



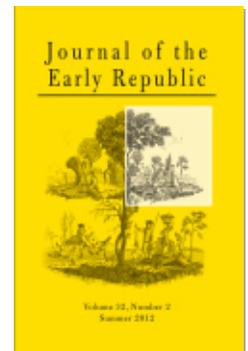
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Slavery, Settlement, and Empire

The Expansion and Growth of Slavery in the Interior
of the North American Continent, 1770–1820

JOHN CRAIG HAMMOND

The expansion of slavery on the North American continent under the newly independent United States was both remarkable and unprecedented. In 1770, European settlers, European empires, and African American slaves had only the barest presence west of the Appalachians. While scattered settlements of European Americans held slaves in places such as the British Illinois country, British West Florida, and Spanish Louisiana, African American slavery on the North American continent was largely confined to the strip of British colonies that hugged the Atlantic Coast. Outside of the Chesapeake and Low Country plantation cores, there were seven times as many slaves in the northern colonies (47,000) than there were in the entire Ohio and Mississippi Valleys and along the Gulf Coast (7,000). Finally, while European empires staked claims to the trans-Appalachian West, Native Americans continued to control the vast interior of the North American continent. Over the next half century, the expansion of European American sovereignty and African American slavery would produce dramatic changes in the continental interior. By 1820, the United States exercised sovereignty over the long contested Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri Valleys. It also oversaw an enormous empire for slavery that stretched from the Chesapeake to Flor-

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ida, from the Atlantic to the Missouri, and from the Gulf of Mexico to St. Louis and the Illinois country.¹

Historians typically attribute the growth of slavery in the continental interior to the emergence of an independent United States and the dominance of the federal government by southern planters and their partisan allies. As slaveholders from the Atlantic states sought to exploit the advantages offered by growing demand for cotton and sugar, they used the powers of the federal government to create a western empire for slavery that provided new lands for plantations and new markets for slaves. In many ways, the literature on slavery and expansion in the early republic remains exceptionalist and nationalist in that it analyzes the growth of slavery in the interior of the North American continent as a uniquely American phenomenon, occurring in distinctively American places and historical periods, and involving the westward expansion of American institutions and peoples. Over the past decade, historians have moved beyond the confines of the United States as both nation and nation-state by situating the growth of slavery in broader Atlantic and imperial worlds, and by highlighting the resistance of Native Americans and African Americans to slavery's expansion. But despite these additions the expansion and growth of slavery in an ill-defined trans-Appalachian West remains a phenomenon linked closely with the westward expansion of the United States.²

1. Population figures drawn from Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), Table I, 272–75.

2. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 325–57; Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); John Craig Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West* (Charlottesville, VA, 2007). For an older historiography that focused almost exclusively on American political institutions and the interests of southern planters to explain slavery's expansion, see Donald Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765–1820* (New York, 1971); Don Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York, 1978), 74–113; Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of The United States Government's Relations to Slavery* (New York, 2001); William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers, Conditional Antislavery, and the Nonradicalism of the American Revolution," in *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War* (New York, 1994); Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson*, 2nd ed. (Armonk, NY, 2001). For more recent interpretations of slavery's expansion, see Douglas R. Egerton, "The Empire of

Treating the expansion of slavery as a phenomenon that was concomitant with the emergence of an independent United States and assuming that the United States was exceptional in its commitment to encouraging slavery's growth and expansion create numerous interpretive problems. Historians typically begin their analyses of expansion with the flurry of ordinances passed and rejected by the United States in the 1780s. But in doing so, historians tend to neglect the presence, persistence, and significance of the slavery and empires that predated the expansion of the United States into the continental interior. At the same time, by focusing on the changes wrought by the expansion of the United States, historians have minimized the significant continuities that characterized slavery's growth and expansion from the 1760s through the 1810s under French, Spanish, British, and American regimes. Other problems abound. Even as historians have emphasized the significance of growing Atlantic world demand for cotton and sugar in driving slavery's expansion into the southern interior, they have isolated the growth of slavery from other factors that shaped the history of the interior of the North American continent. Indeed, the emergence of an Atlantic history paradigm has reinforced narratives centered on the westward expansion of slavery from the Atlantic states while contributing to the neglect of the continental interior's unique history of slavery and empires.³

Liberty Reconsidered," in *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, ed. James Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, and Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville, VA, 2002), 309–30; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York, 2005), 17–38; Lacy K. Ford, "Deliver Us from Evil": *The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York, 2009), 112–40; George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholders Union: Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic* (Chicago, 2010), 211–23. Rosemarie Zagari, "The Significance of the 'Global Turn' for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building," *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (Spring 2011), 1–37, is especially helpful in understanding how nationalism and exceptionalism still pervade the historiography of the early American republic. See also Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York, 2006), 3–14.

3. For the significance of colonial continuities in shaping the early national history of the United States, see the forum led by Jack P. Greene, "Colonial History and National History: Reflections on a Continuing Problem," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (Apr. 2007), 235–50; François Furstenberg, "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History," *American Historical Review* 113 (June 2008), 647–77. Like Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*,

