Cherokee to present a memorial to the Senate, "it did not matter what the petitioners said they were. Their connection with us was well known. The laws of the United States did not treat them as a foreign power, but as a people subordinate to the United States...The Supreme Court had declared them to be a domestic nation."¹³⁵

Although the Supreme Court did declare the Cherokee Nation a "separate political entity

134. Prucha, *American Indian Treaties*, 157. Some members of Congress did continue to argue for the sovereignty of the Cherokee, but even those who spoke in favor of Indian sovereignty acknowledged that the Indians had "dependent" rather than "independent" sovereignty. Ibid., 163. Prucha contends that the arguments in favor of Indian sovereignty and treaty rights meant that the idea of Indian sovereignty was "preserved." Ibid., 167. However, the fact that these debates were triggered by large-scale, sustained, successful efforts to force Indians off of their lands indicates that the kind of sovereignty accorded to Indians in the eighteenth century (when the middle ground persisted and legislators followed British examples out of necessity) no longer existed. Whatever arguments northern congressmen presented to counteract Jackson's imperial policies, the North underwent a removal period as well, and a series of treaties also enacted the "final dispossession" of northern tribes. Ibid., 183.

135. United States, Congress, *Register of Debates in Congress* (Washington, D. C.: Gales and Seaton, 1825-1837), 23rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1,773.

with rights and prerogatives,” it also retreated from any understanding of the Cherokee as a foreign nation; the court deemed the case outside its jurisdiction, and ultimately failed to prevent forced removal by the end of the 1830s.¹³⁶ While the verdict did not overtly support the Jacksonian notion that Indians had *no* place in American society, it effectively overturned the founding generation’s reliance on old-world diplomatic relationships with the tribes of North America.

Historian Richard Slotkin writes that colonial Americans emphasized their “Englishness” by contrasting their own society with that of the Indians. Post-colonial Americans had to establish their *Americanness*, and that required an entirely different process.¹³⁷ Ultimately, white Americans’ sense of independent identity rested heavily on the divergences between the way the United States and Britain treated indigenous people. When the new nation stopped colonizing white Americans in the West, it ceased to follow the colonial model set up by Great Britain. This worked out well for westerners, who found a place in national politics and culture. Because the new imperial framework did away with the traditional notion of subjects, however, Native Americans had no place. Of all the domestic precedents that originated out of western issues, the formulation of independent Indian policy was the most critical development of all. Establishing American precedents for dealing with their own internal aboriginal colonists had a far-reaching impact on the way Americans understood their capabilities. When John Quincy Adams and his colleagues at Ghent firmly refused to yield to British negotiators’ demands for an Indian buffer state in the Great Lakes basin, the American diplomats spoke volumes about the connection between America’s growing

136. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 210, 215.

137. Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 21.

independence and her developing Indian policy. As Chief Justice John Marshall stated in his ruling opinion in the case of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*:

The condition of the Indians in relation to the United States is perhaps unlike that of any other two people in existence. In general, nations not owing a common allegiance are foreign to each other. The term nation is, with strict propriety, applicable by either to the other. But the relation of the Indians to the United States is marked by peculiar and cardinal distinctions which exist nowhere else.

In designating Native Americans as a race “domestic dependent nations,” for Marshall’s language does not single out the Cherokee people, the Supreme Court made them a type of colonial subject theretofore unknown in the British Empire.¹³⁸ Consequently, the West, America’s platform for its claim to exceptionalism, became home to one of the most unique aspects of the nation’s evolving identity. As Samuel Woodworth’s poem “Progress of Improvement” made clear, Americans’ celebrated ability to tame the wilderness meant destruction for the Indians: “Refinement’s progress,” Woodworth wrote, tore “through the savage waste” and “O’er the rocks once startled by the Indian yell.”¹³⁹

Declaring the Indians “domestic dependents” created a clear and permanent line of distinction between them and all other residents of frontier regions. As the West became the focal point of national identity and frontier residents became citizens rather than colonists, there was no longer a place for both white and red savages in the borderlands. Whiteness became the key to unifying formerly disconnected regions, and savagery took on purely racial connotations. In the founding decades, American leaders

138. *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1 (1831), Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School Online.

