“TELLING YOU WHO WE ARE”: IDENTITY FORMATION ON AMERICA’S FIRST WESTERN FRONTIER

A Dissertation in
American Studies
by
Susan M. Ortmann

©2015 Susan M. Ortmann

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2015
The dissertation of Susan M. Ortmann was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Simon J. Bronner  
Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Folklore  
Chair, American Studies Program  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Michael Barton  
Professor of American Studies and Social Sciences

Charles Kupfer  
Associate Professor of American Studies and History

Elizabeth J. Tisdell  
Professor of Adult Education

Francis Bremer  
Special Member  
Professor Emeritus  
Department of History  
Millersville University of Pennsylvania

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

This work answers two main questions: How did settlers in the Old Northwest Territory and Kentucky identify themselves and how did they want others to see them as they lived on America’s first frontier from 1777 to 1830. It also challenges the idea of a western persona as one created after the 1830s in the far regions of the country. The first American West and the personality developed to portray frontier life initially began in the Old northwest Territory. Using rhetorical analysis, historical research, and psychological Interpretation, my answer to these questions is that settlers moving into Kentucky and the Old Northwest created an early American identity that designated them as the first westerners. These settlers used the process of identifying difference or “othering” to various degrees and memory to identify what they believed to be acceptable and unacceptable character traits. Although their experience was part of a larger attempt by American citizens to create a national character and culture, frontiersmen and women viewed themselves, not their eastern peers, as more emblematic of what it meant to be American. While race, gender and class each played an important role in helping pioneers self-identify, these provide a limited picture of what westerners considered markers of worth and civility. Religion, politics, and education also served as desired character traits. These qualities helped set the white western settlers apart from others and made them feel superior. As the frontier designation moved further west and beyond the Ohio region the persons who settled these newer territories experienced more of the same.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.................................................................................................................. v

PREFACE........................................................................................................................................ vi

Chapter 1. Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2. “Who We Are and Are Not”: Choosing Our Identity on America’s First Frontier ........ 34

Chapter 3. A Distinctive Character: Creating the Character of the Western American Man.......... 68

Chapter 4. Wives and Mothers on America’s First American Frontier: Women Creating a Western

Identity ........................................................................................................................................ 100

Chapter 5. “And the Children Shall Follow In Their Footsteps”: Childrearing and Education as a

Means to Create Western American Citizens............................................................................. 140

Chapter 6. “Practicing Religion in the Garden of Good and Evil”: A Factor in Identity Creation……... 172

Chapter 7: We Are American Citizens Too: Using Law and Politics to Identify Westerners Locally

and Nationally........................................... ........................................... ................................... 214

Chapter 8: Conclusion.................................................................................................................. 250

Bibliography.................................................................................................................................. 268
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Departure on December 3, 1787, from Manasseh Cutler’s parsonage in Ipswich, Massachusetts ................................................................. 45

Figure 2-1: The Battle of Fallen Timbers............................................................ 72

Figure 3-1: Liberty. In the form of the Goddess of Youth; Giving support to the bald eagle… 103

Figure 4-1: The Foraker Log Cabin................................................................. 151

Figure 5-1: Cane Ridge Meeting House in 1934.................................................. 188

Figure 6-1: Major General Arthur St. Clair...................................................... 230

Figure 7-1: A Haircut in a Cavalry Stable........................................................ 264
PREFACE

This dissertation examines the formation of identity by settlers who moved onto America’s first western frontier following the defeat of the British in the Revolutionary War. The rhetoric of the pioneers left to researchers in letters, diaries, newspaper articles, and other documents offers a record of their ideas about themselves and their lives in the Old Northwest Territory and Kentucky. My thesis maintains that settlers created their identity as western Americans and civilized and exemplary citizens of the nation’s republic. In fact, they maintained they, not their eastern peers, offered an image of “true American.” The first western settlers, through the records they left set the prototype for the American pioneers who followed as the nation expanded. Their stories, in the spirit of American Studies, convey in addition to events their attitudes, biases, and perceptions of life on the frontier.

My interest in these matters began during my years as a graduate student at the University of Delaware. Dr. Christine Heyrman challenged students to examine documents in The Lyman Draper Collection, a microfilm record housed in the university library. Though assigned to read only one of documents left by Thomas Hinde, an itinerant preacher and political commentator, I found myself pulling several of the reels of the collection. Elizabeth Perkins’ book, Borderlife (1998) drew me further into the study of America’s first west. Once I began to examine the primary source documents, the idea that writers and scholars with assertions to validate, created the identity of these earlier pioneers seemed too sweeping a claim. The experiences their documents relate offer insight into how the American pioneers viewed themselves and how they wished others to regard them.

This work is interdisciplinary. It draws upon American Studies and social history and incorporates literature of the period, religious practice and affiliation, education, and government as vehicles for understanding how the identity and culture of America’s first western settlers developed. The record provided demonstrates change over time as the frontier line moved further westward by the 1830s and people emigrated onto the Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and beyond.
Perry Miller, in his seminal work *The New England Mind* (1972) asserts that these early colonists’ ideas about themselves, government, and religion designated them as the first Americans. Their legacy, according to Miller, inspired those who followed and set a model for later Americans to follow.\(^1\) While the Puritan influence persisted, so did the impact left by those who settled in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the other British colonies. The Puritans, early Virginians, the Quakers of Pennsylvania, and other colonists were not American. They were and claimed to be British. They settled land claimed by the British. Puritans sought reform of the English Church. They did not wish to break from it. Each of the colonies developed government that suited their needs and circumstances, but all retained British law and custom as well as they could.

In contrast, the settlers who populated America’s first western frontier did so as Americans. They bore the name American, lived under the governance of the United States, and declared themselves different from and better than the British they fought during the Revolutionary War. The identity they created bore some resemblance to the British social and legal legacy. Yet, their rhetoric repeatedly rejected any notion that compared them to the British. The westerners’ belief in their unique opportunity to fashion a truly American government, society, and identity make claims to the contrary questionable, no matter how deeply rooted they are in our scholarship.

This work builds upon a long list of scholarly sources, but relies mostly on primary sources left by a group of men and women, who expanded the United States and provided us with a western persona that was founded in a region that few of us consider when discussing the American West. They were our first westerners and their lives are an important part of our history and deserve recognition.

In order to facilitate reading the spelling of words within the direct quotes have been updated. The “F” symbol that designates an “S” has also been changed to clarify words.

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to highlight the importance of the Old Northwest and the white settlers who immigrated to the region. This area legally settled as American territory was the nation’s first frontier and the persons who settled there were our first westerners. The diaries, letters, and documents of the persons recorded in this text show that they consciously and in some instances unconsciously strove to create a new identity for themselves. While we have come to view identity as complicated, for the settlers presented in this dissertation it seemed less so. Race, ethnicity, gender, religion, politics, education, and occupation defined how they presented themselves to others and thought about themselves in diaries and other documents. The settlers featured in these pages who arrived in the Old northwest after 1776 saw themselves mostly as white, male or female, adult or child, Christian, adventurous, accepting of opportunity, literate or not, and hard workers, western and American. They set the pattern for what we have come to regard as the American West or westerner. While elements of their identity changed as circumstances shifted some aspects remained more firmly in place. For example, Anna Bentley and her family might become more prosperous economically, yet, her commitment to her Quaker religion and caring for her family and home stayed firmly in place.\(^2\)

The rugged individuals, like the Bentleys, who migrated to this early frontier, more often than not referred to the region they settled as the west, the Northwest Territory, or wilderness. While current scholars and a few of the early migrants called it a frontier, the frontier or west held different meanings for the pioneer. In some instances it referred to a geographical region, a place separate from the East coast that possessed its own set of issues and challenges to be faced and solved. Many of those who settled in the Old Northwest and Kentucky viewed the region as an unsettled portion of the nation waiting to be civilized by white men’s standards. The region also suggested a place of encounter with the unknown, or

---

at least the untested. Settlers understood that Indians populated the Old Northwest, but until they encountered them, many had a limited view of who the Indians were and what contact would mean. Their ideas were based upon the written record of the first British colonists, and reports given by trappers, the military, and land surveyors. Once Settlers such as Thomas Hinde, Lucy Hastings, and James Hall came face to face with Tribal members their views changed or were reinforced both positively and negatively (mostly the latter).

Settlers knew they were traveling to a new region, one that had been denied them by British control before the Revolutionary War, but they also regarded their destination in the west as an idea. Thoughts of opportunity, prosperity, and unrivaled freedom are expressed in the letters of Lucy Hastings and Mannaseh Cutler. The frontier as an idea for most of the settlers was wrapped up in their newly won status as Americans. This western land was part of the America they fought to wrest from the British and it promised opportunity and independence. While the thirteen original colonies already settled might limit their prospect of advancement (socially and economically), the enticement of unclaimed frontier land offered adventure and fortune. The frontier offered the chance to recreate themselves. If they had failed economically or socially back east, the failure often lay behind them once they travelled westward. In their new homes settlers could demonstrate their abilities. They fashioned homes, towns, and secular and religious institutions from the ground up. Their prospects seemed limitless and all of this came with the additional bonus of limited government oversight and restriction in the region.

The ideas that settlers such as Hinde, Hall, Flint and others held about the west and the identity traits they claimed as their own set a pattern that newer settlers after the 1820s adopted when the designation of west moved beyond the Ohio River Valley. Though later generations would come to connect an American

---

3 Lucy Hastings (Lucy Hastings Correspondence in Hastings, Lucy A. / State Family correspondence, 1838, 1855-1874 [Transcriptions] Call Number, Eau Claire SC 35 ([unpublished]) http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI) and William P. Cutler and Julia P. Cutler, Life, Journals and Correspondence of Reverend Manasseh Cutler, LL. (2 volumes, Cincinnati, OH: 1888).
West with the likes of cowboys, Indians, and ranchers, the stage was set for our views of the frontier and the western persona in this first western American region.

Sources

Examining the efforts made when individuals or groups engage in identity creation demands the researcher use a wide variety of sources. This dissertation looks specifically at attempts by some persons and groups moving to America’s first frontier to define themselves as civilized persons, western, and true capable American citizens. The written works whether composed by an individual, or directed by an institution or group (religion, education), offer a look at how a limited and literate group of our earliest western citizens wanted to view themselves and wished to appear to outsiders. Accurate, exaggerated, hypocritical, or somewhere in between the rhetoric they used to advance their self-definition suggests that these particular settlers who left a written record understood what characteristics white Americans were beginning to consider necessary for citizens of the New Republic. The rhetoric made a lasting impression as it still affects our ideas about the American West and frontier life.

Diaries, letters, documents, and local newspapers examined for this dissertation provide the primary basis for a rhetorical analysis of settlers’ ideas about themselves and their experiences. The corpus of material is comprised of the written texts produced by twenty women. These works help assess the way women who accompanied their husbands and fathers to the frontier felt about their lives and their ability to handle new and difficult circumstances. Since the poor were often illiterate, it is likely the women documented in this work came from families back east who were economically and socially able to educate their children. Most of the women writers were married and had children. A few of the texts examined came from widows and daughters. The documents presented include news accounts, histories,

---

private documents, and legislation that dealt with the topics connected to women’s lives. They include materials from Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Kentucky, and Illinois and were chosen to cover the time span stretching from 1777 -1850 that this study examines. The women explain the loneliness and dislocation they suffered, the dangers they faced, and their growing sense of confidence as time progressed. Given their ability to survive the west, they began to view themselves as equal to, or better, than women living along the settled eastern seaboard.

More men than women occupied the Old Northwest. Women came west most often accompanying husbands and fathers. They rarely arrived unaccompanied by a man. Whereas men traveled as heads of households, as well as single men engaged in religious activity, military actions, the fur trade, and as land surveyors and speculators. The men featured in these pages represent a broader group of Americans who possessed the ability to read and write. Some forty-three men penned the diaries and letters studied for this dissertation. Another sixteen wrote books during the era. While some of the published works included were fiction, many were presented as histories. Again, the primary texts reviewed are drawn from each of the states carved out of the Northwest Territory and Kentucky and cover the same time period. The works of the male settlers tell us how they regarded themselves, the western land they occupied, Indians and blacks, the women who accompanied them, the nation as a whole, and help explain the emerging sense of regionalism that separated the East from West.

Newspapers played a large role in recording the history of the First American West and reveal the attitudes of the persons who lived there. Articles, advertisements, and editorial page comments appear from twenty-three newspapers across the region. *The Western Advocate, Western Star, and the Knoxville Gazette*, as well as others presented in these pages cover commentary about the settler, the Indian, free blacks and escaped slaves, war, politics, religion, the West as a region, and education. Religious journals and magazines offer other avenues for discussing the settlers’ commitment to spiritual and moral issues.

The United States Census records, beginning in 1790, offered me a broad view of the persons who resided in the Old Northwest Territory. The figures initially divided the population by gender, age and race, naming only the head of household. Hoping that local and territorial records might provide a
more precise picture of the numbers of early settlers proved disappointing. Many of the local and territorial records prepared before 1820 were destroyed or deemed missing after the War of 1812. Available census records from Indiana and one or two counties in Ohio offered little clarification and the information was not always easy to extrapolate because of the condition of the records.

American historians like Frederick Jackson Turner relied on the definition of frontier by population as offered by the United States Census Bureau. I followed his lead in examining population density but also went beyond this to examine social factors. Black Codes from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, for example, provided information on the treatment of black residents. Records taken from The Northwest Ordinance (1787), the Federal Land Laws from 1785, the Annals of the United States Congress, State Constitutions, early New England Laws, and The Virginia Company’s Rules for colonists presented the legal circumstances under which the earliest British settlers lived and helped unearth the legalities of life for the first American settlers.

Scholars for decades have rhetorically examined the use of the words “frontier” and “west.” Whether regarded as place or ideology, each has played a role in research dedicated to proving or discrediting theories regarding the existence of an American national character. A renowned starting point is Frederick Jackson Turner’s paper given in 1893 on the significance of the frontier. Turner’s work discussed the value of the frontier in shaping American democracy and history. Since he first published his assertions scholars have either complimented or criticized (more recently the criticisms hold sway). In 1959, Merle Curti and associates at the University of Wisconsin introduced their work on Trempealeau County, Wisconsin in *The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County* (1959). Curti, a student of Frederick Jackson Turner, sought to prove the validity of Turner’s assertions about the frontier and its residents’ contributions to the building of the nation. The work of Curti and his fellow scholars, according to an article by James Henretta, made two significant

---

contributions. First, the group utilized census figures, and other statistical data as a methodology for their study. Curti showed how the vast mass of data available about individual lives could open a window into researching the claims made by scholars like Turner who relied less on objective methods and more on interpretations of information. Curti's second major effort: proving the validity of Frederick Jackson Turner's assertions did not fare as well. The numbers he uncovered in the Wisconsin community undercut Turner's explanation of American historical development in America. Despite Curti’s analytical approach to the study of history, and his findings he continued to share Turner's liberal assumptions about historical America and world shaped by and composed primarily of legally equal adult males. The younger scholars of the 1960s relied even more on the useful methodology of the social sciences to complete their work. Their studies, even more than Curti’s relied on numbers and challenged Turner. Henretta claims The Frontier Thesis was living “on borrowed time.” Ignored populations, the history of “important white men,” women, and a more objective approach was in, Turner, the history and triumphalism of old white men was out.

While numbers have value, so do words and intent. Number can demonstrate the mistaken ideas of the persons involved in the settlement process. They can uncover wishful thinking and even fraudulent claims, but the words prove the intent and view of themselves the settlers wished to evince, even if reality was different. As for Turner, today’s scholar suggests what he should have done and how he should have accomplished his study. While that has merit, Turner was not commenting on racial injustice, gender inequality, or addressing the need for justifying actions taken by settlers procuring land from Indians or Hispanics. He was commenting on the closing of the West and what that meant for the future of the country. He viewed the West as he knew and perceived it, just as those referenced in these pages did.

Though it remains important to look at our past and judge it as wanting in order to recognize, sometimes rectify, and evade the same mistakes, it is just as important to understand the settlers on their own terms. Fairness demands we look at them in their circumstances and understand their point of view. I do this by

---

6 Ibid., 510.
7 Ibid, 511.
examining their writing rhetorically as revelations not only of their experiences, but also of their thinking and worldview.⁸

Histories written during the period of early western settlement support the idea that settlers perceived their region as something new and completely American, despite the fact that other groups also occupied the land. Timothy Flint, James Hall, John Filson, and Elizabeth Ellet were writers that I examined for their views of the settlers who moved to a geographical stage of an unfolding western drama. They worked to define their first American West as cohesive. The stories of settlement they published and the manner in which they fashioned their accounts emphasize the character traits they hoped would be attributed to America’s first western citizens. Skillfully manipulated, or mostly true, their rhetoric set a foundation for later westerners to build upon when portraying themselves and their character.

**Methodology**

Diaries, letters, newspaper articles, and records (personal and government constitute the major evidence for noting a frontier identity created by the settlers who wrote about moving into America’s first west after the Revolutionary War. While the numbers and types of settlers represented matter to this work, the words left us matter more. Rhetorical analysis, the examination of language, is the primary analytical approach of this dissertation. A pattern develops when looking at the repeatedly used language that the western settlers presented here employed to describe themselves, their new homes, their Indian neighbors, and a variety of other persons and elements they encountered or thought about. In their article on the discursive construction of national identities, de Cillia, et al (1999) state that “the idea of a specific national community becomes reality in the realm of convictions and beliefs through reifying, figurative

---

⁸ Alan Dundes, author of *Analytical Essays in Folklore* (The Hague and Paris; Mouton, 1975) was renowned for his work as a folklorist, anthropologist, author, and teacher. His essays and books underscore the use of rhetoric as a way to uncover culture. Alan Trachtenberg reminds readers to examine the repeated rhetoric of groups of persons as a way to uncover cultural meaning in his book *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1982).
discourse continually launched by politicians and …people.” 9 I follow their call by noting texts and utterances that are shared and therefore indicate a sense of community. Some general observations about the similarities within the rhetoric used by numerous settlers in America’s early West help pinpoint an effort by westerners to, consciously or unconsciously identify themselves as the best of Americans, western, and civilized.

There are several scientific approaches to the study of identity formation. Some biologists engaged in what we term the ‘hard sciences” that follow specific rules, assert that we are born with our identities in place. Despite his designation as a philosopher and psychologist, Ullin Place proposed the thesis “that mental states were not to be defined in terms of behavior; rather, one must identify them with neural states (the nervous system).”10 Place maintained our brains predispose us to respond to stimuli (human or other) in specific ways. The softer sciences such as psychology and sociology posit that identity creation is the result a person’s ideas of self-hood and interactions with society. Societies, according to the social scientists build relatively stable patterns of social interaction that each of us challenges or accepts. As we accept or challenge society’s norms our status or place within society develops. Moreover, our identity is not static or singular. We carry multiple identities at any one time and some of these change as our relationships, and other circumstances in our lives alter.

The persons featured within these pages built their identity by recognizing both biological and social influences. The saw themselves biologically as men and women, as racially different, and as strong or weak. They accepted gendered roles and perceived racial qualities that white society ascribed. In their social lives they worked to meet the requirements that defined white persons as civilized, cultured, and superior.

The study of gender theory has become quite important over the last several decades and plays a significant role in this study of identity. While sex is the biological component of male and female that

settlers would have recognized, gender (though they would not have recognized the terminology we apply) is both a social and psychological element. Both men and women took on the hardships of the frontier. They carried with them already established ideas about normal gender roles. The ascribed roles of gender, during the Early Republic involved males as strong protectors, and women as frail and submissive. On the frontier the acceptable behaviors assigned to males and females were repeatedly tested. When wives became ill, men assumed household duties. When men left the homestead women took over the day-to-day chores and the role of protector. Though rigid definitions of behavior created stereotypes that resulted such as patriarchy or a male-dominated social structure. While patriarchy existed, it behooves us to take note of the more fluid gender roles experienced in the west. For example, according to the written record evidenced here women fought to protect their households and men on the trail and in military units prepared their meals and cleaned their own clothes. In each of these instances men and women acted outside prescribed gender roles out of necessity and yet maintained their male/female status.

While gender roles might have been more fluid on the frontier most whites’ attitudes toward those of differing races was not. Ideas about race plays a large role in this study. Both Indians and blacks were viewed as different and inferior. In my dissertation, I ascertain through the primary texts the interactions between designated racial groups living on the frontier as well the outcomes of these interactions. Race was and is primarily, though not exclusively, a socially constructed category. While there is a wide consensus that the racial categories that are common in everyday usage are socially constructed, and that racial groups cannot be biologically defined. Nonetheless, scholars admit racial categories correlate with biological traits (e.g., phenotype) to some degree.\textsuperscript{11} Social scientists have taken the lead in defining a race as a group that is treated as distinct in society based on certain characteristics. Because of its biological or cultural characteristics, which are labeled as inferior by powerful groups in

society, a (darker) race is often singled out for differential and unfair treatment. While some racial groups are offered and/or pushed to assimilate or become absorbed into the dominant culture others are not. While some effort was made by missionaries to assimilate Indians into white culture the effort, as misguided and half-hearted as it was, failed.

Social scientists toward the end of the twentieth century used postcolonial theory to account for the domination of people of color and the assumption of “white privilege.” My research encompasses these separate disciplines. The western history of colonialism does matter to this work. White settlers occupied land that they determined unclaimed and open, even though Indians lived on it for centuries before European contact. Though some whites like Quakers and Moravians proclaimed their dealings with Indians to be fair, and the Northwest Ordinance required white settlers to acquire land by lawful title the result is obvious. Indian Removal became law and displaced tribes were forced to leave their homes to the white settlers who occupied them.

Critics tell us that the post-colonial theory as now understood delegitimizes groups who lost their battle. Post-colonialism, concentrating upon marginalization, gives undue importance to successful resisters over unsuccessful ones. Given that preference for winners, it is fair to ask how Indians fit into the concept. Is what happened between the United States and the Indian nations ended or still unfolding? The term “post” suggests it is settled. If the victim lost in this instance can their story fit the model of post-colonial study? Perhaps the terms of study need better definition. Moreover, some scholars complain that using post-colonial theory moves us back to a Eurocentric approach to research. By insisting that Native culture and literary traditions continue to be preoccupied with resisting white American colonial influence, we continue to empower white society. While attempts to place the American Indian within the

12 Ibid.
discipline of post-colonialism in its current state possibly raises more questions than might be answered
the idea of a colonial power displacing a native population offers a viable method of study.

Though the number of primary sources, the types of persons represented, and the methodological
theories used are not as inclusive as some might desire, they do provide a window through which we can
begin to examine the subject of frontier identity and how it developed and place the ability of the settler to
define himself back into her or his point of view.

**Identity Formation**

This dissertation investigates identity creation and what it meant to the American settler. I will
present evidence that people who chose to settle the first frontier, although engaged in the broader attempt
by citizens to create an American national character and culture, believed that their movement westward
laid the foundation for a national American persona. These frontier settlers often defined themselves by
what others were not. They did this through a process that recognized and highlighted difference a
phenomena that some social scientists today call “othering” and by using an already created collective
memory. This collective memory drew upon white ideas of civilized life and stories of the frontier left by
earlier colonists from British Virginia and New England. Their actions, successes and failures added to
the collective memory of what was now an American West. This expanded idea of frontier experience
became a basis for later settlers to build upon when forming their life story. Settlers in the Old Northwest
created a value-based community. As for their values, they were underpinned by Christian doctrine and
though at times loathe to admit it, white European influence.

---

book describes the preconceptions and superior attitude westerners adopt toward people of the “East” (Middle
Eastern, Asian and North African societies). He used Foucault as a sources for grounding his ideas about “othering”.
According to Said, Michel Foucault insisted “othering” is strongly connected with power and knowledge. When we
“other” another group, we point out their perceived weaknesses to place ourselves in a position of power. We set
ourselves up s superior and work to maintain that hierarchical order.
The pioneers who settled the Ohio River Valley were not the first to experience the difficulty of creating new communities and lives in the New World. The fact that other groups of settlers who colonized unfamiliar American places underwent many of the same experiences might lead one to view frontier settlement and the creation of identity on the frontier as “process,” or a course of repeatable experiences. I use it here in a measured way because circumstances can change and alter the pattern. What happened in Ohio was shaped by particular social, historical, and political circumstances that differed from those experienced by John Smith in Virginia and William Bradford in New England in the early 1600s. Yet when comparing the incidents and encounters of the two groups (earliest English colonists and pioneers moving to America’s first frontier) one finds similarities. Indian contact, clearing land, establishing homesteads and facing an unsettled life were part of each group’s encounter with the frontier. After the Revolution of 1776 these similar experiences helped pioneers to construct a collective American identity. Moreover, as the frontier designation moved further west and beyond the Ohio region the persons who settled also used earlier pioneer events to make sense of their lives and establish a western and American identity.

The word identity raises some red flags for scholars. As I use it here and as settlers seem to understand it identity consists of how one views oneself and how one wants others to see them. That said, the truth of one’s presentation of self can be false or deluded. Moreover, identities change. Phillip Gleason, Nelson Foote, Rogers Brubaker, and Nelson Cooper all reference the complications of identity formation. Since the 1950s, identity has been tied to intellectual and moral significance. Debates center on topics such as whether biological and social forces control identity formation and how weak or firm ideas of identity construction are. Those who prefer the biological approach to identity creation such as.

---

Anne Fausto-Sterling see the brain as the foundation of personality. In the late twentieth century, the genome era began. Biomedical researchers began to consider individual identities in terms of DNA base sequences. They insist racial identity has become discernable in terms of DNA markers, and hope to identify special chromosomes affiliated with (gay male) homosexuality. In an attempt to ferret out the molecules that contribute to gender identity, laboratories have move beyond the study of hormones into the expression of gene sequences in the embryonic brain. Despite these biological advances many insist that society remains the most significant influence on how we understand and see ourselves and others.

Social scientists Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper write that identity “denotes a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group or category.” This sameness might be recognized by those within the group as an objectively or subjectively arrived at idea of alike. Brubaker and Cooper also maintain this sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective actions such as nationalism, political movements, or gender affiliations. The authors assert that by the mid-1970s identity as a word had been “driven out of its wits by over-use.” But that was only the beginning. In the 1980s, with the rise of race, class, and gender as the “holy trinity” of the humanities. Brubaker and Cooper assert that, “identity talk” inside and outside academia continues to grow. Discussion of an American character or identity continues as a major topic of debate. While they do not wish to ban the term, they do suggest alternative phrases that might better apply to specific uses.

Historian Philip Gleason also worries about overuse of the word identity. He traces its history and cautions that those employing the word “identity” in their research should do so carefully. Gleason credits

18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid, 3.
Eric Erikson for placing the word “identity” into wide use among scholars of different disciplines.\textsuperscript{22} Erickson’s definition of identity seemed vague and therefore applicable to a variety of studies and as such, has been confused. Erikson admitted that identity is hard to grasp because it concerns "a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture."\textsuperscript{23} His meaning seems to be that “identity” involves an interaction between the interior development of the individual personality, understood in terms derived from the Freudian id-ego-superego model, and the growth of a sense of selfhood that arises from participating in society, internalizing its cultural norms, acquiring different statuses, and playing different roles.\textsuperscript{24} Gleason highlights the waves of the application of “identity” as it began in the 1950s, carried on through the 60s and 70s through the 1908s. He maintains that the reason for the word’s popularity lies in our difficulty to understand the individual’s relationship with society and to the idea of a larger national character.\textsuperscript{25}

While Gleason provides a context for understanding pre-occupation with the word “identity,” Nelson Foote addresses the individual’s complicity in creating and appropriating a series of identities.\textsuperscript{26} Scholars accept the names given to traits and adopt them as their own even if given by others on the basis of family lineage, religion, work activity, and other attributes.\textsuperscript{27} The sense of self-hood and belonging both grow out of acceptance of society’s naming process. The affirmation of settlers’ to accept the designation of West as both a place and ideology began after men of the East such as Thomas Jefferson and Mannaseh Cutler deemed the new territories as a place of difference and experimentation as well as west and fashioned a new law to govern the area.\textsuperscript{28} The people who immigrated to the region adopted and

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Philip Gleason, 918-20.
\textsuperscript{26} Nelson N. Foote, "Identification as the Basis for a Theory of Motivation," \textit{American Sociological Review}, 16 (Feb. 1951), 14-21.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Northwest Ordinance 1787.
began to expand on the idea of a new and different space and identity both locally (west) and nationally (American).

Whether on a local or national basis, recognition of their difference became a key factor in westerners’ beliefs about themselves as superior Americans. Sociologist Allan G. Johnson relies on the concept of the “other” to underscore power relationships and ideas of superiority. Settlers recognized difference. In recognizing difference they set themselves up as different. Yet, Maria Beville, editor of the Journal of Otherness Studies, warns that the term Otherness is not so simple a concept. In many ways, it like words such as frontier and identity is a slippery and difficult term to define. “Othering” presents a contradiction, for in order to recognize difference one must also acknowledge similarity. Moreover, when naming the other in either a specific or generalized way one becomes other to the named group.29 Yet, Beville recognizes the term other as useful. It implies more than simple difference. ‘Sameness’ and ‘difference’ belong to a long standing process of social, cultural and political ‘othering’ that has been pivotal to the development of societies.30 Whether the means for determining “other” is determined by fear, hostility and/or a struggle for domination, or by independence, representation and hospitality the view of the other can be measured by degrees. Treatment of those deemed different depends upon the perceived degree of difference. Blacks and Indians as “other” played into settlers’ need to favorably compare themselves to two groups they could present as inferior and dehumanize through the comparison.31 This seemed especially important as white pioneers tried to prove themselves to citizens back east.

Michael Schwalbe points out that the more offensive designations of “other” that settlers applied to Indians and blacks offered only one model of distinguishing the settler from outside groups. Sociologist Michael Schawlbce recognizes “defensive othering” as a way in which people differentiate

30 Ibid.
themselves from persons within their own group.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, other white persons could be seen as lesser and still operate within the same sphere as the settler. This determination became apparent in descriptions of the British and Easterners. The creation of the “other” as a point of comparison and self-identification helped pioneers identify themselves and understand their place in the American nation.

When describing an American identity and the role that pioneers played in constructing it, Samuel Huntington, noted scholar and author of \textit{Who are We? The Challenges to American National Identity} attacks the notion that America has always been “a nation of immigrants.” He writes that America's founders were not immigrants, but settlers. British settlers arrived in North America desiring to establish a new society through colonization, as opposed to migrating from one existing society to another existing society as immigrants do. That new culture in New England manifested itself through congregationalism, town meetings, and a broader franchise. In Virginia, plantations and the newness of a chance for upward mobility affected settlers, who established their culture of southern manhood that placed political and social power in the hands of a wealthy group of landowners. Although Huntington takes the claim of new culture as a more complete transformation, I believe that their culture evolved over two centuries. At times, they clung to their British connections especially when threatened by other European nations. At other times they resented British rule and chaffed at the authority imposed on them from a Parliament and King whose distance from the colonies made it almost impossible to understand local needs.

Huntington describes the traits colonists eventually came to value most as the product of British antecedents. Ironically, those antecedents of, “liberty, equality, individualism, representative government, and private property,” were the very values that split the colonies from England. Huntington underplays the contributions of Indians, as well as French, Dutch, and Spanish settlement on British settlers and declares that our country would not "be the America it is today if in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth

\textsuperscript{32} Michael Schwalbe, et al.
centuries it had been settled not by British Protestants but by French, Spanish, or Portuguese Catholics.”

Huntington’s narrower view of pioneer identity met with valid criticism. In 1998, Janice Radway promoted a broader approach to exploring identity. As the president of the American Studies Association, Radway challenged the scholars of the discipline to look beyond white, male European influence and engage the stories of groups long ignored in the American experience. Her speech “What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association” (1998) challenged her cohorts to think about the name “American” and the implications of promoting a homogenous national identity. Radway also asked American scholars to look beyond themselves and their country as a way to understand American culture. While earlier scholarship concerning gender, race, ethnicity and class in America had been written, Radway contended, more was needed. Her prompt spurred important work. Yet, while these studies offer valuable insights, they, too, can narrow our vision. Mention identity and the academy mostly reverts to addressing the issues of gender, race/ethnicity, and class when defining what it means to be American. Others that have been claimed include disability, location, age, sexuality, and occupation. While each of these factors matter, the authors of the texts that appear in my work frequently use religion, education and political involvement as elements important to their view of themselves as Americans of the West and the New Republic Era.

The Scholarship

Although no legitimate research devoted to identity formation for pioneers living on America’s first frontier can ignore the importance of examining gender, race, and class in studying self-definition, other factors also figured into how America’s first pioneer generation thought about themselves and wanted others to view them. I contend that through their writing the settlers quoted in this text used religion, education, child rearing, bravery, and self-reliance in forming an identity for the American

frontiersman and women who settled in the Ohio River Valley region. They used memory gained through past experience and knowledge to pinpoint desirable traits and reject characteristics displayed by those regarded as “others.” American pioneers of the Ohio Valley region, through their own words, used accepted desirable characteristics to assist in establishing an identity that they viewed as positive and truly American. These early citizens understood the need for a unified American identity. Trying to complete the break with the British begun by war, all Americans were trying to create a national character during the years of the Early Republic. The writings presented often claimed the Old Northwestern citizens were the truest Americans. Since the nation was new and the land that pioneers claimed was regarded as unsettled, the settler could think that the character both regionally and nationally that he exhibited was also new. If a national persona was to be created, then it should be one that, supposedly, left behind the European influences still apparent in the culture of those who resided in settled eastern communities.

Ideas about America identity and its connection to frontier have long fascinated scholars from a variety of academic disciplines. This work builds upon the ideas and theories of scholars whose work has contributed to our understanding of the significance of westward expansion when examining American identity, Frederick Jackson Turner's paper, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," read at Chicago in 1893, remains compelling and valuable for research purposes. Turner’s explanation of the nation’s development called attention to a cultural distinctiveness and national character that existed for America and Americans, even as he regrettfully announced an end to the constant "colonization of the Great West" that found promise in an abundance of open land.35 His regional thesis laid the basis for the idea that free and abundant land had created a restlessness, individualism, materialistic, and pragmatic people far different than their European predecessors. His work credited the settlement of the frontier with having fostered ideas of American democracy and nationalism.

Turner was hardly the first or the last to express the idea that the West had a profound influence in building the idea of an American character. Ralph Waldo Emerson purported the same as early as

1844. In his essay concerning “Character” (1844) he asserted that American citizens demanded of their political representatives, wisdom, independence of thought, the ability to decide right, and unselfishness. He pointed out that our frank countrymen of the west… have a taste for character.” 36 Theodore Roosevelt’s The Winning of the West (four volumes 1889-1896) credited western settlement and the aggressive tactics used for obtaining land with finishing the creation of a United States. Turner’s work, however, held special appeal for readers and inspired a legion of scholars to direct their attention to all manner of subject matter connected with the western experience and identity. Many of these authors felt compelled to acknowledge Turner’s ideas by supporting or contradicting them.

As a critic himself, Turner directly contradicted the work of Herbert Baxter Adams, with whom he studied at Johns Hopkins. While Adams, Turner’s mentor, posited a theory that tied American development to European roots, or more specifically to cultural elements begun in medieval Germany,37 Turner set out to complicate and in some ways overturn that idea. Turner’s critics, in turn, took aim at his assertion of causation. Progressive historian Charles Beard, in a 1928 article, claimed that Turner ignored multiple factors contributing to the development of the frontier. Industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of transportation systems counted just as much as frontier settlement, in fact, according to Beard these elements of American life actually promoted western movement.38 John Almack, in an article titled “The Shibboleth of the Frontier,” in Historical Outlook (1925), also highlighted Turner’s errors. Almack insisted that Turner used repetition and sympathy instead of truth and resorted to a type of “Marxian determinism” when analyzing the contribution of the frontier and settlers to the American character.39 Benjamin Wright, authoring an article for the Yale Review in 1930, took pains to denounce Turner’s disavowal of European influences on America and frontier settlement.

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
As Americans approached the midpoint of the twentieth century and a Cold War stand-off with the USSR, scholars from both sides of the Atlantic delved into the historical records to examine the ways in which frontier settlers identified themselves. Ray Allen Billington used his book *Westward Expansion* (1949) to remind Americans that the story of western expansion contained painful as well as proud moments. Focused on the Trans-Mississippi frontier, *Westward Expansion* encourages citizens to consider not only the optimism, faith in self, adaptability, and trust in democracy that frontiers-people displayed, but to also remember the racism and excessive nationalism that undercut the positives gained when encountering the frontier story.\(^{41}\)

Henry Nash Smith’s Ph.D. dissertation for Harvard University was published as *Virgin Land* (1950). In this text Smith located a set of myths and symbols he claimed were attached to the story of our western advancement and then explained for his audience just how these character types melded together as one frontier identity that continued to influence American politics and society. Smith’s western hero, the yeoman-farmer and heroines played out their roles on the pages of American literature, movie scripts, in children’s games and toys and a host of other cultural items.\(^{42}\) Though critics later dismissed Smith’s “myth and symbol school” as too narrow and simplistic, his ideas much like Turners’ continue to hold sway as an early classic of the American studies field.\(^{43}\)

One need only examine the last half century in America to conclude that a measure of truth continues to be found in Turner’s work, as well as in Smith’s myth and symbol school. The idea of the quintessential American rising out of our frontier heritage played itself out in John F. Kennedy’s mention of a “new frontier” as emblematic of his political vision and economic goals in the early 1960s.\(^{44}\) In his

---

\(^{40}\) Ibid.


speeches, JFK declared the promise of a “new generation” of Americans, bringing to mind the pioneers of the nation’s first frontier who saw promise in their march westward. Lyndon Johnson and Ronald Reagan hitched their identities to western garb and ranch lifestyles when not in the oval office in the 1960s and 1980s. Though they were from western states and both owned ranches before coming into Washington D.C. Johnson and Regan both understood the benefits of portraying themselves as an alternative to the polished northeastern politician. Their charades were part of a more rugged, self-made, independent, but caring American persona. Fast forward to George W. Bush in the opening years of the twenty-first century and read the numerous press reports that refer to the president’s reliance upon a firm, perhaps inflexible, western persona when engaged in diplomatic relations. For example, NBC Nightly News reported that when then President Bush traveled to Germany to build European support for the twenty-first century war on Iraq, even the “German media portrayed Bush as a, “Rambo-like cowboy intent on going after Saddam Hussein with or without Europe's support.” Bush’s so-called cowboy behavior and the idea of that the frontiersmen’s character, for good or bad, remains a strong part of our cultural identity and persists within our own country and beyond our borders.

Since the 1970s, American Studies scholars have moved us further along the road to understanding frontier settlement and identity mostly by focusing on smaller areas of study. John Mack Faragher’s, *Sugar Creek, Life on the Illinois Prairie* (1986), for example, offers a regional study that helps ferret out the difficulties and rewards of frontier settlement. His community study tracks the settlement experience and the changes taking place within a locale over time.

Elizabeth Perkins directly addresses the issue of frontier identity creation in her book, *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (1998). Perkins provides a close reading of pioneer John Shane’s written work and suggests that while settlers laid claim to an identity, the children

\[45\] Ibid.
of frontier people often revised and interpreted their stories. Along with authors devoted to studying the west, the settler’s children crafted their work to meet a specific agenda. Perkins’ work encouraged readers to look to the original words of the pioneers in order to gain a truer understanding of western settlement. Her words especially influenced this text, which aims to move away from the conclusions drawn by outsiders and take a close up and personal view of those who settled the land.

Gender studies remains key to comprehending identity creation within the rubric of frontier studies. Kathleen Brown’s *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (1996) offers insight into the lives of women who faced the circumstances found in new settlements. Her research dealt with the fluid nature of gender roles experienced by colonial women settling in Virginia. Settlers on the frontier, both men and women, often were forced to act outside the prescribed roles of masculine and feminine in order to survive. Though the designation of feminine in European society dictated more traditional wife and mother behaviors, Brown point out that women found themselves forced to perform tasks more in line with masculine activity. The plowing and other heavy work women in Virginia undertook made it difficult to reconcile the expectation of coming to the new world to rise in status with the reality of surviving in an unsettled land. The female settler solved her dilemma by explaining her situation as temporary. Much of what Brown wrote provides value for studying the lives of women on America’s first frontier as they faced the challenge of remaining feminine while working in fields and living in rough circumstances. Joanna Stratton’s *Pioneer Women* (1982) also offers insight into the lives of everyday women who traveled into the American west. Stratton pulls the primary sources of women who settled in Kansas and comments on their lives as viewed through their own words and lived experience. These are just two of what comprises several library shelves of works devoted to the storied lives of women in the west.

Malcolm Rohrbough writes about a “frontier tradition.” He contends this tradition consisted of a set of beliefs that was already in place for the newest American pioneer. Rohrbough’s book *Trans-Appalachian Frontier, Third Edition: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850* (2008) applies a chronological breakdown to draw out his theories explaining the development of political, government and social institutions in different regions of the country. Rohrbough asserts that as each group of men and women moved further westward they built on previous ideas of frontier and yet built new institutions to help them cope with their own particular circumstances.

I apply the idea of a frontier tradition more closely to individual accounts of the settler experience. By looking closely at their written record I demonstrate that these men and women were aware of the trials, tribulations and opportunity the frontier offered before they began their travels. Settlers who moved over the Appalachians from 1776-1830 (many of whom came from New England) heard the stories about the Pilgrim and Puritan communities, watched their peers defy the British Proclamation of 1763, and listened to the tales of trappers, military men and explorers who crossed the mountains before them. The pre-conceived ideas about frontier they carried with them provided a way to contextualize their new circumstances and provided a basis for their self-definition.

Richard Slotkin also is inclined to view the frontier as tradition. He devoted over twenty years of his research to producing a trilogy of books that applied and extended Smith’s myth and symbol school, even as others declared it obsolete. Smith in *Virgin Land* offered readers a series of enduring myths and legends that he proclaimed attached to the American frontier. In Smith’s view, the frontier served as the vehicle for economic, spiritual, and masculine renewal. The mythology went on to assert that the West required rugged individuals. Slotkin provided a more detailed list of rugged individuals by singling out hunter/scouts and Indian fighters among others, whose persona was more complicated than those

---

52 Ibid.
characters portrayed in dime novels and through more modern media. The frontier myths, according to Smith and Slotkin, have been accepted as truth by generations of Americans and in effect have helped bind our society together through the centuries.\textsuperscript{54} Two books within the trilogy influence this project. His initial offering, \textit{Regeneration through Violence} (1973), emphasized that American settlement from first contact was the story of frontier. Thus, the idea of frontier by the time of the Ohio settlement already held traction in the minds of the new American citizen. The third book \textit{Gunfighter Nation} (1993) underpins Slotkin’s earlier arguments through the use of examples in images from popular film, television, and novels. According to Slotkin, popular culture continues to disseminate the idea of frontier to Americans and others.

Tradition or not, authors insist current scholarship recognize the plight of the Indians, Asians, Africans, and Latinos, and fault earlier scholars, such as Turner, for ignoring the violent conquest of the west. Patricia Limerick in \textit{Legacy of Conquest} (1987) takes issue with Turner’s claim that the year 1890 marked the closing of the American frontier. She insists the problems that grew out of this violent era dedeicat3ed to finishing the mission of Manifest Destiny set the stage for later conflict. One of these continuing struggles involves the United States southwestern border troubles and the insistence by some that Mexican/Americans, as outsiders, exacerbate the problem. Limerick insists this ongoing clash of cultures supports her thesis.

Richard White’s \textit{It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West}, (1991) provides an exemplary text for those embracing the New Western scholarship. White challenges Turner’s idea of frontier settlement as a process. White views frontier as characterized by a set of relationships. These relationships were not just between settlers and Indians. They also involved intersections among white peoples of the same, as well as differing, classes, religions and ethnicities. Settlers and their governments, both local and federal, developed a distinctive relationship due to distance

from and ability to communicate with officials.\textsuperscript{55} Distance from the Eastern seaboard’s cities and towns and the need to address a distinct set of issues, in White’s view, combined to make frontier persons unique in their needs, adaptability and approaches to problem-solving.

White noted the importance of adaptability when addressing the relationship between people and place. Settlers learned to deal with the circumstances of climate, landscape, and a host of other natural elements connected to the settlement experience. William Cronon agrees that the land as well as other persons affected identity formation. Cronon in \textit{Changes in the Land} (1983) argues the case for placing ecology at the center of the settlement story. Though his narrative focuses upon colonial settlement, his work underscores land use and availability of resources. These factors figured as much into the lives of pioneers who lived in the Ohio region as they did for early colonial settlers.\textsuperscript{56} Among other things, Cronon centers on the intense deforestation performed by the settlers. Between the farming that required open spaces and all the goods that used lumber, they changed the landscape and their own lifestyle.

Whether or not historians regard westward settlement as a process or set of relationships, frontier persons perceived their settlement experiences to be unique, even though the first explorers and settlers arriving in America after Columbus’s maiden voyage in 1492, entertained some preconceptions about what they might encounter in their travels. They drew inspiration for their adventures into the wilderness from the stories about colonial settlement and from the explorers and soldiers who preceded them. Likewise, those who expanded the frontier beyond the Ohio region utilized the narratives of the ‘first’ American settlers to help make sense of their experiences.

To establish their claim to a special identity, settlers who traveled beyond the Appalachians to Ohio, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and the surrounding territory compared themselves to their eastern counterparts, to Indians and old Europeans and found each of those groups wanting when placed beside themselves. In their letters and writings these men and women saw themselves as real Americans, who

had the temerity to face an untamed land and carve out a civilized lifestyle. The idea of a positive difference from others underpinned the identity they created for themselves and left us.

The years under examination, 1776-1830 may seem arbitrary, but they are not. The year 1776 offers the point at which many rebels felt freed from constraints of British law that kept them penned behind the Appalachian Mountain range. They also began to view themselves as part of a new nation struggling for self-definition through a new and different form of government. As for the 1830 end date, it follows the opening of the Erie Canal and its connection of the East to what most considered to be settled America. Although women such as Anna Bentley, in her letters, still described her home in Ohio as frontier in 1830, new areas of the country lying further to the west had already begun to lay claim to the frontier designation.

While chronological order plays a role in the study, since over time the frontier moved beyond these settlements, using time as the primary organizational format becomes unwieldy and prone to repetition. Therefore, this text will take a topical approach to developing a narrative about identity creation on the frontier. Diaries, correspondence, a variety of government documents and records, travel journals, official church and missionary works, songbooks, and a host of other primary and secondary sources lend themselves to the thematic arrangement. These sources nicely underpin the assertion that citizens on the frontier worked to create a flattering and enduring picture of their lives and show that as they traveled westward to the Ohio region ideas about frontier settlement already existed in their minds. Despite any knowledge he/she had of the region they headed for, the settlers in America’s first frontier considered themselves to be uniquely American.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

The argument proceeds from explanations of migration and lifestyle to claims that a western identity formation took place in the Old northwest as part of the settlement process. This was the first American West. The first chapter explains terminology used throughout this work. It also discusses
attempts by a number of pioneers to define themselves in their new home and provides details about their settlement experience. It follows the progression of settlement through differing routes from the Eastern settled states and highlights the ethnic differences of persons migrating into the Old Northwest and Kentucky over several decades. Reports given by official surveyors for these territories, descriptions offered by the settlers, contemporary newspapers, and a variety of early state histories flesh out the necessary information. Memory allowed the settlers presented here to make sense of their surroundings, while the ability to adapt to and sometimes refashion their new environment boosted their self-esteem. As the numbers of persons moving west increased, so did the desire for statehood. Even after statehood was achieved settlers still viewed their lives as distinctive and continued to write about the region as “an uncivilized world full of wonder and danger.”

In that world filled with wonder and danger pioneers contrasted themselves with others to pinpoint their own western personality traits. While some characteristics of eastern citizens and Europeans seemed acceptable for identity development, frontiersmen rejected other characteristics as inferior and/or outdated. White male citizens living in the East might possess admirable manners or education, but they lacked the ingenuity, bravery and self-reliance exhibited daily by pioneers. For example, many eastern Americans seemed content to apprentice themselves or sell their labor to owners of small business concerns. Settlers meantime struck out on their own and answered to themselves. Europeans offered culture and a strong military tradition, but failed to understand the importance of liberty and opportunity as enjoyed by Americans. Tied to their stratified and old fashioned class system, those living in Europe or European colonies outside the new nation’s borders experienced limited possibilities for achievement; achievements only America offered to all white-male citizens.

Indians and blacks, both free and enslaved, were viewed as uncivilized “others.” Even though one might adopt or admire some of their personality elements, such as the Indians survival skills in the

---

57 Lucy Hastings (Lucy Hastings Correspondence in Hastings, Lucy A. / State Family correspondence, 1838, 1855-1874 [Transcriptions] Call Number, Eau Claire SC 35 (unpublished) http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI)

58 Discussion of other as a concept in the Schalbe and Said texts is applied.
backwoods, the differences detected between them and white settlers proved too entrenched to overcome. Thus, the pioneer not only identified who he was, he also identified himself by pointing to who he was not.

The stories and experiences of many of the men who moved alone or with their families to the American nation’s early frontier play out in the diaries, journals, day books, public papers and the correspondence they left behind. Through their words in the second chapter one gains a general perspective of the male settler’s everyday life and his view of himself. In many ways those who wrote about their lives saw themselves, not like those who remained back east, but as a truer version of the American male. Like their European predecessors, male settlers whether in a community setting, or on their own faced daily obstacles to success.

According to those male settlers presented in the third chapter, their own lives and the lives of others depended upon how well they demonstrated their self-reliance, confidence, intelligence and bravery. When facing unsettled land and the possibility of dangerous encounters the aforementioned qualities were regarded as necessary. Indians, blacks and women offered a contrast to manliness. Using paternalism and/or oppression in contacts with those of other races and relying upon a long-standing patriarchal system in gender relations, white males demonstrated their superiority.

Whether a white male left the Eastern seaboard by choice or because he failed to make a living, or committed some infraction of societal norms, the frontier settler wanted his peers to see him as industrious, successful, independent and self-sufficient. By word and deed, even when that deed seemed less than masculine, these were, in their estimation, true American men.

In the third chapter, I examine the role of women on the frontier. Women, until recently, were historically downplayed in terms of western settlement. In the last few decades, American scholarship has recognized that women had an equal hand in shaping the frontier. Whether a sod-buster’s wife, mother, camp follower, female missionary, or woman migrant to the borderland, all frontier women had a story to tell. The women recorded in these pages used their stories in creating a long-standing and flattering identity for the white, middle-class women who moved west.
Scrutinizing diaries, correspondence, private papers, and newspapers/periodicals shows that women portrayed themselves as capable, resilient, hard-working, knowledgeable, virtuous, and brave. Their words and stories pinpoint the hardships, loneliness, and difficulties they faced. Western women struggled when attempting to retain their claim to acceptable femininity as defined by religious norms, the patriarchal system, and eastern prescriptive literature. The circumstances of their lives often forced them to engage in activities that lay far beyond what was considered acceptable female behavior. Fighting Indians and plowing fields hardly seemed ladylike. Yet, the frontierswoman insisted she remained within the established boundaries of acceptable gender roles despite her endeavors, typical or not.

Women concerned with retaining aspects of femininity found ways to justify their behavior. Often, they contrasted themselves with Indian and black females as a way to establish themselves as civilized and refined, despite the challenges placed before them. The white, western woman was a survivor and well equipped to stand by the side of the white frontiersman.

The fourth chapter explores the ways in which education and child-rearing practices helped fashion a frontier identity. Children also endured the difficulties and opportunities of living on the frontier. They needed both a practical education to survive and a traditional education that provided literacy to prosper. Given the possibility of captivity by savage Indians and natural dangers of animals and environment in the woods many persons considered the borderlands a risky place to raise a family. People residing in the west countered that notion by stating the remarkable ability of their children to face whatever came their way. Growing up on the nation’s borders forced the children of pioneers to rely on themselves and their inner strengths. Educators east and west promoted the virtues of allowing children to experience the out-of-doors and grow up in a hardier fashion. While easterners sometimes lacked these opportunities, the western child did not.

Western children needed to survive dangerous situations, but the ability to read and write also loomed large as parents on the frontier considered how best to raise their sons and daughters. Many of the white persons who comprise the bulk of this study were educated enough to read and write; hence the ability to provide their self-description. These mothers and fathers often wrote of their desire to see their
children prosper as reputable and educated adult Americans. Articles, account books and other personal letters document book purchases and instances of home schooling and hired tutors. Each of these bear out the desire for learning present in the west. Both the ability to raise brave, self-reliant children in the face of difficult circumstances and the skill to provide competence in literacy factored into the construction of the western character. As true Americans these men and women capably produced ideal republican citizens able to steer the country toward greatness.

Religion moves front and center in the fifth chapter as it provides a backdrop for identity creation. Frontier religion took place in what many settlers concerned with such issues regarded as a garden of good and evil. Wherever settlement occurred religion followed. Life on the frontier, however, offered religious benefits as well as drawbacks. The new environment could hamper civilized behavior and tempt one to move closer to damnation. The idea that frontier living might threaten one’s soul could be traced back to the explorers and the first settlers in the new world. At the same time, the practice of religion in an unsettled landscape where one saw unobstructed God’s creative glory also held sway in the minds of each generation of settlers.

In this chapter, letters, journals, songbooks, revival literature, religious tracts and church records from Old Northwest settlement explain claims of a distinctive religious practice and closeness to God. Those pioneers, intent on proving their own faith commitment, sometimes insisted most eastern citizens could never attain this closeness. Not only did western settlers believe they grew closer to God in their isolated settlements, they also maintained that overcoming the difficulties of moving away from established churches made them more resilient Christians. Though adherence to particular religious denominations differed among settlers, fundamental beliefs in one God, the Commandments, and salvation offered some sense of a shared religious experience. Settlers’ claimed that they suffered from fewer denominational arguments.

Involvement in politics and government helped shape settlers’ identity. The sixth chapter examines the documents of the settlers who left a record as a citizen of the west and as an American citizen. Citizenship and civil involvement helped measure the success of the New Republic. Political issues necessarily interested many frontiersmen once the Congress enacted the Northwest Ordinance, which opened the possibility of achieving statehood. Their livelihood and self-esteem depended in part on the recognition that western settlers deserved equal representation in the halls of government. A good number of pioneers believed their role in creating the idea of America as a nation of individualists mattered. Their support for egalitarianism and democracy demonstrated that Americans differed greatly from Europeans.\(^6\)

Early on pioneers concerned over the laws governing them recognized that they faced issues that eastern citizens did not. The already settled seaboard states paid little or no attention to land disputes, Indian attacks, British threats, and settling the place of blacks in society. In the South the position of blacks, free or enslaved, in society was governed by strict legal codes. In the northeast, though free, bigotry kept blacks sidelined in society. Their issues, their voices, and their place in the ranks of citizenship remained unrecognized.