In minimizing the significance of the continental interior's own history of slavery, settlement, and empires, historians have tended to read the causes and consequences of slavery's expansion from the Atlantic states *after* 1815 backward into the period between the 1760s and the 1810s. They do so at the expense of following the history of slavery and empires in the contested borderlands of North America forward from the Seven Years' War through the end of the War of 1812. Two separate historical phenomena have consequently been conflated: the slow but sustained expansion of the Caribbean plantation world into the greater Mississippi Valley dating from the 1760s, and the rapid and massive expansion of American slavery from the Atlantic states into the southern interior after 1815. Finally, historians have tended to treat the planter-dominated American nation-state as omnipotent in its ability to shape the West to its liking, even as the literature has emphasized Native American and African American resistance to expansion. Yet when viewed from the interior of the North American continent, the United States seemed like any other empire, settler group, or Native American nation seeking to secure sovereignty and autonomy in the contested borderlands of North America. Limited in its ability to project power into the continental interior, the United States found itself reacting to the actions of settler

historians of colonial Louisiana have been most sensitive to the French and Spanish origins of slavery in the Mississippi Valley and the continuities that characterized slavery from the 1770s through the 1810s. See, for example, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1992); Thomas N. Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718–1819* (Knoxville, TN, 1999); and more recently, Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Bloomington, IN, 2006); and Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore, 2009). For works that begin their analyses in the 1780s, see Rothman, *Slave Country*, 1–35; Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 1–12. For the importance of situating the early American republic in a context that joins the history of the interior of the North American continent with Atlantic history, in a period from 1754 through 1815, see Bender, *A Nation Among Nations*, 61–115; Furstenberg, “Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier”; Peter H. Wood, “From Atlantic History to a Continental Approach” in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (New York, 2009), 279–98; Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation–States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999), 814–41.

groups, slaves, separatists, Native Americans, and vying empires far more frequently than it determined them.⁴

Collectively, these problems suggest the need to rethink the origins, periodization, geography, and dynamics of slavery's growth in the interior of the North American continent through 1815. The inseparable histories of slavery and empire in the interior of the North American continent pre-dated the expansion of the United States and the migration of slaveholders and slaves from the Atlantic states. Slavery's great, initial expansion and then growth in the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Valleys occurred in the four decades between the Seven Years' War and the Louisiana Purchase, a period that witnessed a significant expansion of the Atlantic plantation complex, along with new imperial, settler, and Native American conflicts in the borderlands of North America. Begin-

4. For the differences between the pre-1815 growth of slavery in the colonial Mississippi Valley, and the post-1815 expansion of slavery from the Atlantic states into the southern interior, see Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 156–74; John Craig Hammond, “‘Uncontrollable Necessity’: The Local Politics, Geo-Politics, and Sectional Politics of Slavery Expansion,” in *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation*, ed. John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason (Charlottesville, VA, 2011), 138–60. For the differences between early national and antebellum slaveholding expansionists, see Robert E. Bonner, *Mastering America: Southern Slaveholders and the Crisis of American Nationhood* (New York, 2009), 3–23. For the tendency to conflate slavery's growth in the decades preceding 1815 with the great Jacksonian and antebellum expansion of slavery from the Atlantic states into the southern interior, see, for example, Rothman, *Slave Country*; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 73–76, 112–40; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 17–38. More broadly, historians tend to identify the causes of expansion between the 1780s and 1815 with the causes of Jacksonian and antebellum expansion, including the expansion of slavery. For alternative interpretations, which argue that early American expansion was driven by the continuation of eighteenth-century conflicts over the borderlands of North America, and American policymakers' desire to preserve the American Union, see J. C. A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish-American Frontier, 1776–1821* (New Haven, CT, 2009). For the tendency to overstate the role of the federal government in driving slavery's growth prior to 1815, see Rothman, *Slave Country*; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 112–40. For the weaknesses of the American nation–state, see Greene, “Colonial History and National History.” For the necessity of imperial powers responding to the demands of local white settler groups, see Furstenberg, “Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier;” Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders;” Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible; The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, CT, 2004).

ning in the 1760s, imperial conflicts led to the expansion of the Caribbean plantation complex into the lower Mississippi Valley as Spain and Britain used state support for slavery as an important tool of empire building. The successful establishment of plantation economies in the lower Mississippi Valley led, in turn, to the transformation and growth of slavery upriver in the Missouri and Ohio Valleys, where farmers and planters increasingly used slave labor to produce food and stores for plantations downriver. In the forty years between the Seven Years' War and the Louisiana Purchase, slavery became central to the economic, social, and political lives of the white settler groups in the imperial Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Valleys. By the time of the Louisiana Purchase, these regions were joined in a distinct Mississippi Valley plantation complex that was itself part of a broader Atlantic world of empires, commerce, and slavery.⁵

In 1783, 1795, and 1803, the United States gained titular sovereignty over the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Valleys, joining the ranks of imperial powers, European American settler groups, and Native American nations seeking to draw boundaries, secure autonomy, and establish effective sovereignty in the interior of the North American continent. Slavery had been central to British, French, and Spanish efforts to establish territorial hegemony in the interior of the North American continent in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Like those rivals and predecessors, the United States would prove utterly unexceptional in its willingness to use state support for slavery as a means to secure sovereignty in the interior of the North American continent. Indeed, the United States would prove exceptional only in that it prohibited slavery in the Northwest and placed significant but ultimately futile restrictions on slavery in the Mississippi Valley. The United States could not halt—let alone reverse—the deeply entrenched colonial processes, imperial rivalries, and Atlantic demand for slave-produced commodities that had long shaped patterns of slavery, settlement, economy, and sovereignty in the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Valleys. In the interior of the North American continent, slavery and sovereignty often advanced together.⁶

5. This article unfortunately overlooks the importance of Native American slavery, as analyzed in recent works such as Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

6. I borrow the terms “titular” and “effective” sovereignty from John Reda, “Joining the Union: Land, Race, and Sovereignty in the Illinois Country, 1763–1825” (PhD diss., University of Chicago at Illinois, 2009).