139. Samuel Woodworth, *Melodies, duets, trios, songs and ballads: pastoral, amatory, sentimental, patriotic, religious and miscellaneous: together with Metrical Epistles, Tales, and Recitations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Elliot & Palmer, 1831), 124, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

in the Eastern states had followed the example of British thinkers whose “rationale for subjugation...stemmed from notions of culture, not race.”¹⁴⁰ Thus frontier whites were as likely to exhibit uncivilized *behavior* as their dark-skinned neighbors. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, Americans crafted independent definitions of “savagery” as something determined more by race than by conduct, culture, and an individual’s proximity to the cultured centers of power. The War of 1812 shifted the terms of this discussion: the uncouth white colonists of the 1790s frontier became glorified heroes, while British troops – by virtue of their wartime alliance with Indians – temporarily assumed the role of white savages. One account of the western army detailed how troops under Harrison and Winchester, Kentucky and Ohio volunteers (a “finer set of fellows never were paraded”), marched out against the “red and white savages” at Fort Defiance.¹⁴¹ An 1813 Carriers’ Address published in Louisville’s *Western Courier* emphasized the mixed-race savagery of Britain’s wartime coalition: the King’s “legions red, and black, and white” made up “savage hords [*sic*]” and “mongrel clans.”¹⁴² Philadelphia’s *Democratic Press* echoed this sentiment, referring to the British force descending on Louisiana in 1815 as “partly colored...red, black, and white.”¹⁴³ British accusations during the war that sending Kentuckians into battle was the equivalent of England deploying Indians offers a compelling counterpoint; eastern Americans might have agreed with British jeers against western fighters in the founding decades, but the

140. Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 27.

141. “To the Editor of the Aurora. Chillicothe, October 30. Western Army,” *Green Mountain Farmer* (Bennington, VT), October 28, 1812, vol. 4, issue 19, AHN.

142. *The Carriers’ Address, to the Patrons of the Western Courier* (Louisville: Printed by Nicholas Clarke, [1814]), LCP.

143. “Louisiana and her nearest Friends,” *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), January 13, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

War of 1812 changed the entire narrative for them.¹⁴⁴ Washington, D.C.'s *National Intelligencer* responded to British insinuations that Kentuckians were white savages by exclaiming in disbelief, “[g]allant Kentuckians, what think ye, of a British colonel, putting you upon a footing with the murderous Savage?”¹⁴⁵ This eastern paper’s incredulity at such a claim shows that residents of the capital no longer completely agreed with Britain’s critical assessment of western Americans.

After the war, the white savages of the colonial West no longer existed. Americans in the Jacksonian era “continued to cite the ‘indolence’ and ‘savagery’ of Indian hunters as justification for taking Indian lands” and “began to celebrate white hunters like [Daniel] Boone as the vanguard of civilization.”¹⁴⁶ Uncultured behavior and appearance (Boone himself dressed in Indian garb and did up his hair with bear grease in a native style) no longer made those men savages because their race trumped those other factors.¹⁴⁷ Noble Indians like Tecumseh or the Mingo Chief Logan replaced white savages as the semi-civilized yet pitiable residents of the wilderness. Although typically described as dark or copper in color, in other respects these figures very much resembled characters like Daniel Boone; however, their behavior and appearance could *not* be overlooked because these noble savages were only “virtually” rather than technically white.¹⁴⁸ While white frontiersmen could never truly be consumed by the wilderness, noble savages could never truly escape it. This unique brand of internal colonialism

144. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 208-210.

145. “From the National Intelligencer. Detroit, M.[I]. Feb. 11, 1812,” *The Native American* (Norwich, CT), March 18, 1812, issue 3, AHN.

146. Daniel J. Herman, “The Other Daniel Boone: The Nascence of a Middle-Class Hunter-Hero, 1784-1860,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 449, 434. One newspaper cited the activities of white savages in 1818, but the people in question were actually committing crimes while dressed up as Indians to disguise themselves. See “From the American Daily Advertiser. White Savages,” *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), August 18, 1818, vol. 32, issue 66, AHN.