Settlers on America’s first frontier seemed to understand that the opportunity to create a truly democratic republic lay before them. Unlike citizens living in already established Eastern states, pioneers were free of over a century of British influences in governance, geographic layout, and custom. The pioneer freely involved himself in fashioning government from the local to the state level. A true American male used his preeminence through gender, race and religion to play his role in the newly formed American Republic, his role was both privilege and duty and he took both seriously.

Using narratives of Indian encounters, stories about their daily lives, as well as political and religious practices as vehicles for self-definition, settlers took for granted that the personality type they

created could be applied to all pioneers, sans a few miscreants. Ultimately, my dissertation is intended to be more than a historical recapitulation of settlement developments on the early American frontier. While authors have argued that early New England settlers demonstrated a self-awareness of wilderness and frontier, the identity creation that took place in the Old Northwest presents us with the first American process of frontier identification. While many settlers relied upon reports of earlier colonial settlement to help them make sense of their experiences, they also, as a product of a newer time, helped set the stage for an American western identity that followed the frontier line as it continued to move westward. Whether process or a series of relationships underpinned this frontier identity development, each new group expanding the borders of western American settlement utilized a number of the same elements to define their character. Classifications of gender, race, and societal status mattered. Yet, settlers also used religious practice, citizenship, parenthood, and education to measure their self-worth.

One might wonder why we usually identify the Plains States, Texas, the Rocky Mountains region, and the states that border the Pacific Ocean and the inhabitants therein as the American West and Westerners. Americanist William Goetzmann provides some insight into this discrepancy considering the first American frontier settlers resided in the Old Northwest Territory and Kentucky. The visual record of painters, sculptors, and entertainers working in the American West after the 1830s fixes far west panoramas and characters such as cowboys, cattle drives, gunslingers, and cavalrymen as the American frontier. The rhetorical record left by settlers living within the Northwest Territory paint a less vivid and memorable history of frontier life.

According to the texts left behind, it is clear that many settlers accepted the idea of their identity and self-worth, as they described it in context of their times. It is important to recognize why they felt compelled to act in ways we would not and to understand the white settler on his terms.

---

Westerners of the Old Northwest and Kentucky, despite the lack of paintings and sculptures, developed their collective identity with reference to a distinctive American frontier. They employed memory and difference to demarcate their character. Western writers claimed the brutality and uncivilized nature that intruded on their lives on the frontier drew western settlers together. The Indian menace trumped the pioneer’s desire for unrestrained independence and “open country settlement.”⁶³ John Bradford made clear that he believed a shared identity existed among the westerners of his state when he declared in his weekly newspaper, The Kentucky Gazette, that he intended to and could “…secure the unanimity of opinion…”⁶⁴ Sometimes separated by education, ethnic background, or political affiliation, citizens on the frontier fought for one another, shared supplies, and built communities together. They survived together. Heart-rending narratives attested to this bonding and to the creation of their special western identity. No matter their differences, these exemplary men and women pulled together and in doing so formed America’s first western persona.

Chapter 2

“WHO WE ARE AND ARE NOT”
CHOOSING OUR IDENTITY ON AMERICA’S FIRST FRONTIER

Rebecca Heald, a pioneer wife and mother, amazed early American readers with the story of her “exciting” wilderness ordeal when she published details about her narrow escape from an Indian warrior. The author explained that during an 1812 Indian attack, a marauding brave attempted to steal her horse. Recalling the frightening experience, Heald contended that, thanks to luck and ingenuity, she managed “at the last instant to escape the savage’s intended death blow.” She then hid “under a pile of blankets on a nearby trader’s boat.” The lady remained “completely silent during the voyage downriver until certain of her safety . . .” 65 Heald’s survival depended upon her own ability to act quickly and boldly, at least according to her account.

When telling of her experience as she “remembered” it and chose to portray herself, Heald stressed the bravery, self-reliance, and ingenuity she showed while escaping from Indians intent on murdering her. She emphasized the behavior and values she esteemed and believed other Americans were beginning to view as the ideal characteristics for a national identity. Heald’s memory of the story held meaning for her, since bravery, self-reliance, and the ability to think and act quickly placed her well within not just a developing and acceptable national character, but also the more local western persona that she perceived settlers arriving on America’s first frontier were consciously and unconsciously creating for themselves.

The story told by Heald gets at the heart of this dissertation’s claim, which is that we can discern the cultural values at work in the New Republic and on America’s First Frontier by paying attention to the rhetoric and behaviors expressed by frontier settlers. In choosing their own positive descriptions – and also in ascribing negative values to their enemies – these settlers demonstrated precisely what they prized.

---

or disdained. This dissertation uses rhetorical analysis. American Studies scholar, Alan Trachtenberg reminds readers to examine the repeated rhetoric of groups of persons as a way to uncover cultural meaning. In *The Incorporating of America* (1982), Trachtenberg writes, “as a student of culture I am drawn especially to the figurative language by which people represent their perceptions of themselves and their worlds . . . I take these as materials of prime historical interest, for they are vehicles of self-knowledge, of the concepts upon which people act vehicles of self-knowledge”. 66 Comparing the textual communication produced by settlers’ living on America’s first frontier to those of the British arriving in early Plymouth, Boston, and Jamestown, suggests a distinctive pattern of identity formation. Those early colonists, much like the later migrants into the Northwest Territory, saw themselves as living on a frontier. Even if they used words other than frontier to describe their new settlements, they understood the land to be on the borders of what they accepted as civilization. Use of terms such as wilderness and savages to describe the land and the people who inhabited it are found in the writings of both groups. Local context, environmental as well as social, helped develop a shared identity among early and later settlers. I argue that the relative distance from one’s perceived “homeland,” religious belief, gender norms, child-rearing and education, race, and political interests all played a role in bonding settlers as a community. This bonding process occurred repeatedly as the constantly moving frontier changed from the earliest English settlements of the seventeenth century to the Ohio River Valley region settled after 1776. This later period, known to many historians and Americanists as the era of the New Republic, is the primary focus of this work, and the theory it addresses, as any work must do that analyzes the West, is the frontier thesis by Frederick Jackson Turner. This dissertation tests Turner’s claims, and those of his critics, about the west. It tests them, however, through an examination of America’s first west or frontier, the Old Northwest and Kentucky. In this geographical region, I hypothesize, the words and actions of settlers set the stage for cultural development and for the later regional identity that eventually spread further west across the plains and toward and beyond the Rocky mountains.

---

Words Matter

This dissertation uses terms in scholarly discourse that have been contested. For example, the meaning of frontier can refer to a geographic location or serve as a metaphor for remoteness. The Northwest Territory moniker has been applied to several regions as the United States has grown and could encompass the Ohio River Valley region or the Pacific Coastline. The labeling of persons as pioneers can also be troublesome. Given the problems of definition it is important to explain how several terms are used in my work.

Scholars debate how to best define “frontier.” Though a review of the word frontier appears earlier in the introduction a further explanation can only increase our understanding of the term. Historian Ray Billington asserts that Europeans viewed the frontier as both place and idea. Europeans did not dispute the need to define some places in the New World as civilized or other locales as frontier. They viewed all of America as frontier prior to the Revolutionary War. When determining the idea of frontier, Europeans perceived the American frontier as uncivilized, dangerous, and replete with economic opportunity. Once the Revolutionary War ended and the British no longer held claim to the seaboard colonies, Europeans began to identify the American frontier as that specific region that lay beyond the Appalachians. They recognized a divide between east and west in America.67 James Fennimore Cooper, in works such as The Pioneers (1823), helped to change European ideas of frontier and Americans. For foreigners from England, France, and Germany who read his books, the frontier was still a wilderness and an unsettled region, but it stood apart from the Eastern seaboard settlements created by colonial settlers.68 The frontier, forested and rough, as well as the prairie, a place of boom and bust living, bred heroes, such as the fictional Natty Bumppo, who graced many of Cooper’s tales69 and the real-life Daniel Boone who

68 Ibid.  
69 James Fennimore Cooper, The Leatherstocking Tales. (New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 1985) include five individual novels The Pioneers (1823), The Last of the Mohicans (1826), The Prairie (1827), The Pathfinder (1840), and The Deerslayer (1841). The novels cover the entire life span of the main character Natty Bumppo (also called Leather-Stocking) The Pioneers is the first novel and it offers a portrait of frontier life in
settled his family in Kentucky and fought Indians to protect his home and loved ones. This was the American frontier and pioneer as perceived by those living in Europe after the Revolutionary War.

Americans assessed their frontier as both place and ideology. Those who thought about moving and those who did so, thought about the frontier as a geographical space; the northwest region of the Ohio River Valley that was no longer denied to them by British law. The official United States Census report treated the frontier as the “margin of settlement which has a density of two or more to the square mile.” Frederick Jackson Turner relied upon this definition when advancing his ideas concerning the closing of the American frontier, yet Turner also envisioned it as “the melting point between savagery and civilization.” By these definitions several frontiers had already graced the American landscape and more followed in what would geographically become the United States. There had been the Puritan frontier, the Old West, which includes the region from the fall line of the seaboard-rivers to the crest of the Alleghenies, and the Old Northwest. By 1830, the frontier region had moved forward to the Mississippi Valley and then onto the Southwest, the Plains, and the Oregon Country. The first American frontier drew claimants of this Northwest Territory who like earlier Europeans saw the area as a place where the populace who could civilize the land and make it their own in response to their vision of the perfect settlement, despite a myriad of challenges and obstacles. Americans who actually moved from the East coast to the open lands in the early Northwest expected to improve and/or recreate their lives.

Once settled on the frontier, the persons who claimed the land began homesteads and towns and fought to hold onto their accomplishments. John Mason Peck’s “New Guide to the West” (1848) suggests

---

American literature. The main subject of the book is the conflict between two different views of the frontier. Natty Bumppo regards the land as “God’s Wilderness” and the other character wants to tame and cultivate the land.  
70 The fact that Frederick Jackson Turner relied upon the United States Census Bureau’s definition of “unsettled” or frontier territory was that which had population densities of less than 2 people per square mile is found in John T. Juricek, “American Usage of the Word "Frontier" from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society (1966) 10-34.  
71 The quote referring to the frontier as a “melting point” was developed by Frederick Jackson Turner in his, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” American Historical Association. Chicago World’s Fair, Chicago, 12 July 1893.  
that three distinct waves of migration took place for farmers moving westward. Peck described the first wave as “...the pioneer, who depends for the subsistence of his family chiefly upon the natural growth of vegetation, called the range, and the proceeds of hunting. His implements of agriculture are rude, chiefly of his own make, and his efforts directed mainly to a crop of corn and a truck patch. ... He is the occupant for the time being, pays no rent, and feels as independent as the lord of the manor. With a horse, cow, and one or two breeders of swine, he strikes into the woods with his family, and becomes the founder of a new county, or perhaps state. He builds his cabin, gathers around him a few other families of similar tastes and habits, and occupies till the range is somewhat subdued.”

Peck looked to the next group as the class of emigrants who purchase their land, clear roads, and improve the housing types they constructed. This second wave of farmers built school houses, mills and courthouses. The third wave “rolled on” and, according to Peck, included, “men of capital and enterprise.” The earliest settler was now able to take advantage of the increases in land prices and take account of how his hard work enriched his life economically and socially. The frontier became more than a spot on a map. Settlements, villages, and towns rose from the forests the pioneer cleared and planted.

Those early settlers and the persons or groups who followed wrote in their letters, diaries, and other written texts about the frontier as a vision of what America was meant to be and presented themselves as examples of what a true American citizen should be. They were fashioning the country out of unclear forests and fallow fields. Crevecoeur, a Frenchman watching the cultivation of the so-called American ideal, regarded the frontier as the “great woods” and claimed that Americans were those who “felt the pull of a vacant continent.”

---

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
pioneers to claim they, as Crevecoeur asserted, were the true Americans since they accepted the challenge and lure of unsettled land and displayed qualities such as those exhibited by Rebecca Heald.

Stories like Heald’s, as well as the United States Census Bureau’s 1890 announcement that the nation’s ability to move the frontier line had ended, inspired historian Frederick Jackson Turner, to examine what the frontier meant to America. He interpreted the presence of a movable frontier as a key to the development of American democracy and national identity. He worried that the closing of the frontier meant the closing of a safety valve for American social pressures. His conclusions, first announced in his speech titled, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893), remain a topic of debate that continues today. Turner maintained the frontier was, “the line of most rapid Americanization” and asked his audience to understand that each generation of Americans moving westward encountered “primitive conditions.” He believed the Americans populating the opening regions of the west had been armed with specific traits that helped them succeed. Turner wrote of characteristics that included, “...coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and acquisitiveness; that practical inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things... that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism” All of these were needed to face the rough circumstances of frontier life. The self-sufficiency developed by these citizens promoted the spread of democracy and their ideas about democracy formed around their articular set of circumstances. Their remote location, desire for land ownership, the dangers they faced and the vast resources available prompted them to establish a brand of democracy that encouraged local responsive government rather than a strong centralized authority. They were reluctant to surrender their control over the life they struggled to build, even after the designation of frontier moved beyond their region.

---

77 United States Census Bureau 1890.
79 Turner’s “Significance of the American Frontier.”
80 Ibid.
Turner’s theory that a stronger democracy developed because of frontier life prompted many a critic and/or champion to examine his claims. The *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950), written by Americanist, Henry Nash Smith offers insight into the idea of the frontier as an idea around which a mythology grew. He explained how those myths connected with Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis. Smith looks at the heroic personages whose fame was created through the pens of literary figures, such as James Fennimore Cooper. Smith also examines the idea of the American frontier as an undeveloped garden waiting to bloom under the guidance of the right hands…white, American hands. Critics claim that Turner’s thesis, much like Smith’s book, ignores some of the groups that populated the frontier as well as some the more controversial activities connected with white settlement. Yet critics and champions alike acknowledge that a frontier and rougher lifestyle existed, even if both disagree on its overall impact on America. My work offers evidence that the rhetoric America’s first pioneers employed to identify themselves and their influence on the nation very closely resembles the portrait Turner presented of the frontier settler.

Just as the term frontier deserves definition, so does the label “pioneer.” That description as well as settler and frontiersman have all been used in texts devoted to examining the west and will be used in this work to describe the persons who chose to move westward from the Eastern seaboard to the frontier line. While those settlers often referred to themselves in their own written work as western or westerners, some authors such as John Peck and James Fennimore Cooper used pioneer to identify the settler. By 1830 the western border of the nation had moved further toward the Pacific Ocean. Thus, a lightly or completely unsettled place in the Old Northwest could still be regarded as frontier by the pioneer living there, but not necessarily mark the furthermost western point of the nation. The description of pioneer, therefore, is somewhat subjective.

James Fennimore Cooper’s definition of pioneer or pioneering in America was tied to economic choice or activity and the promise of land. Cooper wrote that pioneers were born out of a continuing

---

pattern of American settlement. That pattern described the movement westward of men who found less economic opportunity for themselves once the density of the population of eastern settlements increased. The president of the Ohio Historical Society used a very different and more romantic description of the pioneer in an 1852 speech: “They were born under a monarchy, — fought the battle of Independence, — assisted in the baptism of a great republic, — then moved into a wilderness, — and laid the foundations of a State, — itself almost equaling an empire. These men not only lived in remarkable times, but were themselves remarkable men. Energetic, industrious, persevering, honest, bold, and free — they were limited in their achievements only by the limits of possibility.” Pioneers of the first frontier saw themselves as takers of economic opportunity as Cooper theorized, as well as the remarkable and heroic citizens described in the Historical Society speech. Both explanations of western character traits worked for them as they made a home in the Northwest Territory.

Finally, the term Northwest Territory, requires some explanation in terms of this study. In 1888, B. A. Hinsdale, a professor at the University of Michigan, published The Old Northwest with a View of the Thirteen Colonies as Constituted by the Royal Charters. His analysis of the region included work on "the territory northwest of the River Ohio" from which the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin were carved. Hinsdale believed that the Old Northwest was a historical unit. The Northwest Territory defined as such by those intent on enacting the Northwest Ordinances of 1785-1787 encompassed the very area Hinsdale studied. It is treated that way in this study. The one exception is the addition of studying Kentucky along with its northwest neighbors.

Kentucky, until 1792, remained the frontier area of the state of Virginia. Kentucky’s porous border and influence on the southern area of Ohio, as well as the idea of it as early frontier make it difficult to separate it from the work presented here. As for attaching the word Old to Northwest Territory,

---

82 James Fenimore Cooper, The Leatherstocking Tales.
84 B. A. Hinsdale, The Old Northwest, With a View of the Thirteen Colonies as Constituted by the Royal Charters (New York, 1888), iii.
Territory, one must remember that as America expanded and the frontier moved further toward the Pacific Ocean the states bordering the Pacific became known as the Northwest. Thus, the Ohio region and the states surrounding it became the “old” version of the American Northwest, or “Old Northwest” for short.

Analysis of the movement of persons into the Northwest and Kentucky, the places they came from, and the culture they brought with them offers insight into how they thought of themselves as westerners and Americans. Most came with little more than what they could carry yet they tackled Turner’s, “meeting point between savagery and civilization.” For the settler, the Northwest was the place they came to prosper and expand a new nation.

**Migration Patterns: Ethnicity and/or Homogeneity**

Expanding the nation was the work of diverse groups of people. Words, such as ethnicity and homogeneity may seem antithetical, but in terms of migration and settlement on America’s first frontier they mesh. The migration patterns that led to the populating of the Old Northwest Territory brought different ethnic, racial, and social populations together. While the settlement experience suffered due to conflicting views over ethnicity, religion, race, and culture, ultimately, those persons, no matter their differences, united under a national and local identity. At the same time, they worked to retain some level of individual and group cultural traditions.

Even with the promise of land, population numbers in the Old Northwest remained relatively low for the first decade following the Revolutionary War. After the passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, migrants found the prospect of westward movement much more attractive. The Northwest Ordinance, officially titled “An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States North West of the River Ohio,” was adopted by the Confederation Congress. The law secured land grants for individuals and groups, allowed for flexibility when acquiring property, encouraged education, promised

---

85 Frederick Jackson Turner’s Thesis.
much of the Bill of Rights, and set in place a ban on slavery. This legal structure lured persons pursuing economic and social advantage. As a legal frame of federal governance, The Ordinance allowed for social experimentation. At the local level where most white settlers shared hardships, dangers, and a lack of material goods and currency men more easily saw themselves as equals. The written works of some settlers suggests that this feeling of egalitarianism, real or perceived, prompted men to assume the opportunity to shape and limit government authority in their lives and settlements. When Rufus Putnam and Manasseh Cutler led a company of families to Marietta, Ohio to begin a community they understood the flexibility of Ordinance. Cutler, along with Thomas Jefferson designed it to further the development of republican ideals in a region free of the British trappings of settlement long in place in eastern communities.

Western settlement was scattered and sometimes, such as in the case of Lucy Hastings and her husband, temporary. The Hastings, finding their first western home less profitable than expected, refused to dismiss the promise of the west. They simply packed up and moved further west believing their dream still possible. Others facing failure retuned to the East coast. Though some people gave up and moved east the growth of population increased dramatically as the nineteenth century progressed and by 1860 the area contained almost seven million residents. These immigrants included whites, native born to America (Indians will be addressed in another portion of the Chapter, as will the experience of blacks.) as well as persons who were European-born and each influenced the culture of the Northwest Territory. Historian, Robert Sweirenga informs readers that American-born migrants hailed from several cultural regions. They came from the New England or Yankee cultural region, which included New England and some of New York, the Midland based in the Delaware and Susquehanna Valleys that included the Mid-Atlantic states, and the Upland South that was comprised of the Piedmont, Blue Ridge, and Shenandoah

---

87 Lucy Hastings Correspondence in Hastings, Lucy A. / State Family correspondence, 1838, 1855-1874 [Transcriptions] Call Number, Eau Claire SC 35 ([unpublished]) [http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI](http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI)
Valley, as well as the Appalachian area. Lowland southerners mostly remained below the Mason-Dixon Line.

People arriving followed different paths as they traveled to America’s early western border. Persons from New England traveled the Great Lakes, or traveled across New York, and after its completion utilized the Erie Canal (1825). Migrants from the Middle Atlantic States crossed through Pittsburgh and moved west following the National Road or the Ohio River. Travelers from the upland south crossed through the Cumberland Gap, followed the Wilderness Road, and/or the southern tributaries of the Ohio River.89 The time of arrival and the place of origin for immigrants impacted the power structures within each of the states that eventually emerged from the Northwest Territory.

Those pioneers arriving from the northern and Mid-Atlantic region of America took firm hold of Ohio’s government and culture,90 even though earlier arriving settlers from the South penetrated the border of southern Ohio from Kentucky. New Englanders concentrated much of their settlement in areas around the northern coast of the Buckeye state. The influence they exerted far surpassed the control they might have expected to wield due to their overall numbers.91 Better educated and wealthier than the southerners in the lower portion of Ohio, they maintained their control over territory. Despite the north/South split in the Ohio population there was an area of cultural intermingling. Around the

---

89 Ibid.
Figure 1-1: Departure on December 3, 1787, from Manasseh Cutler’s parsonage in Ipswich, Massachusetts, of the first of two groups comprising the forty-eight pioneers to the Ohio Country and the Northwest Territory. This image is from the book by Edwin Erle Sparks, The United States of America, and Part 1, published in 1904.

Cincinnati area Upland Southerners from Kentucky and Virginia mixed with settlers who moved in from Pennsylvania and other Mid-Atlantic states. The economy created in this area blended subsistence farming with the corn economy that accompanied Pennsylvanians. German culture from the farmers of Pennsylvania mixed with the Scotch-Irish population from the Carolina Piedmont region.

Indiana presents a picture similar to Ohio, in that northerners settled in the upper regions of the state, while southerners made their homes in the lower portion. Unlike Ohio, it was the Upland Southerners who shaped culture in Indiana. Southerners’ influence dominated speech patterns, religious affiliation, house and barn architecture, and farming practices. Upland Southerners controlled Indiana's government for several generations. The numbers of Yankee migrants remained low in the state because northern settlers preferred to bypass places already under southern control due to the slavery issue. Despite some attempts to dominate the area, later arriving Yankees and mid-landers could not override the southern settlers’ domination of Indiana. Like Ohio, a portion of Indiana became a zone wherein southerners and mid-state immigrants mixed culturally.

Southern Illinois, like southern Indiana, lay at the more western edge of the Ohio River route followed by Upland Southerners. When Illinois entered the Union in 1818, two thirds of its residents came from the South and the ratio did not change until after 1830. Illinois followed the same pattern of a North and South split between Upland Southerners and New Englanders. Like Ohio and Indiana, a section in the center of the state held both mid-state and southern immigrants and became a place where cultural groups mixed. Wisconsin and Michigan, although the recipients of some early eastern migration lay to the North of the more traveled routes and so immigration numbers and statehood arrived later. Both of these states became home to a larger number of foreign born immigrants than other states within the Northwest Territory. This often occurred because of the desire of foreign born persons to avoid Illinois and Indiana, states that continued to struggle with the issue of slavery despite the ban imposed by the Northwest Ordinance.

In 1790, five foreign born (white) nationalities were found in the first thirteen American states: English, Scotch-Irish, Germans, Dutch, Irish. Ohio attracted few foreigners. In 1850, only ten percent of the persons living in Ohio identified themselves as foreign-born. Half of the immigrants in Ohio were

---

93 Ibid. 88-89.
95 Ibid.
German, a quarter Irish, an eighth English, and the rest were French, Canadian, Welsh, Scotch, and Dutch.\textsuperscript{96} Indiana, like Ohio, failed to attract many foreign born immigrants. Illinois attracted a larger number of foreigners than its neighbors, but still drew fewer foreign born immigrants than Wisconsin and Michigan.\textsuperscript{97}

Germans, the dominant ethnic group in Wisconsin, along with the French Canadians (and later English Canadians) they composed the largest foreign population in Michigan.\textsuperscript{98} As the Canadians in both states moved further into the mid-sections of each territory they intermingled with Yankees. This mix often bred tensions due to long-standing religious and cultural differences, since Protestants held more modern views and Catholics harbored a more conservative lifestyle.\textsuperscript{99} As time moved forward and the population of both states increased the tension lessened.

The sketch I have provided of the population in the Northwest Territory points to general settlement patterns and helps illustrate the tensions that developed as community connections to factors such as religion and ethnicity grew. As the population continued to expand and the economy shifted, individualism often trumped community. Identities overlapped and though cultural differences remained to some extent, westerners began to agree on what they deemed a true republican national identity.

**Components of Identity**

During the 1950s academics responding to a Cold War with the Soviets insisted that Americans enjoyed a cohesive national character. The United States was defined by scholars of that era as possessing

\textsuperscript{96} Hubert G. H. Wilhelm *The origin and distribution of settlement groups, Ohio, 1850*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University, 1982), 47-48.
\textsuperscript{97} Robert Swierenga, 90.
a population that agreed upon government, cultural traditions, and values. We Americans were different from Europeans, who due to internal conflict had led us into two world wars. By the 1970s, scholars criticizing the work of earlier consensus writers complained that the idea of a national identity failed to consider groups other than white, Protestant men. From that point forward studies of American identity relied mostly on the factors of race, ethnicity, gender, and class to define Americans. Multiculturalism and pluralism became the catch phrases underpinning research directed toward uncovering the histories and cultural influences of people heretofore ignored. My analysis moves away from this pattern to a degree. While I understand the importance of gender, ethnicity, race and class and use each of those important factors, I contend that the citizen of 1800 would not have understood our complications of identity. By assessing the writings of America’s first pioneers to find evidence of self-identification the research infers that westerners, indeed most Americans, understood themselves through race (white, black, Indian), European or American, religion (Christian or non-Christian), male or female, and through a complicated process of denoting class which included to varying degrees involvement in civic duties, education, employment, wealth, and refinement.

Even with these identifying factors and the diversity of population in the Old Northwest, one thing became clear: the writings of a group of pioneers defined the settlers of the Old northwest and Kentucky as American and Western. Their written words refer to these two terms frequently. Westerners, like their eastern peers were citizens of a new nation. That new nation required a useful national identity—an identity that would help distinguish Americans from old Europe and especially the British and unify them under the new nation’s banner. People throughout the United States grappled with the problem of defining what it meant to be American from the years 1777 and 1830. The values of the Revolutionary Era, as described in documents such as Common Sense, The Declaration of Independence were objects of

---

100 Consensus historians claimed Americans shared a set of values. These scholars downplayed conflict. The list of consensus historians would include Louis Hartz, Daniel J. Boorstin, and David M. Potter.
pride and justified separation from Britain. They also boosted morale during the Revolution and afterwards along with the Constitution laid out the structure of governance under which the New Republic evolved. Once the nation state was established, however, it almost immediately began to change in size and scope thanks in part to western settlement. As the borders expanded so did the push for increased democracy and by the mid-nineteenth century a sense of freedom seemed to blossom under the label of Jacksonian democracy.

While both Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson championed the rise of democracy in the country and fought for the interests of farmers against the commercial concerns of the country the two presidents were regarded differently. Jefferson was a man of the East. Portrayed as a man of the people, he remained a wealthy planter, an elite. His mannerisms were upper-class. He did not work with his hands to till soil or fight adversaries. Though Jefferson’s words and writings promoted limited government and republican ideals, the president maintained the Bank of the United States, an institution he earlier claimed was unconstitutional, and authorized the Louisiana Purchase. Both of these policies demonstrated his intent to utilize federal government control when he deemed it warranted.

Andrew Jackson, a wealthy farmer, had worked for, not inherited his wealth and position. He had grown up on the frontier and fought alongside ordinary people in the War of 1812. He challenged Indian control of land and promised to destroy the Bank of the United States. Jackson presented himself as more comfortable intermingling with people of lower social and economic status. He championed greater rights for the common man and was opposed to any signs of aristocracy in the nation.\textsuperscript{102} His manners reflected those of the common American man. Jacksonian democracy, aided by the strong appeal to the spirit of equality among the people of the newer settlements in West, helped promote extensions of the vote. In the 1824 presidential election Andrew Jackson won the popular vote, but split the electoral votes in the states of the Northwest Territory eligible for voting \textsuperscript{103} with another western politician Henry Clay. After the


\textsuperscript{103} Voting for national elections depended on admittance as states. The following lists the dates of statehood: Kentucky (1792), Ohio (1803), Indiana (1816), Illinois (1818), Michigan (1837), Wisconsin (1848).
results were announced many westerners cried foul and insisted Clay and Adams had engaged in a “corrupt bargain.” 104 By the 1928 election, Jackson’s popularity showed him winning every state and county in the Old Northwest Territory and Kentucky. 105 Jackson, a man of the people, truly was a man of the west.

As Jackson championed freedom and individuality, the writings shown in these pages imply that western settlers also took a major interest in expanding freedom, independence, and identity building as the nation grew. Constructed upon the republican ideals that colonists heralded during the Revolutionary War, eastern citizens identified virtues of true American citizenship through religion, politics, a need for education, and their unfettered labor. An orderly society, reform movements, a strong work ethic, faith and virtue, self-reliance, political participation, and working for the common good served as the benchmarks for measuring worth. 106 Frontiersmen agreed with their eastern brethren that true Americans possessed these traits. The words of Rebecca Heald suggest they simply believed their circumstances on the frontier strengthened each of these characteristics within them. Heald’s story, one of many such recollections, 107 helped prove the point.

Diaries and journals of men such as Thomas Hinde and others demonstrate that in the tradition of true republicanism, settlers on the frontier took their civic duty seriously. Hinde, writing under a number of pseudonyms frequently commented on local and national issues in newspaper columns. One of his favorite names, Theophilus Ariminius, gave a nod to his respect for and commitment to republican ideals as practiced initially by the ancients and most recently in his America. 108 His writings and the writings of

107 Stories appear in each chapter of this dissertation. Dedicated and brave clerics, such as Thomas Hinde, Dr. McClure and Dr. Drake tell of their travels among the Indian tribes and of their visits with white settlers as they followed their circuits. Women like Anna Bentley, Mary MacMillan, and Mrs. Jenkins survived hard winters, harder chores, and Indian raids while their husbands battled the British, Indians, and forested land.
108 Thomas Hinde. Thomas Spottswood Hinde Papers, The Draper Manuscript Collection, Series Y.
others show that white men of the western region believed themselves more connected to their local government because officials were more available. Along the Eastern seaboard political figures more often than not, enjoyed an elevated status and over time mixed less with the ordinary citizen. In the West, political officials like all others struggled to make a living and often worked jobs alongside constituents. Before the 1820s, the social structure of western settlements was more equal, since many early pioneers were land owners and began their lives on the frontier with few possessions and little hard currency.

With the more egalitarian social status of early settlement, the issue of class on both the economic and social level in a country perceived to be classless was complicated. Status was rarely dependent solely on economics because of the dearth of wealth among emigrants. Employment might carry with it a measure of status, as did education. Military officers, ministers, and others with a profession enjoyed status, but these features were not exclusive. For instance, a circuit rider might be respected as a religious mentor, but may have lacked any level of true education or training. Class became more important as frontier settlement increased. And the region began to more closely resemble eastern settlement. As a merchant economy took hold and the need for trained professions, such as lawyers, became more acute, the importance of social status intensified.

Professionally trained at university or not, clerics were a necessary component of western society. Pioneers took religion west. But they insisted their brand of religion differed from what they left behind. Revivals combined religious groups, and thus their tolerance (in their opinion) for other sects outweighed that found in the more formal established religions on the Eastern seaboard. Services and/or private prayers experienced outside a building and under a canopy of sky and trees, offered a closer connection and understanding of God. Religious practice also offered proof of civilized behavior. Persons back east feared that western settlers would succumb to the savagery the wilderness offered. Adherence to and the exercise of religious values proved they had not.
A values-laden upbringing through religion and the desire to educate children, both formally and in a harder way, offered settlers the chance to demonstrate the superiority of western living. The Northwest Ordinance asserted the need for schools and education. It set aside a specific portion of land in each plot of acreage surveyed for the building of a school. Despite obstacles such as the lack of teachers and the monetary backing, the written record left through settlers’ letters, receipts, and advertisements for academies, books, and teachers suggest that parents on the frontier desired education for their children. But the ability to read and write offered only one aspect of learning needed to survive on the frontier. Education also included the ability to meet the dangers of life on the frontier. Stories of Indian attacks and kidnappings underscored the need for frontier children to grow up hardy and tough, as well as literate.

The recounting of Indian wars, captivities, problems with competitive European nations that still fought for trade, resources and land, the need to clear a forest to make a new home in a strange environment, religion, problems with gender norms and a host of other characteristics helped pioneers carve out an identity for themselves. Many of the stories they told already mirrored the record of frontier experiences left by earlier British colonists. The difference was that the people who moved west after the break with England called themselves Americans. The new Americans examined in these pages read or heard about the problems of earlier pioneers and came west despite the dangers anticipated and because of the promise of reward. Memories of earlier colonial stories helped the Northwestern settler of the New Republic Era place their own experiences in context and develop a distinct persona.

Memory as a part of Identity Formation:

Remembering who we want to be and who we do not want to be.

The use of memories to help pioneer citizens choose desired qualities for their new persona is a recognized component of identity formation. Kate C. McLean, in an article referring to the use of memory in identity creation, notes that, “memories are central to one’s sense of self and become fodder for
constructing every life story.” McLean claims that gender, race, and class figure into self-image, but insists family, education, work experience, religious affiliation, and most elements of our entire life experience help us to self-identify and attach meaning to our memories. Disruptive episodes, such as life transitions (for example, rebelling against England, movement westward, and problems with Indians), left settlers feeling dislocated. Memories helped people make sense of new experiences.

Settlers attached meaning to their memories. Even in a rough, one-room cabin a tablecloth used for dining meant civilized entertaining of guests for Anna Bentley. Memory and the meanings they invoked provided the basis for defining the lifestyle settlers wanted to create. Even though pioneers on America’s first frontier claimed to have improved on life as practiced along the East coast, they retained ideas about what it meant to be white, civilized and Christian along the Eastern seaboard much as the earlier Puritans and Virginians remembered the accouterments and manners of civilization in Britain. Puritans and the earliest Virginians had remained civilized despite their frontier experiences, so could these new Americans.

Memory meaning and then telling were necessary components of identity construction, for the Old Northwest settlers. Memory allowed for comparisons. Eastern citizens living in the years surrounding and after the American Revolution measured themselves through comparisons with one another or “Old Europe.” While memory could offer a positive for comparison, like that of a white table covering, it also provided for negative reflections. Knowing of Indians and their behaviors predisposed some to expect savagery and uncivilized behaviors. The idea of the Indian was not new. The settlers recorded in this text knew of them and remembered stories told by pioneers and surveyor, but first hand interaction with tribes offered a far different experience than words on a page and stories told. How

110 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
to contextualize a community far different than possibly presented pioneers with a difficult task. Now, Frontiersmen compared themselves not only with Europeans, easterners, and blacks but with a new group of persons different from themselves. Indians offered a contrast in lifestyle that fed perceptions of white superiority.

The “othering,” process described by Michael Schwalbe in his article for Social Forces (2000), offered a method by which settlers could understand their connection with the Indian. By naming a group or person as different and undesirable the white settler, in this case the dominant group, was able to acknowledge the existence of Indians, or secondary group. That recognition and the comparison that followed clarified the idea that white culture trumped Indian culture and thus, whites were superior. The process of “othering” has a long tradition in America (as well as in other societies around the world), both pre and post-Revolutionary War. While some scholars prefer to rely on terms such as different, unique, and/or distinctive to highlight dissimilarities among groups, Schwalbe insists “othering is different” in that through language tells the dominant person how to think about secondary groups.

Schwalbe’s emphasis on speech provides background for the rhetorical analytical methods of this dissertation. Part of his argument states that the rules for defining someone “other” are enforced by demeaning their status.114 Thus, in the case of early colonists and later Americans, words such as savage, heathen, pagan, dependent, slave and a host of other pejoratives characterized the “other.” Some of the terms applied to “others” in this text are currently regarded as pejoratives to avoid. Words such as Indian, Negro, colored, were utilized by the first American westerners, and therefore are found in this study.

Sociologist Allan G. Johnson, examining privilege and difference, maintains, “other’ is the key to understanding the power systems of privileged groups.115. He insists that when settlers, such as New England’s Puritans or Virginia’s Jamestown citizens, arrived in America they brought with them the idea of privilege. They had witnessed the use of privilege within the ranks of the ruling classes of the British

citizenry. Back home in England the new world settler might have been regarded as lesser or “other” and suffered from religious or class oppression. Once they arrived on the American continent they found ways to view themselves as the superior group. They characterized the original inhabitants, Indians, as primitive and savage despite the fact tribal life was well established.116 Racial difference, cultural and social mores all set white Europeans, no matter their status in Europe, as better than and different from the Indians.

Not all designations of difference were as stark as that between whites and Indians. Distinctive categorizations of “other” exist in people’s lives. Michael Schwalbe recognizes “defensive othering” as a way in which people differentiate themselves from persons within their own group.117 Thus, Thomas Hinde, itinerant preacher and farmer, told readers in notes that his children outpaced eastern-born youth in their self-reliance.118 While both groups of offspring might meet many of the standards being developed as desirable traits in American males, the frontier-raised child, in some ways, surpassed less hardy eastern youth. Male settlers also applied “defensive othering” to women, who as customary in a patriarchal society, were regarded as inferior. At the same time pioneer males described their women as superior to women residing back east. Europeans and a host of white males who proved less educated or culturally dissimilar also merited a lesser status. The ability to distinguish themselves assisted frontier settlers in identifying themselves as superior.

The creation of the “other” as a point of comparison and self-identification helped assuage any self-doubt that haunted colonists across the new United States when breaking away from their motherland. It also helped reinforce self-confidence in settlers who moved west in order to escape social or economic problems back east.119 Pioneers worked hard to present themselves in the most complimentary and advantageous manner and struggled to combat any suspicion of their irrelevance as

116 Ibid.
117 Michael Schwalbe, et al.
118 Thomas Hinde, “Thomas Hinde Diary and Letters.”
citizens. The writers appearing here denied time and again within their texts that they suffered no hint any hint of regression from the ranks of civilized men. The authors in these pages consistently depicted the pioneer and his family as civilized and honorable, distinguished by virtue, individualism, enterprise, faith in God and bravery. The less attractive qualities of racism and disregard for Indians could be swept under the proverbial rug of national need and pride.

The idea of superiority took a far more unattractive turn when settlers engaged in what Schwalbe refers to as “Oppressive othering.” Certain groups, overall, failed to measure up to the lowest standards of civilization and deserved to be demeaned. Indians and Blacks (free or enslaved) might occasionally display positive attributes and qualities. For instance, James Fennimore Cooper, in his *The Leatherstocking Tales* (1823-1841), “established the Indian as a significant literary type in world literature.” His affirmative portrayal of some Indians helped create a character type that made its way into the national culture. Even with the occasional positive imaging of the Indian, “othering” him/her came easily. Skin color and dress set them apart. Their lifestyle appeared strange. That strangeness of custom placed them outside the norms of acceptable white behavior. Over time the Indian’s resistance, or perceived inability, to adapt to the white lifestyle simply reinforced what most white settlers always knew: Indians were a lesser or inferior group and should be treated accordingly.

Whatever feelings of superiority they felt, white settlers needed to reckon with Indians as a significantly powerful reality on the frontier. This meant that there was always some ambivalence to the settlers’ “othering” attitudes. The Indians could be disparaged as savage and dehumanized, but hardly dismissed as negligible. Since the 1960s and 70s, academics rightly focus on the misconceptions that whites held about Indians and their culture, and use that as a point of departure for studying the cruel and unfair treatment Indians received at the hands of white settlers and government agencies. While those

---

120 Schwalbe, et al.
scholarly works provide valuable insights and a cautionary tale for future relations between peoples, current ideologies cannot change the past. The stories and descriptions of the settlers living alongside tribes of Indians helped whites shape their identity. Right or, as we now understand, wrong the Indian was most often the enemy. He was different. He was savage. He was “other.”

The idea of the “other” achieving any degree of assimilation, as the two competing groups (white settlers and Indians) met and formed relationships presented a difficult issue for settlers. Some religious groups, such as Moravians, contended the Indian could learn and benefit from adopting white customs. Moreover, white settlers out of necessity implemented some Indian methods for surviving the frontier. The use of Indian methods complicated the need to continue presenting white men as civilized, and/or superior. No white settler desired to admit their reliance on an inferior being. Despite some reliance on Indian ways in planting, medicine, and hunting the juxtaposition of civilized white settler versus uncivilized Native Americans persisted through the years of Manifest Destiny and well into the twentieth century.

Milton Gordon’s Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origin (1964) discusses “cultural exchange” as an element crucial to identity formation.122 Most academics agree with Gordon that a two-way exchange describes the experience between the core (Indian) and emigrant (European) cultures.123 Gordon, as well as other scholars, acknowledge the fluidity of the relationships that developed and insist that despite exchanges and some periods of cooperation, neither culture ever completely assimilated to the other’s way of life.124 Nor did feelings about the tribes remain static in the minds of white Americans. Brian Dippie’s The Vanishing American divides white attitudes toward Indians into three periods. The first period, from 1812 to the mid-nineteenth century, applies to this work. Dippie asserts that white ideas concerning progress and culture contributed to a new explanation for the

---

decline in Indian presence. This theory asserted that the Indian nations were in decline and would eventually disappear without claims of white abuse.\textsuperscript{125} The Indian’s regressive lifestyle and rejection of white progress doomed him.

The idea of a vanishing Indian provided justification for the demise of Indians when white settlers or religious missionaries worried that whites destroyed the tribes. The Indian lifestyle, wedded to a more nomadic way of life and tied to a less fruitful use of the land and its resources, was to blame for the decline in Indian populations. Given their lesser moral ability they succumbed to the temptations of alcohol and savagery. The tribes shouldered the blame for their own demise. This excuse also placated easterners, who removed from the conflict, at times questioned the rightness of taking Indian lands.\textsuperscript{126} They tended to view the danger of Indian threat as a thing of the past. By the nineteenth century, most northeastern Americans never encountered an Indian.\textsuperscript{127} What they knew of the Indian was the stuff of stories and government approved treaties. White persons inhabiting the Old northwest faced a far different reality.

Western writers like Timothy Flint and James Hall insisted that Indian confrontations demonstrated the hardiness and worth of settlers. Newspaper and pamphlet writers shared stories with readers, east and west, that reinforced the view that Indians committed all manner of atrocities as they blocked progress. A Philadelphia periodical reporting on a speech delivered by John Scanando, chief of the Oneidas, underscored the idea that Natives intended to destroy all white men. Scanando, a blind one-hundred year old warrior, claimed Indians “had been cheated by whites” and he exhorted his tribe to “make bows and arrows… kill, kill, kill.”\textsuperscript{128} The old chief, intending to inflame the passions of his

\textsuperscript{125} Brian W Dippie, \textit{The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy}. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
tribesmen, frightened white readers and hardened the negative perceptions they harbored toward Indians. The settler, given descriptions like this, insisted in his words that “he stood between native savagery and the massacre of all whites.”

Timothy Flint, during his years in the Old Northwest, wrote about the superiority of whites over the “animal” behavior of the American Indian.” Flint insisted that the Indians penchant for violence would never change because “the Indian race was organized to love the horrible excitement of war and to the love of murder for their own sake…and furthermore, that this truth was supported by the actions of Indians from the first settlements through the battles with General George Washington and at the time his book was published.” Ultimately, the Indian beast was a formidable enemy.

Besting a deliberate and thoughtful enemy took courage and skill and the civilized white settler who triumphed deserved elevated status. Still, white men’s methods for combating Indians sometimes crossed the line of acceptable behavior. Settlers, for the most part, accepted Christian doctrine. As Christians they sometimes struggled to reconcile their violence toward Indians with the mercy promoted in religious doctrine. This problem had been in play since the earliest days of the Columbian Exchange, back in the 1490s. The inner tension between religious belief and frontier activity that began with the first exchange between Indians and Europeans receives excellent treatment in Lewis Hanke’s, *Aristotle and the American Indian*. Aristotle taught in *Politics* that some men are born to slavery and that inferior races might even be sub-human. This theory offered justification for the Spanish and other Europeans who confronted Indians.

Caught between the need to displace and/or eliminate the tribes that blocked them and a religious doctrine that cautioned equality of treatment, those who chose to move to the frontier were forced to examine and then excuse their actions toward Indians. Most whites found enough solace in the

---

129 Thomas Hinde.
130 Timothy Flint, 37
131 Ibid.
justifications to continue their mistreatment of Indians. The juxtaposition between religious mores and frontier practices continued in a specifically American context during the Early Republic period. Sensitive to perceptions of themselves back east, settlers worked to mitigate unfavorable portrayals of their deeds.\textsuperscript{134} In light of the constant Indian threat, pioneers reasoned, “Danger carried its own dignity,” and cruelty might be excused when a person faced danger each and every moment.\textsuperscript{135} As to claims that pioneers robbed Natives of their land, John Bradford, a settler, insisted, “Indians held no legitimate claim to the land…settlers were fulfilling the mission of manifest destiny.”\textsuperscript{136} When necessary, westerners admitted they might resort…“to taking the law into their own hands,” but in most instances they followed the law.\textsuperscript{137} That law pertained to legal as well as spiritual tenets.

No matter how they behaved, the Indians somehow failed to meet the standards of civility set by whites. Mary Beth Norton argues that when searching for reasons behind the earliest colonists’ negative feelings toward Indians she has found evidence that whites employed the word “black” to their descriptions of the Indian attackers. She asserts that by the time of Puritan settlement in America, Europeans had already connected evil with the color black.\textsuperscript{138} Norton’s book deals with Indians and colonists in late seventeenth century New England. Yet, as late as 1810 references tying blacks and Indians together are found in the very creative claim that both Africans and Indians were found on the continent of Africa.\textsuperscript{139}

While this belief of a connection between the Indian Nations and African citizens may not have been widespread, the connection was made in a letter published in a respectable western publication. In an

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
1810 letter, John Parker claimed, “I have examined my old African man Tom relatively to his having conversed with the southern Indians, and understanding their language. I was in town with my old African, who came to me and requested that he might stop his wagon to talk with a yellow man he had seen, who spoke exactly his country talk. I permitted him to stop, and went a small distance with him where I saw a black man and an Indian together. They appeared to be much engaged in conversation. My old man joined them in their discourse...they seemed to be well pleased and to understand each other fully. I have had the same information from other Africans in this neighborhood, who all concur, “that these Indians talk the same language as the yellow people whom they made prisoners in their country.” Parker went on to describe how Tom said he became acquainted with the Indian language. Tom asserted that, “The yellow people lived over a great water towards sun-set. Our king and the yellow people were often at war. We had many of them prisoners, who lived among us a long time. These yellow people and us talked together like the Indian I saw in Lexington. They had long hair, which many of them could set on.” He added, "I never was in the yellow people's country, but have been well acquainted with many of them. They fight with bows and guns as we did.” Parker ended the correspondence by insisting he knew Tom to be truthful and that other Africans supported the account.

For pioneers in the Ohio River region who accepted them, ideas such as a connection between blacks and Indians as well as the possibility of sub-human races helped reinforce the prejudicial assumption that blacks were acceptable targets for oppression. Anti-black prejudice was imported into the new territories and rested comfortably alongside disdain for Indians. The two, in fact, worked together within the minds of the settlers engaged in the process of “othering.” As they moved into the new and developing region settlers were forced to come to grips with their attitudes toward blacks (free and enslaved).

Ohio, by the early 1820s, was already home to a number of African American communities. Intermarriages and couplings that occurred between indigenous people, European explorers, and free and enslaved.

---

140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
enslaved Africans produced a group of descendants dubbed mulatto, or colored. These persons of mixed racial heritage fared no better than blacks born of two same race parents. The Northwest Ordinance, which included a ban on slavery angered many southern citizens looking to enter the region with their human property in tow. The ban also encouraged free blacks to believe that much of the newest American frontier lacked the bigotry and racism found in the South. The truth proved far different. In fact, there was plenty of prejudice. Not owning slaves hardly meant a person believed in equality among the races. Despite the absence of chattel slavery, racism remained alive and strong.

Much like Gary Nash's discussion of racial policies in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Leon Litwack prompts readers to more closely examine white racial attitudes and policies in the Old Northwest. Though Philadelphia became home to a large community of free blacks, racism remained strong in the City of Brotherly Love. Nash studies the ways in which a true American male needed to behave and concludes that according to white norms, black residents could never achieve those objectives. Any time a black male attempted to obtain a job that might allow him to be self-sufficient and demonstrate his abilities, white males felt threatened. That perceived threat fueled tensions between whites and blacks. Litwack recounts the presence of similar bigotry and racism on America’s first frontier. Black codes, unfair terms of apprenticeships, the return of fugitive slaves (some free blacks), and the rejection of black students in white schools singled blacks out as different and inferior. The national government, for its part, questioned whether the black man was even an American citizen. The United States Constitution gave a wink and a nod to slavery with the Three- Fifths Compromise which placed blacks in a tenuous position. In addition, despite the ban on slavery in the Old Northwest, the federal government ignored the abuse of blacks moving into the new region. Most Northerners west and east, according to

---

Litwack, saw segregation as a natural consequence of the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of blacks.\footnote{143} Blacks, like Indians were an oppressed and dehumanized “other.”

The oppression of blacks seemed easy for whites when obfuscating the law banning slavery. John Malvin, born a slave in 1795 in the state of Virginia, left for Ohio in 1827 as a free man. He believed he was leaving racism behind. Malvin wrote in his autobiography, "I thought upon coming to a free state like Ohio that I would find every door thrown open to receive me, but from the treatment I received by the people generally, I found it little better than Virginia.”\footnote{144} Witnessing the condition of free blacks in Ohio, and having read the latest version of Ohio's Black Laws (They were revised at least two times before 1830) responsible for the status of persons of color, Malvin recorded, "I found every door closed against the colored man in a free state, except the jails and penitentiaries, the doors of which were thrown wide open to receive him." \footnote{145} Freedom for free blacks and escaped slaves in the Old Northwest was an illusion and punishment for whites practicing racist policies was non-existant.

Though the practice of racism existed in the northwest it was far from uniform. White persons residing in the southern and eastern portions of Ohio often dealt with blacks as harshly as whites living in bordering slave states of Kentucky and Virginia. In some settled areas of northwestern Ohio blacks found less inhospitable reactions to their attempts to immigrate. This portion of the state, settled by persons emigrating from New England, New York and Pennsylvania retained feelings of superiority toward free blacks. Yet, they objected to slavery on moral and economic grounds.

Slavery, banned in the Old Northwest, existed legally in Kentucky. As part of Virginia, before its separation as a state, Kentucky counties reported varying levels of households owning slaves. African

\footnote{144}{John Malvin. \textit{Autobiography of John Malvin : a narrative, containing an authentic account of his fifty years’ struggle in the state of Ohio in behalf of the American slave, and the equal rights of all men before the law without reference to race or color : forty-seven years of said time being expended in the city of Cleveland.}: Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Leader Printing Co. (1879). Ebook and Texts Archive - California Digital Library \url{http://archive.org/details/autobiojohnmalvin00malvrich}}
\footnote{145}{Ibid.}
American slaves brought westward labored to help whites create a home. Slaves accompanied white Americans defending themselves against the British and their Indian allies. The numbers of slaves in residence in Kentucky varied. Half of Kentucky slave-owner households had only one or two slaves each.\textsuperscript{146} Even when a family felt it was evil, slavery some masters regarded it as a necessary economic evil. John Fee’s diary demonstrates the paradox faced by those who abhorred the institution yet felt economic pressures. His father, John Fee, was of Scotch and English descent and his mother was the daughter of Quakers. He explains, “My father was an industrious, thrifty farmer. Unfortunately he inherited from his father's estate a bondman - a lad bound until he should be 25 years of age. My father came to the conclusion that if he would have sufficient and permanent labor he must have slave labor. He purchased and reared slaves until he was the owner of some thirteen. This was a great sin in him individually, and to the family a detriment, as all moral wrongs are.”\textsuperscript{147} Still, the family retained slaves until their economic position made it feasible to free them.

Westerners, intent on economic prosperity and developing their own sense of themselves as worthy of the title “American” used ”othering” as a way to distinguish difference and superiority. Whether elevating their status in terms of a national ideal, or separating themselves from lesser races, the pioneer’s ability to assign positive traits to himself and note the negative traits of others made the process of creating a western character easier.

**Importance of the Stories in Identity Formation**

Whether dealing with the issue of slavery, the treatment of Indians, the education of children, their religious practices, and/or social status the desire to see themselves as both members of a local community and a national persona were recorded in the words of some settler’s. Elias Darnall, describing


Canadians in a published account of his military service during the War of 1812, noted their pleasing appearance, but stressed that unlike Americans they, “were not well informed.” Darnall insisted that they bowed to British aggression because they lacked the knowledge needed to understand their circumstances. Frontier Americans would never bow to any master. The Kentucky militia man also told readers that British soldiers reverted to uncivilized behavior as they fought alongside “Negroes and Indians.” Darnall, along with fellow American troops, used the comparison to highlight their own ability to remain civilized and free in an uncivilized land.

Persons moving west told family and friends back east of their circumstances and accomplishments through letters, articles and diaries and in doing so reconfirmed that they remembered what set them apart from those deemed uncivilized and unacceptable. These letters and stories offer an early example of the communications loop discussed at length by William Goetzmann, who explains that easterners avidly consumed information about western experiences, thus tying the two regions together conceptually and creating more demand for accounts of westward expansion. At the same time, these very same letters pointed to the difference in lifestyle between east and west. For example, James Hall presented a portrait of female virtue when he published the story told to him by Ellen, a young bride-to-be, who recalled her captivity experience in the story “The Backwoodsman.”

Ellen, traveling west with family and her soon-to-be husband to Indiana in 1802, fell into the hands of a band of Indians when they attacked her group. Ellen maintained “she ably remained calm during her ordeal as an Indian prisoner…she kept her wits about her and left parts of her dress along the trail for rescuers to follow. She also worked at slowing her kidnappers pace.” When rescued, Ellen insisted her faith in God and continual prayer kept her from harm. Ellen demonstrated that she

149 Ibid., 69.
remembered the behavioral traits required of her. She also displayed her virtue and faith in God during a life altering situation. While eastern women might be as virtuous and faithful to their religion, few white women living in seacoast cities and towns would ever be required to do as much in such dangerous circumstances.

Ellen’s story was not unique. Rather it proved similar to a captivity story from the earliest Puritan settlers. Since stories about Indian attacks and kidnappings faced by the early colonists were popular during the Early Republic, eastern readers could relate Ellen’s story to the experiences of respected ancestors. The recollection from the diary of a young Puritan girl written in 1676 stated, “April 5, 1676: There comes sad news from Plymouth. William Clark left his [sic] garrison house on Eel River with every man to attend Sunday morning service. They left the gate of the garrison open. Savages rushed in and killed Mistress Clark and ten other women and children. One boy was not quite dead, and the doctors have mended his skull with a piece of silver. All this happened on March 22nd, almost at the time that Mr. Southworth saw the Indians at Nunaquohqet Neck. Mother and Father are going to send me to Aunt Mehitable in Boston for safety. But surely I am none too good to share the fate of my dear mother, and my faith in God sustains me.” Ellen, like Hetty before her, described the horror of the Indian threat and the sustenance drawn from faith in God. In both cases the women displayed strength of character rather than hysteria.