Under American rule, the continuities that characterized slavery and its growth were more significant than the changes wrought by the extension of American sovereignty into the interior of the North American continent. Through 1815, slavery in the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Valleys continued to develop along patterns first established with the expansion of slavery into the lower Mississippi Valley in the 1760s. It would not be until after 1815 that slaveholders and slaves from the Atlantic states migrated into the southern interior and the Mississippi and Missouri Valleys in significant numbers. Until then, what grew and expanded in the lower Mississippi Valley was the Caribbean plantation complex, fed mainly by the migration of Caribbean planters, northeastern merchants, and the international slave trade (both legal and illegal). Similarly, in the Missouri and Ohio Valleys, slavery continued to expand largely in response to the plantation revolutions in the lower Mississippi Valley. Only after 1815 would American slavery from the Atlantic states expand into the southern interior in an enormous, sustained push, where it would meet with and then transform the patterns of slavery, settlement, and sovereignty that had been established over the previous half century. In the interior of the North American continent, then, the growth of slavery in the first decades of American rule represented not a sharp break from the past but a significant continuity that dated back to the 1760s and connected the region's colonial past to its place in the post-1815 American Union.



Until the 1760s, African American slavery and European American settlement in the interior of the North American continent was confined to New Orleans and its immediate hinterlands, along with a few scattered French, British, and Spanish outposts. Though France initiated designs on building a full-fledged plantation regime in the Mississippi Valley in the 1720s, Native and African American resistance, the considerable distances between the Illinois country and Louisiana, and the location of the lower Mississippi on the fringes of the Atlantic world combined to thwart French imperial designs. In 1729, Natchez Indians launched a surprise attack against the burgeoning French plantation settlement at Natchez, destroying the French outpost and killing or capturing its settlers, slaves, and officials. In turn, the French plantation regime in the lower Mississippi Valley—already battered by the financial pressures that accompanied a plan to build a plantation colony from scratch in less than

ten years—collapsed. Imperial officials and merchants in France would all but ignore Louisiana for the next three decades. Would-be planters in the lower Mississippi Valley subsequently abandoned their plans for a plantation society even if they never gave up their dreams of creating a profitable plantation economy. In the absence of the imperial support needed to prop up a plantation regime in the face of hostile Native Americans and unwilling African slaves, a “frontier exchange economy” emerged in the 1730s. Though slavery remained central to social, political, and economic life in French Louisiana, plantation slavery and empire languished in the lower Mississippi Valley and along the Gulf Coast for the next three decades.⁷

The place of slavery in the Mississippi Valley would begin to change as the Atlantic plantation complex entered its greatest period of growth in the 1760s. The Seven Years’ War, the American War for Independence, the great rebellion against slavery on Saint Domingue, and the wars of the French Revolution occasionally disrupted growing trans-Atlantic commerce in slaves and commodities. War and rebellion failed, however, to reverse the larger trend of expanding empires, using more slaves, to produce more cash crops, in once marginal places. When the wave of rebellions that struck the Caribbean beginning in the 1790s led to the demise of slavery in Saint Domingue, growing demand for slave-produced staples led to the shift of the Caribbean plantation complex from its eighteenth-century core in places such as Saint Domingue to once peripheral places such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, and Louisiana. Thirty years before that, the expansion of the Caribbean plantation complex would begin to reshape the place and significance of slavery in the interior of the North American continent.⁸

7. Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992), 44–76; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 195–215; Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans*, 35–144.

8. For the growth of slavery in the Atlantic world from the 1760s through the 1810s, see David Eltis, “Was Abolition of the U.S. and British Slave Trade Significant in the Broader Atlantic Context?” *William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (Oct. 2009), 717–36; David Patrick Geggus, “Slavery, War, and Revolutions in the Greater Caribbean, 1789–1815,” in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington, IN, 1997), 1–50; Geggus, “The Caribbean in the Age of Revolution,” in *The Age of Revolution in Global Context, c.1760–1840*, ed. David

The great expansion of the Caribbean plantation complex reached the lower Mississippi Valley in the 1760s; over the next four decades that expansion would create an entirely new Mississippi Valley plantation complex stretching from New Orleans to the Missouri and Ohio Valleys. As slavery began its great expansion in the Caribbean, the outcome of the Seven Years' War dramatically shifted the fortunes of empires and the place of slavery on the North American continent. After France ceded its North American possessions in 1763, both Spain and Britain sought to secure their new possessions of Louisiana (which extended north to the Missouri Valley) and West Florida. To do so, imperial officials offered generous land grants to would-be settlers, promoted the production of staples and stores to supply cash-crop producing islands in the Caribbean, and encouraged the importation of slaves.⁹

In the wake of the Seven Years' War, merchants from the British empire flocked to the lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast borderlands, using their connections to integrate the region with the larger Atlantic world of commerce and slavery. In the late 1760s, British merchants began purchasing African slaves in Caribbean ports for re-export to Spanish New Orleans. The approximately 8,500 slaves who arrived in New Orleans via the Caribbean re-export trade in the 1770s and 1780s represented a tiny proportion of the overall trans-Atlantic slave trade to the Caribbean. Nonetheless, the re-export slave trade would have an outsized effect on Louisiana's future, as merchants, farmers, and officials increasingly fashioned themselves into plantation lords. Meanwhile, in the Natchez District of British West Florida, British settlement in the 1760s and the resettlement of Loyalists in the 1770s created a small but significant society with slaves that included 5,000 British settlers and 1,200 slaves by 1783. After Spain gained control of the Natchez country in 1783, Spanish officials immediately encouraged settlement by disaffected and displaced British subjects from the Floridas, Georgia, and the Carolinas as a barrier to American expansion. Those same officials continued to use slavery to promote settlement and cultivate settler loyalties by offering even more generous land grants, eliminating duties on

Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New York, 2010), 83–100. For the inclusion of the lower Mississippi Valley and the Gulf Coast in the “Greater Caribbean,” see “Introduction,” *A Turbulent Time*, ed. Gaspar and Geggus, vii–xiii.