147. Herman, “The Other Daniel Boone,” 449, 434.

148. White, *The Middle Ground*, 518.

created cultural pathways by which citizens relinquished sentimental attachments to the former mother country.¹⁴⁹ Romanticizing the tragedy of the Indians' situation in the nineteenth-century United States replaced the post-colonial cultural tradition of sentimentalizing tales of the British nobility. Scholar Laura J. Murray argues that an "aesthetic of dispossession" allowed Americans to dramatize their own relationship with England while "rhetorically exculpating" themselves for their role as colonizers of Indian tribes. Homegrown literature romanticized the idea of loss and homelessness and applied that sentiment to both white Americans (distant and distinct from their original parent state) and natives (sadly destined to lose their possessions in the face of westward expansion).¹⁵⁰

The internal subjugation of Indians also inspired Americans to reinterpret the old colonial parent-child relationship. Previous chapters have shown that western imagery, especially in the context of the War of 1812, allowed Americans to embrace their youth as a source of strength rather than childish weakness; labeling themselves as a new kind of parent completed the new nation's appropriation of the parent-child metaphor. The founding generation had applied the parent-child relationship to that of the government with western whites, and federal officials frequently made collective references to the government's red *and* white children. However, despite the argument of native writer William Apess that it made much more sense for the paternal American president to look

149. Internal colonialism is defined as domination of natives by natives, as opposed to the subjugation of native people by a foreign people. See Norma Beatriz Chaloult and Yves Chaloult, "The Internal Colonialism Concept: Methodological Considerations," *Social and Economic Studies* 28, no. 4 (December 1979): 85. Although white Americans in the nineteenth century cannot be considered "indigenous" or original inhabitants of North America, most of them had been born in U.S. territory and fall under the definition of a native inhabitant. White American citizens created a new form of internal colonialism through federal, state, and local legislation that controlled the allocation of resources and engendered dependency.

150. Laura J. Murray, "The Aesthetic of Dispossession: Washington Irving and Ideologies of (De)Colonization in the Early Republic," *American Literary History* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 207, 212.

at white citizens as his “children,” that perspective faded away after 1815.¹⁵¹ Subsequent generations gave Indians sole possession of the role of subservient offspring instead. In the new American imperialism, whites could be youthful, but they were not childish. Conversely, Indians remained children however developed they became according to white standards.¹⁵² Although the British had also told Native Americans to look up to the king as a father, the U.S. parent state took a more hands-on approach to governing its native children.¹⁵³ As a parental figure to Native Americans, the U.S. government also distinguished itself by not seeking the same types of military alliances that Great Britain had. Speaking to the chiefs and warriors of the Delaware tribe during the War of 1812, the commissioners appointed to council them declared that their American “father does not ask your assistance in the war in which he is now engaged with the British – The red people have no concern with disputes between the Americans and the British – They do not understand the causes of the war and why should they take part in it?” Unlike British leaders who felt free to make military alliances with Indian “children” against common

151. Ibid., 225. For some examples of references equating red and white children, see Benjamin Hawkins and Thomas Foster, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 364, 377-378, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

152. References to the President of the United States as the “father” of his Indian “children” abound in official communications between whites and Indians in the nineteenth century. Scholars have also pointed to the infantilization of Native Americans in nineteenth-century American culture. Portraying the Indians as childlike allowed Americans to justify their own paternalistic policies towards them. As Michael Paul Rogin writes, “to imagine Indians as children of nature...rationalized Indian removal from their land.” Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York: Knopf, 1975), xix.