Defining national character in the country as a whole and within the population of the West remained a work in progress as the United States approached its 55th anniversary. National Identity was not a settled collection of character traits and rules, rather it was a group of qualities and values learned through life lessons and based on circumstance. The idea of what was or who was American fueled an ongoing argument. As the nation’s borders, demographics, economy, politics continued to change, so did ideas of what constituted the American personality type. Joyce Appleby

explains that Americans living through the New Republic era were, "buffeted by free choice, changing standards, and a highly mobile population." 153 Everywhere they turned Americans were presented with new opportunities and experienced losses, both economically and personally. This proved especially true along America’s first frontier. The ability to tell others their stories reinforced for settlers the idea that it was in the west that the true American character existed.

Alongside that national character, men such as Timothy Flint and James Hall were helping create a regional unity that underscored the idea of a western character. Their magazines, published before 1830, emphasized their belief that the West was a place Americans should prefer to live.154 The two men, as well as other writers, highlighted the literature, landscape, institutions, and scientific accomplishments as aspects that enabled the west to trump the East. They emphasized the heroics, compassion, self-sufficiency and citizenship of pioneers. Even as they helped to create the western persona and a sense of regionalism they made certain to remain wedded to nationalism. The western citizen could hold fast to region and country.

The words of writers, such as Hall and Flint offer only one source of evidence that westerners on America’s first frontier constructed a collective identity. Some men, women, and children all wrote about their experiences and what they drew from them. Their words created the ideas of what it meant to live on a western frontier and be a pioneer.

153 Appleby, Inheriting the Revolution, 130.
Chapter 3

A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER:
CREATING THE IMAGE OF THE WESTERN AMERICAN MAN

Establishing the earliest English settlements in Virginia required planning and investment. The men who disembarked from the ships sent by Sir Walter Raleigh and the later Virginia Company shareholders received the warning that, “In all your passages you must have great care not to offend the naturals [natives], if you can eschew it; and imploy some few of your company to trade with them for corn and all other . . . victuals if you have any.”\textsuperscript{155} By trading and keeping civil relations with the tribes in the region, primary stockholders thought settlers might better avoid famine, failure of the colony, and lost revenue. Eventually, when their own crops took hold and began producing, these early pioneers became self-sufficient.

Though ordered not to offend the Indians, Company officials back in England also cautioned the settlers to take great care in keeping their weapons out of the hands of the “country people,” to use only the best marksmen when shooting in front of Native Americans, and to never allow the Indians to see any sign of physical weakness, else they might lose the perception of the settlers’ superiority and assault them.\textsuperscript{156} While trading for self-interests offered benefits, prudence required keeping a relatively unknown peoples with suspect character flaws at a disadvantage. These cautionary orders delivered to English colonists in 1606, seemed just as valid when Puritans moved into New England. Later on they seemed applicable to settlers who traveled west to the nation’s first frontier after 1776. Citizens of the Old Northwest and Kentucky followed the lead of their British ancestors. They kept peoples who exhibited difference, such as Indians and blacks at a disadvantage and in comparisons claimed their own superior character. By claiming themselves to be far better than Indians and blacks and by trumpeting the superior

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
traits they developed in relation to white women, easterners, and citizens of Europe men on the frontier began to fashion for themselves a distinctive identity as Americans and Westerners.

The men who moved onto the frontier in the latter part of the eighteenth century, like their counterparts in eastern settled states, worked to establish an American identity that separated them from Old Europe. The nation’s governing documents declared a nation built on egalitarianism, republicanism, access to civic participation, independence, and the ability to accrue property under the protection of the government. These were principles accessible to most white American men. Over time, as western white male settlers experienced dangers, a new and challenging environment, and specific needs that were hardly routine in the East, they began to view themselves as the truly hardy and independent American men. The Northwest Ordinance, their own governing document, restated their freedoms and offered a guide for establishing institutions, such as school systems that were not set up or in many cases required in the settled states. The west was new and different.

The Yankees who left the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic citizens, and the southerners who traveled through Kentucky and into the lower portions of the territory following the precedent for mobility set by their ancestors. Stewart Holbrook, in Yankee Exodus, notes that just as the Pilgrims and Virginia colonists had, New Englanders, such as exiled Puritan minister Roger Williams, set the precedent for mobility.157 Williams and his followers adjusted their religious and civil government from that of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to better reflect their views of what a godly society should be.158 While early settlement hugged the coastline, eventually increasing populations and a lack of open land around the initial British communities pushed Englishmen to move westward toward the Alleghenies and the Appalachians. This very same need for open land to provide a safety valve for a growing and opportunity-hungry population prompted American males to move westward after the Revolutionary War.

Just as Europeans moved across the Atlantic to create new homes and opportunities for themselves and families, American citizens moved westward to the latest frontier. No longer held in place

158 Ibid.
by the English United States’ citizens raced west. These settlers were not the first whites to enter the region. Explorers, fur traders, some religious missionaries and a few families already explored, hunted, and/or lived in the area. John Filson tells readers in his history recounting the settlement of Kentucky (1784) that, “The first white man we have certain accounts of, who discovered this province, was one James McBride, who, in company with some others, in the year 1754, passing down the Ohio in Canoes, landed at the mouth of Kentucky river, and there marked a tree....”\footnote{159 While Filson’s history may be incorrect, (remember the French were in the region before the English and Americans) he demonstrates that white males entered what would become America’s first frontier decades before the Revolutionary War.}

McBride returned back east after most likely scouting the west for trade and surveying purposes. Though he entered the region to complete particular set of tasks, no one reason prompted emigration into Kentucky and the Old Northwest. After 1776, when the newest pioneers, the first to bare the moniker American, moved beyond the Appalachians and Alleghenies they shared stories about the factors that pushed and pulled them westward. It was in the sharing they believed they began to establish themselves as the best example of what it meant to be an American man. Whether telling of their experiences on the frontier themselves, or allowing another to report about the “uncivilized” territory they traveled to and settled in, most pioneers’ stories echoed similar themes. They remembered their own bravery, ingenuity, independence and composure in the face of the unknown and unfamiliar. They recalled deprivations, as well as the threats posed by lesser persons, such as the Indians living in the region, Throughout the 1790s Indian raids and skirmishes provided plenty of stories to support the self-definition of some whites as brave and tough individuals.

Popular western authors, diarists, travel journalists, and other writers picked up on the themes of superior nature and bravery and repeated them to audiences back east and elsewhere. Writers such as

\footnote{159 John Filson and Paul Royster, editors, “The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke (1784); An Online Electronic Text Edition” (1784). Electronic Texts in American Studies, Paper 3. \url{http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/3} 70}
Judge James Hall, Timothy Flint, John Bradford, William Moore, and a host of lesser known authors such as Thomas Hinde\textsuperscript{160} stressed the heroism and ability of white, western American males. From the stories that recounted virtue, individualism, enterprise, hard work, self-sufficiency, and bravery, citizens on the Ohio frontier began to create a distinctive frontier identity.

As to what helped create this hardy personality, Fredrick Jackson Turner, Henry Nash Smith, and other scholars asserted that the promise of new land influenced the ways that Americans lived and thought.\textsuperscript{161} They suggested the frontier with its abundance of available land encouraged to move forward and develop homes to their liking. They further argued that the ideal of freedom was tied to this abundance: settlers pursued individual desires and prosperity buoyed by the belief that resources would never run out and could be exploited for wealth. Ohio residents in the nineteenth century anticipated in their journals and sermons the concept of the “myth of the garden” that open land and a new environment molded men. Timothy Flint, a cleric and resident of the West, believed the natural environment caused men on the frontier to develop a particular set of character traits. He insisted “the configuration of climate, physical character, fertility…” \textsuperscript{162} all affected the inhabitants of the territory. He further speculated that the growth of qualities such as hardiness and independence, once begun might become

\textsuperscript{160}Judge James Hall (1793-1868) established the first periodical in Illinois, \textit{The Illinois Monthly Magazine}, and wrote novels and books about the western experience. Thomas Hinde (1785-1846) Hinde served as an itinerant Methodist preacher and Indian agent. He used a number of pseudonyms, such as “Theophilus Arminias” for the articles he wrote John Bradford (1749-1830), founder and editor of the \textit{Kentucky Gazette}, worked tirelessly to promote the west. He advocated a tough policy toward Indians, claiming they were savages who blocked progress. Timothy Flint (1780-1840), born in Massachusetts, worked as a parish cleric until he was accused of counterfeiting. He moved west and continued to preach as an itinerant. He also speculated in land and wrote of the western character in \textit{Indian Wars of The West} (Cincinnati, OH: E. W. Flint, 1833).


Others, like David Mori Potter insist abundance such as open and cheap land have helped form who and what Americans see themselves to be. David Morris Potter, \textit{People of Plenty: Economic Abundance And The American Character}: (Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

\textsuperscript{162} Timothy Flint, \textit{Indian Wars}, 4.
The Battle of Fallen Timbers

Figure 2-1: An 1896 depiction of the battle from Harper's Magazine of The Battle of Fallen Timbers (August 20, 1794). This painting offered a view of the final battle of the Northwest Indian Wars and shows the brutality of Settler/Indian battles. Source: Wikimedia Commons

the norm in the western persona.\textsuperscript{163} Caleb Atwater, politician and educator, proclaimed in 1841 that as a long resident of Ohio he understood what the “vast domain” offered to westerners and that the west’s “freedom of government” promised to make America “the greatest and most powerful nation on earth.”\textsuperscript{164} For these men the availability of land, new opportunity and the chance to develop government and society helped create a western character who valued independence, ruggedness, and democracy. According to

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Caleb Atwater. \textit{An Essay on Education}. (Cincinnati, OH: Shepard and Stearns, 1841) Preface.
Professor of History James Davis, the decision and act of migrating separated men. Those who chose mobility promoted the growth of republicanism and creativity in the Old Northwest.

Not everyone chose to or could migrate. Those who did were most likely young, intrepid, and middle class. Historians Ray Billington and Martin Ridge in *Westward Expansion* assert that except for some trappers, soldiers, explorers, and transients America’s poorest people lacked the funds to migrate west. The decision to move west alone or with family required a man to invest a substantial amount of capital. Figuring in the cost of land that ranged from $1.25 to $10 an acre, the need for transportation and the purchase of enough provisions to carry a person or persons through until self-sufficiency was achieved and a prospective settler might face a cash outlay of over $1000.165 Western settlement was rarely a poor man’s game, since the average American working man’s wages stood at about one dollar a day in the early nineteenth century. The evidence suggests that much like Puritans and early Virginia colonists, the first American pioneers moved by using their own capital or were staked by someone who expected a return on the investment. A Connecticut clergyman, John M. Peck, in his guide to assist emigrant travelers (1836-37), recounted the cost of travel arrangements by boat and overland and warned the emigrant that he must consider meals, lodging, and the transport of any goods he wished to transport. Westward migration cost more than saved dollars.166 The move west was not for the poor or those who discouraged easily.

The challenges of western settlement required strong-willed settlers. Many a family struggled to create a home only to see their efforts fail. Traveling to the Cincinnati region from back east, John Tanner, a young pioneer later kidnapped by Indians, described his white family’s arrival in the west. Tanner recalled that, “In one day we went from Cincinnati to the mouth of the Big Miami, opposite which we were to settle. Here was some cleared land, and… log cabins, but they had been deserted on account

---

of the Indians.” 167 His father rebuilt the cabins and enclosed them with a picket fence, hoping that his homestead experience would end on a more positive note. A homestead of small log cabins and a protective fence hardly resembled anything left behind on the East coast and demanded a hardiness many men did not display.

Distinguishing the Western Man from his European and Eastern Counterparts

Historian James Davis insists that the settlement struggles that promoted the development of society in the Old Northwest, from 1790 to 1820, ended in establishing communities that did not meet all eastern perceptions of civilization. This occurred even though at times settlers attempted to re-create what they remembered as familiar. 168 Complete re-creation of eastern society and institutions was doomed to fail. The landscape alone made any attempt to mirror the East impossible. Moreover, as they settled pioneers began to truly consider the chance of establishing something new. In 1832, Timothy Flint noted, "What mind ever contemplated the project of moving from the old settlements over the Alleghany mountains . . . without forming pictures of new woods and streams, new animals and vegetables, new configurations of scenery, new aspects of men and new forms of society?” 169 The move west broke the restraints of an established society’s structure and for some put failure in the past. This new home offered success and with success came the willingness to take more risk. People from a variety of places and backgrounds argued and sometimes resorted to violence, but eventually most came together. This synthesis with all of the struggles and conflict, resulted in the eventual sharing of techniques about farming, trades, government, and culture.

---

169 Timothy Flint. The History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley (Cincinnati, Ohio: E. H. Flint and L. R. Lincoln, 1832), I, 184.
Building upon the republican ideals that emerged from the Revolution, citizens of the new republic identified the truest American citizens as white, male, protestant and independent.\textsuperscript{170} Manliness on the frontier required a commitment to form and maintain an orderly society, reform movements, a work ethic, virtue, independence, self-sufficiency, political participation and working for the common good. These qualities over time came to serve as the benchmarks for measuring a man’s worth. \textsuperscript{171} Western settlers promoted ideas of American manhood shared by all American males, but in the west men approached the components of manly behavior from a somewhat different perspective than the Eastern man.

American peers back east measured themselves through comparisons with one another, or “Old Europe.”\textsuperscript{172} The western pioneer writer assessed his worth by providing a positive and self-serving view of his response to civilizing a new region threatened by continual Indian aggression, nearby British troops, and the growing presence of free blacks. The first American frontiersmen, though unaware of the term “othering” as used by today’s psychologists and sociologists, commonly used the strategy to define themselves. Declaring who was and was not a peer and explaining their distinction helped them differentiate and promote the persona they were creating. The American westerner learned the tactics of “othering” from example set by the Spanish, French, Dutch, and British who set foot on American soil centuries earlier. These European groups used difference to distinguish themselves when confronting one another and non-Europeans. Indians and blacks offered an easy target. They visibly looked different and often seemed to behave differently. Classifying the differences of fellow white Europeans proved a bit more complicated.

Westerners needed a more nuanced approach to emphasize their superiority to and distinctive persona from that of other white men. Though the frontier settler admired the earliest British Puritans and Jamestown colonists’ hardiness and courage that same admiration did not apply to the English citizens living under the rule of King George III (1738-1820). England, locked in an Old World culture, lagged behind in attempts to create a citizen responsive government, such as the one unfolding in the United States.

Americans whose words are repeated in these pages, like Puritans, were reforming and reshaping a deficient European model. While still practicing some English cultural mannerisms, such as language and dress, settlers in the late eighteenth century understood that certain English qualities were despicable. Americans rejected the British reality of an aristocracy in which men remained in squalor or wealth by the luck of birth. Reward belonged to those who earned it through hard work, not as part of an inherited legacy. Moreover, representation and involvement in government should be the right of all white males rather than reserved for those of a particular social status. Americans understood the need to replace British culture long with an “American” culture to rival the British.

Until after the War of 1812 Americans, especially those on the frontier, still felt threatened by Englishmen. British troops remained stationed on the western borders and were accused of prompting Indian raids that took the lives and livelihoods of settlers. The English for too long used the resources of America for their own enrichment and impressed American males to work on board their ships. The time had come to establish challenge British rule and influence.

Threats and manners aside Americans believed they had reason to scorn Englishmen and their government due to the savage nature they exhibited. During the Revolutionary War British Regulars depended on German Hessians and Indian compatriots to brutalize American colonists. As early as 1779, rebels fighting the better equipped and trained British regiments wrote of the savage treatment received at the hands of British Regulars. Militiaman John Dodge recorded his experience as a captive of the English in Quebec. Able to escape, Dodge wrote to the Continental Congress and others to explain the violence unleashed on those desiring freedom as Governor Hamilton, a British government appointee, bribed and
gifted Indians for delivery of enemy scalps and prisoners.\textsuperscript{173} His narrative made its way to the hands of those living in England and America by 1779. Eventually given land because of his military service and captivity Dodge continued to write about his experiences in the West.

During the war, Dodge accused the British officers, both civil and military of being “savage & unprecedented among civilized nations; that our officers and soldiers taken by them have been loaded with irons, consigned to loathsome and crowded jails, dungeons, and prison ships; supplied often with no food, generally with too little for the sustenance of nature, and that little sometimes unsound and unwholesome, whereby so many of them have perished that captivity.”\textsuperscript{174} Dodge reported that some captured Americans had been forcibly removed to British ships and taken to England to be charged with murder and treason. The American soldier insisted, “Their prisoners with us have, on the other hand, been treated with moderation and humanity”\textsuperscript{175} The same sort of charges were leveled at the British by American militia who served in the western theatres.\textsuperscript{176} If the treatment of combatants and non-combatants during wartime were not evidence enough of the deficiencies of the English character, Morris Birbeck an English citizen who considered moving his family to the American west, kept a diary of his visit. Though Birbeck abhorred slavery, he compared American settlers to their equals in Britain and found Americans to be superior. He also saw the west as a “place to improve his station and fortune…” and claimed to favor a home that offered him a voice in government.\textsuperscript{177} Thus, despite the warnings and concerns about British behavior, settlers who moved to America’s first frontier braved settlement near English forts. As Americans moved so did the new nation’s borders.

Europeans served as one white group for western men to compare themselves to. Those white males residing back east also challenged the pioneer’s perception of himself. Those arriving on America’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{173} John Dodge, \textit{Narrative of Mr. John Dodge during his captivity at Detroit, reproduced in facsimile from the 2d ed. of 1780, with an introductory note by Clarence Monroe Burton}. (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1909).
\item \textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{176} See diaries of American militiamen that are already listed in Chapter 3, such as the Elias Darnall Diary.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Morris Birbeck, \textit{An Englishman’s View on America and Slavery}, 139 as quoted in David McClure, Doctor of divinity, \textit{Diary of Dr. David McClure} (New York, NY: Privately Printed) 68.
\end{itemize}
first frontier in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century understood that security for self and family required hard work. This sometimes meant engaging in menial labor and taking up the duties of women when a spouse took ill, died, or ran away. Justifying their actions as necessary western men believed they experienced little loss of self-esteem by performing tasks that some men back east might view as beneath their station in life.

James Davis’s study of masculinity in the Old Northwest maintains that whereas in the East certain professions drew a measure of respect that overshadowed the worth of the mechanic or laborer, in the West men rarely worked full-time in any one occupation and despite the conditions of work maintained esteem. Westerners willingly worked more than one job in order to remain independent and escape what they believed was the growing dependency of eastern male laborers on workplace owners. An expanding class of wealthy entrepreneurs mandated when an eastern employee began and ended his workday and they also had the power to set wages. This reliance on another to ensure economic security provided a push factor for emigrants who chafed at the idea of submitting themselves to another’s control.

The frontiersman valued his ability to walk away from the constraints of the Eastern workspace. His individualism and desire to pursue opportunities prompted the frontiersman to work in multiple fields if that meant future success and continued independence. Even if he performed a job for another, he did so on his own terms. An agreement was reached between two men and both benefitted. James Hall worked as a land speculator, a lawyer and judge, a politician, a writer, and editor. Thomas Hinde rode the trails as an itinerant preacher, worked as an Indian agent, and operated as a land speculator. Given the variety or number of jobs undertaken, according to western writers, pioneers worked hard, “…and became jacks of all trades.” Denigration for hard labor rarely factored into judging a man’s character on the frontier. In fact, it garnered praise and trust. Richard Flower, a farmer residing in Illinois recalled, "I

179 Thomas McKenney and James Hall, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, 10.
180 Thomas Hinde, Thomas Spottswood Hinde Papers.
went into my field the other day, and began a conversation with my ploughman: his address and manner of speech, as well as his conversation surprised me. I found he was a colonel of militia.”

Settlers moved from one job to another depending on day, season and need. A ploughman could also serve as an officer. Unless caught in some sort of misdeed, western men retained their self-respect despite menial labor.

Western citizens proudly announced that the region offered various opportunities open to anyone, no matter their station in life, the newcomer simply must possess the courage to take the risk. In fact, the rewards awaiting emigrants were so expansive that authors of *Cincinnati in 1826* boasted that even, “In the dwellings of the middling and poorer classes, there is, in general, that appearance of comfort and ease, which denotes a fertile country, and a benignant government, — where labor receives its reward, and enjoys it in security. The means of substantial enjoyment are probably more extensively diffused throughout our community than among any other people in existence. Although this remark may appear to display more of local partiality than of knowledge, “yet we do not fear the result of a candid investigation of its correctness.” Jobs, opportunities and success awaited those brave and hardy enough to make their way westward.

### Defining Themselves: Self-described Distinctive Americans and/or the American Adam portrayed in Western Literature

The specific problems, actions, and needs of Western settlers as they expanded American borders identified them as different from other white Americans both physically and emotionally. The decision to move westward, according to western author James Hall, separated them from “the mother states, by a wide chain of almost impassable mountains, and wholly cut off from the restraints and the protection of

---


government. Instead of calling upon Virginia, or upon the general government, to protect them from their enemies they depended upon themselves.”184 This distance aided pioneers in developing a mindset that encouraged their sense of individualism, opportunity, adventure, and freedom. The characteristics the settlers claimed as their own inspired American writers (of fiction and non-fiction) through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One scholarly concept that has received pronounced attention is that of the “American Adam.”185 An early statement supporting the idea of an Adam-like American man came from Jean Hector De Crevecoeur, a French American writer and statesman, who in 1782 described the American as a “new man” -- an innocent Adam in a bright new world dissociating himself from the historic past.186 R.W.B. Lewis, an American literary scholar, echoing Crevecoeur’s assertion, observes in his book, American Adam (1955) that the American pioneer exhibited an identifiable set of characteristics. The western settler was, in his view, a “new hero, an innocence, identified most readily with, Adam before the fall. He is self-reliant and self-motivated; the Emersonian figure, the simple genuine self against the whole world.” 187 The western man was a hero, intent on independence and making his own way in life. Authors of the First American West, such as Timothy Flint, James Hall, and Thomas Hinde recorded these very same traits as elements of what they saw as a developing western manliness. They wrote about western Americans as new and different, distinct from anything that had come before. While they might aspire to achieving financial and social success as defined back east, the possibilities of the West also offered a perception of distinction. Not only could they have eastern type prosperity they could better it. The perception of distinction and promise lured men to take a risk no matter their calling in life.

Homesteader, newspaper publisher, or tradesman, newly arrived settlers provided a foundation for developing a new American and western persona. James Fennimore Cooper, though not a westerner in terms of the Old Northwest settler, directed his work to explaining this new American character.

184 James Hall, Sketches of the West, 15.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
Writing the *Leatherstocking Tales*, Cooper provided examples of the frontier personality type. The first of the series, *The Pioneers* (1823), helped give a name to the intrepid western settler. His hero Natty Bumppo (also identified as Hawkeye) reflects the qualities Cooper envisioned for the frontiersman. They should be emblematic of, “rugged individualism, self-reliance, moral certitude in the face of difficult ethical dilemmas, and freedom from the potentially stifling strictures of society,” 188 Acts of valor such as the rescue of captive women, the sometimes necessary deaths of Indians during frontier warfare blended together in his fiction to symbolize the nation’s developing identity. 189 Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, was meant to inform readers about white and Indian culture and behavior in the early nineteenth century.

Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) especially works as an avenue for comparing and contrasting the masculine traits and skills exhibited by whites and Indians. The author, writing about his characters in the backdrop of the frontier that existed during the French and Indian Wars of the 1850s and 60s, shows us the deficiencies of the white English officer Heyward in the story as he makes the mistakes of a man unfamiliar with the frontier. Yet Cooper does not totally undermine his white character. He shows Heyward’s integrity and caring, especially when protecting the white females. Heyward also proves himself as a man brave enough to sacrifice his life for others. In regards to Indians, Cooper demonstrates they are not a monolithic group. Uncas and Chingachgook, both Indian males, are shown to be somewhat civilized as they accompany and fight alongside Hawkeye. Cooper’s Huron character of Magua serves as the villain of the story. While able to present some justification for his actions, Magua is portrayed as an embittered and cruel savage.

It is the character of Hawkeye, a white American born male, who adapts to the frontier and the natural environment surrounding him. In this man Cooper emphasizes and displays the best traits of the white and Indian races. Hawkeye identifies himself by his whiteness, while understanding and socializing

---

189 Ibid.
with the Indians. Thus, the skilled frontiersman Hawkeye, as described by Cooper, responds to people, places, and events as a capable hero and moral individual— the epitome of republican citizenship.

Cooper, as a typical author of the period, used his writing to instruct. The Leatherstocking Tales stories offered young white men life lessons. They could follow two paths: make good decisions and become heroes or make bad decisions and fail. Those men who headed west often made mistakes early on as they faced frontier challenges, but as able Americans they adapted quickly to survive and ensure the survival of those dependent on them. Like Hawkeye, they became heroic figures worthy of carrying the title “American man.” Their ability to endure hardship and move forward, in their perception, defined them.

American characters as portrayed by James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville might have recognized some value in Lewis’s depiction of an “American Adam” who had the opportunity to define himself as a reflection of the Biblical Adam before his fall from God’s grace. More recently, some scholars reject the idea of an American Eden, as well as American Adam who an identifiable American masculine type. American Studies scholar Donald Pease argues in The New American Exceptionalism (2009) that the American Adam, as well as other myths meant to demonstrate a unique American character are part of a “complex assemblage of theological and secular assumptions out of which Americans have developed the lasting belief in America as the fulfillment of the national ideal to which other nations aspire.” Pease believes that though Americans try to convince themselves that they display a distinctive set of characteristics, the truth is their ideas about themselves shift and adapt as needed. Thus, no one personality defines them. Other scholars, such as historian Elizabeth Perkins look to the words of settlers to show that there are elements of truth to the characterization of the western persona. Some settlers documented the adventure, danger, economic opportunities, and increased

---

190 Ibid.
192 Elizabeth Perkins, Borderlife.
independence they experienced out west. These themes resonate throughout the records left to us by settlers who recorded the stories about their life and the reasons why they moved to the frontier.

Puritan emigrants proclaimed they took the risk of moving westward from England to gain religious freedom. John Winthrop and others sought to reform religious practices. Yet, they also looked for economic gain to support their families and sought to establish respected reputations as they created communities in Massachusetts.¹⁹³ Settlers who moved into the Old Northwest Territory and Kentucky in the late eighteenth century also claimed a need for more freedoms. Still many more moved to escape debt or scandal.¹⁹⁴ The East no longer offered economic prosperity to the larger population. Timothy Flint wrote of Daniel Boone as representative of those who moved west for adventure and freedom. Boone, according to Flint, moved his family, servants, flocks, and household goods west to land that offered less social restraint and more economic promise.¹⁹⁵ Less renowned, but equally representative was James Hall, the court-martialed military officer, who moved westward to reinvent himself and turned to the law after his career as a soldier ended in disgrace.¹⁹⁶ For many men who fought in the Revolutionary War, the West offered advantages. Their reward for services during the conflict was the receipt of land given by grateful but poor states. Virginia officers, left with little financial opportunity in their eastern hometowns ventured west.

Opportunities might appear to be unlimited, yet settlement on America’s first frontier was not for the faint of heart. Clearing land, building a homestead, and eventually becoming part of a larger settlement required skills. Early on, a lack of “mechanics” to employ woodworking skills and agriculture meant the frontiersmen out of necessity mastered a number of trades not required of his eastern peers. James Hall reminds us that settlers usually arrived with few resources in hand. The backwoodsman’s dexterity, as Hall insists, when using the axe proved impressive “when we reflect on the variety of uses to

¹⁹⁵ Flint, Indian Wars of the West.
¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 69.
which this implement is applied, and that it in fact enters into almost all the occupations of the pioneer. In clearing lands, building houses, making fences, providing fuel, the axe is used; in tilling his fields, the farmer is continually interrupted to cut away the trees that have fallen in his enclosures and the roots that impede his plough.”\textsuperscript{197} Besides the creation of a home and garden the settler needed to consider how best to use all the resources he came into contact with in his new home. Skins for clothing and coverings, crude wood furnishings, plants for medicinal use and new food items became staples as he settled in and carved out a fruitful life for his family.

The success of providing for a family and the ability to declare oneself self-sufficient proved a man’s worth in 1800.\textsuperscript{198} Though western writers often referred to the self-supporting settler, the reality was in some instances different. Archaeologists David Strothers and Patrick Tucker explain in their study of the Dunlap Farm of Ohio that the subsistence farmer promoted by Thomas Jefferson and praised through western stories often failed to materialize. Though some managed to achieve the goal, for most the experience placed them somewhere along a continuum that ranged in degree from complete subsistence to failure.\textsuperscript{199}

Explaining reliance upon others was necessary in a region that was regaled for opportunity and independence. John Peck’s Emigrant Guide (1836-37) warned those considering westward migration to accept some measure of the crude hospitality of those pioneers already settled.\textsuperscript{200} Despite the possibility of early dependence on others, Peck and others assured the need for assistance lasted for only a short time. After all, the region was undeveloped and, overall, the new home promised a more independent way of life. On the positive side, settlers explained that helping another settle in to the region could be seen as one’s Christian duty. That duty would be repeated by the recipient of the kindnesses when another new

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} Gary Nash.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
family arrived. Therefore, the western man demonstrated the Christian and republican characteristic of concern for one’s neighbors and by doing so saw to the betterment of the nation.

In the East, care for the needs of others tugged open purse strings, but rarely incurred anything more than a monetary commitment. The concern exhibited by pioneers put their lives at risk. Groups of men often banded together to search for, or to avenge, victims of Indians. James Hall in *Sketches of the West* (1835), recognized that despite the need for self-sufficiency, the frontiersman felt committed to protect his neighbor, as well as family. Hall states that lacking the protective resources of the East, western settlers, “became early accustomed to rely upon their own courage and resources. Every man looked to his personal safety, and stood prepared to sustain his neighbor, and to guard his own fireside. As the settlements tended, self-defense grew into patriotism; men united for mutual protection.” This unity forged by need encouraged frontier citizens to become more hospitable, even when they might lack abundance for themselves.

Recognizing the need to band together in some measure, according to James Hall, promoted, “generosity, frankness, and manly bearing.” For example, Daniel Boone raised a group of eight volunteers to chase down the kidnappers of the Calloway daughters and then returned the girls to their family. Along the Virginia-Kentucky border, a party of twenty men followed a Wydanot raiding party for days in an effort to rescue kidnapped children. The men who went to rescue the children, though not related to the family, put their own families and themselves at risk to aid a neighbor. If the measure of a republic was its citizens’ regard for one another’s welfare, surely these men provided an exemplary model of the republican citizen.

Eastern citizens desired news about Indian raids. One group drawn west helped report the settlement experience. According to Indiana historian Fredric Brewer, newspaper publishers and or printers willing took the gamble of opening publishing concerns in the west. Entering the search

---

201 Hall.
202 Ibid.
203 Timothy Flint, *Indian Wars of the West*, 59.
204 Ibid., 70.
limitations of “Ohio from 1820 through 1830,” the United States Library of Congress lists six hundred newspaper titles. There is no breakdown of how long each was published, or the territory covered by each.205 Entering the same time period for Massachusetts yields four hundred titles, again with no information on periods of publication.206 While demographics and success and failure rates may limit the value placed on numbers alone, it is clear that newspaper editors in the west persevered. They continued their efforts despite the hardships of limited and trained hired help, supplies, contrary weather and “oppressive working conditions.”207 Frederick Brewer, historian, maintains when one paper failed the owner often began another. The western newspaper man and printer understood the civic duty connected to their craft. Whether published weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly and no matter the page count the pioneer paper provided platforms for discussion, edification, cautionary tales, and kept citizens apprised about their government.208 Newspapers and other publishers offered a necessary service in an isolated settlement. New products and changes in social manners and behavior appeared on the pages of the papers. These advertisements and articles expanded a consumer society that grew with better monetary circumstances and growing population numbers. News editors also recorded what was happening locally. A newspaper report gathered pioneers together to help a neighbor when relating stories about the economic, political, spiritual, and social needs of frontiersmen and their families.

Male frontiersmen responding to calls for assistance placed in newspapers and passed along by neighbors met both their civic and Christian ideal. Many emigrants to Kentucky and the Ohio region remained committed to the traditions of Christian duty. Moral behavior, as professed by Christians mattered. An account by Dr. Knight and John Slover, members of a militia, described the death of

http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/titles/results/?state=Ohio&county=&city=&year1=1820&year2=1830&terms=&frequency=&language=&ethnicity=&labor=&material_type=&lccn=&rows=20

206 Ibid. Massachusetts.
http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/titles/results/?state=Massachusetts&county=&city=&year1=1820&year2=1830&terms=&frequency=&language=&ethnicity=&labor=&material_type=&lccn=&rows=20


208 Ibid.
Colonel Crawford, an Indian captive, at the hands of the Wydonat tribe. The two witnesses describe the suffering of Crawford, who tied to a post was tortured, shot, and finally scalped. Crawford, throughout his ordeal, relied upon his faith in God and quietly prayed for mercy and strength. 209 Dr. Knight and John Slover marveled at the man’s ability to maintain such faith even during the most horrid experience. In another account, Richard Hildreth noted in his History of the United States (1880) many militiamen, their families, and settlers living nearby forts observed their religious practice even without benefit of ministers. These people residing on the outskirts of the nation often held religious services. 210 Their desire and need for religious support in an unstable environment prompted them to assume the duty to attend even the most makeshift observances.

Not all settlers arrived with family or military cohort. Many a single man working as a traveling cleric displayed elements of the developing western character as they faced the backwoods to provide others with spiritual comfort. Ministers, such as John Shane, chose to face the frontier on their own terms. 211 While Shane kept a record of his experiences, the Reverend James Finley spent forty years traveling through the west preaching to those he encountered. As he followed his religious calling he took the time to record his experiences so that others might know about life on the frontier. 212 The west offered a minister few comforts and a good deal of work. Additionally, many back east claimed, the frontier offered temptation and vice. Finley upon traveling westward, confessed that he succumbed to all types of “wickedness” and “revelry.” Eventually, he pulled himself out of the devil’s grasp and returned to living a Christian life. Finley credited the Cane Ridge Revival with helping him regain moral footing. 213 Finley’s belief that the frontier might be a place for vice originated from the ancestors of Americans of the eighteenth century. New England and Virginia colonists arriving in the seventeenth century had

209 Dr. Knight and John Slover, Narrative of a Late Expedition Against the Indians, (Andover: Ames and Parker 1798), 15.
claimed the existence of good and evil in an unsettled land. The lack of civilized checks on vice and the influence of untamed surroundings was a risk, but true religious fervor such as Finley’s could overcome the temptation.

The availability of vice might exist on the frontier, but authors proclaiming the merits of life in Cincinnati in 1826 insisted the usual temptations existed to a lesser extent in the West than anywhere else in the country. They claimed, “The most prominent source of crime and wretchedness, among our eastern brethren, — the vice of drunkenness — was not unknown here,” but was more rare than in other parts of the Union. Moreover, those same authors contended that the vice of gambling through lotteries and other games of chance had sometimes been tried, but remained rare, meanwhile in the Northeast and South citizens eagerly participated in both.

Men, such as Shane and Finley emphasized the power of religious faith even in the face of hardship. As white Americans, adherence to moral behavior came more easily to westerners than to their non-white neighbors. Compassion, self-sufficiency, freedom, moral virtue, civic minded behavior, and a host of other positive attributes marked the western male settler as different. In fact, in some minds, the western man appeared superior to, both white and non-white. American Adam or not, the western man offered an ideal for others to emulate.

White Men and Their Connection to Identity at the National and Local Levels

Those willing to endure the difficulties of frontier life and close the gap between cultures, east/west and white/Indian, included renowned explorer Zebulon Pike who seemed to meet the personality requirements beginning to take hold for the American frontiersman. Zebulon Pike’s life, according to historian Jared Orsi, epitomized the thought processes of American men who worked to

214 Cincinnati in 1826 (London: J. Miller, 1827), 89. http://www.archive.org/stream/cincinnatiin00mansgoog/cincinnatiin00mansgoog_djvu.txt
215 Ibid.
understand what connected them to other Americans both locally and nationally. Men like Pike came to understand that sacrifice for neighbor and country identified the best qualities found in the American male citizen.\textsuperscript{216} The population’s gratitude for sacrifices served as the basis for recognizing the heroism of some men. Pike, born in New Jersey in 1779 counted himself a member of the generation which followed the Revolutionary War. Pike counted several Revolutionary veterans among his relatives. His father was an acquaintance of Washington and Pike used this personal connection to show that his choice of a hero rose from an informed opinion. Washington exemplified the type of man who set aside personal interest to support his military forces and later the nation as a whole. Admiration for Washington was widespread in the nation and helped bond citizens together.

Orsi asserts that Pike desired to achieve a status of honor similar to that of Washington. Using evidence of Pike’s life, Orsi also maintains Pike lived the developing ideals of American manliness.\textsuperscript{217} Pike grew to manhood while living in various military outposts in the Old Northwest Territory of Ohio and Illinois. Determined to make a name for himself, he joined his father’s regiment at age 20. Throughout his career he carried with him the manly traits he developed while living as a citizen of the Old Northwest. Virtuous, heroic, humble, loyal, independent, and committed to the good of the nation, Pike, like Washington, committed fully to his men, his fellow citizens, and the country. His self-sacrifice and the hardships he experienced in his travels demonstrated his hardiness and resilience. His accomplishments did not require wealth or position by birth; they simply required the proper backdrop. The West provided that environment. Pike, like other westerners, published his story of life in the West. He laid claim to the recognition he believed his sacrifice and manliness earned him as a part of the nation’s developing history.

As part of the developing history of the nation, Ohio River Valley residents understood why citizens back east worried about the volatility of the frontier. The constant threat of Indian wars concerned those living in stable coastline communities, who looked to the barbarity of Indians as proof that the

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.
unsettled west led men to embrace an uncivilized life, according to white standards.\textsuperscript{218} In order to combat any suspicion of their worth as American citizens or their regression from the ranks of civilized men, western authors in their biographies and autobiographies depicted the settler as civilized and honorable citizens.

John Shane was one among many who came to believe in and write about the growing prominence of the West and the western citizen in the United States. By choosing west over east even after experiencing both, Shane demonstrated his preference for frontier life. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1812, Shane’s parents insisted he return east for his upper level education and so he attended college and seminary in Virginia. But Shane refused to remain in the East and returned to Ohio and Kentucky as a Presbyterian minister. An avid collector of frontier stories, he declined the offer of a parish position back east or in the west, preferring to remain free and unencumbered. He spent his life preaching to settlers as he traveled the backwoods often recording their experiences.\textsuperscript{219} Shane’s recordings captivated the imaginations of readers, who wished to understand the appeal and challenge of western life. His stories depicted the dangers and accomplishments of homesteading on the frontier and highlighted that this lifestyle brought people together locally and nationally.

Others who encouraged a local identity include James Hall, who sought to "elevate and improve" the character of the Illinois citizenry.\textsuperscript{220} His \textit{Illinois Monthly Magazine} placed "specimens of western talent, enterprise, and intelligence before the public" and disseminated accurate information about the condition and prospects of Illinois to distant readers in the East.\textsuperscript{221} The growth of historical awareness in Indiana led to the establishment of the 1808 Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society. It opened about eight years before the territory achieved statehood.\textsuperscript{222} Western settlers understood their connection...
to state and locality even as they pressed forward to become states and take their place on par with the thirteen original states that formed the Union.

**Indians and Blacks as a point of Comparison for Elevating the White Pioneer’s Identity**

Dr. David McClure, born and raised in New England, accepted the challenge to leave his ministry back east and travel to Ohio to try and bring the word of God to Indians. Despite his initial reluctance to place himself among the Delaware Indians he recognized it as his duty to move to the Ohio Territory. Over time McClure, unable to convert many of the Delaware tribe, claimed his failure to be the result of the Indian’s unsettled nature. Discouraged, he convinced himself and others of the tribe’s recalcitrance. McClure failed to understand the tribe’s already rich spiritual life and believed they would readily convert to Christianity. Dr. McClure finally moved back east and resumed his mission to preach within a more traditional setting among people more like himself—i.e., white men. He resented the Indian’s stubborn nature and the barbarism that made them unable to accept a superior belief system.

Indian barbarism peppers stories recorded and retold in settler’s words. Henry Bird, a white settler taken captive, disclosed the details of his nightmarish tale to a local reporter. Bird recalled his kidnapping by an Indian raiding party in 1811. According to the unlucky settler, he spent months as a prisoner of the savages. The Indians repeatedly threatened to kill him. They degraded Bird and treated him harshly. Indians also used the captive as their slave. Though constantly fearful for his life, according to Bird, he remained calm and observant. One evening when his captors, a loutish and undisciplined group, indulged in too much alcohol, Bird managed to escape. Patience, bravery, and an awareness of what transpired around him, Bird insisted, allowed him to outwit his less intelligent and undisciplined captors.

---

223 David McClure, Doctor of divinity, *Diary of Dr. David McClure* (New York, NY: Privately Printed), 68.
Other stories also emphasized the superiority of white men. A surprise attack by Indians upon John Merrill and his family demonstrated the importance of heroic action in dangerous circumstances. Despite suffering a broken arm and sustaining bullet wounds, Merrill still “exerted every faculty at the critical moment… he seized a billet of wood with which he dispatched two Indians.” 225 Merrill showed strength of character by refusing to give up in the face of overwhelming odds. His intellect and bravery as well as his perseverance saved the lives of his family members. Pioneers, such as John Merrill, protected their families no matter the odds as they stretched the boundaries of the nation.

Whether telling of their experiences with Indians themselves or enlisting another to report their contact with Indians, most pioneers’ stories echoed a similar theme. Savages unjustly attacked white settlers as they went about their daily business of making a home, The pioneer family, unprovoked, was forced to defend itself. In an untenable position, the white settler had no choice but to kill the savages who threatened their lives and home. A recounting of the murder of women and children by tribesmen placed the plight of the pioneer in stark light for easterners who might question the settler’s proclivity for violence. Charles McKnight, working from diaries and other documents, recounted the dangers when he wrote about the aftermath of one attack on a homestead. A husband and father returned home with fellow settlers and found his wife, “and her two daughters, who, having been violated with circumstances of savage barbarity, were tomahawked and scalped. Their bodies, yet warm and bleeding, were found upon the floor of the cabin. The neighborhood was instantly alarmed.” 226 The response of the settlers to this atrocity was to send a band of men, under the command of a military officer, to apprehend the Indians and punish them. Reports of such Indian barbarism and savagery experienced at the hands of Indians made their way into many reports, formal and informal. For example, a Philadelphian, writing a report for a scientific organization detailed his perceptions about visiting the West and his contact with Indians. The

226 Charles McKnight, Our Western Borders, (Philadelphia, PA: J.C. McCurdy 1875), 269.
writer insisted some evidence of genius presented itself in the way in which Indians used natural resources and also in their ability to adapt to their surroundings. As a visitor and firsthand observer of tribal life, however, the author told readers, “… he could never overlook their predilection for barbarism as evidenced in their dress and behavior.”

John Peck, a cleric, also underscored the barbarism of Indians. Peck provided those thinking about immigrating to the frontier with a preparation guide that would help them in their encounters with the unknown. His Guide for Emigrants (1836-37) denounced any defense of the Indian’s character. He discounted any blame leveled against white settlers for the decline of tribes by stating, “Evidence enough can be had to show that they were degraded and wretched, engaged in petty exterminating wars with each other, often-times in a state of starvation, and leading a roving, indolent, and miserable existence.”

Dr. David McClure, during his time spent proselytizing to the Delaware tribe, noted that Indian men were, “savage” and abhorred “all types of labor except war and hunting.” McClure noted that all physical labor was done by females, including paddling canoes whenever men desired to travel. Given their lack of enterprise and the fact that they employed “but little labor to the soil” justified the notion that the Indian men should give way to a better sort of man who was committed to wise use of the land as well as to the virtues of individualism, hard work, to family, neighbor, and country.

While Indians reportedly got by on minimal provisions and seemed content to exist at a barbaric level, the first American pioneer stood ready to invest everything he owned in his future. He wagered his life and sometimes the lives of others against his ability to create and sustain a new and prosperous home. Francis Hall, a traveler in the Old Northwest who arrived after the War of 1812, wrote, “With his axe on his shoulder, his family and stock in a light wagon, he plunges into forests, which have never heard the woodman's stroke, clears a space sufficient for his dwelling, and first year's consumption, and gradually

---

229 David McClure, 68.
230 Ibid.
converts the lonely wilderness into a flourishing farm.” Such hard manual labor supported the idea of rugged manliness, and proved the white man’s superiority to the lazier Indian male.

**Black Men and the Frontier Identity**

Black men, either runaway slaves or free, failed to measure to the white perception of American masculinity. Slavery, though prohibited by the Northwest Ordinance, continued to flourish in some regions. While most Ohioans rejected attempts to nullify the Northwest Ordinance’s ban on slaveholding, some farmers and others in southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois hired many slaves escaping from Virginia and Kentucky. The Northwest Ordinance prohibiting slavery in the territory seemed to promise free blacks and escaped slaves the possibility of self-determination and economic prosperity. In truth, it offered neither.

In 1802, the Ohio Constitution undermined any idea that blacks could gain equal status in the state. The state constitution, like the Ordinance, prohibited slavery. At the same time, an unwelcoming and unquestionable message was delivered to any black considering entrance into the state with the passage of “black laws” in 1804 and 1807. The black laws required all blacks to register and produce a certificate of freedom. By 1807, proof of freedom no longer served as a sufficient method for blacks to gain residency in Ohio. State legislators passed a law requiring that within twenty days of settling in Ohio, blacks must promise good behavior and a means of support. To back up their claim they paid a $500 bond. Few white men could have posted a $500 fee. For many blacks the sum was almost insurmountable. Other states that were eventually partitioned out of the Northwest Territory followed the example set in Ohio and adopted similar laws restricting black settlement and movement within their

---

231 Raymond V. Phelan, *Slavery in the old Northwest* 1906, 256.
233 Ibid.
boundaries. Given these legally authorized limitations, blacks found little opportunity to attain the self-sufficiency and independence exhibited by white males. Still blacks strove to prove their manliness.

While some small towns and cities only occasionally enforced black laws, the city of Cincinnati took advantage of all restrictions leveled against black rights. Americans, both white and black, free and fugitive, recognized the advantages of moving to Cincinnati in the 1820s. The city advertised the town as the “Queen of the West” through newspapers and writers insisted the city offered tremendous economic and social opportunities as it increased its manufacturing base.234 As methods of transportation increased so did the ability of citizens, North and South, to travel to Cincinnati and other western destinations. White men often found the advertised opportunities and a chance to prove their worth to be true, black men did not.

Black men believed, mistakenly, that their service in the War of 1812 merited them recognition as at the very least, worthy of the right to live alongside whites and at most, American citizens. Since federal law closed militia duty to them in the 1790s, when offered a chance to serve as a member of the uniformed military they eagerly signed up.235 During the War of 1812, approximately one hundred men served with Oliver Perry on Lake Erie, while others fought alongside Andrew Jackson on the New Orleans front as the war drew to a close. Moreover, it was a black company that defended Detroit from attackers. 236 Black men who served often received praise from commanders for their efforts. Despite their efforts they still faced discrimination and exclusion in the Northwest.

The status of blacks was consistently undermined. Slaves were accused by white of lacking any commitment to family. This accusation ignored the reality that slave owners forced family members to separate. Black men hoped that once outside of the slave system they could show their love of family, just as whites routinely did. Declaring that slavery prevented a man from "being a man," one fugitive slave

236 Ibid.
swore that when he arrived in a free state he would plan for his children’s future. Charles Ball tried regularly to rescue his wife and children from slavery and expressed his continued "torment" as he dealt with the separation. The struggle to prove their manliness by caring for family continued when black men reached the Old Northwest. In fact, due to the hope they carried for a better life the disappointment in their new home perhaps proved almost as devastating as slavery.

Legislative restraints purposefully denied free blacks their civil rights, the promise of economic prosperity, and attempts to care for their families. The right to testify in court or to serve on juries, admission to the local hospitals, orphanages, poor houses, and public schools were a few of the inequalities blacks suffered at the hands of white bigots. Moreover, the hope for black children to gain access to public education eluded them until 1849.

Physically identifiable as different, blacks were easily targeted for exclusionary policies and practices. By 1829, blacks made up 9.4 percent of the entire Cincinnati population. The stream of black migrants came from the South and included "freed" blacks and fugitive slaves. By 1829, an African Methodist Episcopal Church, much like that found in Philadelphia, offered blacks a place to voice political concerns. They developed aid societies, Christian fellowship, some private schools, and a group of emerging leaders, who largely consisted of ministers. The black political voice still lacked an effective platform and the economic wherewithal for expressing their concerns, still whites took note of their advancements. The white population did not experience the same population increase as that found in the black community. This disparity of numbers began fueling white fears that free blacks might prove difficult to control. Various groups expressed different anxieties concerning the growing black presence. Merchants and shopkeepers, with ties to southern customers, certainly wanted to avoid any sign that

238 Charles Ball, Slavery in the United States. A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man (New York, 1837), 466, 22.
239 Nikki Taylor, 283.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
Cincinnati offered refuge to escaped slaves. Some expressed the belief that jobs competed for with blacks should be freed up for white men. Still others worried about the need to care for the blight of impoverished and uncontrolled blacks in their city.

Some whites worried about a decline of morality promoted by black residents. Like Indians they thought blacks lacked the ability to act civilly in a frontier setting. Whites editorialized, "we shall be overwhelmed by an [immigration] at once wretched in its character and destructive in its consequences." The editor of Liberty Hall, a local paper, complained of "night walkers, lewd persons, and those who lounge about without any visible means of support, and especially the Negro house gamblers." While white men, such as Reverend Finely had managed to escape the hold of evil and returned to the Christian fold, whites worried that as an inferior race blacks would prove unable to resist crime and vice. In 1829, these fears and bigotry led to violence by whites against the black community.

Recognizing the difficulties of attaining any sense of manhood, equality, or independence, blacks left Cincinnati in large numbers and relocated in Wilberforce, Ontario. The black community petitioned the Canadian government for and received permission to establish this municipality as a free community in Canada. Though the new settlement did not succeed, clearly the attempt showed the determination of blacks to create a home in which they could prosper and care for themselves and their families.

Conclusion

By 1830, white men living on America’s first frontier drove many Indian Tribes out of their homes and a number of blacks out of areas of the Northwest Territory. They, not their eastern counterparts were settling and increasing American westerners and making certain the men who expanded

242 Ibid.
243 Western Star (Lebanon, OH), 29 August 1829 (from the Cincinnati Sentinel).
244 Cincinnati Daily Gazette, 24 July 1829.
245 Liberty Hall, 25 August 1825.
246 Cashin, “Blacks in Northwest.”
and occupied it were worthy of the opportunity. In 1819, *The Western Review Magazine*, boasted that citizens living in Old Northwest region, despite attempts by some to hinder settlement, had triumphed. The magazine’s editors claimed, “Our population has multiplied, and our property accumulated to such a degree, that we not only have an ample field for our own talents, but for those of the most promising and enterprising young men from the Atlantic States.”

Reminiscent of the English colonists who felt estranged from the mother county of Great Britain, the western settler, according to the magazine editors, “are ceasing to feel like colonists who have left the mother country and the delights of home, and who always look back for the inventions and improvements which society is expected to introduce.”

Declaring separation from their eastern peers, the magazine insisted that settlers no longer related all of their issues to those experienced back east. Instead, they began to understand that some of the problems they faced differed greatly from those faced by citizens living in seaboard cities. The settler now began adapting policy to their specific needs. In doing so, they distinguished themselves from other groups: white, Indian, and black.

Although later historians and scholars explain the behavior of western male settlers as aggressive, violent, and unfair in their treatment of anyone not white, protestant, and male, most male pioneers who moved to the first frontier viewed their actions as just and necessary. Their desire and full intent to take every opportunity as Americans defined them as men. Arguing whether America’s first settlers acted justly does not change how the pioneers presented here defined themselves and those whites who followed them. In their words and their estimation they acted in ways expected of a true American man. They sometimes connected their westward movement with a godly mission, just as their ancestors from the 1600s had. The writings of some American pioneers infer that they saw themselves as

---

248 Ibid.
249 William P. Cutler and Julia P. Cutler, *Life, Journals and Correspondence of Reverend Manasseh Cutler, LL.* (2 volumes, Cincinnati, OH: 1888) I.
overwhelmingly heroic, independent, patriotic and good. The rugged masculine persona of the frontiersmen, through their words, is their legacy to us.
Chapter 4

WIVES AND MOTHERS ON THE FIRST AMERICAN FRONTIER:
WOMEN CREATING A WESTERN IDENTITY

Mary McMillan, the wife of an army officer, lived in Michigan at the time the territory became an American possession. She recalled, “… having heard rumors of the approach of a hostile party, and being apprehensive of a sudden attack.” Worried because of the absence of her husband, Mary felt it necessary to walk with her small infant to a neighbor’s house a few miles away in order to hear the latest news regarding the Indian threat. Mary left her other children at home in order to make better time. Once she reached her destination her worst fears were confirmed. Terrified for the children she left behind, she hurried back home. There she found the cabin stripped of furniture and the little ones missing. Mary wrote that, “A sickening terror entered her heart,” and, “at once on her mind, that her little ones had been either murdered or carried away captive by the merciless Indians.” In this terrible emergency she claimed that she remained self-possessed and logical. She reasoned that, “The savages could not have gone far.” Mary determined that her only course of action was to find a way to cross the river and seek aid immediately. Discovering that the canoe was missing, she rolled some logs into the water and placed two boards across them. This makeshift raft carried Mary and her baby to the opposite shore where she found her children hiding. They had pulled the canoe up into the bushes so they could safely wait for her return. Those reading Mary’s account from around 1803 in an 1851 publication that detailed the lives of pioneer women, could only marvel at the mother’s resourceful response to a situation that might have ended with the death of her children. Readers back east perceived the Native American practice of

---

250 Michigan officially became an American Territory in June of 1803 and remained a territorial possession until 1837 and its admittance as a state.
252 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
254 Ibid.
holding hostages or integrating prisoners into their tribal life as a ghastly prospect and at times wondered why the McMillan family chose to live with these threats.

Anna Bentley’s settlement experience which began in the 1820s seemed less precarious, since it did not include overt threats from Indians. Yet her journey to the frontier proved no less traumatic. Anna exchanged an upper-class Quaker lifestyle in Maryland (like Kentucky, a border slave state) for the Ohio frontier. Her new home consisted of a one-room cabin she shared with her husband and children. Anna left behind an entire support system of family and friends. Over the next 30 years through her letters she told of the trials she faced while trying to live a new life on an unsettled frontier. She also recorded the changes she witnessed as Ohio evolved from a frontier to a settled state.

