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"The invisible lines between us": Border-making in Anglo-America, 1750--1800

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"The invisible lines between us": Border-making in Anglo-America, 1750--1800

Abstract
This thesis explores how the boundary-making practices of white officials came to be the dominant way of dividing and claiming the American landscape. It argues that, in the late colonial era, neither Indians nor officials could actualize their desired boundaries. Indians' map-based boundaries were annulled by white officials while officials' land surveys were subject to onsite termination and manipulation by Indian groups. White frontier settlers, however, developed powerful ways to establish their land claims—namely informal delineations backed by actual settlement—that could not be prevented by officials or Indians. In the final years of the colonial era and the first decades of the independence period, officials co-opted settlers' extra-legal methods of claiming land and applied them on the large scale. This fusion of settler boundary-making practices with those of officials allowed the U.S. government to impose its own geographic ideals on America and its various cultural groups.

Keywords
History, United States, Geography, History of Science
"THE INVISIBLE LINES BETWEEN US": BORDER-MAKING IN ANGLO-AMERICA, 1750-1800

BY

CAMERON B STRANG

BA, McGill University, 2004

THESIS

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This thesis has been examined and approved.

Thesis Director, Eliga Gould, Associate Professor of History

Cynthia Van Zandt, Associate Professor of History

Jan Golinski, Professor of History and Humanities

Date 5/4/08
DEDICATION

Doing history is in many ways a solitary, even lonely, activity, and one that is quite challenging. No novice historian could overcome either the psychological or practical obstacles of this (rather bizarre) life path without a lot of help. Luckily I have been blessed with professors, friends, and family that have made the experience of getting an MA and writing this thesis more than just doable—it has been a blast. As teachers, mentors, and thesis committee members, Cynthia Van Zandt and Jan Golinski have expected great things from me and thus pushed me to always try harder and never settle for mediocrity. Eliga Gould was as helpful and engaging a committee chair as anyone could ask for. He focused my vague ideas into a project that has been exciting, interesting, and (surprisingly) innovative, and I am very proud to have worked with him.

The community of scholars outside of my committee has been equally important to my experience at UNH and, hopefully, a future working in the past. The attention and encouragement of Nicoletta Gullace and Jeff Bolster during my first semester here were invaluable; the confidence they gave me was perhaps the most significant contribution to my entire educational career. Julia Rodriguez helped me expand in new directions (and avoid bankruptcy) by trusting me with a leading role in her HOSLAC project and I am lucky to have been her RA and friend. My fellow graduate students, both in the history department and beyond, taught me how to succeed while enjoying myself along the way.

Lastly, this is for Bill, Karol, and Tyson. The further I get in life the more I realize how impossible it would all be without a loving and supportive family.

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ABSTRACT

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Cameron B Strang

University of New Hampshire, May, 2008

This thesis explores how the boundary-making practices of white officials came to be the dominant way of dividing and claiming the American landscape. It argues that, in the late colonial era, neither Indians nor officials could actualize their desired boundaries. Indians' map-based boundaries were annulled by white officials while officials' land surveys were subject to onsite termination and manipulation by Indian groups. White frontier settlers, however, developed powerful ways to establish their land claims—namely informal delineations backed by actual settlement—that could not be prevented by officials or Indians. In the final years of the colonial era and the first decades of the independence period, officials co-opted settlers' extra-legal methods of claiming land and applied them on the large scale. This fusion of settler boundary-making practices with those of officials allowed the U.S. government to impose its own geographic ideals on America and its various cultural groups.
INTRODUCTION

“This is America! You can’t just come in here and steal our land!”

-It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia, Season II.

In the modern United States, land is divided in standard ways. Dark lines demarcate national borders on maps and, at ground level, border-crossing stations or guarded fences are clear signs on the landscape that we have reached the limits of our own country. Buildings, modified landscapes, fences, and clearings are recognized as signifiers of owned space. The fact that U.S. citizens acknowledge a coherent system of delimiting American territory allows land disputes to be decided by a uniform set of laws. If, however, different groups within the country based their claims to land ownership on entirely different notions of space, land disputes would be chaotic.¹ Not only would each group be unable or unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of other groups’ boundaries, but claims would overlap without any mutually accepted way of resolving who actually has rights to that space. More than likely, conflict would ensue, and the most powerful group would either absorb aberrant systems into its own or force their standards onto weaker groups.

¹ There is only one legally accepted spatial system in the U.S. on which claims are based, yet cultural (and even personal) concepts of space and place, and what landscapes mean to groups and individuals, are still highly varied throughout the country. As anthropologist Keith H. Basso points out, “place-making” involves far more than the border-making methods that bound an area. Landscapes are given meaning through “multiple acts of remembering and imagining” and can serve as sites where personal and social identities can be defined and constructed. Keith H. Basso, Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 6-7.
This process of homogenizing spatial systems through accommodation and compulsion had been occurring in eastern British America since the arrival of European settlers and, by the mid eighteenth century, the three main cultural groups—Indians, white officials, and white settlers—shared much common ground (both geographically and conceptually). Yet the British victory in the Seven Years War and the subsequent white rush into the backcountry made questions of land rights more pertinent than ever, and Indians, officials, and settlers all made claims to this space with their own culturally-distinct systems.

From about 1750 to 1770, Indians and white officials were able to keep each other's systems for claiming space (and thus right to own it) in check because both of their systems were based on mutually recognized formal geographic conventions and technologies. Thus Indians, who recognized that they were increasingly outnumbered, hoped to have their rights recognized through European-style maps. These boundaries, however, were only substantive if white officials agreed to sanction and respect them. Officials based their own spatial system on onsite land surveys, but Indians could alter or forestall these boundaries by coercing surveyors in the West. Chapters One and Two show how both of these groups' reliance on formal border-making systems prevented either of them from achieving their desired boundaries.

Chapter Three demonstrates how white settlers, a cultural group that utilized informal and illegal ways of claiming space, were actually the most successful at taking up the West for themselves. The settler land ethic required only very basic technology to create physical marks of possession that were legitimized by the act of settlement itself.
Although neither Indians nor white officials considered their claims to be valid, they could not prevent the masses of squatters from overrunning the frontiers.

In the last years of the colonial period and the early decades of the Republic, white officials successfully integrated settlers and the most efficient aspects of their land ethic into official policy. This new all-white racial alliance permitted officials to use extralegal violence to impose its own geographic system onto reluctant Indians. By the end of the eighteenth century, Indians' border-making powers were no longer recognized and official borders could no longer be manipulated. The stage was set for the transformation of the entire American landscape by and for white Americans.

Scholars have written extensively on both border-making and the eighteenth century Anglo-American frontier, but they have overlooked how different border-making systems collided in this setting and why the geography of white officials ultimately triumphed to become the only recognized way of conceptualizing land. The Anglo-American frontier is a particularly interesting setting to study boundary-making in its cultural context because it was perhaps the only area in the early modern Atlantic World that was divided by racism, at least in the modern sense of the word. The violence and new ideologies of the 1750s and 1760s made Indians and whites see each other as inherently different enemies and create boundaries of separation. The borders made by

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2 There are several variations in scholarship accounting for this shift. Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); originally published in 1963, Gosset skipped the eighteenth century as a key era in the growth of modern concepts of race, claiming that Indians were considered to be “damned from birth by God” in the seventeenth century and “damned by biology” in the nineteenth, ignoring the impact of the 1700s. George M. Frederickson, Racism: A Short History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Frederickson found the roots of nineteenth century racism in the Renaissance, but racial typologies began to reach their modern form throughout the eighteenth century. Nicholas Hudson, “From ‘Nation’ to ‘Race’: The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth Century Thought,” in Eighteenth-Century Studies, 29.3 (1996), 247-269; Hudson argued that Indians were perceived as several disparate “nations” until the late eighteenth century, when they were conflated into one race.
both races only further aggravated the hate and the two peoples soon considered living together to be impossible.

This thesis incorporates elements of several fields of history, including the history of geographic science and technology, the historiography on borderlands and frontiers, the New Indian History, and more general works on the Anglo-American backcountry. Recent writings on border-making sciences have focused almost exclusively on maps, especially their function as Foucaultian “technologies of power.” The historian of cartography J.B. Harley was the most explicit exponent of examining maps as a form of imperial discourse, claiming that in “imperial contexts, maps regularly supported the direct execution of territorial power.” I am not arguing against his theory that maps, like other discourses, are inherently biased constructions worthy of postmodern exegesis, but I found that maps themselves did little to actualize real possession of—much less power over—the land. Onsite delineations, either through surveys or less formal squatter’s rights, were more important to substantiating whites’ claims of possession.

Considering the historiographical emphasis on cartography as a “classical form of power-knowledge,” it is surprising that historians of science who have studied surveying in colonial settings have generally done so without any reference to its broader cultural implications. Instead of considering how people at ground level employed and

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4 Harley, 170. See also the work of Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, Christian Jacob, Jerry Broton, Margarita Bowen, and Matthew H. Edney.

responded to this visible form of delineation, historians of surveying have narrowly studied surveyors, their techniques, and their instruments or have conflated surveying with its Cartesian byproduct, mapping.  

Conversely, with the exception of a few works on cartography, histories written about the late colonial backcountry have almost totally ignored border-making sciences. There are excellent studies on the role of science and technology in the early contact period, especially on how differing notions about nature, technology, and the body engendered concepts of racial difference that legitimated European conquest. Works on

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8 One important exception to this is Alan Taylor, who has shown the importance of land claiming systems, both formal and informal, to white land ownership in the Northeast. Alan Taylor, “‘A Kind of Warr’: The Contest for Land on the Northeastern Frontier, 1750-1820,” in The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., Vol. 46, no. 1 (Jan., 1989); and The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

9 See especially Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); and Joyce E. Chaplin, Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). British colonists in the early seventeenth century believed the traits that made Indians distinct were determined by culture and climate, not naturally inherited. Indian skin was thus “tawny” because of exposure to the sun or the intentional dying of otherwise white infants. This did not necessarily make them inferior to Europeans, who often saw Indians as impressive physical specimens living in a state of naked innocence long since lost to the English. Yet, according to Joyce Chaplin, Europeans began to perceive Indian susceptibility to
the mid to late eighteenth century, however, eschew the lens of science in favor of culture, empire, and law.\textsuperscript{10} Thus instead of using contemporary science as a way of understanding racism in this period, historians have turned to violence, psychology, and language to explain this all important change in human relations.\textsuperscript{11}

I argue that the ways Indians, officials, and white settlers made borders, and the conflicts that arose between different methods, had an important effect on culture, law, race, and violence in the Anglo-American backcountry. From 1750-1800, border-making east of the Mississippi changed from a process in which Indians and white officials counterbalanced each other's territorial ambitions to one almost totally dominated by whites. White officials monopolized the power to make legitimate boundaries only after disease as a mark of deep bodily differences that could not be accounted for by America's climate. In order to stave off illness, whites thought that Indians had to spend an inordinate amount of time building up bodily strength, leaving little time to develop a sophisticated civilization. The idea that Indian bodies and culture were naturally inferior to those of Englishmen generated imperial ideas that America could and should be populated by whites.

\textsuperscript{10} In cultural history, the most important works are those that have salvaged the cultures of "Indians" and "settlers" from being one-dimensional collectives without any real individual agency. The real complexity of the situation faced by various Indian groups is elucidated well by Daniel K. Richter, \textit{Facing East From Indian Country}: A Native History of Early America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Gregory Evans Dowd, \textit{War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, & the British Empire} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). Patrick Griffin has done more than any other historian to show that frontier settlers were not just a Turnerian force of nature, but a unique cultural group that, though often brutally racist and violent, had distinct motivations from and goals for the world around them; Patrick Griffin, \textit{American Leviathan}: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007). The study of empires in the West has also been revived by careful consideration of how Indians and the British tried to deal with the absence of France following the Seven Years War and the influx of settlers from the East. Eric Hinderaker, for one, found that the leaders of both Indian nations and the British colonies were unable to regulate affairs as they wished and ultimately failed to mediate how the West developed; Eric Hinderaker, \textit{Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800} (Cambridge University Press, 1997). The work of Robert A. Williams has shown how white officials conceived of law as something changeable in regard to Indian lands. By reiterating the tenets by which Indians could and did possess the West, land-hungry whites were able to legitimize their expansion with a variety of legal traditions; Robert A. Williams, \textit{The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

\textsuperscript{11} Jane T. Merritt argued that, by 1763, Indians and whites grew to hate each other because of feelings of betrayal and concurrent changes in language, such as the meaning of savagery; Jane T. Merritt, \textit{At The Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Similarly, Daniel K. Richter argued that the ideologies of white Indian-hating and Indian nativism (both of which developed in the early 1760s) made both races into an irreconcilable other; Daniel K. Richter, \textit{Facing East From Indian Country}.
co-opting the informal land claiming methods of frontier settlers, a group whose practices officials had previously condemned as illegal and pernicious. By 1800, officials of the United States were creating formal boundaries through extralegal means, a powerful and flexible system of asserting land ownership that would underlie the expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century.
CHAPTER I

"THIS VERY GROUND THAT IS UNDER ME": INDIAN MADE MAPS AND TERRITORIAL POSSESSION

After one hundred and fifty years of contact, acculturation, and territorial dispossession, Indians had come to believe in the power of mapping as the border-making technique that afforded them the best chance of deciding their officially recognized limits. As Gregory Nobles notes, "the authority of cartography had an increasing appeal in the eighteenth century," a statement that holds true for whites and Indians alike.¹ Increasingly outnumbered, Indians turned to maps in an effort to create effective borders on paper because they could not enforce them on the ground. Since maps cannot and need not represent geopolitical realities, Indians hoped formal maps would make their territorial claims legitimate.²


Indians tried to use maps to impress their territorial claims upon the English, but these efforts failed because Indians lacked tangible ground level power to delineate and effectively defend their borders. Indians could and did emulate white officials’ efforts to use maps to secure what they considered to be rightful claims; they could not, however, conduct land surveys, the system of territorial delineation that legitimized boundaries in the eyes of white officials. Indian mapping and official land surveying were both formal and accepted methods of making boundaries yet, by necessity, each relied on acceptance from the other group. The borders proposed by Indian maps needed approval from white officials to be recognized and, as will be seen in chapter two, official land surveys could be prevented or altered by Indians.

In the 1750s and 1760s, Indians’ map-based attempts to legitimize territorial possession took three identifiable forms: defending claims to inhabited lands, reclaiming lands that were illegally stolen, and—the rarest and most provocative form—rearticulating what it meant to own land and the rights by which it could be claimed. Of course, there is no single “Indian” story in this period or any other; each group (and individual) had disparate, overlapping, and often contradictory goals in their land dealings. Nevertheless, all North American Indians shared a common narrative of territorial dispossession by whites, one that they were quite conscious of in the eighteenth century. It is thus permissible, even advantageous, to examine the particular dealings of individual groups with various types of maps because such an examination evinces the similarities among failed territorial claims and, as in the case of Neolin’s cosmographical map, highlights how maps could be used successfully. During the period being considered in this chapter (1756-1767), nations inhabiting areas north of Maryland were
more often involved in territorial disputes than those to the south, whose official
complaints usually involved issues related to trade.\(^3\) In order to present as balanced a
picture as possible of land dealings in these northern regions, I will focus in detail on
three episodes involving Indian groups of varying size and power that employed very
different cartographic styles.

Throughout this chapter I will be using J.B. Harley’s and David Woodward’s
inclusive definition of maps as “graphic representations that facilitate a spatial
understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world.”\(^4\)
Thus I consider such items as wampum belts, spiritualistic diagrams, and modern
Euclidean charts, all of which were used by Indians and whites in this period to claim
land or express relationships within it. Indians also began using written descriptions of
territorial boundaries, and though these were not actually graphic, they are formal
geographic representations that mark a significant shift in how Indians claimed land.
Such written maps, which draw almost exclusively on European conventions, are thus
included as well.

The goal of this chapter is to show how maps were used in mid eighteenth century
Indian land claims. Thus I focus on Indian mapping techniques and the spatial
conceptions that informed them circa 1750-70, not on the persistence of traditional
cartography nor its replacement by English mapping. In this period, syncretism was a

\(^3\) Southern nations became increasingly involved with land disputes in the late eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries (the Creek/U.S. boundary discussed in the Coda is one example of this). For more on the
importance of trade to intercultural diplomacy in the South, see J. Russell Snapp, *John Stuart and the
Struggle for Empire on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); and
Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717*

\(^4\) J.B. Harley and David Woodward, “Preface,” in *The History of Cartography*, vol. 1. J.B. Harley and
sine qua non of Indian geographic technologies, especially cartography. Indians east of the Appalachians made Europeanized maps in an effort to fit their diminishing land claims within a European spatial system of acreage and linear borders, a desperate effort to define space for themselves in an increasingly European landscape.

Whereas land surveys were the definitive aspect of English territorial claims in North America, Indians did not possess the tradition, technology, or cultural spatial conception necessary for linear surveying. Without these foundations, Indians could not develop a syncretic Anglo-Indian form of geometric land surveying, one that could have been used to formalize territorial claims at ground level in a way that Europeans would be obliged to recognize. In lieu of the knowledge or means to survey their boundaries, they chose instead to define and support their land claims with maps, a medium that could be made to fit European conventions relatively easily. They could make maps intelligible (and, hopefully, authoritative) to Europeans simply by co-opting some European cartographic conventions, a far more feasible task than acquiring sophisticated and expensive surveying tools and learning the intricacies of geodesy and the European understanding of mathematics intrinsic to it.

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5 The trigonometric or geodetic measurements conducted during European land surveys were, at least ideally, the basis of Europeans' precise maps but, as seen in Chapter Two, surveyed lines were most important as visible claims on the landscape itself. Straight lines on Indian maps (and, indeed, many European ones) were not based on actual onsite measurements.
The history of Indian territorial perceptions can be divided into three temporal eras, pre-contact, contact, and post-contact. Different groups throughout the Americas experienced these phases at different times, speeds, and levels of intensity, but by the 1750s, most Indians living in what is now the eastern United States were well into the post-contact era. That is not to say that pre-contact aspects all disappeared; on the contrary, Indians and whites both made use of "traditional" Indian maps into the nineteenth century and Indian ideas of territorial delimitation retained many minimally-Europeanized aspects.

Deriving from Eurocentric notions that pre-Columbian America was in a state of nature, there is a common misperception that Indians did not consider land as property and thus had no territorial boundaries. Yet after thousands of years of American settlement, eastern Indians had developed complex systems of independent (and thus interdependent) territories divided clearly by physical features of the landscape, artificial landmarks, or unoccupied space between inhabited areas. Certain tracts of land, bodies of water, and other resources were often shared by several groups, and some Indians considered land rights to pertain only to the products of the land and not the land itself. This situation was further complicated by the fact that many eastern groups were highly mobile, moving their entire communities between seasonal farming and hunting grounds.

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Indians did not share European ideas about private property, but they did claim and demarcate national territory and even subdivided agricultural land into familial plots. In his 1749 history of North America, William Douglass wrote that “Indians are very jealous of their hunting and fishing Grounds or Properties,” territories that were determined (at least in the pre-contact period) by natural or manmade boundaries. As an example of a nation bordered by natural landmarks, Douglas noted “our neighboring Nation of Abnaquies are bounded by the Atlantick Ocean, or rather at present by the English settlements..., by the Bay of Fundi, by the great River St. Lawrence, by Lake Champlain and Hudson’s River.”

Artificial landmarks were also common among pre- and post-contact Indians both to delineate a nation’s space and to create a sense of historical attachment to that space. Marked trees, painted posts, and stone heaps were all used as border-markers and memorials. While a pile of rocks could and did designate a nation’s spatial limitations, it might also be a monument to a long-fallen warrior, thus conflating national pride and sovereignty with a tract of land. According to historian Nancy Shoemaker, such landmarks served “explicitly” and “implicitly” as boundary markers because they were at once practical geopolitical constructions and “carried intensely felt meanings and thereby connected people emotionally to that place.”

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8 William Douglass, A summary, historical and political, of the first planting, progressive improvements, and present state of the British settlements in North-America (Boston: Printed and sold by Rogers and Fowle in Queen-Street, 1749), 155.

9 Ibid., 153.


11 Ibid., 27-28.
Indians and Europeans alike shared this notion of using natural and manmade landmarks to designate a nation’s sovereign space and they both also represented their surroundings with maps. Like every other known people, Indians developed maps to “store, communicate, and articulate concepts and facts” about their geographical, social, and spiritual worlds. Pre-contact maps used several media, including paintings on birch bark, skins, stones, and blazed trees, bead maps, and ephemeral maps (those sketched in the dirt or sand) in order to assist with wayfinding, recount historical events, coordinate action, or communicate a message relevant to religion or natural resources. As G. Malcolm Lewis has pointed out, they had no need for the formality of standardizing measurements or directionality, so such conventions were never developed. Understandability came from the use of experiential itinerant schemas like travel time, and topographical features served the dual purpose of landmarks and territorial divisions.

Unlike European maps, pre-contact North American maps were probably never created to express secular power nor to “divide their territorial world into finite areas comparable to the Europeans’ states, territories, townships, and properties.” By the mid-eighteenth century, however, radical shifts in the natural and sociopolitical landscapes had compelled Indians to employ maps to make European-style claims within an increasingly European framework. This process of syncretism was incredibly

14 Ibid., 182.
15 Gregory A. Waselkov found that several Indian-made maps from the early eighteenth century, which have usually been understood as social-settlement maps, were in fact “political documents, graphic representations of the balance of power among the southeastern Indians.” Although his argument evokes
influential on how Indians in eastern North America c. 1750 conceived of land and how it could be delineated, claimed, and represented. The impact of land transactions on this shift cannot be overemphasized because when the English bought, conquered, or stole land, they did so in European, not Indian, units. The territories exchanged in treaties and sales were delineated by European standards, and the more acculturated a given Indian group became, the more they thought of land in European terms. This shift in perspective was made apparent in Indian maps from this period, all of which—including bead maps and Neolin’s spiritual chart—were heavily imbued with English elements.

The Indians’ “landscape,” defined by anthropologist Eric Hirsch as the “meaning imputed by a local people to their cultural and physical surrounding,” was also a product of syncretism; in fact, as in every colonial setting, acculturation of landscape perspectives was a two-way process, reshaping the geographic world of both Indians and English. For example, the patterns of British expansion in the early years of colonization and along western frontiers were decided by preexisting Indian ideas of directionality and, more concretely, Indian guides and cartographers who led them through a familiar network of routes. English concepts of territoriality were then promulgated within this nexus, delineating, claiming, and reforming the physical geography at the very heart of Native American landscape.

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By the 1750s, the lands of Indian groups living close to the Atlantic Ocean were long since bounded by European conventions and such standards were steadily moving west. Yet mapped linear boundaries tended to precede formal surveys, a circumstance conducive to illegal encroachments on Indian lands. After a 1762 Iroquois complaint about white settlement beyond a negotiated boundary that “was not yet run,” one commentator told William Johnson that the situation provided “an opportunity of shewing the Indians the inconvenience of any Line Being the Boundary of an Indian Sale and that it should always be by natural marks.” He knew that boundaries negotiated in treaties on maps had no effect if they were unaccompanied by ground level surveys, and without the infrastructure to inscribe these lines on the earth, natural boundaries were the best alternative.

Indian groups living further west maintained a somewhat more traditional system of territorial division, one for which lines had little significance. The best contemporary description of their land system was written by Lewis Evans, a surveyor and cartographer who explored trans-Appalachian America in the 1740s and 50s. Evans observed that “Indians do not generally bound their Countries with Lines, but by considerable Extents of Land… the intermediate ground they reserve for their Hunting, which equally serves for that Purpose and a Frontier.” Although each group had a distinct territory, they

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18 When in 1761 a spokesman for the Six Nations sought protection from settlers illegally crossing their boundary line, he was asked “what they meant by that Line,” he was able to distinguish it clearly from other previous borders, Minutes of conferences, held at Easton, in August, 1761 (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1761).

19 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 10:539.

20 Lewis Evans, Geographical, historical, political, philosophical and mechanical essays. The first, containing an analysis of a general map of the middle British colonies in America; and of the country of confederate Indians: a description of the face of the country; the boundaries of the confederates; and the
were separated by the shared space of hunting grounds, not the infinitely small lines of the European system. Warren Johnson (the brother of Sir William), similarly noted that “The Indians have particular Hunting Grounds for Each Tribe and never intrude upon One another’s Places.”21 Combined with the economic necessity of hunting and trapping, the role of hunting grounds as capacious territorial boundaries elucidates why Indian groups so frequently decried white incursions into these areas.

Regardless of exactly how Indians defined their boundaries, it was glaringly obvious that they were losing land at an alarming rate, and that prompt and meaningful actions were necessary to preserve or reclaim their holdings. Although violent resistance was increasingly used to this end, maps also took on new import as tools for claiming Indian land by English conventions. Maps, however, usually failed to actualize these territorial ambitions; the most effective and durable Indian land claims survived through on site defense against squatters and land surveyors, not visual or written geographic representations. Though maps helped Indians define their own land and even promote solidarity within it, they had little impact on negotiations with whites. The consistent failure of Indian maps to secure sovereignty is clear with the benefit of hindsight, but it was a viable and promising option to contemporary Indian leaders.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections, each providing an example of how Indians sought to use maps to claim, reclaim, or reconceptualize land ownership. The first focuses on the Eastern Delawares who used both “traditional” Indian maps and modern Western ones within the highly ritualized and formulaic treaty

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system to hold on to their lands in Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley. As a people with a long history of being defrauded of their lands, a recent history of racial violence, and uncertain allegiances to both the English and their "uncles" the Six Nations, the Eastern Delawares were at once unique and representative of many Pennsylvanian groups experimenting with novel methods for retaining their rapidly diminishing claims.

The much smaller Wappinger nation of the Hudson River valley was also forced to seek recognition of their lands, yet theirs had already been taken from them while fighting for the English during the Seven Years War. Forgoing the treaty system, the long-acculturated Wappingers pursued their rights through litigation and formal appeals, both in New York courts and in London, and hoped to use descriptive documents to override the white land surveys that had already carved up their homeland.