153. British authorities had never intended to interact with Indians as anything other than foreign entities with whom they allied; whatever their paternal relationship with the Indians of North America, neither the British nor the French made any concerted efforts to acquire western lands (other than requiring treaties that deeded the land on which forts were established). William Henry Smith, ed. *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair, Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress, and Governor of the Northwestern Territory, with his Correspondence and Other Papers* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 1:142. This is borne out in White, *The Middle Ground*, 307-308. British Indian Superintendent William Johnson purposefully worked to show Algonquians that their British father planned to retain the habits of the French father with regard to Indian lands after the Seven Years’ War. With a few exceptions, British policy was designed to limit settlement to small “colonies based on ‘military tenures’ around the posts.” The royal government simply did not orchestrate large-scale land deals.

enemies, American leaders articulated a new order: natives had no place in white quarrels, and no ability to ally with legitimate powers.¹⁵⁴

Rather than worrying about the hypocrisy of subjugating Indians within a supposedly democratic republic, many Americans took comfort in pointing out the differences between their own imperial model and those of old-world nations. While whiteness brought them a sense of parity with England, a unique style of imperialism gave Americans much-needed confidence in their own exceptionalism. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, leaders like Indiana Governor William Henry Harrison, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, and President Thomas Jefferson agreed that avoiding conquest on the Spanish model indicated Americans' honor and benevolence. This magnanimity, however, disappeared whenever the fair treatment of Indians clashed with the nation's expansionist agenda.¹⁵⁵ Contrasting their own imperialism with that of European powers allowed Americans to mask the injustice of policies like land exchange, forced assimilation, and removal. Defending the United States in his *Remarks on the Review of Inchiquin's Letters* (1815), aging first-generation writer Timothy Dwight declared that British practice:

...in *Hindoostan*...was for a long period, and until very lately, so oppressive to the miserable inhabitants...Our conduct toward the Aborigines of our country, though scandalous, is far from being equally infamous with yours towards the Hindoos: and the name of Harrison will go down to posterity with less infamy than those of Clive, and Sykes.¹⁵⁶

154. "The Commissioners Appointed to meet in Council the Indian Tribes of the Western Frontier of the United States – To the Chiefs[,] headmen[,] & Warriors of the Delaware Tribe," [1812], Return Jonathan Meigs Papers, Roll 5, Frames 261-262, OHS.

155. Owens, *Jefferson's Hammer*, 58-59.

156. [Timothy Dwight], *Remarks on the Review of Inchiquin's Letters, published in the Quarterly Review; addressed to the Right Honourable George Canning, esquire. By an Inhabitant of New-England* (Boston: Published by Samuel T. Armstrong, 1815), Archive.org. Italics in original. Dwight does admit that the British made some attempts to reform while Americans had not; his praise, therefore, is only moderate.

The Indians occupied a new position relative to the parent state. An article in Washington, D.C.'s *Daily Intelligencer* explained proudly that, "[t]he Indians stand in a strange but well defined relation to the United States. They are like 'a wheel within a wheel' – a sort of *Imperium in Imperio*. They possess their own lands, but have no right to sell them, but to the government of the United States." The author drew clear connections between this unique policy and independence from British oversight: "The British Government once attempted to aim a blow at this right of purchase...but the designs of the Commissioners at Ghent were soon seen through, and indignantly rejected."¹⁵⁷ Author Daniel Bryan coupled forcing civilization onto the savage with the glory and value of the nation:

We will refine, exalt, and humanize
Th' uncivilized Barbarians of the West...
The task, the Godlike task, be ours, that wretch...To melt, to decompose
and sublimate!¹⁵⁸

Similarly, Samuel Woodworth's *The Heroes of the Lake* (1814) declared confidently:

Let Europe boast her sons of iron mould:
Let Asia sell her sympathies for gold
Afric [*sic*] may glory in her serpent guile,
And 'on for vengeance' with her Zanga 'toil:
Be it my country's richer glory far,
With deeds of love to blunt the rage of war:
Her sons, dread demons to the opposing foe –
Angels of mercy o'er a chief laid low!¹⁵⁹

In contrast with all of these other parts of the world, Americans were on a mission of mercy to the Indians; the unfortunate chief represented here (a fictional son of the

157. "Cession of Indian Lands," *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), October 19, 1816, vol. 4, issue 1180, AHN. This article appears to have been excerpted from the *Richmond Compiler*.