Two very different people -- but along with many other female newcomers moving west, Bentley and McMillan traveled to what they perceived as an unsettled and opportunity-filled Northwest Territory between 1777-1830. Like Bentley and McMillan, a host of other pioneer women presented in these pages recounted their stories in diaries, journals, letters, and through newspapers and books. The stories they told about their experiences laid a basis for how their white peers viewed them and how some later generations would assess the character of the American, western woman. They were active agents in shaping their identity.

Women had traveled west with missionary groups and alongside militia and trappers before the Revolutionary War, but most stayed for short periods of time. John Filson, relating Daniel Boone’s settlement experience, wrote that Boone claimed his wife and daughter, in 1775, were the “first white women that ever stood on the banks of Kentucke River.” The first permanent white women settlers in Ohio arrived with family members in about 1788 and 1789. They were part of the settlement at

---

Marietta founded by the Ohio Company of Associates. From Kentucky and Ohio settlement spread and continued until women occupied places in what would eventually become a five state region.

Creating an ideal for the American woman to emulate proved no less difficult than agreeing on understanding what it meant to be a man in America following the Revolutionary War. The women who appear in his chapter moved to the Northwest Territory and proved every as concerned with identity development as other citizens. En route and after their arrival on America’s first frontier many a sod-buster’s wife and other female migrant told of the danger, excitement, achievement, deprivation and loneliness often associated with putting down roots in a strange place. The written record they left underscored the problems they faced as they tried to place themselves within the nation’s developing norms for female behavior.

Agreeing upon the proper behaviors and characteristics deemed suitable for identity can proved a difficult and unpredictable undertaking even in the most stable environment. American men and women, during the years of the New Republic era, felt pressured by unstable economic and social conditions. Given the uncertainties they faced ideas of changing the paternalistic attitudes shown toward women might have seemed possible. This could have offered a point of separation from British and European tradition. Instead they retained the view of women as lesser beings. No other option occurred to them. The feminine ideal remained tied to the skills required to raise moral, civic-minded children.


258 This study will be limited to Ohio River Valley settlers arriving on the frontier between 1780-1815. The decision to omit documentation from the decade of the 1770s stems from the fact that any reporting about Indian battles tied to the American Revolution may contain a different agenda than the later materials examined in this paper. This paper is part of a dissertation that will cover a broader population and time span when completed.

While the use of primary sources, such as newspapers, journals, correspondence, and books always leads the careful historian to consider the possibility of bias. In this particular study, however, the question of biased authors, who might embellish their stories or misrepresent their characters goodness or evil, merely helps support the contention that female Ohio Valley pioneers wrote in a specific manner for a specific goal; the creation of their own identity. This was an identity that confirmed their retention of a civilized and feminine nature.
Figure 3-1: Liberty. In the form of the goddess of youth; giving support to the bald eagle. Savage, Edward, 1761-1817, artist.

If women were the repository of virtue and the instructors tasked with training America’s youth for their duties as citizens, it seems reasonable for the artist to depict the female goddess Hebe, as offering a cup to an eagle. With her right foot she treads on chains, a scepter, a key, and other implements of tyranny in honor of the European enemy recently defeated and the to uphold the freedoms promised in the Constitution. At the lower right, beyond a pedestal or altar, the town of Boston is visible, with lightning in the sky overhead.

LC-USZ62-15369 DLC (b&w film copy neg.) - REPOSITORY Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., 20540, USA.
and maintain a well-kept, civilized, and Christian domicile. A well-run and orderly home, well-mannered children and purity and piety became the markers of achievement for white, middle and upper-class womanhood.²⁵⁹ Through prescriptive literature and sermons from the pulpit, women learned their lot in life was to give over control to their fathers or spouses, remain virtuous and provide understanding and emotional support for their husbands. Women might teach children the republican values that underpinned the opportunity seeking, commercial enterprises men engaged in, but they did so from home and hearth. The line dividing home and workplace became the core of what scholars, such as Linda Kerber,²⁶⁰ would come to call the doctrine of “separate spheres.” Men operating in the public sphere provided for the family and women engaged in domestic chores within the safety of the private sphere, or home, their husbands earned for them.

When women needed reminders of their duty to husband and family, those reminders might come from men or other women. Catherine Beecher who moved to Cincinnati in 1832, according to historian Kathryn Kish Sklar, was a spokesperson for culture during the nineteenth century. Beecher insisted that women remain confined to the home and school and dedicate their time to improving the female sphere. For Beecher morals developed in the world of pious women trumped those in the male sphere. From the home women more easily influenced society’s moral behavior. This unique ability to oversee and shape morality provided women with a social importance as homemakers. Women could use their place in the home to court the admiration of others and reinforce their own self-esteem. Though frustration might result from the limitations of the domestic sphere, women learned to endure.

Dr. Samuel Jennings, respected physician and surgeon, cautioned women in 1817 to lay aside frustrations and, “…submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of his wife. In obedience then to this precept of the gospel, to the laws of custom, and of nature, you

²⁶⁰ Ibid.
ought to cultivate a cheerful and happy submission. The way of virtue is the way of happiness."  

The message for each woman was to follow her husband even if he led her, against her better judgment, into the wilderness. The need to submit and endure truly challenged the lives of the women who moved west as they dealt with emotional and material hardships. While Beecher and others of the period laid out restrictions for female behavior, daily life for women settlers often undercut their ability to reach the feminine ideal. Women in the new American West faced problems that often made adherence to rules guiding femininity difficult. Those women who came with communities and those who came with as part of a single family as seen through their writing often relied on memories of their experience back east to help them transition through the settlement process. By example they demonstrated for their children acceptable behaviors.

The Use of Memory to Make Sense of New their New Homes and Identities

Westward settlement often proved to be a grass-roots movement. Companies, such as the Ohio group, and some other religious sects such as Anna Bentley’s Quaker community, pooled their resources and organized migration west. Others, like Lucy Hastings and her husband arrived as a single family unit. Women residing within this developing region worked to make sense of their new lives and surroundings. They relied upon the ideas of culture and behavior that they brought from home. Though sometimes forced to change or adapt remembered behaviors, they worked to make what transpired in their new homes acceptable. Over time, they even felt confident enough to suggest that the ways they

261 Samuel Jennings, M.D., “The married lady's companion: or, Poor man's friend; in four parts: I. An address to the married lady, who is the mother of daughters: II. An address to the newly married lady: III. Some important Hints to the midwife: IV. An essay on the management and common diseases of children” (Richmond, VA: T. Nicholson, 1817). Internet resource.


264 Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
accomplished their daily tasks, cared for their families, and practiced their faith might prove superior to methods and materials eastern women used to accomplish those very same tasks. Simply put, circumstances on the frontier required change and inspired innovation.

Necessity bred adaptation. This meant that what might be a cultural rule for ladies living within the “Cult of Domesticity” back east sometimes had to be put aside in the west. The changes occurred most often in the interest of efficiently sharing the overwhelming amount of labor required of homesteaders. Female pioneers learned quickly that survival required them to undertake hard work even if it required them, at times to appear unfeminine. Given the situation and need women had the chance – and often a duty - to exploit the ladylike norms when their own lives, or the lives of others were threatened. The West offered less occasions for demonstrating gentility, at least during the opening era of the United States’ Republic.

The demand that they exhibit self-reliance and growing confidence helped white, western women to justify the fact that they sometimes worked as hard as Indian squaws and black women. They also faced a similar lack of comforts. Many of the white women recorded here insisted, however, that their current circumstances provided a stepping stone to a better and more refined lifestyle. For example, when her husband suggested they move further westward Lucy Hastings remarked that, “the opportunity to increase their land holdings and better their life style were reason enough to move once again,”265

Caroline Kirkland, writing her diary under the pen name of Mary Clavers, clearly understood that this “home on the outskirts of civilization” was a temporary state when she wrote that, “The dead silence, the utter loneliness, the impenetrable shade, which covered the site of the future city, anticipated of future life and splendor.”266 In her mind’s eye she expected that a better life would be achieved in this desolate place.

Historical fact supported the optimistic attitude of the western pioneer. The earliest Virginians and New Englanders took a chance on a new home and lifestyle and prospered as did most of the

265 Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
266 Caroline Kirkland, 1, 45.
succeeding generations. White pioneers chances to become successful seemed attainable, especially given their ability to build new lives and settlements from the ground up. Their dreams of building new civilized regions and of spreading the nation were based upon recent and empirical examples. Despite the inevitable hardships, families knew more or less what westward movement and settlement required. It was a risky endeavor, but there were reasons to hope and plan for success.

Faced with a new environment that offered opportunity the stories these women told through letters, diaries and other written records, sometimes provide an interesting interplay of memory and current experience. The connecting of past and present provided white women settlers with reassurances that they remembered what it meant to be civilized and refined. Their memories of their former life also helped place the settler’s new reality into a more familiar context. Lucy Hastings when explaining the homes in her new locale used houses back east as a way to describe what she saw around her. Even as she admitted that “land, farms, and many of the houses show a great contrast and there were many one room log dwellings,” she quickly related in the following line that “we have some as nice houses as you do back east.” Lucy could explain her current circumstance through her remembered past and also hope that one day she might again reside in a home type resembling those from her eastern roots, or surpass the memory and create a better home in her new environment.

Mary Dewees used her remembered version of home as a way to transition from past to present. Mary attempted to explain the changing landscape as she moved further into the frontier territory. She noted the scenery she remembered from her eastern home. A trimmed tree and flowers in the garden were points of reference for what passed as natural beauty back east. With that in mind she turned to describing her new environment. Mary marveled at the wild and lush environment around her. She used recollections of home to compare and contrast and eventually make sense of her new environment for herself and those reading her words. The unfamiliar became a bit more understandable.

267 Ibid.
Something as simple as a dandelion could evoke memories of home. Some frontier women brought a bit of home with them in the form of flowers. They managed to carry seeds or seedlings from back east to plant in their new settlements. Hollyhocks, marigolds, verbenas and bachelor buttons bloomed around some cabins. The trumpet vine or honeysuckle might cover a crudely fashioned pole trellis at the door. The wife of a pioneer, who had lived in "the bush" nearly three years without seeing another white female face, spoke of her delight when she found a dandelion in bloom near her doorstep. Its unexpected appearance brought back associations with her old home and reminded her of beloved ones so vividly that she could not resist the impulse to "sit down and have a good cry."269 "I felt less lonely," she said, "all that day, and ever since. My dandelions are the only ones in the settlement, and I take care that they and the white-clover, which has since made its appearance, shall not run out."270 Hope found in the most unpretentious flower reminded women that their new life might eventually resemble or surpass what they left behind.

Religion offered another link to home. Though many settlers arrived with different faith backgrounds in place, most could relate to a belief in Christian virtue. Faith helped women transition to their new life. In the west, as in the East, men were increasingly subsumed in a competitive marketplace that, according to historian Bruce Mann, increasingly valued economic investment and growth. As money and success increasingly became the focus of men supporting families, women were charged with encouraging families to remain true to their faith. The promotion of religion, by women, became collectively associated with the growing American feminine ideal. Thus, Christianity helped to demonstrate that women of the West accepted and remained wedded to a civilized value system. Black and Indian women might identify themselves as Christian, but white women surpassed their ability to remain committed to the Christian God and share their fervor with family and neighbors.

In this unsettled region a woman’s faith was especially and sorely tested. During a 1780s attack by the Cherokees on Fort Lick, Tennessee, Mary Bledsoe witnessed her husband’s murder.

269 Ellet, Elizabeth, *Pioneer Women.*
270 Ibid.
Despite the tragedy, she wrote that her religion, “had taught her fortitude under her distresses.” Moreover, her thoughts were not selfish, rather she thought of how this horrific turn of events would affect her children’s time of crisis, far surpassing the everyday mishaps experienced by families back east, tried her faith far beyond normal limits.

Descriptions of Anna Bentley’s faith as recorded in her letters tell us about her involvement in her religious community, her commitment to Quaker doctrine, and her desire to remind others of her religious constancy. Though family back home would have been unaware of an occasional skipped Sunday meeting, Anna took time in her correspondence to explain why she and her family sometimes missed Sunday meetings. The weather, family illness and a variety of other misfortunes might serve as impediments to church attendance. In spite of her problems, Anna assured her mother of her dedicated efforts to remain true to her faith and to provide for her children’s religious instruction.

Claims to religious commitment were not limited to the women occupying America’s first frontier. Centuries earlier another pioneer woman, Anne Bradstreet, wrote in her poems of her own mother’s attempts to educate her children in their religious duties. Her poems and Anna’s letters demonstrate a continuing emphasis on the duty women assumed to advocate for religious constancy. Women such as Bledsoe, Bentley, and Dewees often mentioned their efforts to instruct children in the tenets of Christian beliefs as a way to underscore their claim to piety and respectability.

Religious instruction provided only one element of education promoted on the frontier. Given the responsibility of Republican Mothers to produce responsible, self-sufficient and civic minded citizens, women, such as Anna Bentley, worked to teach their children at home or sent them to a nearby one room schoolhouse. Whatever the location for schooling children learned among other lessons, the skills of reading, writing and doing sums. As the population of the region grew so did educational

---

271 Ibid.
272 “Bledsoe Diary” (1870s), as presented in *Early History of the South-West by General William Hall*, The South-Western Monthly, 1852 Draper Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.
273 Briggs-Stabler papers.
opportunities. Newspaper advertisements for tutors and normal schools became more commonplace after 1800. This is evidenced, in part, in letters asking for payment that passed from educators to parents throughout the period.275

Educational opportunities were one of the many items advertised for purchase in western newspapers. Lucy Hastings, Anna Bentley and other frontier women desired “nice things.” Westerners, like middle and upper class easterners were consumers. In 1809, William Challen, a Kentucky resident, touted his chair-making skills. Challen’s chairs could have been simple. After all, how fancy a chair did log cabin residents need? The furniture maker, however, claimed his furniture mirrored the latest and best fashioned chairs . . . just as they are currently popular in London and New York.”276 Silk products, women’s short white gloves, fancy figured shawls, combs and looking glasses would hardly be considered necessities for performing domestic chores on the frontier, yet they were present in advertisements because a market existed. 277 The ability to purchase these finer, advertised goods often materialized once a family achieved a stable settlement and income. The consumer culture increased as communities began to grow.

Even though most newcomers to the frontier arrived with limited material possessions, women still wrote about attempts to show refinement. Mary McMillan, traveling west with her family, carefully choose belongings to bring to the frontier. McMillan’s travel to Michigan took her from “a populous and cultivated region.”278 Hers was a difficult journey. The family took only one small wagon and loaded it with necessary articles. Yet, while packing she managed to make room for a set of pewter dishes and cups.279 These items, hardly a necessity for living in a cabin, served as a symbol of refined living. She wrote of her sorrow at having to witness the theft of these precious pieces by Indians while her husband was absent from home. She recalled, she did not dare rescue any portion of her property, lest they should

275 See letters from American memory pages.
276 The Supporter; 1815/07/18; Volume: VII; Issue 353; p.1, Chillicothe, Ohio.
277 Ibid.
278 Ellet, Elizabeth. Pioneer Women.
279 Ibid.
turn their anger on her children.”

“Like many other matrons of that day” Mary prided herself on a handsome set of pewter dishes and plates. She remembered having consistently scoured them to keep the treasures bright as silver. Unfortunately, that polish pleased the Indians and they took them away. Mary lost a piece of her refined character as well as a memory of a more secure home.

Anna Bentley’s letters make it clear she remembered the need, as a respectable and genteel woman, to provide hospitality for guests. In moving west, she imported her internal barometer of civilizational niceties. When public hotels or taverns were not available, settlers opened their homes to travelers, providing both meals and a place to sleep. On multiple occasions Anna wrote to her mother about entertaining visitors. She listed menus and conversations. Anna lamented the fact that her resources were scarce. The china and glass pieces she brought with her shattered when one of the children knocked over a shelf. She noted the threadbare condition of the tablecloths she carried with her to her frontier home and hoped to replace them very soon. Though the need to entertain might not occur as often as it did back east, despite shortcomings of food and possessions Anna continued providing a welcoming household for guests who were moving into the area, or simply passing through. She also told the folks back home about the praise heaped upon her for her efforts.

Lucy Hastings also provided ample evidence of entertaining guests. She spoke about those who visited and her efforts to make them as comfortable as possible. She did this knowing at times that by using the meager goods at her disposal to be hospitable her family’s overall economic health suffered. While some might see the comments made by Lucy and Anna as bragging, writing of these trivialities suggests a more important goal. The telling of these events might well have been attempts to send a message to reassure family and friends back east of the settler’s continued respectability. Anna and Lucy

---

280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
282 Briggs-Stabler papers.
283 Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
remained aware of the need to maintain a “well-kept, comfortable home” for family and an open and welcoming haven for guests.\footnote{Ibid.}

Aspiring to create a better material life offered one reason for moving west. In the nineteenth century, many settlers were strongly motivated by the promise of more opportunities for economic wealth than they could expect back east, or in Europe. Indeed, for much of the world, the United States represented a land of opportunity. Within the United States, the frontier offered a distillate of that promise – the chance to pick up and head to a new home with better prospects. The idea was never that the new place would be perfect on the day newcomers arrived. Instead, they brought with them those things they could carry, and those mental precepts which informed their outlook on what the better life would look like. There was no thought of “going native.” Rather, the idea was to bring civilization westward with them. This imbued the West with an aura of promise.

Despite the promise of a better life, the reality of frontier life remained difficult, at least for quite some time. Women who moved from comfortable circumstances back east had to reconcile the rougher condition with their expectations. A new Wisconsin bride lamented her own lack of domestic skills. As the pampered daughter of a wealthy family she never found it necessary to learn to cook, sew, or keep house. Following her husband, a military officer, to his post might have seemed romantic. What she found when she arrived shocked and disappointed her. The young woman comments and complains about the few amenities available in her new home, the lack of available servants, and her inability to cope. Her letters back home show how unprepared she was to take on her role as a frontier wife.\footnote{Elizabeth Baird, A New Bride in Wisconsin, 210.} Western settlement tested women. For this particular bride, emblematic of some middle or upper class eastern women, the lack of help and luxuries made adjusting to her new circumstances a difficult experience.

Though women wanted to own goods and achieve financial security, having money did not necessarily define class structure on the first frontier. Back on the eastern seaboard identifying persons of economic means seemed easier. During the early years of settlement, the widely dispersed population and
the number of new homesteaders helped minimize monetary class distinctions. Education, experience and longevity, and religious affiliation served as some of the characteristics that were considered in lieu of, or in addition to, monetary divisions when deciding social status. Since the women portrayed in these pages could most often read and write, they most likely came from middle class backgrounds or better. Their connection to white middle and upper class values holds little surprise. In Anna Bentley’s case, we know she came from a family of means. A lack of new opportunities for her husband back in Maryland resulted in her journey to the frontier. Lucy Hasting’s family must have had some economic security because they sent her one hundred dollars at a time when that figure was no small sum. She requested the money in order to increase land holdings in her new home. Increased landholdings were not as easy to come by back in New York. Caroline Kirkland certainly experienced no problem with funding as she spoke of having, “undertaken to layout our village, to build a mill, a tavern, a store, a blacksmith's shop; houses for cooper, miller, &c. to purchase the large tracts which would be required for the mill-pond, a part of which land was already improved; and all this, although sure to cost an immense sum. The mill, for instance, was to be a story and a half high, and to cost perhaps twenty-five hundred dollars at the utmost.” As the Eastern seaboard saw the number of opportunities to purchase land dwindle, Anna, Lucy and others encouraged relatives back east to move westward and take advantage of the prosperity and freedom the west offered. They each saw the west as the possible fulfillment of, or retention of, an upper class status, whether based on education, money, or other factors. Memory of the upper classes in the East fed their dreams and pulled them westward despite the trials that awaited them.

Obstacles to Achieving the Ideal Female Identity:
The Reality for White, Western Women

286 Ibid.
287 Briggs-Stabler papers and Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
Memory could not overcome the reality of hardship. The trip to the Ohio Country proved the first of many difficult obstacles for women. Sometimes forced to travel hundreds of miles on foot, women carried goods or children in their arms, since wagons or animals carried only the most necessary items for establishing a homestead. Though a precious few sentimental or prized objects found a place on the wagon, most were left behind as the trip west began. The life ahead promised loneliness, privation, and danger. Female pioneers learned quickly that the need for food and shelter required them to adapt even if the actions required of them for day to day living, at times, seemed unfeminine.

When their husbands left the homestead to hunt, trap, farm outlying fields, or pursue business ventures, western women protected home and hearth in the most unladylike ways. Much like the “deputy wives” living in the early Virginia settlements that Kathleen Brown wrote about, the women in the Northwest Territory often conducted their own work, took up their husband’s duties, and rose up in arms against Indian raiding parties that threatened their homes, their children, and their livelihood. Elizabeth Harper, daughter of an Ohio settler, was employed to teach school when she met and married Abraham Tappen, in 1806. Abraham’s employment as a surveyor required frequent absences from home. Elizabeth took up the burdens of “superintending the clearing of a new farm.” She completed the tasks “with an energy and cheerful spirit” and as a good wife and mother helped lay “a substantial foundation for future comfort and prosperity.” Clearing land and the manual labor involved in running a homestead hardly figured as part of the standard for feminine behavior.

Wives and mothers living within the Ohio River Valley regions of Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Indiana understood about the dangers, physical and spiritual, present on the frontier. Female settlers, such as Anna Bentley, Rebecca Heald, and Lucy Hastings used their letters, written recollections,

and diaries to show that despite rough and unsettled circumstances they remembered what femininity and
civility demanded of them. If a model woman placed her faith in God, supported her husband, cared for
her family, stood brave and strong in the face of danger and hardship and never lost sight of her virtue and
femininity, then the western woman surely fit their ideas of the American female persona.\textsuperscript{291}

Seeming to meet the feminine ideal and actually living within its strictures continually
complicated the lives of pioneer women. Poor white women and non-white females such as Indians and
blacks would always fail to measure up as republican mothers and acceptable females because of the
physical and sometimes masculine types of labor they engaged in. What then of the western woman
working at these very same tasks? Her lifestyle and the chores and duties she undertook as a settler were
bound to challenge her claim to represent the model. As a way to validate their claim to femininity, the
western women produced a written and oral way of sharing news and stories. Their record was more than
the result of longstanding habits of diary keeping and correspondence begun earlier in life. Considering
the difficulties of frontier life and the costs of sending letters and keeping diaries taking time to write or
share stories after an exhausting day and part with dearly earned money implies there were other
considerations at work.

The scarcity and cost of paper, as well as postage mentioned in several of the letters demonstrate
the financial stress writing placed on these women.\textsuperscript{292} Given the time, energy, and finances it seems clear
that their written recollections not only reassured those back east that their female relatives and friends
remained civilized, but also helped these women interpret their lives and new circumstances. It also
served to aid the creation of a long-standing, flattering identity for western women. Their development of
an identity as a way to refer to themselves was necessary. It promoted them and the frontier region they
inhabited. As Anna Bentley, in the 1830s, contended in letters written to family back east, “The West

\textsuperscript{291} Kerber, 119-127.

\textsuperscript{292} Both Anna Bentley (Briggs Stabler Papers) and Lucy Hastings (Lucy Hastings Correspondence in Hastings, Lucy
A. / State Family correspondence, 1838, 1855-1874 [Transcriptions] Call Number, Eau Claire SC 35
([unpublished]) http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI let relatives back east know how hard it is to come
by writing materials. Each also details how tired they are and how difficult it is to find time to write home.
offered the chance to attain a superior life.” 293 Bentley, Lucy Hastings, and other women would consistently encourage relatives and friends back east to come and take part in the opportunities open in the west. They spoke with pride about their accomplishments and those of their spouses and children.

Raising livestock, killing snakes, and keeping a garden were all part of Anna Bentley’s daily existence. Back east non-white women toiled in fields and otherwise engaged in difficult physical labor back east. Well-bred ladies did not. Mrs. Bentley, from a respectable Maryland family, was unaccustomed to physical labor. Anna’s earliest letters detailed the challenges she faced when simply trying to wash the family’s clothing. She mentioned that she would not want her female family members back home to engage in this drudgery. Yet, she insisted need outweighed hardship.294 Lucy Hastings also wrote about caring for livestock and how tired she felt as she made her home a place to which she could one day “proudly invite her family.”295 Lucy spoke about her increased susceptibility to illnesses as she worked at forging a new life.296 Still, Anna and Lucy expected eventually that the feminine ideal they perceived themselves a part of would become their reality. They merely had to wait for their homestead to become prosperous.

Harriet Noble understood her present circumstances demanded her participation in activities that tested the boundaries of the woman’s sphere. Living with her husband and children on the unpopulated Illinois frontier, she understood that with winter approaching her family’s well-being depended upon her willingness to physically help build her home, a task that seemed far beyond anything refined women should be expected to perform. She recalled, “I helped to raise the rafters and put on the roof, but it was the last of November before our roof was completed. We were obliged to wait for the mill to run in order to get boards for making it.”297 In order to move things forward, Harriet insisted she could drive the oxen and pull up stones, while her husband dug them out completely and loaded them onto a pallet. Though her

293 Ibid.
294 Briggs-Stabler papers.
295 Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
296 Ibid.
297 Elizabeth Ellet, Pioneer Women. 393-94.
husband doubted her potential, he permitted her to try and was amazed at the ability she demonstrated. She
recorded, “I suppose most of my lady friends would think a woman quite out of her legitimate sphere in
turning mason, but I was not at all particular what kind of labor I performed, so we were only comfortable
and provided with the necessaries of life.” Family safety and need, time and again, made these
transgressions unavoidable. Few could criticize behavior when survival dictated action.

Back east females who had the financial resources could oversee servants who performed
unpleasant and/or strenuous duties. Women pioneers usually lacked any help unless it came from an older
child, husband, or neighbor. She might of necessity plow or move heavy objects one day and on the next
engage in more familiar housekeeping duties such as candle-making, sewing clothes for the family,
baking bread, and cooking. These were a few of the domestic chores that regulated a woman’s life. There
might be division of labor, but the tasks allotted to a frontier woman required a variety of skills.

Doctoring also took up a woman’s time. Though medical treatment at home traditionally fell to women,
the problems faced on the frontier were harsher than anything a female back east might encounter in
1800. Disease was a fact of life for settlers. Pioneer women, concerned about this, wrote often of illnesses
in their letters and diaries. Pregnancy threatened the lives of women along the frontier, since the
availability of male physicians remained limited until after 1810. Training in the use of forceps for safer
deliveries was limited to physicians. The mid-wife, who more often than not attended the birth of pioneer
babies, lacked the skills to lessen the dangers of birthing for frontier women.

Domestic chores, pregnancy, child rearing, and the duties of helping run a farm or a business
made the female settler’s work seem endless. Lucy Hastings at one point took in boarders. Acting as a
servant to strangers living in one’s home hardly seemed the actions of a proper woman. She, however,
neatly navigated the difficulty by noting that her boarder was a sickly young woman, one Lucy Dow,

298 Ibid.
299 Ibid.
300 Ewell Jennings, “Pioneer medicine in Indiana.” Indiana Magazine of History (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana). Internet resource.
“who needs care and assistance.” This circumstance allowed Hastings to demonstrate her Christian kindness and charity, thereby tabling some of the criticism that might have otherwise come her way.

Women who accompanied husbands, fathers, and other male figures, willingly or not, to the frontier often portrayed themselves as part of the effort to tame and civilize the west. Much like those women who crossed the Atlantic in the seventeenth century to fulfill the Puritan mission of establishing a godly kingdom to reform and redeem all Christians, American westward migration to the Ohio River Valley assumed the mantle of a mission. By 1830, the undertaking was defined as spreading the glory of American republicanism. American women, alongside husbands, brothers and fathers took up the challenge to fulfill their Manifest Destiny and to settle the nation from sea to sea. This mission justified white settlement and the mistreatment of non-whites through the nineteenth century.

Comparing Black and Indian Women to White Western Women:
A Method for Underscoring the “Superior Character” of Whites

Just as men found the process social scientists call “othering” to be a handy psychological coping mechanism, so did white female pioneers when trying to explain the reality of their lives. Black women, who lived alongside them as “indentured servants” or free people provided one way for white women profess their retention of civility and reassure themselves of their worth. Comparisons with black peers presented a way to prove themselves superior morally, domestically, and culturally. In truth, white

---

301 Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
303 Advocates of Manifest Destiny believed that expansion was necessary and inevitable for the nation’s economic and social growth. Though older as a concept of American expansion, John L. O’Sullivan coined the exact term “Manifest Destiny” in the July/August 1845 issue of the United States Magazine and Democratic Review in an article titled “Annexation.”
305 Since the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery those persons owning slaves who moved from the southern states onto America’s first frontier needed a way to skirt the law. Forcing their slave to sign indentured servitude contracts kept them bound, while remaining within the law.
and black women experienced many of the same problems on the frontier. Black females found themselves transgressing gender norms, just as white western women at times moved beyond the accepted limits of feminine behavior.

Historian Barbara Welter recognized the "cult of true womanhood" that regulated the behavior of white women of the New Republic required white females to cultivate piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness. Decisions for the family as well as providing the means of financial support lay within the purview of the male. 306 Free blacks in the Northwest, as well as fugitive slaves from the South sometimes professed some familiarity with this ideal. If they worked for whites as domestic servants, or house slaves they may have witnessed the middle or upper-class white marriage relationships. Most black north-westerners, however, had little opportunity to mix with whites. Some black females followed white conventions due to their devotion to the Protestant faith. That faith promoted a value system dependent on the Bible and the Ten Commandments. God ordered his people to care for their neighbors. White used this to justify the paternalism that enabled them to control non-Christian peoples as well as Christians regarded as inferior.

Familiar or unfamiliar with white value systems and behavioral codes, black women failed to meet the standards set by whites. Unfairly, many white persons, slave holding or not, viewed black women as sexually promiscuous. 307 White men might force themselves on the black women under their control, but the fault lay at the feet of the temptress who overcame the white man’s better nature with her sexual wiles. White women rarely feared being separated (except during Indian attacks) from their children and husband. Not so for the black female, living on America’s first frontier. She worried about the threats posed by fugitive slave hunters and masters who apprenticed their children. Add to the list the violence that accompanied racism and the fears of black women were more than reasonable.

307 Burt James Lowenberg and Ruth Bogin, Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings (University Park, PA, 1976), 35-36; and Glenda Riley, "American Daughters: Black Women in the West," Montana: The Magazine of Western History, 38 (Spring 1988), 21; “Women's History,” Journal of American History, 75 (June 1988), 9-39. All of these works discuss the behavior of black women and how much influence the ideals of white womanhood had on them as they moved beyond slavery.
Poverty also undercut the role of black women within the home and society. While many black men supported their families, bigotry and lack of opportunity forced black women into unskilled, low-paying employment in order to help provide for the family. Often, female fugitive slaves escaped with children in tow, but no husband, since husbands were sometimes sold off to different slave-owners. Black women successfully hid their children in wagons, or like the white heroine Rebecca Heald, stowed them away on boats. Once they arrived in the Northwest, black matriarchs found themselves facing a distinct set of circumstances that differed from the experiences of most white American mothers in the region. With no male head of household in place, domesticity and submissiveness might be desirable traits, but they were not necessarily required for meeting a family’s everyday needs.\footnote{Lowenberg and Bogin, eds., \textit{Black Women in Nineteenth Century American Life}, 15.} Economic subsistence was.

Against these challenges, white women could contrast their lives favorably against the lives of black women. Lest one believe that persons back east would not recognize the comparison, it must be remembered that cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York were home to free black communities that were often treated with disdain, despite the work of abolitionists.\footnote{Jill E. Rowe, “Mixing it up: Early African American Settlements in Northwestern Ohio.” \textit{Journal of Black Studies}, 39 (2009), 924-936.} White women and men living along the Eastern seaboard, especially the poor who needed to position themselves above another group, often thought of blacks as lesser beings or inhuman. Thus, easterners would easily accept the portrayal of women pioneers in the West as superior to black females.

Though the comparison of white women with their black peers presented a means for female settlers to prove their civilized and feminine nature, the proximity of Native Americans most visibly proved their worth and superiority. Westerners negotiated the paradoxes of gender by juxtaposing the behavior of female Indians with white pioneer women. Again, the process of “othering” offered a tool for defining the character of white female settlers. Despite a lack of factual knowledge about the role of Indian women in tribal life, white Americans, both male and female in all regions of the nation often disparaged the female Indians. John Filson reported about Indians, “… there is little difference between
the dress of the men and women, excepting that a short petticoat, and the hair, which is exceeding black, and long, clubbed behind, distinguish some of the latter. Except the head and eye-brows, they pluck the hair, with great diligence, from all parts of the body, especially the looser part of the sex.”

While Filson noted the similarity in dress, others wrote of behavior and claimed squaws equaled their husbands in savagery. Female Indians, according to white soldiers, took an active part in mangling the bodies of dead settlers left on the battlefield. Moreover, squaws “bred into their offspring the same barbaric nature shown by the cruelest Indian warrior.”

Elias Darnall, Timothy Mallory, and John Davenport, all prisoners of Indian tribes during the War of 1812, recalled they each faced the prospect of taking an Indian wife in order to ensure their safety as captives. Though they were able to avoid the forced marriages, to a man each referred to the women in the tribe as “inhuman.” Davenport insisted “the squaws” when celebrating a particular Indian victory in battle or tribal occasion imbibed in whiskey drinking alongside the men. No respectable white female settler would engage in such behavior. Rather middling class women back home supported their men in combat by engaging in civilized activities. They pulled their resources together to send clothing and blankets to needy American troops fighting in Canada during the war. The ladies of Kentucky performed these types of sacrifices by giving over some of their own meager supplies. They did so willingly for those fighting the savagery of Indian and British troops. The descriptions of Indian women that returning soldiers related helped define Indian women as the “other” and reassured white female settlers of their civilized behavior. Even though the surroundings might mirror those of her Indian counterpart, a white woman’s actions and appearance did not.

---

310 John Filson, Boone appendix, 76-77.
311 Timothy Flint, Indian Wars of the West, 42.
312 Elias Darnall, A Journal Containing An Accurate and Interesting Account of the Hardships, Sufferings, Battles, Defeat, and Captivity of Those Heroic Kentucky Volunteers and Regulars, Commanded by General Winchester, In the Years 1812-13. Also, Two Narratives, By Men that were wounded in the battles on the River Raisin, and taken captive by the Indians. (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co, 1854).
313 Ibid.
White women, desiring to appear refined and civilized, took the need to be pure, according to white standards, seriously. According to John Bradbury, who observed Indian behavior while traversing the frontier, “…chastity in females (for most tribes) is not a virtue” and deviation from sexual modesty was not considered a crime, when sanctioned husbands, fathers, or brothers.  

314 John Filson supported this view by claiming, “Some nations (Indian) abhor adultery, do not approve of a plurality of wives, and are not guilty of theft; but there are other tribes that are not so scrupulous in these matters…Fornication is unnoticed; for they allow persons in a single state unbounded freedom.”  

315 This lack of virtue in terms of sexual activity truly separated Native Americans from white women. No respectable white woman would consider such behavior, even if sanctioned or encouraged by a male relative. In fact, white females who dared demonstrate a lack of purity faced instant censure.

Women settlers deserved, at least in the ideal, consideration and respect, if not love, from their husbands, fathers, brothers, and other male acquaintances. The Indian woman, according to accounts, accepted mistreatment by men as their lot in life. White observers claimed the Indian women, “are very slaves to the men; which is a common case in rude, unpolished nations, throughout the world.”  

316 Others explained, “It is well known that the squaws have all the labor of the field to perform, and almost every other kind of hard service, which, in civil society, is performed by the men…ultimately the husbands word was law.”  

317 Mary Jemison was only twelve years old when taken captive by Indians during the French and Indian War. She later recalled that in living with Indians she noticed Indian women performed farming duties and all manner of hard labors that white men performed for white women.  

318 Moreover, according to Jemison, Indian women understood that “It is a rule, inculcated in all the Indian tribes, and practiced throughout their generations, that a squaw shall not walk before her Indian, nor pretend to take

---

316 Ibid, 80-81.
318 Ibid.
the lead in his business.\textsuperscript{319} Apparently, some forms of paternalism was a shared quality for men in the Indian and white communities.

Not everyone described Indian women in such negative ways. Just as James Fennimore Cooper portrayed male Indians in a more positive light, George Caitlin, the famed Philadelphia artist, undertook a mission to deliver his version of the west through oil paintings. Though unable to embark on his mission until 1830, as a believer in the theory of the Vanishing Indian, Caitlin made it a point to capture the images of Native Americans on canvas for future American generations. His repertoire provides one of history’s best and most sensitive visual records of native peoples. His picture of \textit{A Pretty Girl} (1832) shows a composed, intelligent and lovely Indian woman.\textsuperscript{320} She bears no resemblance to the drunken, toothless women described by captive soldiers during the War of 1812. But even Catlin concentrated most of his attention on Indian men, whose glamour was greater and who often engaged in tough masculine activities. While Caitlin focused upon images, other white males noticed the hard labor Indian women completed and some encouraged white women to display the same willingness to work that Indian women showed. Those same white males discarded the idea of white women working hard when they noted, “…now a days (hard work is) considered beneath the dignity of the ladies, especially those who are the most refined.” \textsuperscript{321} This comment flew in the face of the very restrictions middle and upper class white men placed on women.

\textbf{The Gender Complication and Identity of Western Women}

George Caitlin might paint complementary portraits of Indians, but the Native Americans living on the strange and supposedly untamed landscape that lay beyond the Appalachian Mountains were viewed by those living back east as threatening. The stories of Indian misdeeds and threats provided

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{321} James Seaver Narrative.
readers back east with tales of female bravery, piety, and perseverance. Women seemed especially at risk to be abused and dishonored. Thought of as weak, intellectually inferior, and vulnerable, how could a woman survive the danger of frontier living?

In American storytelling, captivity narratives recounted the capture of European-American settlers by Native Americans. While many folk and fairy tales following similar patterns of forced separation, torment and rescue, preceded the Indian captivity narrative in other cultures, the stories told in America helped shape and strengthen social and religious attitudes for white society. Threats concerning the kidnapping of white settlers by Indigenous peoples remained an actual threat (as did the capture of Native Americans by whites, though rarely mentioned) as America expanded in size and population from colonial times through 1880. Thus, the stories continued to pour out to an audience who eagerly read them. As stories of capture, hardship, deliverance, and/or escape, the tales appealed to readers’ emotions.

Delivering an appeal that both entertained and inspired, the stories built on the hunter-predator narratives by casting white victims as mediators between savagery and civilization. Ultimately, the white victim chose civilization over Native American brutality. Through the captive’s actions white hostages demonstrated their preeminence over their captors. Just as the "folk legend" – an episodic narrative - situated itself in truth and served to prompt audiences to question its worldview in some way, the captivity narrative, often exaggerated, contained enough truth to accept as valid. Due to their plausibility, the stories swayed public attitudes. Turning persons against Native Americans hardly proved difficult, since most settlers seemed more than willing to accept evidence affirming white superiority, the uncultured nature of the Indian, and justification for challenging Native American blockage of progress.

This portion of the chapter, like some other recent works, investigates the use of the legends disseminated through the captivity narratives to help women in different eras of American frontier settlement identify themselves. Women settlers from the colonial era through to the United States Census Bureau’s proclamation about the closing of the frontier,\(^{322}\) worked hard to present themselves as pious,
capable, and able to remain within the strictures of acceptable female behavior in a setting that many times challenged their gendered role. The captivity narratives passed along to later generation helped fashion a favorable portrait of the white female victim and for quite some time a biased view of the Native American.

Historian, June Namias argues in her book, *White Captives* (1993) that the captivity narratives reflect the evolution of female stereotypes held by Americans living in different eras of frontier development. As evidence she examines the captivity stories of three white women captives from three different time periods. Namias asserts that colonial era white captives, such as Mary Rowlandson, were designated "survivors." These English females, though sorely tested during their kidnapping and the aftermath, used their physical, emotional, and spiritual stamina to survive. During and after the Revolutionary War period the stereotype of the female captive changed. From 1776 through the 1820s white women settlers seized by Native Americans told tales that portrayed themselves as "Amazons," not survivors. They behaved in ways that showed their willingness and ability to defend their own lives and the lives of loved ones from aggressors.

The Amazon reference, drawn from ancient stories about a tribe of warrior women who controlled their lives and sexuality, worked well for frontier women and suggested they might ably handle the rigors and threats of western life. They stood strong as the type women a New Republic needed, even though some might question their femininity. Namias’ final grouping of captivity narratives came about after the 1820s just as the "True Womanhood" ideal became more fully entrenched in American society. Namias insists these later captivity narratives showed women as "Frail Flowers," and victims overwhelmed by the savagery they faced at the hands of their captors.323 While Namias’ assertions are supportable, the stories told by white female captives do not fit as neatly into periods of evolving gender roles as the three narratives suggest. The behavior of white women captives varied during each period as did the female gender role for frontier women.

Exceptions to the portrait of women as survivors and/or Amazons challenge any precise model, but even without an unassailable pattern captivity narratives mattered to those who read them during the early colonial period and after the Revolutionary War. According to Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, the story of Mary Rowlandson’s captivity enjoyed a large readership on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Although the text temporarily fell out of print after 1720, at the time of so-called religious declension during the 1780s it experienced a revival. Hannah Duston’s captivity narrative, like Rowlandson’s also enjoyed a large readership as it educated and entertained readers. Both stories exhibited the same pattern of capture, suffering, and redemption, yet both gave witness to very different behaviors by the heroines.

Both Rowlandson and Duston suffered captivity during the seventeenth century. Both were Puritan. Both were captured by raiding Indian tribes during war. Both eventually were delivered from their captors. The two stories, however, differ in how the women handled captivity. Mary Rowlandson, the wife of Puritan preacher Joseph Rowlandson, was taken captive in 1675 in an attack on Lancaster, Massachusetts, during King Philip's War. Rowlandson's account spans nearly twelve weeks. She traveled with the Native Americans in extremely difficult winter conditions. Throughout her dangerous journey she remained a highly devout Puritan woman. She examined her behavior, trusted in her God, and awaited deliverance from the hands of her savage captors. Ultimately, English negotiators managed to secure her release and she returned to her husband and family convinced that only God’s goodness and care saved her. Puritan clerics used her story to encourage pious behavior and deep faith in their congregations. They insisted Rowlandson’s dependence on God and submission to his will had served her well.

Unlike Rowlandson, Hannah Duston secured her own freedom from captivity. Hannah and her newborn daughter Martha were taken captive by Native Americans during King William's War in 1697.

Duston watched as Indian attackers killed twenty-seven of her neighbors. Then she was forcibly marched alongside other captives to an Indian village. According to her account, along the way, the Native Americans killed baby Martha by smashing her against a tree. After weeks of living an uncivilized and brutal life among the Native Americans Duston, Mary Neff, and Samuel Lennardson attacked their captors with tomahawks in the middle of the night. The three took scalps to use as proof of their incredible tale of escape and stole an Indian canoe to make their way to freedom. Some of Samuel Sewall's diary, located within the Duston Family Story appears in an entry dated May 12, 1697: “This remarkable exploit of Hannah Duston, was received with amazement throughout the colonies…” Duston regarded as a heroine had monuments erected to honor her bravery as a captive of the Native Americans and as a worthy Puritan woman.

Though the experiences of these two white women captives unfolded in very different ways, both demonstrated strength of character. Each validated ideas of white superiority by remaining loyal to their faith and culture. Their accounts justified feelings of scorn for the lesser Indian who proved unable to understand and accept Christianity and a changing environment. Despite the fact that one acted as survivor while the other wielded a tomahawk, Puritans praised both Duston and Rowlandson for their reactions to captivity and used both as models of how women should conduct themselves.

Acclaimed Americanist scholar Richard Slotkin maintains that Indian captivity and victimization offered victims and later the reader of the captivity tale insight into discovering the will of God. Of course, God favored white triumph for colonists. But the power of the narratives these women told did not die out as the white population increased in numbers and control of the land. The messages provided by earlier captivity narratives concerning women’s behavior and Indian savagery showed up as a new generation of white women settlers presented their stories of captivity. Moreover, the same differences in

---


women’s responses to Indian kidnapings and threats remained in place during America’s New Republic Era.

Creating a narrative identity during the New Republic years required some flexibility, even as society demanded women citizens uphold their commitment to morality, civic duty, and the well-being of others. Allegiance to Republican Motherhood, Christianity, and modesty and submissiveness worked well for the developing feminine model. Frontier women told to meet these standards used them as well as Indian threats and captivity narratives as the perfect vehicles to present themselves as capable, female citizens and protectors of home and hearth.

Mary Macmillan, left to fend for herself and family while her husband performed his military duties, faced circumstance that might reduce many women to tears and collapse. Her children were missing and quite possibly dead after Indians raided her home. She did not collapse. Rather she thought quickly and capably about what needed to be done. She did not go seeking man to assist her. She fashioned the raft to search for her loved ones even as she tended to her infant. The happy ending to her story, fortuitous as it was, took nothing away from her brave actions. She served as a credit to the persona of the western woman.

Many family members who remained along the settled eastern coast worried that their relatives who chose to move westward might well succumb to the brutal nature of the frontier. In her autobiographical work of 1841, Caroline Kirkland published about life on the frontier of Michigan. She recalled, “They (Native Americans) would get whiskey from someone—and could not live without it…” Moreover, “they would steal anything they could lay their hands on, from the farmers who lived within reach of their settlements.” If Indian inhabitants, French trappers and others succumbed to the

328 John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek, 51.
329 Caroline. M.S. Kirkland, A New Home - Who'll follow?: or, Glimpses of western life (New York: C.S. Francis, 1841), 47. Kirkland wrote her autobiography as a fictional account using the name Mary Clavers as her character.
temptations afforded them and adopted the savage lifestyle wilderness living promoted, could the same happen to relatives and friends who moved west? The possibility of kidnapping, sexual attacks, and/or forced marriage placed white women at a heightened risk considering the perceived depravity of Indian raiding parties.

This increased concern for the well-being of women settlers was grounded in women’s biological susceptibility as well as gender. During the New Republic Era of the United States white females were thought to be in need of protection. Stories of women being held captive by Native Americans both titillated and shocked women back east. The threat and results of Indian kidnapping and the possibility of becoming a squaw seemed almost worse than the prospect of death. Yet, the women captives (at least those who published accounts) often lived to tell their story and inspired other American women to strive to better their own character.

Captivity narratives helped set up the characterization of how a “proper woman” should behave when faced with an untenable situation. According to Richard Slotkin, “In [a captivity narrative] a single individual, usually a woman, stands passively under the strokes of evil, awaiting rescue by the grace of God.” Slotkin describes the need for both body and soul to reject offers of Indian marriage, even if punished for doing so. Any choice other than rejection marked a surrendering of the opportunity for God’s salvation and a return to white civilization. The white female reading public in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, while greatly disturbed by the captive's situation, might also be spurred to greater faith and gentile behavior by the example set. Ellen, a young bride living on America’s first frontier during the late eighteenth century, behaved laudably. Once captured and taken from her new husband, Ellen followed the prescribed behavior of patience and prayer. She waited for rescue and when it finally arrived she credited God for his care.

---

331 Slotkin, Regeneration through Violence.
332 Ibid.
333 James Hall.
334 Ibid.
Not every woman captive in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reacted as Ellen did. A number of women found themselves operating outside the customary feminine ideal. Some of the female settlers proactively defended themselves and their families in order to avoid captivity, debasement, and/or death, or once captured they worked actively to secure their own safety. Moreover, they told their stories to others. Charlotte Robinson’s diary recorded that even a younger, less mature female could be counted upon to show strength of character in the face of immediate danger. Robinson, traveling “into the Cumberland Valley to join her husband and others who had moved there for the soil and climate” witnessed the heroism of young Nancy Gower. Charlotte recorded that Native Americans appeared on the opposite cliffs of the river and commenced firing down upon white settlers traveling in boats. In Mr. Gower’s boat was his daughter Nancy and she took the helm and steered the boat, exposed to all the fire of the enemy. “A ball passed through her clothes, and penetrated the upper part of her thigh, going out on the opposite side. It was not discovered that she was wounded by any complaint she made, or a word she uttered, but after the danger was over, her mother discovered the blood flowing through her clothes.” The exceptional young woman sacrificed her own well-being for her companions. Sacrifice, traditionally a male trait since men often placed themselves in harm’s way to protect women, became a female characteristic for Nancy. Not many young ladies living in New York or Philadelphia could be expected to behave in a similar manner. Operating within the domestic sphere the chances that they would face a similar situation seemed remote at best.

335 According to Kathryn Derounian-Stodola’s Introduction to Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives (New York: Penguin, 1998), “Statistics on the number of captives taken from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries are imprecise and unreliable since record-keeping was not consistent and the fate of hostages who disappeared or died was often not known. Yet conservative estimates run into the tens of thousands, and a more realistic figure may well be higher. For some statistical perspective, however, incomplete, consider these figures: between 1675 and 1763, approximately 1,641 New Englanders were taken hostage (Vaughan, Alden T., and Daniel K. Richter. “Crossing the Cultural Divide: Indians and New Englanders, 1605-1763.” Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 90 (1980): 23-99., p. 53); and during the decades-long struggle between whites and Plains Indians in the mid-nineteenth century, hundreds of women and children were captured (White, Lonnie J., “White Women Captives of Southern Plains Indians, 1866-1875.” Journal of the West 8 (1969) 327.)

A writer recounting the story told to him by Mr. John Merrill about a surprise attack of Native Americans upon his family on the Kentucky frontier in the 1780s emphasized the importance of self-reliance and fearlessness for women. Mr. Merrill, despite suffering a broken arm and sustaining bullet wounds, still “seized a billet of wood with which he dispatched two Native Americans.”\(^{337}\) The same narrative explained that Mrs. Merrill, as her husband fought savages to safeguard their home, boldly “grabbed an axe and dispatched four of the savages with fatal blows.”\(^{338}\) Mrs. Merrill understood what her family required of her and performed appropriately.

Ideas of gendered behavior were complicated for all women during this period. The soft feminine character could, according to some, be taken too far. Dr. Samuel Jennings after warning women to submit to their husbands also criticized women for succumbing to irrational fears. He wrote, “FEAR perhaps, has injured the health of the ladies more frequently, than any of the passions. It is indeed ridiculous to hear the screams of, a modern fine lady, at the appearance of a caterpillar, spider…Yet I believe, if once the habit of being easily affrighted is completely formed, any such trivial object, may prove sufficient to bring on hysterics, convulsions, madness and death.”\(^{339}\) Spiders and caterpillars would have seemed a small thing to women whose homesteads were often surrounded by woods, bears, snakes, and Native Americans.

Not all authors of the new nation maintained, as Dr. Jensen did, that women must remain wedded to home as a submissive wife and mother. Charles Brockden Brown’s novel Ormond or The Secret Witness (1799) challenged the idea of a woman’s place in the home.\(^{340}\) One of his characters, Constantia Dudley, made life decisions, ran a household, supported an elderly male parent, and fought back against physical attack. Another female, Martinette de Beauvais, cross-dressed during the French Revolution and...

---


338 Ibid., 142.

339 Samuel Jennings.

served as an example of the woman warrior. In the novel, Martinette mentors Constantia as she navigates her way through life without a man. Both of these fictional personalities defied the feminine ideal of the time. Published during the French Revolution and following on the heels of our own Revolutionary War, the idea of a woman warrior fighting for the rights of the people emphasized the possibility for a woman to provide true support for a republican style government.

The slippery move from the submissiveness and domesticity of femininity to taking up arms to protect self, family, and rights seemed to rest on circumstance. *The New York Mirror*, of 1823, extolled the virtues and bravery of frontier women for all eastern residents to read. In an article titled “Female Intrepidity,” a reporter told the tale of a wife on the Kentucky frontier, who willingly defended even her “negro slaves by seizing a broad-axe and taking an Indian by his long hair…and at one blow severed his head from his body.” The slaves as well as the Indian failed to measure up to a white woman protecting her own safety and her family’s well-being and labor force.

Despite the praise for initiative and bravery given by groups of men through newspapers and books the code of behavior that accompanied the Cult of Domesticity and the Separate Spheres Doctrine remained in place. And the ability of the eastern homemaker to fail to meet those standards was rarely tested. Furniture and linens did not require taking up an axe for protection of home and family. Female citizens, living within settled eastern communities, experienced a fairly secure lifestyle. Their daily lives most certainly provided challenges, but those challenges rarely involved life or death circumstances and the need for heroic action. Household technology, social norms, religion, and the occupational goals and successes of their husbands occupied them. More commonly, eastern women worried about the menace of local felons and drunkards. These women could remain safely within the strictures of the developing feminine model. Remaining within those same codes proved less easy for the wife of a

341 Accessed from a Footnote in “Attaining Masculinity, By Paul Lewis.” Note Number 5, page 44, which discusses the American Press’s reaction to women involved in the French Revolution.
pioneer. Unlike women who made decisions in the safety of a parlor or kitchen, the frontier female’s daily activities often required her to choose an immediate course of action. A captivity narrative told after 1830 seemed to negotiate a happy medium between the idea of woman as survivor and woman as Amazon. Rachel Parker an Anglo-Texan woman, was kidnapped at the age of seventeen. She witnessed her grandfather's torture and murder and her grandmother's rape. The Indian women charged with watching over her proved to be her worst tormentors. Rachel recalls losing her temper over the abuse one day and fiercely struck back against a younger Indian woman. After that, her treatment improved. She noted that having shown courage earned her respect and equality within the tribe. Shortly after, she was ransomed and returned home. She died a year or so later in childbirth. Her story, once published became popular in both the United States and Europe. It showed a woman suffering hardship who remained submissive in some manner and able to act aggressively in another during a period when female passivity and equanimity was expected and praised.

Accounts of captivity narratives like that of Rachel Parker appealed to a broad number of readers well into the nineteenth century and beyond. The legends were American stories. Stories that extolled the virtue and bravery of American women while undercutting the civility and competence of Native Americans. The forced separation, torment and, deliverance recorded helped white society along the nation’s moving frontier identify itself. The emotional appeal and the lessons disseminated helped underpin ideas about female behavior in the new nation. White women victims faced with a choice of succumbing to savagery or retaining their hold on the white version of civilization chose (at least in the stories reported) to stay within the cloak of Christian and white protection. Their actions and decision demonstrated white superiority. Exaggerated or not, the accounts were accepted as true and influential. Women settlers from the colonial era through to the closing of the frontier struggled to navigate a fine line between acceptable feminine behavior and survival. The captivity narrative helped them do both.

344 Jo Ella Ealey Powell, Frontier Blood: The Saga of the Parker Family. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).
345 Ibid.
The Western Women’s Advancement in the face of Paternalism

The West did offer women some measure of advancement. Creating a homestead on undeveloped land, running the household and the family’s affairs during a husband’s absence or following his death all demanded a women to sometimes act in what many easterners would regard as a manly fashion. Mary Bledsoe made no apologies when she claimed, “… she exhibited a decision and firmness of character which bespoke no ordinary powers of intellect. Her mind, indeed, was of masculine strength, and she was remarkable for independence of thought and opinion in her appropriate sphere of action.” Bledsoe insisted that given the strength of character the West demanded, any woman would do well to show the same hardy spirit. A portrait of western womanhood was developing and those planning to move to the region should take stock of their ability to meet the standards.