The third group I am considering can be defined broadly as the Western Indians, ethnically diverse peoples living in the northwest backcountry and beyond the reach of British or Iroquois authority. The spiritual map made by their nativist prophet Neolin was not intended as a tool for negotiating territorial boundaries with the British. Instead, his map helped teach the Western Indians a new way of conceptualizing their territory, one that emphasized Indians' divine and racial right to trans-Appalachian lands. Whereas the map-based efforts to negotiate claims with the English failed, Neolin's map succeeded because it promoted solidarity and concrete action to protect territory that Indians came to consider a racial birthright. In effect, it helped transform the previously plastic cultural and territorial boundaries, often called "middle grounds," into sites of
segregation, and Indian Country became so sacred that, by 1770, many Indians would (as William Johnson heard one remark) “as soon lose their heads as give up their land.”

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By the time of the Treaty of Easton in 1756, the Delawares had a long history of lost lands and lost sovereignty. At some point in the seventeenth century, they were officially subjugated by the Six Nations of the Iroquois and given the symbolic role of women, a collective identity that implied their inability to conduct independent land deals. The English recognized and supported the hegemony of the Iroquois, who sold off much of the Delawares’ land for their own advantage. The Walking Purchase of 1737 was a particularly onerous manifestation of this arrangement, one that the Delawares made into a charged political symbol. It created powerful associations between their status as clients of the Six Nations, their label as women, and white encroachment on their lands that contributed directly to the eruption of racial violence in 1755.

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22 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:777.

23 Some scholars such as Michael N. McConnell considered the Delawares’ label as women to be an honor because it meant that they were “the voice of wisdom and moderation in native societies,” yet I find the interpretation of Francis Jennings, that this gendered role was meant to deprive the Delawares of land rights, more convincing. (Michael N. McConnell, “Peoples ‘in Between’: The Iroquois and the Ohio Indians, 1720-1768,” in Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800, ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 106; Francis Jennings, “Pennsylvania Indians’ and the Iroquois,” in Beyond the Covenant Chain, 90.


White encroachment and political subjugation also prompted many Delawares to seek a distant new home. This faction "jump'd over Allegeny Hills, and settled on the waters of Ohio... a Country that the Most High had created for the poor Indians, and not for the White People."26 These Western Delawares (including Neolin) were instrumental in developing the nativist notion that the West was "Indian Country," yet those who chose to stay in Pennsylvania, the Eastern Delawares, also sought to secure their land rights, first through violence and, when that failed, through traditional diplomatic channels.

In 1755, the Delawares "proclaimed war against all the English and threaten not to leave one of them alive; and assign, as a reason for this, that they have been too long treated by the Six Nations, to whom they are subject, as women, but will now show them that they are men."27 Led by "king" Teedyuscung, the Eastern Delawares wreaked havoc along the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Maryland in an aggressive war that conflated their increasingly racist hatred of the English with independence from the Six Nations and the desire for recognized land rights, issues often discussed with highly gendered language. The Delawares thus told an Iroquois delegate that "we are men and determined not be ruled any longer by you as women, and we are determined to cut off all the English except those that make their escape from us in ships."28 This reference to leaving by sea is significant for it implies that the entirety of American land was Indian property that must be purged of the English, a trope that became common among nativists.


27 Ibid., 2:369.

Despite such rhetorical boasts, being a tributary of the Iroquois was a convenient foil, and the Delawares were quick to aver their dependency on or independency of the Six Nations if either stance seemed likely to support their land claims. At the Treaties of Easton (1756, 1757, 1758, and 1761), the Treaty of Harris' Ferry (1757), and the Treaty of Lancaster (1762), Teedyuscung, the Delawares' primary spokesman, usually invoked Iroquois dominance to procure protection for their territory in the Wyoming Valley, land owned by the Six Nations on which they settled the Delawares displaced by the Walking Purchase.29

In the 1750s and 1760s, the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania (not to be confused with the present state of Wyoming) was a site of territorial conflict among white settlers, English officials, the Iroquois, and their tributaries that foreshadowed the large scale disputes that accompanied white expansion into Ohio. Squatters who were moving to the Wyoming valley had little regard for colonial authority and, due in part to a sense of betrayal following the Indian attacks of 1755, had developed a powerful ideology of Indian hating.30 Well aware of the threat these squatters posed to the Delawares' land and lives, Teedyuscung worked within the traditional Anglo-Indian treaty system (an arrangement that required acknowledging Iroquois leadership) in order to gain British and Iroquois recognition and protection of the Delawares' holdings in the Wyoming valley. Maps were a crucial aspect of this effort.

29 See for example: Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Easton, in the months of July and November, 1756 (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, 1757), 11.; Minutes of conferences, held at Easton, in August, 1761 (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1761), 6, 15.

30 Merritt, At the Crossroads, 281.
It merits mention that Teedyuscung was himself a fascinating figure, a dynamic and well documented personality in a story too often filled by nameless Indians sharing a collective national or even racial identity. In his time as leader of the Eastern Delawares, he vacillated between allegiances to the French and the English, affirmation and denial of Iroquois domination, and professed Christianity and pragmatic religious ambivalence. A bombastic speaker, Teedyuscung was known for dramatic overnight changes in opinion, hard drinking, and a self-righteous air of importance. Although they had not met, William Johnson believed “[Teedyuscung] speaks of himself in a Stile of Consequence which...belongs to no single Indian upon the Continent,” and claimed the authority to represent some Indian nations that Johnson had never heard of and others that “don’t know there is such a man in the world as Tediuscung.” Although he had “imposed himself [at treaties] as a man of much greater importance than he really is,” Johnson, Pennsylvania delegates, and the Iroquois recognized that Teedyuscung pulled clout and that even if his authority and allegiances were tenuous, he was still “capable of doing a great deal of mischief.”

Most important for this study, however, was his readiness to employ both indigenous and English conventions to secure his territory within the Anglicized land system. Contrary to traditional treaty protocol, Teedyuscung demanded his own amanuensis to write and read messages and record minutes independently of the officially appointed clerk. According to Jane T. Merritt, Teedyuscung was at the forefront of a

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32 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 2:826.

33 Ibid., 2:874.
shift among Indians from using wampum belts and oral culture to western style documents, a change indicative of "the increasing need to control the outcomes of these negotiations." Although he continued to use traditional diplomatic tools, including the wampum map described below, his co-option of the written word and western conventions in his land dealings was a crucial step in the shift from treaty diplomacy to litigations in colonial courts, like those conducted by the Wappingers in the 1760s.

Although the treaties at Easton, Lancaster, and Harris' Ferry between 1756 and 1762 were distinct meetings with many different diplomatic goals, they were most important for the Eastern Delawares as negotiations for the Wyoming Valley, dealings inextricably tied up with their recent attacks on the English. The brutality of the attacks, combined with fear of further alliance with the French, made the British more willing to accommodate the Delawares than ever before, and Teedyuscung took advantage of the fear and respect engendered by the fighting to aver his land claims.

Although Johnson and other British officials blamed the Delawares' "treachery and ingratitude" on French intrigue, Teedyuscung shifted the catalyst for their attacks to white greed for land. The Six Nations, themselves fearful of white expansion, supported Teedyuscung, telling the English at Harris' Ferry that "you, covetous of land, made plantations [at Wyoming] and spoiled their hunting grounds; they then complained to us and... we found their complaints to be true... you drove them back into the arms of


the French.” The English officials at these treaties were genuinely interested in ameliorating whatever prompted the atrocities of 1755-6, and thus took seriously the Delawares’ claims.

The first of these was made at Easton in 1756. Seeking to draw attention to land issues as the fount of anti-English violence, Teedyuscung presented Pennsylvania’s lieutenant-governor Robert Hunter Morris with a wampum belt, a map of the Delawares’ position in Wyoming.

Teedyuscung then explained the belt, saying it was sent him by the Six Nations and he accepted of it: you see, says he, a square in the Middle, meaning the Lands of the Indians; and at one end a man, indicating the English; and at the other End another, meaning the French; our Uncles told us both these coveted our lands, but let us join and defend our lands against both.37

The Delawares and Six Nations considered the Wyoming Valley a literal middle ground between two aggressive white empires; an inconvenient home for the Delawares yet an important buffer zone against white expansion for the Six Nations.

Although the belt is far from geographically precise, it is nevertheless a legitimate map, one that sent a powerful message about the political importance of keeping the Delawares at Wyoming.38 If the English were to drive off the Delawares, not only would they lose an important bulwark against the French in the west, but the Delawares would surely re-ally with the French (“the Enemies of Mankind”) and the frontier atrocities

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36 Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Harris’s Ferry, and at Lancaster, in March, April, and May, 1757 (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, 1757), 16.

37 Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Easton, in the months of July and November, 1756 (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, 1757), 11.

38 Wampum belts could act as either stylized mnemonic maps or be explicitly geographic. For the Iroquois, Wampum strings and belts acted as both witnesses to a treaty or a pledge as well as the actual pledge itself. G. Malcolm Lewis, “Maps, Mapmaking, and Map Use by Native North Americans,” 88.
would begin anew. Teedyuscung had occasion to emphasize the importance of securing the Delawares' borders that same day when Morris, after receiving the belt, complained to him that four whites had just been killed by "enemy Indians" near Susquehanna. Not one to mince words, Teedyuscung responded that "if his People were so foolish as to come on our Borders at this Time, and were killed anyhow, they must take the Reward of their Folly." Nevertheless, he still felt it necessary to emphasize that "none of these private Deaths ought to affect [their] publick Measure."

At the 1756 Treaty of Easton, Teedyuscung tried to capitalize on the Delawares' unusually strong bargaining power and the encouraging reception of the wampum belt and their Wyoming Valley claim to reassert their right territory lost in the Walking Purchase. To accomplish this, he utilized another of the traditional treaty protocols for conveying a geographic message, a stylized speech accompanied by gifts of wampum strings. "This very Ground that is under me (striking it with his Foot) was my Land and Inheritance and is taken from me, by Fraud; when I say the Ground, I mean all the Land lying between Tohicon Creek and Wioming, on the River Susquehannah." It is

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39 Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Harris's Ferry, and at Lancaster, in March, April, and May, 1757, 18.

40 Ibid., 11.

41 Ibid., 11.

42 Ibid., 11.

43 As Philip J. Deloria notes, white officials were often impressed with the rhetorical skills of Indians speaking at treaties. It is significant, though, that Teedyuscung incorporated both "metaphoric sensibility" as well as very plain, almost legalistic, language. This Indian style was then co-opted by many patriotic whites during the Revolutionary period. Philip J. Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 32. On the elements of traditional treaty protocol, see Daniel Richter, Facing East from Indian Country, 134-138.

44 Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Easton, in the months of July and November, 1756, 23.
significant to note that Teedyuscung then identified the fraud as occurring during the land survey following the Walk, when “the young Proprietaries came and got [the boundary] run by a straight Course by the Compass, and by that Means took in double the Quantity intended to be sold.” This reference to surveyors and their instruments as the executors of territorial dispossession was such a common theme that, as early as the late 1740s, surveyors were subjects of suspicion and resentment, a theme that will be addressed further in the next chapter. Fearing more attacks by the Delawares, the English were eager to please and readily acknowledged “the transaction of that Walk was...universally given up as unfair, and not to be defended.” Nevertheless, these lands had long-since been sold, surveyed, and occupied, and despite the underhandedness of the Walk, Teedyuscung’s claims had no legal authority.

Unlike the land lost in the Walk, the Wyoming Valley still belonged legally to the Six Nations who reserved it for the Delawares, yet white settlement continued to increase there and Teedyuscung continued to press the Delawares’ rights to that territory. His deep-seated impression that the Wyoming Valley was Delaware land—combined with his new persona as an important dignitary—led him to have his personal secretary draft the

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45 This additional information on the fraudulent survey does not appear in the version of the treaty printed by Benjamin Franklin. For reasons unknown I found it only in Christian Frederick Post’s recounting of Teedyuscung’s speech at Easton (“this ground that is under me...”). Christian Frederick Post, “Journal of Christian Frederick Post,” in An Enquiry into the Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians from the British Interest, and into the Measures taken for recovering their Friendship (London: Printed for J. Wilkie, at the Bible, in St. Paul’s Church-yard, 1759), 101.

46 Christopher Gist and other early surveyors of the west concealed their instruments and conducted their measurements surreptitiously to hide their real purpose from the Indians because surveys were well known to precede formal white claims. James H. Merrell, Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999), 222, 278.

47 Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Easton, in the months of July and November, 1756, 31.

48 In the words of Richard Peters, “neither Teedyuscung or any of his Jersey Basket makers [had] the least pretense to [these] Lands,” (Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 10:213.)
“Draught of land desired by the Delawares,” an inexact yet decidedly western-style map that he presented at Easton in 1757 to clarify exactly which territories he claimed.\(^49\) That this map was made only one year after the wampum map evinces just how urgent the need to secure Wyoming had become.

In a letter to William Johnson, Governor William Denny explained the content of the “paper purporting to be a Draught of Lands [Teedyuscung] requested might be granted to them for their habitation,” first shown to Johnson’s agent George Croghan in 1757.\(^50\) The lands Teedyuscung desired did not include those lost in the Walking Purchase, but “about 2 million of acres” around Wyoming:

the courses began a little below Shamokin...then by the Boundary Line of the Purchase of 1749 to the mouth of Lehighwachsen...then in a straight line...to Burnest’s Hills [and following them] to the Big Island on the West branch, then... to the place of beginning about a mile south of Shamokin.\(^51\)

The map was obviously the work of an amateur cartographer and it lacked the conventions of a graticule or a precise scale. Yet it had ruled lines, prominent landmarks like forts, mountains, and rivers, descriptive captions, standard directionality (north is at the top of the page), and it was drawn on paper, the proper medium of the West.

The most obvious reason for Teedyuscung’s quick transition from traditional to European mapping conventions was the failure of the wampum belt and formal oratory to secure recognition of Wyoming. Yet the more important factor was the shift in what the Delawares hoped to achieve with their maps. The wampum belt expressed political

\(^49\) This “Draught” is still extant in the Pennsylvania State Archives and can be seen in Mark Warhus, *Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Land* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 82.


\(^51\) Ibid., 2:754.
relationships to international powers, geographic-imperial entities whose size and complexity defied "realistic" depictions and were best understood symbolically. Although the wampum map masterfully expressed how the Delawares inhabited a political and geographic middle ground in 1756, by 1757 they were far more concerned with the apolitical white settlers who were "daily encreasing their Settlements" in the Wyoming Valley.\footnote{Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Harris's Ferry, and at Lancaster, in March, April, and May, 1757, 16.} The purpose of Teedyuscung's "Draught" was thus to solidify the Eastern Delawares' territorial boundaries. With bordered lands, the Delawares could follow the Six Nation's advice and "use [their] best Endeavors to defend [their] Frontiers, and protect the Lives of [their] People," while also securing recognized territorial limitations that they hoped the colonial authorities would be obligated to enforce.\footnote{Ibid., 16.}

By the 1762 Treaty of Lancaster, it had been decided that the Delawares were not to receive exclusive rights to Wyoming, but would be allowed to continue living there under the aegis of the Six Nations. For Teedyuscung, the culmination of six years of work within the Anglo-Indian treaty system, using both traditional and modernized geographic aids, did not produce the desired result. Over sixty years old with a broken spirit and a "habit of drunkenness," he resigned himself and the Eastern Delawares to the fate handed down by a delegate from the Six Nations, one presented in the very treaty rhetoric that had failed Teedyuscung:
I make a fire for Teedyuscung, at Wyoming; I tell him to sit by the fireside, and watch that Fire; but I do not Give it to him, for our English Brethren cast an eye upon that land; therefore I say to Teedyuscung, watch that Fire, and if any White People come there, tell them to go away, for that land belongs to your Uncles, the Six Nations.54

This conventional use of the language of council fires would have a sad irony for Teedyuscung. While he was passed out drunk one night in April of 1763, armed settlers from Connecticut, probably incited by members of the Susquehanna land company, raided his town in Wyoming, driving out the Delawares with a simple show of brute force that overrode the intricacies of a half-decade of politics and treaties.55 The settlers set fire to the village, and burned Teedyuscung to death in his cabin.

Immediately after this murder, his son, Captain Bull, took swift revenge against the English, first capturing and burning alive several of the settlers and then leading a war party that joined Pontiac’s forces of Western Indians. He directed his party’s efforts at these same settlers and, as historian Anthony Wallace put it, “by the end of the dark and bloody year 1763, no white men lived on the grassy plains of Wyoming.”56 Such episodes of atrocities and evermore brutal reprisals reflected and propagated the racial animosity of the backcountry, a situation that became so dire that total racial separation through formally mapped boundaries seemed to be the only possible solution. As seen in the next chapter, these grand efforts only aggravated frontier racism further.

54 Minutes of conferences, held at Lancaster, in August, 1762. With the sachems and warriors of several tribes of northern and western Indians (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, 1763), 20.

55 Wallace, King of the Delawares, 261.

56 Ibid., 261.
The Delawares were not, of course, the only Indian group being forcibly run off of their land. After serving with Great Britain during the Seven Years War, the Wappingers—a nation of about four hundred Indians living in eastern New York—returned to their homes in Dutchess County to find their land claimed by some of the province’s most powerful landlords. Although most of the Wappingers took this as their cue to relocate and merged with the diverse Stockbridge Indians, some, including their chief Captain Daniel Nimham, chose to stay in the east and defend their rightful property.

The small farmers who lived there were eager to oblige them; they recognized that the Indians were the land’s legal owners and, more importantly, the Indians offered better terms in their leases. Furthermore, white settlers and Indians both resented the great patentees, who used what Alan Taylor described as “fraudulent documents and creative surveys” to monopolize the New York landscape. When their tenants stopped paying rent, the patentees Philip Philipse, Beverly Robinson, and Roger Morris decided it was time to remove the competition:

without any manner of legal warrant, or authority for so doing... [they] collected a body of upwards of two hundred men, or soldiers...all well armed and supplied with ammunition...[and] marched against these poor defenseless people...drove them out before them [and] burnt and destroyed [the] homes of this poor, but loyal people.

Needless to say, the tenants once more paid their rent to the patentees.

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58 A Geographic, historical summary; or, Narrative of the present controversy, between the Wappinger tribe of Indians, and the claimants, under the original patentee of a large tract of land, in Philip's Upper Patent, so called. Containing, a brief, but faithful account of the proceedings thereon, from the first rise of the dispute, until the 12th day of March, Anno Domini, 1767 (Hartford: Thomas Green and Ebenezer Watson, 1767), 19.
The patentees supported their own rights with a highly suspect seventeenth century deed of sale to Adolph Philipsen in which the Wappingers supposedly sold him "Philipse Upper Patent," yet their strongest claim was that the land had already been surveyed by and for wealthy whites. A letter to William Johnson from one Catharyna Brett, a widow with sizable lands in the Upper Patent, described the survey that took place in the 1730s. The governor had presented Philipse's deed to the Wappingers who insisted that Philipse never ratified that document before his death. In order to support her claims, "the Governor Desired [Brett] to have that Part Surveyed so that the Indians might be convinced of the Bounds."\(^59\) Thus Cadwallader Colden, then surveyor-general of New York, came to survey the patent, "but was Soon repulsed by a Company of Drunk Indians...who threatened to break his compass and he was Stoped."\(^60\) Brett eventually paid off "Old Nimham," Daniel's father, and "with much difficulty" the survey was finally accomplished.\(^61\) In retrospect, the Wappingers would have been wise to continue resisting that survey. Territorial maps and deeds could be disputed in courts of law but, like the forcible ousting of the Wappingers after the Seven Years War, the physical reality of surveys had an air of permanence that litigation could not easily undo.\(^62\) The significance of surveys and less formal onsite claims is explored in Chapters II and III.


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 10:494. As noted before, surveying instruments, especially compasses, were well-recognized tools of territorial dispossession, thus threats to destroy them represented a non-violent form of resistance against surveys. It is noteworthy that Giselle Byrne's, in her study of British land surveys in New Zealand, found that the Maori also resisted formal surveys by stealing and destroying surveyors' equipment, especially theodolites (Giselle Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand* (Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books, 2002), 106).


\(^{62}\) In the words of Sarah S. Hughes, surveyors were the "advance agents of permanent settlement." Sarah S. Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen: Land Measuring in Colonial Virginia* (Richmond: The Virginia Surveyors Foundation, 1979), 73.
Nevertheless, the Wappingers had good reason to believe that they could reclaim this land. They were acculturated to the English land system to such a degree that they delineated land into plots for white tenants and, unlike the Delawares, had a long history of loyal service to Britain and friendship with the provincial government. In fact, at the 1756 Treaty of Easton, Teedyuscung spoke "on behalf of the Wapings... and produced a short broad belt of white wampum, having in the center two hearts of reddish color, and in figures 1745, wrote after the following manner, 17\text{n}\text{v}45" that a former New York governor had given to the Wappingers.\textsuperscript{63} Not only is this an interesting episode in which whites used a mixture of English and Indian traditions to express a geographic and political relationship (Teedyuscung said "the belt...represented union"), it also shows how the Wappingers were too insignificant to speak for themselves within the Anglo-Indian treaty system.\textsuperscript{64}

As neither William Johnson nor the Iroquois had much interest in protecting the rights of "long domesticated" Indians with "several old titles," the Wappingers sought to reclaim their lands through formal, document-based litigation within the colonial legal system. Besides, the long acculturated Wappingers, who were themselves landlords within the English land system, probably felt as comfortable in provincial courts as dealing with the formalities and rhetoric of treaties. Daniel Nimham thus defended the Wappinger's land with a stack of documents and a white lawyer, Samuel Monroe, tools

\textsuperscript{63} Minutes of conferences, held with the Indians, at Easton, in the months of July and November, 1756, 31.

\textsuperscript{64} Nimham and forty-six other Wappingers were at Easton in 1756, but all of their land dealings were conducted through the Six Nations.
that evinced the full co-option of English legal conventions, especially the written word. The supposed power of the word had such a hold over the Wappingers that, when asked to produce a description of their claim at the retrial of 1767, the Wappingers—as seen below—decided to present a written instead of a graphic map, a choice that would have been alien to them a few decades earlier.

The first man that Nimham and Monroe sought for support was the erstwhile surveyor and current lieutenant-governor Cadwallader Colden. William Johnson granted them a pass to visit Colden, “who they hoped and expected would do them justice, as they imagined he must, (from his surveying the same) be well acquainted with the state of the Case.” Although Colden had issued a royal proclamation in 1761 that “fraudulent purchases [from Indians] may be recovered by a due course of law,” he was nonetheless far from receptive of the case Nimham brought against Beverly Robinson, Philip Philpse, and Robert Morris on March 6, 1765.

Petitioning Johnson from New York’s “New Gaol,” Monroe complained that despite producing “several papers, and vouchers to attest to the truth of such their complaints, and Right to said Lands,” they were nonetheless denied their property by

65 On increased use and importance of writing, see Merritt, “Metaphor, Meaning, and Understanding.”

66 For more on how surveyors often rose to powerful political positions, see Sarah S. Hughes, Surveyors and Statesmen.

67 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 10:854.

68 A Geographic, historical summary; or, Narrative of the present controversy..., 13.
biased judges. He went on to plea for Johnson’s intervention, without which the Wappingers would remain deprived of their land and Monroe would remain incarcerated, a situation he blamed on the council’s efforts “to stop [him] from going to England as [he] intended with the Indians in order that they might be reinstated in their rights.” The lawyer’s prison sentence can be understood as a deliberate effort to deprive Indians of the power of the written word, a technology from which Teedyuscung had also hoped to benefit by employing a personal secretary. Unlike Teedyuscung’s clerk, however, Monroe threatened provincial administrators with accountability to Whitehall, and in order to avoid censure for their self-interested rulings, they “sentenced [him] to Gaol by Mittimus.”

The patentee Robert Morris also wrote Johnson in an effort to dissuade him from getting involved, claiming that Monroe himself was responsible for inciting the Wappingers to press illegitimate claims. Johnson needed little persuading. He told Morris that

I have laid it down as an invariable rule...that whenever a Title is set up by any tribe of Indians of little consequence or importance to his Majesty’s interests, and who may be considered as long domesticated, that such claims...had better remain unsupported...on the contrary, whenever I find a just complaint made by a people either by themselves or connections capable of resenting and who I know would resent a neglect, I judged it my duty to support the same.

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70 Ibid., 11:735.
71 Ibid., 11:735.
72 Ibid., 11:885.
73 Ibid., 11:912.
Even without Johnson’s support, Nimham was eventually able to travel to London in 1766, where the lords of trade and Lord Shelburne deigned to support his cause and enjoined Johnson to do so as well, a responsibility which he still shunned and thus passed off to his son Guy. In his instruction to Guy, Johnson did advise him to “afford them the general benefit of my countenance,” but put far more emphasis on preventing the dispute from “creating any disturbance...among the Interior Nations.”74 Like many colonists in the years following Pontiac’s War, Johnson feared that upsetting the western nativists would lead to a general Indian conflict.75

Neither Guy Johnson’s presence nor the presentation of even more formal documents had any impact at the 1767 retrial. In his ever elusive pursuit of legitimacy through the written word, Nimham and his council provided Governor Sir Henry Moore with a written map of the lands they hoped to reclaim.

[The Wappinger’s] tract of land, situate, lying, and being in the southernmost part of Dutchess County... [is] about two hundred thousand acres; bounded westerly by a tract of land formerly conveyed ...by a deed from one Aughekenage...northerly by land, formerly granted to Col. Sephanus Van Cortland...southerly by Cortland’s Manor...and extending easterly about seventeen miles, and is about sixteen miles in width.76

74 Ibid., 12:269.


76 A Geographic, historical summary; or, Narrative of the present controversy..., 23.
This written description was a far more accurate claim than even Teedyuscung’s “Draught,” for it included all of the niceties of English convention, including precise borders with other legal plots and measurements in the standard units of miles and acres.

Just as Teedyuscung found the supposed power of maps to be illusionary, so did Nimham discover that the European technology of the written word was equally incapable of reuniting the Wappingers with their land. The governor and the other members of the council shared the same territorial interests as the patentees, thus gave credence to their bogus documents and unanimously declared that “the Indians now living of the Wappinger tribe, have no Right, Title, or Claims to the Lands granted.”