158. Daniel Bryan, *The Mountain Muse: comprising the adventures of Daniel Boone; and the power of virtuous and refined beauty* (Harrisonburg: Printed for the author by Davidson & Bourne, 1813), First American West Digital Collection, Digital ID icufaw bbc0051.

159. Samuel Woodworth, *The Heroes of the Lake: A Poem, in Two Books* (New York: Printed and Published by S. Woodworth & Co., 1814), 37, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

celebrated Indian Logan) needed the paternalistic care of his American captors. Indians themselves saw the distinctiveness of American policy in a different light: Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee Prophet, taught that while the British, French, and Spanish all came from the Master of Life, Weshemoneto, the Americans were ruled by Matchemoneto, an evil spirit directly opposed to the Master of Life.¹⁶⁰

Indian hating played a valuable role in Americans' ongoing struggle to create a national culture out of old colonial and regional identities: it bridged differences of class and political affiliation, and united the American people across the east-west regional divide.¹⁶¹ Even during the founding decades, men of disparate or even hostile political persuasions often held common intellectual ground when it came to Indians. As a feared and foreign entity, “white men found it easy to bury their differences in dealing with [the Indian].”¹⁶² In the West, defining a common enemy had always united the wealthier landowners with small-scale subsistence farmers. The two groups had only a few goals in common, but “reducing Indian assaults” was one of them.¹⁶³ The resentment engendered by the Battle of Tippecanoe, and the British-Indian alliance in the War of 1812 garnered national concern over a problem once confined to the peripheries. Even before the United States declared war, President James Madison understood that he needed to convince Americans that the British-Indian connection posed a danger to the nation. For that reason, he and his administration echoed William Henry Harrison's account of the victory at Tippecanoe as a great success over “bloodthirsty brutes armed by the British.”

160. Owens, *Jefferson's Hammer*, 122-123.

161. This argument builds on and complements that of Edmund S. Morgan. See this chapter, note 5.

162. Kornfeld, “Encountering ‘the Other,’” 291. Kornfeld quotes historian Bernard Sheehan, who points out that even men as politically and personally distinct as Thomas Jefferson and Timothy Pickering approached questions about how to deal with Indians in the same way.

163. Kristofer Ray, “Land Speculation, Popular Democracy, and Political Transformation on the Tennessee Frontier, 1780-1800,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 165.

Presenting the battle thus helped Madison unite his constituents behind the forthcoming war against Great Britain.¹⁶⁴ Indian involvement with the British forces sparked resentment from Americans who might have disregarded the “Indian problem” prior to the war. Events like the kidnapping of Martha Crawley in 1812 inspired rhetoric that created permanent connections between being “American” and persecuting Indians. In response to a belief that Britain intended to “excite the Indians and the blacks to measures pregnant with evil to them and to us,” Philadelphia’s *Democratic Press* declared in January 1815 that:

The whole force of the Southern and Western states, without the least regard to party, will naturally be held ready to resist an enemy that would subject them to the miseries of the tomahawk...and those of Santo Domingo...Our gallant brethren of the South and West, disregarding all sectional lines, are displaying before their countrymen and the world, the effectual vindication of our Merchants and our Sailor’s rights, in the camps of the enemy.¹⁶⁵

This editorial, laced with language that connected darker races with the enemy, demanded Americans cast aside all non-racial divisions in the interest of the nation as a whole. The *Nashville Clarion* similarly demanded:

Americans have you lost your spirit?...For ten years you have been the sport of those who owe their existence to your forbearance...Americans act as becomes men. Make the neighboring nations responsible for the acts committed in and through their territory. Teach double dealers your true character, and command the submission of the petty savages on your frontier. In times like the present forbearance will be construed into pusillanimity. Act as your forefathers and at the point of the bayonet subdue or extirpate the savage foe...Act as becomes freemen.¹⁶⁶

The war spurred Americans to tie race and patriotism together – *real* Americans fought the Indians as opposed to allying with them. Indian removal also strengthened ties

164. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 127.

165. *The Democratic Press* (Philadelphia, PA), January 26, 1815, LCP Periodicals.