When women moved to the Ohio territory legal statutes for American citizens already existed. Subject to their husbands and fathers, women held few legal rights. Claims to property and children for the most part proved non-existent. Yet, like their predecessors from early New England, females on the American frontier gained legal and political recognition earlier than their eastern peers. Cornelia Hughes Dayton in Women before the Bar (1995) offers insight into the legal standing of females in Connecticut’s seventeenth century New Haven colony. By necessity and religious conviction, she argues, women received a more equal footing with men in the eyes of the court than did their counterparts in England. The frontier of New England sometimes recognized a need for women to act outside the norms of gendered behavior. The financial aid was to continue until her death or remarriage. Indeed, Dayton asserts that in under some circumstance Puritan women often fared better in terms of legal status and rights early in the colonial period than they did later on. Calvinistic theological practice in New England

346 Ibid.
348 Ibid. 8-11.
deemed women subordinate to men, but also acknowledged that a wife and mother was a responsible agent in the family. There was no blending of male/female roles, even though both sexes sometimes moved beyond the norms of activity, but women were less deprived of agency than they would be when the strictures of later civilization were implemented.  

As in Puritan New England, women moving west to America’s First West found a measure of access to the male world not enjoyed by females in eastern cities. They took part in manual work traditionally reserved for men. Homestead life gave women more responsibility and raised their status in the family dynamic, even as it solidified their role as housekeeper. Pioneer life and its inherent difficulties both challenged and reinforced the gender roles of the time. For example, Indiana promoted the earliest and most liberal of divorce laws. Mary Bledsoe, following her husband’s death, ran his estate without the oversight of a male guardian simply because no man lived close enough to take the position. In the nineteenth century, western women were able to vote in local and state political elections, while their eastern sisters continued to advocate for the privilege into the twentieth century.

Despite the public and private activities that brought both positive and negative effects on their lives, pioneer women kept stressing the positives. Anna claimed to her mother that while living on the frontier,” … the comforts of life are here abundantly enjoyed…” Lucy Hastings provided similar reassurances about her experience on the frontier. In a letter to relatives back home sent from the Oxford Wisconsin region, she maintained that “the customs, manners and costumes here do not seem much different from Mass.” These women, painting a picture of themselves as strong and capable and often brave, still understood the need to appear feminine and submissive. Mrs. Catherine Sevier reminded others that she prized her more traditional domestic skills. While she earned praise in her community for her daring nature and her refusal to back away from danger, in her diary she explained that, “It was always a source of much gratification, and one of which she fondly boasted, that among the first work she

349 Ibid.
350 Mary Bledsoe’s Diary.
351 Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
352 Ibid.
did after her marriage, was to make the clothes which her husband and three sons wore…”353 Her role as wife and mother trumped any other accomplishments.

Lucy Hastings repeatedly remarked in letters that she tried to be a prudent housekeeper and supportive wife, since this skill set could well make the difference between a successful and failing homestead. 354 Mary Bledsoe wrote that she, “… accepted her appropriate sphere of action.” 355 That sphere, as prescribed by writers such as Catherine Beecher, who wrote about appropriate feminine behavior, bound women to their household and motherly duties. Though at times Bledsoe and other frontier females were forced to act outside the bounds of femininity, Bledsoe explained that western women “were only masculine in character when forced to take up arms or duties for defense and survival of their families. Otherwise, they tried to remain within the limits society placed upon all women.”356 Women such as Mary Bledsoe, Mary McMillan tried to maintain many aspects of the culture they left in the East, even as they stretched the prescribed definition of feminine and adapted it to their needs.

Caroline Kirkland proposed in her written texts that although most pioneer women experienced more independence of mind and action than their peers in the East, they still remained “tied to the domestic sphere, even though it was a little larger than in the East.”357 Bentley, Hastings, Bledsoe and other women settlers acknowledged they understood that living on the frontier offered them the opportunity to be active agents of American growth and change. The white female settler began to suggest to those living back east that perhaps the western settler could offer new and better ways to live, even as they professed to remain submissive and obedient.

When women, such as Bledsoe, Hastings, and Bentley told their stories they did so as a way to prove to themselves and their eastern peers that they retained their identity as “civilized women.” When needed, they employed memories of their past to help them underscore their claim to respectability. By

354 Lucy Hastings Correspondence.
355 Mary Bledsoe.
356 Ibid.
357 Caroline Kirkland, 62.
contextualizing their new life through earlier experiences they made sense of their new lives and insisted they remembered and remained within the boundaries of civilization and femininity, even if rougher conditions sometimes challenged that claim.

The reality of their circumstances meant the concepts of feminine and masculine often changed as need demanded. Physical labor, facing dangerous situations, and the lack of finer things might complicate their assertion of true femininity, but these pioneers refused to surrender the claim of true womanhood, even as it was developing in America. Moreover, their written work never allowed those back east to lose the picture of them as civilized. By managing to maintain their claim to civility in the face of complicated circumstances, these women stretched the ideal of true womanhood for themselves and when necessary reshaped it. They suggested that living on the frontier possibly offered a superior life choice, one in which women might, at times, be afforded the opportunity to expand their sphere of influence. They not only met the requirements demanded of femininity, when needed they proved capable of moving beyond it to accomplish what their sisters back east might view as near impossible.

**Conclusion**

While not all women who traveled to the frontier chose to record their experience, the general portrayal of the pioneer women who did was that they were an exceptional group, a model for others to follow. According to Caroline Kirkland in her work *A New Home, Who’ll Follow* (1841) the frontier woman was emblematic of the newest republican ideal needed for this flexible period in time. Later generations or historians each had a hand in reviving the flattering representation of western women. The identity of the pioneer woman, however, developed from the words of the women who lived the experience.

---

358 Caroline Kirkland, 61.
The post-Revolutionary War generation represented women as guardians of the republic’s moral virtue. The nation entrusted to mothers the charge of raising a population of exemplary citizens. Western women took up the duties assigned to virtuous republican mothers and exhibited qualities not required of their eastern peers. When their husbands left the homestead to hunt, trap, or pursue necessary business ventures, western women protected home and hearth. These women dealt with loneliness, illnesses, deprivations and life-threatening situations.

Seeming to meet the feminine ideal and actually living within its strictures did present pioneer women with a paradox. Poor and non-white women failed to measure up as republican mothers and acceptable females because of the physical and sometimes masculine types of labor they engaged in. What then of the western woman working at these very same tasks? Her lifestyle and the chores and duties she undertook as a settler were bound to complicate her claim to represent the model. That complication weaves its way into the writing these women produced. The words of female settlers were not just their way of sharing the latest news and stories or the result of a longstanding habit of diary keeping begun earlier in life. Given these sacrifices of time, energy and finances it seems clear that their written recollections not only reassured those back east that their western women remained civilized, but also helped these women explain and understand their lives and new circumstances as a further benefit the written record helped create a long-standing and flattering identity for themselves. Their development of an identity was necessary. It promoted them and the frontier region they inhabited. “The West offered the chance to attain a superior life.” They were the exceptional women who helped to tame it. Over time, they even felt confident enough to suggest that ways they accomplished tasks or lived life might be superior to those practiced back east.

Accomplishments in politics, religion, labor, and heroics, defined the male pioneer’s value as a citizen. Given their exceptional identity, western men needed special women as their companions. The

---

women who accompanied them westward, willingly or due to the patriarchal authority afforded to men over women, as well as those born on America’s first frontier were described by many as possessing that necessary exceptional character. Whether they struggled with the contradictions that they faced in their new home or smoothly navigated the line between feminine behavior and the need to take up some masculine duties, the women who braved the frontier presented themselves as a worthy model for their children and for their peers back east.
Chapter 5

“AND THE CHILDREN SHALL FOLLOW IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS”: CHILDREARING AND EDUCATION AS THE MEANS TO CREATE WESTERN AMERICAN CITIZENS

James Kilborn’s father, unable to support his large family, sent James out on his own at an early age. Young Kilborn labeled his own prospects as “gloomy” and in a short time concluded that, “. . .two things in particular were indispensable…to establish the reputation of a first-rate hand to work, with perfect integrity in every trust, and to get learning.” Kilborn’s firm intent to demonstrate his trustworthiness, to procure an education through tutors, to show his devotion to the Protestant Episcopal Church, and his own commitment to hard work enabled him to “conceive and carry out his dream of a new community in the West, a haven for Episcopalians in the “howling wilderness” of the Ohio country.” Kilborn’s efforts took him to the United States House of Representatives in 1813. His fellow Ohioans trusted him enough to elect him to two terms. This chapter provides evidence that Kilborn and his western peers understood that education and effective childrearing practices ensured the survival and prosperity of children born on the frontier as well as the future of the western region and the American Republic. Parents took childrearing duties seriously. They saw their children of the west as the foundation for the future of the American republic. The nation’s success lay in the hands of the newest generation inhabiting Kilborn’s wilderness.

Kilborn understood that using the term “howling wilderness” to describe his new home in Ohio carried with it a specific history. Coming from Connecticut to reside in the northwest, James was most likely familiar with the “hideous, howling wilderness” reference applied in 1694 by Puritans to the

settlement of Kent in the northwest corner of Connecticut. This type of rhetoric, which incorporated visions of a dangerous and uncivilized region, served to adequately explain the views Kilborn and many of his fellow settlers carried with them as they settled in the Old Northwest. Education offered a means to counter the challenges of the “howling wilderness.” Formal and practical knowledge helped set the settler apart from his uncivilized surroundings and the savages that inhabited it. Education was a key component of developing a distinctive identity.

The Puritan influence on Kilborn affected his ideas about the need to achieve an education. New England Puritans understood that educational venues served as a necessary part of the settlement experience. They recorded that, “In respect of the Colledge, and the proceedings of Learning therein. After God had carried us safe to Newt. England, and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, rear'd convenient places for Gods worship, and settled the … Civill Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance Learning, and perpetuate it to Posterity.” Though they noted that the priority of education was to train a literate ministry, fulfilling that need had other benefits in that it enabled parents to better prepare their children to pursue a prosperous life lived in Christian manner. The cost of education, however, presented an obstacle in the early seventeenth century just as it would in the American Republic of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Imagine their gratitude when the issue of money for education was overcome in their New England wilderness as, “…it pleased God to stir up the heart of one Mr. Harvard (a godly Gentleman and a lover of Learning, there living amongst us) to give the one half of his Estate … towards the erecting of a College” and all his; Library: ‘ after him another gave' 300. T. others after them' cast in more, and the publique hand of the State added the rest: the Colledge was, by common consent, appointed to be at Cambridge, (a place very pleasant and accommodate and is called (according to the name of the first

363 Ibid.
364 Ibid.
founder) *Harvard Colledge.* 365 Yale University, originally known as the “Collegiate School” and established by seventeenth century clergymen, sought to provide trained clergy and political leaders for the colony. In 1718, Eli Yale, a governor of the British East India Tea Company endowed the College and the school was renamed “Yale College.” Such large and generous bequests provides evidence of the prominent role education played in the lives of these early colonists.

Colonial New Englanders continued to show their regard for education. In 1642, a Massachusetts Law required that parents and masters see to it that children know both the principles of religion and the capital laws of the Commonwealth. Mandatory knowledge of the law required that citizens be able to read it or at least understand it when read by another. 366 Literacy enabled church members to enrich their spiritual life as individuals and as a congregation. Understanding the law ensured an orderly community and augmented the ability of men to engage in their civil duties. In 1647, an additional educational statute passed. This time, the law dictated that all towns of fifty or more households must form a school and pay a teacher out of either private or public monies. In addition, towns of one hundred or more households had to establish a secondary or Latin grammar school to prepare male students to enter Harvard College. As the need for clerics and professionals increased so did the demands for appropriate educational venues. These legislative matters may have stemmed from a desire to create a model civil and commonwealth, but they also had the very pragmatic effect of creating a literate and engaged citizenry. No matter how each Puritan male’s individual religious development unfolded, education could be applied to other aspects of life.

Colonial Virginians, no less than New Englanders, recognized the need for education. Virginians, however, faced economic and spatial issues not present in the northern colonies. A widely dispersed population and few stable or large settlements in colonial Virginia made it difficult to gather children into a school. Families scattered throughout the countryside proved unable to muster enough

365 Ibid.
students to economically support the formation of schools. Despite such obstacles, some colonial Virginians pushed ahead with efforts to educate their youngsters as best they knew how. Records reveal that Virginians displayed a keen interest in giving children in the colony an education, and these colonists developed numerous ways to do so. Wealthy planters often hired tutors or sent their children back to Europe for schooling. Still, one did not need to be a wealthy plantation owner to pay for a child's tutelage. Some of those who possessed only moderate wealth employed more creative methods of financing their children's instruction. Rebecca Starke, a widow of some means, wanted reassurance that her son James would receive instruction in reading and writing. Her will, dated July 12, 1711, dictated that a portion of her estate be directed toward financing at least “two years schooling” for James. Other parents’ bequests included land and/or livestock; Rebecca Starke willed her son an education.

Early seventeenth-century colonists living in Virginia also tried to launch the first institution of higher education in British America. In 1618, a royal charter set aside land and authorized the opening of the University of Henrico. The effort, while laudable, failed to achieve its desired purpose. By 1622, a school for Native Americans existed on the land and during an Indian Massacre even that facility was destroyed. As more settlers immigrated into region and the Virginia Company failed to prosper, King James II transformed the proprietary colony into a royal one. Despite a series of boom and bust cycles, the city of Williamsburg in 1693 opened the College of William and Mary. The school, established by royal charter, was charged to “make, found and establish a certain Place of Universal Study, a perpetual College of Divinity, Philosophy, Languages, and other good arts and sciences...to be supported and maintained, in all time coming.” Named in honor of the reigning monarchs, King William III and Queen Mary, who took the throne once her father James II was dethroned, the college became a hallmark of Virginia education.

---

367 Abstract of Rebecca Starke's will in "Starke's Free School and 'Justice of the Peace,'" William and Mary Quarterly, (1st series, 4, no. 3, 1896) 199.
Schools other than William and Mary opened as the colonial era progressed. Augusta Academy, established in 1749, was renamed Liberty Hall in tribute to the Revolution. As the century drew to a close, no less a personage than George Washington endowed Liberty Hall with $20,000 in stock. The gift rescued the institution from near-certain insolvency. In gratitude, the trustees changed the school's name to Washington Academy. Later on this classical school was again renamed and became Washington and Lee.369

Just as the issues of raising children and planning for their education figured prominently in the minds of colonial settlers both North and South, these same concerns occupied the thoughts of pioneer families. As settlers poured in from New England, New York and Pennsylvania to the Ohio region and from Virginia and other southern regions to Kentucky, and the lower portions of Indiana and Illinois, the problems of childrearing and education promoted thought and discussion. Education viewed as essential for developing and maintaining a thriving republic, became part of the overall effort to create a national identity. While schooling in Europe remained a privilege reserved for the wealthy Americans began to think about educating a broader segment of society. Access to education did not become uniform in terms of enrollment, ages, time spent in school, or curriculum content, but those ideas all became part of the debate as residents of the East and the Old Northwest struggled to settle questions about education.

**Education and the Northwest Ordinance (1785-87)**

Eastern residents, as well as Northwest settlers, though committed to schooling, remained determined to protect individual rights. John Adams, one of the founding fathers and our second president, regarded “wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue,” as necessities for a populace intent on

---

retaining their liberties and rights. Retaining their liberties and rights. The ideals of egalitarianism, to men such as Adams, would be a citizenry that could exchange ideas and make informed decisions about their government. Colonists’ intent on breaking free of Britain’s hold remained sensitive to the European image of New World residents as backwards. In large measure, colonists agreed education was necessary to prove their sophistication and scholarship, the problem lay in who would control and offer financial backing for a broader swath of American youth to attend school. The same need to use education to counter unflattering views of their persona, as well as questions about financing and control over schools hounded America’s first westerners. Would those who lived a subsistence lifestyle as many in the newly settled frontier territory did be able to support education?

Settlers moving into the Old Northwestern region, if asked about their desire to mold educated Americans, could point to their territorial document to underscore public commitment to schooling for youngsters. Appointed officials wrote the articles governing the new frontier, yet those who moved into the area did so knowing the laws. The series of Northwest Ordinances (1785-1787), unlike the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution laid out a legal structure for education. Thomas Jefferson, a founding father and president of the United States, and others who worked on formulating the language for the Ordinances used the opportunity to place their ideas, albeit vague, about the need for education into the public record. The East, already settled, offered less opportunity for experimentation. The new frontier, however, could be fashioned to promote new ideas. The Ordinances in an attempt to make schools a central part of settlement included rhetoric that promoted “Religion, morality and knowledge” and “encouraged” education in all the country’s future endeavors.

Land was set aside in each settlement for a school. The law also stated that a portion of land in each area surveyed be sold so that the monies collected from that sale could be used to establish and maintain a school. The problem left unresolved was the balance between local, state, and federal control of education and how monies would


371 Northwest Ordinance 1787, Article III.
be raised for continued support of the school systems. This delineation of power presented a substantial obstacle for those who had just fought a war revolting against authoritarian government.

Noah Webster, an early educational reformer, worked tirelessly to help the new Republic survive in the midst of what he saw as “blunders in legislation and an overall “ignorance” in the American populace and its leaders.\textsuperscript{372} He praised the ideals of republicanism and insisted that Americans should move away from their European roots. Webster promoted universal schooling as a way to cement unity in the new nation.\textsuperscript{373} As a proponent of a stronger federal system of governance, he asked Americans to put aside differences and look to the common good. One might question whether or not westerners were aware of Webster’s intent to promote American nationalism through schooling. Though no specific mention of titles authored by Webster appear in estate inventories studied by Edward Stevens as he looked at book ownership in Ohio from 1790 through 1850, his examination of records show that educational texts, such as spellers, readers, and dictionaries were frequently listed as property.\textsuperscript{374} Moreover, as the nineteenth century moved through the first decades the wealth gap between residents of the territory played less of a role in determining who owned books.\textsuperscript{375} It seems quite possible that Webster authored some of the texts found in the inventories. Considering the debates over Webster’s attempts to develop an American version of our language,\textsuperscript{376} it seems hard to believe that westerners never heard or read about the educator’s intent to democratize the citizenry through education on the editorial pages and in the magazines that came to them.

Educators of the period continued to argue over the need to retain European educational standards with classes reflecting a more American national viewpoint. More importantly, the need for monetary

\textsuperscript{373} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{374} Edward Stevens, Jr. “Books and Wealth on the Frontier: Athens County and Washington County, Ohio, 1790-1859,” \textit{Social Science History}, (Vol. 5, No. 4 (Autumn 1981), 417-443. Stevens notes Noah Webster’s spelling book was first published in 1783 under the title \textit{Grammatical Institute, of the English Language . . .} Part 1; the first edition to bear the more common title \textit{American Spelling Book} appeared in Philadelphia in 1787.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{376} Tim Cassedy “A Dictionary Which We Do Not Want”: Defining America against Noah Webster, 1783–1810.” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly} (Volume71, No. 2, April 2014), 229-254.
provisions for education continued to hamper efforts to establish a more stable educational system. Corruption, Indian threats, and internal divisions over the appropriate curriculum and also sidelined many of the ideas offered by education reformers in the late eighteenth century documents that settled the Northwest Territory. Simply put, the outcome fell short of the goal for education presented in the Ordinance. Yet, the commitment to education remained firm in the Northwest Territory. David Tyack, Thomas James, and Aaron Benavot, all scholars of the history of education, emphasize that the use of land grants by the federal government to support common public schools provided impetus to the new states to provide elementary education. Despite disagreements over how public schools should be provided, Tyack, James, and Benavot insist that, "on the value of diffusing knowledge through public schools there was substantial agreement. . . .” Education mattered to western citizens. Without it, settlers of the Old Northwest feared they might never prove their right to identify themselves as civilized and ethical, or religiously moral Americans. Education offered them and their children the opportunity to promote the superiority of life in the West.

Western American Identity: A Civil and Moral Character

The rhetoric of education presented in the ordinances aside, families, local communities, and churches provided schooling for children, during the first decades of settlement. The words of western leaders, such as Manasseh Cutler of Massachusetts, explain why settlers felt the need to provide learning for youngsters living on the nation’s borders. Cutler, a minister, schoolteacher, physician, and an amateur scientist understood the need to create a republican society on the frontier. Cutler, a founder of the Ohio

378 Ibid.
Company and its main agent/advocate to Congress, also ran an academy for boys in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Promoting education was not a whim for him. Rather it was a personal cause.

The importance of education for Cutler, as well as for Jefferson, as they thought about western settlement was part of the larger concern that easterners held about frontier life. Many citizens living in already settled states worried that without institutions and government even the most judicious citizen might be tempted to revert to savagery. Schooling, a matter being addressed in some northeastern states, was regarded as a necessary institution. Cutler explained in his first sermon in Marietta, Ohio, in 1788 that “early attention to the instruction of youth is of the greatest importance to a new settlement. It will lay the foundations for a well regulated society. It is the only way to make subjects conform to its laws and regulations from principles of reason and custom rather than the fear of punishment.” Like Jefferson, another supporter of the sciences, Cutler welcomed “the opportunity of opening a new and unexplored region. . . .” In Ohio he could fashion government and institutions to meet the needs of a republic in the sense expressed by America’s founders. Cutler relished the idea that, “there will be an advantage which no other part of the earth can boast, and which probably will never occur again; that, in order to begin right, there will be no wrong habits to combat, and no inveterate systems to overturn?”

Cutler and his fellow settlers worked to lay a foundation for society through an emphasis on universal education. Education would result in the advancement of what settlers thought of as “proper” characteristics. Virtue, self-sufficiency, independence, dedication to family, country, and neighbors, as well as a hardy physique all ranked high among the qualities needed to develop a thriving republic. Caleb Atwater, when promoting a comprehensive school system in Ohio in the 1820s, recognized education included more than what could be taught in a classroom. He wrote of larger needs for personal success and citizenship when he asserted that, “. . . by education we mean that discipline and instruction, which

---

379 William P. Cutler and Julia P. Cutler, Life, Journals and Correspondence of Reverend Manasseh Cutler, LL. (2 volumes, Cincinnati, OH: 1888), I.
380 Ibid.
381 Ibid.
382 Ibid.
commences in the cradle, and ends only in the grave. It is the education of circumstances which is constantly, though sometimes almost imperceptibly, going on, in and around us; at home, abroad, while we are our study, in the street, at the fire-side, at church, or in whatever place we are.\textsuperscript{383} This type of education relied on formal practice in teaching reading and writing, as well as learning by example and the exchange of ideas. Atwater and others in the United States advanced educational theories as the new nation struggled to find its footing internally and in the world beyond its borders.

The Benefits of Hardy Childrearing

While citizens across America agreed on the need for education during the Early Republic era, theories of education, at times, adapted to circumstance. Children on the Eastern seaboard attending classes at home or in a more formal setting attempted to grasp reading, writing, and arithmetic. Children out west were taught those same skills and more. The child of the West needed to acquire survival skills as well as formal subject matter. Instructions about living a safe and productive life on a sometimes dangerous frontier were important lessons. The consequences of failing to master these instructions might be fatal.

The children living in western settlements while learning to survive, also gathered practical skills. They accomplished chores that few youngsters back east contended with. Many pioneer families lived in areas of the United States only recently cleared and opened for settlement. As time passed the cultures and economies of the city and town living developed, but before 1820 much of the American frontier remained largely unpopulated. Daily life for many children living on a homestead consisted of work, perhaps some schooling, and some play when possible. Youngsters began assisting with the work as early as age five. As the child grew so did his/her responsibility for agricultural and household chores. Male children matured and participated in the more strenuous activities required to keep the homestead

operating. Depending upon their age, boys could be found chopping wood, clearing land, hunting game, plowing, planting, and harvesting. Female children also assumed more duties around the home as they grew. Candle making, mending, cooking, gardening, and a host of other chores occupied a girl’s time and energy. While children living on farmsteads in rural areas east of the Appalachians also engaged in similar work, following the Revolutionary War, rarely did parents back east consider the threat of attack by Indians or face the isolation found on the nation’s borders.

Given the possibility of captivity by Indians, the temptations of living in an uncivilized environment, and threats by wildlife, many persons back east considered the borderlands a risky place to raise a family. The rattlesnake and copperhead were constant dangers in the region. Bears and wolves, though more a danger to livestock, could threaten humans. Yet Thomas Hinde, an itinerant preacher and political author, claimed that growing up on the frontier was a blessing. He insisted that children brought up in the country or on the frontier attained a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. His philosophy of childrearing maintained that “children raised in towns and the city have so many events surrounding them that they have little time to think about them. . . .” Whereas, children raised in the country have “more time to think alone and reflect and their minds are longer caught up with the occurrences of life. . . .” That time alone fueled imagination and curiosity. It also helped build resilience and diminished fear.

The Reverend John Witherspoon, president of Princeton (founded in 1746 as the College of New Jersey), agreed with Hinde about the advantages of raising children outside the town or city. Witherspoon wrote, in 1817, that he believed children reared in a harder setting fared better than those coddled by their parents. A well-exercised and developed body buttressed a keen mind. In his letters concerning the proper educational needs of children he wrote, “All persons, young and old, loving liberty: and as far as it does them no harm, it will certainly do them good. Many a free born subject is… a slave for the first ten years of his life; and is so much handled and carried about by women in his infancy that

---

385 Ibid.
the limbs and other parts of his body, are frequently misshapen, and the whole very much weakened; besides, the spirits, when under confinement, are generally in a dull and languishing state. 386

Figure 4-1: Being born in a log cabin or building one (note the stumps outside) was taken as an indication of being a common man in the 1800s. This was a portrayal of an Ohio cabin Joseph Foraker, a political candidate wanted voters to belief he grew up in. Though he resided in a much nicer two story home as a youth he understood that many settlers did live in cabins of this sort. The cabin setting Old portrays the open territory children could explore. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons

---

Rather than allowing children back east to spend their days in the same sedentary manner experienced in their early years, Witherspoon insisted, “The best exercise in the world for children, is to let them romp and jump about as soon as they are able, according to their own fancy. This in the country is best done in the fields; in the city a well aired room is better than being sent into the streets.”

Open fields, or a well aired room, hardly seemed a comparable choice for the exploits of the young.

Learning to work hard, play hard, and spend time on their own helped frontier youngsters develop a sense of adventure that served them well. When given free time, a child living in an unsettled region enjoyed endless possibilities for fun. Trees to climb, swimming holes, and forests awaited a child who finished chores and felt inclined to explore. Scientist and physician, Samuel Hildreth, explained that children seeking fun engaged in various modes to make time pass by playing games with balls, challenging each other in foot races, wrestling, and leaping. Foot-races and wrestling were promoted, since each benefitted youngsters that might encounter Indians. Girls learned to dance and adults made certain that parties of young people came together when possible for parties hosted at various forts.

The sense of adventure gained through sports, competition, and the use of imagination as well as the more refined skill of dancing showcased characteristics of western children. Just as adults on America’s first frontier desired recognition for their hard work, self-reliance independent nature, bravery and resourcefulness and civility, they worked to have their children display the same rudiments of character. Newspapers, correspondence, and memoirs offered avenues for dispensing the message that youngsters raised on the frontier excelled. For example, published letters describing Daniel Boone’s adventures in Kentucky, during 1786, related a deeply detailed story about the capture of John Flinn’s wife and children by Indians. The correspondence tells of the bravery exhibited by the victims during their ordeal. In another account, brothers, one twelve and the other nine, fell victim to two Indian

387 Ibid.  
389 Ibid.  
390 “Correspondence from the Daniel Boone Papers,” *The Draper Manuscript Collection*, Series 14 C.
kidnappers while at play on a riverbank. The boys managed to turn on the savages and seriously injure them during the first night of captivity. The brothers left markers along the route back to their Ohio homestead so that a party of men might return to the bloody scene and finish executing the two offenders. The boys’ ingenuity and courage saved them.

Growing up on the nation’s borders forced the children of pioneers to rely on themselves and their inner strengths. In addition to working the land, children on the border had to know how to endure and defend it. Security, from Indian raids, wild animals, or criminals, was not something a frontier family could safely delegate to far-off, or, in their case, non-existent authorities. Articles noted that settlers’ children “became young heroes.” A story about a youngster’s heroism noted that, “a boy, while yet too young to carry a rifle, placed a tomahawk in his belt and sallied forth when his father and brothers pursued a retreating savage.” An additional report explained the bravery and composure of a young man injured during an Indian fight onboard a flat-bottomed boat. He waited until the battle ended to show his mother the bone sticking out of his arm. When asked why he delayed telling her of his injury, he replied, “The Captain ordered silence during the action, and I thought you would be likely to make noise if I told you.” Samuel Metcalfe equated the courage and discipline demonstrated by this child’s toughness on the frontier with the Greek myth commemorating the bravery and discipline of the Spartan boy, who kept quiet even as a fox gnawed at his chest. Americans during the Revolutionary era utilized ancient Greek political philosophies to form a government; how appropriate to compare an American youngster’s ruggedness and discipline to that of a Spartan boy.

The ability to obey orders and display confidence and bravery, even in the face of challenge did not develop unaided. The western works examined suggest settlers believed that outstanding children

---

392 Ibid.
395 Ibid.
were the product of the child-rearing practices utilized by western parents. Children born on the frontier knew no other lifestyle, but young persons who moved westward with their families at an older age were expected to adapt to their new environment and the expectations placed on them by need and family. Anna Bentley praised her son Granville for his ability to adjust to rough living after moving to Ohio from a middling class home in Maryland. When she wrote to her family back east she boasted that he handled all of the plowing and that even though he had often cut his foot with the axe he continued to chop wood for the family’s use. When the Reverend Dr. Perkins decided, in 1799, to move his family west from a town in Connecticut to Athens, Ohio his two sons found themselves guiding and driving oxen along the river banks while their father steered the barge the animals towed. The boys, inexperienced at such work, learned quickly how to manage the task because they had no other choice.

Whether born on the frontier or moved their by parents, the traits of independence and self-sufficiency mattered for all children in this new region. Several letters address the plight of Freeman Burt, a hearing-impaired young man who could not speak. As the son of a poor Cincinnati widow his opportunities appeared limited. Rather than allow him to become a burden on the community, a women’s organization affiliated with the local Wilson’s First Presbyterian church raised the funds needed to send Freeman to the Gallaudet’s Connecticut school. In a letter written from Joshua Lacy Wilson, pastor of the church dated March 23, 1818, Wilson informed the school administration that, “The Females who send him are a benevolent society known by the name of the ’First female society of Cincinnati for religious purposes.’ They unite prayers and Alms. They send this unfortunate boy with Mr. [name missing] who it is expected will deliver you this letter and pay you two hundred dollars for his admittance the first year. They calculate upon keeping him with you three years and making remittances annually or Semi-annually as opportunity may offer. Should any Contingent expenses be incurred by the Managers

---

for his Comfort or health they will be so good as to forward their bills to me by mail and the amount shall be remitted.” 399 Pledging to pay a total of six hundred dollars, plus other expenses, placed an expensive obligation on the women of the church and yet, the need to educate one child outweighed the expense they took upon themselves. Their actions affected the community as a whole. The church group provided a young man with skills that might ensure his ability to become a contributing member of the community and the nation.

**Religious and Common Schools**

Schooling whether provided by parents at home, through the auspices of religious organizations, or by private secular institutions remained a staple of frontier life in the first decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1820s, however, educational reformers began promoting a common, or more public school system. They insisted on instruction in English, since some settlers spoke only German or French. This push for English language differed from the education promoted by the earliest settlers of the frontier. Virtue, literacy and self-reliance were the goals of the religious missionaries who established many of the educational efforts undertaken in the first few decades of settlement in the Old Northwest.

Father Rivet, a French priest, arrived in 1793 at Vincennes and opened the first school in Indiana. Despite the promotion of virtue and literacy, Jesuits working among Indians and white settlers failed to meet the Catholic Church’s hopes for conversions.

Moravians worked to convert Indians in Pennsylvania and New York as early as the 1740s also tried to make inroads in converting and educating Indians and whites. Chief among the missionaries to the Indians were David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder, both of whom helped to found communities, such as Schoenbrunn and Gnadenhutten, in eastern Ohio during the 1770s. Their efforts, while bearing some fruit, also met with disappointing results.

---

399 Ibid.
Missionaries, from other Protestant sects, such as Methodists and Baptists directed most of their conversion and educational efforts toward white settlers.\textsuperscript{400} They established Sabbath Schools. Ministers and their surrogates trained both children and adults to read, write, and accept God’s message. Sometimes, however, clerics found adult settlers eager to learn to read and write while reluctant to accept religious faith. In those instances, clerics focused on appealing to young persons. The Sabbath Schools drew many who desired education for themselves and their children and often garnered a better attendance rate than church services.\textsuperscript{401} Lessons might be held in a rougher environment than that experienced back east, but the dedication and message resonated with frontier citizens as well, if not better.

Sabbath school literature sent by missionary and tract societies from New England offered a steady supply of reading for settlers. Ministers, both traveling and those settled in congregations, shared their private libraries with the pioneers. The Sabbath school, with the availability of the monthly periodicals and newspapers, the pulpit, and the parsonage offered inspiration and an update on the world beyond the Ohio River Valley.\textsuperscript{402} John Shane owned a collection of books, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines and individual stories given to him by the settlers he visited. His collection rivaled most local libraries. Shane kept these written records in scrapbooks and lent them to others.\textsuperscript{403} The minister’s wife also often exerted a profound influence upon the young women, the mothers, and the children of the community in which her husband labored under a divine calling.\textsuperscript{404} As the number of settlers increased, so did the need for locally trained ministers. Eastern religious denominations began to open seminaries and colleges to train clerics and teachers.\textsuperscript{405} Kenyon College, founded by Episcopalians opened in 1824 in Ohio. Catholics founded Xavier University in Cincinnati in 1831. No

\textsuperscript{401} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{403} Elizabeth Perkins, \textit{Borderlife}, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{404} Ibid.
matter the denomination, common sense argued that pioneers needed support as they tried to establish a fuller and more constant religious life for themselves and their children. Educating seminarians on the frontier answered the settlers’ needs more effectively than trying to prepare eastern born and educated men for a new life in an unfamiliar place.

Ministers trained at theological universities located along the eastern seaboard and those beginning their career after graduating from newly opened western theological universities often offered the classical lessons from Roman, Greek and other ancient philosophies. Yet, these hardly seemed the most necessary subjects for most frontier settlers to master. Thomas Jefferson, in a 1775 letter to John Jay, made clear his respect for the farmer as a valuable citizen. Jefferson’s desire to develop a nation peppered with self-sufficient farmers suggested settlers needed a more practical program of study. As a statesman, farmer, and sometime scientist Jefferson inspired homesteaders with the Northwest Ordinance. He recognized the importance of literacy, yet envisioned well trained farmers who could produce crops for themselves and the nation. Fathers should train their young men to farm and work a homestead.

Father to son knowledge was not the only means of learning farming techniques. Early on farmers depended on subsistence means for planting and harvesting, but as time progressed so did agricultural methods. Magazines, books, and agricultural organizations, established before 1830, disseminated the latest techniques for maximizing crop yield and land use. In 1798, Noah Webster’s “Farmer’s Catechism,” along with his ideas about children’s behavior and their need to develop as citizens, were published as part of The Little Readers’ Assistant. As the need for agricultural education increased, after 1830 both Michigan and Pennsylvania passed legislation to create agricultural schools to ensure continued success for farmers in the region. Legislative land grants meant to promote the growth of future schools set a pattern that was continued with passage of the Morrill Land Grant Acts.

---

408 The Little Reader’s Assistant. (Northampton, MA; William Butler, 1798).
Despite the availability of land for building schools, progress in developing educational facilities and reforming the system sometimes came slowly. The legislatures in Ohio and other territories often sold the lands set aside by the Northwest Ordinance for the establishment of schools or speculators. Losing patience with the corruption surrounding school funds an Ohio state auditor commented, “There seems to be no end to the plunder upon this fund.” Decades passed until, in 1822, Caleb Atwater, began to successfully lobby the legislature and Governor Allen Trimble for educational reform. Writing about the need for a full educational experience Atwater’s text on a proper education noted that while strength of character and composure under the duress of frontier living might label pioneer children as exceptional in one way, education also meant learning to read and write. According to Atwater, if education was to be offered to a broad segment of the populace the Ohio government needed to finance schools. This insistence on state funding met with resistance from private as well as government sectors. The result was to stall the process.

In an effort to seem responsive to the lack of formal educational facilities in the state, the Ohio government moved forward to establish a commission tasked with studying the feasibility of developing public or common schools. Atwater was named chairman of the commission and during the summer and fall of 1822 he and his committee researched the condition of Ohio's educational system and then studied public education programs evolving in other states. Atwater wrote three pamphlets one on the condition of school buildings in Ohio, one about the type of public school system Ohio should create, and one concerning the value of common schools to Ohio's future. He intended to convince Ohioans of the need for state financed education. Atwater modeled his plan after New York's public school system. According to Atwater, Ohio should finance schools through the sale of state property. The commission made its final report to the Ohio General Assembly in 1823. The legislators, for the most part, opposed

---

411 Caleb Atwater, “Essay on Education.”
412 Ibid.
413 Ibid.
public funding for public education, but the public exercised their right to be heard and, in 1825, common schools were established in Ohio. The work toward establishing common schools and a broader access to education, elicited from the esteemed ex-president, James Madison, a letter informing Atwater of his support for attempts to create a sustainable educational structure in Ohio. Madison expressed “his wishes” that nothing “frustrate” attempts to enhance the school system.\textsuperscript{414}

Similar stories of obstacles to public education unfolded in the other states created from the Northwest Territory. Despite the trials, frontier settlers engaged in opening venues of higher education to prove their desire to produce learned young persons. Simon Bronner, noted Americanist, mentions in his book \textit{Campus Traditions} (2012) that visitors from overseas noted the growth of new universities occurred on the nation’s borders rather than back east. Since four universities served an English population of some twenty-three million, the thirty-seven colleges located in Ohio might have seemed excessive for three million residents. The abundance of school choices, however, stood as testament to the western enlightened vision of education.\textsuperscript{415} By 1831, in the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Alabama over 500,000 acres of land had been set aside for the building of, “academies, colleges and universities,” with more dedicated for common schools.\textsuperscript{416} The desire for and recognition of education’s importance to the growth of the region spread quickly through the first American West.

White settlers on the first American frontier sought to prove they offered a firm foundation on which the country could expand and prosper. They remained convinced that white children raised in loving Christian homes and armed with western education held the physical and mental means to conquer anything that challenged the them. The characteristics they promoted and the example they offered their children produced the virtuous citizen needed for America to flourish.

\textsuperscript{414} Madison to Atwater 1823, \textit{American Memory}.
\textsuperscript{415} Simon Bronner, \textit{Campus Traditions: Folklore from the Old time College to the Modern Mega-University}. (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 14-15.
Women’s Education

The need for a strong character and the ability to manage hard work were regarded as necessary for female as well as male children as they traveled to and lived on the frontier. As early as 1795, an advertisement in the *Knoxville Gazette* offered lessons for young women in the city of Lexington. They could receive instruction in reading, writing, algebra, music, drawing, and a variety of other disciplines.\(^{417}\) Subject matter, such as geography, algebra, and geometry offered a regimen comparable, if not better, than what one might find in most girl’s academies existing along the East coast in 1795.

Competent or not, some education and life lessons were better learned outside the classroom. Mrs. David Pratt, Dr. Perkins’ eldest daughter, was fifteen years old when the family began their move westward. Keeping a diary, Miss Perkins recorded the dangers and trials the family faced as they traveled toward their new home. Privations of food and shelter, raging rivers, and illnesses plagued the family. Young Miss Perkins recalled her mother’s death from a “nervous fever” during the journey.\(^{418}\) This left the fifteen year old to care for her younger brothers and sisters. Deciding to settle in Athens, Dr. Perkins purchased, according to his daughter, “. . . the best the place could afford, a log cabin with one room, one window, and one door. There was a spring of excellent water near the house, and a shed for horse and cow.”\(^{419}\) As a young girl in a new home, she recalled, “We were well pleased with our new home. . . Here we enjoyed peace and happiness. We suffered many privations; most of our bread had to be prepared from grain ground on hand mills, or horse mills, or pounded in a mortar, dug out of a large stump, with a spring pole fastened to an iron wedge for a pestle.”\(^{420}\) The Perkins diary spares none of the hardship and yet remains uplifting. Faced with this multitude of chores, problems, and the loss of her mother, Miss Perkins persevered. Her ability to write most likely offered her an outlet for expressing her feelings and

\(^{417}\) *Knoxville Gazette*, 8 May, 1795. Volume IV; Issue 9; 1, Knoxville, Tennessee.
\(^{418}\) Perkins Diary,” From *“History of Athens County....”* Charles M. Walker, 1869.
\(^{419}\) Ibid.
\(^{420}\) Ibid.
later informed readers of her strength of character and ability to survive. The life lessons she acquired through her experiences served her every bit as well as those offered from books.

The growing commitment to educate and fortify females within and outside of the schoolhouse according to women’s historian Linda Kerber, the product of the Early Republic Era that emphasized “Republican Motherhood.” Kerber’s term, “republican mother,” describes the belief that the citizens of the new nation had confidence in the idea that daughters should be raised to uphold the ideals of republicanism and receive the education needed to pass civic and moral values on to the next generation. An 1823 December issue of the Masonic Miscellany Magazine, supports Kerber’s theory. In the piece the authors claimed female education a necessary element for the proper development of the “public welfare” and insisted that if America expected future generations to “command her armies” and see to the nation’s social well-being children needed mothers able to inspire and train. Educators and politicians along the East coast and in the west recognized that the lack of competent teachers on the frontier made it essential that women could competently raise the next generation. The skill to raise and educate laid a basis for future accomplishment.

Caleb Atwater, the Ohio education theorist, commented on the need to educate females. He insisted that, “The main objects of educating females are precisely the same with those of educating the other sex — to develop [sic] all their powers and faculties, and, to prepare them for happiness and usefulness. We take it for granted, because we know it is in fact so, that females are as capable of attaining all sorts of knowledge as the other sex. Indeed they learn more easily.” Though Atwater championed learning for girls, he limited his reasons for supporting female education to the traditional view of women as wives and mothers. He insisted that, “... men of liberal minds and true politeness,

422 Ibid.
424 Caleb Atwater.
prefer, enthusiastically prefer, a learned woman, as their wife, companion and friend, and for the mother of their children. They prefer a wife, whose conversation is agreeable; who forgetting herself, can strive to please them; can sympathize with them; soothe all their sorrows and render them happy.” Thus, women’s education remained tied to the domestic sphere for which God intended them.

By 1826, Cincinnati lauded its own progress in addressing the educational needs of females. Several female academies graced the city and offered a variety of educational experiences for girls. The Female Academy, under the direction of Principal John Lock, “taught young women the French language, Music, Penmanship and Needle-work.” The price of tuition, depending on the classes attended, ranged from four to ten dollars a quarter. Students underwent public examinations and earned medals and honorary degrees each summer. The Academy also publicized its competence for teaching the simple elements of the different branches of basic or higher education--chemistry, natural philosophy, and astronomy--to the younger pupils.

A boarding school, attended to by the Misses Bailey offered girls who resided outside the city a school experience. The Bailey sisters were reputed to be “. . .well qualified, both by their attainments and high respectability, for the duties which they have undertaken, and are now assisted in their school by Mr. F. Eckstein, who has devoted many years to the instruction of youth, and whose testimonials of merit have already been laid before the public.” The school promised parents to provide young women with, “All the elementary, as well as higher branches of female education, including the French language. Music, Painting, and Drawing, are taught in this institution.” Instruction in the arts raised the level of culture that parents could brag about when comparing their daughters to girls brought up in eastern cities. City schools, however, were not the only place girls received instruction. Reverend Johnson, the

---

425 Ibid.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid.
Kentucky minister, recalled that several little girls attended his “corn crib schoolhouse” along with the boys in the rural neighborhood he served.429

Corncrib schoolhouse, academy, or homeschooling, given their responsibility to produce responsible, self-sufficient and civic minded citizens, western women such as Anna Bentley, an Ohio settler, worked hard to educate her children. While most of her children were educated at home she also volunteered to help out at nearby schoolhouses. Bentley’s children learned among other lessons, the skills of reading, writing and doing sums. Anna often spoke about her children’s education in letters she sent back east to family members.430 She mentioned that despite the lack of educational tools at her disposal the children’s education flourished. It rivaled, she claimed, the learning they might experience in Maryland and seemed all the more precious given the logistics of obtaining schooling. In fact, even her toddler Aliceanna was, “very quick at learning poetry.”431 Another mother living on the frontier, Mary Bledsoe, watched her husband die at the hands of Indians. She recalled that, “Bereaved of her husband, sons, and brother-in-law by the murderous savages . . .,” her duty required her to see to the children (both male and female); their education and their settlement in life.432 Despite the difficulties of raising her children alone and managing her late husband’s estate on the frontier she saw to it that each of her children received the skills to read and write so that they might become good citizens, as well as prosper economically and spiritually. She, along with other women, believed herself responsible for their future development. She and others believed women as well as males needed the skills to help frontier children move forward in terms of citizenship, prosperity, and strength of body and character. Thus, early on, female education became an important tool for successful western settlement.

430 Anna Bentley Letters.
431 Ibid.
Comparing the Education of Indians and Free Blacks to Whites on the Frontier: A Sign of Superiority

The idea of educating white women, as well as white males, posed a difficulty for nineteenth century men wedded to ideas that claimed a women’s inferior intellectual, moral, and physical prowess. Tying the need to educate women for their duties as wives and mothers overcame much of the reluctance to educate them. Women might be different, but even educated they remained unthreatening for the most part. The thought of educating male Indians and free blacks or fugitive slaves, however, created a problem for most white settlers. The answer; find ways to make educational resources all but impossible for non-whites to attain. The ability to deprive certain groups’ access to schooling proved easy to accomplish since their physical and cultural differences were visible.

Some whites despite bigotry tried to educate Indians. Jesuits and Moravians preached the Gospel to the Indians. The efforts of these two religious sects differed from most of the other Missionary societies who on occasion sent preachers to the Indians. Those other groups feared the “savages” and often began their missions with grave doubts. Jesuits lived among the Indians and learned their language and culture. Moravians expended money and manpower. They noted that, “Indians exposed to the white way of life benefitted from it.” For example, “Some Indians, who have long resided among the white people, have learnt to work in iron, and make hatchets, axes, and other tools, without any regular instruction.” Income from their businesses and the personal donations of members covered the costs incurred. Wherever the Moravians went they opened schools.

Despite differences in how religious sects interacted with Indians, all attempted to change their customs, behavior, and religious belief through education. Whites usually believed that Indian culture should be abandoned and replaced by white traditions, customs, and beliefs. Methodists met with some

---

434 Ibid.
success in their efforts to supplant Indian culture as they worked on teaching agricultural skills to the Wyandot tribe in the Ohio territory. In 1816, John Stewart, a mulatto Methodist minister arrived to take over the Methodist’s missionary duties. He insisted that the Indians maintain sobriety and honesty (the white version) and give up their traditional dancing and feasting. When Stewart died, his replacement Reverend James Finley arrived and built a school believing that might provide easier acculturation, since the training began at an earlier age before the Indian lifestyle took firm hold.

Quakers performing their missionary services among the Shawnee tribe, engaged in many of the same practices as the Methodists. They used schools, agricultural methods, and religion to prompt Indians to accept customs agreeable to white society. Overall, they met with the same limited success. Moravian missionaries, even with their more intensive efforts lamented of Indian behavior that, “few will submit to hard labor, neither their education nor their wants inclining them to industry and application. In general, the men love ease; and even hunting, (though their chief employment) is attended to but for a few months of the year; the rest of their time is chiefly spent in idleness.” According to clerics, the Native American children followed the example set by their parents even when a white persons showed them a different path. That conclusion underscored the belief held by many whites of the futility of educating the Indians.

White settlers on America’s first frontier, emphasizing their own ability to educate and raise brave, self-reliant children in the face of difficult circumstances, pointed to the less able Indian child as proof of white superiority. Settlers maintained that Indians spoiled their children, especially their male offspring. Native American women allowed their youngsters to run free and undisciplined throughout their early years. Moravian missionaries noted that “Indian children are always considered as the property of the wife. If a divorce takes place, they all follow her.” To that end, “Both parties are very desirous of gaining the love of their children . . . never oppose their (the child’s) inclinations, that they may not lose

436 Ibid.
437 Ibid.
their affection.” 439 Because of the fears of alienating a child’s favor Indian parents preferred leniency in childrearing.

Noting the leniency applied to raising Indian children, one writer insisted, “Native boys rarely received any discipline . . . thinking it would dampen their spirits and their martial ardor.” 440 In the minds of settlers, the unrestrained behavior of Indian boys stood in stark contrast to the composure exhibited by white children. As proof they pointed to the example set by a nine year old white captive found after almost three decades rejoiced at his release. Reunited with white society, the young man “related with precision the situation of his family and the circumstances of his capture while he was engaged in chores . . . and he manifested such solicitude upon the subject . . .” that his interviewer came away highly impressed. 441 This white youngster, not only adeptly related his experience, he also preferred the restraint and discipline of white parenting to the misplaced tolerance for misbehavior granted by Indians.

Settlers and missionaries failed to alter Indians’ attitudes toward child-rearing. The tribes proved reluctant to alter their lifestyle and family relationships. Fugitive slaves and free blacks, on the other hand, often tried to gain equal access to opportunities held by whites. Despite their efforts, blacks were denied the opportunity to educate themselves or their children. Many former slaves recognized that education was essential to enjoying all the privileges of freedom, including equality. 442 Schooling offered the opportunity to rise above menial labor jobs, buy land, or become astute entrepreneurs. Black children, however, were refused admittance to white schools and orphanages. One runaway declared that slavery prevented a man from “being a man.” 443 He defined manhood as the ability to plan for his children. The struggle to better the lives of black children continued when ex-slaves reached the Old Northwest and tried to begin their own households and schools. As they attempted to educate their children they were

439 Ibid.
440 William Moore, Indian Wars of the United States, 38.
rebuffed by whites. One father placed his daughter in an Ohio academy despite objections from local whites. When the principal expelled all of the black pupils, he moved his family to Canada.\textsuperscript{444} Many black men opened their homes to children other than their own offspring in order to keep them out of the hands of slave hunters who came North to collect bounties.\textsuperscript{445} Attempts to offer their children schooling and care in territories of the Old Northwest undermine the idea that black fathers cared less for their children.

The lack of educational opportunities was only one problem black children living in the Ohio River Valley faced. Well before the Fugitive Slave Act passed, slave-hunters trolled the Northwest Territory attempting to collect the bounties offered for returned slaves. Children proved to be easy prey.\textsuperscript{446} Easy to subdue, slave-traders then sold captured children into bondage in southern states. Kidnapped and difficult to trace, the legal codes in place in the new territories did little to prevent the abuses of slave-hunters.

Apprenticeships also separated black children from their chance at family life. Some whites abused the system to perpetuate servitude for blacks. The legal codes in territorial Indiana permitted long-term indentures of blacks and mulattoes, through terms of ten, twenty, and forty years. One sixteen-year-old named Jacob was indentured for ninety years.\textsuperscript{447} In other parts of the Northwest, some children were apprenticed to pay for the unfilled indentures of their parents. Sometimes, desperately poor black parents indentured their own children. Sally Mathes of Highland County, Ohio, apprenticed her infant son to a white farmer because she was “unable to support her said child.”\textsuperscript{448} Though some black parents made these arrangements willingly, the apprenticeship system often functioned as an instrument for obtaining cheap labor, marginalized black progress, and undermined the black family.

Finding their hopes for education and equality slipping away, in 1829 blacks living in Cincinnati prepared to leave and establish their own community. In Canada, the new community of Wilberforce,
offered black migrants a fresh start. The first institution established was a school. Wilberforce colonists desired more than literacy for their youngsters. Instruction in reading and writing as well as schooling at every level were part of the plan. When prominent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison visited the colony in November 1831, he noted that 20-30 children attended the school. Wilberforce parents most likely thought that an education would level the divide between their children and whites. That belief proved to be baseless, even for those blacks who attained school.

**Conclusion**

Race, place and other obstacles aside, as long as an instructor was available, many western children received some form of education. Mothers, fathers, ministers and trained teachers served as instructors in a variety of locales referred to as school. The homes of spinster women, as well as Reverend John Johnson’s schoolhouse that stood as little more than “old corncrib,” offered educational services. In the minds of some, these venues were hardly the basis for producing scholars, but despite the scarcity of educational tools and the rough environment, the children of pioneers studied and learned.

In his book detailing life on the Ohio frontier, historian Douglas Hurt maintains that New Englanders moving into the Northwest Territory immediately after the Revolutionary War tried, just as their forbearers the Puritans had, to “transfer the physical and social culture” of the home they left behind to the frontier. This meant learning to read and write for religious as well as civil purposes. Manasseh Cutler, minister and founder of the Ohio Company, believed the schoolhouse served as an important institution for the maintenance of civil and social contentment.

Cutler, luckily, had financial backing

---


450 Ibid.


for the institutions he created. Some settlers in other western regions who desired education for their
cchildren proved financially unable to fund schooling.

Authors recounting the growth of the new territories wrote that while educated settlers migrated
westward, others moving to the region hardly could be called men of property and/or education.453 Still,
they committed themselves to improving the lives of their families.454 The efforts to offer children
schooling, made by the early settlers, bore fruit. Dr. Daniel Drake, in letters to his children, recalled for
them that even though he attended school infrequently he had learned to read and write.455 Drake
remembered that while his father and the neighboring families in his new home “. . . were not indifferent
to the need for education,” their poverty and own illiteracy forced them to postpone hiring a
schoolteacher.456 Within a year or so of settlement, however, they built a log schoolhouse and a
“competent” schoolmaster was procured. Drake eventually became the first student of medicine in
Cincinnati, Ohio. His recollections were meant to counsel his children about the importance of education
and promoted the need to pursue it by any means.457 His commitment to learning was passed on to others
through his words.

By 1819, The Western Review and Miscellany Magazine proclaimed that anyone who doubted
the West’s commitment to education must reconsider since, “There are some considerable errors which
need to be corrected, and many inadequate notions which ought to be enlarged. Parents have a great
desire to give, and children to receive, the advantages of learning and science, and the impulses upon this
subject are as good here as in any part of the United States; but the means, so far as books, apparatus,
teachers, and institutions are concerned, are much less than they are in some other places. All the

453 Hurt, Ohio Frontier.
454 John Woods, Two years' residence in the settlement on the English Prairie, in the Illinois country, United States : with an account of its animal and vegetable productions, agriculture, &c. &c., a description of the principal towns, villages, &c. &c., with the habits and customs of the back-woodsmen. (London: Longman, Hurst, Reessa, Orme, and Brown, 1822), 293-95.
456 Ibid., 141.
457 Ibid.
privations which we have suffered, and which we are still suffering, in regard to our education, are indeed rapidly diminishing, and giving place to increasing facilities and advantages.458 The West more so than any on the Eastern seaboard faced challenges and still managed to educate its young.