9. Usner, *Indians, Settlers and Slaves*, 105–48; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 195–215.

the importation of slaves, and establishing bounties for slave-produced cash crops such as tobacco and indigo.¹⁰

In the 1770s and the 1780s, as the lower Mississippi underwent the violent transition from a society with slaves to a slave society, Spanish officials wielded state power to safeguard slavery and to cultivate the loyalties of creole and newly arrived planters, merchants, and settlers. French planters, working in tandem with Spanish officials, gained greater control over the lives of their slaves in both law and practice by curtailing or eliminating many of the customary freedoms that slaves had gained since the collapse of the French plantation regime in the 1730s. Planters and officials reinforced planter and white rule by meting out harsh, public punishments against slaves who had run away, committed petty crimes, or assaulted whites; punishments ranged from amputation, to breaking on the wheel, to being “dragged by the tails of horses, hanged, and quartered.” With the transition to plantation slavery leading to an increase in slave flight, Spanish officials published standard payment scales for the capture and return of runaway slaves. They also levied a

10. For the slave trade to the lower Mississippi Valley, see Gregory E. O'Malley, “Beyond the Middle Passage: Slave Migration from the Caribbean to North America, 1619–1807,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (Jan. 2009), 125–72. The figure of 8,500 slaves re-exported from the Caribbean to Louisiana is derived from Table VI, 153. For the re-export trade that developed between New Orleans and British ports in the Caribbean, see Jean-Pierre Legaunec, “Slave Migrations in Spanish and Early American Louisiana: New Sources and New Estimates,” *Louisiana History* 46 (Spring 2005), 185–209. The growth of the slave population in Natchez stemmed primarily from the Caribbean re-export trade rather than from an internal trade that sent slaves from the Atlantic states to the Mississippi Valley; see Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville, VA, 1992), 226–38; James A. McMillin, *The Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783–1810* (Columbia, SC, 2004), 66, 92–93, 99. For the growth of slavery in British and then Spanish Natchez, see D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1968), 3–53; David J. Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720–1835* (Jackson, MS, 2004), 13–45. For the crucial role played by British merchants in forging commercial ties between the lower Mississippi Valley, the Caribbean, northern cities such as Philadelphia, and Great Britain, see Light T. Cummins, “Anglo Merchants and Capital Migration in Spanish Colonial New Orleans, 1763–1803,” *Gulf Coast Historical Review* 4 (Fall 1988), 7–28; and Cummins, “Oliver Pollock’s Plantations: An Early Anglo Landowner on the Lower Mississippi, 1769–1824,” *Louisiana History* 29 (Winter 1988), 35–48.

tax to finance the rewards and to compensate planters whose slaves were killed or executed during capture and punishment. Spanish officials also co-opted potential enemies of the emerging plantation regime by hiring Native Americans and free people of color to capture runaway slaves and to join expeditions against maroon settlements.¹¹

Two decades of Spanish and British rule and imperial support for slavery dramatically transformed the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1760, there were perhaps 5,000 black slaves in French Louisiana, and those slaves had gained considerable freedoms within slavery under the frontier exchange economy that prevailed from the 1730s through the 1760s. The dominant powers in the region were Native American, not European. Located at the extreme margins of the Atlantic world and long neglected by French officials, both plantation slavery and empire faltered in the lower Mississippi Valley under French rule. In the 1770s and 1780s, Spanish and British officials used the powers of the imperial state to establish small but thriving slave societies in the lower Mississippi Valley. The enslaved population roughly quadrupled to include over 20,000 slaves in Louisiana, West Florida, and the Natchez district, and planters and imperial officials had regained a large measure of control over the lives of both the free and enslaved black population.¹²

Under Spanish rule in the 1790s, the lower Mississippi Valley would undergo a full-scale plantation revolution. As slave revolts in the Caribbean shifted commodity production to places such as the Mississippi Valley, Spanish imperial support led to the further integration of the region with the Atlantic world of commerce and slavery. In the Natchez country, the planter elite consisted mainly of merchants from Scotland and Philadelphia who had begun settling in British Natchez in the early 1770s. Well versed in trans-Atlantic commerce, they used their connections in the British Caribbean to expand the re-export slave trade to New Orleans and to market viable cash crops and stores. After 1783, Spanish

11. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*, 136–41 (quote at 138); Gilbert C. Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves: The Regulation of Slavery in Louisiana, 1763–1803* (College Station, TX, 1999), 48–132; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 77–90, 325–40; Ingersoll, *Mammom and Manon in Early New Orleans*, 147–239.

12. Population figures drawn from Paul F. LaChance, “The Growth of the Free and Slave Populations of French Colonial Louisiana” in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, ed. Bradley G. Bond (Baton Rouge, LA, 2005), 204–43, and Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 278.

officials worked closely with the Natchez planter-merchants to consolidate Spanish and planter rule and to build a workable plantation society. Spanish officials validated the enormous British land grants that had first drawn planters and merchants to the region; they appointed planters to colonial offices; and they created for the Natchez country a standard Spanish *cabildo* or town council that allowed the planters to govern themselves and their slaves with the backing of Spanish officials. Spanish officials also worked to safeguard planters' investments in slaves by ridding the region of banditti who frequently stole slaves for sale downriver in New Orleans, and by limiting settlement to slaveholding families. In exchange for loyalty to the Spanish Crown, Natchez planters and settlers received even more land grants, along with the state support needed to maintain a degree of stability and order in a volatile frontier slave society. Under Spanish and planter rule, slavery flourished in the Natchez country in the early 1790s, when planters and merchants began searching for a viable cash-crop. They found it in cotton, and in 1794 the Natchez District produced a little over 36,000 pounds. Enamored by cotton's potential, district planters offered a bounty for the creation of a workable gin. In 1795, a local mechanic collected the bounty. By 1797—a year before the United States began governing the Natchez country—cotton production was approaching 1,000,000 pounds per year.¹³