166. *Nashville Clarion*, May 23, 1812, quoted in Kanon, “The Kidnapping of Martha Crawley,” 9-10.

between East and West because it enabled more individuals from eastern states to move beyond the Alleghenies; as army officer and Ohio legislator Abraham Edwards remarked in an 1809 letter to future Michigan Governor Henry Brown, treaties that stripped Indians of their land did much to “increase emigration from the old states.”¹⁶⁷ The ability to merge the two regions by way of population movement depended on getting the Indians out of the way.

...

In the fall of 1912, the residents of Louisville, Kentucky celebrated the centennial of the War of 1812. To commemorate their celebration, city leaders issued a keepsake card. It depicted a man and a woman, both fair-skinned and neatly dressed, clasping hands in front of a background that featured a drawing of the Battle of Lake Erie and a separate pastoral landscape. The man represented the United States, while the woman was meant to symbolize Great Britain.¹⁶⁸ In the image, one hundred years after the second revolution, the United States and its former mother country stood together as two great friends who could look back on the events of the war with equanimity and pride. They posed together as friendly members of one family. While battles like the one on Lake Erie clearly secured Americans’ access to land and prosperity as pictured in the landscape imagery, the third combatant in the conflict was entirely absent. Native Americans had been eradicated from the scene. The War of 1812 enabled white Americans to move past post-colonial subservience, a transition that had disastrous consequences for native peoples. Casting off British models meant an end to the founding

167. Abraham Edwards to William Henry Brown, September 26, 1809, Indiana Territory Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, INHS.

168. Card commemorating the Centennial of the War of 1812 [Louisville: Tinsley-Mayer Engraving, 1913], FHS. The card catalogue explains the symbolic meaning assigned to the male and female figures described above.

era's Indian policy, which cautiously prioritized peace over obtaining native lands. Founding-era figures like Thomas Jefferson believed that only tribes who succumbed to "English seductions" would present a problem for Americans (who would then be "obliged to drive them, with the beasts of the forest into the Stony mountains"); the rest were too advanced to give in to British intrigues, and therefore not included in his gloomy forecast.¹⁶⁹ However, when the war ended and Indian resistance to U.S. expansion continued, what conclusion remained but that Indians must have been *naturally* bad. With the British puppeteer removed from the equation, Indian misbehavior seemed to confirm that defects existed within the race, and proved that natives could never be trusted.

Nineteenth-century Americans found a solution to the post-colonial malaise that had eluded the founding generation: they embraced their racial ties with the former mother country, but rejected old-world politics and culture by turning away from the seaboard and anchoring national identity in the West. Unlike the British Empire, the expanding United States had no room for both dark- and light-skinned subjects. It could only contain citizens and a separate race of "domestic dependents." Americans' domestic dependents, unlike Britain's colonial subjects, were destined to disappear rather than remain a permanent component of an ever-growing empire. American writers understood this unique aspect of their nation; each of James Fenimore Cooper's "Indian novels" contained a character who represented the last of his race.¹⁷⁰ Casting the Indian as an internal "other" united a diverse and scattered population struggling to craft a cohesive

169. Jefferson to John Adams, June 11, 1812, *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*, ed. Lester J. Capon (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 2:307-308.

170. James S. Hedges, "Oak Openings: Fenimore Cooper's Requiem for the American Indian," *The Old Northwest: A Journal of Regional Life and Letters* 11, no. 1 & 2 (Spring and Summer 1985): 26-27. For example, Chingachgook, Susquesus, Conanchet, Ozema, Saucy Nick, Scalping Peter.

identity out of the fragmentation of the colonial past. As James Kirke Paulding's

Backwoodsman declared upon crossing the Ohio River:

And thus their hardy offspring dare to roam,
Far in the West, to seek a happier home,
To push the red-man from his solitude,
And plant refinement in the forest rude.¹⁷¹

Westward movement was the cornerstone of American exceptionalism and identity, and removal of Native peoples was the *sine qua non* of westward expansion.