Just as the Western Review asserted some within the Ohio River Valley region looked to create a more stable and structured educational system. Some even claimed to have outstripped their peers raised back east, in terms of educating youngsters. John S. Williams, the editor of, The American Pioneer, a monthly periodical maintained that while raised in buildings sometimes “Rough and uncouth in appearance” the children showed no ill effects. The families, according to Williams, “… could be made very comfortable, and for health seemed preferable to many more civilized dwellings.”459 The physical and mental conditioning of the frontier child benefitted from the rougher circumstances. The lessons learned, formal or not, toughened these youngsters and made them hardier individuals as well as literate citizens. Settlers insisted their children exemplified the best of what it meant to be a child raised in the United States. They often mastered reading and writing and perhaps just as importantly to the new country developed the skills to take risks and turn them to successes. The children of the first American West helped expand and solidify the idea of America, while their pampered eastern peers had life experiences more connected to Old World tradition.

Caleb Atwater, a western advocate for education, understood the promise of a literate citizenry and dedicated years of his life to making certain that the idea took root. In his mind education was a lifelong venture that included more than formal schooling. That thought seemed to bear fruit when no less a figure than Andrew Jackson, a pioneer of Tennessee, a risk taker, and an old hand at dealing with Indian threats became the country’s leader, in 1828. Jackson, according to a fellow politician, Senator Hugh Lawson White, just as many frontiersmen had been educated in “nature’s school.”460 A student of the

woods, as well as the schoolroom, President Jackson exemplified for westerners many of the character
traits they believed necessary to instill in their own children. Parents living on the frontier had produced a
man of the people, an advocate for democracy and a strong individualist willing to fight for his country.
He was a true American. Jackson’s physical strength, mental acuity and ability to succeed despite the
obstacles placed before him, were by-products, to some degree, of his environment. That environment
was the classroom of the western frontier.
Chapter 6

“PRACTICING RELIGION IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL”:
A FACTOR IN IDENTITY CREATION

Settlers moving westward to the first American frontier carried their religious faith with them to their new home. Given the obstacles they faced, pioneers in the Old Northwest Territory claimed the moral and physical dangers awaiting them on the nation’s borders more sorely tested their faith in God. Their faith so routinely challenged overshadowed the Christian practice of their eastern seaboard peers. As further evidence supporting their claim settlers utilized the example set by Indians to demonstrate that groups of persons living in the Old Northwest and Kentucky succumbed to the temptation to reject civilized behaviors as defined by white persons. Their Protestant religious faith, according to the settlers, marked them as good, compassionate, and virtuous. Qualities such as devotion to the common good demonstrated the white pioneers’ worth as citizens of the New Republic and helped prove that settlers remained civilized, enlightened, and wholesome while living on the frontier.

Like their English predecessors, the early American settler held conflicting views of the frontier. On the one hand, the frontier sheltered heathens, while on the other it offered natural beauty and personal opportunity. Like their English predecessors, pioneers believed they were transplanting an acceptable and superior spiritual creed to the frontier region and refused to recognize that the beliefs of others such as Indians held the same value. This chapter examines the importance of religion in the lives of the persons who settled the Old Northwest Territory. It interprets the use of religious faith by settlers to claim an American identity that aligned with the emergent values of the New Republic. Like the colonists who first settled on American soil in the seventeenth century, some of the first American pioneers wrote about the obstacles they faced to the practice of their faith. I hypothesize based upon the rhetoric they used that settlers applied revivalism to reinforce the process of “othering” and urged virtuous republican behavior to emphasize their civil and moral importance as they shaped a new persona as western and American
citizens. Religion mattered in their lives just as it mattered in the founding of the nation. Thomas Jefferson, with assistance from a committee, wrote the Declaration of Independence calling upon the justice of God the Creator as his authority. The Constitution of the United States of America drew upon biblical perceptions of God’s sovereignty as well as recognition of man’s sinful nature. The use of biblical foundations helped Americans explain the need for elements of checks and balances and democracy as they spurned outdated European government models tied to monarchy and aristocracy. All men no matter their calling in life stood equally before God. White Americans, as a nation and a people and most especially those facing life in a new territory, relied on religious faith and trusted that God blessed their endeavors.

**Background: Claims of Introducing Religion to America**

Look at books about the underpinnings of Christian religious belief in the New World and you are likely to find several versions of how God’s grace supposedly fell upon this land. Why is this important? Many Americans, both past and present connect the founding of the nation with the Protestant Christian faith. Persons whose writings appear in these pages wrote often understood that their Christian faith influenced their self-identification as western and American. Understanding the history the deep tie between America and religion helps explain the reasons why settlers needed to lay claim to retaining a deep faith.

New England authors, like Perry Miller, supported the claim that early Massachusetts provided the place for the first trial of American character. Miller and others\(^461\) recount the Puritan conviction that

God and the Devil fought for control over colonial New England. That struggle to defeat evil and create a godly community in the New World helped define the Puritans’ mission as well as who they were.

The struggle between good and evil placed Indians in a complicated position. They already possessed a spiritual life that worked for them. Europeans, however, believed that in time Indians would come to realize the inferiority and immorality of their faith traditions and turn to Christianity. This acceptance of the true God might serve as evidence of good trumping evil. At Plymouth Plantation Henry Overton reported, “. . . when the Church did fast and pray for Rain… An Indian of good quality, being present, and seeing what they were about, felt a wondering at them for praying for rain…” 462 After a while the Indian, “beheld that at last the Clouds began to rise, and by that time they had ended their Duty, the Rain fell in a moist: sweet, constant, soaking shower.” This experience led him to desire the relationship that the English had with their God and he, “resolved from that day not to rest till he did know this great good God’ and forsook his Native belief system.” 463 This narrative supported the assumption of white religious preeminence and gave hope of a possible triumph over the evils present in the unsettled wilderness.

Pilgrim and Puritan New Englanders swore they brought God to the colonies and to the Indian population. They expected all Indians would recognize white superiority and change their behavior, just as the Indian who viewed the rainstorm had. Two problems stood in the way of their expectations: Indians already possessed a moral and religious tradition and even those Indians who adopted the Christian faith fell victim to whites who refused to view them as equals religiously or civilly under any circumstances.

Although the attention given to the Puritan experience might suggest that the American religious experience begins in New England, Virginians could counter that claim as early as 1606, King James sanctioned the Virginia Company’s intent to undertake “so noble a Work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian Religion

were passed down to Americans in the form of ideas about correct moral and civil behaviors. The ideas underpinned claims of the nation’s exceptionalism.


463 Ibid.

174
to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God.”

Plenty of appeals for success that would show divine approval showered the mission. The Virginia Company wrote of their intent to convert and school the children of the Indians. The chronological record of the Jamestown colony clearly precedes the Pilgrims and the Puritan mission in New England.

Catholics offer a history that claims two events to prove they introduced the one true God to the New World. The legend of St. Brendan places Catholics in the Americas as early as 860 A.D. A history of the Catholic Church insists, “Notwithstanding the prejudiced opposition, or ignorance, of some historians who have appeared since the religious revolt of Martin Luther and his followers against the mother church and against everything Catholic… Brendan, the navigator, full of religious zeal, skimmed along western limits of the then unknown and dangerous Atlantic. Catholics suggest, he must have touched upon the shores of what are now the states of Georgia and Florida.”

Although this account has not been documented, the Columbus account has. Christopher Columbus provides a reliable alternative for explaining the Catholic Church’s contention that they spread Christianity in the New World more than century before the founding of the earliest English colonies.

The competing claims due to changing social attitudes make contemporary scholars uncomfortable with colonial bragging rights that ignore the Indian presence. Still we may be able to agree that religion played an important role in each white colonial settlement. Spiritual faith provided a touchstone for those facing the unknown or unexpected. As time passed and each new frontier opened, whether English, Scots-Irish, German, French, Irish, or American religion came along for the ride and helped white settlers form a view of themselves, their new locale, and their country.

---


Religion Moves to the Old Northwest: A Point of Frontier Identity Revitalized

Given the fact that earlier European colonists brought their religious faith with them as part of their cultural baggage, the claim that many of America’s first pioneers kept their religious belief close might appear obvious. The different attitude toward God and the natural world, as the Revolutionary War ended, however, makes the commitment of the Old Northwestern settler to maintaining faith all the more remarkable. The period of frontier settlement in the Ohio River Valley region took place during the Enlightenment. As a cultural movement of philosophers and other intellectuals its emphasis rested upon the importance of the individual and the use of reason. Looking for scientific rules to explain occurrences in nature and people’s daily lives the Enlightenment scholars of Europe held great influence over the ideas of those Americans exposed to their works. As the Revolutionary War began, some of the people insisting on rebellion focused upon the ideals of liberty, democracy, republicanism and religious tolerance as significant touchstones for American political theory. Attempts to reconcile science and religion resulted in the preference for some of the founders, such as Jefferson and Franklin, for reason, sans claims of prophecy and miracles.

Thomas Paine in, The Age of Reason (1794-95), challenged the belief in supernatural aspects of faith and expressed his disdain for the formal church organizations that dotted the American landscape. Paine wrote, “All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit . . . .Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals.” While Paine’s more detached approach to religion met the needs of founders recognized as Deists, such as Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison,

---

466 Thomas Paine, Age of Reason, Part I, 1794.
467 Peter Gay, Deism: An Anthology. (Van Nostrand. 1968), 9–10. Deism holds that God does not intervene with the natural world’s mechanisms. The Creator allows it to run according to laws of nature. Moreover, human beings can only know God via reason and the observation of nature. Supernatural manifestations (such as miracles) are to be regarded with caution.
the power of a more reasoned religious belief eventually gave way to a need for a more emotional and intimate faith for many Christians. This turn of many to a more expressive religious practice was demonstrated through what historians call the Second Great Awakening. The Awakening, a Protestant, evangelical and revitalization movement, occurred throughout parts of Europe and the United States. For settlers facing a strange and unstable frontier a revitalized and personal approach to religion served their needs. The power of revival influenced their practice.

Many of the pioneers recorded in these pages who settled in the Ohio River Valley Region from 1777-1830 claimed to be God-fearing people. They insisted that their brand of Christianity – generally northern, European/British-style, Protestantism -- set them apart from others and helped to define them. To prove their point, they explained their special faith in God through their letters, pamphlets, music, books, and newsletters. Showing a visceral sense that the frontier was a venue in which their individual religion could be strengthened, pioneers expressed the belief that their faith surpassed that of Christians living back east. Their Christianity also trumped Indian religions and Black Christianity. They easily identified themselves as the true heirs of the religious legacy left by America’s Puritan forefathers – here again, because the frontier aspects of the Puritan experiment matched their own American frontier circumstances.

Massachusetts Puritans claimed their movement into New England was, “A mission into the wilderness” and insisted they would build a “city on a hill.” Puritans used both of these metaphors to describe their New World home. Puritans understood that while they faced unknown dangers, their travel to the colonies might also yield religious opportunities and benefits not available to them back home in England. John Winthrop and the community arriving with him on the Arbella, in 1629 knew that the frontier offered opportunities for both positive and negative outcomes. Perry Miller’s scholarship on Puritan thought explains that the Puritan interpretation of the New World as a biblical wilderness open to

their religious and civil reforms was instrumental in promoting expansion in the colonies from British settlement to the founding of a new nation, and hence an identity separate from the Old World.\textsuperscript{469}

The unsettled wilderness also sustained, challenged, and changed British settlers landing in Virginia. Though less talked about than Puritans, the earliest Virginians displayed their commitment to attain both the secular and religious profits not available to them in England. John Rolfe recognized the growing differences between persons in the New and Old Worlds. He insisted that English migration to Virginia was taken up by, “a peculiar people, marked and chosen by the finger of God, to possess it, for undoubtedly he is with us.”\textsuperscript{470} Rolfe identified a group of persons willingly moving west from the center of civilization.\textsuperscript{471} A peculiar, or chosen people, as Rolfe considered them, could survive, prosper, match or surpass the accomplishments of those left behind in Europe and take up the challenge of converting Indians.

Civilization followed the early colonists even though in some manner it differed from what they left behind on the British Isles. Environment, supplies, and a host of other circumstances including a desire for some change dictated new customs and habits as British colonists moved out from the seaboard to the western portion of settled colonies. Once again circumstance natural and social prompted some changes in habit. Those who settled beyond the Appalachians, on America’s first frontier, also experienced the feeling of being far removed from life on the settled eastern seaboard. In a religious sense they, just as their ancestors had, wrestled with ideas of the wilderness as something dangerous and in need of taming. American settlers viewed themselves as God’s stewards tasked with improving the earth they inhabited. Emerging seventeenth-century philosophers such as Francis Bacon emphasized the potential

\textsuperscript{470} Wyndham Robertson, \textit{Pocahontas, alias Matoaka, and her descendants through her marriage at Jamestown, Virginia, in April, 1614, with John Rolfe, gentleman; including the names of Alfriend, Archer, Bentley, Bernard, Bland, Bolling, Branch, Cabell, Catlett, Cary, Dandridge, Dixon, Douglas, Duval, Eldridge, Ellett, Ferguson, Field, Fleming, Gay, Gordon, Griffin, Grayson, Harrison, Hubard, Lewis, Logan, Markham, Meade, McRae, Murray, Page, Poythress, Randolph, Robertson, Skipwith, Stanard, Tazewell, Walke, West, Whittle, and others. With biographical sketches by Wyndham Robertson, and illustrative historical notes by R.A. Brock.} (Richmond, VA: J.W. Randolph & English, 1887). \url{https://babel.hathitrust.org/shcgi/pt?id=mdp.39015014292174;q1=john%20rolfe}
\textsuperscript{471} Ibid.
for human control over nature.\textsuperscript{472} Nature, however was unpredictable and assumed the roles of the good mother and threatening “other,” depending upon the circumstance. This clash over understanding and dealing with the dual nature of the frontier as mother and other challenged the self-definition of settlers.

Perry Miller, when explaining the lives of the Puritans in the New World tried to reconcile the conflict. The frontier, according to Miller, provided a “…conditioning factor” for New England’s earliest settlers.\textsuperscript{473} The pioneers’ response to this new environment shaped them and their errand. Whether Puritan or newly created Americans, Christian whites took advantage of what mother earth offered and battled the hardships she gave. The new territory whether 1600s coastal British colony or 1777 Old Northwest offered freedom from restrictions found back east, as well as challenges when trying to remain within the bounds set by white Protestant religious tradition. Overcoming and civilizedizing the frontier and the Indians, enriched the settlers’ own religious lives and helped them set an example for their peers who stayed behind in settled regions, as well as for the Indians.

New settlers arriving in the Old Northwest during America’s Early Republic adhered to religion and considered it an important aspect of settlement. Ministers preceded and then kept abreast of settlement in the region. As new Americans moved in ever greater numbers to new settlements, they trusted that God would sustain them. God’s sustenance, however, required human action. Settlers found that special circumstances and obstacles hindered religious practice. In their new home. They often lived far from their nearest neighbors. When they did meet a neighbor they might differ in religious denomination. Pioneers lacked ministers, places to worship, faced natural and supernatural temptations, and eventually found themselves targeted for criticisms by church organizations in the East.

On the other hand, settlers were operating to some extent against a cultural backdrop affected by the Second Great Awakening, which often resulted in a reductionist Christian method that was favorable in frontier conditions. The need for ministers to offer daily guidance for salvation had been replaced by the individual’s power to connect with God. Also, frontiersmen latched onto the idea that religious sects

\textsuperscript{473} Perry Miller, \textit{Errand Into the Wilderness}, 1.
were less important than the ability to attend available religious services. Evangelist George Whitefield, during the First Great Awakening, had led the way to more religious tolerance when he said, “Don’t tell me you are a Baptist, an Independent, a Presbyterian, and a Dissenter: tell me you are a Christian. That is all I want…” That flexibility in relation to doctrine encouraged adaptation of practices on the frontier. A Methodist could get along with a Baptist because they were both Christian. That shared background united them. While overtime the flexibility of denominational identification declined, early in the settlement experience it helped settlers retain a connection with Christian practice.

Challenges to faith aside, settlers insisted that if America was a nation founded and sustained upon Christian principles, as Tocqueville pronounced in 1831, then the pioneer stood front and center as the true example of that religious heritage. That is, Christianity, while not enshrined in the founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, informed them. In his Phi Beta Kappa address of 1837, Horace Bushnell intoned, “This western world had not been preserved unknown through so many ages, for any purpose less sublime, than to be opened, at a certain stage of history, to become the theater wherein better principles might have their action and free development. Out of all the inhabitants of the world, too, a select stock… the noblest of the stock, was chosen to people our country.”

Pioneers moving west during the earliest years of settlement were that noble and select stock meant to expand and grow the better principles of a nation using religion to help unify them.

As early as 1804, Caleb Jarvis Taylor, a pioneer and minister, warned that disputes among different faith groups would weaken the fellowship found on the frontier. In his pamphlet “News from the Infernal Regions” his protagonist meets three devils who, in the guise of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist preachers explain their attempt to divide and conquer Christians though petty squabbles over

---

theological and political issues. Taylor’s cautionary encouraged settlers to overlook the smaller doctrinal differences that separated their brands of Christianity in order to band together in a stronger religious community.

Taylor’s warning did not go unheeded. Thomas Hinde, a circuit riding preacher, reiterated the advice in 1828. He reinforced for Ohio River Valley citizens of the importance of remaining steadfast in their Christian faith as a whole and downplayed the particular brands. As late as 1854, The Camp Meeting Manual penned by the Reverend B.W. Gorman, stressed the necessity of “a union among preachers” if they aspired to hold a truly successful revival. All of these cautionary notes sought to counter eastern discord among religious groups as westerners stood united in their Christian identity.

Letters and records of life on the frontier suggest that some settlers accepted the blurring of the lines between religious denominations. When in need of a cleric for a wedding or other ritual the nearest preacher would do. Nathan Hatch’s groundbreaking study, The Democratization of American Christianity, points out the “growing civility” between denominations despite the growth of more “formalized” church structures and theological disputes. This cooperation between church groups increased in the North and the South, but was most evident in the banding together of religious groups along the new American frontier. Need, distance from one another and far more threatening “others” overshadowed differences in church membership. Reverend John Johnson, a preacher in Ohio and elsewhere, remembered that as a child, “The Baptists had meetings in our neighborhood once a month; and, as mother was a Baptist, we attended these meetings quite regularly.” Yet, desiring additional religious inspiration, they also attended the camp-meetings of the Methodists. Apparently the

481 Ibid.
Methodist camp meetings affected him in a positive manner. He later converted to Methodism and began his own mission as a minister.

**The Circuit Rider: The Westerner finds Answers to Obstacles**

Religious societies back east understood that the ever-increasing numbers of people migrating west needed religious guidance. Members of various Protestant Church councils accepted that, just as it had for the early Puritans and Virginians, life in the wilderness offered a “luxuriant growth of vices”\(^{482}\) to new settlers. Eastern missionary organizations hired clerics to survey the state of religion in the backwoods. The responses they received emphasized the need to send trained ministers into the area as quickly as possible. In Missouri, ministers reported “a boundless field had opened for missionary work.”\(^{483}\) Reverend Nathan Derrow, claimed that “though illiterate and enthusiastic ministers awaited instruction” and noted the religious ignorance that he found among settlers and their children.\(^ {484}\) Reverend Gideon Blackburn, employed for one month to tour settlements reported that the “whole body of this country was newly settled. The people are mostly poor and the accommodations for preaching are very bad; but an early attention to the different settlements by an enlightened ministry would have a happy tendency.”\(^ {485}\) Even the American militias that fought in the Ohio Valley during the War of 1812 needed attention from ministers.\(^ {486}\)

To meet the needs of settlers, soldiers, and others, denominations located along the eastern seaboard employed ministers willing to serve on the frontier. Those who accepted the offer often did so because they lacked employment at a settled church or needed more education and experience before

---

\(^{482}\) W. Tennessee Missionary Society, *The Weekly Recorder; a Newspaper Conveying Important Intelligence and Others* (May 1, 1818 4, 39; American Periodicals Series Online), 307.

\(^{483}\) Ibid.

\(^{484}\) “Domestic Missions,” *Christian Herald* (Mar 7, 1818; 4, 24; American Periodicals Series Online), 374.

\(^{485}\) Ibid.

\(^{486}\) Reverend David Jones, *Journal of Two visits Made to Some Nations of Indians on the West side of the River Ohio in the Years 1772 and 1773.* (Burlington, NJ; Isaac Collins, 1865), x-xi.
congregations selected them to preach in an eastern pulpit. Moreover, the mainstay of preaching on the frontier, the Methodist circuit riders, were not required to have a formal theological education. They were often laypersons who preached and pulled together congregations so that eventually churches might be established. Though church leaders preferred a more formally trained clergy, they wanted even more to spread their ministry to people on the frontier who needed Christian guidance. Thus, the circuit riders served a need. They provided prayer, preaching, teaching and services. The sacraments of communion and baptism, however, were available to congregants on a more limited basis when an ordained Methodist deacon or elder made his way around the circuits.\footnote{Ralph E. Morrow, “Methodists and 'Butternuts' in the Old Northwest,” \textit{Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society} Vol. 49, No. 1 (Spring, 1956), 34-47.}

As proof of the unprepared nature of many clerics traveling the region, even the Revered James Finley, a beloved minister who earned the nickname, “Lion of the Forest” worried about his lack of clerical skills. He wrote of the trepidation he felt during his first meetings, when he hoped, “there would be no need of my poor services, and I could return to the quiet pursuits of domestic life.”\footnote{James Finley, \textit{Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley; or, Pioneer life in the West}. Ed. by W. P. Strickland. (Cincinnati, OH: Cranston & Curtis, Hunt & Eaton, 1885), 190.} Having gone into the woods to pray that no one would attend the meeting at his brother’s home, Finley remembered, “… my prayer was not answered, for the people came from all directions, and it appeared to me that the cross was so heavy it would crush me to the earth. Nevertheless, I was obliged to take it up and bear it; yet God blessed the blundering effort and gave me favor in the sight of the people. I went on to the next appointment, and attended to the duties of a traveling preacher, but had no comfort.”\footnote{Ibid.} Finley, as did others, faced his fears and ministered his flock quite effectively.

Finley and others, despite real or perceived shortcomings, proved dedicated to their preaching. Reverend David Jones, a pastor in a Pennsylvania Baptist Church who had rendered his services to troops in the region during the Revolutionary War, found himself called back to action at the age of seventy-six. He volunteered his services as a chaplain, and according to a set of personal journals, “Reverend Jones
served under Generals Brown and Wilkinson and continued in service until peace was concluded.\textsuperscript{490} The needs of the congregants, whether in an army camp or living on a lonely homestead, outweighed considerations of age, stamina, or preparation for the religious ministry.

Back east, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist Church councils began to search for better trained circuit riders to work the frontier. The circuit rider hired by an established church traveled a specific route through the backwoods, which was measured by the time it took the preacher to cover the assigned area. Circuits usually followed streams, since most settlers built their cabins close to a water source. The minister would stop at a cabin and often find several families from the area gathered together awaiting his arrival. The group then joined in prayer and if an ordained minister was present received communion. Because the route traveled remained the same, settlers could count on a minister arriving within a certain time period.\textsuperscript{491} The circuit system established in the Old Northwest improved upon the wandering evangelical practices set by First Great Awakening.

Church organizations back east encouraged spirited single men to accept positions on the frontier. Circuit riders generally signed a two year commitment to preach the Gospel to frontier Christians. The preachers rarely served longer than a year or so in a specific circuit. They were regularly appointed to a new area. This gave the preachers an opportunity to reuse their sermons and to perfect their delivery.\textsuperscript{492} It also kept them from growing too familiar with the local people and wanting to settle down.

Circuit riders made only about $80 annually.\textsuperscript{493} Life rarely proved easy for the traveling preacher. Though most ministers postponed marriage and other commitments while riding their circuits some itinerants such as Thomas Spottswood Hinde settled in the backwoods with a wife and children. In order to make ends meet, Hinde took on several other jobs to supplement his income. While preaching

\textsuperscript{490} Reverend David Jones, \textit{Journal of Two visits}, x-xi.
\textsuperscript{492} Morrow, “Methodists and Butternuts...”, 34-47.
\textsuperscript{493} R. Douglas Hurt, \textit{The Ohio Frontier} (Bloomington IN; Indiana University Press, 1998), 289.
throughout Kentucky, Hinde also wrote for newspapers, composed music, and acted as a land speculator. These jobs suited his nomadic lifestyle.

Ministers other than Hinde found it necessary to increase their scanty allowances. Isaac McCoy, located at the Baptist Church at Silver Creek, Indiana (1808) labored as a wheelwright when not preaching. Edward Tiffin preached at his assigned appointments in the neighborhood of Chillicothe, became the first governor of Ohio, and carried on the exacting daily routine of a country doctor. In similar fashion, Dr. Joseph Doddridge, a pioneer Episcopalian minister living in the upper Ohio Valley also practiced medicine in order to make ends meet. The lifestyle of the circuit rider offered something new and different each day. Some ministers found this preferable to the routine experienced by clerics assigned a particular parish back east.

Circuit riders carried their message of faith through forests and often traveled dangerous routes to meet with settlers. The frontier minister came to understand the needs of congregants and exerted a very real influence over them. Ministers who carried out their duties sometimes reported that the difficulties encountered seemed to strengthen their determination to complete the mission of preaching. Reverend John Johnson, a Methodist itinerant, was sent to travel the White Oak Circuit, in Ohio. This territory no more than wilderness, according to Johnson, “included nearly all the country lying upon the waters of White Oak Creek, embracing all of this, and parts of adjoining counties.” Traveling about 25 miles to preach at what others referred to as a meeting house, the reverend found his destination little more than a falling down structure. He also discovered no one had advertised the meeting. One woman with an infant in her arms attended. He preached to her. He recalled, “When finished, he bade her good-bye, with a word of exhortation; and as she went away, trudging along the path by which she came, he could hear her

495 Joseph Doddridge, Notes On The Settlement And Indian Wars Of The Western Parts Of Virginia And Pennsylvania, From 1763 To 1783, Inclusive Together With A View Of The State Of Society, And Manners Of The First Settlers Of The Western Country (Albany, N.Y: J. Munsell, 1876), 11. http://digital.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/t/text/text-idx?c=pitttext;view=toc;idno=00age8892m
every few steps, in a low voice, but one full of emotion, say, “Glory!”\textsuperscript{497} The story of Johnson’s attention to his one congregant made its way to other settlers in the region. To Johnson’s surprise he found that the next meeting held in the same place “was filled to overflowing;”\textsuperscript{498} When he expressed his amazement about the numbers of attendees to the crowd, he learned that the woman had given a glowing account of the previous meeting. And still more gratifying, he was told that the very same woman, “walked and carried her child ten miles on that occasion, as her husband persecuted her, and would not allow her to ride his horse to meeting.”\textsuperscript{499} Virtue and dedication to duty, both regarded as hallmarks of the western character, reaped rewards for some of the hardy individuals serving as circuit riders.

**Something Borrowed or Something New:**

**Camp Meeting Revivals as a Distinctive form of Frontier Religious Practice**

Circuit riders recognized the inefficiency of traveling a route as a means for reaching out to Christians and drawing in new converts. Thus, preachers adopted revivalist camp meetings to draw crowds together. Revivalist fervor took hold in the Ohio River Valley upon the opening of the Cumberland Gap, after explorer and guide Daniel Boone in 1790, convinced a group of Scots-Irish Presbyterians from North Carolina to settle Kentucky. Many of these rough and ready Protestants were Presbyterians whose ancestors staked claims to lands in Ireland by pushing settled Catholics aside. They understood the need to fight to maintain their religious tradition. They built homes, established livelihoods and cut and hewed logs for a Meeting House. Presbyterian minister Barton Warren Stone (1772-1844) arrived on the western frontier to become pastor at Cane Ridge in 1796.\textsuperscript{500}

\textsuperscript{497} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{498} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{499} Ibid.  
By the end of the century, Presbyterians in Kentucky and southern Ohio, lacking the necessary numbers of clerics, traveled to meet together for services and preaching. Methodists, Baptists, and those who lacked any religious affiliation also joined the smaller religious meetings of Presbyterians. In 1801, ministers planned a full scale revival at Cane Ridge. This religious event stands at the forefront of the history of revivalism in the nineteenth century west. Military personnel stationed in the area estimated that some 20,000 to 30,000 persons of all ages, representing various cultures and economic levels traveled on foot, horseback, and by wagon. Accounts recall the contagious zeal which characterized this and the other revivals that followed over the next half century. Before the 1820s, even those attending these meetings often did so at their own peril. As Samuel Hildreth observed, “If they (pioneers) attended a neighboring meeting to hear the preaching of an itinerant minister of the Gospel, it was with the trusty rifle in their hands; and he who lay down in peace and apparent safety, was often awakened by the yell of the savage.” Moreover, traveling to meeting meant leaving the homestead unguarded. The need for religion and companionship, however, trumped any threats faced.

Camp meetings, which often lasted for a full week, provided the means for prolonged contact with the faithful. This longer period of religious service required a carefully planned agenda that provided a lasting memory. *The Camp Meeting Manual* (1854) was published as a guide for pulling together all the best practices for running a revival meeting. It exhorted all preachers to work together, to provide everyone with a role to play, and to put in place a policing force of sorts to handle any rowdy attendees who might be tempted to misbehave in the confines of a wooded campsite. The manual also offered a daily schedule that lasted from 5:30 in the morning until 10 o'clock at night. The daily plan included prayer services, sermons, lessons, meals and recreation time. By the 1820s, some of camp meetings lasted for two or three weeks at a time. Preachers scheduled the revivals for the least busy times of the

---

501 Ibid.
504 Ibid.
year. At these protracted religious gatherings preachers could shore up the devotion of the faithful and have the opportunity of addressing possible converts. Ministers thought even settlers, who continued to resist the call of God, might willingly choose to attend revivals. After all, in a life mostly absent of company and recreation, the camp meeting provided an occasion for both.

Figure 5-1: Cane Ridge Meeting House in 1934, Little Rock Road, Paris vicinity (Bourbon County, Kentucky) The picture above depicts the location, if not the actual building, where the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801 took place. This revival set off several years of camp meetings that fueled religious fervor in the Old Northwest. Theodore Webb, Photographer. American Memory.
Revivalism through camp meetings and local churches became a familiar practice in the American colonies during the First Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century. English colonists desiring a more vibrant religious experience, sought out enthusiastic evangelicals to preach the Gospel of Salvation. Though some historians reject the existence of a religious awakening at this time, most agree it was a period of increased religious activity for colonists and helped define the future of religion in America. The First Great Awakenings instilled in adherents’ increased personal faith. Christians admitted their neglect of their spiritual well-being, accepted their guilt, and vowed to follow God’s path to redemption. Ministers, such as Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield popularized this spiritual awakening which spread to Christians North and South and then into the western regions of the existing English colonies.

The American Revolution interrupted this religious episode. But by 1800, Americans longed for a reprise of the First Awakening’s emotional connection with God. Dislocation from the mother country and a new mobility both physically and socially left many citizens of the new nation feeling unsure of their future. This second series of revival meetings prompted by the approaching millennia and uncertainties in the new nation’s economy, society, and governance appeared first in the East, then the South, but found its true niche in the frontier settlements. James McGready, a Presbyterian minister, carried the fervor of revivalism with him through Pennsylvania, Virginia, and eventually into the Kentucky and Tennessee settlements. The movement west set the stage for full scale religious awakenings across the nation and especially on the frontier. Ellen Eslinger, a social historian, examines the why and where of the camp meeting. She contends that the social element of camp meetings, such as Cane Ridge, rather than a phenomenon of frontier living made the revivals important to Americans.

---

505 Jon Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *Journal of American History* 69 (2) (Sept 1982), 322. Butler has suggested that both the name and the concept of the “Great Awakening” first arose in the work of nineteenth-century religious historians.

searching for an “integrating mechanism” for their new national culture.507 While Eslinger correctly ties the need for a unifying social element as a way of developing an American identity, she incorrectly ignores the challenge of frontier life as part of the need for camp meetings. The development of a broader national character extended beyond the period in which camp meetings were celebrated along the east coast. Yet, they persisted in the backwoods. Some pioneers viewed the camp meeting as an escape from the daily struggles they faced on the frontier. The camp meeting restored their religious enthusiasm, gave them some strength to move ahead and in some regard helped the settler discover who and what was American.

Despite earlier revival fervor of religious meetings held in locations within and outside of America, the settlers in attendance at western revivals insisted the practice was uniquely theirs. Religious historian Leigh Eric Schmidt disagrees. In his book Holy Fairs (2001), Schmidt insists that since American revivals borrowed from European religious tradition, the camp meetings seen in the Old Northwest and Kentucky lack any unique quality.508 Schmidt traces the roots of the camp services back to the communion festivals of early modern Scotland. In 1625, John Livingston a Presbyterian preacher decided to travel the Scottish Highlands, holding celebrations of “Holy Communion” that stretched over several days and culminated in, “a down pouring of the Spirit,” as well as a “comfort to the godly.”509 Due to the lack of churches and the distance between Scottish settlements communion festivals became a staple of frontier worship and conversion. During the early eighteenth century, Scottish immigrants to the colonies brought with them the practice of sacramental occasions thus, supporting Schmidt’s claims that a decidedly Scottish Presbyterian pattern of revivalism arrived in the West. John Boles and Peter Mode, both noted religious historians, agree with Schmidt’s claim that western revivals mostly borrowed their

508 Ibid.
509 Leigh Eric Schmidt, Holy Fairs, 56.
form from earlier religious practice.\textsuperscript{510} Events, such as the Cane Ridge Revival, simply demonstrated a trans-Atlantic exchange of religious custom that flourished west of the Appalachians.

Though revivals and camp meetings absorbed Presbyterian inspiration, even Schmidt admits that Methodists, Baptists, and even Shakers placed their imprint on what Peter Mode called, “the frontierization” of American Christianity.\textsuperscript{511} American settlers added their own practices. Ellen Eslinger contends that, “the practice was, a creation and widespread adoption of a new form of evangelical worship.”\textsuperscript{512} Attendees experienced a sense of community and cohesion, despite their denominational differences. James Finley, the famous Methodist itinerant, asserted that revivals out west inspired seven young men of differing sects to take up the calling of ministry and labor at converting and assisting Christians for years.\textsuperscript{513} The acceptance of diverse religious groups participating under one tent provided a point of departure from Presbyterian meetings. Presbyterian revivals in Scotland, as well as those held in other areas of the United States, lacked the same religious pluralism and fervor seen in western camp meetings. Andrew Reed and James Matheson, visitors from Europe, viewed American religious practices to decide if they were comparable to services back home. They maintained in their narrative prepared for the Congregational Union of England and Wales that while initially skeptical of American camp meetings and the reported excesses of emotionalism, once at a meeting they found services to be “most remarkable..., and filled with, ...a solemn and powerful effect of divine truth.”\textsuperscript{514} The Europeans might worry about attendees falling down and swooning, but they recognized the camp meeting as a venue where faith increased and acknowledged that it did differ from European practice.

Not everyone viewed revivalism at camp meetings in the same positive manner as western settlers did. James Finley informed revivalist of the criticism concerning camp meetings and warned that since,

\textsuperscript{511} Peter Mode. \textit{The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity}. (New York, New York; Macmillan, 1923) 13-14.
\textsuperscript{512} Eslinger, xxi.
\textsuperscript{513} Cole, \textit{Lion in Forest}, 243.
\textsuperscript{514} Andrew Reed and James Matheson, \textit{A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches} (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1835).
“Revivals had broken out in many places…and… This waked up opposition…”\textsuperscript{515} Just as “Mitre and Crown” had protested the Scottish communion services as they grew in popularity and increased local fervor rather than enhancing broader Presbyterian ties.\textsuperscript{516} Now Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist church councils sitting along America’s east coast began to question the long term value of the camp-meetings. Their skepticism concerning the frontier services revealed a cultural fault line dividing establishmentarian easterners from their frontier compatriots.

Mainstream ministers and church councils took reports about the excessive emotionalism exhibited at camp meetings very seriously. One witness claimed to have seen “no less than 50 lying at once and crying for mercy,” and that “many of them fall instantaneously without discovering the least symptom before…and some appear affected.”\textsuperscript{517} An article in the \textit{Christian Observer} accused attendees at camp meetings of believing that “falling down” signified a true conversion.\textsuperscript{518} B. W. Gorman, the author of the manual for running camp meetings, warned revivalists that “It has been objected against Camp Meetings in certain regions of the country that they have declined in usefulness; and this circumstance we are told is a providential indication of the will of God that they should give place to other means, better adapted to the present phases of society.”\textsuperscript{519} The church hierarchy of the East believed western Christians needed more conventional types of religious guidance in church practices as the population on the frontier regions continued to increase. Conservative observers wanted less reliance on emotionalism and more trust in a reasoned approach to religion.

As early as Cane Ridge, Presbyterian ministers, such as John Lyle, described the over-enthusiasm displayed by participants. Lyle criticized some of his fellow clerics for their support of some hysteria. Yet, he also reported that at the sight of so many communicants he too felt emotional. Lyle wrote that he

\textsuperscript{515} Cole, 269.
\textsuperscript{516} Schmidt, 216-17.
had “clearer views of divine things than … before” and that he felt “uncommonly tender” as he spoke.\textsuperscript{520} It was easy to criticize if one sat in the settled parishes of the thirteen original states, not so easy to remain objective in the face of overwhelming numbers of pioneers practicing their faith, even if those Christians prayed a bit too loudly or too zealously.

Defenders tried to allay the growing fears concerning camp meeting revivalism. The Rev. George Baxter, laboring to teach religious doctrine to the faithful of Lexington, Virginia, travelled to Kentucky in 1801, to view a revival. He wrote to Bishop Archibald Alexander that “Upon the whole, sir, I think the revival in Kentucky among the most extraordinary that have ever visited the Church of Christ, and, all things considered, peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of that country.”\textsuperscript{521} An article titled “Revivals of Religion” appearing in the \textit{Western Christian Monitor} in 1816 defended the use of revivals to impassion Christians and bring new members into the Methodist fold. The author reminded a disapproving church hierarchy that they need not “…fear the arm of flesh when the arm of omnipotence was made bare on our behalf,” in order to “move forward and preach with power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{522} Just as the two men visiting from Europe recognized the benefits drawn from the camp meetings, circuit riders cautioned their church councils to consider the needs and views of new converts. They warned that converts focused less on ecclesiastical structure and formal ritual than on their emotional connection to God.\textsuperscript{523} Supporters of the revival spirit promoted at camp meetings believed the more formalized aspect of religious affiliation would come with time.

Frontiersmen believed their enthusiasm for religious faith and the revival tradition required special modes of expression to underscore their unique qualities. They wrote newsletters, pamphlets and books to inspire western settlers. Even as the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society


\textsuperscript{521} Murray, Iain H. \textit{Revival and Revivalism} (Edinburgh, Scotland; Banner of Truth, 2010).

\textsuperscript{522} “Revivals of Religion,” \textit{The Western Christian Monitor} (August 1, 1816; American Periodicals Series Online) 73.

busily published religious materials for circulation in New York City and beyond, writers in the Ohio River Valley region published their own religious tracts. John Taylor, a Baptist minister and church historian, began his career in Virginia and then moved his family to Boone County, Kentucky. As the minister for northern Kentucky’s first Baptist Church, Taylor held an enviable position from which to comment upon the history and state of the early Baptist Churches in the region. Caleb Jarvis Taylor wrote about the dangers of succumbing to the devil’s wiles while living on the frontier. Thomas Spottswood Hinde wrote under several pseudonyms in order to publish his religious ideas. William Beauchamp founded the Western Christian Monitor in 1816 and published it in Chillicothe, Ohio. Johannes Wilhelm Christian Dietrichson wrote, *A Pioneer Churchman* in 1844 to aid Norwegian Lutherans living in the Wisconsin backwoods. As the number of printing presses increased, so did the number of religious publications from the area.

Sacred music provided another outlet for expressing religious emotion both during and outside of camp meeting. Nathan Hatch identifies four waves of indigenous folk music geared toward Christians during America’s Early Republic years. One of these waves originated with proponents of camp meetings. From 1780 until 1830 western publishing companies produced a large number of religious folk music texts. The works generated include “Expression” a folk hymn with words by Caleb Jarvis Taylor. This was just one of the religious songs within an entire booklet of his hymns. Other religious music for revivals appear in White and King's *The Sacred Harp*. This work was first published in 1844 and since that time has been repeatedly republished. Sacred Harp music represents one branch of an older tradition of American music. That tradition developed over the time period of 1770 to 1820 and took inspiration

---

524 John Taylor wrote *A History of Ten Baptist Churches*, (Frankfort, KY: (np), 1823; reprint, Cincinnati, OH: Art Guild Reprints Inc., 1968), and also *History of Clear Creek Church: and Campbellism Exposed* (Frankfort, KY, A. G. Hodges, Commentator Office, 1830).
525 Thomas Spottswood Hinde Papers.
from earlier English hymns brought to America.\textsuperscript{530} The influences of 1830s and 40s revivals added to the development of the music found in this hymnal.

Thomas Spottswood Hinde wrote \textit{The Pilgrim Songster}, a selection of hymns which he used to help him with his ministry.\textsuperscript{531} Many of these composers lacked any serious musical training. Still, each aspired to strike a religious chord in the hearts and souls of pioneers as they attempted to worship. The camp meeting song became a type of folk music and a popular feature of the revival meetings held on the frontiers in the early and middle 1800s. Camp meeting songs simple, repetitive, and possessing a simple melody proved easy to pick up. Consequently, they appealed to musically untrained frontier folk.\textsuperscript{532} The music and writings developed for use in revivals and other religious gatherings, though simple in form, helped pioneers lay claim to a unique and unifying brand of religious practices that identified them as Christians, westerners, and Americans.

The Influence of Worshipping in the Woods on Western Religion

Spiritual publications and religious music, as well as defenses of revivalism might sway the attitudes of some, but many eastern ministers maintained anti-revivalist attitudes. Settlers, for their part remained unconvinced that any clergyman or lay church member living in a town or city back east could appreciate or understand their religious needs. Thoreau wrote about the beauties of \textit{Walden} and his desire to experience a primitive existence when he explained “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”\textsuperscript{533} Thoreau understood the transformative power of nature. Still, his cozy Walden cabin was a pastoral spot surrounded by towns and long-standing, settled

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{530} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{531} Thomas Spottswood Hinde \textit{The Pilgrim Songster} (Chillicothe, OH: Fredonian Press, 1815).
\item \textsuperscript{532} \textit{Camp Meeting Songs} 2001, Smith Creek Music. \url{www.smithcreekmusic.com/.../Gospel.hymnody/Camp.Meeting.songs.html}
\end{itemize}
farms. The Ohio River Valley resident truly lived in the woods and might have thought the poet should come to the frontier in order to understand the real beauty of God’s creation, as well as its dangers.

Settlers of the West found themselves surrounded by the splendors of God’s creation every day. At the same time they often faced the possibility that death might be close by.\textsuperscript{534} Not particular about their place of worship, they frequently held services in groves, with congregations sitting around on logs, or else they officiated in the cabins of the pioneers.\textsuperscript{535} They claimed that a roof of tree branches created by God at the very least matched the majesty of any man built church. Whereas Presbyterians moved quickly to build churches, Methodists and Baptists focused their efforts to converting souls and worried less about formal surroundings for worship. Ultimately, these two groups using the natural environment as a backdrop earned more converts. Unwittingly, the humble pioneer worshippers preceded the experience of Ralph Waldo Emerson.\textsuperscript{536} They too found for some time, that God presented himself more clearly in the woods than the pulpit.

**Testing their Faith in God: The Western American’s Ability to Persevere**

While the Ten Commandments provided a means for determining right from wrong in both eastern and western American communities, in the West a person’s faith sometimes underpinned life and death matters. Each day of their lives settlers struggled to survive. Indians, floods, droughts, wildlife, insects, and a myriad of other hazards stood in the way of their opportunities and progress. Frontier people, armed with faith as well as a long rifle, and an ax or hatchet, trusted in God, their own skills, and the hardy preachers who faced the same struggles they did in order to provide religion. Educated ministry, who had earned degrees sitting safely in their stone churches back east on the other hand offered little

\textsuperscript{512} Moore, *The Frontier Mind*, 203.
\textsuperscript{535} Sweet, *Circuit Rider Days in Indiana*, 4-5, 9.
\textsuperscript{536} Moore, *Frontier Mind*, 229.
relevant assistance when a frontiersman faced angry Indians looking for scalps or needed hands to help in a field that required clearing.

Christians living on the frontier characterized the religious faith of their eastern brethren as wanting when compared to their own. Eastern citizens rode or walked to a nearby church each week for services, while settlers often traveled miles or days to hear a sermon. Lucy Hastings offered folks back home a picture of her religious life in comparison to theirs. She found Indians sitting uninvited in her cabin many mornings. They sat and watched as she worked at daily chores that might challenge the hardiest man and all the while she prayed for her safety. Her relatives back home never faced such difficulties and yet complained about their lives and missed church regularly. Hastings chided her family for their lack of constancy in faith matters when the availability of religious services and lessons were so readily accessible.

While church leaders in eastern denominations found it necessary to criticize western religious practice they also understood the need to plan for the future of already established parishes. Little thought was given to creating more permanent churches out west. Parishes on the frontier opened more by accident than design. When asked to contribute to missionary funds for overseas efforts or for Indian conversion, Baptists living in Indiana complained that their eastern brethren cared more for non-American conversions than for providing adequate funding for religious development out west. Despite the lack of funds, the dearth of planning, and the daily trials faced by the western Christian, he/she retained faith in God. The challenges faced tested settlers and demonstrated their hardiness and ability to persevere. These qualities helped define the pioneers’ worthiness as Christian Americans.

537 Lucy Hastings Correspondence in Hastings, Lucy A. / State Family correspondence, 1838, 1855-1874 [Transcriptions] Call Number, Eau Claire SC 35 ([unpublished]) http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI
Religious Groups on America’s First West: Those Acceptable for Identity Creation

A desire for increased tolerance prompted some religious groups to move to the first American frontier. Acceptance of these denominations, however, was limited. Not all faith groups received the same forbearance. Those who did were white, Christian, and Protestant, sharing a similarly identifiable view of faith. The Episcopal Church, under the direction of James Kilbourn, left the Eastern state of Connecticut to escape persecution. Episcopalians took hope from the first article of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 guaranteeing that no person would be “molested on account of his mode of worship or religious sentiments, in the said territory.”540 That same promise of tolerance existed in the East, but failed to materialize to a full extent in the experience of Episcopalian congregants. The town of Worthington, Ohio, became a haven for those of the Episcopal faith.

Other denominations, besides Episcopalians, sought to expand God’s reach in both the white and the Indian communities of America’s first frontier. The east coast, crowded with churches, offered reduced hopes of attracting new converts. The West opened a world of possibilities. New towns needed new churches or meeting houses. In the year 1775, Thomas Beals, a Quaker from Pennsylvania, visited the Delaware Indians as well as some other tribes in the Ohio territory. Upon his return back east, Beals expressed his enthusiasm for the region and told fellow Friends, “he saw with his spiritual eye the seed of Friends scattered all over that good land and that one day there would be a greater gathering of Friends there than any other place in the world.”541 Some twenty-four years later, Beals returned to the area and helped found the settlement of Quaker Bottom. From that point forward a thriving community of Friends settled in the area. Friends on the frontier attempted to demonstrate their openness to Indian and black

541 Harlow Lindley, “Thomas Beals, First Friends Minister in Ohio” (Volume 53, January-March 1944, Number 1), 55-60.
members. Their intentions met with little success. Internal divisions back east derailed efforts at peaceful settlement. Anna Bentley’s letters to her mother showcase the divisions facing Quakers living in frontier communities. Moreover, many whites in the region felt disdain for the Quakers’ gentler brand of Christianity toward Indians and blacks. Thus, the church failed to take hold among the general population of the region.

While Quakers failed to make the impact they desired, Methodism, though slow to start, surpassed other religious groups in claiming converts through the Old Northwest. Methodist circuit rider, Reverend Finley reported numerous conversions at camp meetings. The Milford camp meeting was one such occasion. Finley noted that, “the meeting was also a time of great power, there was a mighty shaking among the dry bones. A leader of infidelity, renowned for his advocacy of error, was awakened and converted, and sent out by the Spirit to bear testimony to the truth of that religion which he had reviled.” Following that event the White-oak camp meeting according to Finley, “was held at Indian hill, and was the most powerful one I had attended on the district. How many were converted I am not able to say, but the number was large. On Sabbath I baptized one hundred persons before nine o'clock, by sprinkling and pouring.” The work of itinerants such as Finley helped the Methodist Church grow from around 14,000 members in 1784 with some forty-two circuits operating, to over one million members and almost 4,000 circuits by 1844. Methodists willingly and effectively dealt with obstacles facing all denominations moving to the frontier and did not shy away from proselytizing and converting.

Baptists experienced the same types of success as Methodists. They made great gains in membership following their participation at the Cane Ridge Revival. David Benedict, an early Baptist historian reports, “This great revival (among the Baptists) in Kentucky, began in Boone county on the Ohio River, and in its progress extended up the Ohio, Licking, and Kentucky rivers, branching out into

542 Ibid.
544 Cole, Lion, 350.
545 Ibid.
546 Nathan Hatch, Democratization, 220.
the settlements adjoining them. It spread fast in different directions...It was computed that about ten thousand were baptized and added to the Baptist churches in the course of two or three years.” 547 Baptists were early on the ground in Ohio. In 1789, a number of Baptist families from Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey formed a settlement on the Little Miami at Columbia, a locale that now sits within the limits of Cincinnati.548  Ohio had two Baptist churches and sixty-four members, in 1790; by 1812, sixty churches and over two thousand members were reported. 549 Baptists admitted many to their flock in the early settlements of Illinois, in spite of their lack of aggressive conversion methods. 550 The membership flourished, even though signs of tension existed within the religious community.

Baptist members split over policy decisions made by eastern-church authorities. North westerners disagreed with the missionary efforts to convert Indians. Many pioneer Baptists viewed Indians as an obstacle to their lifestyle and a danger to white settlers. They resented monies and efforts directed toward providing Indians with religious instruction551 and felt that eastern Baptists misunderstood the situation on the frontier. Easterners were undercutting the frontiersmen’s efforts to move Indians aside.

Baptists within the region surrounding the Wabash River also resented the movement of money from their region to affiliated Baptist congregations back east. They desired more autonomy and insisted eastern religious leaders were not meeting their monetary or spiritual needs. Even clerics criticized the east. Ministers who traveled circuits for the Baptist faith in the west worried that given the growth in numbers of better educated eastern clerics they might be dismissed from their posts. They insisted that their would-be replacements might threaten the success of western congregations, since ministers from the East would fail to understand the circumstances and needs of pioneers.552 The East/West regional divide flowed over into the Baptist community.

547 Ibid.
549 Ibid., 340.
551 Randy Mills, “The Struggle for the Souls of Baptists.”
552 Ibid.
Presbyterians also suffered from divisions within their church. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Presbyterians arrived in North America and by the late 1700s some migrated into the Northwest Territory. In 1803, they were counted as one of the largest religious denominations in Ohio. Though scattered throughout the state, their strongest presence was found among the Scots-Irish people who settled principally in southern and eastern Ohio. Due to the lack of church buildings, ministers, and schools in the region, Presbyterians shared resources with Congregationalists.553

In 1820s, Columbus, Cincinnati, Marietta and most of the other towns in Ohio had Presbyterian churches. Presbyterian congregations spread to other areas of the Northwest in much the same manner as they had in Ohio. Despite their successes Presbyterians suffered divisions within their community over doctrinal issues. Many of these factions established their own colleges to train ministers in their own version of the Presbyterianism. Beginning in the 1830s, Presbyterian Church divisions intensified over the issue of slavery.554 Nationally, the Presbyterian Church divided into Northern and Southern branches. Both parts of the Church appeared in Ohio. Presbyterian ministers never made the same gains at camp meetings as Baptists and Methodists. After Cane Ridge they preferred to embrace a less emotionally charged conversion process.

Religious Groups in America’s First West: Those Less Acceptable for Identity Creation

Religious tolerance, in truth, only went so far. One might expect the religions of Indians and blacks to fail to be discredited set by white Protestants living along the frontier, but several white religious groups also faced derision. Moravians, Mormons, Shakers, Catholics, and Jews, despite the tolerance clauses of the Ordinance of 1787, continued to be regarded with suspicion and outright persecution. Forms used to deliver God’s message still mattered when the methods appeared too different.

554 Ibid.
Shakers, like Moravians sought to live a pacifist lifestyle. A radical sect that emigrated west, “The United Brethren of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing,” as the Shakers called themselves, worked to secure converts and proved somewhat successful. Some Shaker practices, however, such as a refusal to take up arms for defense earned them suspicion and disrespect. Their name, Shaker, was a pejorative used by non-members to describe the physical contortions they exhibited during worship. Even though emotionalism and “jerking” were activities engaged in at some camp meetings, the contortions of Shakers marked them as visibly different. Their societies, organized upon a communal basis, failed to acknowledge marriage as a necessary Christian institution. They practiced celibacy, believing that sexual intercourse was sinful. This belief offered one further sign of their inferior faith. Marriage, the bedrock of the family, was a necessity for morality in the minds of most practicing white Christians.

Shakers sought some relief from the disapproval they received by moving outside of the more crowded east. In 1805, some 370 Shakers founded their first Ohio settlement at Union Village. Farming their own tracts of land, the community prospered and developed trade with non-Shaker neighbors. Still, the refusal to bear arms to protect the region and their other beliefs aroused the ire of outsiders. Between 1810 and 1813 mobs attacked the Shaker community of Union Village. Moving away in order to establish additional communities in the Ohio Valley, the Shakers continued to face persecution. Militias requisitioned the resources Shaker managed to gather and newspapers and local religious groups engaged in publishing pamphlets and articles dedicated to condemning the beliefs of Shakers.

Moravians, also pacifists found themselves targeted by both whites and Indians. The religious group settled as early as 1772 in the Ohio River Valley. The Land Ordinance of 1785 awarded them lands already settled in the region. More interested in bringing the word of Jesus Christ to Indians than gaining new white members for the Moravian Church missionaries assumed the role of evangelists, to assist people seeking salvation. Chief among the missionaries to the Indians in the Northwest Territory were

---

556 Ibid.
David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder, both of whom helped to found communities, such as Schoenbrunn and Gnadenhutten, in eastern Ohio. The peace and prosperity of the Moravian settlements attracted some Indian interest and successfully made conversions among the Delaware tribes.