There was a significant amount of public outcry against this case. The most outspoken of these, A Geographic, historical summary; or, Narrative of the present controversy, between the Wappinger tribe of Indians, and the claimants..., was published soon after the 1767 hearing by an anonymous author who was quite familiar with this case. Although most of the details of this pamphlet involved legal nuances and impassioned outbursts about how this “poor, but loyal people” were ill-used, the title of this piece, by emphasizing geography before history, was a keen insight that land itself, not the deeds or formal claims to it, was at the heart of this dispute. “Who doth not know, that something besides the absolute decree of the Judges is requisite to the creation and confirmation of a title to lands; and that for any court to say that the land of A belongs to B doth not make it so in reality.” Surveys and martial prowess had made the

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77 The New-York Mercury, March 30, 1767.
78 A Geographic, historical summary; or, Narrative of the present controversy..., 20.
79 Ibid., 54.
Wappingers' lands into white lands, and litigation—no matter how infused with English norms—was not going to reclaim it.

As for the Wappingers, most soon merged with the eclectic Indian communities at Stockbridge, yet they did have one more opportunity to show the English the extent of their resentment. In 1778, Captain Nimham and a force of about sixty Wappingers sided with the American rebels and set out to join George Washington’s army. As Colin Calloway notes, the Wappingers and other Indian groups had very real grievances against the aristocracy and politicians, and the Revolution gave them a chance to resolve through bloodshed what they could not through litigation and co-opted geographic technologies. En route to join the Continental Army, Nimham and his band were ambushed by British soldiers and almost half of their numbers were killed, including Nimham and one of his sons. The rest returned to Stockbridge and a future of western removal.

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Although incorporating geographic documents into land negotiations was becoming increasingly common and necessary in the white-dominated colonial east, Indians living along the borderlands and further west continued to use maps mostly for pre-contact purposes. There had been some English-made maps of the West, and a few surveyors like Christopher Gist and George Washington even tried to demarcate onsite claims for themselves and ambitious land companies. Despite such incursions, Indian maps and spatial conceptions remained the norm west of the Alleghenies until English

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victory in the Seven Years War dramatically changed how Indians and English interacted in this region.

In the years leading up to the French and Indian War, a wide variety of previously disparate tribes from the east, south, and northwest migrated to this region to escape white encroachment, harvest the plentiful hunting grounds, and do business with British traders who had followed the Delawares into the West. They were joined on the frontier by Europeans of various backgrounds, themselves venturing west in search of free or cheap land and to settle beyond the reach of any real colonial influence. These Scots-Irish, German, English, and Swedish groups tended to settle in homogeneous communities in which, overtime, a sense of ethnic identity would mature in opposition to their Indian neighbors, whose villages were inhabited by Indians of various tribal backgrounds. The multiethnic Indian communities, however, became hotbeds of Pan-Indianism where ethnic distinctions, such as Shawnee or German, were insignificant compared to the broad racial groupings of Indian and white.

The Seven Years War and its aftermath engendered an unprecedented degree of Indian/white racial tension and also forced Indians to re-evaluate their place (both politically and geographically) in a suddenly French-less North America. As Gregory Dowd argued, this crisis of status pertained both to their secular and spiritual worlds, drawing the two together to a point where their geographical territory was also a religious and racial promised land. The novel political and social uncertainties were manifested

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with Pontiac's War while the related spiritual concerns led many Indians to be more attentive to the teachings of nativist prophets, charismatic religious leaders who had been preaching throughout the backcountry since the 1740s. The most renowned of these was Neolin, a Delaware who used a deerskin map to help explain a politico-religious doctrine about banishing the English and their Christian God from Indian country.

A Delaware Living in Tuscarawas Town in the Ohio country, Neolin was well placed to build off of developing notions of racial distinction. His journey to visit the Creator and the visions he received have been well documented elsewhere, but suffice it to say that he claimed to meet the Master of Life who gave him instructions regarding how to restore the Indians to an idealized pre-contact civilization by rejecting white people, materials, and religion. The focus of this study, however, is his "cosmographical map," a tool that not only elaborated his philosophy to contemporaries but also allows an historian to draw out the pertinent aspects of his preaching and influence. I will thus focus on the three most detailed contemporary descriptions of the map, those of James Kenny, John Heckewelder, and John McCullough, to examine the tenets of nativism, white influences on it, and the reconceptualization of trans-Appalachian America as a place of Indian sovereignty.

The design of Neolin's map was characteristic of both Indian and Christian spiritual charts, yet by fusing nativism's racial unity with a sense of geographic and heavenly sovereignty, it took on a politically assertive role not found in earlier western

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83 For the details of Neolin's spiritual quest and vision, see Dowd, War Under Heaven, 102-103; and Alfred A. Cave, "The Delaware Prophet Neolin: A Reappraisal," in Ethnohistory, vol. 46, no. 2 (Spring, 1999), 271-273.

84 No originals of Neolin's map have survived, thus our knowledge of its images can only be derived from contemporary European descriptions. Lewis, "Maps, Mapmaking, and Map Use by Native North Americans," in The History of Cartography, vol. 2, book 3, 91.
Indian maps. With the departure of the French from the continent, western Indians were faced with the same challenge as eastern ones, to assert their territorial sovereignty in the face of a single potentially dominant power. Yet whereas eastern groups tried to use English conventions to claim their land in what had become an English landscape, leaders like Pontiac and Neolin tried to ensure that their negotiations would take place on Indian terms in Indian country. Neolin’s map was the medium that best explained to western Indians their new political status and proselytized a faith that allowed them to come to terms with it by taking pride in their racial heritage and guarding against white expansion. By inciting Indians to defend a racial and religious homeland against ground level dispossession, Neolin’s spiritual map proved a more effective and lasting means of claiming land than those used by Teedyuscung or Nimham.

The Moravian missionary John Heckewelder described how:

in 1762, there was a famous preacher of the Dealaware nation, who...traveled about the country, among the Indians, endeavoring to persuade them that he had been appointed by the great Spirit... to point out to them the offences by which they had drawn his displeasure, and the means by which they might recover his favour in the future. He had drawn... a kind of map on a piece of deer skin, which he called “the great Book or Writing.”... This map he held before him while preaching, frequently pointing to particular marks and spots upon it, and giving explanations as he went along.85

The “offenses” to the Master of Life that Neolin most often cited were similar to those condemned by earlier nativist prophets, especially the corruptive effects of alcohol, but he went further in prohibiting the use of guns and even flint and steel as a fire starter.86


86 The white captive John McCullough went into much detail concerning how his Delaware captors, after listening to Neolin preach, forced him to build fires by rubbing sticks together. John McCullough, “A Narrative of the Captivity of John McCullough, esq., Written by Himself,” in A Selection of some of the most interesting narratives of outrages, committed by the Indians, in their wars, with the white people also,
Indians were thus to begin training with bows and arrows and keeping to a strict diet of
dried meat, corn, and an emetic made from bitter roots meant “to purge out all that they
got of yᵉ White peoples ways & Nature.” In short, the goal was to revert to a
romanticized pre-contact Indian culture so as to “return to that former happy state, in
which [Indians] lived in peace and plenty, before these strangers came to disturb
[them].” Yet centuries of white influence and the idealized nativist version of the
Indian’s past not only made Neolin’s vision practically impossible, but he also supported
the inclusion of specific elements of white culture and censured some that were native in
origin. Handshaking and drinking alcohol in moderation were tolerated while polygamy
and traditions such as the medicine dance were banned.

The two most important aspects of white culture incorporated into Neolin’s
nativist vision were European methods of knowledge dissemination and Christianity,
both of which were explicit in his map. Neolin promoted literacy so that his followers
would be able to read a prayer given to him by the Master of Life, but most of his
congregation was illiterate and he thus used his map as the primary means of
proselytizing. He had the map reproduced on “Dress’d Leather Skin & some on paper” in
such abundance that the captive John McCullough personally saw an Indian made “copy
of [Neolin’s] hieroglyphics, as numbers of them had got them copyed and undertook to

Ibid., 273; James Kenny, “Journal of James Kenny,” in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and
Biography, vol. 37, John W. Jordam, ed. (1913), 188.

Heckewelder, History, Manners, and Customs..., 293.

Dowd, War Under Heaven, 104.
preach, or instruct others." In fact, Heckewelder quoted Neolin as saying "I advise you to preserve, in every family, at least, such a book or writing as this, which I will finish off for you, provided you bring me the price." Although this provocative statement suggests Neolin had no problem serving both the Master of Life and Mammon, the active diffusion of his map among would-be followers demonstrates the complex fusion of native and white elements in his theology.

As Jane T. Merritt points out, the co-option and dissemination of religious documents, whether drawn or written, showed how Indians used white religious conventions to promote nativist revivals, and that these documents then changed how Indian religions were understood and practiced. The dispersal of spiritual literature and charts, especially one of such a prominent prophet as Neolin, standardized hitherto diverse local practices into a more standardized form. This, after all, was part of Neolin’s vision; spreading his map helped ensure that his teachings would become the Indian religion practiced by the Indian race in Indian country. One Delaware warrior bore witness to Neolin’s success in this ambition, claiming “that its agree’d to by their Whole Nation, to follow their new Plan of Religion.” Reproducing the map allowed Neolin’s anti-white teachings to reach a large audience of Western Indians, making it an effective means of promoting solidarity and defiance against British power.


91 Heckewelder, History, Manners, and Customs..., 293.


93 Kenny, “Journal,” 188.
White culture not only impacted the means by which Neolin spread his vision, but was very influential on the very tenets of his supposedly all-Indian religion and the map used to relate it. Although spiritual maps and spirit journeys were longstanding elements in Indian religion and cartography, Christian missionaries used similar diagrams to overcome the barriers of translation and illiteracy in order to preach a boiled down version of the gospel, the outstanding features of which were the alternate choices between heaven and hell.\textsuperscript{94}

This sort of dichotomous view of good and evil was alien to pre-contact Indian religions, yet Neolin’s chart had paths that led to damnation overseen by the devil and a precarious “avenue” to heaven which, in most accounts of the map, was blocked by whites. James Kenny, a Quaker trader, described the map as having

\textit{\textasciitilde}Earth at \textit{\textasciitilde}Bottom \& heaven at \textit{\textasciitilde}top, having a straight Line from One to \textit{\textasciitilde}Other, by which their forefathers use'd to assend to Hapiness. Abo\textsuperscript{1} \textit{\textasciitilde}middle is like a Long Square cuting thire way to Hapiness, at right Angles, \& stoping them representing \textit{\textasciitilde}White people, \textit{\textasciitilde}outside is a Long Squair like black Stroke Circomscribing \textit{\textasciitilde}Whole within it, \& joyning on \textit{\textasciitilde}left Hand Issuing from \textit{\textasciitilde}White peoples place is cut many Strokes parallell to thire Squair or Situation, all these Strokes represents all \textit{\textasciitilde}Sins \& Vices which \textit{\textasciitilde}Indians have learned from \textit{\textasciitilde}White people, through which now they must go, \textit{\textasciitilde}Good Road being Stopt. Hell being fixed not far off, there they are Led irrevocibly.\textsuperscript{95}

McCullough and Heckewelder also include heaven and hell in their analyses of the map, the former having three increasingly hot levels of hell as well as a soothing “spring of water... as if they had some idea of the Popish tenet of Purgatory” while Heckewelder’s had both a “great Spirit” and an “evil spirit” who kept “a continual watch for Indians.”\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{94} Dowd, \textit{War Under Heaven}, 99.

\textsuperscript{95} Kenny, “\textit{Journal},” 171.

\textsuperscript{96} McCullough, “\textit{A Narrative of the Captivity},” 275; Heckewelder, \textit{History, Manners, and Customs...}, 292.
Neolin did not, however, simply copy white media and messages. As Alfred A. Cave argues, he incorporated select elements of Christianity within an existing Indian framework in order to best fit perceived contemporary needs.97 The goal that Neolin hoped to achieve was geographic, racial, and religious unity, thus the replacement of the myriad lesser divinities with one “Jehovah-like supreme deity”98 who created Indians as a single race helped to integrate the ethnically diverse groups of Indian country. Furthermore, by co-opting the devil and a fiery Dantesque hell and conflating them with white people and goods, Neolin’s map drew a lucid, elegant, and influential connection between whites, damnation, and the necessity of securing Indian sovereignty in the West.

In his account of the chart, McCullough explained its dual purpose of “denoting the probation that human beings were subjected to whilst living on earth, and also, denoting something of a future state.”99 It is unclear if by “a future state” McCullough meant the Indians’ vision of the afterlife or some future political state, yet this very ambiguity says much about how interconnected the two concepts were in Neolin’s pan-Indianism. The fact that McCullough had Neolin saying “that by following his instructions, they would, in a few years, be able to drive the white people out of their country” makes it clear that Neolin believed an aggressive defense of Indian country to be integral to his wider cosmology.100 As Pontiac’s War of 1763 demonstrated, Neolin was not alone in this sentiment. His map, a widely spread and very clear message drawn by and for Indians, was an indispensable catalyst to this conflict.

98 Ibid., 274.
100 Ibid., 273.
Like the maps used in land dealings further east, Neolin's incorporated many European elements, yet much of it and Neolin's success can be attributed to using the map to promote an Indian landscape among Indians, not merely maintain Indian-owned land within an otherwise English landscape and land system. Although western Indians would eventually lose trans-Appalachian Indian country to white encroachment, that process also owed surprisingly little to English-made maps that tried to Europeanize the western landscape from afar. Indians only lost the west when surveyors and squatters made tangible claims to it. Even after Pontiac's defeat, preventing and resisting these onsite delineations proved an effective means for western Indians to protect the well-mapped secular and sacred country that the Master of Life—and Neolin—had defined as theirs.
CHAPTER II

“WE HAVE ALTERED THE COURSE A LITTLE”: OFFICIAL LAND SURVEYS AND INDIAN AGENCY

Although American Indians developed syncretic maps that they hoped could actualize official territorial boundaries, Indians lacked the specialized European knowledge systems and technologies necessary to conduct precise land surveys. Linear surveying relied on a European conception of space, one that understood all observable space to be part of the surface area of a spherical earth. This surface area was infinitely divisible by standard geometric figures, the accuracy of which could be confirmed with reference to heavenly bodies. Learned British and creole officials in North America shared this manner of understanding geography and space, and believed that precise observations and the scientific endeavors based upon them would reflect the natural order of the universe. In this era of precision, geometrically and astronomically measured boundary lines were the height of geographical achievement, a means of inscribing European ideas of order directly onto the American landscape.

It is ironic, then, that these high-tech surveys based on European knowledge systems provided Indians with some of the most significant opportunities to determine the shape of their territories. Just as the formal Indian maps examined in the previous chapter relied on the approval of white officials, so too could western land surveys be prevented or modified by Indians. Exerting onsite influence over surveyors allowed
Indians to make de facto changes as to where border lines were run, alterations that could forgo the official treaty system and, by their physical presence on the landscape, demand recognition. Although maps were the geographical technology with which Indians were most proficient, Indians could determine the location of boundary lines most effectively through official surveys.

In the 1760s and early 1770s, no colonial boundary line was more important for either Indians or whites than that meant to segregate the two races. Amidst the racial violence that followed the Seven Years War, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 created the Indian Boundary Line, a map-based border that designated the Appalachian Mountains as the frontier between the all-white east and Indian country. It soon became clear, though, that this border was ineffectual, and plans were made to relocate the boundary line in a way that could stop frontier violence, regulate speculation and settlement, and—for Indians—create authoritative territorial bounds that would secure their autonomy.

For the white officials who negotiated the Indian Boundary Line, it was imperative that the finalized boundary would be inscribed on the landscape. Not only would this create a visible ground-level border that would be clear to both Indians and whites and (hopefully) dissuade either race from crossing into the other’s territory, but it also would fulfill the geographic standards by which educated whites made sense of space. This task naturally fell to professional surveyors. By virtue of their precise measurements, the boundary would be authoritative both at ground level and when translated onto globes and maps. Furthermore, precise boundary lines provided a frame within which surveyors could conduct cadastral surveys, those that delineated a given

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1 This was not the first time racial boundaries had been made between Indians and white; such divisions were created after the 1644 Powhatan-English War and after King Philip’s War of 1676. It was, though, the first time a royal edict tried dividing all Indians from all whites.
space into ownable plots, a prerequisite for those who hoped to profit from acquiring trans-Appalachian lands.

The very necessity of onsite surveys to this European-style land system provided both Indians and the surveyors themselves with unexpected prospects for undermining official plans for boundary lines that had already been settled on maps. The boundaries had to be physically measured and marked in the west, a region in which British authority was tenuous and unable to ensure that the officially negotiated borders would actually be run as intended. Indians, still by far the most formidable power in the trans-Appalachian region, could coerce surveying parties to do their bidding, either by physical threat or onsite negotiation. On the other hand, surveyors were in a position to secure significant personal gains by altering a line's designated course or, at the very least, they could end a survey prematurely in order to ensure their personal safety.

In this chapter, I will begin by outlining how educated whites in the 1760s and 1770s understood geography and space. Their spatial conceptions were no more "ordinary" than those of the Indians explored in Chapter One, and thus an explanation of how they saw geographical space is necessary to appreciate why surveyed boundary lines were so fundamental to territorial delineation. I will then examine the running of two lines, one that bisected the Proclamation Line and another that redrew it much farther west. The survey of the latitudinal Mason Dixon Line crossed the Proclamation Line into Indian country in 1767 and, despite being the most scientifically advanced survey ever conducted in the New World, it provided otherwise subaltern western Indians, namely the Delawares, with a rare opportunity to influence borders in their own homeland. In 1771, John Donelson surveyed the new Indian Boundary Line in the Virginia backcountry, a
remarkable episode in which the surveyor and the Cherokee chief accompanying him agreed to reposition the line during the survey itself. These two surveys, the Mason Dixon Line and the Donelson Line, demonstrated the power of Indians and surveyors to decide the ultimate placement of important colonial boundaries, an onsite fait accompli that could override even the most carefully planned borders.

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Educated Englishmen and creoles in the second half of the eighteenth century shared a common understanding of how space should by comprehended and delineated because these educated gentleman all learned a standardized version of geography. Geography, like other European sciences during the mid eighteenth century, was fueled by the pursuit of precision through the use of regulated mathematics, measurements, and instruments.\(^2\) To be sure, few of those whom I am classifying as “officials” were able to conduct the precise experiments that proved the axioms of geography. Yet almost all British men with pretensions to gentlemanly status would have read one or more of the many textbooks meant to instruct “our younger sort of Nobility and Gentry [in] MODERN GEOGRAPHY, that most useful science.”\(^3\) Even those with no interest in geography as knowledge were often very interested in land as a profitable resource, and

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\(^3\) Patrick Gordon, *Geography anatomiz'd, or, The compleat geographical grammar being a short and exact analysis of the whole body of modern geography after a new and curious method / collected from the best authors and illustrated with divers maps*, London: Printed for Robert Morden and Thomas Cockerill, 1699, i.
would thus aim to know the basics of the science that regulated how the lands they coveted were divvied-up.

There were, of course, varying degrees of geographical proficiency among white officials, and those individuals involved in creating the American boundary lines ranged from being casually competent to cutting edge experimenters. I will thus first introduce European geography (the foundation of official surveying) at its most basic, as non-specialists would have learned it from the multitude of primers on the subject. I will then examine how professional surveyors, the geographic specialists most relevant to this chapter, went about dissecting space with boundary lines.

The spatial conception of educated Britons was based on geography, a science that they learned in school and from textbooks. One of these texts meant to “render [geography] inviting to the sons and daughters of England” (Robert Davidson’s *Geography Epitomised*) defined geography as “a description of the terraqueous globe.”

The challenge of the eighteenth century was to describe this globe with precision, and even geography texts written explicitly for youths were very clear that precision could only be achieved with standardized technology, measurements, and calculations. These textbooks thus instructed their readers on how to identify places and spaces on the

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4 For some of the several examples of these eighteenth century primers, see: *A concise system of geography: wherein the first principles of the science are laid down in a plain and easy manner, suited to the capacities of youth* (London: Devizes, 1774); Laurence Echard, *A most compleat compendium of geography; general and special; describing all the empires, kingdoms, and dominions in the whole world* (London, 1705); Daniel Fenning, *A new and easy guide to the use of the globes; and the rudiments of geography* (London, 1760); J. A. Gregory, *Manual of modern geography, containing a short, but comprehensive and entertaining account of all the known world* (London, 1760); John Holmes, *The grammarian's geography and astronomy ancient and modern, exemplified in the use of the globes terraqueous and ccelestial* (London, 1751); Johann Hübner, *An introduction to geography, by way of question and answer* (London, 1738); Joseph Randall, *A course of lectures in the most easy, useful, and entertaining parts of geography, astronomy, chronology, and pneumatics* (London, 1750); *The young gentleman and lady's geography* (Dublin, 1766).

5 Robert Davidson, *Geography epitomised; or a tour round the world: being a short but comprehensive description of the terraqueous globe: attempted in verse, ... By an American.* [London], 1786.
“terraqueous globe” in terms of geometric shapes, especially lines, and the tool these primers advocated for learning how to do so was a model globe. A dialogue between a geographer and his pupil in *Geography Made Familiar and Easy to Young Gentlemen and Ladies* (1748) illustrated this point:

Q. Which is the best Way to attain a just idea of the Globe of the Earth?
A. You will form the truest idea of the Natural Globe by viewing and studying an *Artificial* One.
Q. What is an Artificial Globe?
A. It is a round Body, made by Art, on whose surface the outward Parts of the whole Earth and Sea are delineated.  

Other artificial globes were designed so that the earth’s surface could be viewed with direct reference to the surrounding sphere of fixed stars. Herman Moll’s *An Introduction to Geography* (1701) described such a sphere as “a round and movable instrument, made up of divers circles which the astronomers have invented for... conceiving the motions of the Heavens, and representing the true situation of the Earth.” These globes were critically important for how territory was understood. The fact that “the true situation” of any place could only be known by measuring the earth’s position within the celestial sphere encouraged officials to visualize the earth on its largest scale—a planet situated in space. Thus the earth, which would have seemed impossibly huge if seen only from ground level, could now be perceived as a finite and regular shape.

As a geometric figure, the earth could be divided with mathematical laws into smaller regular shapes, thus providing a framework in which standardized geographic

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6 *Geography made familiar and easy to young gentlemen and ladies. Being the sixth volume of the Circle of the sciences* (London, 1748), 6.

7 Geographers were well aware that the sun was the center of the solar system, yet it still made sense for terrestrial geography to view the heavens as revolving around a fixed earth.

axiom could be averred. Like other aspects of geography, these geometric conceptions were most authoritative when explained with reference to the fixed stars. According to Moll, the circle is the primary geometric form used to divide a sphere’s surface and, in the case of the earth, the most recognized circles are those located directly below constellations. “The tropicks are two Circles parallel to the Aequator, and equally distant from it. One of ‘em passing through the beginning of Cancer towards the North, the other through the beginning of Capricorn towards the South, and... removed from the Aequator on either side...23 deg. 31 min.”

Despite the importance of the tropics as celestial referents, it is significant that Moll included their latitude, because latitude and longitude were circles that “are absolutely necessary to understanding this science.” The grid formed by these two sets of circles was the basis for creating a series of provable facts that legitimized geography as a precise science. In Geography Anatomiz’d (1700), Patrick Gordon lists forty-one “chief Geographical theorems, or self-evident Truths” based on latitude and longitude.

Both geographical theorems and the artificial globes helped make geography a powerful science for Europeans in the early modern period. The proven axioms of geography gave those who understood it a sort of global clairvoyance, enabling them to know things about distant places and peoples that would have been unknowable to those uninitiated in the geographic arts. For example, Gordon demonstrated how one can “know by the globe when the Great Mogul of India, and Czar of Moscovia, sit down to

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9 Ibid., 6.
10 Ibid., 6.
11 Gordon, Geography Anatomiz’d, 36.
Dinner." Although this may seem trivial, such notions of planet-wide surveillance did much to bolster Europe's sense of international and racial superiority. Geography also endowed Europeans with the ability "to know the climate of any given place." Combined with the "science" of environmental determinism, the ability to ascertain a region's climate based on its latitude allowed the educated to denigrate the physical and mental capacities of various peoples without having to observe them first hand.

While most educated whites shared this geometrically precise vision of terrestrial space, only a small corps of professional surveyors was capable of running boundary lines on the actual earth, a skill that made them highly valued in British society. Not only were most legal land holdings reliant on the accurate measurements of surveyors, but they were the vehicle through which the idealized visions of geographical order could be inscribed directly on an otherwise chaotic landscape. In 1771, the poet Thomas Sadler elegized this power of surveyors to give order to nature:

The Bounds of Nature finely drawn we see,
Art forms the line and Genius makes it free,...
SCIENCE! Thou Daughter of the Skies, 'tis thine,
To make Perfection in [nature's] Beauties shine;...
In thy rich stores our lab'ring Thoughts absorb,
Measure the Earth, and each Celestial Orb.
All [nature's] Dimensions we with Ease impart,
By GEODAESIA, and the Rules of Art.

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12 Ibid., 17.
14 Gordon, Geography Anatomiz'd, 23.
16 Thomas Sadler, "To Mr. Arthur Burns, on his New Treatise, intitled Geodaesia Improved: A Poem," in Arthur Burns, Geodesia improved; or, a new and correct method of surveying made exceeding easy. (Chester, 1771), iii.
Precise science allowed surveyors to delineate the earth’s true “dimensions,” which, for them, were geometric shapes based on the lines drawn “By GEODAESIA.”

Mathematics and instruments regulated the practice of land surveying, the “useful art” for which precision was most often and most publicly disputed—and thus most necessary. After all, both land holders and their tenants relied on accurate surveys to ensure that each party had its proper due. Furthermore, states and their provinces were sometimes divided by unnatural linear boundaries, a circumstance that, as in the case of the Mason Dixon Line, prompted much conflict over lines’ true location. Considering the potential of surveying to impact the lives of real people and governments, precision measuring was perhaps more important for this science than for any other practiced during the eighteenth century.

For measuring small tracts, chains (especially “Gunter’s Chains”) worked perfectly well, but for long boundary lines like those considered in this chapter, it was imperative to conduct accurate angle measurements and be familiar with trigonometry. In *The Art of Surveying* (1770), William Emerson listed “those [instruments] for measuring angles; as the Theodolite, plain table, semicircle, circumferentor, Geodetical

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17 Burns, *Geodesia improved*, i.