171. James Kirke Paulding, *The Backwoodsman: A Poem* (Philadelphia: Published by M. Thomas, 1818), 62, Internet Archive.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the United States using the lens of post-colonial studies is problematic, for American history is riddled with contradictions and perplexing inconsistencies. The founders fought a revolution against the arbitrary rule of English kings, and their rhetoric was filled with references to liberty, equality, and God-given rights for all men. Yet, both before and after the Revolution, white Americans enslaved Africans and drove Native Americans off their lands. The modern United States is a global hegemon that exerts economic, political, military, and cultural influence over other nations around the world. It is very tempting, therefore, to simply label the early republic a nascent version of an imperial monolith and to envision the founding generation salivating *en masse* over the entire continent. But by requiring early Americans to behave in the same way as West Africans, for example, or to expect them to encounter the same problems as Native Americans in order for them to qualify as “post-colonial,” we create rigid frameworks and artificial boundaries that limit our understanding of this deeply complex phenomenon. As scholar Alan Lawson points out, to refer to a singular post-colonialism is akin to referring to one form of feminism.¹

Acknowledging the fragility of national identity in the early republic allows us to view westward expansion and evolving policy toward frontier residents, both white and Indian, in a different light. Members of the founding generation had a limited ability to conceive of themselves and their nation outside of colonial-era frameworks. To them, London stood at the center of civilization, and America inhabited the peripheries, relying

1. Alan Lawson, “Postcolonial Theory and the ‘Settler’ Subject,” *Essays on Canadian Writing*, issue 56 (Fall 1995): 20.

on British political principles for survival. As a consequence, they viewed their own territorial acquisitions through the lens of British imperialism, the only model with which they were familiar. The founders' inherited ideas about expansion led them to perceive the territories as possessions to be colonized by an intrepid but inferior population of white settler-subjects. Although these settlers performed an important function in establishing colonies to extend (and enrich) the state, they also became semi-alien by virtue of both their distance from civilization and their proximity to savage indigenes. Americans in the eastern centers wondered, as Londoners had before them, if white colonists might degenerate into savagery themselves. Thus constrained by old-world understandings of territorial expansion, the founding generation in the seaboard states approached the idea of continental power practically and with a decided lack of enthusiasm. Their territorial policy was almost wholly unoriginal, and their nascent empire was one in which whites as well as Indians were the targets of authoritarian governance and cultural disdain.

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, subsequent generations, less steeped in colonial discourse and English traditions than their forebears, began to break with post-colonial patterns of replication. Prominent men of the revolutionary generation, born into families that could have been part of the British gentry, found that by the time they reached later maturity (when they might have expected to occupy patronage positions under the Crown), younger Americans had developed new expectations of their government. They wanted "leaders who spoke their own language." This language did not include fluency in the imperial model of a "speaking aristocracy" paired with a silent democracy, nor did it allow for proto-colonial attitudes toward white

Americans even if they lived on the margins of the country.² Rather, subsequent generations increasingly sought expanded democracy and an egalitarian political culture. With a second war against Great Britain looming during the first decade of the nineteenth century, it became increasingly clear that the founders' revolution had been incomplete. Standing up to the former parent state in a "Second American Revolution" placed second- and third-generation Americans in a position to reenact the *post*-revolutionary period as well. They made different choices than the founders had, and thus they chose to integrate rather than colonize the West.

In post-colonial states, national identity is a "form of identity politics." Forming a cohesive national identity does much more than just unite a population across regional, political, or socio-economic lines. In a former settler colony like the early national United States, crafting a distinct national identity is part of a "strategy of resistance toward a dominant culture."³ When nineteenth-century Americans re-centered their identity around western places, people, and the mythology of the frontier, they engaged in this type of cultural resistance. Replacing "settler-subjects" with "pioneers" and "rugged backwoodsmen" was an act of defiance against old-world understandings of how imperial expansion should occur. Americans usurped the concepts of wilderness and rusticity, which had deeply negative associations in colonial-era discourse, and transmuted them into a source of pride and national uniqueness.