Problems for Moravians intensified during the Revolutionary War as the congregation tried to remain neutral in a war that divided Indian loyalty between Americans and British. The Moravian refusal to embrace either side angered both whites and Indians. Joseph Doddridge, a Presbyterian cleric, wrote about “a body of men from Western Pennsylvania,” who according to Doddridge, “murdered 90-96 Delaware (Lenni Lenape), Mohican, and other Indians who had been converted by Moravian missionaries to Christianity…This tragic event was done at the Moravian town of Gnadenhutten now on the Tuscarawas River [then the Muskingum] near New Philadelphia in eastern Ohio. There were three Moravian or Moravian Indian towns there at the time in Indian Territory North and west of the Ohio River. The three villages were burned with the bodies of the murdered people.” This atrocity committed by whites was mirrored, to a lesser degree, by Indians who in 1806 perpetrated an attack on another community of Moravian Indians.

During the 1805-6 attack which took place along the White River of Indiana, a Delaware woman made a brief appearance as a prophet. Along with followers of Tecumseh, she preached a revitalized “new religion” among the Delaware. Moravian missionaries had already made inroads in converting some Delaware Indians in the Indiana territory. Tecumseh’s followers worried about allowing Indian Christian converts to reside in the community. Tecumseh’s men accused the Moravian converts of witchcraft and burned them for their offenses. The executed Christian Indians undermined and/or refuted the unity and traditions Tecumseh worked to revitalize. Regarded as deviants from the Indian identity that Tecumseh was trying to resurrect, they had to be dealt with permanently.

557 Rufus King, Ohio: First Fruits of the Ordinance of 1787 (Boston, MA; Houghton Mifflin, 1888), 138.
558 Joseph Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars (Clarksburg W. VA, 1824); (reprint. Pittsburgh: Ritenour and Lindsey, Pittsburgh, 1912), 201.
560 Ibid.
Catholics fared a bit better than Shakers and Moravians. The suspicion and hatred of papal Rome, with its roots in the Reformation, predisposed American Protestants to distrust the Catholic Church. Joseph Buell, a soldier stationed in several forts during the late seventeenth century, reported, “…the negative power” of Catholics who interacted with Indians. According to Buell, Catholics did not try to civilize Indians. Instead, Buell recorded, “The principal inhabitants are French, intermarried with Indians, and pay but little regard to religion or law. They are under the guidance of an old Roman Catholic friar, who keeps them in ignorance as much as he can, and fills them full of superstition. The people give themselves up to all kinds of vice, and are as indolent and idle a community as ever composed one town. They might live in affluence if they were industrious.” Thus, according to Buell this was not simply a difference in theology, the Catholic Church encouraged all manner of misdeeds among their members. Catholic priests sanctioned the marriages of whites with Indians and lived within tribal communities. These actions drew attention to fears of regressive behavior that some whites already harbored. Others moving west retained the same mistrust and dislike of Roman clergy and congregants until well into the twentieth century. Catholics repeatedly faced the accusation that as followers of their faith they would be torn between allegiance to Papal authority and the American government. They could not be true citizens of the nation.

The religious communities examined in the pages above lay covered a spectrum that measured the acceptability and respectability of faith groups for settlers. Practices such as unnatural bodily motions, adherence to Papal authority, celibacy, and a desire to remain non-violent made certain religious denominations less than desirable choices for those aspiring to prove their worthiness as American

---

561 Samuel P. Hildreth, *Pioneer history: being an account of the first examinations of the Ohio valley, and the early settlement of the Northwest Territory: chiefly from original manuscripts, containing the papers of Col. George Morgan, those of Judge Barker, the diaries of Joseph Buell and John Mathews, the records of the Ohio Company, &c.* (Cincinnati New York: H.W. Derby & Co.; A.S. Barnes & Co., 1848), 155.

562 Ibid.
citizens. The deficiencies of some white religious sects, however, seemed miniscule when compared to the ways in which blacks and Indians were regarded in terms of religious acceptance.

Whether North or South of the slavery line, blacks found their participation in white Christian churches limited. Ministers might work to convert them and tell them that all followers of Christ had the ability to attain salvation, but one was left to wonder if blacks and whites would rub elbows in heaven since they rarely did so in church buildings or at a camp meetings. Escaped slaves and free blacks moving to the Northwest Territory found far less equality of religious practice than laid out within the Northwest Ordinance. In the North, however, blacks did claim increased authority over their religious affairs. By the late eighteenth century, blacks had created their own self-help and benevolent associations. These societies, given their quasi-religious approach, often led to the opening of independent black churches. In 1787, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones organized the Free African Society of Philadelphia, which later evolved into two congregations: the Bethel Church, the mother church of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination, and St. Thomas Episcopal Church, which remained a white Episcopal affiliate.\(^{563}\)

The oldest black Baptist church in Kentucky was founded about 1790 by the slave Peter Durrett.\(^{564}\) The number of black churches opening in the Northwest Region increased to a lesser degree before 1830 than after, due to the willingness and ability of blacks after that date and the Missouri Compromise to move into the region.

The question of slavery and treatment of blacks from a religious standpoint remained a question unresolved at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Kentucky legally endorsed slavery. The southern portions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois continued debating the Northwest Ordinance’s statute forbidding slavery in their states and territories and utilized indentured servitude and apprenticeships as labor terms. Religious denominations faced a similar challenge in dealing with slavery. They argued over whether or not to brand slaveholders as sinners against God’s law. Church leaders also split over the decision to


\(^{564}\) Ibid.
allow blacks to become congregants or even attend services with their white congregations. Presbyterians divided over the issue of slavery even as the work of abolitionists grew inside and outside of the Northwest Region. Methodists and Baptists suffered similar divisions over the issue. Blacks might be invited to attend camp meetings, but most often were segregated in the space from whites and left to listen to sermons and prayers offered by preachers of their race. As they listened to biblical scriptures ex-slaves developed their own interpretations and found inspiration in stories of deliverance, such as the Exodus out of Egypt.

Though all Christians of all races shared the practices of Bible reading, prayer, and working toward salvation, white Christians continued to separate themselves from non-whites. Whites justified the distinction by claiming that free or ex-slave, a black might be converted to the Christian faith, but often proved unable to completely accept or understand God’s Word. As proof of this claim whites pointed to the fact that blacks continued to rely on superstition and witchcraft that underpinned the religious practice they brought with them from Africa. Both customs broke God’s law. In 1779, just a few weeks prior to the nation’s July 4th anniversary, John Todd, a Wisconsin official, gave the order to execute a slave accused of witchcraft. The death by hanging was considered “merciful” for one who committed voodooism or witchcraft. Differing interpretations and practices of religion, as well as their physical appearance enabled whites to regard blacks practicing Christianity as inferior and warranted their segregation.

Like blacks, Indians were easily identified by sight and reproached for supernatural practices. Indian religious tenets rested upon acceptance of magical powers in the world. Power existed in objects, animals, men, and deities. Indians resorted to charms, fetishes, prayers, sacrifices, and other ritual

565 Kuhns, “Missionaries Old Northwest.”
566 Ibid.
567 Abdul Alkalimat, “Religion and the Black Church.”
practices, in an effort to retain the goodwill of the magical force that personally protected them. Even William Penn, who’s Holy Experiment in Pennsylvania tolerated Indian religious practices, used the refusal to accept the Quaker faith as proof of Indian inferiority.

Though settlers claimed to deride the Indians’ superstitions and belief in the supernatural, those very same ideas held some sway within Christian households. Settlers displayed an interest in alchemy, astrology, and fortunetelling. Pockets of spiritualism reasserted seventeenth and eighteenth century claims of, “a receipt of a secret knowledge that would lead to a true and perfect Christian society.” Settlers denied any occultist practice, since the goal was “to grow closer to God.” Women most always served as the mediums in séances purported to work within “laws of scientific revelation.” In 1853, Lorenzo Dow, a mid-western lecturer and minister, writing in the *Spiritualist Telegraph*, recounted meeting several mediums in the Wisconsin regions. Dow encouraged his converts to “trust in the supernatural revelation contained in their dreams,” and went so far as to claim he could locate lost articles and sometimes cure diseases. These claims hardly were traditional fare for Christian ministers.

Dr. Joseph Doddridge, physician and minister, wrote in his memoirs that a belief in witchcraft prevailed among settlers of the West. Having lived in western Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio, he noted pioneers’ fear of witches persisted and these observations led Doddridge to devote an entire chapter of his notes on the Indian Wars of the late eighteenth century to frontiersmen’s superstitions. Much like their European ancestors, who believed in witchcraft, settlers in the Old Northwest continued to rely on magic to explain the unexplainable. The days of Tituba and Witch Trials, despite Enlightenment reason according to authors like Dow and Doddridge, remained in place in the minds of persons living on the frontier.

---

571 Ibid., 233.
572 Ibid., 241.
573 Doddridge, *Notes*, 179.
Indians, occupying the woods alongside white settlers, unwittingly offered settlers a target or backdrop against which whites displayed the superiority of their Christian faith. One might reasonably believe that attempts to convert Native Americans meant whites worked under the mistaken idea that Indians lacked their own religious creed and/or that once converted to Christianity tribal life would accept white culture. Neither of these ideas were completely true. Whites understood that Indians possessed a spiritual tradition. White men who visited the tribes wrote about Indians’ religious beliefs and shared them in letters, reports, and diaries. John Bradbury insisted in his journals, “There is nothing relating to the Indians so difficult to understand as their religion. They believe in a Supreme Being, in a future state, and in supernatural agency. Of the Great Spirit they do not pretend to give any account, but believe him to be the author and giver of all good.”

Bradbury continued his discourse by stating, “They believe in bad spirits, but seem to consider them rather as little wicked beings, who can only gratify their malignity by driving away the game, preventing the efficacy of medicine, or such petty mischief. The belief in a future state seems to be general, as it extends even to the Nodowessies or Sioux, who are the furthest removed from civilization, and who do not even cultivate the soil.”

John Abbott, historian researching Ohio, added to Bradbury’s account reporting that savagery was an essential part of an Indian’s spiritual life. He noted as, “part of the Indian religion that the death of one of their brethren must be avenged by the death of a white man, and that in the spirit land he would be made glad in witnessing those tortures which were avenging his death.” Since Christianity supposes vengeance lies with God, not man, this belief set Indians apart as brutal. Indian religions, according to western authors, shared few if any common elements with Christianity. While native beliefs varied, and were often layered and nuanced, western writers contended this belief system was “…built upon numerous

---

575 Ibid.
superstitious notions and upon good and evil spirits...influenced Indian conduct." Still, Christian missionaries attempted to convert Indians.

A report sent to his Presbyterian missionary society by the Reverend Hughes depicted Indians as decent, kind, and helpful. As he traveled around the Detroit area in 1800, Hughes encountered several different tribes. In every instance he was treated with care and concern. Still, his success at conversion never reached a desired level. Despite the hospitality, Hughes noted the inability of Indians to recognize and accept a superior belief system. Indians might offer some kindesses, but failed to take advantage of the Christian salvation offered by whites. The fact that many Indians already had a fulfilling spiritual life did not matter.

The rejection of Indian religion and attempts at converting them to Christianity, began as soon as white Europeans stepped foot in the New World. Early on the British colonist declared his authority. When Indians did gain some measure of praise for adopting Christianity, it was backhanded. For example, the Reverend Samuel Danforth of Taunton, Massachusetts testified to the presence of a few able Indian preachers as well as several hundred converts. Yet, Danforth did not see the success as the result of Indian efforts, rather he credited Englishmen who invested their time and talents and a “small meeting house built after the English fashion” for the conversion successes. Even though Hughes and Taunton gave some recognition to Indian accomplishment, settlers rarely adjusted their negative attitude towards the tribes’ religious traditions. They viewed Indians as savage, cruel, and an obstacle to civilized living. Each of these characteristics directly opposed Christian custom.

Reports of Indian misdeeds were told and retold. This pattern of undermining Indian morality repeated itself in the Old Northwest settlements. Reverend Finley recorded that in a drunken fit a Native American known as Between-the-logs insisted that his wife was “a bad woman, a witch, etc., and that

---

578 Ibid.
581 Ibid.
he ought to kill her.”

This story demonstrated a lack of principled behavior on the part of Indians. When Indians proved difficult to convert, missionaries sometimes faulted “evil reports.” Missionaries insisted that their efforts were undermined by the falsehoods of Indians who claimed that once missionaries had sufficient power and numbers of baptized Indians, “they would kill all the un-baptized...” Missionaries and other whites intent on conversion justified their failure by insisting Indian leaders employed unfair tactics as a method for retaining their power. These reprobates stood in the way of God’s word.

Religion in the minds of some missionaries was inseparable from acceptable Protestant, white culture. For example, proper cultivation of the land became a moral issue. As historian William Cronon reminds us, “the earliest settlers to New England, and the Indians had different values on life and had differing opinions on how they should use the land around them.”

God gave man land. He demanded proper use of it. Unlike French Catholics who often settled with the tribes and adopted their lifestyle, Cronon tells us that New England settlers, “were struck by what seemed to them the poverty of Indians who lived in the midst of a landscape endowed so astonishingly with abundance.” Moravian missionaries, working with the Delaware tribe in the Old Northwest, saw the lack of small farms as problematic to their overall conversion plan. They insisted that the farming implements they provided and the lessons in cultivation they offered would soon enough civilize the tribes. Methodists, Catholics and other missionary sects also tried to instill both white culture along with religion belief.

Settlers claimed the religious superiority of their Christian practice. Tolerance for religious difference and practice set them above other Christians who displayed less forbearance. In some

582 Cole, Lion, 441.
583 Ibid.
586 Ibid.
http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hutton/moravian.i.html
instances their assertion of broadmindedness proved true, but it told only part of the story. Western Christians rejected any faith group that deviated from their perception of acceptable behavior. This proved true for some white denominations as well as for blacks and Indians, no matter their faith. A morally appropriate religious practice identified Christians as civilized and American. That appropriate practice was defined most often by white mainstream Protestants.

**Conclusion**

The deep rooted tradition for spirituality that settlers migrating from New England and the upland South brought with them as part of the New Republic made the Old Northwest and Kentucky a rich environment for ministers’ intent on saving souls. While religious direction might be taken for granted due to its availability to citizens back east, the frontier citizen overcame challenges to receive the Gospel and appreciated God’s Word more due to the effort. Hence, the relative paucity of religious institutions on the frontier does not point to an absence of religious feeling. Instead, such sentiments as were present on the frontier were intensified for many settlers.

Settlers in the Ohio River Valley region heeded the call to undertake their “mission in the wilderness,” just as their forbearers had. As they traveled west they recognized the need to implant a moral code. Though religious differences existed, as a whole, they understood the need to establish an orderly society; religion played a large role in rooting that order. Lacking the organizational structure of religious denominations in place along the seaboard forced frontiersmen to assume control of their spiritual fate.

Settling down in an uncivilized land, the pioneers adapted religious practices to suit their lifestyle. They asserted that they had overcome a measure of the divisiveness that eastern denominations exhibited. They were able to do so because it served their needs. When in need, a minister from a different religious community served as an acceptable substitute. Different groups, by necessity, shared the duties of ministering to those already churched, as well as to potential converts, during week-long camp meeting.
Within the framework of the camp meetings attendees often found a common religious identity despite competition for converts and differences in theology. That shared experience allowed them the freedom to expose the fear, loneliness, and uncertainty they experienced each day living on the borders of the new nation.

Another part of their mission was the conversion of non-whites. Indians and blacks. While seemingly a straightforward duty, it proved fraught with disagreements and frustrations. Tolerance stretched thin as deep-seated bigotries and anger overcame efforts to save souls. Both groups presented a danger to claims of white superiority. Ultimately, non-whites, even when they accepted Christianity, failed to meet the moral standards set by white Protestants whose intent to minimize the threat, real or alleged, of blacks and Indians trumped claims of tolerance.

Recounting the dangers and the challenges they faced daily, Christian settlers concluded that they represented the best of American religious values. That religious claim laid a foundation for their identity as citizens of the New Republic era. Republican government required virtue from its citizens, settlers took that civil and spiritual aspect of citizenship to heart. Even in the throes of war men of the west remained faithful to God and country and conflated the two in their minds. In May of 1812, as troops readied themselves to face the British, “inhabitants of Cincinnati assembled at the stone meeting-house, to hear a sermon.”\textsuperscript{588} The sermon, replete with patriotic militarism, exhorted the crowd to, “Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up; beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning-hooks into spears; let the weak say I am strong.”\textsuperscript{589} God recognized the rightness of their struggle and they would prevail.

The relationship of the pioneer with God was personal and individualized. A life in which one rarely mingled with others demanded a self-sufficient faith. The beauty of their independence was that when needed they could come together as a community with neighbors or visitors. Gathered together in a homestead or in the woods and fields they attended services. Their words as they settled their lives and

\textsuperscript{588} Western Spy, May 23, 1812.  
\textsuperscript{589} Ibid.
Christian practices on the first American West laid claim to a heritage of religious difference that persisted as an identifying trait of westerners.
Chapter 7

WE ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS TOO: THE USE OF LAW AND POLITICS TO IDENTIFY WESTERNERS LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY

Thomas Hobbes, in his famous treatise on government, *Leviathan* (1651), defined law as “the formal glue that holds fundamentally disorganized societies together.”\(^{590}\) Glanville Williams, a well-respected twentieth century legal scholar, spoke of law in much the same way, declaring it "the cement of society and also an essential medium of change."\(^{591}\) He claimed “Knowledge of law increases one’s understanding of public affairs… as well as some understanding of social values.”\(^{592}\) The respect for and recognition of the need for law and order played a part in American history at the time of earliest English settlement. The Pilgrims landing at Plymouth immediately wrote and signed their compact. John Smith, when faced with near destruction of the Jamestown, Virginia, settlement put the law of “no work, no food” into place. His law required settlers to help establish a working society. Both of these models as well as the Hobbes and Williams explanations of law help scholars and lay readers understand why settlers on America’s first frontier quickly worked to establish a government. They used law and political interests to unite and protect their homesteads and communities in the face of unfamiliar circumstances and dangers. Their frontier society employed law and order in ways that sometimes set them apart from the Eastern government and often provided the glue that bound them to the New Republic. Law and politics helped identify the character traits they professed to see in themselves and hoped others would see in them. They were westerners.

This chapter examines why many Americans of the New Republic era felt it necessary to create a unique system of law and government that would distinguish them from the British and the Eastern states. Then the focus turns to the political discourse heard in the first West as a crucial way for the settlers to

---

592 Ibid.
exchange ideas about the best form of government and how to implement it to ensure their sense of security—and identity. American federal law, even though remarkably similar to the legal code the new country supposedly left behind, defined who Americans were, what they believed to be right and wrong, and how they hoped those outside the United States would view them. Though a loose confederation of states governed by a relatively weak Congress, the country held together to hold off opportunistic European nations looking to benefit from vulnerabilities. Despite local interests and inter-state squabbles the thirteen constituencies identified themselves as American and remained together until the stronger Constitutional government of 1787 took hold. According to writers such as Timothy Flint, the citizens living on the earliest American frontier utilized common experiences and their shared Northwest Ordinance government as well as connections to their eastern peers to protect themselves and fend off interlopers as they developed a western American persona.

Even before passage and confirmation of the United States Constitution Americans defined themselves as a republic that relied on a set of values. Their new country was to be comprised of persons who were civilly aware and active, who worked toward the common good and were virtuous. Americans valued personal liberty and the idea of improvement by way of their own labor. Having fought the British, Americans believed no man should be awarded high position simply by virtue of birth. Merit, not an established aristocracy, earned men their place in the social order. All white men had the opportunity to succeed economically and socially. What a man did with the opportunities was up to him.

Nowhere was this idea of independence and the ability to surpass the accomplishments of one’s parents more evident than on the frontier. Many westerners defined themselves as more unique from Europe than eastern Americans. Once on the frontier they took the opportunity to recreate themselves and to establish a true republican government on what they thought of as unsettled land. This unsettled land offered chances for experimentation and the creation of a truly “American” version of government and citizenship.

The egalitarian values reflected in the words of the Declaration of Independence and reiterated in the tone set by the Articles of Confederation and later on through the United States Constitution offered a
standard for crafting a distinctive American character. As territory opened beyond the Alleghenies and Appalachians pioneers moved west. The nation expanded geographically and demographically. Given the intent of revolution, the experience of new living conditions, and the ongoing unity of east and west under the banner of America, newly settled westerners used their new homes and experiences to fashion a set of laws that simultaneously distinguished them from, and bound them to, the thirteen original states. It was a tricky balance and the negotiations for a result that all parties could live with are evident in primary documents presented here. The divisions and similarities that separated and bound east and west included the ability of westerners to create new settlements and eventually states. Pioneers claimed that the East still held traces of British settlement, while western settlers developed a region that relied directly on the guidance of republican values.  

Those fashioning the western government understood through experience under the Articles of Confederation the impotency of a loose, decentralized government. The members of the Congress of the Confederation, when confirming the Northwest Ordinances preferred a government strongly centralized and able to respond to and advise western settlers. Congress also understood that the western country, though different in environment and challenges, was a part of the public domain of the United States. Claims of difference might persist, but connections to the East and the nation meant any form of government must be subject to the authority of the United States government. The west must be a branch of the parent stock and part of its policy and system. Thus, identity formation of the frontier settler persona through law and politics evolved as part of the national discussion of character as well as from the regional desire to be regarded as different, or better,

Laws and politics had to reflect the settler’s perceptions of what it meant to be manly, republican, moral, and American. Westerners’ government embraced the ideals of democracy and equality. Since

593 Caleb Atwater, *An Essay on Education* (Cincinnati, OH: Shepard and Stearns, 1841), Preface; Timothy Flint, *The History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley* (Cincinnati, Ohio: E. H. Flint and L. R. Lincoln, 1832), I, 184; Randall, Emilius; Daniel Joseph Ryan, *History of Ohio: the Rise and Progress of an American State* (New York: The Century History Company (1912), 458; All three authors discuss the ability to create something completely new and different, on the frontier.

594 Dwight G. McCarty, *The Territorial Governors of the Old Northwest, A study in territorial administration*, (Iowa City, IA; The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1910), 43.
settlers most often arrived with little in the way of goods or money, one might earn the respect of others, be elected to public office, and still provide manual labor for a neighbor. Therefore, your neighbor might see you as both employee and a familiar public official. That reality as some authors claim helped signify a truly egalitarian society. In some places, the eastern politician by contrast held a position in the community that most often allowed for a less fluid social hierarchy.

The claims of difference asserted by the first American westerners after 1776 were not new. The early British colonies also experienced a west versus east division. Colonists in Virginia fought Bacon’s Rebellion (1675-76) in answer to what some British westerners perceived as unfair treatment at the hands of the royal government in Williamsburg. Taxation, rising prices, bad weather and poor crops, divided settlers east and west. Disputes over the lack of protection against Indians and competing trade issues ended in violence between some groups of eastern and western settlers and between colonists and Indians. Puritans settling the northeast also found themselves sometimes burdened by east/west divides. Kenneth Lockridge, and other historians credited with helping develop a “new” and less consensus favored history, tell of the lessening of eastern authority as puritans moved through New England.595 Lockridge tells us that younger settlers, forced to move to the frontier of Massachusetts due to crowded conditions in Dedham and other established communities established their own settlements and norms, even as they remained tied to the core of New England settlement. Consensus, once a basis for Puritan settlement declined over time. While Lockridge tells of values changing over time as new generations broke away from their elders, John Demos underscores the dangers faced by colonist who settled on the frontier of the Massachusetts colony. His book The Unredeemed Captive - A Family Story (1995) recounts the captivity story of Eunice Williams and the ordeal her family went through to achieve her return home. Eunice was captured together with her family and over 100 other town residents in the Deerfield Massacre of 1704.

The Deerfield raid was the largest executed by the French and Indians. The French started planning the raid early in 1703 and as tribes gathered in Montreal Indians who traded regularly with the British began to warn the colonists of the possibility of an attack. Though forewarned about the impending threat colonists who were inundated with rumors paid scant attention. Unprepared many captives were taken and many citizens were brutally killed in the raid. Changing values and needs in both Virginia and Massachusetts separated to some extent western settlers from easterners.

The east/west divide continued on America’s First Frontier. The political, and/or power, relationships westerners experienced with Indians and British troops were not experienced by easterners. Struggles for land and control of the region were daily fare, especially before the War of 1812. The identity of many settlers was wrapped up in politics. Though some of the political issues such as those regarding race and ethnicity, gender, religion, regional interests, and education, as well as national affiliation affected east and west, most western Americans experienced these legal, political, and social issues somewhat differently.

Identity through Politics and Law: The Northwest Ordinance

The Northwest Ordinance was both a legal plan for settling new land as American territory, as well as a socializing experiment. The territory governed by the Ordinance was acquired mainly by the cession of land claims by seven of the thirteen original states. Their ownership of the western lands were usually rooted in the vague wording of old colonial charters. The fact that the claims often overlapped one another further complicated efforts to settle state boundaries and often pitted one state's interests against another. The new United States government needed to settle boundaries and bring

the disparate groups of citizens together. Boldly a plan to get states to cede to the federal government disputed western lands evolved and took hold.

Virginia, Georgia, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, South and North Carolina were the seven states that enunciated claims to areas in the West. These so-called "landed" states had a potential advantage over the six "landless" states. It was assumed that the future sale of western lands would enrich the landed states and possibly allow them to operate without any form of taxation. The landless states feared that they would lose residents and dwindle into insignificance.

The ceding of western lands settled the question of preeminence by any one state. Now that the federal government possessed so much public land it needed plan to settle the territory. A series of laws were passed by the Articles of confederation Congress to organize the areas and prepare them for statehood. These measures included the Great Northwest Ordinance in 1787.

The Northwest Ordinance provided the basis for territorial government. A Governor was appointed by the Continental Congress of the United States to oversee the territory and derived his authority directly from the Federal government. The governor answered to the United States Congress and reported regularly to it. The commission could be revoked at any time. That threat served as an effective check upon his actions. Another significant provision of the Ordinance was that the Governor reside in the district and have a freehold estate of one thousand acres. This requirement helped deter absenteeism and gave the governor a stake in the territory’s success. Articles in the Ordinance included no reference to the amount of salary paid to the Governor, but a law passed soon after set the remuneration at two thousand dollars per year. The law expressly provided that this amount should include compensation “for discharging the duties of superintendent of Indian affairs in the northern department.” As Commander-in-Chief of the militia the governor appointed all officers below those of

597 Kentucky, by this point, was already well on its way to statehood, had its own authority in place through its own governor and legislative body. Since it previously was a portion of Virginia, its government was fairly well established along the lines of most southern states. Slavery was legal and the population preferred local autonomy to a dominant state authority. In 1792, Kentucky was accepted as a state.
598 Dwight G. McCarty, 43-45.
599 Ibid.
general rank, as well as all civil officers except the Secretary and three Judges on the territorial Supreme Court. These judges also acted as another check on powers of the governor.

The governor laid out counties and townships and also had the usual administrative duties of a Governor to enforce the laws and preserve the peace. The territory was a wild frontier with few and scattered settlers and bands of Indians and so it needed a strong and vigorous administration swift to act with the twofold goals of success and survival in mind. In the frontier regions, historian Dwight McCarty reminds us that, "personalities counted for more than principles, and eloquence and combative ness for more than social culture and wealth." The office needed a strong man who understood he must meet the needs of a territory facing obstacles not encountered back on the settled eastern seaboard. Citizens wary of too much power in too few hands, following republican theory, could keep a watchful eye on the governor and his assistants and petition for change if they felt he overstepped his powers.

Arthur St. Clair, the first governor appointed to oversee the Northwest Territory, spoke about the effectiveness of the government put in place by the Ordinance of 1787. He stated, in an early address, to his constituents, “From the ordinance for the establishment of civil government in this quarter that hath been just now read, you have a proof, gentlemen, of the attention of Congress to the welfare of the citizens of the United States, how remote so ever their situation may be.” He continued by explaining that the Ordinance provided, “A good government, well administered,” and the laws governing them were, “the first of blessings to a people. Everything desirable in life is thereby secured to them; and from the operation of wholesome and equal laws, the passions of men are restrained within due bounds; their actions receive a proper direction; the virtues are cultivated and the beautiful fabric of civilized life is reared and brought to perfection.” St. Clair’s comments represented the image most settlers on the frontier wished to portray of themselves. Their lawful behavior and civilized lifestyle lived on a frontier that challenged the presence of both qualities merited them praise.

600 Ibid.
601 Ibid.
602 Hildreth, Address by St Clair July 13, 1787.
The Northwest Ordinance dealt skillfully with most of settlers’ immediate needs such as land ownership, education, religious practice, relations with Indians, and to some extent the treatment of blacks. Drafters of the Northwest Ordinance implied in the rhetoric of the bill that the legislation was meant to be a “temporary” means of governance. The law offered a transitional legal structure until a territory became a state. For those desiring the opportunity to have a hand in fashioning a new American republican government for themselves, the temporary nature provided a window for testing and trying laws that worked best for their circumstances. This benefitted them as they committed to a state constitution. To help move them forward to full statehood the Ordinance included the steps needed for admission into the Union as a state.

According to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 several steps led to eventual recognition as a state. Once the population of a territory officially reached five thousand voting-age males it could elect its own territorial legislature to add an additional counter to the powers of the governor. When the population reached sixty thousand, the territory formed a constitution and petitioned to form a state. Once accepted by the federal government, the new state enjoyed complete equality with the existing states. The legislation created five states out of the territory designated as the Old Northwest and provided for civil and religious liberties. Article VI of the Articles of Compact within the Northwest Ordinance prohibited the owning of slaves within the Northwest Territory. Territorial governments evaded this law by use of indenture laws. The Articles also spoke to the fair treatment of Indians settled on the land and the need for just negotiations when Indians agreed to sell off land. Importantly, for the future of the young republic and its newest region, The Land Ordinance of 1785 set aside the income accrued from Section 16 of the 36 sections to be used for the support of schools. Legislators writing the Ordinance envisioned a moral, educated and free society developing on America’s first frontier.

603 Northwest Ordinance 1787.
Land Ownership as the Key to Establishing the Claim of Self-sufficiency

Federal legislators who supported the Land Ordinances thought the law would provide an orderly transfer of lands though legal title. Public to private ownership was the goal. Land ownership, an important first step for establishing personal independence and reputation presented some difficulties for those moving west. Settlers worried about how they would procure these lands and at what price. The first attempt to answer questions about dispersing the newly acquired land appeared in the Land Ordinance of 1785, which declared all territory west of the Appalachian Mountains be settled in an orderly, systematic fashion. The land once surveyed utilized a rectangular grid for parceling.\textsuperscript{605} An obstacle did hamper the end result. Eager settlers had moved west as soon as the British restrictions fell. They established homesteads in the territories before the laws regarding sales and settlement passed through the Continental Congress. These “squatters” posed problems for the government. Their actions supported the ideals of individualism and self-sufficiency that many American politicians promoted as part of the republic. The squatter pioneer also cultivated and improved the land. Moreover, by laying claim to the land squatters undermined the threat of British troops who remained along the western border. They also hindered the possibility of incursions by the Spanish who resided along the southwestern boundaries. Yet the earliest homesteaders angered the Indians even as the United States government struggled to repair relations with the tribes after the Revolutionary War.

The early settlers also hurt the pocketbook of the United States Treasury by claiming many of the best lands at no cost. The government had hoped to cash in on the price good land might bring. Debates ensued over how to handle squatters and whether or not the government could deed their land. In 1841 the government adopted a plan that allowed squatters to purchase land at an inexpensive price. Thus these earliest settlers ably sidestepped the law and retained their claim to land. Some saw this as a demonstration of individual liberty unhampered by government.

\textsuperscript{605} Land Ordinance 1785.
The sale of public lands caused disagreement between the government and squatters and also provided issues around which the two political parties rallied support. Congress as a whole agreed that land represented wealth and the monies collected should go straight into the federal treasury. The question debated by the two legislative parties centered on how to use the profits collected from the sale of public lands. The Federalist party of Alexander Hamilton saw the issue in terms of monies to be used for the country and as a way to pay its debt. Federalists (later the Whig party) wanted top dollar for acreage and proposed selling large tracts at full value. This settlement plan favored large land speculators with adequate capital to invest as well as the United States Treasury.

The party of Jefferson disagreed with the Federalists. The Democratic Republicans (later Democrats) promoted the sale of smaller parcels of acreage at cheaper prices. The money collected still flowed to the federal government, but rather than benefit the government, terms for sales gave an advantage to a larger number of American citizens willing to take the risk and move west. Until the Civil War, Congress tended to follow the first option but failed to implement it fully. As a result, the government received only a portion of the land’s value. For settlers land represented a new life and sometimes a second chance. Land provided prestige and self-sufficiency. Local interests trumped all party affiliation for most westerners.

The political disagreement over land sales erupting from party affiliation also divided North/South within the existing thirteen states. Northerners and southerners disagreed about the value of the Northwest Ordinance land policies. Though a more complicated set of issues underscored the regional arguments over land policy, the southern wish to expand its agricultural economy by adoption of easy land cheap land policies offers a simple explanation for their stance. In contrast, northerners desire to establish a more industrial market system pushed them to promote less westward expansion and stricter land purchases so that migration did not drain labor. The Mid-Atlantic States split between the two positions. This regionalist mindset converged as persons from all eastern areas migrated into the Old

---

Northwest. Once identified as westerners cheap and available land weighed won out over feeding the
government coffers.

Both North and South influenced settlement and attitudes in the Old Northwest. In areas where
southerners settled their characteristics of municipal governance often prevailed. Like many of the
southern localities pioneers migrated from, once federal land was dedicated as a particular township, the
township was relatively free from interference by state government. Additionally, reliance upon the type
of upper class power demonstrated in southern states was transplanted to the west. In the South the planter
class that held power in made certain municipalities they lived were governed in ways that benefitted
them and maintained their dominance. This same type local jurisdiction and upper class power also
manifested itself in the arena of public education. Once land was dedicated for schools, the actual
development of the public education system became the responsibility of the local township or the
particular state. Often, the requirement for schools was ignored. It mirrored the lack of educational
facilities found in the social structure of the south.607

Still at other times northern immigrants moving into portions of the Northwest managed to bring
their ideas of governance with them to areas they dominated by population. Ideas from the New England
region placed into the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 made settlement easier for northern migrants. The
Ordinance encouraged the worship of religion and the spread of education. The Ordinance stated,
“Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind,
schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”608 Northerners ably incorporated some
of the county and town meeting structure of governance developed by the Puritans when settling
Massachusetts Bay Colony. Thus, New Englanders established familiar government forms. Moreover
they demonstrated their desire for education. Citizens clearly showed education could trump monetary

607 Alexandra Usher, “Public Schools in the Original Federal Land Grant Program,” The Center on Education
considerations. Alexandra Usher, noted historian examining education in the United States cites the Supreme Court case of Cooper v. Roberts (1855) as evidence that the desire for education could trump monetary gain in the Old northwest Territory. A cherished policy of The Northwest Ordinance was the law that set aside the section numbered sixteen in every township of land for the use of schools. During the 1840s some within Michigan’s governing body sold off public lands which contained a wealth of minerals to a mining company. Citizens of the region protested and took the mining company to court for ignoring the need to develop a school on the parcel of land designated as section sixteen. The case made its way through the court system and finally was granted a hearing by the United States Supreme Court. The court justices ruled that the 1847 deed providing for the sale of mineral lands, did not include section sixteen, which remained subject to the compact with Michigan for the establishment of public education.

The comfort with government, for settlers both North and South resulted from the fluidity of an evolving institution. The flexibility of forming a government appealed to a majority and allowed for that majority to begin moving from local concerns to a broader state structure through the constitutions they created. As they moved toward statehood and understood how their own circumstances mirrored or differed from what they had left behind pioneers could reject, accept, and blend ideas of what worked well.

The organized westward settlements were built to inspire civic duty and encourage people to participate in the democratic process by planting, “in the heart of every community the same sentiments of grateful reverence for the wisdom, forecast, and magnanimous statesmanship of those who framed the institutions of these new States.”609 The citizens prevailed. The Northwest Ordinance had set aside land for schools in order to ensure that the next generation of Americans on the frontier understood their government. By understanding the needs of the republic, westerners could strengthen their hold on democracy.

---

609 Usher, 7-8.
Personal and National Identity Politics

The United States Census Bureau offered a definition of the “frontier line” as the density of two people per square mile.\(^6\)\(^1\) The frontier line of the United States, or the outer line of settlement, however defined, moved westward by degrees from the 1776 to the 1880s. The Old Northwest Territory and Kentucky composed America’s newest frontier line as the treaties ending the Revolutionary War were signed. The Northwest Ordinance, laying out the rules for territorial governance both nationally and regionally, kept the frontier connected to the nation. It provided a listing of the liberties enjoyed by settlers guaranteeing the right to assemble, to enjoy religious freedom, to the writ of habeas corpus, trial by jury, proportionate representation in the legislature; and of judicial proceedings. The Ordinance stated clearly, “No man shall be deprived of his liberty or property, but by the judgment of his peers or the law of the land.”\(^6\)\(^1\) The Ordinance ensured American rights enjoyed by American citizens as they worked through the process of exploring what republican government could be.

Personal and political interests concerning land distribution, Indian relations, British western forts, the franchise, transportation, and trade all played a role in the formation of a western identity and attitudes on the local and national stage. Each issue had both a local and national component that affected the lives of settlers. For the pioneer issues of landownership promised the possibility of prosperity and attaining a respected reputation. These were very personal matters.

T.H. Breen, a respected historian of colonial policy, examined the methods used by southern land speculators to build their power and reputation in the southern states, prior to 1776. They willingly fought a much stronger British military in order to protect the social and economic identities they created before royal restrictions threatened to strip them of their earned lifestyle. A Revolutionary War victory ensured their status. As southern gentlemen status was wrapped up in the ability to develop land and increase

---


\(^6\)\(^1\) Northwest Ordinance 1787, Articles 1 and 2.
holdings through smart speculation. If successful, a gentleman proved to the community his superior judgment and talent.\textsuperscript{612} These skills usually brought respect as well as economic, social, and political power.

The skill of choosing the best lands for development and creating a prosperous business or farmstead mattered as much in the Northwest Territory and Kentucky. Men who moved west from southern states and from other territories understood that property ownership could improve their livelihood, help them escape past social indiscretions or economic failures, and recreate themselves and their reputations in a region that was still being shaped. As T.H. Breen noted in \textit{Tobacco Culture}, “solvency would nurture personal autonomy; personal autonomy would assure integrity.”\textsuperscript{613} Fashioning a legal code and political atmosphere that supported taking opportunity, ensuring property rights, and protecting personal liberties helped the settler shape his identity and reputation.

Settlers benefitted from limited property ownership, but those men engaged in larger land speculation deals garnered an increased share of the influence and social development in the region. Much like the southern planter or the northeastern investor, land speculation offered, on a grander scale more than profits. It offered a means of domination in the political realm of the region. Nathaniel Massie began his career in the west as a land surveyor. He worked hard to develop his skills and as his associate in land speculation John MacDonald claimed Massie became “an expert woodsman.”\textsuperscript{614} Adept at traversing territory that lacked roads, able to survive trails peppered by Indian settlements, and able to record landscape and distances for purchase Massie, according to Mc Donald, “could steer his course truly in clear or cloudy weather, and compute distances more correctly than most of the old hunters.”\textsuperscript{615} Massie and some of his fellow surveyors could have been satisfied with a job well-done, but he and the others understood that their positions as land speculators and locaters could yield more advantages.

\textsuperscript{613} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{614} John McDonald, \textit{Biographical Sketches of General Nathaniel Massie, General Duncan McArthur, Captain William Wells, and General Simon Kenton ...} (Dayton, Ohio, 1838), I6.
\textsuperscript{615} Ibid.
Speculators such as Massie, after proving their value to those in power, sought to be appointed justices of the peace. The position gave them power. It solidified their sense of position in the community and their public reputations. Rhys Isaac argued that in Virginia, the courts were “central to the organization of society.” They protected the law, which defined “rights and obligations.” As the guardians of property, the courts were key to the “effective independence of persons.”\textsuperscript{616} The courts as primary institutions helped powerful men maintain the status quo. To lose control of them was to lose control of property, autonomy, and reputation. In Kentucky an offshoot of Virginia, the courts held the same powers. As settlers moved westward the clout of the court system was replicated throughout portions of the Northwest Territory. Men such as Massie who earned their status benefitted from their position as justices of the peace and judges on higher courts.

As people migrated westward and local officials took office, citizens began to recognize that the key to future political success was the promotion of decentralization.\textsuperscript{617} The Articles of Confederation had transitioned the nation from British control to a more balanced distribution of powers in the Constitutional government. Settlers increasingly pushed for reforms of the Northwest Ordinance and fought the strong executive power placed in the territorial governor. Westerners desired legislative bodies, which would distribute authority. When establishing their state constitutions they made certain that a large measure of control remained in local hands. In a region populated by persons from different states and/or ethnic backgrounds political power for any one group ebbed and flowed.\textsuperscript{618} People intent on protecting personal interests and reputation resented and pushed back against anything or anyone that tried to limit them. While the Shays and Whiskey rebellions both transpired in states outside the Old Northwest, each took place in western portions of settled states. These events demonstrated that persons removed from urban settlement and eastern centers of government power to demand and protect their rights. The frontier

\textsuperscript{616} Rhys Isaac, \textit{The transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790} (Chapel Hill, NC: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA., by University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 94, 93.
\textsuperscript{617} Cayton, \textit{Frontier Republic}, 81-109.
\textsuperscript{618} Ibid.
settler in the Old Northwest believed the same. Settlers had to demand their rights, protect them, and assert their individuality.

Victory in western politics often went to those supporting the notion that everyone should be left alone to pursue his, or his group’s interests.\textsuperscript{619} The character traits of independence, individualism, and a desire for personal liberties under a republican system meant that westerners switched their political support once the two party system developed. The Federalist Party held sway in the Territories as long as George Washington held power in the national government. Washington loyalists, such as the leaders of the Marietta colony in and persons who settled the Western Reserve, staunchly backed the Northwest Ordinance, the Constitution, and the Washington presidency.

Associates of the Ohio Company praised that "superior wisdom which formed the new plan of a federal government, now rapid in its progress to adoption. They also lauded Governor Arthur St. Clair, appointed to his territorial position in 1788 by President Washington. St. Clair had proven himself as President of the Continental Congress and the associates pledged “unreserved confidence,” in his territorial governance as outlined in the Northwest Ordinance.\textsuperscript{620} After all, St. Clair was a proponent of the Northwest Ordinance that opened the land initially and he sought to end Native American claims to Ohio so that white settlement might proceed unimpeded. In other words, St. Clair supported what most westerners needed and who they claimed to be. Federalist popularity, though influential in the region after the party’s decline, rapidly lost support during the Adams Administration.

President Adams’ implementation of the Alien and Sedition Acts, in the late 1790s, drove voters of the Northwest Territory to Jefferson’s political party. Fourth of July celebration toasts made in 1800 referred to Federalists as “monarchs” and the wealthy elite.\textsuperscript{621} Upon the repeal of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1802 newspapers noted that Jefferson, “a man of the people,” exhibited many of the same republican values observed in westerners, who loved freedom, individualism and openness.\textsuperscript{622} After

\textsuperscript{619} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{620} Hildreth, \textit{Pioneer History}, 510.
\textsuperscript{621} Beverly Bond, 144.
\textsuperscript{622} \textit{Western Spy}, July 3, 1802.
1800, the fortunes of the two parties rose and fell as the political issues debated increased in the developing states and territories.

By 1812, most newspapers in the Northwest Territory supported the party of Jefferson. Despite political leanings for one side or another, westerners continued to believe they must speak their mind. A frontier newspaper headline promoted plain and open dialogue between settlers and their government as it boasted, “Independence is my Happiness and I state things as they are without respect to Place or
Person.” As local and national governance affected the settler, he was, as a good citizen, to respond positively or negatively no matter the majority opinion.

As time passed residents of the Northwest insisted that the restrictions on voting requirements seemed too limiting and strongly opposed the law. The wording of the Northwest Ordinance stated, “That a freehold in fifty acres of land in the district, having been a citizen of one of the states, and being resident in the district, or the like freehold and two years residence in the district, shall be necessary to qualify a man as an elector of a representative.” These qualifications severely limited the number of white men eligible to vote. Squabbles over land ownership, speculators corrupt practices, a growing population, more business openings, and disputes over slavery demonstrated changing conditions in the territory that required a broader right to vote.

In an effort to control their own future, Ohioans began petitioning for an expansion of the franchise set by Northwest Ordinance Legislature and the United States Congress. Residents unable to vote began to insist that without the franchise they were doomed to remain obstructed by laws they had no control over. That situation in a government identifying itself as a republic could not be allowed to stand. Locals in Marietta, Ohio, who had once praised Governor St. Clair, a little over a decade late referred to him as a “demi-god” who refused to listen to their wishes. Statesmen who supported the increased franchise pushed a petition for statehood forward and pleaded with the Congress to “relieve their oppression” and raise them to a level “equal with the other states.” Ohio won its status as a state in 1803 and achieved its goal of a more democratic government with a broader franchise for white males.

The Indiana Territory, organized in 1800, quickly followed on the heels of Ohio by petitioning for an increased franchise. The United States Congress answered in 1804 by extending the vote to all white males, over age twenty-one who paid territorial taxes and resided in the area for two years. Before the War of 1812 the federal government had reduced those restrictions to one year residency, even though

623 Indiana Gazette, July 7, 1805.
624 Northwest Ordinance 1787.
625 Western Spy, May 20, 1802.
626 Farmers Creed.
the Indiana territory had not yet been admitted as a state. Illinois mirrored the efforts put forward in Indiana and gained similar concessions before statehood was conferred. Illinois government officials deftly brought together disputing groups under the banner of overthrowing elites who sought to control the area.  

Both Indiana and Illinois took great pains to demonstrate their citizens’ competency. These hardy persons deserved the franchise. The two states also worked hard to demonstrate their commitment to law and order within their territorial boundaries. Citizens were warned that drunkenness, corruption, rioting, and other moral offenses would be punished accordingly. Land deeds were validated and taxes assigned. Though ethnic and regional differences played out, all settlers in the territories could agree upon the need to override the laws in place under the Northwest Ordinance and push for an expanded the voter base.

The right to exercise the vote required male citizens to be informed. To be informed one needed access to information. Though newspapers opened in the western territories, transportation problems obstructed the flow of trade and news. The Scioto Gazette in 1808 described the disadvantages of waiting for the latest news to make its way west and called the problem “irritating.” Settlers expected some aid, from the federal government. After all, the Ordinance was put in place with the knowledge that their isolated frontier location had to be acknowledged. The United States Congress, however, wanted to avoid financing internal improvements and left the bill for roads, canals, and maintaining passable waterways to be paid by local governments. The Army did work to provide accurate navigational and road guides, and helped further boat designs with shallow drafts for easier shipping, but the pathways, whether

---

628 Western Spy, December 8, 1810, Louisiana Gazette, July 18, 1812.
630 Ibid.
631 Scioto Gazette July 16, 1808.
632 Western Spy, February 16, 1803.
traveled by foot, horse, wagon or water remained problematic. Newspaper were not the only means of spreading news and information that was hurt due to weak transportation links. The federal postal service which played a crucial role in national expansion was also hampered in its duties by unsatisfactory modes of travel. Westerners hoped mail would facilitate expansion into the West by creating an inexpensive, fast, and convenient communication system.

Reliable correspondence was required to assist entrepreneurs in their attempts to find business opportunities, to help farmers find markets for products, and to develop relationships between merchants west and east. Obstacles to the movement of mail stalled these activities. One newspaper described the road from Vincennes to Kaskaskia as “impossible.” Though the development of canals and steamboats alleviated much of the transportation difficulty by the 1820s, early settlers remained disappointed in the federal government’s lack of action and assistance. The problem of communicating with the East and traveling to and from the frontier contributed to feelings of separation.

Even though settlers sometimes disagreed with federal government actions and the limits it placed on aid and attention to western problems, national commitment remained strong. The frontier settler was an American. Accounts of early 4th of July festivities tell of Revolutionary War officers who recounted their hardships “over a flowing bowl of whisky punch,” while later in the day men and women gathered for dinner and patriotic toasts. This type of nationalist fervor was repeated at other locations across the west. The intrigue surrounding Aaron Burr and conspiracies of separation from the Union raised similar nationalist sentiments among many settlers. A toast delivered at an Independence Day observance countered any attempt to divide the nation. It praised “the Eastern and Western America and declared, “…may it be perpetual.” Though the toast distinguished between the two regions, it advocated for the nation to remain connected and strong.

---

635 *Western Sun*, September 11, 1807.
636 Hildreth, 404.
637 *Western Sun*, July 11, 1807.
The War of 1812 offered additional evidence of the westerners feeling for the nation. Even a routinely Federalist leaning newspaper in Chicolithe urged readers to support the war effort.\(^638\) The war was personal for many settlers. They experienced the threat from British troops in forts that lay on America’s boundaries. The pioneers also believed the British instigated Indian attacks and brutality. As early as 1806, President Jefferson in the wake of British impressment and other issues, asked Ohioans to be ready to march at a moment’s notice. As information about the attack of the British ship \textit{Leopard} on the United States frigate \textit{Chesapeake} materialized, militia stepped up defenses and began to congregate to build blockhouses for protection.\(^639\) Shortly after, \textit{The Western Spy}, published in Cincinnati, reported that Indians gathering at Greenville, “alarmed the frontier settlers.”\(^640\) When the Twelfth Congress of the United States declared war against Britain, westerners supported the move and saw opportunities for themselves. The war might well end the Indian problem once and for all and open up land at the expense of British and Indian tormentors.

Henry Clay, a citizen of the west and war-hawk representative of Kentucky, wrote in December 1813, “Canada was not the end but the means, the object of the War being the redress of injuries, and Canada being the instrument by which that redress was to be obtained.”\(^641\) Thomas Jefferson, supporting the effort, claimed, “The acquisition of Canada this year, as far as the neighborhood of Quebec, will be a mere matter of marching.”\(^642\) Though the assertions of Clay and Jefferson failed to materialize, the fact remains that western men fought vigorously during the war, while the women worked in aid societies and took up the duties of the men that left them behind. Settlers were proving their allegiance to the nation, even as they fought for personal interest, honor, and for the opportunities Clay and Jefferson laid out for them.

\(^638\) Hurt, 377.
\(^639\) Ibid., 320.
\(^640\) Ibid.
\(^641\) Henry Clay to Thomas Bodley, December 18, 1813, in \textit{Papers of Henry Clay}, 1:842.
Opportunities declined during the Panic of 1819. If westerner settlers thought themselves independent of and separated from the rest of the country, the banking crisis of 1819 made clear their political and economic ties with the other regions. The easy credit from local banks pioneers wanted and received, ended. The large migration into the region that followed the War of 1812 temporally came to a halt. Easy credit had offered social leveling that most westerners applauded. They supposedly desired a nation of equal citizens. Once the United States National Bank called in the loans made to regional banks and lands were foreclosed on, the equality shared was mostly one of debt. Those who left the East and experienced some financial gain in their new homes found themselves, in 1819, no better off and in some instances worse for the move west. What they learned was that politics supporting easy gain rarely worked and claims of independence and self-sufficiency ignored the larger nation and world of which they were a part. They also understood the need to take care of their local issues. They mattered as did self-sufficiency. Distrust of the National Bank, the political elite, and eastern government intensified during this economic downturn.

The distrust that soured westerners on politics dissipated during the election cycles of 1824 and 1828. Andrew Jackson appeared on the political scene. Jackson’s image, seeming to represent the qualities western men strived for and respected, reinvigorated western political debate. Even in Kentucky, a state that for years competed with Jackson’s home state of Tennessee, the political rhetoric for the election increased. Voters broke for or against Jackson. Andrew Jackson and the issues he pressed appealed to many in the Northwest Territory.

Despite periods of dampened or growing political interest, the western settler, according to the writers examined, remained mostly engaged in government activities. They cherished their independence and freedoms and knew that civil participation protected both.643 They were encouraged to be fair minded and open to others beliefs.644 They were to remember that they were part of a grand experiment as they expanded American territory, influence, and values.

643 Western Spy, July 8, 1801.
644 Indiana Gazette, August 7, 1805.
Gender as a Key to Political Identity

The idea of “separate spheres” governing the lives of men and women during the New Republic Era has enjoyed robust discussion. The chapter in this text dedicated to women and the frontier provides a more in-depth examination of the place of women in American society as a whole, as well as on the frontier. Still, it is important to consider the role of gender in politics and to understand the different spaces men and women occupied, both physically and socially. Men inhabited home and public spaces, including the world of politics and the law. Women’s lives and activities were mostly confined to the home and dedicated to housekeeping and child-rearing duties. Though given education, that privilege was often only afforded females so that they could properly raise civic minded citizens able to advance American society and economy. David Waldstreicher, explains in his respected work In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes (1997) that women, as well as blacks, might populate American society but their role in the realm of governance was limited. Women involved themselves in social events surrounding civic celebrations, such as voting days and Fourth of July festivities, and worked for aid societies during wartime. Westerners continued the patriarchal family structure found in the East. Men, whether, father, brother or husband positioned themselves as the protectors of women economically, politically, and socially. Without a vote or control over their own property females had little influence in government.

645 During the first wave of Women’s Studies scholarship Linda Kerber, in her article “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History,” Journal of American History, (v75 n1 p9-39 Jun 1988), examined the historical characteristics of women in the United States and aid close attention to the notion of the woman’s “sphere” in society. Kerber asserts that the idea of "separate spheres" was used to retain power relationships in society. Nancy Cott, in the book The Bonds of Womanhood, (New Haven Yale University Press, 1977), examined the movement of women from the private realm of the home into the public domain. Barbara Welter’s article "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860." American Quarterly (Johns Hopkins University Press, 18 (2),1966) 151–174, explored the ideal of femininity prevalent among the upper and middle classes in the 19th century. Welter identified true women as pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. Western women were subject to the attitudes of paternalism and oppression described by each of these scholars.

646 Women in the Early Republic actually engaged in more than household chores, especially if they lived on the frontier. Diaries, letters, and reports tell of women taking up arms to protect the homestead, tilling soil, planting crops, and helping with the harvest. None of these acts were considered household chores or necessary for child-rearing. They were, however, necessary activities for homesteaders who hoped to survive the frontier.

The lack of involvement in politics and law impeded unhappy wives from divorcing husbands. Women had little ability to provide for themselves outside of marriage. Limitations on property ownership, the right to sign contracts, and the paternalism with which men regarded women narrowed women’s opportunities. Divorce, a scandal in polite society, was rare. Some wives ran away rather than continue in an abusive and/or unhealthy marriage situation. Husbands sometimes advertised in newspapers that their wives had left them. By announcing the desertion of a spouse men risked speculation about their own failure as a husband and inability to control their household. Still, they felt compelled to announce to others that they refused to be held responsible for any debts accrued by the runaway. The ads rarely asked for the wife to return, rather they enabled the man to try to legally escape any unwanted financial burden.