Downriver in Louisiana, a diverse group of Spanish officials, Louisi-

13. For the plantation revolutions that transformed the lower Mississippi Valley in the 1790s, see Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 325–57; Rothman, *Slave Country*, 45–49. For the great expansion of slavery under Spanish rule, see Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi*, 33–37, 73–79. For the relationship between planters, merchants, and Spanish officials, and for the origins of both slaves and planters, see Timothy Ryan Buckner, “Constructing Identities on the Frontier of Slavery: Natchez, Mississippi, 1760–1860” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2005), 16–97; James, *Antebellum Natchez*, 31–54. For the dominance of Philadelphia- and Scottish-born merchants among the planter elite in Natchez, see Morton Rothstein, “‘The Remotest Corner’: Natchez on the American Frontier,” in *Natchez Before 1830*, ed. Noel Polk (Jackson, MS, 1989), 92–108; James, *Antebellum Natchez*, 20–22; Cummins, “Anglo Merchants” and “Oliver Pollock’s Plantations.” For the importance of the Caribbean re-export trade and for the comparative paucity of slaves from the United States, see Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi*, 33–35; Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism*, 226–38; McMillin, *Final Victims*, 66, 92–93, 99; Todd Ashley Herring, “Natchez, 1795–1830: Life and Death on the Slavery Frontier” (PhD diss., Mississippi State University, 2000), 203–207.

ana planters, British and American merchants who identified with the “Frenchmen and Spaniards,” and refugee planters from Saint Domingue guided Louisiana through its own plantation revolution in the decade prior to the Louisiana Purchase. Planters north of New Orleans quickly adopted their growing plantation workforce from staples and stores for the Caribbean to cotton for export to Europe. At the same time, the slave revolt on Saint Domingue shifted parts of the Caribbean plantation complex to the southern-most stretch of the Mississippi Valley, as fleeing Saint Domingue planters who sought refuge in Louisiana worked with native planters to produce sugar. By the mid-1790s, a full-fledged cotton and sugar boom was underway. As in Natchez, Spanish officials backed planter efforts to discipline slaves in the midst of a plantation revolution where slave resistance seemed perpetually on the verge of spilling into slave rebellion. Planters and officials also encouraged the community of British and American merchants to procure slaves and to market commodities in the larger British and American Atlantic worlds. Though relations with Spanish officials were often contentious, French planters and Anglo-American merchants remained generally satisfied with Spanish rule. Even when Spanish officials imposed unpopular restrictions, such as the 1795 ban on slave imports in the wake of the Saint Domingue rebellion, they regularly permitted evasions and exceptions. In 1800, Spanish officials finally bowed to planter and merchant pressure and reopened the slave trade. New Orleans merchants resumed the Caribbean re-export trade and then largely replaced it with direct shipments of slaves from Africa. The plantation boom was given further impetus when the French failure to retake Saint Domingue and the British expulsion of Saint Domingue refugees from Jamaica resulted in an influx of perhaps 6,000 planters, slaves, and free people of color between 1802 and 1804. In the four years preceding American possession of lower Louisiana the importation of slaves and the migration of planters increased at an unprecedented rate, as did the production of sugar and cotton. More broadly, forty years of British and Spanish rule had transformed the lower Mississippi Valley from a neglected imperial periphery into a thriving plantation society that was fully integrated with the Atlantic world of empires and commerce in slaves and commodities.¹⁴

14. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence E. Carter (28 vols., Washington, DC, 1934–1975) 9: 8–9 (quote). Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans*, 147–239; Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves*, 194–236; O’Malley, “Beyond the Middle Passage”; Legaunec, “Slave Migrations

Upriver in the Spanish Missouri country, Spanish inducements and the plantation revolution that struck the lower Mississippi Valley also led to the transformation and growth of slavery in the four decades preceding the Louisiana Purchase. Through the 1760s, Native American and African slavery had existed in the fur-trading and farming settlements that dotted the French Illinois country, the region surrounding the confluences of the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers. The outcome of the Seven Years' War divided French Illinois along the Mississippi River, ceding the Ohio Valley to Britain and the Missouri Valley to Spain. As they had done elsewhere, Spanish officials used slavery to encourage settlement, to cultivate the loyalties of settlers, and to integrate the region with Spain's new Mississippi Valley empire. In the French Illinois country, which was oriented as much toward French Canada as it was toward Louisiana, Native American slavery and the fur trade had coexisted with African American slavery and agriculture. Spanish officials worked to shift the economic and geopolitical orientation of the Missouri country from fur trading and the Great Lakes to agricultural production for Louisiana. In 1770 they banned the further enslavement of Native Americans, a practice associated mainly with the fur trade. They also promoted the use of African slaves and the production of stores and foodstuffs such as flour, salted beef, and hemp to supply the expanding plantation economy downriver. Spanish officials also offered enormous land grants and other imperial support for the mere promise of producing staples and stores for sale downriver. Given the costs and difficulties of procuring African slaves in the far-off Missouri country, Spanish officials went so far as to purchase slaves in New Orleans and then send them upriver to Missouri, where they were sold on credit to settlers, "as they had requested." In the 1770s and 1780s, Native American slavery quickly declined as Native American slaves were absorbed into the expanding institution of African American slavery.¹⁵

in Spanish and Early American Louisiana"; Robert L. Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," in *A Turbulent Time*, ed. Gaspar and Geggus, 204–25; Nathalie Dessens, "From Saint Domingue to Louisiana: West Indian Refugees in the Lower Mississippi Region," in *French Colonial Louisiana*, ed. Bond 244–64.