19 William Emerson argued that “Gunter’s Chain is the best for measuring land; its length is 4 poles or 22 yards; and is divided into 100 links” (William Emerson., *The art of surveying, or measuring land....* (London, 1770), 5); Arthur Burns advocated that surveyors should “measure, layout, and divide Land...with the Chain only” (Burns, *Geodesia improved*, i, ii); historian A.W. Richeson attested to the efficacy of Burns’ chain-only method, calling Burns’ surveying manual “the outstanding surveying text of the late eighteenth century,” (A.W. Richeson, *English Land Measuring to 1800: Instruments and Practices* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 158).
staff, infallible, &c." The angles found with these increasingly precise instruments were used to make trigonometric calculations that established the area of a given plot and the course of boundary lines. According to Burns' surveying manual, "it is absolutely necessary for everyone that would become an Artist in measuring land, to begin with, and be very expert in several rules of arithmetic." Plane trigonometry was sufficient for the vast majority of land surveys, but long boundary lines had to take the curvature of the earth into consideration, a far more complex calculation.

It may seem unlikely that American Indians would have been able to take advantage of these precise and high-tech surveys, but that is exactly what happened in the trans-Appalachian backcountry during the 1760s and early 1770s. The Indians' own geographic technology was limited more or less to the syncretic maps examined in chapter one, documents that failed to have the desired effect on official territorial boundaries. Maps had to be presented at formal meetings that were usually located on the British side of the frontier, a circumstance that made the Indians' preferred borders reliant on the approval of colonial officials. The boundaries that were agreed upon and mapped out at these treaties, however, had to be precise in order for officials to consider them legitimate, and the only way to achieve this was to send professional surveyors to the border itself, an area in which Indians were still the central powerbrokers.

In the eyes of officials used to imagining the earth as a model globe, the running of lines on its surface may have seemed like a straightforward issue of geometry. Yet on the frontier, this concept of space collided with that of Indian groups who had every

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21 Burns, *Geodesia improved*, viii.
reason to resent whites and their attitudes towards land ownership. The conflicts that ensued onsite during surveys across and of the Indian Boundary Line, and the impromptu negotiations that resulted from them, are the subject of the rest of this chapter.

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Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon geodetically surveyed a partition to settle the long disputed border between Maryland and Pennsylvania. Their line, though, came to represent much more in the American consciousness: it is the iconic boundary between north and south, a division between race-based slavery and racial freedom. Yet while they were surveying the Line (from 1763-1768), the geographical partition that most concerned colonials was that between east and west, whites and Indians—two groups that, by the 1760s, hated and killed each other throughout the backcountry. The Proclamation Line of 1763, a north-south boundary on the western frontier, was meant to be America’s first truly racial division. In the years between the Seven Years’ War and the American Revolution, it acted as a front across which each side could identify a racial enemy, one that they characterized as hostile and inherently different than themselves.

For the British government, the Proclamation Line was created as part of the larger effort to deal with the vast territories recently taken from France in an

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22 In January of 1765, while on winter holiday from running the Maryland/Pennsylvania boundary, Charles Mason visited Lancaster, Pennsylvania where he described in his Journal the Paxton Boys’ massacre, the most famous episode of violence by Indian haters in the 1760s. “What brought me here was my curiosity to see the place where was perpetuated last Winter the Horrid and inhuman murder of 26 Indians, Men, Women and Children, leaving none alive to tell.” The dead were Conestoga Indians who “had fled to the Gaol” in Lancaster in a vain effort to escape the Paxton Boys, vigilantes who hated them because they were Indians. The Paxtons broke into the jail and brutally executed and dismembered the Conestogas, peaceful dependents on the Pennsylvanian government and erstwhile neighbors of the Paxtons. “Strange it was that the Town though as large as most Market Towns in England, never offered to oppose them ... no honor to them!” The Paxtons, it seems, were not alone in their sentiments. In Charles Mason, The Journal of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, transcribed by A. Hughlett Mason (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1969), 66.
economically frugal way. Keeping their Indian neighbors happy was one of the most important aspects of this policy; thus trans-Appalachian settlement was forbidden in hopes that “the Indians may be convinced of our... Resolution to remove all reasonable Cause of Discontent.”

The Line, at least in theory, also prevented speculators and squatters from inhabiting lands that the British government could no longer afford to protect.

The concept of a royal boundary line also pleased western Indians, especially the Delawares, who—as seen in Teedyuscung’s negotiations at Easton—had long desired a formal line of separation to forestall white encroachments. After the violence, negotiations, and frustrations surrounding the Delawares’ land claims between 1755 and 1763, the Royal Proclamation must have seemed like an answer to their prayers. By the “Royal Will” the British mapped a line of separation, one far grander in scope and closer to their own preferences than anything that the Delawares, still subject to Iroquois hegemony, could have hoped to negotiate themselves.

Not only was the boundary line ordered and publicized by map, a geographic technology with which the Delawares were quite comfortable, but it also satisfied the traditional Indian spatial concept that territories were best separated by natural landmarks. The Proclamation Line ran the length of the Appalachian Mountains, the most recognizable north-south division in eastern North America.

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25 Ibid.
By 1763, influenced by the teachings of Neolin, many Delawares and other western Indians saw the entirety of trans-Appalachian America as a racial homeland. By officially segregating this territory from the settled colonies, the Proclamation Line did much to reinforce this sentiment. Similarly, the Proclamation Line also encouraged eastern whites to conceive of the west as Indian country and thus conflate all of the previously disparate Indian nations into a single Indian race. The Delawares, in many ways, became the archetype for this new Indian enemy. Their violence in 1755-6 triggered a wave of Indian hating and, as advocates of both pan-Indianism and formal separation, they were readily associated with the Ohio country and the anti-British sentiment therein. For many British colonists in the mid to late 1760s, the Proclamation Line allowed traits of savagery, hitherto assigned to the Delawares by frontier settlers, to become the standard image of all Indians.

More significantly, just as white inhabitants of the Pennsylvania backcountry had lived in fear of Delaware attacks, so the colonies as a whole started to fear a general Indian war. On December 17, 1767, a New York newspaper warned that “the Indians in general on the Continent are daily growing more and more dissatisfied and discontented. Indian hating was certainly visible in earlier white-Indian conflicts, especially in brutalities like the 1676 massacre at the Great Swamp Fortress during King Philip’s War. The racial hatred that developed on the mid-eighteenth century frontier, however, was the beginning of a long and widespread notion that Indians were inherently inferior and savage. According to Jane T. Merritt, Indian hating developed on Pennsylvania’s frontier because whites felt betrayed by Indian groups whom they had long considered neighbors and allies, Jane T. Merritt, *At The Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 190-197. For more on the rise of Indian hating on the Pennsylvania frontier, see Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 189-236.

Indian haters, like the Paxton Boys, often justified their atrocities with the language of savagism, a characterization that elites had long used to denigrate both Indians and unruly whites before frontiersmen re-projected it onto all Indians as a coherent and inherently barbaric race (Merritt, *At The Crossroads*, 12, 281-282).
among themselves, and that it will probably soon produce a Rupture.”

Two years later, *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal* claimed that “an Indian war is inevitable.” Such journalism was quite common throughout the 1760s and demonstrated the fear of race-based conflict that made the English promote the Proclamation Line as a bulwark against a racial enemy.

The reality, though, was that Indians and whites lived on both sides of the boundary, and racial atrocities continued to be a major source of concern for white and Indian Americans throughout the 1760s. Strangely, the utter failure of the Proclamation Line to stop racial violence, trading abuses, land speculation, and westward expansion did nothing to change the opinion of either Indians or whites that a formal separation was the key to peaceful coexistence. When, in 1767, “One Stump and his Servant ... in a very inhuman manner murdered ten Indians on Susquehanna,” George Croghan wrote that “It evidently shews the indispensable Necessity of the Indians being removed to a greater Distance from our Settlements, and which suffer me to say, can only be done, by fixing the Boundary with them. Nothing Else will do.”

The formalization of an enforceable Proclamation Line remained the central issue up to and after the Fort Stanwix conference of 1768 which, despite satisfying William Johnson’s goal of pushing the boundary much further west, also failed to solve the

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problems. As with other map-based boundaries of this period (those proposed by Indians and whites alike), the Proclamation Line failed to prevent violence and illegal territorial encroachment.

Unlike the Proclamation Line, Mason and Dixon’s carefully surveyed border has remained an emblematic feature of American geography, one that itself became a site of racial tension in the mid nineteenth century. In 1767, however, their Line literally crossed racial boundaries when they continued their latitudinal survey west into Indian country, bisecting the Proclamation Line that ran along the Appalachian Mountains. Their expedition, an officially sanctioned incursion into lands purportedly reserved for Indians, attracted the attention of several important figures, both Indian and white, who were central to interracial politics. On a smaller scale, the day-to-day experience of the survey party illustrated the very real tensions between the British, Iroquois, and Delawares. As an occasion that brought racial enemies together, it punctuated the larger events and conflicts that forced them to exist separately.

Near the end of 1766, Mason and Dixon were forced to call a halt to the boundary line they had been surveying since 1763; preceding any further would have taken them across the Proclamation Line and into Indian country. As official surveyors themselves, Mason and Dixon respected the legitimacy of government-made territorial boundaries and would have been loathe to transgress one without proper authorization. More importantly, officials involved with the survey knew that delineating space west of the Proclamation Line would have been a clear insult to Indian sovereignty. The frequency of frontier violence and fear of the Delawares made the proprietors of the Line reluctant

to cross the "Boundary between the Natives and strangers" without the permission of the Six Nations. 32 Although the part of the Ohio country west of Maryland and Pennsylvania was occupied mostly by Delawares and Shawnees, the Iroquois were still recognized as the legitimate owners of the Ohio country. Horatio Sharpe, governor of Maryland, thus asked Sir William Johnson to "endeavor to prevail on the [Iroquois] Indians to give their consent that the [Mason Dixon] line be run" beyond the Appalachians. 33

Johnson, however, knew this to be a delicate matter. He was worried that the Indians "may be apt to conceive very differently the meaning of the present line," as an official encroachment into Indian territory (which, in effect, it was). 34 So on May 8 th, 1767, Johnson held a conference at the German Flats, New York, to gain the permission of the Six Nations to extend Mason and Dixon's survey into Ohio. The Congress was attended by many more Iroquois than had been invited, because the Mason Dixon survey presented them with an opportunity to learn more about land surveying, knowledge that could prove invaluable when running any future boundaries between Iroquoia and the British colonies. 35

Johnson, though, was caught up in the omnipresent English fear of a general Indian war. 36 He confided to Lord Shelburne that he called the Congress only partially

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33 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:230.

34 Ibid., 12:256-7.


because it was “a necessary part of [his] duty for terminating these disputes” between Maryland and Pennsylvania. The “more material motive [was] satisfying them on the Subject of their Inquietudes of which I had the most... alarming accots, and therefore no Time was to be lost.” Still in its planning stages, the western expedition of the Mason Dixon Line was already tangled up with the pervading politics and fear surrounding the Proclamation Line.

The proprietors of the Mason Dixon Line provided Johnson and the Iroquois with yet another opportunity to direct colonial expansion into Delaware lands. The superintendent thus chose two important representatives, Hugh Crawford and the Mohawk chief Hendrick, to lead the surveyors’ expedition into the West. Mason described Hugh Crawford as “our Interpreter, who has traversed these parts for 28 years, either as an Indian Trader or Commander in his Majesty’s Service in the late wars.” He had since served in Johnson’s department of Indian affairs as chief assistant to George Croghan and acted as liaison to Pontiac in 1766. Furthermore, Crawford and Johnson


38 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:230.


40 One witness, describing Crawford’s relations with Pontiac, told Johnson that “Mr. Crawford keeps the Indians in the best order I’ve ever seen any keept in & I hope his Ezal [zeal] for the service will recommend you to his notice.” More than likely, such praise prompted Johnson to select Crawford to accompany Mason and Dixon. Kenneth P. Bailey, ed., The Ohio Company Papers, 1753-1817: Being Primarily Papers of the “Suffering Traders” of Pennsylvania (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1947), 159; Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:120.
were both active land speculators who hoped to acquire trans-Appalachian territories for themselves. As a member of the Ohio Company and one of the Suffering Traders,\(^41\) Crawford no doubt hoped to use his place with Mason and Dixon to scout out and secure some of the best western lands for himself and his associates.\(^{42}\)

The Iroquois guides were also handpicked for this important excursion. “Sir William thought [it] proper to send these Indians down [to the Pennsylvania/Maryland border], among whom are the famous Hendrick, and some other principle Headmen of the Mohawks Nation.”\(^{43}\) Hendrick was a central Mohawk figure in the post Seven Years’ War era, involved with Johnson and land sales in the 1760s and a primary representative of the lower Mohawks at the Fort Stanwix Treaty.\(^{44}\)

Hendrick and the other Iroquois guides (ten other Mohawks and three Onondagas)\(^{45}\) had goals of their own that went beyond those of either Johnson or the

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\(^{41}\) The Suffering Traders were a group of Indian traders who made several petitions to receive Ohio land grants (throughout the 1760s and 1770s) as restitution for trading losses incurred at the hands of western Indians. Although Johnson did not hesitate to secure thousands of acres for himself at Fort Stanwix, he did not provide any to Crawford or the other Suffering Traders whose property was stolen in 1754. See Bailey, *The Ohio Company Papers*, 11, 159, 223.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 200.

\(^{43}\) The New-York Gazette or The Weekly Post-Boy, December 17, 1767, “New York, December 17, 1767,” America’s Historical Newspapers, 1690-1922. News Bank, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com](http://infoweb.newsbank.com). This same article goes on to voice the fear of a total Indian war.

\(^{44}\) It is possible that the author of this article confused this “famous Hendrick” with the more famous Mohawk of the same name who was killed fighting with William Johnson during the Seven Years’ War. I do not, however, think it was a case of mistaken identity. The former Hendrick (d. 1755) was perhaps the most well known Mohawk and his death was extensively covered in New York newspapers (see, for example, *The New-York Mercury*, October 6, 1755, “Boston, October 9,” America’s Historical Newspapers, 1690-1922. News Bank, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com](http://infoweb.newsbank.com)). The Hendrick of Mason and Dixon’s survey would have been well known in his own right for his role in land negotiations in New York during the 1760s (for two examples of Hendrick’s involvement in land negotiations, in 1764 and 1768 respectively, see Sullivan et al., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 11:359-360 and 12:618). The fact that he is listed third after Abraham (the lead spokesman) and Kenadagaya on the list of Mohawk chiefs present at the Fort Stanwix Treaty also confirms the latter Hendrick’s importance.

\(^{45}\) It is significant that the entire body of guides came only from these two Iroquois nations. Both the leader and the majority of the guides were Mohawks, the group that William Johnson had brought to prominence
commissioners of the Line. They hoped to learn something about how surveys were actually conducted so that they could avoid being cheated when the time came to demarcate the revised Proclamation Line. At Fort Stanwix, Johnson confirmed that "Indians [would be] appointed to see the line run," and it is more than likely that, given the experience and knowledge acquired from the Mason Dixon survey, Hendrick would be among these officials.\textsuperscript{46} In light of Johnson's corruption at Fort Stanwix, familiarity with surveying could prove a crucial skill. Considering how Johnson manipulated the Proclamation Line's location on maps, the chances were high that he would try to increase his own territory during the survey as well.\textsuperscript{47}

The Mason Dixon Line was a prime chance for the Iroquois to glean enough knowledge to ensure their agency in future surveys because it was the most scientifically advanced surveying project ever attempted in North America and the largest in scope.\textsuperscript{48} According to Astronomer Royal Nevil Maskelyne, "Messieurs Charles Mason and

\textsuperscript{46} Sullivan et al., \textit{The Papers of Sir William Johnson}, 12:477.

\textsuperscript{47} Sara Stidstone Gronim, "Geography and Persuasion: Maps in British Colonial New York." In \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Ser., Vol. 58, No. 2. (April, 2001), 394-398

Jeremiah Dixon [had been engaged] to settle the limits between the provinces of Maryland and Pennsylvania, in North America; which the performed partly by trigonometry and, and partly by astronomical observations.\textsuperscript{49} The survey was a paradigm of precision; it produced "the straightest and most regular" lines ever run by taking astronomical sightings with a new kind of zenith sector, an instrument "so exact that they found they could trace out a parallel of latitude by it, without erring above fifteen to twenty yards."\textsuperscript{50} In addition, Mason and Dixon used the boundary survey as an opportunity to conduct highly sophisticated experiments for the Royal Society, most notably measuring the length of a degree of latitude. To ensure precision, measurements were conducted "two or three times" with both brass and fir rods whose minute variations were checked against "the height of the thermometer at the time."\textsuperscript{51}

No other colonial surveys, including those of the Indian Boundary Line conducted in the early 1770s, came close to Mason and Dixon's degree of exactitude, nor were any carried out with such a large and well equipped party. Charles Mason's journal is frustratingly sparse with details (except those relating to geodetic measurements, which are very thorough) and he neglected to include specifics about the number of men (or women) in the 1767 expedition and ignored logistical considerations. He did, however, sketch the composition of the surveying party in June of 1764. Mason's offhand entry noted that "[W]e engaged ax men, etc. The whole company including Steward, Tent

\textsuperscript{49} Nevil Maskelyne, "Introduction to the following Observations, made by Messieurs Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon...," in Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, "Observations for Determining the Length of a Degree of Latitude in the Provinces of Maryland and Pennsylvania, in North America," in Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775), vol. 58 (1768), 270.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 271. Their zenith sector, which used a new style of plumb line to ensure accuracy, was developed by "master technician" John Bird (Richeson, English Land Measuring to 1800, 163).

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 275, 272.
keepers, Cooks, Chain carriers, etc. amounting to 39. Two Waggons, Eight Horses, etc."

Assuming that the surveying party in 1767 was at least as large as that of 1764 (and probably much larger), we get some sense of the team that penetrated and delineated the Indian Country. The addition of Hendrick and the other Iroquois guides would have made this seem a large and threatening force to Delawares and other Indians living in the Line’s path.

Observing and assisting the precise measurements of this large surveying party would have left the Iroquois guides with enough knowledge of how the English measured land to play a decisive role in the running of future boundary lines. This is not to say that Hendrick could have measured and run a latitudinal line with the same accuracy as Charles Mason, but the Iroquois would have learned which instruments and procedures were central to making lines. These could then be the targets of efforts to disrupt or manipulate officially surveyed borders.

Horatio Sharpe and Maryland’s other delegates for the Line were well aware of the status of these Iroquois guides and the importance of ensuring they were treated with the necessary respect. Sharpe went so far as to declare that “the public Peace ... may greatly depend on the good Usage and kind Treatment of these Deputies.”

He feared that mistreating these important chiefs, especially whilst in officially recognized Indian country, could explode into the widely dreaded Indian war.

Mason and Dixon were thus enjoined “Not only to use them well yourselves but to be careful that they receive no Abuse or ill treatment from the Men you may employ in

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53 Ibid., 177.
carrying on the said Work, and to do your utmost to protect them from the Insults of all other persons whatsoever."54 Also in the interest of ensuring peaceful relations, Sharpe included an addendum to this letter which advised that the Indian guides be given (diluted) liquor no more than three times a day.55 He knew how high tensions had become between Indians and whites and hoped to make certain that a war would not start on account of a drunken quarrel between an Iroquois chief and a white frontiersman.

Far more threatening than these potential internal conflicts were the very real dangers of surveying in Indian country, an activity with which the Delawares in particular took umbrage. The survey's axmen could surely recall how in 1755 Delaware warriors had murdered fourteen settlers near Penn's Creek with chains and axes (iconic tools of white surveys), symbolically reclaiming their stolen land on the bodies of their victims.56 White fear of Indian violence was a powerful force east of the Proclamation Line, but it was truly terrifying in the West. Upon reaching the Monongahela River, about fifty miles into Indian country, twenty-six (over half) of Mason and Dixon's axmen turned back east, "they would not pass the river for fear of the Shawanes and Delawares Indians."57

The Mohawks also knew that they were in dangerous territory. Twenty-six miles and one month before the axmen quit, Mason noted that "Mr. John Green, one of the Chiefs of the Mohawks Nation, and his Nephew left us, in order to return to his own Country."58 Despite Iroquois claims to control Ohio and the Indians who lived there,
John Green made it clear that they did not really believe it to be their “own Country.” It is therefore no surprise that the guides were “very glad to see” a band of Seneca warriors en route to war with the Cherokees.\(^{59}\) It made them feel more secure to know that more armed Iroquois were near at hand.

The territory west of the Maryland/Pennsylvania border was controlled by the Delawares and Shawnees, and the Iroquois’ claim to rule them and their land quickly proved illusionary. The Delawares, still struggling in 1767 between the Scylla and Charybdis of the Six Nations and the English, were well aware of the Iroquois led expedition of Imperial surveyors delineating their land without their permission.

Like Johnson and the Iroquois, the Delawares also sent an elite representative to meet with the surveying party: “Prince Prisqueetom, Brother to the King of the Delawares.”\(^{60}\) It seems certain that Prisqueetom was the same man as Pisquetomen, the elder brother of such famous frontier figures as Shingas, Delaware George, and Tamaqua—“King Beaver” of the Western Delawares. According to Michael N. McConnell, Pisquetomen and Tamaqua were arbiters for peace with the English, using diplomacy to ensure that the Western Delawares remained secure in their Ohio homeland. After 1755, Pisquetomen “began the most active moment of his public life, serving as both his brother’s eyes and ears and as a link between the Delawares’ peace faction and the British.”\(^{61}\) McConnell, however, wrote “it seems likely” that Pisquetomen died in

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\(^{59}\) Ibid., 175.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 175.

1762, "robbing Tamaqua and his people of decades of experience in coping with the colonial world."\(^{62}\)

Not only was Pisquetomen still very much alive in 1767, but he remained active in his old role as Tamaqua's eyes and ears among the British. His primary goal in meeting with Mason and Dixon was probably to inspect the surveying party and keep a close watch on it as it proceeded westward. As an official British expedition led by Iroquois Indians and a representative of William Johnson, the survey must have been perceived as an immediate threat to the Delawares' lands in Ohio, territory that they continued to hope would be protected by the Proclamation Line. For Pisquetomen, who in his youth was a translator during the Walking Purchase of 1737, Mason and Dixon's survey had an ominous precedent. Since much of the Walk's fraud occurred during its survey, when "the young Proprietaries came and got [the boundary] run by a straight Course by the Compass, and by that Means took in double the Quantity intended to be sold," Pisquetomen would have considered it imperative to keep Mason and Dixon under close surveillance.\(^{63}\)

Yet Pisquetomen was also a high-profile cultural intermediary, and that Tamaqua sent such an important and aged dignitary to meet with Mason and Dixon evinces that he understood the unique opportunities that trans-Appalachian surveys offered Indian groups like the Delawares. As officials who were required to go into the Delawares' country for the sake of onsite precision, Mason and Dixon presented the Delawares with a rare

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 292.

chance to negotiate borders away from the Iroquois dominated treaty system. The fact that Mason and Dixon were surveyors, the people who actually made the official boundary lines that the Delawares so desired, made it all the more important for the Delawares to settle with them directly.

Pisquetomen’s message was still one of peace: in good English, the “old Prince” told the surveyors how he and his brother “had a great mind to go and see the great King over the Waters; and make a perpetual Peace with him.” Just as meeting with the surveyors gave Pisquetomen the chance to act independently of the Iroquois, so too did his wish to treat directly with the English King demonstrate that the Delawares knew the colonial treaty system offered them little hope of achieving sovereignty. Such aspirations must have chafed Hendrick and the other the Mohawks present, who still insisted that the Delawares were women incapable of diplomatic relations without their supervision. Nevertheless, Pisquetomen made it clear that the Delawares also still distrusted the English; he would not travel to England to meet with the king because “he was afraid he should not be sent back to his own Country.”

Upon reaching a Delaware warpath at Dunchard Creek two hundred and thirty-three miles west of the Line’s eastern origin, Hendrick told Mason and Dixon that they had reached the “extent of his commission from the Chiefs of the Six Nations ... and that he would not proceed one step further westward.” The warpath was, to use Nancy

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65 Ibid., 175.

66 Ibid., 187.
Shoemaker's terminology, both an explicit and an implicit national boundary.\textsuperscript{67} It marked explicitly a geopolitical boundary of the Delawares' sovereign territory, one that the Iroquois guides refused to violate despite their boasts to own that land. The warpath on Dunchard's Creek was an implicit national boundary because it tied the national history of the Delawares to that territory. Mason noted in his journal that "This Creek takes its name from a small town settled by the Dunchards...the Town was burnt and most of the inhabitant killed by the Indians in 1755."\textsuperscript{68} Although the landmark's name was of European origin, the significance of the warpath evoked the Delawares' national sovereignty and reinforced their claims to the land.

Mason, Dixon, and Crawford could not prevail upon the Iroquois guides to change their minds, so the entire expedition began its journey back east (with Mason and Dixon rechecking their measurements all the way). The Line was supposed to continue until it reached the fifth degree of longitude west of the Delaware River, about eighty miles west of the Proclamation Line and thirty miles beyond where the Iroquois stopped the expedition.

The surveyors and officials involved in the Line were surprised to hear of its premature conclusion. There had been no mention of a prearranged terminus and all evidence indicates that the Iroquois guides were paid and treated well during the survey.\textsuperscript{69} Contemporary newspapers simply claimed that the guides turned back on account of the winter, while Johnson accounted for their reversal as a reaction to the "universal


\textsuperscript{68} Mason, \textit{The Journal of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon}, 187.

\textsuperscript{69} Sullivan et al., \textit{The Papers of Sir William Johnson}, 5:737, 6:5-6, 6:71, 6:2, 12:367, 12:401.
discontent prevailing among them” about frontier atrocities and the failure to survey and enforce the Proclamation Line.70

Hendrick, though, decided to turn back only after reaching the Delaware warpath at Dunchard Creek, a mark on the landscape that sent a clear message to the Iroquois guides that the lands further west were outside of their jurisdiction.71 For the Iroquois, the warpath was a visible reminder that the Delawares, despite their label as women, were more than capable of annihilating the small party of Iroquois and English trespassing on land they increasingly considered to be their racial home.