Although men migrating from North and South into the frontier region shared ideas of paternalism toward women, self-sufficiency, republicanism, the need for a superior character when compared with Indians and blacks, and the ability to take advantage of opportunity as markers of their masculinity, they sometimes disagreed on what honor meant. Both agreed that “real men” supported and protected their families and properties. Both believed men needed to be civic minded in order to protect. Having fought a revolution against Britain partly because of mistrust in government authority, republican citizens remained suspicious of politicians. An untrustworthy man might try to fool voters and conceal motives to gain power and/or money, but the involved citizen could counter the threat.

For both northern and southern frontiersmen, reputation played a role in choosing an honest and reliable candidate. A man unafraid of hard work, who remained honest, and exhibited masculine conduct complimented by gentlemanly behavior exemplified the best type of candidate for public office. This ideal of citizenship might serve as a model for other republican male citizens. A newspaper article quoting an Illinois voter insisted. “…slang, low jokes…scurrilous attacks…” to be speech politicians

should avoid if they desired to be characterized as manly.” The voter’s opinion about slang and uncouth behavior sometimes depended upon his place of birth and economic status.

Place of birth, for example led men to think of gentlemanly behavior in different ways. A gentleman could overplay the role in the perceptions of upland yeoman settlers. They abhorred what they viewed as the comportment of the southern planter class, as well as what might be viewed as northern affectations. The issue of using violence to settle political disputes also differed north and south of the Mason Dixon Line. Violence and physical confrontation found its way far more often into the political activity of southerners than northerners. Both the upland southern yeoman settlers and wealthier southern planter types agreed that bravery was an essential component in proving one’s manliness. Historian Robert Shalhope asserted that southerners used displays of masculine physical prowess to influence the outcome of political activity. Yeoman southerners might engage in brawls while wealthier southerners engaged in duels, but both groups injected into the political culture of the Old Northwest an element of what historian Bertram Wyatt Brown labeled, “southern honor.” Southern honor condemned effeminacy and expected men to be ferocious and aggressive. During the presidential election of 1824 the subject of duels became part of the voters’ selection process. In a newspaper article defending the moral superiority of northeastern politician John Quincy Adams, the author insisted that less moral men such as Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson appeared on his “Black List” because they had fought a duel. The fact that parts of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio became home to a large group of southerners the report that he lacked any dueling experience that might have hurt rather than helped Adams’ reputation.

Physical aggressiveness and reputation played a role in politics, but so did sports competition. Men found ways to gather for business deals and political discussions and agreements in less formal

651 Bertram Wyatt Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), xxi, 595.
652 Indiana Newspapers and the Presidential Election of 1824, reprinted From the Richmond Public Ledger.
settings. Horseracing served as a gentlemanly sport and provided a venue in which men shared opinions and ideas. A winning racehorse offered the additional benefit of proving a man’s ability to recognize excellent breeding in livestock. Just as men were respected for choosing the best parcel of land, the ability to breed and train a race horse demonstrated superiority. John Reynolds in *The Pioneer* (1887), explains that the horse races in Illinois offered recreation and reputation, since they resembled the ancient Greek Olympic Games. This comparison to ancient Greece gave a nod to the republicanism Americans professed to honor and also complemented the participant’s identity as American men.

Both northern and southern males brought ideas of manliness with them to the Old Northwest Territory and each connected the characteristic of manly behavior to involvement in government affairs. Male voters selected politicians whom they perceived to be examples of aggressive manliness. Both northern and southern settlers also agreed that one’s activity in civil issues was a necessary republican trait. American voters were manly when engaged in government affairs, such as voting and political meetings. Neither group, however, completely controlled the development of manliness as an identity trait in the political realm of the Old Northwest. Both ideas, northern reliance on middle-class and professional customs, as well as the southern variations on physical prowess and reputation held sway at one time or another and to a large extent blended over time.

**Race as a Marker of Belonging:**

**The Law and Treatment of Blacks and Indians in the Territories**

The Northwest Ordinance rejected slavery. That article of the law proved difficult to enforce. Some of the white, slaveholding citizens moving into Kentucky, a state that welcomed slavery, continued through to settle in the less populated Old Northwest areas that would become southern Illinois, Indiana,

---

and Ohio. The Ordinance, like the Constitution, offered a mixed picture of slave-holding. If property protection was guaranteed, but slavery was outlawed, the question arose as to what slave holders and blacks expect. Moreover, while New Englanders and those entering the region from Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic might dislike slavery, they rarely viewed blacks, free or enslaved, as equals or desired to open their communities to them.

Free blacks and slaves, hearing about provisions in the Northwest Ordinance, moved westward, or escaped from the southern bondage for the same reasons as whites. Available land, freedom, independence, and the ability to recreate their lives in a developing region drew them in. There was, however, no “happy ending” awaiting them. White settlers began petitioning changes in the Ordinance restrictions regarding slavery almost immediately. In 1796, Illinois, a lightly populated territory wrote, “To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, the humble petition of the inhabitants of the counties of St. Clair and Randolph, in the Illinois country, respectfully shows: That the sixth article of compact contained in the ordinance of Congress' of 1787, for the government of the Territory Northwest of the Ohio, which declares ‘That there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said Territory, otherwise than in the' punishment of crimes,' is, as your petitioners humbly conceive, not only contrary to the promise and assurances made them… Your petitioners then were, and now are, possessed of a number of slaves, which the article above recited seems to deprive them of. (perhaps inadvertently,) without their con-sent or concurrence.”655 Citizens who saw themselves as the most free of Americans, were decidedly unhappy that their freedoms were, in their minds, curtailed over the question of slavery.

Though the issue of slavery arose several times in Ohio the residents of that area never mounted a real pro-slavery agitation. Slaves might be of value, but less so than some other possessions. John Tanner wrote of his movement into the Ohio region from the south. His father, managing the transportation of his family and possessions, according to young Tanner, “bought three flat boats; in one

of these boats we put the horses and cattle—in another, beds, furniture, and other property, and in the third were some Negroes. The cattle boat and the family boat were lashed together; the third, with the Negroes, followed behind. We descended the Ohio, and in two or three days came to Cincinnati…”

Tanner continues by describing the sinking of boats and his father’s attempt to save the cattle. He makes no mention of the fate of the slaves and recalls that as “The people from Cincinnati came out in boats to assist us… father told them the cattle were all safe.” The blacks, regarded as property, seem in Tanner’s account to be of less value than the cattle. While pro-slavery agitation might have been less apparent in Ohio, this account shows that blacks enjoyed little regard in terms of political, economic, or human worth.

Westward, beyond Ohio, the pro-slavery movement was more vocal, although nowhere did the use of slave labor become legal in the Northwest. Slaveholders, however, refused to surrender their “property” so easily. Contracts for service supplanted slavery as the method for controlling the black workforce. The contracts were decidedly unfair, but legal. Terms for service were set, recorded, and signed. A territorial law, passed in 1807 and in force until 1810, provided that owners of slaves moving into the territory might bind them for whatever time the master and slave agreed upon before or shortly following arrival. If the slave refused to consent to the offered contract the owner had sixty days to remove him to a slave state. All slaves under fifteen might be held till they were thirty-five or thirty-two, according to gender. All children of indentured servants and/or slaves were considered as bound to the ages of thirty and twenty-eight, respectively. This system to the bondsmen remained virtual slavery.

Newspapers regularly ran ads asking for the return of runaway slaves, indentured servants, and bound apprentices. Advertisements for runaways served as an effort to restore public confidence in the system of white hierarchically controlled labor and white dominance over the laws governing the area. While the desire to reclaim one’s property seemed clear, a downside in advertising for the return of

---

656 Tanner Narrative.
657 Ibid.
runaways existed. Just as admitting to a runaway female family member or spouse raised questions about a man’s weakness and cruelty, so did the disclosure that blacks placed in his charge felt the need to escape. Thus, ads were written to appear paternalistic and the plea to provide information was meant only to secure the welfare of the escapee. Any impression of mistreatment became a simple misunderstanding. Politics and law demanded justice (the return of property) and preservation of a sterling reputation. No white person need look too deeply into the facts of each runaway situation. When comparing the claims of white men to blacks credibility automatically was awarded the white man. The Northwest Ordinance banned slavery and forced labor, but little changed in the lives of slaves brought into the territory, except the labeling applied to their status.

Blacks, free or bound, had no standing as American citizens. Their children were denied access to white schools, they were encouraged to open their own places of worship, and at camp meetings they were often segregated. Ohioans and persons in other territories, most who migrated from the South and the North never intended to give blacks equal rights. According to historian Leon F. Litwack, the state of Ohio faced with the possible migration of blacks into the area “provided a classic example of how anti-immigration legislation could be invoked to harass Negro residents.” Black Laws provided a solution for regulating any blacks who managed to settle in the territory.

White migrants from the North faced difficulty in supporting the Black Laws. They had no desire to imitate the actions taken against blacks in the slave states. Yet, they worried about economic competition from free blacks who might choose to move to the state. More importantly, many white northerners were just as bigoted as southerners. Southerners, long accustomed to a social and economic hierarchical system in which blacks occupied the lowest level never hid their intent toward blacks. They very much supported the Black Laws passed by Ohio legislators in 1804. Across the different territories of the Northwest Black Laws varied, but for the most part they resembled those passed in Ohio that compelled blacks entering the state to post bond of $500 guaranteeing good behavior and to produce a

660 Ibid.
661 Leon Litwack, North of Slavery (Chicago, 1961), 72.
court paper as proof that they were free.\footnote{Ibid.} For many these restrictions ended ideas about settling in the Old Northwest.

Many black citizens residing in Cincinnati, Ohio, decided to remove themselves from the inequality and bigotry in the 1820s. Proponents of the Black Laws, according to a local newspaper, discovered too late that they had driven off “the sober, honest, industrious, and useful portion of the colored population,” which lessened “much of the moral restraint ... on the idle and indolent, as well as the profligate.”\footnote{Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 17, 1829.} The problem the newspaper failed to note was that proponents of oppressing blacks wanted no African Americans in the area, whether deemed bad or good.

Western citizens failed to see the hypocrisy of their position. As proponents of equality, settlers fought for their rights whenever they believed the government or individuals threatened them. The treatment they gave to blacks undermined the claim that they practiced equal justice. In respect to the treatment of blacks, like many of their eastern peers, westerners believed blacks to be lesser beings. Inferior beings lacked the right to equal treatment and were unable to understand or avail themselves of the privileges afforded by American law. Some authors, noted that as inferiors, blacks needed the paternal care given them by whites. Sometimes that care necessitated harsh treatment, but most often it offered security.

Political scientists Desmond King and Rogers M. Smith challenge ideas that the mistreatment of blacks simply are part of an unequal power relationships aimed at establishing a structural hierarchy that supports the superiority of white economic or social standing. They propose that politics matter. Looking at racial systems through the lens of what King and Smith call “racial orders,” offers a fresh perspective. They assert that if a racial order of white supremacy hampered the economic interests of whites, it is hard to claim economic aims drove that order. Thus, the antebellum laws that banned free blacks in Old Northwest states may well have hurt the labor cost accrued by white employers.\footnote{Desmond S. King, Rogers M. Smith, “Racial Orders in American Political Development.” The American Political Science Review, Vol. 99, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), 75-92.} It made
more sense economically for Northwestern whites to encourage black settlement. The fact that that black migration was discouraged shows the contest between black and white supremacy was driven by the desire for political, as well as economic and social preeminence.

Blacks were not the only recipients of unjust treatment before the law due to racial difference. Indians also received unfair treatment and unlike blacks enjoyed far less chance to assert any right to political or social power. Their story in terms of the settlers’ white identity formation involved political machinations by way of treaties, land purchases, and wars. The Indian received the losing hand as a result of each of these maneuvers, despite some support from groups such as the Quakers.

The Indians living in the region did not agree to American border claims and did not view their homelands open for settlement. By the early 1790s, the Washington administration understood the political value of settling ongoing clashes between the advancing white American settlers and Indians. Western lands and settlement were important to the future of the nation economically and diplomatically. Samuel Prescott Hildreth’s narrative details the purchase of Ohio lands by the Marietta Company and the details describe a rather unfair exchange even though the Northwest Ordinance required fair dealings. Hildreth wrote, “the Union, but will be greatly benefited by the measure, considered in any other point of view; for, without any expense except a small allowance of purchase-money to the natives, the United States will have within their protection, seventeen million, five hundred thousand acres of very fine land, to dispose of as they may think proper.”

Washington eager to protect the nation’s gains dispatched “Mad Anthony” Wayne to quiet any pressing Indian problem. He supposedly did so with a victory in the Battle of Fallen Timbers (1794). Indians, having been defeated, felt compelled to sue for peace. Representatives from the various tribes met with Wayne at Fort Greeneville in western Ohio. The Americans and Indians spent eight months negotiating the Treaty of Greeneville (1795) before signing it. The two groups recognized boundaries for

---

666 Hildreth, 91.
settlement, the Indians received a monetary payment and goods as well as a promise of goods to be delivered yearly. Settlers heralded the victory and saw it as the beginning of the end for Indians. Shortly after, white settlers broke the treaty by settling beyond their borders and the skirmishes began again. Politically, on both the national and local levels, Indians presented an obstacle to overcome. If the treaties failed to settle the disputes over land settlers would resort to other means.

As white settlers continued their march forward claiming new land for their own, they insisted they were not the only side violating the legal boundaries set by treaties. They claimed Indian treachery over land prompted them to ignore laws that shifted like sand. One account related, “These lands, with a large surrounding region, were one of the most favorite portions of the hunting ground which the Indians had surrendered in their several treaties; and the treaty of 1795 seemed to close the last fond hope of ever after enjoying them. Yet the hunters living about Sandusky, and on the different branches of the Muskingum, continued not only to visit there, but until the winter before the last war with Great Britain commenced, they were in large parties during the hunting season….”

Some back east might worry about the excesses of settlers using natural resources. Settlers in response claimed the Indians had no regard for proper use of the land and the animals that inhabited it. Assertions made clear that Indians were responsible for the disappearance of game, “The bear continued in considerable abundance until their last great hunt in the winter of 1810-11. That winter was a favorable season for them to effect the object they seemed to have in view, which was to destroy the game, the weather being cold, with several falls of snow. The carcasses of many deer were found in the woods bordering the settlements in Washington and Athens counties, which appeared to be wantonly destroyed by the savages.” In the battle for vindication of their own actions, it was essential that the white westerner position himself as better than as well as more observant of the laws of nature and government than the Indian. The tribes deserved their fate.

Historian William Franz examining the treaties and the words of those who negotiated with the tribes maintains that while Indians battled whites to maintain their culture they also sought material gain

---

667 Hildreth, 409.
668 Ibid.
in the relationship. Franz claims that white negotiators believed Indians often threatened attacks in order to goad settlers into seeking terms for peace that included “presents.” Pointing out that Indians engaged in profit making activities undermined the idea of the tribes as unconcerned about personal gain and gave more support to westerners seeking aid against the Indians from the United States government. Settlers understood that their political clout and economic growth lay in making Indians seem an untrustworthy adversary.

The Battle of the Thames also provided support for the westerner’s plea for aid from the government. This particular conflict, a pivotal American victory during the War of 1812, provided frontier settlers and militias some cover and political capital in light of their overall failure to conquer the British in Canada. The Northwest citizen saw the War of 1812 as a means to defeat and remove both the Indians and British threat. On October 5, 1813, General William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory and a future president of the United States, led an army of Americans against a force of British soldiers and Indian warriors. The British army, retreating from Fort Malden, had just suffered a blow at the hands of Oliver Hazard Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie (1813). Tecumseh, a Shawnee Native American chief, convinced the British Commander, Colonel Procter to halt his retreat and make a stand on the banks of the Thames River. The American army won a total victory. The Indians fought fiercely, but scattered after the death of Tecumseh on the battlefield. His death delighted many pioneers who feared his growing power among Indian Tribes in the region.

Since the early nineteenth century Tecumseh had worked among different tribes and managed to form a confederacy whose goal was to restore the Indian lifestyle, forego associations with white traders, and stop white Americans from seizing more land. Tecumseh's death and General Harrison's victory marked the end of Tecumseh's Confederacy. A Poem ‘The battle of the Thames” written shortly after the famous conflict and published later in 1840, noted the cowardice of the British in battle, while praising

---

Tecumseh’s heroism and worthiness as a combatant. It also maintained that Tecumseh’s savagery required his defeat. As William Emmons, editor of the volume publishing the poem, maintained, “This Historic Poem was written some years past, with no other view than to render a just tribute of praise to all who shared in the perils of that ever memorable event, which saved the defenseless frontier inhabitants from the scalping knife and tomahawk of the Indian allies of Great Britain, under the lead of the renowned Chief Tecumseh, who fell in single combat.”  

The poem not only discredited the British, it also gave credit to the Indian warrior. The result, it built up praise for the white frontiersman who bested both on the battlefield. Though Indian relations with white settlers continued to be adversarial after 1815, victory at Thames underscored the bravery and fortitude of the western frontiersman in the minds of all Americans.

Over the next three decades, Indians in the old Northwest signed treaties, forsaking claims to the land in this region. While legally able to sell away their homes, they, like blacks were regarded as weak in character. They needed white guidance. Laws put in place on the local level protected Indians were meant not to restrain them, but to protect them from their own failings. One such law in Michigan read, “Francois Fafard shall not be permitted to sell or trade away brandy to the Indians, on pain of confiscation and loss of his habitation, and of the brandy found thereon, or effects received for the same.”

Ultimately, Indians could never be regarded as American citizens by Euro-American settlers. They, as well as blacks failed to meet the standards that western citizens were establishing in terms of moral, social, and legal behavior. More importantly, Indians were not white.

Conclusion

---

670 William Emmons, *The Battle of the Thames: or The Death of Tecumseh.*
Westerners identified themselves through their laws, government, and political affiliation. As Hobbes and Williams stated, laws and governments held society together and helped persons understand themselves and their culture. As the new nation faced the coming of the millennium in 1800 settlers moved westward with visions that were full of promise, both secularly and according to the scriptures. Like the earliest colonists they understood that with the opportunity to create a new and just society came the possibility of judgment. Settlers might see that judgment by way of failure in their new ventures, Indian threats, punishment from God, and censure from Americans residing in the settled states back east. The need to justify their actions and prove themselves as worthy, indeed exemplary, American citizens meant creating a society bound by law and order and bound by republican values. Republicanism protected freedoms, retained independence, and promoted moral and civic behavior. These underpinned the identity westerners wished to portray.

Movement westward enabled settlers to display their independence as they pushed-back against government restrictions when issues of economic gain and free expression were threatened. Because their contact with government officials at most levels forged somewhat more personal relationships settlers felt they had more of a hand in shaping their government. As regions changed from territorial status to statehood pioneers were able to experiment with and choose the laws and government structure that best suited their needs and interests. The pioneers believed that their ability to form republican government from its beginning stages made the frontier settler more attuned to what it meant to be America. Meanwhile, persons who lived in the existing thirteen states remained more rooted to their British origins.

Western settlers suffering less from the British legacy, more easily adapted to and connected to the American political party that best represented their interests and the values they regarded as important. When Federalists under the guidance of George Washington supported land acquisitions, recognized the importance of local government, and claimed the mantle of republican values westerners supported them.

---

672 Hobbes, *Leviathan* and Williams “Learning the Law.”
673 *Journal of Presbyterian History* “American Millennium Visions, 1776-1800”, 125
After the Adams presidency and the distrust spawned by the Alien and Sedition Acts, most westerners turned to the party of Jefferson. Frontiersmen shifted their backing to the Democratic-Republican administrations of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. The Virginia triumvirate of presidents seemed to promote small entrepreneurial and agricultural concerns, cheaper public lands, and protection from British and Indian threats.

While they considered themselves privileged to have the opportunity to begin their lives anew, frontier settlers were reluctant to award that same opportunity to non-whites. Free and enslaved blacks held no political rights or social recognition as they moved into the territories they believed would offer freedoms long denied them. White settlers considered blacks as an economic drain, a social blight, and weak dependents. They offered a stark contrast to superior white society. Laws were fashioned to keep them marginalized and drive them elsewhere.

Life on America’s first frontier also brought whites into conflict with the land’s Indian inhabitants. Federal, state and local governments worked to pave the way for continued white settlement. The federal government’s methods ranged from unfair treaties, to outright warfare, and in the 1830s federal legislation forced removal of Indians to territory west of the Mississippi. Westward migration did not just happen in antebellum America. Movement west required facilitation. Elected officials, politicians, and judges encouraged by constituents provided that ease of movement in return for votes.

For good or ill the laws and government that westerners chose helped define them. On the positive side they exhibited strong ties to freedoms, rights, civil engagement, individualism, self-sufficiency, and at times they demonstrated true acts of bravery. On the negative side, the laws they established allowed them to deny those same opportunities to non-whites. While we can easily identify the negatives, the westerner on America’s first frontier justified their decisions and believed the law and the nation’s future compelled them to act as they did.
Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

By 1830, at least five of the dozens of newspaper and magazines published in the Old Northwest territory and Kentucky printed articles claiming the frontier line now lay west of the region’s borders. These publications issued all within a few years of one another, lend credence to the idea that many settlers in the region no longer considered themselves living on the edge of civilization. The west at least geographically was relegated to the plains states and the territories opening as part of the Louisiana Purchase. These locales as well as places alongside and across the Rocky Mountains were the new American West.

While some looking at the map might have suggested that in 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase the designation of West had already moved past the Old Northwest there is no evidence in the newspapers or diaries presented here to suggest settlers felt they were no longer inhabiting a western frontier. According to their written words, people in Old Northwest continued to view themselves as the western “most settled” area of the nation. The land acquired through the purchase were largely unsettled and unexplored as American territory. It does seem plausible that citizens of the Old Northwest would have appreciated the buffer between themselves and the Spanish and welcomed the unlimited port of deposit along the Mississippi that came with the purchase of New Orleans from the French.

Despite American lands expanding in 1803, by 1830 a westward-looking nation simply had to view a map to realize the fundamental truth of the notion that the west had moved. The conclusions featured here reflect the reality that the First American West or frontier idea, once so central to the Old

---

674 A series of newspapers advertised upcoming Pioneer Celebration days meant to commemorate a proud past. The Sentinel and Gazette (Wisconsin, 1829); The Scioto Gazette (Ohio, 1832); and the Cleveland Daily Herald (Ohio, 1860) are few of the ads. From 1820 through 1841 the Louisville Public Advertiser published a series of news articles and editorials which located the frontier to the southwest and border with Mexico and the northwest Some of the dates include for these articles include Louisville Public Advertiser (Louisville, KY) Wednesday, November 08, 1820 Louisville Public Advertiser (Louisville, KY) Saturday, September 27, 1823 Louisville Public Advertiser (Louisville, KY) Thursday, November 12, 1829; Louisville Public Advertiser (Louisville, KY) Thursday, March 11, 1841; Louisville Public Advertiser (Louisville, KY) Wednesday, April 07, 1841.
Northwest, remained a living concern as new territories opened and the nation moved closer to the Pacific Ocean. The Old Northwest settlers despite the designation as something other than current frontier, retained ideas of “frontierism” and held onto the western identity that emerged from the actions and thoughts of those persons recorded in these pages. Moreover, the Old Northwest pioneers’ ideas of west and westerner remained influential as a factor in formulating a sense of place and person. The Ohio River Valley settler had been part of the First American West and was the first Westerner.

The ideas of the settlers recorded in this text about their identity as Americans and frontiersmen for the most part combined earlier European influence, developing ideas about the uniqueness of the American nation and citizen, the belief that western settlement offered the opportunity to create a new lifestyle and persona, some wishful thinking about their own accomplishments, and the denigration of lifestyles and customs of non-whites. Their letters, diaries, newspaper articles and government documents reveal that they wanted to be viewed as able, individualistic, Christian, civilized, western, and American. Though the records offered in this text defined them by race, ethnicity, sex, and in a complicated fashion class they also relied upon religion, politics, education region, and nation to round out their character.

As time progressed so did the ways in which people of the Ohio River Valley identified themselves. While some areas of the Old Northwest, especially Wisconsin and Michigan, still met the designation of “frontier” set by the United States Census Bureau, because of their population density the book, Cincinnati in 1826, confirmed feelings that the region was now as settled and advanced as any eastern locale. The book’s authors boasted that the city included a library, a fine arts academy, a museum, literary organizations, several levels of the court system, churches of many denominations, and an effective government. All of these elements of culture, stability, and order underscored the progress of the city, and the entire state over a mere decade. The authors of Cincinnati in 1826 bragged, “The

---

675 United States Census Bureau’s definition of “unsettled” or frontier territory was that which had population densities of less than 2 people per square mile is found in John T. Juricek, “American Usage of the Word “Frontier” from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner,” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society (1966) 10-34.

676 Benjamin Drake and Edward Deering Mansfield, Cincinnati in 1826 (Cincinnati, OH: Morgan, Lodge, and Fisher, 1827).
progress of Ohio in wealth and numbers, since her admission as a member of the confederacy, has been altogether unprecedented. Less than a quarter of a century ago, the boundaries which now include the fourth state in the union, marked the limits of an infant, remote territory.” The statement implies that only a truly industrious and capable group of American individuals could have accomplished so much in such a short period.

While advertisements for festivities celebrating the pioneer past supported the idea that the settlement period had ended, they also gave evidence that the frontier period still influenced the ways in which persons living in Ohio, Indiana and so on wished to present themselves and the past. Advertisements such as that In the Indiana Journal broadcast the idea that the frontier experience was a proud one. Organizers of the celebrations touted the ventures of the region’s earlier settlers as successes. This younger generation of journalists noted the accomplishments of men as brave and honorable citizens, but they gave special praise to women settlers for having suffered all types of hardship to care for family and community. For example, they recounted the difficulties of pioneer mothers as they watched over their children under the most challenging of circumstances. According to the authors, “if ranked among all American women earned the designation matchless.” 677 Women, in the view of the newest white male generation, remained bound by a narrow range of acceptable behaviors; that of white middle and upper class norms. Yet, their achievements as the first settlers earned them praise and set them apart from the newer residents of the area. The frontier women could both limit and promote behaviors in the female of 1826.

In 1827, the Indiana Journal encouraged women to be the guardians of home and hearth, 678 and the Milwaukee Sentinel (1836) made it clear to readers that “there was nothing so lamentable than children under the guardianship of an uneducated woman.” 679 The statement indicates that the traditional patriarchal system remained in place. Mother’s place in the home remained sacrosanct, yet it is worth

677 Indiana Journal (Indianapolis, IN), July 23, 1836.
678 Ibid., May 1, 1827
679 Milwaukee Sentinel (Milwaukee, WI) May 22, 1838.
recognizing that with the rise of separate spheres women were regarded as the superior sex in terms of Christian values. Men were increasingly seen as already immured in the world of capitalistic competition, whereas women, supposedly, represented a portion of life in which superior morals could still prevail. My contention is not that women were equals, but that under the separate spheres doctrine women were believed and sometimes even required to function as the moral agents of a society moving toward a purely commercial, and hence competitive ethos.

The idea of women as limited in activity by their gender and more moral had become as true in large portions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois as it was in the East. Separate spheres did leave women some cultural space within which to create and retain a female-centered identity. Unfortunately, the ability to operate outside the strictures of societal expectations, a feature of life women had dealt with during the early period of northwest settlement, was curtailed. No longer could women employ the justification of survival to excuse handling a weapon or building a roof.

Were women, especially those on the first frontier, dissatisfied with their lot in life? That question has no firm answer. Some women might have felt constrained by white male and female theories about their place in society. Still, the wives and mothers writing about the frontier that appear in these pages seemingly were more preoccupied with daily life and its demands than worrying about the equality of the sexes. There is an undeniable element of pragmatism in their writing: this was their life, and they had to live it. Women, like Anna Bentley, filled letters with stories about the hard work faced on a daily basis. Bentley also never missed an opportunity to praise her husband for his struggles as he cared for her and their children. Perhaps she simply put the best face on a bad situation and felt underappreciated and/or limited, but the fact that she wrote glowingly about her spouse belies that. Anna could have just as easily left her husband’s achievements and successes unmentioned. She could have mentioned him in passing and alluded to the fact that he was well and working hard. She did not. The same holds true for Lucy

---

680 Weekly Indiana State Journal (Indianapolis, IN), November 27, 1856.
Hastings, Mary Bledsoe, and the other women whose words are recorded here. They took the opportunity to praise their husband and suggest the superiority of their lives.

And what of their male companions? What do the words of the fathers, husbands and sons tell us about their lives? Zebulon Pike, James Hall, and Timothy Flint as well as others described the men who settled the Old Northwest in their texts and diaries as strong, brave, and truly emblematic of what the American male should strive to be. Daniel Boone’s exploits and accomplishments are recounted in the works of John Filson. Their deeds when rescuing Indian captives, clearing and planning the land, and building a home with nothing but an ax in hand are recounted in the written work of those authors mentioned above. Richard Slotkin in his book *Regeneration through Violence* identifies the literature of the New Republic period such as Cooper’s *Leatherstocking* series as the foundation of the frontier myth. Slotkin’s work offer a critique of the myth, which he claims was a response to the social and psychological anxieties of Europeans as they confronted life in a very different and challenging New World setting. While there is some truth to the assertions, it is also true that the first American Westerner presents us with a more complicated set of responses to the frontier. Though these men faced anxieties the narratives they present display the natural fears of change, at the same time the settler carried an idea of what a new life unencumbered by European values might be. They, not Cooper or Thoreau created a reality concerning their lives and their personality according to their needs and experience. Somewhat fabricated or true, they required no literary texts to interpret what they faced and felt as they placed their story on paper for others to read. Some claim the actions of frontiersmen were romanticized and exaggerated for public consumption. Many insist that they cheated and abused Indians and blacks. Still it is hard to deny them their due. Whether we currently approve of the settlers’ activities, they faced a set of circumstances we can only imagine and yet made their mark on land they regarded as America.

---

682 Flint, Pike, Hall.
683 John Filson and Paul Royster.
684 Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*. 
As time moved on men living in the Old Northwest were increasingly immured in the world of capitalistic competition. Completion of the Erie Canal, population increase, and the growth of business and politics changed the landscape economically, socially, and physically. The need to portray themselves as hardy and brave was replaced by a need to display their economic and political prowess. Involvement in politics both locally and federally led to legislation that helped underscore the changes that occurred in the Old Northwest as of 1830. The completion of Indian Removal during the Jackson and Van Buren administrations helped citizens of Kentucky and the Old Northwest feel safer in their homes, opened lands previously closed off, and seemed to settle the Indian problem. While a few tribes continued to reside in the region, in 1827, the Indiana Journal reported that delegates of the Creek Nation were already passing through to investigate lands west of the territory’s borders. According to reports from the paper, they found the new lands to their liking.\textsuperscript{685} Newspapers in Wisconsin after 1828 seemed more concerned with Indian troubles in Oregon, Florida, and Canada than in the Old Northwest Territory. By 1838 the same newspapers reported that by treaty Indians surrendered all title to lands in the lower portion of Michigan.\textsuperscript{686}

How to justify the disappearance of the Indians fell to men such as Judge Story, an Ohio resident and historian, who lamented the sad tale of tribal life. He claimed that their disappearance from the region was not the fault of white Americans. Instead, it was inevitable. Story wrote in the Western Intelligencer of the tribes, “melancholy history” and claimed, “By the law of their nature they seem destined to a slow but sure extinction.”\textsuperscript{687} The Indian was no longer a threat for the settlement process (except for a few incursions in Illinois that the government quickly handled).\textsuperscript{688} The tribes had given way to the resourceful pioneers who established settlements in the region. The white settlers’ firm belief in the inevitability and even justice of Manifest Destiny coupled with their increasing numbers and technological advancement trumped the skills Indians had, or so went the thinking. In fact, this pattern of

\textsuperscript{685} Indiana Journal, September 11, 1827.  
\textsuperscript{686} Milwaukee Sentinel (Milwaukee, WI), February 13, 1838.  
\textsuperscript{687} Western Intelligencer Religious, Literary, and Political (Hudson, OH).  
\textsuperscript{688} Indiana Journal, June 30, 1832.
thought continued as settlement moved further westward and remains part of the Vanishing Indian trope, whereby native peoples, as well as frontiersmen, would be seen as part of the past and not of the future.

As for blacks living in the Old Northwest, historian Leon Litwack informs readers that while life had never been easy for them, conditions for ex-slaves and free blacks worsened as the debate over abolition grew more heated after 1830. Although both the Northwest Ordinance and Missouri Compromise outlawed slavery in the Old Northwest, bigotry and abuse continued. Reports of court cases involving demands for the return of runaway slaves made their way into print. As the violence in areas applying for statehood increased, so did the number of news articles dedicated to reporting the ongoing struggle. Editorial pages carried more opinion pieces as citizens and officials took turns placing their point of view for or against the slave trade and the entire institution of slavery on the record. Slavery versus abolition, and in larger terms, North versus South, came to dominate the racial discourse of that day. The area moved in consciousness from being the frontier to being a major part of the northern section, even while some citizens who emigrated from the southern states remained in favor of the despicable institution.

Although many whites might have disliked slavery, most never considered placing black youngsters alongside white children in schools opening in the Old Northwest or Kentucky. The assumption that racial separation was natural went mostly unchallenged. This is seen by the rarity of cases in which it was challenged – for example, at Oberlin College, founded in Ohio in 1833. Oberlin remained an outlier because of its decision to admit women and blacks, which means that most schools were comfortable with old pattern of demographic hierarchy. As educational opportunities declined for some, for white students the number of schools and universities available increased as the population

---

689 Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery.*
690 *Indiana Journal* and the *Scioto Gazette* among other newspapers reported on court cases that decided the validity of claims made by slave owners demanding the return of human property.
691 Ibid.
continued to grow. The fact that the Ohio River Valley Region opened schools at a rate surpassing most previously settled areas of America demonstrates just how committed many westerners were to education. To these westerners, the new schools served to prove their civility and ensure their future successes.

Education out west, required more than the ability to read, write, and master sums. The Reverend John Witherspoon of Princeton not only preached about the health benefits of outdoor activity, he also maintained a moral component to maintaining an able body. The body, a gift from God, must be cared for. Reliance on ancient ideas of republicanism fit nicely into the need to keep a sound mind and body. Ancient Greeks admired the political and intellectual prowess displayed by Athens, but also prized the disciplined and physically gifted bodies produced in Sparta. Both figured into notions of how to raise the best republican citizens. The West given its open fields and growing number of schools offered a landscape capable of promoting the improvement of both mind and body.

Other institutions such as churches, also proved civility and Christian morality remained a part of the settler experience. Reputation, as shown in the chapters above, marked a settler as trustworthy and civilized. This was especially true of men who immigrated to the region from the South. They demonstrated a willingness to defend their honor despite the risk of death. Men professed faith by action. They brought their families long distances to attend camp-meetings even though the travel took needed resources from the homestead. Christianity mattered to the white settlers recorded in these chapters. The new territory replete with obstacles to faith required a new form of worship. The camp meeting filled the need. Described as new and inventive, whether truly unique or not, served the settler’s hankering for God, companionship, a respite from the harsh conditions of frontier life, and an emotional outlet for pent up feelings. It also offered the chance to claim a superior closeness to the Almighty as whites brought Christian values west.

---

694 Simon Bronner.
695 Witherspoon.
By the mid-1800s brick and mortar churches, once scarce, now listed weekly services, special events, and meeting on the pages of the local papers around 1830? Religious revivals, in the past the stuff of camp meetings, now took place within many of the organized churches. Chicago’s *Inter-Ocean* newspaper exclaimed that its readers should recognize the new religious revival taking place within church congregations across the state of Illinois. Those who chose to become church members often actively celebrated their Christian identity. Denominations that claimed to be party to the newest resurgence of religious fervor included Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian congregations. Residents of the Old Northwest no longer claimed a religious frontier.

Just as churches grew, so, too, did government. People who moved west after 1787 understood that the Northwest Ordinance set forth law for the territory. Thomas Jefferson and those who assisted him in crafting the Northwest Ordinance set up guidelines for property acquisition, education, and labor system (rejection of slavery), and the structure of government. All of these requirements were especially helpful for guiding a region from territorial through to statehood. It was always part of the frontier idea that these territories would gain their stars on the national flag. The early laws did little if anything to curb entrepreneurial fervor. The first American West was open to all manner of trade and commerce. Keeping the region free of excess government regulation depended upon the civic involvement of settlers. The letters, diaries, and newspapers listed herein demonstrate that white males were deeply engaged in politics. Some settlers felt connected to it in a way that today’s Americans do not. Many people today feel detached from their legislators and powerless to effect change. Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich asserts that, “a large portion of the public doesn’t even bother voting. Only 57.5 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots in the 2012 presidential election.

Put simply, most Americans feel powerless, and assume the political game is fixed. So why bother? A study published by Princeton’s Martin Gilens and Northwestern University’s Benjamin Page confirms the lack of public belief in their ability to change government. Gilens and Page analyzed 1,799

---

696 *Inter-Ocean* (Chicago, IL), February 15, 1874.
policy issues and examined the role of business and the average citizen in deciding policy for each area. Their conclusion: “The preferences of the average American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy.”\textsuperscript{697} The Pew Research Center reports that merely 53\% of Americans know the party affiliation of their local or federal representatives are.\textsuperscript{698}

A number of settlers on America’s first frontier felt differently about their connection to politicians and government. Chances were they had direct contact with their representatives. As shown in the records some worked side by side in the fields as each worked to settle the land. Most settlers expected government to be responsive to their needs and took an active role in making certain that it was. In that respect, they believed they possessed an opportunity to develop a form of government that truly met the goals set forth in the Constitution. The West allowed them a real opportunity to experiment with leadership and law in a region that they perceived (despite their Indian neighbors) had no law or government.

Experimentation with law and social distinctions complicated any discussion of class as a status marker. The opportunity to recreate one’s self and place any negative perceptions of character in the past continued as people newly arrived and those who had been settled for some time in territories fashioned their environment. Status might well be tied to economic prowess for some, but religion, education, and profession, as well as civic minded activity remained important markers of status. No one character trait automatically determined identity as upper, middle, or lower class and one’s place could change as circumstances altered.

The men and women recorded here told stories about themselves, the Indians, politics, religion, marriage, settlement and education. They believed that the Old Northwest was America’s first western frontier. The western identity created through the rhetoric employed by these settlers of the region remained influential in defining the westerner even as settlement moved from the Plains, to the Rocky

\textsuperscript{698} “Many Voters do not know Their Representative’s Party” in “GOP Has Midterm Advantage” \textit{Pew Research Center for People and the Press} August 2014, 3.
Mountains, into Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, and through the southwest. The independent, self-sufficient, white American male settler or homesteader, speculator, itinerant minister, militiaman, and merchant of Ohio took on some similar and different labels as time passed and so the west of the later nineteenth century was comprised of the cowboy, ranch owner, saloon owner, minister, sheriff, cavalryman, and infamous outlaw. No matter their title, these male and female types kept diaries, wrote letters, and had their stories immortalized in newspapers, in literary works, and dime novels. This textual record lays out for us the characters we most often define as the western American. 699

The western identity created through the rhetoric of settlers of the Old Northwest, even if exaggerated or questionable, tells of the characters we most often define as the western American. 700 Their written record benefitted from the writings left by those left behind by British colonial settlers from New England and Virginia. Those earlier records and stories helped the first American pioneer make sense of his/her new circumstances. The written record provides evidence suggestive of reputations lost and redeemed, loneliness, fields to clear and plow, transportation troubles, Indian threats and capture, and British border troubles that Americans faced. These crop up again and again in the texts examined in this dissertation and continue as part of the story of persons moving to Oregon, California, Texas, Arizona, and so on.

In each instance of settlement after 1830 there are stories told about local governments to establish, the push toward statehood, and the harsh circumstances faced and overcome. The westerner of the Plains and far west encountered new environments both awe-inspiring and harsh and faced dangers that brought shivers to eastern readers. Was the identity they developed and we have often accepted as part of a frontier process passed on from those living in the Ohio River Valley? In some ways the answer is yes, but the process was never completely adopted. New landscapes and developing technologies such

as the railroad and farm implements changed the day to day lifestyle and custom. The overwhelming size and scope of settlement after 1830 often has overshadowed the earlier settlement of America’s first frontier in the Ohio region.

Some might wonder why Americans in the latter half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries connect the nation’s west and westerners to the persons who settled in the Plains, Texas, and the region surrounding and beyond the Rocky Mountains instead of the Old Northwest and Kentucky. Perhaps it is the richer and more romantic visual record that accompanies the words of the settlers from the Far West that makes the pioneers of that region stand out for us.

While portraits of Indian chiefs produced in 1806 by the artist de Saut-Memin captured the likenesses of Indians for the historical record and Indian archives established by Thomas L. Mc Kenney preserved the portraits, Indian artifacts, and records written by white men about the Indians these relics are limited. Though Daniel Boone and his heroic exploits in Kentucky captured the imagination of many Americans who read written accounts, a visual record recounting episodes of settlement in the Old Northwest and Kentucky are scarce. What remains consists mostly of survey sketches, maps, and some portraits and amateur attempts at sketching. George Caleb Bingham did produce some major artistic works which today constitute a huge portion of historical memory from the region and times. But before 1830 these consisted mostly of portraiture of family members.

George Caitlin, one of the earliest artists involved in capturing the American West after 1830 undertook the mission to paint the faces and rituals of the “vanishing” Indian on canvas. In the 1840s and 50s, “the high tide of Manifest Destiny” artist George Caleb Bingham memorialized wagon trains moving west and the spread of democracy as a feature of continuing settlement in paintings such as County Election (1852) and Stump Speaking (1853), as well as Verdict of the People (1853). Bierstadt’s

702 Geotzmann, 40-44.
703 Ibid., 55.
704 Ibid., 205-19.
romantic landscapes of the Rocky Mountains, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon expressed in paint and canvas what settlers in the Old Northwest and Kentucky tried to depict in words—the beauty and awe of the western scenery. The appeal of these works back east shows that the frontier appealed to folks in the East, and contributed to a sense of national unity as people looked at the paintings for confirmation of what was happening in the frontier regions.

As for the male personalities who inhabited these vistas, Frederic Remington and Charles Russell used painting and sculpture to forge an unforgettable masculine image. Russell’s portrayal of cowboys, bank robberies, the “vanishing Indian,” and the Montana frontier sought to depict a lifestyle quickly disappearing as progress and industry grew. Frederic Remington believed it was the nation’s Manifest Destiny to settle the entire span of land from ocean to ocean and even though the settlement might be rife with both tragedy and romance it was inevitable. Russell, Remington and other artists sought to memorialize a moment before the machine age replaced horse and rider, cattle branders, and Indian braves hunting buffalo. These artists celebrated the desire for independence, democracy, virtue, self-sufficiency, and white dominance as necessary components in the identity development of America’s western settler.

Showmanship, a form of popular art, also had a hand in making the far western settlements America’s West in the minds of citizens. Buffalo Bill Cody’s genius allowed him to create theatrical western imagery which soon became part of the American imagination. The fact that Sitting Bull was a co-performer at his shows helped to validate the vision of an authentic west as Cody portrayed it. By the end of the nineteenth century, Cody, a former western scout and dime novel hero, fixed in the minds of Americans the image of the Plains cowboy and Indian, the battles they fought, and the ultimate triumph of the superior white male over challengers. The visual culture of the Plains produced after the Northwest Territory lost its designation of frontier, remained for citizens living outside the American West the standards by which they understood the American West. This somewhat romanticized view of frontier life

---

eclipsed what had gone before in the Ohio River Valley. This version of west offered a satisfying vision of American settlement for many, even as it eventually incensed others.

Enter Frederick Jackson Turner. Every American studies scholar has to reckon with the historiographic legacy of Turner. What about his ideas concerning the frontier? Historian Richard White, points out Turner’s portrayal of frontier significance differs widely from Buffalo Bill Cody’s, yet the two arrive at similar conclusions. Both Cody and Turner lamented the closing of the frontier and portrayed the West and its settlers as having expanded and improved the nation.\footnote{White, Richard, Patricia Nelson Limerick, and James R. Grossman. The Frontier in American Culture: An Exhibition at the Newberry Library, August 26, 1994 - January 7, 1995. Chicago: The Library, 1994. Kindle Edition, Locations 120-128.} Not everyone agrees with that portrayal of the western settler, the close of the west, and take issue with Turner’s methods and conclusions.

To understand Turner’s work requires one to examine his background. Frederick Jackson Turner’s conclusions about the causation of the frontier on American development likely began as he was growing up in Wisconsin. In 1861, the year of his birth, Wisconsin had only been a state for about a decade (1848). His father, a journalist and amateur historian, most certainly influenced his decision to devote his life to the study of history. The stories and editorials he might have read in his father’s paper probably helped shape his opinions about his home state. Stories along with celebrations commemorating the early days of settlement most likely affected his ideas about the frontier as a safety valve, a place where democracy grew, and the source of generations of strong, individualist citizens intent on following an ever-moving frontier line.\footnote{Frederick Jackson Turner Thesis.} This was the America he saw develop, and the America he knew.

The criticism Turner draws from current and recent researchers who ascribe today’s values to his theories push aside the reality that Turner responded to circumstances as he knew them. Indians were no longer a problem, since open land was no longer an issue. Wisconsin residents long settled on their
land feared no backlash from Tribes intent on ending incursions onto their lands. While the placement of Indians onto reservations was an abysmal treatment, it was accepted by a majority and done when Turner wrote his thesis. Turner’s failure to address the treatment of black citizens also, while unfortunate in our current thinking, was not turner’s concern as he prepared to speak to his audience. The problem Turner addressed was a lack of new land to settle overlook the fact that his thesis was not intended to address issues about injured parties. His comments focused on a specific issue; the future of the nation following the close of the frontier. In the 1890s, ideas of white superiority, however misguided, were commonplace
in America and Western Europe. Did he generalize when making his assertions? Yes. Not every frontier settler worked to expand democracy or experiment with the best forms of governance and freedom. Not every westerner behaved in a noble manner. Those included in this dissertation, however, share many of Turner’s ideas about who they were and what they intended in their settlement of the west.

Turner’s philosophy of the frontier and its importance to America came from attitudes that current scholars, in their efforts to redress past offenses, want to sweep under the proverbial carpet. Right or wrong, the newly coined white American settlers who rushed across the Appalachians, across New York, and through the Cumberland Gap created what they understood were or wanted to present as new lives, new communities, true American identities and good democratic government. Like it or not, they are part of our past. They are an important part of our history that might well raise questions, but cannot be disregarded simply as evil or an embarrassment.

As part of our history, white pioneers like all other groups deserve our attempt to understand them in their context and scholars who truly desire to comprehend our heritage should want to know more about them and their ideas and concerns. Often, academics studying the past point to an attitude of triumphalism displayed by the white settlers. For many that superior posture seems repugnant when one considers the persons white pioneers displaced or mistreated. Perhaps it would be just as significant to consider that those same white settlers while seeking to escape economic or social repression in settled areas of the country, might understandably feel a sense of triumph when considering the obstacles and hardships they often overcame. Political circumstances and modern technology accounted for a part of the success of the frontier men and women, but there were other strengths they brought with them which helped in their effort to carve out a new place and make it their homestead and towns their own in terms of governance, economic success, and physical possession. Among the strengths they carried were the ability to grasp opportunities, envision something new, and implement plans to actualize that vision, all the while presenting themselves in a manner flattering to their psychological and emotional expectations. During the New Republic era when political figures and the middling and upper classes were trying to define what it meant to be American, those settling the western region placed independence, democracy,
virtue, self-sufficiency, and white dominance as markers of American identity. To comprehend the fullness of our history scholars must begin to place the legacy the first American westerners left us within the context of their lives and circumstances.

Those circumstances affected how they viewed and portrayed themselves. While we currently focus on identity mostly in terms of race, ethnicity, class, gender and/or sexuality, those elements of who we are did not hold the same weight to a person living in Ohio in 1800. The diaries, letters, and other printed documents presented here describe settlers as western, by locale, as American, as Christian, as farmer, mechanic, or clergyman, male or female, and when necessary in relation to blacks or Indians as white. Discussions about identifying themselves more often move to character traits that set them apart from other groups. This identity of personality and attempts apply the western persona with a broad brush to the citizens of the region was the goal of western writers such as John Filson, James Hall, Timothy Flint and other Old Northwest and Kentucky authors of the period. The issue of identity was far less complicated or divisive. Again, it is important when looking at efforts to create this first western identity that we take care to understand their viewpoint and cautiously try to interpret their ideas of themselves through our beliefs.

This dissertation, supported by rhetorical analysis, uncovers what some settlers on America’s First Frontier regarded as their successes and failures. Through diaries, newspapers, government documents, letters and other textual sources taken from across the different soon-to-be states the pioneer men and women featured here offer a clearer picture of white American settlers’ lives and actions. Those pioneers used their experiences to formulate a western identity for themselves. While that identity may be flawed, fluid, or questionable, it was theirs.

The words “American West” conjure for us ideas of calvary soldiers and scouts, gold rush hopefuls, wagon train groups, ranchers, cowboys, gunfighters, and sheriffs, of the Plains States and far west. Still, it is important that we remember the character traits we use to identify these western persons were rooted in the American frontier identity developed by settlers living in the Od Northwest Territory and Kentucky from the 1770s through the 1820s. The rhetoric the first American westerners used to
describe themselves and their situation, whether factual or not, portrayed their perception of their lives. The depictions written were not just important for the period. Rather these printed words continued to explain the identity of the American Western settler as each generation moved with the frontier line as it progressed toward the Pacific Ocean.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

Newspapers and Magazines

*American Whig Review*, 1832.


*Liberty Hall & Cincinnati Gazette*. Cincinnati, OH: Looker, Palmer & Reynolds, 1815. Publication Office, 1816,


*The Knoxville Gazette*. Knoxville, TN: George Roulstone 1791-96

*The Masonic Miscellany and Ladies' Literary Magazine*. Lexington, KY: William Gibbes Hunt,


*The Western Missionary Magazine; and Repository of Religious Intelligence*. S.l: s.n, 1803-1805.


*Weekly Recorder: A Newspaper Conveying Important Intelligence and Other Useful Matter under the Three General Heads of Theology, Literature, and National Affairs*. Chillicothe, OH. 1814-1821.

Western Star. Lebanon, OH, 1829.


Diaries, Books, and Documents


Ball, Charles. Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man, Who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia, As a Slave, Under Various Masters, and Was One Year in the Navy with Commodore Barney, During the Late War. Containing an Account of the Manners and Usages of the Planters and Slaveholders of the South—a Description of the Condition and Treatment of the Slaves, with Observations Upon the State of Morals Amongst the Cotton Planters,


Birbeck, Morris. An Englishman’s View on America and Slavery. in David McClure Diary of Dr. David McClure New York, NY: Privately Printed, 1899.

Blair, Emma H. The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes As Described by Nicolas Perrot, Bacqueville De La Potherie, Morrell Marston and Thomas Forsyth. Cleveland, OH; A.H. Clark Company 1911.


Dewees, Mary C. "Diary of Mary Coburn Dewees, September, 1787." *Mrs. Mary Dewees's


Doddrige, Joseph. Notes, on the Settlement and Indian Wars, of the Western Parts of Virginia & Pennsylvania, from the Year 1763 until the Year 1783 Inclusive: Together with a View, of the State of Society and Manners of the First Settlers of the Western Country. Wellsburgh, VA: Printed at the Office of the Gazette, for the author, 1824.


Hall, James. *Letters from the West Containing Sketches of Scenery, Manners, and Customs*,


Instances of Indian Genius,” Harrison Hall, Ed. The Port-Folio, 2, 133, Philadelphia, PA: New Publication Office, 1816,


York, NY; Charles Scribners and Sons, 1908.


Jennings, Samuel K. *The Married Lady's Companion, Or, Poor Man's Friend: In Four Parts.*


Marcus, Robert D, David Burner, and Anthony Marcus. *America Firsthand: Readings from*


McKnight, Charles. Our Western Border: Its Life, Forays, Scouts, Combats, Massacres, Red Chiefs, Adventures, Captivities, Pioneer Women, One Hundred Years Ago. Containing the Cream of All the Rare Old Border Chronicles, (now Long Out of Print and Almost Impossible to Procure,) Together with a Large Amount of Fresh and Original Matter Derived from Authentic Sources, the Whole Work Embracing Strange and Thrilling Narratives of Captivities, Daring Deeds, Desperate Conflicts, Exciting Adventures, Personal Prowess, and Aiming, by Judicious Selections, to Present the Fullest, Most
Varied and Most Reliable Portrayal of Border Struggle and Adventure yet Published.


[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/nworder.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/nworder.asp)


Seaver, James E, and Mary Jemison. A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison: Who was Taken by the Indians, in the Year 1755: Containing an Account of the Murder of Her Father and His Family; Her Sufferings; Her Marriage to Two Indians ... Carefully Taken from Her Own Words, Nov. 29th, 1823: to Which Is Added, an Appendix, Containing an Account of the Tragedy at the Devil’s Hole, in 1763, and of Sullivan’s Expedition; the Traditions, Manners, Customs, &c. of the Indians. Canandaigua, NY: J.D. Bemis, 1824.


Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co, 1869.


**Secondary Sources**


280


Bronner, Simon J. *Campus Traditions Folklore from the Old-time College to the Modern Mega-university.* Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2012.

Brown, Bertram. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South.* New York, NY:


Cashin, Joan. ""Black Families in the Old Northwest." *Journal of the Early Republic, Special Issue on Gender* 15, no. 3, 449-75.


Donald, David, and Frederick Palmer. "“Toward a Western Literature, 1820-1860.”* Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 35, no. 3 (1948): 413-28.


Henretta “James A. The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a


Kuklick, Bruce. "Myth and Symbol in American Studies,"" In Locating American Studies: The


Potter, David Morris. *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character.*


Randall, E. O., and Daniel J. Ryan. *History of Ohio; the Rise and Progress of an American State,*


Richter, Daniel K. *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America.*


Stevens, Edward. "“Science, Culture and Morality." In Schools and the /means of Education


Waldstreicher, David. *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American


York: Penguin, 1998
VITA

Susan M. Ortmann

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg; American Studies, 2015

M.A. University of Delaware; American History, 2006

M.A. Millersville University; History, 2004

B.A. Millersville University; History, 2002

TEACHING

Adjunct Professor, Millersville University; 2012-2015
American History
Western Civilization

Lecturer, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg; 2011-2015
American History
American Studies
English Composition
Political Science

Adjunct Professor, Millersville University; 2005-2008
American History

HONORS AND AWARDS

Susan Samuelson Memorial Award for Academic Achievement, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg, 2014

Myers Award for History, Millersville University, 2002

Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, 2002

Richard Keller Award in American History, Millersville University, 2001

SERVICE

Co-President, American Studies Student Association, 2011-2013