15. Fernando Leyba to Bernardo Galvez, Jan. 13, 1779 in *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765–1794*, ed. Lawrence Kinnaird (3 vols., Washington, DC, 1946–1949), 1: 314 (quote). Carl J. Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country: The Mississippi Frontier in Colonial Times* (Urbana, IL, 1998), 145–61; Ekberg, *Fran-*

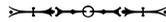
By the early 1790s, merchants, farmers, and officials had successfully reoriented the Missouri Valley toward African American slavery and the production of stores and food for plantations downriver. The shift led to the further growth of slavery, as did the migration of French slaveholders who now settled in Spanish Missouri to flee the Northwest Ordinance's Article VI and to gain access to the Spanish-controlled Mississippi river. The Illinois French were joined by a small trickle of American settlers who readily swapped loyalty to the Spanish for outsized land grants and commercial access to the Mississippi River. By 1804, African American slaves accounted for a quarter of Missouri's non-Indian population, and nearly one-third of the population around the main settlements of St. Louis and St. Genevieve. Forty years of Spanish rule and support for slavery had transformed the Missouri country from a fur-trading outpost oriented toward the Great Lakes into a society with slaves that was thoroughly integrated with Spain's broader Mississippi Valley empire and plantation frontier.¹⁶

The plantation revolutions that had transformed the Mississippi Valley since the 1760s were colonial processes fed by imperial rivalries in the borderlands of the North American continent and growing European demand for slave-produced commodities. Imperial rivalries on the Gulf Coast and in the Mississippi Valley led Spanish and British officials to encourage colonization via the establishment of plantations in once-peripheral regions of the North American continent in the 1760s. Aided by the resources of the Spanish and British empires, these plantation societies quickly became integrated with an expanding Atlantic commercial world: first as suppliers of staples and stores for more lucrative plantation colonies in the Caribbean, and then, in the 1790s, as producers of commodities such as sugar and cotton in their own right. In the four decades between the Great War for Empire and the Louisiana Purchase,

cois Valle and His World: Upper Louisiana before Lewis and Clark (Columbia, MO, 2002); Peter K. Johnson, "Ésclavage Rouge: The Nature and Influence of Indian Slavery in Colonial St. Louis," *Missouri Historical Review* 105 (Oct. 2010), 14–30; Aron, *American Confluence*, 39–68.

16. Aron, *American Confluence*, 69–105; Reda, "Joining the Union"; Jennifer Louise Turner, "From Savagery to Slavery: Upper Louisiana and the American Nation" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2008); Jay Gitlin, *The Bourgeois Frontier: French Towns, French Traders, and American Expansion* (New Haven, CT, 2010), 13–45.

the non-Indian population of the lower Mississippi Valley had expanded from less than 10,000, equally distributed between whites and blacks, to approximately 50,000, with the black population increasing at an unprecedented rate. At the same time, in the Missouri country, Spanish efforts to consolidate its imperial holdings led to the decline of Native American slavery and the expansion of mixed agriculture and African American slavery. The demands of the trans-Atlantic economy and imperial rivalries that stretched from Europe to the Caribbean to Louisiana to St. Louis sparked these plantation revolutions and then fed them for the next four decades. In the process, slavery had become a deeply entrenched institution in political, social, and economic life in the imperial Mississippi Valley. Neither the demands of the Atlantic economy, imperial rivalries, or the centrality of slavery to everyday life would end simply because the United States had acquired contested titles to the vast and volatile Mississippi Valley.



In 1798, 1804, 1811, and 1812, the United States considered placing restrictions on slavery's growth in the Mississippi Valley. Why did these proposals fail? The interests of planters from the Atlantic states in obtaining new lands and markets for their slaves were not decisive factors. Most white Americans and policymakers favored American acquisitions in the Mississippi Valley largely because they promised to help secure the Ohio Valley in the Union while solidifying northeast merchants' control of the commerce that flowed down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. For planters from the Atlantic states, American control of the lower Mississippi Valley and the Gulf Coast promised to contain the contagion of slave rebellion that they feared French, Spanish, or British officials would deliberately spread from non-United States-controlled southeast borderlands to the Atlantic states. The extension of American sovereignty into the Mississippi Valley and the Gulf Coast also promised to deny safe haven for Georgia slaves who sought freedom in Spanish territory, and to mitigate the prevalence of slave stealing by banditti and Native Americans who ferried stolen Georgia slaves to Spanish Mobile and Pensacola, and from there, to New Orleans and Cuba. Few Atlantic state planters, however, looked at the Mississippi Valley or the far southern interior, which was still controlled by Native Americans, as a site for settlement. With the exception of a few visionaries such as Thomas

Jefferson, fewer still envisioned it as a terminus for a domestic slave trade. Only after 1815 did planters and slaves from the Atlantic states begin migrating into the Mississippi Valley and the southern interior in significant numbers.¹⁷

Why then did the United States fail to limit slavery's growth and expansion in the Mississippi Valley? Any attempt to halt slavery's growth in the West had to contend with the colonial realities, imperial rivalries, and Atlantic markets that had shaped the place of slavery in the Mississippi Valley since the 1760s. Hardly a period of manifest destiny, prior to 1815 American sovereignty in the West remained contingent, contested, and highly uncertain. American officials deeply distrusted the various white settler groups in the Mississippi Valley: a threatening amalgamation of land speculators, merchants, and slaveholders; ancient and "new" French planters, Old Regime Conservatives, Bonapartist imperialists, Saint Domingue refugees, British Loyalists, Spanish officials, and expatriated Americans; all of whom seemed ready to raise the standard of any imperial power that promised to protect slavery. American officials—like their imperial predecessors—believed that imperial rivalries, the weaknesses of imperial states in the West, and the loose loyalties of white settler groups meant that they could best govern settlers and local elites by accommodating local interests. In the Mississippi Valley, slavery was the one interest that bound together the disparate and diverse settler populations. The necessity of state support for