Hendrick and the other Iroquois (and, most likely, the surveyors themselves) were afraid to proceed into Delaware country, where they knew their purported authority would not protect them from people who had every reason to resent them and the survey they accompanied. Despite all of the advanced instruments and formal geographic conventions that Mason and Dixon employed, their survey ultimately relied on Indian conceptions of space. Both the Iroquois recognition of the territorial boundary implicit in the warpath and the Delawares notion that the west was their racial homeland prevented the survey from being completed.

The early end of the Mason Dixon Line must be counted as a Delaware victory because, as things stood in 1767, the extension of an official colonial boundary eighty miles beyond the supposedly sacrosanct Proclamation Line would have meant the end of


71 Mason noted that Dunchard Creek “takes its name from a small town settled by the Dunchards [that] was burnt, and most of the Inhabitants killed by the Indians in 1755.” The Journal of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, 187.
any pretensions the Delawares had towards territorial sovereignty. Their warpath had made their boundaries clear to the Iroquois guides while also evincing their military potential. Furthermore, by sending Pisquetomen to meet with Mason and Dixon, the Delawares showed that they—not eastern officials or the Iroquois—were the group with whom any onsite land claims ultimately had to be reckoned.

The spatial conception of white officials that required authoritative boundaries to be run onsite left the Line vulnerable to adjustment or, in this case, termination, by Indian groups whose own notions of how space was delineated and the rights by which it could be claimed often proved decisive. If officials had considered it sufficiently precise to draw the boundary line on a map, then the western Indians would have been denied any agency in deciding its position. Unfortunately for the Delawares and other western nations, the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1768 would do just that.

By redrawing the course of the Indian Boundary Line on a map, William Johnson was able to dictate the position of borders in a way that would have been far more difficult if done on site. Not that this mapped-line was any more successful in controlling white expansion or stopping frontier violence than previous ones had been, but it did prevent western Indians from citing the Royal Proclamation Line of 1763 as a legitimate and recognized territorial border.

The very impermanence of the mapped Indian Boundary Line stands in stark contrast to the surveyed Mason Dixon Line, a latitudinal border that remains a well-recognized mark on the American landscape (albeit because of its significance as the boundary between slavery and freedom in the nineteenth century). Of course, not all surveyed boundary lines have had the staying power of Mason's and Dixon's.
Donelson's Line of 1771, a surveyed boundary between Virginia and Cherokee country is no longer on any map of the United States, but it demonstrated just how influential Indians and surveyors could be when, for precision's sake, lines had to be run onsite in the west.

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By the late 1760s, it was all too apparent that the Proclamation Line of 1763 was doing more to aggravate existing frontier tensions than to solve them. Yet both Indians and whites, groups who increasingly considered each other racial enemies, continued to press for the formalization of an Indian Boundary Line that could keep each race safe from the other. It was decided that the Line should be moved westward and the superintendents of Indian affairs, John Stuart and Sir William Johnson, should negotiate the new boundary with the powerful Indian groups in their region. In 1768, Stuart and the Cherokees resettled the border between Virginia and Cherokee country at Hard Labor and Johnson met with the Six Nations at Fort Stanwix shortly thereafter.

At the Treaty of Hard Labor, Stuart and the Cherokees agreed to change the Indian Boundary Line from the Appalachian Mountains to one that ran "in a straight line about a north course to the confluence of the Great Conhoway [Kanawha] with the Ohio." This new boundary opened up the area east of the Ohio River for settlement

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72 N.B. Many of the most relevant documents relating to this section can only be found in the archives of the Colonial Office in London. As I have been unable to travel to London for this thesis, I must rely on extended quotes from these documents found in published secondary sources. I was, however, able to confirm the accuracy of several of these quotes by checking their wording with other published transcriptions of the same documents. This is not ideal, but it is the best I can do for now.

(including the land that Mason and Dixon had been prevented from surveying the previous year) and was meant to meet up with the northern border being established by Johnson. As with the original Proclamation Line, Indian groups hoped that this boundary could safeguard their territorial claims as well as ensure that racial segregation was the rule along the frontier. At the conclusion of the treaty, the Cherokee chief Oconostata expressed his peoples’ desire that the Hard Labor Line would finally provide spatial and racial separation: “the Land is now divided for the use of the red and white people and I hope the white inhabitants of the frontiers will pay great attention to the line Marked and agreed upon.”

By putting his territorial speech in terms of red and white, Oconostata made it clear that race and land had become overlapping issues in the backcountry.

The problem, however, was that the line was never “Marked.” Stuart knew that surveying the boundary as soon as possible was integral to ensuring its legitimacy, but he was forced to postpone the survey because of delays to the Fort Stanwix Treaty. When Fort Stanwix was finally concluded, it became clear that Johnson, against the instruction of Whitehall, had used this treaty to acquire vast amounts of land for speculators (including himself) and, by so doing, created a boundary that was too far west to meet up with the Hard Labor Line.

The two Virginians designated to survey the Hard Labor Line, Dr. Thomas Walker and Andrew Lewis, were also Virginia’s representatives at Fort Stanwix. They were each prominent speculators who claimed large tracts beyond the Hard Labor Line.

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75 Alvord, *The Mississippi Valley in British Politics*, 63.
and, like most Virginians, resented the limits that Great Britain placed on expansion. At Fort Stanwix, Walker and Lewis agreed to recognize the Six Nations' claim to (and thus right to sell) the Ohio Valley, but in so doing forfeited all of Virginia's claims to this region. Although this upset many Virginian expansionists, the lands they most coveted were in the southwest (present day Kentucky) and they realized that the inconsistencies between the Hard Labor and Stanwix Lines presented them with a chance to acquire more western land.

The House of Burgesses led the effort to convince John Stuart to push Virginia's boundary even further west than the line he renegotiated following Fort Stanwix. In a 1769 letter, the Burgesses cited several reasons "in favor of a more extended Boundary westward," one far more ambitious than the compromise reached by Stuart and the Cherokees earlier that year.

[We] beg leave to observe that [Stuart's] Line...would be two hundred miles in length, and must pass through a Country abounding with high and rugged Mountains [and] that the present posture of Indian Affairs would make a strong guard of armed men necessary for the protection of those who might be commissioned to run the line, as it must pass through a Country uninhabited, and through which those Indians who seem at present most inclined to hostilities, do frequently take their routes.

The Burgesses, it seems, had learned a lesson from the Mason and Dixon survey, when onsite Indian interference had left Virginia's northern boundary with Pennsylvania

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76 Ibid., 63. Hughes, Surveyors and Statesmen, 74.

77 The most ambitious Virginians claimed their province ought to include all of the territory between the 36° 30' border with North Carolina, the Ohio River, and the Tennessee (or even Mississippi) River (Alvord, The Mississippi Valley in British Politics, 65). For a provocative account of the 1728 survey of the Virginia/North Carolina boundary line, see William Byrd, Histories of the Dividing Line Between the Virginia and North Carolina (New York: Dover Publications, 1967).


79 Ibid., ix.
incomplete. They also echoed the notion that total separation with a racial boundary line was necessary in order to protect whites from savage Indians. Stuart’s proposed line would make the many Virginians who had already settled illegally in Indian country vulnerable to “Indians and others, enemies to His Majesty...whereby the settlers...will, in all probability, be utterly destroyed.”

Stuart, the authority on Indian affairs, was “mortified [that his] reasoning on the subject of a more extended Boundary must differ from that of...the House of Burgesses.” Significantly, Stuart justified his placement of the line with a similar argument as the Burgesses, that Indians were a united racial threat. According to Stuart, the boundary proposed by the Burgesses would cause conflict “immediately with the Cherokees and Chickasaws, but [also] the jealousies and apprehensions of every tribe on the continent...would be again revived.” He went on to emphasize that the Burgesses’ line “would be productive of a general rupture with, and coalitions of, all the Tribes on the Continent.”

Such fear of a united enemy was the result of the Proclamation Line of 1763, a boundary that, by virtue of a shared geographic space, led whites to see all Indians as a single race, not several nations. The traits of vilified Indian groups, especially the Delawares, were conflated to encompass all Indians, instigating fears that small frontier raids, like those of 1755 or 1763, would be writ large. Ironically, this fear prompted eastern whites to continue to press for an evermore western boundary line as a bulwark

80 Ibid., x.
81 Stuart to Botetourt, 13 January 1770, in Kennedy, ed., Journals of the House of Burgesses, xi.
82 His underline. Ibid., xii.
83 Ibid., 12.
against this threat, an initiative that only served to prompt Indians to form the very coalitions that whites so feared.

Stuart thus reproved the Burgesses desired line by claiming “an encroachment on the lands of any nation becomes a common cause, and attracts the attention of the whole,” and that, more immediately, “deputies from the Shawanese [and] Delawares [are] endeavoring to form a general confederacy on the purpose of defending their lands.” Invoking the specter of a Delaware-led coalition of hostile Indians was his final argument against the Burgesses, and proved influential enough that they accepted the line Stuart had originally proposed and even provided £2500 for the planned treaty at Lochaber that would make that boundary official—at least on paper.

Elite whites, of course, were not the only group who considered the Indian Boundary Line as protection against inherently wicked enemies. While negotiating the line that would become formalized at Lochaber, the Cherokee leader Oconostata told Stuart “we want to keep the Virginians at as great a distance as possible, as they are generally bad men and love to steal horses and hunt for deer.” The inclination to speak “generally” of whites reflected both the nativism promulgated in Indian country by men like Neolin as well as the sense of racial separateness reinforced by the Indian Boundary Line itself.

Although the Virginian surveyors Walker and Lewis were originally designated to run the remapped line, Stuart and the Burgesses agreed to replace them with John Donelson. Walker and Lewis’ western land claims made Stuart suspicious of their

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84 Ibid., xii.

85 Colonial Office, 5-70, pp. 246, found in De Vorsey, Jr., The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 77.
motives, and many influential Virginians (themselves speculators associated with the Ohio Company) distrusted the surveyors’ ties to the Greenbrier and Loyal land companies. Yet Donelson also had much to gain from this appointment. He would be in a position to scout out and delineate the best western lands for himself while increasing the size of Virginia in order to augment his prestige and bolster his public career. In more dramatic fashion than he could have imagined, that is precisely what he did. As historian Sarah Hughes succinctly put it, “few men rendered more help to the Virginia expansionists and speculators than the Halifax County surveyor, John Donelson.”

Donelson, Stuart, Stuart’s deputy Alexander Cameron, Attakullakulla (known to the English as Little Carpenter), and “1000 other Indians” agreed to a new boundary of separation at the Treaty of Lochaber, October 18, 1770. They decided on

A Line beginning where the Boundary Line between the province of North Carolina and the Cherokee Hunting Grounds terminates, and running thence in a West Course to a point six mile East of Long Island on Holsten’s River, and thence to said river six miles above Long Island, and then in a direct course to the confluence of the Great Conhanoy and Ohio Rivers.

The treaty even explicitly stated the underlying motive of the boundary line: racial separation. It thus included a clause that “His Majesty’s white subjects...shall not, upon any pretense whatsoever settle beyond the said Line, nor shall the said Indians make any settlements or encroachments” to the east.

The treaty’s stipulations regarding “Long Island on Holsten’s River” would prove to be a decisive factor in the ultimate location of the surveyed border. The Cherokees

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86 Hughes, Surveyors and Statesmen, 151.

87 Ibid., 151.


89 Ibid., xvi.
were unwilling to cede this island or the land near it because they feared the English would use it as a beachhead for the invasion of Cherokee country. Yet "the Indians offered, by way of compensation for the land they refused to grant, to run the Line a more western course to the Ohio."90 This proposed cession was massive, including almost 10,000,000 acres of Kentucky. Stuart, however, was renowned for following Whitehall’s orders to the letter and thus “declined accepting it, not being within the limits of [his] instructions.”91 Governor Botetourt, along with most other Virginians, was annoyed that “the superintendent thought himself so restricted by his orders that he declined accepting [the land]...it is a pity that this addition to His Majesty’s territory, which is so easy to be obtained, should be refused.”92

Yet just because the Lochaber Line was settled by treaty (and, soon after, approved by Whitehall) did not mean that the surveyed border would exactly trace, or even resemble, the one mapped out at Lochaber. Indeed, the treaty’s final stipulation, that “no alteration whatsoever shall henceforth be made in the Boundary Line [except] with the consent of the Superintendent,” would prove to be as ephemeral as the Lochaber Line itself.93

On May 26, 1771, about seven months after the ratification of the treaty of Lochaber, a surveying party consisting of John Donelson, Alexander Cameron, two

91 Ibid., 280.
92 Colonial Office, 5-1349, pp. 17, found in De Vorsey, Jr., The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 77.
interpreters, Attakullakulla, and several other Cherokees met near the North Carolina border and began to run the line. Over the next five months, these men used compasses and "poles" for accuracy (not advanced astronomical methods like Mason and Dixon) while blazing a line of trees that would serve as both a visible partition between two races as well as a precise onsite measurement on which to base globes and maps. The line they drew, though, was not the one agreed upon at Lochaber.

The so-called Donelson Line was an onsite compromise between Donelson and Attakullakulla, both in terms of the actual placement of the boundary and the two men's differing spatial conceptions. Shortly after the survey began, Donelson and Attakullakulla agreed to move the line westward to the Kentucky River, the location that Attakullakulla had suggested during the treaty. In the notes of his map of the line, Donelson described its surveyed course as:

Beginning at the Steep Rock on the Waters of the great Canaway River, to...the [North Carolina] Colony Line & thence Extending the Same in its due West Direction—24 ½ miles and 50 poles...To several markt trees on the South fork of Holston's River...thence to a point 6 miles above the Long Island The[nce] N5°W 4 ¾ miles to a Red Oak markt on the top of a Ridge...Thence N33°W 15 ½ miles crossing Cumberland Mountain to 3 Sycamore Trees Issuing from one root and several other markt trees on a Creek of Louisa River and Thence down the same ...to its confluence with the Ohio.

This written sketch illustrates how Donelson’s Line constituted a compromise between white and Indian methods of delineating space. Prominent features on the landscape, like the “Steep Rock” and “3 Sycamore Trees Issuing from one root” embody the kind of natural landmarks that were central to Indian maps and mental itineraries since the pre-

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94 Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier*, 283.

95 Colonial Office Maps, 700 Virginia /19, found in De Vorsey, Jr., *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 80-81.
contact period (see chapter one) and were essential to Europeans’ sense of space as well.\(^96\) The Line’s other basis was the neat units of European geography, measurements in degrees, miles, and rods that provided the necessary level of precision to make the boundary legitimate in the eyes of English officials. Marking trees was a manner of creating artificial landmarks that was common to both cultural traditions.

According to Donelson, it was Attakullakulla who first suggested changing the course of the survey. Donelson presented the Virginia legislature with an affidavit to exculpate himself from any charges of malpractice, claiming

That in the progress of the work, they came to the head of the Louisa, now Kentucky River, when the Little Carpenter (a Cherokee Chief,) observed, that his nation delighted in having their lands marked out by natural boundaries; and proposed that, instead of the Line agreed upon at Lochaber...it should break off at the head of the Louisa River, and run thence to the mouth thereof.\(^97\)

Although “natural boundaries” were undoubtedly an important aspect of Indian spatial systems, it seems suspect that the Cherokees would actually sacrifice 10,000,000 acres of their territory just to have natural landmarks.

What, then, were Attakullakulla’s motives for altering the Line and depriving his people of a massive territory? The preference for natural boundaries should account for part of this, as should the £500 that Donelson promised (though never paid) Attakullakulla when they made the onsite deal.\(^98\) Historian Louis De Vorsey Jr. posited several plausible reasons why Attakullakulla may have wanted a more westerly line. Along with natural boundaries and personal enrichment, Attakullakulla could have

\(^{96}\) On this and several other spatial conceptions that were shared by Indians and whites before and after contact, see Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 14-27.


\(^{98}\) Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen*, 151.
favored a western boundary because it gave a larger buffer zone for white expansion, used white settlers as a defensive wall against hostile northern Indian groups, or gave the Cherokees an opportunity to profit from the sale of territory near the Ohio River, lands they could only tenuously claim anyway.99 All of these reasons are credible and, more than likely, Attakullakulla had more than one of them in mind when he agreed to Donelson’s Line.

After the conclusion of the survey, Attakullakulla voiced his own explanation as to why “we have altered the course a little.”100 Although this speech was recorded by Donelson and thus necessarily dubious, its message appears to be authentic because Attakullakulla’s rationale reflected the difficult political and geographical position of the Cherokees. He claimed that “I have given away some land…as my [white] brothers were settled upon it and I pitied them.”101 Although he may indeed have pitied the settlers (they did often lead very difficult lives), it is more likely that Attakullakulla wanted to show his “father,” John Stuart, that the Cherokees wanted peace with the whites and did not intend to wage the Indian war that Stuart and other whites so greatly feared. It is also quite possible that Attakullakulla moved the line to accommodate white settlers because the very point of the Line was to separate whites and Indians. Attacking whites settled on the Indian side of the border would have brought repercussions from the British or frontiersmen, so it would have been a pragmatic measure to make sure all established

99 De Vorsey, Jr., The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 85.
100 Colonial Office 5-1350, pp. 27, found in De Vorsey, Jr., The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 83.
101 Ibid., 83.
settlers lived east of the boundary (while hoping against hope that the new line would be enough to keep them there).

Regardless of Attakullakulla's precise motive, he would have been unable to realize the altered course without the consent of Donelson, the appointed surveyor. As most of Donelson's reasons for agreeing to the shift involved personal gain, he would have been quick to aver the Cherokee chief's agency in the decision. He did indeed gain much for himself (in addition to the praise of Virginia's elite) by opening a vast new region to speculation. He was made Pittsylvania County surveyor, where he demarcated 4,749 acres of choice land for himself that he later sold for the princely sum of £4,000. In 1780, he used his wealth and celebrity status to lead an expedition into present-day Tennessee and became a prominent figure in that rapidly whitening region.

Lord Dunmore, governor of Virginia, hesitated almost an entire year before reporting to Hillsborough that "this line is not exactly run by the instructions sent by your lordship to Mr. Stuart..., but that it takes in a larger tract of country than by those instructions they had permission to include." Indeed, he was wise to do so. Hillsborough was furious that his orders had been ignored, but it is indicative of the power of surveyed boundary lines that he was unable to do anything about it. Hillsborough could and did force William Johnson to return much of the land that he took illegally from the Six Nations at Fort Stanwix because that transaction was based on a

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102 Hughes, Surveyors and Statesmen, 153.

103 For more on this eventful expedition, see John Donelson, "A record of the experiences of the pioneers on their trip in boats from East Tennessee down the Holston and the Tennessee rivers and up the Ohio and the Cumberland rivers to Fort Nashboro, the present site of Nashville," found in J.G.M. Ramsey, The annals of Tennessee (Kingsport Press, 1926).

104 Colonial Office, 5-1350, pp. 19, found in De Vorsey, Jr., The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 83.
mapped line that had not yet been run onsite. Donelson’s Line, however, was a fait accompli, a boundary formed outside of the English sphere of influence and thus beyond their power to rescind.

During both the Donelson and Mason and Dixon surveys, Indians took advantage of the fact that the conception of geographical space shared by British officials required onsite surveys in order to ensure precise, and thus legitimate, boundaries. The governmental elites who had decided the hypothetical boundaries could not be present to ensure their accuracy and Indians became the primary powerbrokers in shaping backcountry boundary lines.

Indian maps and official surveys, the formal boundary-making sciences examined in chapters one and two, both depended to a great extent on the approval of the other group. Thus Indian-made maps had to be approved at official treaties and official surveys could be stopped or altered by Indians in the west. At this same time, however, hordes of uneducated whites were flocking to the backcountry and establishing territorial claims that had little regard for Indians, officials, or their carefully surveyed boundaries. In fact, as seen in chapter three, it was the very informality of settlers’ land claiming methods that allowed them to overrun the frontier so efficiently. Unfortunately for western Indians, white officials recognized the advantages of settlers’ extra-legal land claiming methods and the informal (and often brutal) aspects of the settler land ethic would become integral to how officials delineated western lands.
CHAPTER III

“BUT FOR THE INJURIES OF ONE MAN”: MICHAEL CRESAP AND THE PROMULGATION OF THE SETTLER LAND ETHIC IN THE LATE COLONIAL ERA

Frontier settlers, a population consisting largely of poor and uneducated families, were the group most successful in establishing themselves and their cultural spatial conceptions in the North American backcountry during the final years of the colonial period. Settlers on the whole paid little or no heed to formally mapped boundaries, and even those inscribed on the landscape by official surveys were often disregarded if the surveyed land was not actually occupied. It was the efficient, extralegal, and decidedly imprecise ways that settlers claimed space that made them such a dynamic force on the frontier.

Their ad hoc settlements and general unruliness made settlers a constant source of trouble for both Indians and British officials, two groups that had worked to establish racial separation through treaties and formal boundaries, both mapped and surveyed. Not only were many settlers active Indian haters who robbed and killed Indians, but they did so in Indian country, land that Indians considered theirs by political, racial, and divine right. Although individual settler homesteads provided Indians with visible and relatively

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1 This quote is from a speech by the Cayuga chief Logan in which he lamented the Indian murders committed by Michael Cresap in 1774; “The Speech of Logan, a Shawanese Chief to Lord Dunmore,” in The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury, February 20, 1775 (the article mistakenly referred to Logan as Shawnee).
easy targets for violently reclaiming their lands, the sheer number of settlers was quickly proving overwhelming and Indians appealed to the colonial and British governments for succor. Indeed, authorities were usually glad to assist Indians in evicting settlers from Indian country. Not only did settlers occupy lands that wealthier whites coveted (thus precluding the payment of rent or deference), but officials feared that the disruptive behavior of backwoodsmen would provoke the general Indian war that they so feared in the 1760s and early 1770s.

As a cultural group, settlers have been widely studied, yet it has been an enduring problem with this historiography that settlers are usually portrayed as a personality-less force of nature, an inevitable wave of whiteness and the independence spirit that simply happened without any actual human agency.\(^2\) This attitude can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, most notably in Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 “frontier thesis” and Theodore Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West*.\(^3\) Although settlers did indeed share many general traits, especially in their attitudes toward land, it is as necessary to find individual agency for this large and diverse group as it is when studying Indians or white officials. Focusing on the actions and human interactions of a single individual, a man who was representative of the settler cultural group but very involved with both Indians and white officials, helps the historiography move beyond facile generalizations about frontier people and show tangible ways that settlers influenced North American culture and approaches to space.

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\(^2\) One notable exception to this is Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Griffin presents a balanced picture of settlers, showing their collective characteristics as well as individual characters.

I organize this chapter around the exploits of one man, Michael Cresap (1742-1775), a settler from western Maryland who embodied both the positive and negative traits traditionally associated with the ‘frontier type’: he was fiercely independent and a leading patriot but also a scheming landjobber and an Indian hater. Yet Cresap also played a prominent individual role on the Ohio frontier in the decade from 1765 to 1775. He established an illegal settlement beyond the Proclamation Line, claimed lands in Ohio that had already been surveyed by prominent colonial speculators, and had such a central role as an Indian killer in Dunmore’s War that many contemporaries referred to that conflict as Cresap’s War.

Most importantly, Cresap can be understood as an exemplar of the settler approach to land, a powerful way of conceiving and claiming space that, by the end of the colonial era, was co-opted by more powerful whites for their own territorial purposes. Largely because of Cresap’s own actions, many elites interested in the Virginia and Pennsylvania backcountry underwent a surprisingly rapid shift in their approach to claiming and settling land, one that had more in common with Cresap’s violent and unauthorized ethic than that of officials and gentlemen only a decade or so earlier.

From 1773 to 1775, Virginians who were both commissioned military officers and trained surveyors (men like Col. George Washington, Col. William Preston, Col. William Crawford, and Col. Andrew Lewis) took on the role of warrior-surveyors, officials who used Cresap’s methods on a much larger scale to impose their control over the Ohio frontier. Although these warrior-surveyors replaced the imprecise delineations of settlers with the precise surveys that were so fundamental to their spatial conception, the means by which they established and legitimized these boundaries resembled the
extralegal methods of Michael Cresap that officials decried. The official appropriation of
the settler approach to land would reach its climax during Dunmore’s War, a clash with
western Indians (catalyzed by Michael Cresap) in which Lord Dunmore, without
authorization, sent surveyor-led armies to force an official spatial system onto Indian
lands in the Ohio Valley.

This chapter begins with an overview of the spatial conceptions and technologies
central to how settlers understood and claimed land in the backcountry. I will then
present some background information on Michael Cresap before examining his career
between 1765 and 1775, a decade in which he was a founder of an illegal settlement at
Redstone Creek, an active landjobber, and a renowned Indian killer. This account,
however, is not intended to be strictly biographical. I use the events surrounding Cresap
both to illustrate how the settler attitude towards land proved very successful in making
onsite land claims and to show how this frontiersman’s approach to land was a direct
influence on how prominent elites came to claim territory circa 1773.

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Despite being a multiethnic group, the poor white settlers that inhabited the North
American backcountry during the eighteenth century shared a distinctive culture, the
nuances of which have been noted by scholars and contemporaries alike. The cultural
geographers Terry G. Jordan and Matti Kaups listed several of the most ubiquitous
features of the “socio-cultural type that characterized the midland American frontier,”
including: the nuclear family as the dominant social unit; disrespect for law and
government; individualism; lack of attachment to place and thus high mobility; little
concern for ecology; slash and burn agriculture; and a tendency to settle on remote
homesteads instead of villages.\(^4\) For educated eighteenth century observers, such traits
demonstrated that settlers had gone beyond the pale of civilization, both culturally and
georaphically.

Settlers' departure from European norms allowed them to perfect a system of
conceiving and occupying space that was perfectly suited for their mobile, anti-
authoritarian, and family-based culture. Settlers considered unoccupied lands (including
many that were inhabited by Indians) to be available to anyone who could establish their
physical presence on the landscape. This practice of "getting land and taking it up"\(^5\) was
based loosely on Lockean principles that whoever made "improvements" on a given
chunk of space was its owner by natural right.\(^6\)

Thus Joseph Doddridge, a settler who grew up in late colonial western
Pennsylvania, recollected the common belief that "the country belonged of right to those
who chose to settle in it."\(^7\) A far more vehement supporter of settler rights, the North
Carolina Regulator Hermon Husband, declared that "peaceable Possession, especially of
back waste vacant lands...is a Kind of Right."\(^8\) The tracts settlers claimed were, ideally,
just large enough to support the nuclear family and far enough removed from the centers

\(^4\) Terry G. Jordan and Matti Kaups, *The American Backwoods Frontier: An Ethnic and Ecological
that this backwoods culture had its roots in the Savo-Karelian woodlands culture of Sweden and Finland, an
approach to frontier expansion that spread in America from Swedish settlements in the Delaware Valley.