The legacy of the colonial past did not disappear with Americans' nineteenth-century acceptance of the West as the locus of national identity – as Kariann Yokota

2. Conrad Edick Wright, *Revolutionary Generation: Harvard Men and the Consequences of Independence* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 168, 164, n. 24.

3. Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject," 20.

points out, “the geography of value remained in place well after the War of 1812.”⁴

American consumers continued to import British goods and send their children to English schools. Anxious citizens still tried (and failed) to impress British travelers, and American intellectuals continued to swim with the tide of European trends. In fact, even Frederick Jackson Turner, who articulated the significance of the frontier in American history, still operated within the constraints of European agrarian and development theory in 1893.⁵ This *ongoing* struggle to understand their nation outside the bounds of inherited ideological, social, and political frameworks makes Turner, and other analysts of American exceptionalism, post-colonial theorists of a sort. Turner’s position as a white male celebrating a process that harmed Indians, Mexicans, and the environment makes him less “heroic” than post-colonial intellectuals like Salman Rushdie or C. L. R. James, who come from racially marginalized indigenous populations within colonies of occupation.⁶ Yet Turner’s attempts to identify and laud unique aspects of “American” character stemmed, at least in part, from a desire to nullify belittling assumptions about Americans rooted in the colonial past.

Second- and third-generation Americans’ imperial march westward did mean an end to the founders’ vision of a republic unburdened by the power politics common in great European empires. In its place, an “exclusive, exceptionalist conception of American nationhood” developed.⁷ Exclusivity and exceptionalism have negative

4. Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 233.

5. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 251.

6. Peter Hulme, “Including America,” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 26, no. 1 (January 1995): 122. Hulme refers here to American authors, not to Frederick Jackson Turner.

7. Peter Onuf, “‘Empire For Liberty’: Centers and Peripheries in Postcolonial America,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, ed. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 305.

connotations, for these words bring to mind racism, elitism, and inequality – all anathema in a liberal democratic republic. Yet, exclusivity and exceptionalism had a positive role to play in Americans’ post-colonial process. The founders’ conception of their republic was a backward-looking one that bound them to a world of ambiguity and half-way independence. They wanted to create a different kind of empire (a desire that is evident in the inclusion of a mechanism for statehood in the Northwest Ordinance), but did not yet have the tools to follow through on their vision. Building an exceptional empire to the West allowed subsequent generations to accomplish what the founding generation could only partially imagine.

Americans’ exceptional empire in the great West *was* an exclusive one – James Kirk Paulding’s *Backwoodsman* (1818) explained how western landscapes created a clear division between whites and savages:

Ohio’s gentle stream before them lay,
In tranquil silence gliding on its way,
And parting, with its current as it ran,
The prowling savage from the [C]hristian man.⁸

Yet viewed from another vantage point, this nineteenth-century empire was much more inclusive than the founders’ British-inspired model. An entire population of white frontier residents gained full membership in the polity and earned an exalted place in national culture. The current of the Ohio River in *The Backwoodsman* kept the savage out, but it carried white westerners further into the national fold. This was part of the process of finding identity in the midst of post-colonial self-doubt. The western environment might have been “noxious,” but not for whites; Americans turned this old-world concept

8. James Kirke Paulding, *The Backwoodsman: a poem* (Philadelphia: Published by M. Thomas, 1818), 52, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Marquette University – Memorial Library.

(articulated in the Comte de Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*) on its head.⁹ They took control of determinism applied to their new-world surroundings and re-applied it selectively to their native neighbors while exempting themselves. Anxiety among white Americans over their proximity to non-whites in the New World was mitigated by the creation of new assumptions about the effect of the wilderness on various races. Having eliminated the rationale for keeping white western "subjects" marginalized, Americans in the East could absorb these former colonists and forge an empire of "settler-citizens." With no room for traditional subjects in this exceptional empire, Indians, defined as irreversibly savage by virtue of their race, simply had no place. Removal, then, became an integral step in the process of both "unbecoming" British and becoming "American."

9. Eve Kornfeld, "Encountering 'the Other': American Intellectuals and Indians in the 1790s," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 52, no. 2 (April 1995): 299.

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