17. For the unexpected steps that led to the Louisiana Purchase, see Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, 38–41; Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 38–51. For congressional proposals to ban or limit slavery in Natchez (rejected in 1798), lower Louisiana (passed in 1804, rescinded in 1805), and Missouri (passed in 1804, rescinded in 1805, rejected in 1811 and 1812), see Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*. For the dating of the great migration of planters, farmers, and slaves from the Atlantic states to the lower Mississippi Valley, the southern interior, and Missouri until after 1815, see James D. Miller, *South by Southwest: Planter Emigration and Identity in the Slave South* (Charlottesville, VA, 2002); Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), 121–44; Hammond, "Uncontrollable Necessity." For banditti and Creeks stealing Georgians' slaves and selling them in Spanish West Florida, see Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*, 41–53. For the important differences between slaveholding expansionists in the early national and antebellum periods, see Bonner, *Mastering America*, 3–23.

slavery was the single policy that those same settler groups could agree on. Indeed, even before the United States began formally governing the Natchez country, Louisiana, and Missouri, the white inhabitants there demanded that protections for slavery accompany the extension of American sovereignty. Rather than permitting slavery's continued growth as a sop to planters from the Atlantic states, the United States did so to appease the thousands of slaveholders and would-be slaveholders who were inadvertently brought into the expanding American empire, in many cases against their express wishes and the desire of the United States.¹⁸

Even then, the extension of American sovereignty into the Mississippi Valley did not result in an immediate expansion of American slavery from the Atlantic states via planter migration and the creation of a domestic slave trade carrying slaves from the Chesapeake to the Mississippi Valley. While these patterns of migration became common and then predominant after 1815, before then, American planters and slaves did not arrive in Louisiana, Natchez, Missouri, or the vast southern interior in significant numbers. Prior to 1815, the domestic slave trade was the domain of "Georgia traders" who purchased slaves in the Chesapeake for sale to planters in the burgeoning cotton kingdoms of the Georgia interior and the Carolina Upcountry. Similarly, the bulk of planter, farmer, and slave migration from the Chesapeake ended up in either Kentucky and Tennessee or on the Georgia and South Carolina cotton frontier. Indeed, between 1770 and 1820, the greatest expansion of any slave regime on the North American continent occurred in Georgia and South Carolina, where the enslaved population increased by over 200,000 between 1800 and 1820. Only after 1815 would planters from the Atlantic states expand rapidly into the southern interior and the Mississippi and Missouri Valleys. Until then, the growth of slavery in the

18. For the ways in which imperial rivalries in borderlands, required that imperial officials yield to the demands of settlers and elites, see Adelman and Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders;" Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*. For the persistence of settlers groups' institutions, practices, and cultures after the transfer of sovereignty from one imperial power to another, see Jack P. Greene, "The Cultural Dimensions of Political Transfers: An Aspect of the European Occupation of the Americas," *Early American Studies* 6 (Spring 2008), 1–26. For the defeat of congressional proposals to limit slavery, see Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*.

greater Mississippi Valley drew from the same sources that had fed its expansion in the four decades that preceded American rule.¹⁹

The Louisiana Purchase hardly changed the patterns of slavery and settlement, or the relationship between territorial officials and local planters and merchants that had been established under Spanish rule. Francophone planters continued to dominate the plantation economy and government of territorial Louisiana. Furthermore, French Caribbean refugees rather than American planters continued to dominate the streams of white settlers who found their way to Louisiana in the decade after the Louisiana Purchase. All told, at least 15,000 whites, free people of color, and black slaves made their way from Saint Domingue to Louisiana between 1791 and 1810. This stream of migrants from Saint Domingue composed—along with slaves imported from Africa and the Caribbean—the two largest streams of migrants to Louisiana from the 1790s until the 1820s. Meanwhile, very few Americans settled in Louisiana until after 1815. The few who did were either territorial officials or merchants from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. The American merchants and officials who became planters did so by marrying into established plantation families or by purchasing plantations rather than by transferring plantation operations from the Atlantic states to Louisiana. Even fewer American planters and farmers sought settlement in Louisiana. Census figures from 1810 indicate that Anglos counted for between 2 percent and 5 percent of the white population in four of the five parishes surrounding New Orleans. Those few Anglos had migrated to Louisiana before the purchase, and most self-consciously identified themselves with “the French,” the term used by whites to describe settlers who arrived before the Purchase.²⁰

19. Hammond, “Uncontrollable Necessity.” For the dating of the domestic slave trade from the Chesapeake to the lower Mississippi Valley to the 1820s, see Kulikoff, *Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism*, 226–38; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 17–38. For the growth of slavery in individual states and regions between 1800 and 1820, and the great expansion of slavery in Georgia and South Carolina, see Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 187–88.

20. For the migration of Saint Domingue planters, free people of color, and slaves, see Paul F. LaChance, “The Foreign French” in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge, LA, 1992); Paquette, “Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana,” 213–214; Dessens, “From Saint Domingue to Louisiana: West Indian Refugees in the Lower Mississippi Region,” in *French Colonial Louisiana*, ed. Bond, 244–64.

Louisiana's enslaved population remained decidedly non-American in its origins as well. It was not until after 1815 that American merchants began regularly supplying the markets of New Orleans with African American slaves from the Atlantic states. Until then, white Louisianans continued to rely on the intra-Caribbean and trans-Atlantic trades. American sovereignty hardly interrupted the burgeoning international slave trades. Even though Congress prohibited the international and domestic slave trades to Louisiana in 1804, American officials found it impossible to enforce the ban. Congress subsequently rescinded the ban on the domestic slave trade in 1805. Over the next three years, Charleston merchants became the main supplier of slaves to Louisiana, domesticating the international slave trade by having slave ships touch port in Charleston before moving on to New Orleans. After 1808, the illegal international slave trade—which existed side by side with the legal trade from Charleston—hardly diminished. Smuggling was endemic on the Gulf Coast as pirates, merchants, and planters carried a steady supply of slaves through the largely unregulated coasts of the Gulf of Mexico as well as on established overland routes from Spanish Texas and Florida. The smuggling of slaves into American Louisiana was little more than a resumption of business as usual for planters and merchants who were well versed in the art of evading mercantilist prohibitions on commerce and the slave trade. Smuggling was also supplemented by the migration of nearly 3,000 Saint Domingue planters to New Orleans in 1809 and 1810, which added upwards of 4,000 slaves to Louisiana's rapidly growing enslaved population. Through 1815, the enslaved population in Louisiana remained decidedly non-African American, instead composed of native creole slaves, slaves from the Caribbean and Africa, and their immediate descendants.²¹

For the small number of American settlers in Louisiana, see Sarah P. Russell, "Cultural Conflicts and Common Interests: The Making of the Sugar Planter Class in Louisiana, 1795–1853" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2000), 106–23, 176–205. As Russell shows, even as late as 1820, French creoles constituted the overwhelming majority of white residents in Louisiana, and it was only after 1820 that American planters and slaves arrived in Louisiana in significant numbers. For American officials and merchants marrying into established French planter families, see Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, 105–106.