\(^5\) Joseph Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars of the Western Parts of Virginia and
Pennsylvania, From 1763 to 1783*, ed. Alfred Williams (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1876), 134.

\(^6\) Alan Taylor, ""A Kind of Warr": The Contest for Land on the Northeastern Frontier, 1750-1820," in *The
William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 46, no. 1 (Jan., 1989), 7.

\(^7\) Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars*, 133.

\(^8\) Quoted in Stephen Aron, "Pioneers and Profiteers: Land Speculation and the Homestead Ethic in Frontier
of Anglo-American authority that frontiersmen could ensure their treasured independence. Also, tracts could be claimed and taken up with striking speed, so that when settlers felt any of their freedoms threatened, their settlements could be abandoned and new ones established that satisfied their individualism and quenched their “passion for migration.”

Very few settlers had anything resembling a formal education, thus their cultural spatial conceptions were not based on the learned and non-intuitive geographical principles that organized how educated whites saw the world. Even fewer had the skills to conduct geometrically precise surveys. Being “neither...remarkable for science or urbanity of manners,” they did not have the mathematical knowledge to do geometrical surveys nor the money for (or access to) the instruments that made them possible. Yet settlers had no need for these formal conventions. Their claims were based on physical occupation and development, a much more tangible feature on the landscape than the onsite surveys of officials, much less the mapped borders forwarded by Indians. Furthermore, formal surveys were slow because they relied on bureaucratic approval and painstaking measurements.

Settler culture demanded a much faster practice, not only to secure a claim amidst intense competition for land, but because the very marks of possession—the crops and cabins discussed below—were requisite for survival. In lieu of the several precision tools used by officials to conceive and claim land, settlers who were claiming space relied on a single inherently imprecise though durable and efficient technology: the axe.

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9 Benjamin Rush, Essays, literary, moral & philosophical (Philadelphia: Printed by Thomas & Samuel F. Bradford, no. 8, South Front Street., 1798), 223.

10 Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars, 197.
According to Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, author of *Letters from an American Farmer*, “the axe, that is the principle tool the American wants, and particularly the backsetters.”

The “broad axe” of the backwoods had its origins in Scandinavia, a heavier and stronger felling instrument than the axes made in Britain. With this sophisticated though clumsy tool, ecologically negligent frontiersmen with “the distressing habit of looking at trees only as enemies” effected a dramatic transformation of the backcountry landscape within a few short generations.

The axe was the technology central to every method that settlers used to legitimize their claims to backcountry tracts. Tomahawk rights, clearing land, and erecting cabins and fences all used the axe to establish one’s visible presence on the landscape and, in the case of the cabin, were key to survival. Corn rights, a recognized claim based on cultivating a small crop of grain, was also dependent on the axe because corn needed the space and sunlight made available by felling trees.

Tomahawk rights were based loosely on the surveyor practice of blazing territorial boundary markers onto trees, but settlers adapted it to their ad hoc and imprecise system for rapidly claiming land. Essentially, settlers used their axes to hack a mark into the trees that they considered to constitute the bounds of their rather arbitrary claims. According to Doddridge, “there was, at an early period of our settlements, an inferior kind of land title denominated a *tomahawk right*, which was made by...marking

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the bark of some one, or more [trees] with the initials of the name of the person who made the improvement."\textsuperscript{14} Although "almost the whole tract of country between the Ohio and the Muskingum was parceled out in Tomahawk Improvements," the endurance of these claims could only be ensured by human occupation of the delineated site.\textsuperscript{15} Doddridge thus claimed "I have no knowledge of the efficacy of the tomahawk improvement, or whether it conferred any right whatever, unless followed by an actual settlement."\textsuperscript{16}

Just as settlers paid little regard to formally surveyed though unsettled lands, so too they would have had no qualms with establishing themselves on a tract delineated by tomahawk rights but undefended onsite. Active defense was indeed quite necessary; when those "with a view to actual settlement" wanted to supersede tomahawk claims, "they deliberately cut a few good hickories, and gave [the claimants] what was called in those days \textit{a laced jacket}, that is a good whipping."\textsuperscript{17} Just as settlers used brute force to oust Indians from desired lands, they were often willing to use similar though less lethal tactics to evict fellow settlers.

Axes were most actively employed for clearing land and building cabins, the fundamental processes by which settlers imposed their spatial ideals onto nature. Benjamin Rush wrote that a settler's "first objective [was] to build a rough cabin for himself and his family."\textsuperscript{18} The cabins and fences—both built of axe-hewn logs—were a

\textsuperscript{14} Doddridge, \textit{Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars}, 130, his italics.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 134.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 130.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 130.

\textsuperscript{18} Rush, \textit{Essays, literary, moral \& philosophical}, 213.
settler's proof of occupation, defensive bulwark, and single-family shelter against the elements. Deforestation of settlement tracts was such a vital part of "the march of the Europeans towards the interior parts of [the] continent" that Crèvecoeur wrote "he who would see America in its proper light...must visit our extended frontier...where he may see the first labours of settlement, the mode of clearing the earth."  

This mode consisted of both felling trees and "deadening" them to clear space for a cabin and a crop of corn while also, by the very presence of the clearing, claiming the minimum bounds of the tract. A single proficient axman could fell an acre of woods in about seven to ten days and the stumps were usually left in the ground; most frontiersmen farmed with hoes instead of yoked animals, thus stumps did not present serious obstacles. Lazier settlers preferred clearing their chosen plots by "deadening" (or "girdling") the trees, which was "done by cutting a circle round the trees, two or three feet from the ground," a process that slowly killed the tree with minimal labor.

The ecological impact of this method of claiming land went beyond the destruction of woodlands. Wild animals were overwhelmed by livestock and over-hunted by whites, a result that served to further anger Indian groups that relied on hunting for both meat and peltry. Although the newly cleared forests were initially very fertile (especially after the ash of burnt undergrowth provided a fertilizer), frontiersmen often neglected agricultural practices like crop rotation that would sustain the soil. The virgin soil produced high-yield, low-effort crops for only three to five years, at which point

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settlers would often clear land adjacent to their current clearing (sometimes even dragging their cabins with them) and begin the ecologically exhausting process anew. As marks of actual settlement and legal title, cabins became sites of contestation and fraud for people with designs on the land. Historian Alan Taylor noted how, on the Maine frontier, “competitors used violence purposefully and by paying attention to land laws channeled it to defend, seize, or destroy physical evidence of possession—especially buildings and fences.”

Although the lack of authority on the mid-Atlantic frontier decreased the emphasis on litigation, occupation of a tract became all the more important because the courts were largely unable to decide a land dispute and ownership was usually settled on the simple basis of actual settlement. Cabins also allowed opportunistic frontiersmen a chance to perform a kind of onsite, small scale landjobbing scheme. As seen later in this chapter, Michael Cresap used this cabin-building tactic to claim choice lands on the Ohio (a trick that wealthier land speculators learned from him the hard way).

These methods of claiming western lands were antithetical to the ordered process of western expansion promoted by British officials (not to mention the Indians’ hope for racial separation through mapped boundaries), and officials blamed frontier people for fomenting the problems endemic to the backcountry. For British officials, formal geography and surveys were the basis of a geopolitical scene in which precise boundaries and elite authority ensured rational relations with Indians. The decidedly irrational way in which settlers claimed western lands, combined with their strident rejection of authority, made this elite vision impossible.


Yet, by 1773, it became apparent that colonial elites and officials interested in the backcountry of Virginia and Pennsylvania had come to employ settler methods of taking lands, and they ignored their own superiors just as settlers ignored them. In order to understand why this fundamental shift in attitudes to western land and the Indians living in them occurred where and when it did, it is illustrative to examine the career of Michael Cresap, a frontiersman directly involved in several ventures that had a direct impact on large scale speculators and the frontier itself.

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Michael Cresap was, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, “of the regular pioneer type” of the late colonial backcountry: ardently independent, desirous of acquiring western lands without regard to formal conventions, and “inclined to regard any red man, whether hostile or friendly, as a being who should be slain on sight.”24 Yet what set Cresap apart from the anonymous masses of settlers was that he did all of these things on as large a scale as possible. Through both illegal Indian treaties and an exaggerated use of tomahawk rights, Cresap claimed far more land than the typical family-sized plots sought by settlers and, from the time he was twenty-one, was renowned as one of the preeminent Indian killers in western Maryland.

His interest in land can be traced to his father, Thomas Cresap, a man who was involved with Maryland’s various frontier claims throughout his incredibly long life (he lived to be 109). Soon after immigrating to Maryland, Thomas Cresap settled on the Susquehanna (actually in Pennsylvania) and became such a fierce agitator for expanding

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Maryland’s northern boundary that Charles Mason, himself enmeshed in the details of this dispute, noted how

The People near the supposed Boundary Line were then [in 1736] at open war [and] one Mr. Crisep defended his house as being in Maryland, with 14 Men, which [the Pennsylvanians] surrounded with about 55. [Cresap] would not surrender (but kept firing out) till the House was set on fire, and one man in the House lost his life coming out.25

Upon his capture, Thomas Cresap was taken to Philadelphia, where the “Maryland monster...taunted the crowd by exclaiming...‘Why this is the finest city in the Province of Maryland!’”26 Soon after this affair, Thomas removed to Maryland’s western frontier, where he became one of the founding members of the Ohio Company, and—after acquiring “a sufficient knowledge of mathematics”—was appointed surveyor of Prince Georges County.27 In 1770, Thomas was given the opportunity to define one of Maryland’s boundaries (which, apparently, he held quite dear) when he was commissioned to survey the province’s Potomac River border with Virginia. Significantly, his youngest son Michael accompanied him in this survey, giving the


26 Brantz Mayer, Tah-Gah-Jute; or, Logan and Cresap, an Historical Essay (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1867), 25.

27 John J. Jacob, A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap (Cincinnati: Steam Lob Printer, 1866), 38. This source, though containing more information than any other on the life of Michael Cresap (and much on his father as well), is very problematic and will be used with caution throughout this chapter. Jacob, who wrote this book in 1826, was a close friend of Michael’s and even married his widow after his friend’s death in 1775. Also, he was the governor of Maryland, and sought to bolster Cresap as his state’s version of Daniel Boone, a frontier hero of the late colonial period and the Revolutionary War. Jacob claimed to have written this history in order to defend Cresap’s memory against the accusations of the Mingo chief Logan (and also Thomas Jefferson who reprinted Logan’s speech in his Notes on the State of Virginia) that Cresap was responsible for murdering his family and thus catalyzing Dunmore’s War (more on this below). Furthermore, Jacob himself admitted that “neither is my memory very tenacious” (55). I will thus try to use this source only for information that seems factual while excluding or qualifying that which is subject to the author’s biases.
young frontiersman an opportunity to learn some of the finer points of how officials saw and claimed land.  

Charles Mason would no doubt have been shocked to learn that the same “Mr. Crisep” who rudely fought for his personal space on Maryland’s northern border actually became the public surveyor for its western one many years later. The shift in Thomas Cresap’s conception of space—from that of an uneducated frontiersman to a scientifically grounded surveyor—was quite rare and few frontiersmen had access to this kind of learning. This change, though, is indicative of how in the last years of the colonial era, the boundaries between settler and official approaches to land had begun to blur.

Despite some formal education and his time as a surveyor’s assistant, Michael Cresap’s methods and technologies for claiming and delineating land remained those of a frontiersman. He chose to use axes (not chains, compasses, or theodolites) to make claims that were legitimized through clearing land, building cabins, and actual settlement. Yet Cresap did have a geographer’s eye for the big picture, conceiving of space as a vast expanse that could be acquired through onsite delineation or quasi-official treaties and then subdivided for personal profit. This dichotomy in Michael Cresap’s approach to land—using extralegal settler methods on an official scale and for typical official ends—would prove very disruptive to Indians’ and white officials’ plans for frontier space. The fact that his technique was incredibly successful led several wealthy and land-hungry whites to co-opt his methods, albeit on an even larger scale.

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28 Alan Powell, Forgotten Heroes of the Maryland Frontier: Christopher Gist, Evan Shelby, Jr., and Thomas Cresap (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2001), 143.

29 Thomas Cresap sent Michael to primary school in Baltimore County during the 1750s, where Michael probably learned some basic mathematics that would be applicable to surveying. John J. Jacob noted that, “being a backwoods boy...he ran away” from school and made it all the way back to his father’s home in western Maryland on foot before being sent back to school to finish his education.
The most startling difference, though, between Thomas and Michael Cresap was that Michael obviously hated Indians as a race. Thomas had been an Indian trader on the Maryland frontier and had served as a colonel in the Seven Years War, but he did not evince any of the overt racism that first became manifest in the early 1760s. Michael, however, had more in common with the Paxton Boys than his father, and throughout his life exhibited an intense hatred for Native Americans. In the words of historian Robert G. Parkinson, "Michael Cresap killed Indians. This is just about all anyone outside the frontier knew about the Maryland settler prior to the Revolution." Indeed, in 1763 (the same year as the Paxton massacre), when Michael was only twenty-one, the Maryland Gazette reported that "we had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Michael Cresap arrive in town with mokosins on his legs, taken from an Indian whom he killed and scalped."

Even more startling is the account left by the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, which related the impression that Cresap left on western Indians after twelve years of murdering them. Heckewelder reported that "so detestable became his name among the Indians, that I have frequently heard them apply it to the worst of things;

30 On the Indian/white racism of the post Seven Years War period, see Jane T. Merritt, At The Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 266-292; and Daniel K. Richter, Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 189-236. Patrick Griffin argued that individuals like Michael Cresap and Tom Quick practiced racial violence but it would not be until the long and bloody frontier wars of the 1770s and 1780s that hating Indians as an inferior race became fully entrenched in settler culture, Griffin, American Leviathan, 152-180.

31 Robert G. Parkinson, "From Indian Killer to Worthy Citizen: The Revolutionary Transformation of Michael Cresap," in WMQ, vol. 63, no. 1 (Jan., 2006), 99. This is an excellent article concerning how newspapers during the Revolutionary War changed Cresap into a hero-patriot, but it contains nothing on his land dealings.

32 Maryland Gazette, 19 July, 1763, as quoted in Powell, Forgotten Heroes of the Maryland Frontier, 139.
also, in quieting their children, I have heard them say, hush! Cresap will fetch you.”

Whether Michael was motivated by the Indian raids of the Seven Years War—and the subsequent feeling of betrayal that Jane Merritt considers key to the rise of Indian hating—cannot be known. But what is clear is that Michael Cresap did not value Indians right to live and, by extension, he valued their rights to land even less.

Unfortunately, just as Michael Cresap’s methods of securing lands seem to have shaped how officials claimed frontier territory, so too did his propensity to kill Indians seem to have prompted more powerful colonials do the same. Although it would be imprudent to assign too much credit to Cresap for effecting this shift (there are far too many factors involved to give agency to any one man), it is nevertheless suggestive that it was Cresap’s Indian murders that started Dunmore’s War, a conflict in which warrior-surveyors employing Cresap’s approach to land were quick to adopt his brutal practices with Indians. To elucidate how Cresap’s Indian hating interacted with his landjobbing, and how both impacted how white authorities dealt with the West, I will begin with his first venture to attract official attention: his illegal settlement at Redstone Creek.

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In 1765, Governor Penn of Pennsylvania wrote to Governor Fauquier of Virginia that “many ill disposed persons, in contempt of the Royal Proclamation of the 7th of October, 1763, and in violation of the Rights of the Natives, have without authority...

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dared to seat themselves on Lands near Redstone Creek.” The Redstone Creek settlement, near present day Brownsville in southwest Pennsylvania, prompted a struggle in which the settlers continually overwhelmed the combined efforts of western Indians and the British Army until the Indian Boundary Line was moved further west in 1768. This settlement and the Indian and official efforts to remove it highlighted the lack of any real authority (either colonial or British) on the frontier and fed fuel to fears that a racial war between whites and Indians was imminent.

Michael and Thomas Cresap were the leaders of this enterprise. They “held a treaty with forty Six Nations warriors, In Which, [the Indians], by Deed, ceded...a large extent of Land, down the Ohio.” This treaty was very illegal; not only did it create a white settlement in lands that the king had reserved for Indians (and that Indians themselves considered a racial homeland), but it did so without the approval of Whitehall or colonial governors. Many British and colonial officials, especially those with their own schemes for acquiring western lands, feared that the Cresaps’ insolence would inspire others to make similar illegal treaties with western Indian groups.

Thus some of the Suffering Traders wrote Sir William Johnson that “we are uneasy, least such contracts may produce discontent; For others will no Doubt, follow such unwarrantable Practices & for Small Considerations... beguile them into a Disposal


35 Sullivan et al., comps, The Papers of Sir William Johnson (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1921-1965), 12:236. There is some disagreement amongst historians and the historical record as to whether it was Thomas or Michael Cresap who made this treaty. It was officially ceded to “Colonel Cressap of Maryland,” but Michael was sometimes referred to as Colonel Cresap even though it was his father who earned that title. I think it best to assume that both father and son were involved with this treaty, though Thomas would have been about eighty-five years old by this time, thus leaving much of the leadership in Michael’s hands.
of their Lands.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, their suspicions were well founded. Ten years after the Redstone treaty, "A Certain Richard Henderson...confederating with divers other Persons, hath, in open Violation of [the] Royal Proclamation...entered into Treaty with certain Indians of the Cherokee Nation, for the Purchase & Cession of...200 miles square."\textsuperscript{37}

This illegal negotiation, the Treaty of Watauga, was yet another case in which the Cherokee chief Attakullakulla demonstrated his willingness and ability to conduct land affairs outside of official circles.\textsuperscript{38} More importantly, the Treaty of Watauga was an example of social elites (Henderson was a judge) employing one of Cresap's many underhanded means of claiming territory. As early as 1765, Cresap was already setting precedents that powerful colonials could co-opt to overstep both geographical and ethical boundaries in their pursuit of space.

Although the land deal was legitimized with a quasi-official treaty, the Cresaps used settler spatial conventions to claim the land onsite. In June of 1765, when the settlement was first being established, the Seneca chief Ogista complained to Sir William Johnson that "several white Families are settled on Red Stone Creek, and have planted Corn, with Peter, a Mohawk Indian."\textsuperscript{39} The planting of corn would, by necessity, have been preceded by clearing the forest and the felled logs were turned into fences and

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 12:236. The Suffering Traders, though, had hoped to claim Redstone for themselves as payment for trade losses during the Seven Years War, and thus had ulterior motives for contesting the Cresaps' treaty.

\textsuperscript{37} Josiah Martin, Governor of North Carolina, Proclamation, 1775.

\textsuperscript{38} It is likely that Attakullakulla did not think the Cherokees owned the lands in question anyway (Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall. At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 162.

\textsuperscript{39} Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 11:791.
The corn, cleared land, and buildings would all have been recognized by other would-be settlers as marks of possession.\footnote{Although I have found no direct evidence that the Redstone settlers used tomahawk rights, a 1766 Proclamation by Governor Penn specifically forbade “taking Possession of Lands by Marking Trees.” As the Redstone Creek settlement brought about this Proclamation, I think it safe to assume Penn was objecting to tomahawk claims at Redstone (John Penn, “Proclamation,” 1766).}

The settlement was still in its infancy, but Ogista realized that it was illegal and threatened the sovereignty of Indian country and thus asked the British government to remove the “white Families” and “White Hunters” from lands west of the Appalachians. Ogista’s insistence that all whites be removed was based on both the lawful and geographical separation enforced by the Proclamation Line as well as the tenets of pan-Indianism that Neolin had promulgated. Thus Ogista told Johnson that though all white settlers and hunters must be removed, “the Mohawk Indian [Peter], we have no Objection to his living there with his Family, as he is one of ourselves.”\footnote{Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 11:791.}

Yet the Indians failed to understand settler ideas of land ownership. Out of compassion or pity (apparently), Ogista said “we do not desire [the settlers] should lose their labour; but when they have reaped their Corn, we hope they will be removed.”\footnote{Ibid., 11:791.} Corn rights, as far as they had any actual legal basis, gave land ownership to whoever planted and reaped a crop of corn. More concretely, if Indians had destroyed their crop or removed them before the harvest, the settlers would not have been able to sustain themselves. As with building cabins, corn rights served the overlapping purposes of staking a claim and providing the means of survival. In hindsight, the Indians would
have been wise to remove the settlers before a ripened crop gave them a more secure and legitimate foothold in Indian country.

Only one year after the settlement was established, British officials began a long and unsuccessful effort to remove the Cresaps and other settlers from Redstone Creek. Governor John Penn issued a 1766 Proclamation that all trans-Appalachian settlers return to the white side of the Proclamation Line and Thomas Gage, commander in chief of Britain's American forces, ordered the garrison at Fort Pitt "to drive the settlers from Red Stone Creek & other Places by Force, recommending it as proper that some Indian Chiefs should be with the Troops and witness of our Earnest Desire to Relieve them."\(^43\)

Alexander McKee, with soldiers and several headmen of the Six Nations, delivered the notice to vacate, and, in 1766, the settlers did in fact leave and their cabins were burnt.\(^44\)

Whereas the Indians in 1765 failed to destroy the corn that marked the Cresaps' claim to Redstone Creek, Gage and the British Army—who were genuinely interested in satisfying the Indians\(^45\)—realized that it was necessary to remove all of the settlers' physical claims (and means of survival) from the landscape. Gage described how McKee "sent Partys to destroy as many Huts as they could find, to prevent more People from being tempted to seat themselves upon those Lands."\(^46\) Gage also tried to correct the

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 12:133.


\(^{45}\) For more on the British army's preference for Indian rights and complaints over those of settlers, see Matthew C. Ward, "'The Indians Our Real Friends': The British Army and the Ohio Indians, 1758-1772," in The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850, ed. Daniel P. Barr (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006), 66-80.

Indians’ 1765 mistake of allowing the Redstone settlers to reap their harvest, suggesting that “the Spring will be the proper time to remove the Settlers, and then prevent their Sowing.”

Gage hoped that destroying the settlers’ physical marks of possession and forcing them to return east would solve the problem, but, as he admitted in 1768, “altho’ many steps were taken for their removal they have hitherto proved ineffectual.” The Fort Pitt garrison made several forays to Redstone Creek, but every time they threw the settlers out, even more would return to reclaim the land. There were three main reasons why, despite their best efforts, the army could not keep the settlers out of Redstone: the efficiency of the settler land-claim system, the failure to replace the settler-created landscape with a different one, and jurisdictional disputes among the colonies.

Once a tract was cleared, there was really very little work needed to establish or reestablish settlement. Even if all of their cabins and crops were destroyed, the settlers needed merely to erect a new hovel and sow another couple acres of corn in order to repossess the Indians’ lands. Although McKee had told them that they would not be protected if Indians were to attack, the western nations were unwilling to kill the settlers outright for fear of reprisals and upsetting the delicate peace they considered necessary to keeping legal rights to Indian country. Thus, as long as the settlers had the endurance to return each year, their simple and efficient system of claiming space would preclude all the army’s efforts to evict them.

The problem was that each time the settlers were forced off, the landscape they vacated at Redstone was not replaced with a new and different land system, one that

47 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:380.
48 Ibid., 12:422.
would prevent them from reestablishing themselves in their simple and efficient way. The most logical way for the British to have solved this issue would have been to survey and settle the west using formal conventions, but these measures, unlike those of settlers, could not be legitimate unless approved by colonial or British authority. This fundamental obstacle to removing settlers and stopping their many abuses of western Indians was one of the primary reasons given for pushing the Indian Boundary Line further west in 1768.

Although colonial authority was notoriously weak in the west, governments lost all pretense of power in areas where there was no clear jurisdiction. As Governor Penn noted to Governor Fauquier in 1766, “when it is considered that as the Boundary Line between Virginia and Pennsylvania has not yet been ascertained, and it is probable the [Redstone] Settlements made by those lawless People, may shelter themselves under an unsettled or disputed jurisdiction.” Even Gage, the overall commander in North America, found himself hampered by the fact that “those Lands...are Claimed by Pennsylvania and Virginia, or I should use less ceremony with [the settlers].” The question of which province owned Redstone Creek was supposed to have been decided by Mason and Dixon’s latitudinal survey in 1767, but, as seen in the previous chapter, they were prevented from running the line to its planed terminus by Delawares in the Ohio Country and the Mohawk guides leading the party.

Unfortunately for the Delawares and other western Indians, stopping Mason and Dixon kept their own country in jurisdictional limbo, a problem that helped prevent the Redstone settlers from being removed and even contributed to the armed invasion of

49 “Penn to Fauquier, 15 Nov. 1766,” in Pennsylvania Archives, 327.

50 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:380.
Dunmore’s War. It is significant that formally surveyed boundaries, like Mason’s and Dixon’s, were so fundamental to official concepts of order and governance that neither Pennsylvania, Virginia, nor the British had full confidence in their right to remove settlers and their land system from a space that had not been officially delineated to any of them.

Thomas Cresap worked to further complicate the issue of Redstone’s jurisdiction. Arthur St. Clair described how “a ridiculous story that Mr. Cressap has spread with much industry that [Pennsylvania] did not extend beyond the Alleghany Mountain, but that all to the westward of it was King’s Land, has taken great hold of the people.” Cresap, who had lived in and fought over the disputed Maryland/Pennsylvania boundary knew the importance of colonial jurisdiction to effective authority, thus he was wise to incite as much confusion as possible as to who really controlled Redstone Creek.

For colonial and British officials, the greatest threat from the Cresaps’ Redstone settlement was that it would catalyze the general Indian war that they feared so much in the 1760s and early 1770s. In June of 1765, only a few months after the first settlement at Redstone, William Johnson wrote that “[settlers have] begun to establish themselves in the Indian Country threatening to put all Indians to Death whom they might meet with,” and that “through Mistaken Zeal or Madness, [they] are taking such Steps, as must...involve us in a general Indian War.” Although Michael Cresap was not identified by name, boasts threatening to kill “all Indians” certainly sound like his modus operandi.

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52 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 11:812.
Another commenter in 1767 voiced the Indian complaints that “Near four hundred English families have settled on their hunting country, at Redstone Creek...and that their Warriors...are much insulted by those Settlers And a great Many of Them have been Murdered.” He thus “hoped that the Administration, will no longer delay...to confirm the Boundary between the Indians & us...otherwise...the colonies will, before the Spring, be involved in all the dreadfull Woes, of a general Indian War.” Prior to 1768, the Indian Boundary Line was still invoked as a panacea, yet, as evinced by Dunmore’s War, moving the Line westward did very little to stop violence in the backcountry.

In a 1767 letter to William Johnson, George Croghan drew together several of the issues that I have addressed throughout the present study. By conflating geography, pan-Indianism, racial violence, the Proclamation Line, the illegal Redstone settlement, and the Mason Dixon Line in one brief letter, Croghan illustrated just how interconnected all of these matters really were on the 1760s frontier.

The Senicas said to the Delawares, & Shawanse, Brethren those Lands are Yours, as well as ours, God gave them to us to Live upon & before the White People shall settle them for nothing, we will sprinkle the Leaves with their Blood, or Die every Man of us in the attempt...

I wish that Boundary [the Proclamation Line] had never been mention’d to them or that His Majesty had before now, Ordered it confirmed...And nothing now, will in my opinion prevent a War but taking a Cession from them, & paying them for their Lands. Not withstanding all the trouble that has been taken to remove the People settled on Redstone Creek, & Cheat River, I am well assured there are double the Number of Inhabitants in those two settlements than ever was before: And I hear the Indians have stopped the Surveyors [Mason and Dixon] a little beyond the Cheat River, from extending the Line between Pennsylvania and Maryland.54

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54 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:374.
Through his land schemes and Indian killings, Michael Cresap managed to involve himself in all of these affairs. His Redstone Creek settlement was an example of how settler land claims could get the better of formal authority, while his individual landjobbing, discussed in the next section, proved capable of undermining the surveyed land claims of colonial officials and elites.

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The relocation of the Indian Boundary Line in 1768 and the removal of the British army from trans-Appalachian outposts like Fort Pitt in 1772 allowed wealthy speculators the freedom to grab up all of the western lands that they had coveted since before the Seven Years War. Initially, they tried to impose formal geographic order onto this territory by dividing it up with precise surveyed boundaries. Some of Virginia's most prominent surveyors, such as Cpt. Thomas Bullitt, Col. William Preston, and Col. William Crawford were sent by elite speculators to conduct cadastral surveys of their vast new claims. After a remarkably short time, however, some of these speculators changed how they claimed lands, abandoning formal conventions in favor of methods long employed by uneducated frontier settlers. A case study in which Michael Cresap directly influenced how North America's most famous land speculator legitimized his vast territorial claims helps demonstrate how and why this large and sudden shift in cultural approaches to space occurred.

John Jacob, Michael Cresap's contemporary and biographer, wrote that "[Cresap] saw in the rich bottoms of the Ohio an ample fund if he succeeded in securing a title to
those lands.” Although Cresap was familiar with (at least) the basics of formal surveying, he had learned from the Redstone settlement the many advantages of settler-style land claims and, in 1773, began making visible claims on the landscape. He thus “engaged six or seven active young men...and repairing to the then wilderness of Ohio, commenced the business of building houses and clearing lands; and being one of the first adventurers into this...region, he had it in his power to select some of the best and richest of Ohio bottoms.” Building cabins and clearing land were key to legitimizing these tomahawk claims, and Cresap had no problem finding settlers eager to occupy his new improvements in the wilderness.

One of Cresap’s apologists (there have been several of them) defended Cresap’s seizure of these lands, maintaining that he was in Ohio “neither as a speculator nor a land-jobber...and he is no more to blamed for his manly progress into the wilderness in quest of land than George Washington.” Apart from the fact that this claim seems contrary to the evidence that Cresap was indeed a landjobber, it is interesting that he compared Cresap’s “quest for land” with Washington’s; the territory on the Ohio River that Cresap was claiming belonged to none other than George Washington himself.

After the opening of the West to speculation in 1768, Washington was one of the magnates that claimed huge tracts of the best land and had them surveyed in order to

55 Jacob, A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap, 49.

56 Ibid., 49.

57 For more on how cabins were considered rights of possession and were thus sites of contention, see Taylor, “A Kind of Warr,” 9. Patricia Seed found that since the early years of settlement, “English colonists believed that planting was the action that best established ownership” of land, a practice that predated Locke by fifty years; Patricia Seed, American Pentimento: The Invention of Indians and the Pursuit of Riches (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2001), 15.

58 Mayer, Tah-Gah-Jute, 86.
make his claim legal and obvious on the landscape. He had picked out many of his tracts while surveying along the Ohio in the 1750s and 1760s, but he sent William Preston and William Crawford to conduct the surveys that he considered essential to making a formal claim. Although the surveys were done in good order, most of Washington’s lands remained un-cleared and unoccupied—at least until Michael Cresap and his small team of axmen started felling trees and building cabins on them.

Cresap’s incursions onto his land aggravated Washington’s sensibilities as both a trained surveyor and a gentleman. Not only did Cresap flout the onsite delineations that were so central to Washington’s youthful profession, but he failed to pay Washington the deference befitting of his status. In September of 1773, Washington wrote a polite but tense letter to Cresap, in which he cites the formal surveys as proof of ownership and seems indignant that Cresap had the gall to ignore them.

When Capt Crawford went down the Ohio to survey, I desired him to run out this Land for me, which he accordingly did... I have heard (the truth of which I know not) that you [have] taken possession of it. If this information is true, I own I can conceive of no reason why you or any other person should attempt to disturb me in my claim to this land... I would feign hope that my information respecting your taking possession of this Land, is without foundation...I am the first that [claimed it], and have had it surveyed to ascertain the bounds.59

For Washington and many other educated whites, surveyed lines were sacrosanct boundaries that, by virtue of their precision and presence on the landscape, commanded respect. Yet Cresap, like most other frontiersman, had a strong aversion to authority, and neither supposedly authoritative surveys nor powerful figures like Washington pulled

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very much clout among settlers. In another act of insolence, Cresap did not even respond to this letter.

The following year, in a message to lawyer Thomas Lewis, Washington voiced his annoyance that Cresap’s imprecise system for claiming land could trump his legal rights and formal surveys. He was confounded by the fact that Cresap’s claims were “founded on no other right, or pretense than that of claiming every good bottom upon the river; building a cabin thereon to keep off others, and then selling them, and going on to possess other Lands in the same manner.” In a huff, he added that “Mr. Cresap’s claim [was] set up long after I had made a choice of it, and had had it surveyed.” Although he was no closer to regaining his lands, Washington was no fool and was quickly learning the nuances and advantages of how settlers claimed space as well as the shortcomings of more formal land systems.

The fundamental problem, as Cresap forced Washington to realize, was that surveys and other formal means for securing a land title were useless unless accompanied by actual settlement. By the settler conception of space, “the country belonged of right to those who chose to settle in it,” and no onsite claim (much less a mapped one) was respected unless someone lived on the tract in question. Nor did settlers necessarily acknowledge land claims made with typical settler conventions like tomahawk

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61 For more on how settlers flouted elites’ legal standards for land ownership, see Henry Tatter, The Preferential Treatment of Actual Settlers in the Primary Disposition of the Vacant Lands in the United States to 1841; Preemption: Prelude to Homesteadism, Ph.D. Dissertation (Northwestern University, 1933).

62 Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars, 133.
improvements because they "conferred [no] right whatever, unless followed by an actual settlement." 63

Finding himself unable to take any effective measures to prevent Cresap from claiming and selling his lands, George Washington endeavored to beat the settler at his own game. Washington mobilized many men and much capital in order to make settler-style claims on the landscape in a manner that mirrored Cresap’s method of landjobbing. Yet whereas Cresap “engaged six or seven active young men” to clear land and build cabins, Washington could make such claims on a much larger scale. 64

Therefore, in March of 1775, Washington hired William Stevens to lead a campaign to establish his land rights using methods pioneered by Cresap and other backwoods landjobbers. In his instructions to Stevens, Washington enjoined him “So soon as you have pitched upon the Spot to begin your Improvements on, use every diligence in your power to get as much Land as possible ready for Corn, and continue planting...you may, in the meanwhile, be putting up your houses.” 65 Washington’s plan to grab-up land by planting corn and building houses was a sharp departure from the precision measures with which he and his fellow surveyors had claimed land only a few years previously. Stevens’ party consisted mostly of slaves and servants who would be used to settle on these lands, thus actualizing Washington’s corn rights to Ohio tracts. 66

63 Ibid., 130.

64 Jacob, A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap, 49.


66 Tatter, The Preferential Treatment of Actual Settlers, 43.
After the first plots were seized through building, planting, and occupation, Washington encouraged Stevens “to go on to other kinds of improvements as will go the furthest in saving the Land—that is, you are to build—to clear—to fence.” Clearing, building, and fencing—combined with onsite settlement—were the lynchpins of settler land claims, and the fact that Washington considered that these methods, not formal surveys, “will go furthest in saving the land” evinced just how strongly he had come to believe in the power of the settler land system. More than anything else, it was Michael Cresap’s example of success that led Washington to co-opt settler methods for claiming land.

The most important difference, though, between Cresap’s and Washington’s use of settler land claims was the scope of their projects. Both were landjobbers, but only elites like Washington could operate on a scale large enough to impact the overall geopolitical situation of the North American backcountry. To be sure, the sheer mass of unruly settlers was a critical force in this period, one that alarmed both officials and Indians. Yet the actions of frontiersmen on the whole lacked the sort of organization that would allow them to coordinate in order to achieve some specific goal. Indeed, the general individualism of frontier people precluded the desire for such cooperation. It took powerful men like Washington and, as seen below, Lord Dunmore, who were capable of combining the settler land system with a grand vision and vast resources, to realize the full potential of Cresap’s practices for acquiring and dominating western lands.

Unfortunately for western Indians, whites using Cresap’s land methods realized that his brutal attitude towards Indians could also be writ large. Just as Michael Cresap had long been happy to kill Indians at a local level, Virginians in 1774 waged a full-scale war against western nations, one that conflated violence and landjobbing on a scale that would have profound impacts on North American history. Dunmore’s War (1774), often called Cresap’s War by contemporaries, was yet another instance in which Michael Cresap both directly instigated discord in the West and set a precedent that more powerful men would emulate for their own purposes.

In the late spring of 1774, Michael Cresap killed several Indians on the frontier. He gathered a posse of vigilantes from the area near Redstone Creek and, after shooting two Indians passing by in a canoe, boasted that “he wou’d put every Indian he mett with on the River to Death.”

69 There has been a significant debate concerning Cresap’s exact role in the Indian murders preceding Dunmore’s War. Accounts from June and July of 1774 all point to Cresap as the leader of the party of vigilantes that did the first killings, but controversy arose over the accusation that Cresap was responsible for the massacre at Yellow Creek in which the Cayuga chief Logan’s family was murdered. In his famous speech, Logan blamed Cresap for these killings, but the record indicates that it was actually one Daniel Greathouse who killed Logan’s relations. Thomas Jefferson reprinted Logan’s speech in his Notes on the State of Virginia as an example of Indian eloquence, but many of Cresap’s friends (Cresap himself was dead by this time) were offended by this accusation and went to great pains to clear Cresap’s name. In their zeal on Cresap’s behalf, some writers (most notably John Jacob) tried averring that Cresap was actually a friend of Indians (Jacob, A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap). This process complicated the historical record further because depositions were collected from several people who had witnessed some of the murders in question, some of which were taken as many as fifty years after 1774 (many of these depositions are collected in The Writings of Thomas Jefferson and A Documentary History of Dunmore’s War, 1774, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellog (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1905)). Taken on the whole, however, these depositions support the fact that Cresap did the initial killing that catalyzed the war even though he was not directly responsible for the Yellow Creek massacre. That Logan would mistake Cresap as his family’s killer was very understandable; Cresap was a well known Indian killer and had just led a party that ambushed and murdered over thirty Shawnees and Iroquois. Cresap’s exculpation from the Yellow Creek Massacre does not lessen his role as the man whose Indian killing catalyzed the Indian war of 1774.

69 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:1095.
murdered near 30 Indians partly Shawanese but principally of the Six Nations.”

Cresap, like the Paxton Boys, did not draw distinctions between various nations, attacking all Indians as a coherent race that deserved to be exterminated.

The killing of the Iroquois particularly galled William Johnson because that group had long been an important ally of the British (and Johnson in particular) and he feared that such violence against the Iroquois would spur them into leading a pan-Indian war against the colonies. The news of Cresap’s killings was so disturbing to the Iroquois that newspapers reported “all the Chiefs and Head Warriors of the Six Nations, are now on their Way to Sir William Johnson’s, to hold a Congress on the alarming news they received of the Murders committed by Cressap,” a meeting that was attended by “6 or 700” Indians. By the summer of 1774, however, it was doubtful that war could be prevented any longer. Cresap’s killings had put many western Indians in a rage and Lord Dunmore had already begun mobilizing Virginian militias and sending them to the Ohio.

Just as Cresap was able to take advantage of the disputed jurisdiction of Redstone Creek in the 1760s, he was able to exploit the same lack of colonial authority to get away with murder. Pennsylvania and Virginia both continued to claim this region (the Mason and Dixon Line was still incomplete) and thus neither could exercise the necessary authority to prevent or punish such outrages. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that, in 1772, the British army abandoned Fort Pitt and other trans-Appalachian outposts. Since the Seven Years War, the army had done much to protect Ohio Indians from the violent advance of frontier settlers and the power vacuum they left in their wake exposed

70 Ibid., 12:1115.

71 The New-York Journal; or, the General Advertiser, July 4, 1774.
western Indians to incursions from settlers and prominent colonists alike. By "relying on the impotence of the Several Governmts," Cresap was able to kill with impunity while white squatters overwhelmed the Ohio valley.

The removal of the army provided opportunistic elites with an opportunity to follow Cresap's example once more. Colonial power had always been weak in the west, but the army had provided a bulwark of British power that had prevented Cresap-esque measures from taking place on a grand scale. It is no surprise, then, that an organized invasion of the Ohio Valley for the dual purposes of Indian killing and landjobbing occurred merely two years after the British army abandoned the Ohio Country.

Although the Ohio Country was disputed by Pennsylvania and Virginia, it was Lord Dunmore's Virginia that took the more active role in laying claim to it by exercising Cresap's approach to land and Indians on a scale befitting the largest province in British America. Since the early 1760s, Michael Cresap had considered killing Indians and acquiring land to go hand in hand while the Virginia government expanded its boundaries through Indian treaties and surveyed boundaries. With the army out of the Ohio Country and Pennsylvanian surveyors carving up the best lands for themselves, Dunmore knew he had to establish his own Ohio claims efficiently and decisively.

Just as George Washington had learned, Cresap's methods were the most effective way to accomplish this. Not only were they a model for how Dunmore could realize Virginia's claim, but Cresap's 1774 murders and the fear of Indian war they engendered also gave Dunmore an incentive to act. It is therefore not surprising that

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72 For more on the army's protection of Indians against settlers, see Ward, "'The Indians Our Real Friends': The British Army and the Ohio Indians, 1758-1772."

73 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 12:1115.
“young Cressap, who first began the quarrel with the Indians, and murdered a number of them in a cowardly manner, has received a letter of thanks from Lord Dunmore.”

Although Dunmore sought to exculpate himself in this letter from accusations that he was one of “a scheming party in Virginia...who, being mostly land jobbers, would wish to have those lands,” it was he who had ordered an official incursion into the Ohio Country without the approval of the British government. Indeed, Dunmore’s blatant disregard for authority was yet another way in which he acted more like a settler than a gentleman.

Dunmore entrusted the military invasion of the Ohio Country to the leadership of a corps of warrior-surveyors, men that would simultaneously kill Indians and claim their land. Among these was Michael Cresap, to whom Dunmore gave a captain’s commission, but “Cressop [was] a Marylander, and never was an inhabitant of Virginia” and never led more than a small force of frontiersmen. To actualize the expansion of his colony, Dunmore gave command of his army to Virginians who promoted the enlargement of Virginia, had military backgrounds, and were official surveyors.

Three of the armies that Dunmore sent against the Ohio Indians in 1774 were commanded by Virginian warrior-surveyors: Col. Andrew Lewis, Col. William Preston,
and Capt. William Crawford. Andrew Lewis, as seen in the previous chapter, was a staunch advocate for expanding Virginia and affiliated with the Loyal and Greenbrier land companies. He was one of the original surveyors appointed to run Virginia’s Indian Boundary Line as agreed upon at the Treaty of Hard Labor (1768) and had fought with George Washington in the Seven Years War. William Preston was the official surveyor of Fincastle County and, in the early 1770s, had been leading surveying parties that were claiming Ohio land for Washington and other veterans. William Crawford, another officer from the Seven Years War, had conducted surveys on the Ohio River (ones that Cresap blatantly ignored) and, in 1773, scouted and surveyed western lands with Lord Dunmore.

Whether they were conscious of it or not, these warrior-surveyors followed Michael Cresap’s example, both by killing Indians as racial enemies and using this violence to secure possession of lands. In June, Hugh Wallace wrote to William Johnson that Cresap had “sent a Blankett & a Scalp of a Cheiff [to] Governor Eden as a Trophy of his Valour.” Amazed that Cresap “was not put in Jail for his murder” by the government of Virginia, he concluded that “Virginia Maryland & Pensilva seem striving who can get the Lands fastest & I fancy this is all just a Land Jobbing Scheme.” The fact that Dunmore thanked and commissioned Cresap instead of censuring him for such illegal and brutal murders gives credence to Wallace’s suspicions.

77 Another was led by Angus McDonald and the largest force was under the command of Dunmore himself.


79 Sullivan et al., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 8:1179.

80 Ibid., 8:1179.
Like Cresap, the warrior-surveyors sought to use brutal violence to terrorize and displace Indians; indeed, they seemed thrilled by the chance to do so. In a circular letter meant to recruit volunteers, William Preston did not try to hide his eagerness at the upcoming “Opportunity of reducing our old Inveterate Enemies.” Preston’s fusion of the several Indian nations into the facile category of “Inveterate Enemies” substantiated just how prevalent the racial hatred that blossomed in the early 1760s had become by the last years of the colonial era.

This hate was made manifest in the way the warrior-surveyors waged war. Despite the fact that they led official Virginian armies, they ignored the European rules of combat meant to civilize war and eagerly employed savage tactics like scalping hitherto used by vigilantes such as the Paxton Boys and Michael Cresap. At the Battle of Point Pleasant, the largest and most decisive battle of Dunmore’s War, Col. Lewis’ 1400 recruits were so enthralled with scalping the fallen Shawanees for trophies that the Indians “scalped themselves to prevent [whites]” from so doing. Although such practices had long been associated with Indian hating frontiersmen like Cresap, Dunmore’s War used them on a grand scale and, most importantly, as official tools of the provincial government.

Just as the British army had attempted to remove Cresap’s Redstone Creek settlement by destroying their villages and crops, so too did the warrior-surveyors displace western Indians by concentrating their attacks on Indian villages. Preston’s circular letter spelled out how removing the Indians’ onsite claims of houses and corn

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would eliminate them from the landscape and allow for whites to use settler land methods to take it up for themselves. He seemed overjoyed that “This useless People may now a[t] last be Obliged to abandon their Country, Their Towns may be plundered and Burned, Their Cornfields Distroyed. [...] The Oppertunty we hav So long wished for, is now before us.”83

The focus on destroying crops and villages reflected that Preston recognized these as legitimate marks of possession, ones that had to be removed from the landscape before his own and those of other whites could be put in their place. The British army had failed to prevent the Redstone settlers from returning because, as royally protected Indian Country, no legitimate settlement could claim the land in their stead. By the frontier land ethic, that space was vacant after their departure and could be reclaimed simply by planting a new crop and building a new shack. Virginia’s warrior-surveyors shared the British army’s capacity to remove a settlement but, as trained surveyors and Cresape-esque landjobbers, they had the power to impose new onsite claims to replace the Indian ones they had destroyed.

Virginia’s official deployment of settler methods for claiming land and the hatred of Indians that facilitated it marked a key turning point in how white North America dealt with Indians and their lands. The kind of ordered progress that Whitehall had promoted through a gradually moving Indian Boundary Line was replaced with a frontiersman’s propensity to ignore Indian rights and use onsite settlement and force of arms to take the desired space. Well into the nineteenth century, the U.S. army would be used to remove Indians and destroy their settlements in order to make way for frontiersmen to establish their own marks of possession on the landscape. This policy of combining governmental

force with settler land claims was quite contrary to that of the British who, in the 1760s, had employed their army to protect Indians from settler encroachments. Virginia's surveyor-led armies were the first manifestation of this new American approach to land, but the U.S. government would become its ultimate practitioner, killing Indians to make way for settlement on a continental level.

Of course, it would be saying too much to credit this shift to Michael Cresap alone, but this case study has, I hope, demonstrated quite tangible connections between his actions and example and the way in which white Americans on the whole came to approach Indian lands. Indian space had become something to be conquered by force and claimed onsite with an axe and physical occupation, a far cry from the precisely surveyed boundaries of racial separation advocated in the decade following the Seven Years War.
CODA

BORDERING THE BORDERLANDS OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC

In both their internal and frontier surveys, the early United States made a deliberate effort to create what Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron called a “bordered land,” a formally bounded polity that made clear distinctions between those inside the borders and those kept on the outside. Thus just as the Proclamation Line of 1763 had helped define Indians as the hated other in the colonial era, so too did the boundaries drawn between the U.S. and its neighbors (both Indian and creole) distinguish “Americans” from those people that inconveniently shared their continent. Over the first few decades of independence, internal boundaries like those made by the Land Ordinance of 1785 made settlers into citizens while international boundaries turned fluid imperial frontiers into strict divides.

It is surprising, then, that despite the emphasis placed on both frontiers and borderlands in the years following the work of Frederick Jackson Turner and Herbert Eugene Bolton there has been little attention paid to the processes by which these borders

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2 Adelman and Aron argued that the U.S. had turned its frontiers into bordered lands by the early nineteenth century. Similarly, Eliga Gould found that the presidency of Andrew Jackson marked the end of the era of fluid boundaries. I do not mean to contradict either of these claims, but to show that the intent and process of formalizing and solidifying the boundaries of the United States began almost immediately after the end of the Revolutionary War. Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders”; Eliga Gould “Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery,” in AHR, vol. 112, no. 3 (June 2007).
(permeable or otherwise) were actually formed. To be sure, many scholars have looked at the politics and treaties involved with deciding borders, yet their actualization on the landscape has been neglected. The previous chapters have illustrated some of the intricacies of border-making (with Indian maps, official surveys, and informal settler methods) in the late colonial era. This coda provides a brief overview of the creation of boundaries in the first two decades of the independence period, a process that grew out of colonial era developments and set precedents for how the U.S. would claim and delineate land in the nineteenth century.

The three colonial era systems for conceptualizing and claiming land examined in chapters one, two, and three all remained characteristic of their particular cultural group in the early independence period. Indians, though increasingly employing violent resistance to white expansion, continued to hold up their formal, European style maps as the flimsy aegis for ensuring their treaty-ratified boundaries. Officials, now employed by the United States (or individual states within it), still promoted onsite precision surveys, yet were evermore aware of the advantages that could be derived from the less rigidified settler land system and ignoring or rethinking Indian rights. Settlers pressed further west, using tomahawk and corn rights, yet their racial hatred of Indians led them to become more closely allied with white officials than they had been in the 1760s and 1770s.³

Although these three spatial systems would remain in conflict for several decades after the Revolution, it became clear by 1800 that the official, survey-legitimatized method for organizing land had emerged as the dominant means of dividing and claiming the American landscape. The United States government, not settlers, Indians, or

³ On the cooperation between the U.S. and settlers resulting from mutual antipathy to Indians, see: Patrick Griffin, American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 210.
individual states, actively asserted itself as the authority that shaped America’s boundaries. The young U.S. accomplished this by co-opting informal methods, especially the warrior-surveyor approach used by Lord Dunmore, and ignoring Indian claims to a far greater degree than the British had.

Whereas official surveys of the colonial era, such as those of Mason and Dixon and Donelson, were left vulnerable to onsite manipulation by local Indians, warrior-surveyors had the strength to ensure that precise and formal borders could be run without interference. The combination of scientific precision and military force proved so effective at imposing artificial lines on places and peoples that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the government trusted warrior-surveyors to force borders not only with settlers and Indians, but with powerful European empires.

In the first two decades of the Republic, the U.S. government used armed survey parties to rationalize, legitimize, and actualize rigid boundaries for both the internal structure and external limits of the new country. The first large internal survey, that of the Ohio Country following the Land Ordinance of 1785, failed miserably during its first two years because it could not overcome the resistance of local Indians and settlers. Eventually, the U.S. was compelled to legitimize squatters and their informal land system and, in the process, set the foundation for an expansionist white Republic.

The U.S.’s external boundaries, both with Indian groups and European colonies were, during the 1790s, largely the work of Major Andrew Ellicott and his U.S. army escort. Ellicott used warrior-surveyor methods to coerce Indian nations and European empires alike into accepting the U.S.’s desired borders, ones that met the criteria for geographic precision that were so important to the geographic and legal claims of U.S.
officials. The rational linear boundaries placed on the landscaped by dint of astronomy
and armament—both within the U.S. and on its borders—were fundamental to making
the U.S. spatially and politically sovereign.

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The survey of the Ohio Country following the Land Ordinance of 1785 was the
first major land project of the United States, delineating federally owned property in an
effort to ensure ordered migration, preserve peace with Indians, and provide the federal
government with much needed money. Yet the U.S. met with little success in the first
two years of the survey. The problems were that the Ordinance of 1785 relied too
heavily on the precision standards of formal geography and the inhabitants of the Old
Northwest, both Indians and white settlers, considered the federal surveys to be a threat to
their sovereignty. The government's plan and survey of the Northwest succeeded only
after they co-opted settlers themselves and elements of their land ethic into the less
precise though far more efficient Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

With the United States' victory over Great Britain, U.S. officials reconceptualized
Indian land rights to better legitimize their own ambitions. Whites who desired Indian
lands in the late colonial period had claimed that, because of the tenets of natural law,
Indians had the right to sell their land to whomever they chose. Thus British efforts to
claim ownership of the West, like the Royal Proclamation, were considered unjust checks
on white expansion. Officials in the early U.S., however, reverted to claims based on
Norman law that made them de facto owners of Indian territories by conquest. The land

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Peter S. Onuf, Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance (Bloomington: Indiana
now belonged rightfully to the government, who could delineate and bound it as they chose. In the words of Robert A. Williams, "the Indians' rights, natural or otherwise...were to be unilaterally determined by an alien, Norman-derived tyrant."\(^5\) The Land Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 were the manifestation of this conceptual shift. The U.S. government now thought it had an unlimited claim on western lands.

As surveyors and speculators of the late colonial era had learned, though, an officially recognized right to western lands meant nothing without onsite delineation and, more importantly, actual settlement. Although the Land Ordinance of 1785 was meant to satisfy both of these conditions, the Ohio Country was already occupied by Indians and thousands of white settlers, both of whom were in the way of official plans to survey, sell, and settle that land. Squatters and Indians would have to be removed to make way for the formal surveys.

Bringing Ohio Country lands under United States control was not only necessary for financial reasons, but to the very integrity of the United States.\(^6\) During the Revolution, eastern officials had no real control over events in the west and settlers had, in effect, formed an independent society based on their shared hatred of the Indian race.\(^7\) Westerners could threaten to secede as an independent state or, even worse, encourage a European power like Spain of Great Britain to annex them.

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\(^6\) The most thorough discussion of the many issues concerning the federally-owned Northwest Territory and the negotiations and compromises necessary to perpetuating the union between the thirteen states is in Onuf, \textit{Statehood and Union}.

U.S. officials in 1784 hoped to secure allegiance and economic productivity from the Northwest by integrating it within the rational spatial system that regulated territories in the east. Indeed, the geographical plan they envisioned for the Northwest would be far more regular than the awkward state and property lines along the Atlantic. Not only would reason and scientific progress be manifest on the landscape, but these values would transform indolent and coarse western whites into productive and rational beings. As Peter S. Onuf wrote, "The land system itself would teach settlers to 'see' the western landscape—and their own opportunities within it—through the pattern of the grid that defined specific property holdings. Rational, systematic settlement would create enlightened communities."  

Eastern officials also hoped that their plan for northwestern land would discourage the economic individualism that had long characterized frontier types. Squatters tended to be subsistence farmers that depleted soil on land acquired for free, a poor basis for producing national wealth.

In 1784, Thomas Jefferson, the leader of the committee assigned to drafting the Ordinance, proposed a plan for "disposing of LANDS in the WESTERN TERRITORY" that was a paradigm of reason and precision, both of which would stem from formal, globe-based geography. Jefferson wanted to replace the real landscape of the Northwest with a regular grid that followed the graticule instead of the compass because compasses were subject to inaccuracies while the globe's meridians and parallels were always exact and based on mathematic principles. All land divisions would be based on a decimal system of square tracts within several "hundreds," a 10 by 10 mile square. Each hundred

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8 Onuf, Statehood and Union, 38.

9 An ordinance for ascertaining the mode of locating and disposing of lands in the western territory, 1784 (Annapolis: John Dunlap, Printer, 1784).
would be subdivided into 100,000 acres, with 1,000 acres per square mile, 10 chains per
side of each acre, and 100 links to a chain.\textsuperscript{10} Obviously, this neat and rational system did
not work out in conventional measurements, where a standard mile was divided into 80
chains and 640 acres made up a square mile.\textsuperscript{11} To fulfill his dream of geographic order,
Jefferson created the “geographic mile,” a distance equal to the length of one minute of
latitude. According to Jefferson, the geographic mile was superior because “the globe of
the earth itself...would furnish an invariable measure.”\textsuperscript{12} Like the primers on formal
geography presented in chapter two of this study, Jefferson saw the planetary globe as the
basis of geographic precision, an ideal that officials were finally free to realize in the
West. The Northwest’s geographic, social, and racial irregularities would all be
consumed by the surveyed grid.

Congress modified Jefferson’s 1784 proposal so that western lands could only be
taken up by industrious settlers who would enrich Congress both by buying the lands
from the federal government and developing them for export agriculture. Thus the Land
Ordinance of 1785 required that the federal lands would be pre-surveyed, delineated on
site before settlers were allowed to purchase and occupy them. Pre-surveys entailed a
quasi-imperial claim to the land, one that overwrote those of current inhabitants: the

\textsuperscript{10} In Jefferson’s decimal system, we can see an early version of the enlightened reforms made by the
leaders of the French Revolution, like the metric system and Republican Calendar. It is interesting that the
revolutionaries of both countries attempted to replace the irrational standards of the royal era almost
immediately after overthrowing their governments. Just as Congress hoped to impose order on the
Northwest with a reason-based land system, it seems that the Revolutionary governments of France and the
U.S. sought to bring order to their own fledgling societies by rationalizing the organizational bases of
everyday life.

\textsuperscript{11} William D. Pattison, \textit{Beginnings of the American Rectangular Land Survey System, 1784-1800} (Chicago:
Dept of Geography, University of Chicago, 1964), 49.

\textsuperscript{12} Thomas Jefferson, “Report of the Secretary of State, on the Subject of Establishing a Uniformity in the
Weights, Measurements, and Coins of the United States,” in Pattison, \textit{Beginnings of the American
Rectangular Land Survey System, 1784-1800}.
natural rights that had legitimized both Indians and settlers claims to land ownership in
the western state of nature were dissolved by Congressional fiat.\textsuperscript{13} By the Land
Ordinance of 1785, purchasing a surveyed tract from the government was the only
legitimate right to ownership, a situation that officials hoped would attract loyal and
industrious settlers and justify the displacement of squatters and Indians.

Congress knew that squatters and Indians alike would resist their plan, thus they
employed a team of warrior-surveyors to ensure the execution of their vision. The
surveyors would have the instruments and knowledge necessary to draw astronomically
precise meridians and parallels on the countryside and, ideally, the military support to
ensure that they would not be disturbed in their task. Each state was to send an official
surveyor to accompany Captain Thomas Hutchins, Geographer of the United States, and
of the eight surveyors who actually joined Hutchins in 1785, six were army officers.\textsuperscript{14}
Although Hutchins called his associates “the Gentlemen Surveyors” because of their
geographic expertise, they would only be able to overcome the resistance of the
inhabitants of Ohio if they acted as warriors first.

The surveying parties of 1785, though, were not equal to this task. Hutchins was
promised an escort from Colonel Josiah Harmar, commander of Fort McIntosh, but
Harmar did not have any men to spare.\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, western Indian nations were
invited to supply a contingent of chiefs to accompany the surveyors and help ensure their
safety, much as the Iroquois had done for Mason and Dixon. Given the ongoing hostility

\textsuperscript{13} Williams, \textit{The American Indian in Western Legal Thought}, 307.

\textsuperscript{14} Pattison, \textit{Beginnings of the American Rectangular Land Survey System, 1784-1800}, 124.; Joseph W.
Ernst, \textit{With Compass and Chain: Federal Land Surveyors in the Old Northwest} (Ph. D. diss., Colombia
University, 1958), 33-78.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 128.
between western Indians and whites, and the fact that surveys entailed white ownership of Indian space, it is not surprising that they declined this offer. In the words of the Shawnee chief Kekewpelletthy, “we do not understand measuring out the lands—it is all ours.”

Faced with the prospect of hostile Indians and unprotected by the government, Hutchins and the other surveyors were compelled to retreat after running a mere few miles of the grid (and, unfortunately for them, they were being paid by the mile). The warrior-surveyors had been reduced to astronomers without soldiers, a weak force for imposing new a geographic, social, and political order on a hostile land.

Colonel Harmar had no troops for the surveyors because, undersupplied to begin with, he had also been ordered to remove squatters from the Ohio Country, a supposed precondition for fulfilling congress’ vision of a loyal and profitable West. Based on their informal land system, settlers considered themselves legitimate owners of their property and were prepared to protect it from encroachments by the federal government.

Harmar noted how settlers were “accustomed to seat themselves on the best of lands, making a tomahawk right or Improvement, as they term it, supposing that to be sufficient Title,” and that they were “averse to federal measures, and...wish to throw every obstacle in the way to impede surveying of the western Territory.” To remove the squatters and make way for surveys and progress, Harmar sent a detachment of twenty men under Ensign Ebenezer Denny to destroy settlers’ cabins and their crops of

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17 Squatters considered the Ordinance to be a threat to their own notions of a commonwealth and they also resented eastern officials for not assisting them in their ongoing racial war against the Indians. Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 202.

corn. This process, which entailed removing the physical claims of settlers from the landscaped itself, closely paralleled the attempts made by the British army in the 1760s to evict Michael Cresap and the others who had settled illegally at Redstone Creek. As with the Redstone settlement, the squatters departed after their corn and cabins were burnt, but they simply came back and reclaimed the land with these same visible rights of possession.

In 1786, the surveys fared little better. Hutchins received four more surveyors (three of whom were military officers) and was given command of 150 troops to protect them against squatters and Indians (who had again declined to assist in the survey). Despite this fairly large body of men, they did not have the supplies to keep this force in the field, and only thirty soldiers could accompany the thirteen surveyors (who were split up into several parties) at any given time. Indian resistance to these surveys began almost immediately: instruments were stolen or destroyed, land markers were removed, and horses were driven off, all of which served to slow the survey and terrify the unprotected surveyors. When Hutchins got intelligence that the Shawnees were amassing for a full attack on the surveyors, they retreated to the safety of the East.

The exigencies of pre-surveys along a globe-based grid had proven untenable in the Northwest Territory. The requisite instruments and experts made running meridian lines slow and expensive and the real weakness of the United States in the West was

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20 Pattison, Beginnings of the American Rectangular Land Survey System, 1784-1800, 135-137. These methods of indigenous resistance to land surveys are very similar to those used by the Maori to forestall surveys of their land in nineteenth century New Zealand (Giselle Byrnes, Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonization of New Zealand (Wellington, NZ: Bridget Williams Books, 2001)).
manifest in the state’s inability to provide sufficient protection for its surveyors. The problem was that the officials in charge of ordering the Northwest had forgotten the lessons learned by George Washington and Lord Dunmore in the early 1770s: that settlers and their land ethic were efficient and effective for claiming and settling land. Unless surveyors could be backed with a sufficient cadre of men and arms (which, in the mid 1780s, the U.S. could not supply), onsite surveys and the formal system of geography they supported would fail to shape the West.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 that replaced the plan of 1785 was far more effectual because it incorporated settlers and their approach to land into the official project for developing the Ohio Country. Pre-surveys were no longer required and squatters’ tomahawk claims could now be recognized by the state, although they would eventually have to be surveyed and registered. The Ordinance also included a comprehensive plan for making the federal territory into states equal to those in the East. Instead of trying to remove the settlers’ landscape and immediately replace it with an artificial one, the 1787 Ordinance allowed a practical geo-political structure to grow out of the strong base for settlement that had been laid by squatters.

In effect, the Northwest Ordinance created an alliance between settlers and officials, two cultural groups that had been at odds about western land since the Seven

21 A 1787 committee for “revising the ordinance for surveying and selling the western territory” found that:

It would be improper to adhere to the mode provided in the [1785] Ordinance for disposing of the western territory, for the following reasons: 1st, it is too slow in its operation...2ndly, it will, in its advance, constantly involve a great public expense which, being unnecessary, is unreasonable...Upon inquiry into the causes of this delay, they are informed by the geographer [Thomas Hutchins], that the dangers to which the surveyors are liable, from the Indians, prevent their proceeding, except when they can be covered by troops.

From: The committee, consisting of Mr. Carrington, Mr. Varnum, Mr. Clarke, Mr. King and Mr. Hawkins, to whom was referred a motion of Mr. Carrington for revising the ordinance for surveying and selling the western territory,---report as follows (New York, 1787).
Years War. Officials were finally glad to accept squatters because, without their support, the West would never develop into a loyal and productive region. Western settlers, in turn, had realized that they would not be able to drive off Indians without the help of the state, and were thus willing to endure some limits to their individual freedoms in order to better exterminate their racial enemy. The U.S. army ceased driving off squatters and, instead, joined them in their war against the Indians.

This united racial front of white Americans was in many ways the death knell for the Indian nations in the territorial limits of the United States. Unfortunately for Native Americans, these "limits" kept expanding. Although undermanned warrior-surveyors had little success in the Northwest in 1785 and 1786, those sent to establish the external boundaries of the U.S. in the 1790s had much better support, and the limits of the young Republic quickly grew to subsume former Indian lands within the whites-only United States.

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The Northwest Ordinance had helped to secure the internal structure of the nation, but strong and visible boundaries were needed to show the world, as well as Americans living in the various states, that the United States was a legitimate and unified state. By creating onsite boundaries around the Republic, surveyors helped make it visibly manifest that citizens in the various states all belonged to the United States, and that the people beyond those boundaries were either part of different polities or, in the case of Indians, stateless. In both cases, the tangible limits drawn on the landscape were

22 Griffin, American Leviathan, 210.

intended to impede the free mixing of peoples that had long existed on America’s frontiers. Since the division between us and them would no longer be (as) fluid, it became increasingly important that the nation’s boundaries were fixed in as advantageous a way as possible. Warrior-surveyors were thus employed to make certain it was the U.S. who gained the most from the process of bordering North America.

Major Andrew Ellicott, the foremost border-maker of the early independence era, combined scientific expertise with the martial and diplomatic skills of a field general to force the U.S.’s chosen limits onto its neighbors. As a young man in the 1770s, he had already developed a reputation as an instrument maker and astronomer and, despite a Quaker upbringing, Ellicott became an officer during the Revolutionary war. In 1784, he was given his first commission as a surveyor, to complete the Mason and Dixon Line that separated western Virginia and Pennsylvania. Soon after, he joined eminent astronomers Thomas Hutchins and David Rittenhouse to run the western boundary of Pennsylvania (and eastern limit to the space to be surveyed according to the Ordinance grid) and, in 1789, surveyed the western border of New York.

By 1790, Ellicott had earned a reputation as one of America’s preeminent men of science and its most capable surveyor. Benjamin Franklin noted that “I have long known Mr. Andrew Ellicott as a Man of Science [and am] acquainted with his Abilities in Geographical Operations of the most important kind, which were performed by him with


25 Very few contemporary accounts of this survey are extant, but see: The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser, “Extracts from the minutes of the first session of the ninth General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” 24 January 1785; and Pennsylvania Mercury, “Legislative Acts or Legal Proceedings,” 18 November 1785.
the greatest Scientific Accuracy.” It was this ability to achieve “Scientific Accuracy” under the difficult conditions of western surveys that prompted the federal government to entrust him with shaping the Republic and, in 1789, Ellicott was appointed Geographer of the United States.²⁷

His first (and most famous) task as national surveyor was to run the boundary lines of the 10 by 10 mile square that delineated the federal zone of the United States, Washington D.C. Although this internal survey was crucial to the geographical and political situation of the U.S. during the federal period, it has been thoroughly studied,²⁸ while his role in forming the external boundaries of the United States, a far more important project to the integrity of the U.S., has gone overlooked by historians.

In October of 1790, the U.S. sent Ellicott to run a border between Georgia and Creek Country, a region that had never been bought by the British and was thus not officially ceded to the United States. The Scottish-Creek leader Alexander McGillivray had settled this border in a treaty earlier that year, but his authority among the Creeks was concurrently being undermined by one William Augustus Bowles, a white Creek who claimed he could supply men, artillery, and trade with the British Caribbean if the Creeks


²⁷ The Daily Advertiser, 2 September 1789, wrote that “Mr. Ellicott is perhaps the only man in America who possesses abilities adequate to the duties of that office.” Ellicott replaced Thomas Hutchins who, in the year preceding his death, was attempting to defect to Spanish Florida. Hutchins, who had already switched allegiances from Britain to the U.S. (he had been a captain in the British Army), was fed up with the miserly United States and sought a more lucrative post as a geographer or surveyor for His Catholic Majesty. Hutchins changing loyalties raise interesting questions about the mobility of boundary-makers throughout the Atlantic World and the impact that differing national traditions of science might have on borderland surveys.

rejected McGillivray's boundary. According to Bowles, McGillivray had sacrificed the Creeks national territory to enrich a small cadre of property-coveting Creek leaders, men who amassed large fortunes in cattle and slaves in the years after the Revolution. Bowles, who was quickly garnering popular support, promised to "prevent the lines being run" that were, he rightly claimed, merely the means by which the U.S. planned to steal the Creeks' land. "The Indians, distracted by his arts," chose not to sanction the agreed-upon line until a new treaty could be resolved.

All the while, "a considerable body of troops of the United States, and Mr. Ellicott, the surveyor... waited for the Creek chiefs." Faced with the impending threat posed by Ellicott and his soldiers, Bowles tried to reify the Creeks' borders with the geographic technology favored by Indians since the 1750s: maps. In a letter signed "General Wm. A. Bowles, Director of Affairs, Creek Nation," he told Ellicott that the Creeks would not tolerate the violation of the map-based boundary they had settled with the British.

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29 Gazette of the United States, "Philadelphia. Intelligence of Fresh Disturbances among the Creek Indians," 7 December 1791. Like McGillivray, Bowles was a man who drifted across imperial and racial borders during an era when nation-states were increasingly focused on solidifying their boundaries. Born in Maryland to white parents, he rose to power among the Creeks, traveled to Britain after the Revolution to curry their support for that nation, and traveled throughout the Caribbean and the Floridas, where he was eventually arrested by the Spanish and died in jail. On the "cosmopolitan world" inhabited by men like McGillivray and Bowles, see Eliga Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds."

30 For details of the importance of property in late eighteenth century Creek society, see Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

31 Gazette of the United States, "Philadelphia. Intelligence of Fresh Disturbances among the Creek Indians," 7 December 1791.

32 Ibid.
You well know that the cause of discontent with us has ever been the limits and borders of our country—the invisible line between us and the white people... We beg you to consider, whether on an inspection of the map of this country, and the history of the last two centuries, it does not appear that...it is the Indians, and not the white people, who have most reason to complain of streightened limits.  

Bowles indigently cites the U.S. plan for “disposing of certain vacant lands,” space that was actually the Creeks’ “whole country, which nature has bestowed upon us.” Perhaps no one bothered to tell Bowles that Indians no longer had any natural rights in the eyes of U.S. officials, especially not to lands coveted by the Republic. He disingenuously asked why “we at this time see a military force brought within the borders of our country, who pretend to treat with us about a border.” As a man with extensive experience in both imperial and Indian diplomacy, Bowles knew full well that Ellicott and his army were there to force an onsite boundary that would steal a large part of Creek Country and set the stage for further incursions. Nevertheless, and despite his boasts of access to troops and munitions, he could forward no more tenable defense against the incursion than citing the boundary mapped between the Creeks and Britain, a European power that no longer controlled the land in question.

In the colonial era, the Indians would have been able to prevent or alter an unwanted official survey by harassing the surveyors or coercing them into drawing a more favorable line. The U.S. warrior-surveyors, however, made such resistance very dangerous. Although Bowles threatened that “it is our solemn determination to sell our lives for our country,” the Creeks knew that waging a war against the U.S., or even

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33 Norwich Packet, “Letter Addressed to the Commissioners, of the United States,” 5 January 1792.

34 See Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*, 307.

35 Norwich Packet, “Letter Addressed to the Commissioners, of the United States,” 5 January 1792.
directly interfering with the survey, could cost them their property or their lives. They thus defended their land with maps and rights. It is not that Indians placed such emphasis on mapped boundaries because they lacked the knowledge or ability to conduct formal surveys; indeed, Indians had participated in almost every significant surveying project of the late colonial period. Boundary maps were the only recognized claim they could make, even if the original recognition was with Britain. The Creeks and other Indian groups preferred the weak claims they could make from maps to their utter lack of rights in the new Republic.

It would take until January of 1793 to sort out the details, but the Creeks were ultimately unable to resist the pressure of the Geographer of the Unites States and his army, and the line was drawn where the U.S. wished. Racial violence and the threat thereof in the guise of formal surveying had entered the U.S. ethos of westward expansion, and Indians would be kept outside of the U.S.'s bordered lands by force. Unprotected by any recognized legal right, Indian lands were simply waiting to be enclosed within the limits of the United States, without, of course, the Indians themselves.

While Indian lands could be treated as territory in which no rights were recognized except white conquest, the European colonies bounding the U.S. on three sides had to be considered real property in which the U.S. had no jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the U.S. approach to running onsite borders between itself and these recognized territories was quite similar to the ways in which they bullied Indian groups into accepting limits on the landscape. Militant surveys ensured precision boundaries on
the landscape, even when the officials of European-owned territories were against the survey.

The 1795 Pinckney-Godoy Treaty between the U.S. and Spain agreed to a line between the Floridas and the U.S. along the 31st parallel, and George Washington wrote a commission for Maj. Ellicott and an army escort to run the boundary. Upon arriving in Natchez in February of 1797, however, Ellicott learned (by intercepting a secret document) that the Florida government was decidedly reluctant to run the agreed-upon line, hoping "that delay on their part would reduce [the Treaty] to a dead letter."37

Officials in Florida tried to do more to impede the survey than simple delay. A border fort at Natchez that was supposed to be vacated was reinforced and attempts were made to arouse both local creoles and local Indians against the survey party. "Spanish agents" told the Chickasaws and Choctaws "to oppose the demarcation of the boundary [because] immediately upon the establishment of the line, the United States would take possession of all the lands...and drive them off by force."38 Although Ellicott was indignant about such accusations, they would, of course, prove true, and warrior-surveyors like himself would turn Chickasaw and Creek Country into the United States.

In response to Spanish resistance, Ellicott asserted himself as an armed diplomat who wanted to draw his line in peace but was also more than willing to use his army to

36 Despite being (quite literally) a defining event in the history of the Spanish Florida/United States borderlands, Ellicott's survey has received very little attention. Two recent works that provide useful context but ignore this survey are: Andrew McMichael, Atlantic Loyalties: Americans in Spanish West Florida, 1785-1810 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008); and Paul E. Hoffman, Florida's Frontiers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

37 Andrew Ellicott, The Journal of Andrew Ellicott, Late Commissioner on Behalf of the United States...for Determining the Boundary Between the United States and the Possessions of His Catholic Majesty (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962), 44.

38 Ibid., 85.
ensure its appearance on the landscape. He was even ready to use his army to expand the bounds of his country. Ellicott noted in his field journal that “I consider it my duty, as a citizen of the United States, not only to retain the post then occupied, but to extend our limits if hostilities should commence,” and then asked his commissary “to procure all the ammunition he could find.”

Despite Spain’s recognized right to Florida, Ellicott treated that territory like extra-legal Indian Country that could be bounded where and how the U.S. chose.

Borderland settlers also played a part in this tense drama, most of whom (according to Ellicott) feared Spanish reprisals but wanted to be recognized as U.S. citizens. Thus, on the southwestern frontier, Ellicott and his army allied with local settlers against Spain, much like officials and squatters had joined forces against the Indians in the Northwest in 1787. Since many of these settlers were recognized as Spanish citizens, the Florida government was furious that Ellicott would sanction this alliance. Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, governor of West Florida, wrote Ellicott that “I am informed that the officer commanding your escort, has enlisted several persons residents of this government, which being against the law of nations, it cannot pass unnoticed...the object of the escort not being to raise men in this country.” Ellicott, though, disagreed with this law of nations-based thinking. As he noted in his journal, “the express purpose of making use of the inhabitants to carry the treaty into effect, or secure the country by force, if such a measure should become necessary, was our real motive.”

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39 Ibid., 45.

40 For more on settlers living along this frontier, see McMichael, Atlantic Loyalties, 10-34.

41 Ellicott, The Journal of Andrew Ellicott, 74.

42 Ibid., 53.
respected Spain’s rights under the law of nations as little as he respected the Creek’s rights by the law of nature, and was prepared to break either legal tradition to run his line.

Three tense months after his arrival, Ellicott finally forced the Spanish to (re)commit to the latitudinal boundary line and, over the course of the next two years, that boundary was run from New Orleans to Georgia. Ellicott was indeed a skilled surveyor—he ran this boundary with the precision that he had earned him recognition as one of the foremost American scientists of his age. But it was the informal aspects of his surveys that made him successful, allowing him to run the U.S.’s external borders whether its neighbors liked it or not. Breaking the laws of nations and nature was not part of formal surveys during the colonial era; indeed, this blatant disregard for the accepted conventions of civilized society was among the many complaints that officials had hurled at western squatters. In the independence era, though, such illegalities merged into state-sanctioned border making, and the era of U.S. expansion officially began.

**Conclusion**

In the colonial era, there had been a geographic balance of power between Indians and white officials. The spatial conceptions and claims of each group were based on formal conventions that allowed the other to trump or manipulate most proposed boundaries. Indian-made maps that followed European standards had to be approved by officials in order to be legitimate while the onsite surveys that were the basis of official boundaries could be stopped or changed by Indians. From the Seven Years War until about 1770, white frontier settlers and their informal approach to land had been a menace to both Indians and officials alike because settler land claims were made legitimate by
virtue of onsite improvements and occupation, neither of which required the approval of Indians or officials. Although these groups tried to prevent settlers from violating formally mapped and surveyed boundaries, the settler approach proved too efficient to be denied.

When officials co-opted the most effective aspects of the settler land ethic, the balance tipped fully in favor of officials, the group with the money and resources to exercise the full potential of this land ethic. By the 1790s formal surveying was supported by racial violence and onsite Indian resistance could no longer act as a counterweight to official land schemes. In the meanwhile, the U.S. bolstered its own capacity to deny the legitimacy of map-based Indian borders by divesting Native Americans of the fundamental rights based on natural law. By the end of the eighteenth century, settlers and their land greed had been incorporated into the United States, and official recognition and support encouraged them to push further west and kill more Indians.

White dominance of all United States land was the result of many political, biological, and military factors, yet border-making itself should not be overlooked in this milieu. The U.S. solidified its right to delineate and survey America’s “real” boundaries by incorporating settler methods of defining borders but rejecting those of Indians as illegitimate, even though they were based on formal European geography. Like American land itself, geographic sciences and their power to claim land were to be reserved for whites only.
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