21. For the small number of slaves from the United States in Louisiana, see Russell, "Cultural Conflicts and Common Interests," 106–23. For the prevalence of smuggling after 1807, see Gene A. Smith, "U.S. Navy Gunboats and the Slave

Restless slaves and demanding planters dictated that American officials would use state power to maintain a slave society in the midst of both a plantation revolution and the political upheavals stemming from the Louisiana Purchase, the Napoleonic Wars, and slave revolts in the Caribbean. When William Claiborne arrived in New Orleans to begin his term as governor, planters immediately demanded that he continue the Spanish policy of punishing slaves and free blacks who displayed “a spirit of Revolt and Mutiny.” That “spirit of revolt and mutiny” had grown especially strong in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase and continuing rumors of war between the United States and Spain. Louisiana slaves, acting on rumors that freedom awaited them in Spanish Texas, began fleeing in the months preceding the transfer of Louisiana to the United States. When Claiborne arrived in Louisiana, planters immediately warned him that they would personally lead expeditions into Texas to recover their slaves if Claiborne failed to secure their return from Spanish officials. Fearing that such actions would spark an international incident that might result in war between the United States and Spain, Claiborne ordered his subordinates to negotiate with Spanish officials in the Texas–Louisiana borderlands for the return of the slaves.²²

After less than two years of American rule, local planters—led by an inordinate number of Saint Domingue refugees—had wrested control of the territorial legislature and local offices away from American officials. The planters promptly issued a new slave code, continuing the long process of eliminating the customary and legal privileges free and enslaved blacks had gained after the collapse of the plantation economy under French rule in the 1730s. Hardly imposed by American officials

Trade in Louisiana Waters, 1808–1811,” *Military History of the West* 23 (Fall 1993), 135–47; Joe G. Taylor, “The Foreign Slave Trade in Louisiana after 1808,” *Louisiana History* 1 (Winter 1960), 36–43; Rothman, *Slave Country*, 89–91; Robert C. Vogel, “The Patterson and Ross Raid on Barataria, September 1814,” *Louisiana History* 33 (Spring 1992), 157–70. For the influx of slaves carried to Louisiana by refugee Saint Domingue planters, see Paquette, “Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana,” 213–14.

22. For planter demands that American officials try and punish slaves suspected of plotting revolt, see Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers*, 9: 326 (quote), 295, 499. For the fleeing of Louisiana slaves to the disputed border region around Natchitoches, which eventually became the Neutral Ground, see Jared William Bradley, ed., *Interim Appointment: W.C.C. Claiborne Letter Book, 1804–1805* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2002), 71–72, 66–67; Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers*, 9: 765.

distrustful of Louisiana's supposedly more fluid racial laws and mores, the 1806 Black Code and the 1808 Digest of Laws codified and expanded the confusing set of laws and regulations that French planters and Spanish officials had adopted over the previous thirty years. Furthering white control over the black population, the planters also eliminated free blacks from the militia (against the wishes of Claiborne), while the city government established a white City Guard to enforce the black codes, capture runaway slaves, and stand guard against black rebellion. Even more than their Spanish predecessors, American officials faced an assertive group of creole planters that had grown ever more aggressive as the result of the prolonged and massive migration of Saint Domingue planters. Consequently, American officials in Louisiana found it even more necessary to cede control over the black population to local planters while placing the resources of the imperial state at the service of the dominant planter class.²³

Upriver in the Missouri country, slavery continued to grow under the patterns laid down under Spanish rule over the previous decade. When Captain Amos Stoddard arrived in St. Louis to assume American sovereignty in 1804, the leading residents of the town demanded that he institute a set of slave codes to quell the "fermentation" of black slaves who expected that under American rule, "they will be free before long." Invoking Spanish slave regulations and the use of state powers to protect whites from potentially rebellious slaves, the leading men specified that the United States had to place slaves "again under the Subordination which they were heretofore." They also demanded that the slave code should "keep the slaves in their duty according to their Class, in the Respect they owe generally to Whites, and more especially to their mas-

23. For planter control of local and territorial government after the Louisiana Purchase, see Russell, "Cultural Conflicts and Common Interests," 68–110. For the 1806 Black Code and 1808 Digest, see Thomas Ingersoll, "Slave Codes and Judicial Practice in New Orleans, 1718–1807," *Law and History Review* 13 (Spring 1995), 23–62; Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order*, 178–214. For the ways in which local planters demanded that the resources of the imperial state be used to protect slavery, see Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, 90–91, 127–31. For the conflicts between Claiborne and the planters over Louisiana's free people of color, see Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, 91–92, 162–66. For the outsized presence of Saint Domingue refugees in the territorial and local governments, see Dessens, "From Saint Domingue to Louisiana," in *French Colonial Louisiana*, ed. Bond.

ters.” Their demands were leavened by the supplicant language of empire, as the St. Louis elite reminded Stoddard that firm American slave codes would “insure the tranquility of a people who depends entirely on your vigiliency.” Stoddard—a stout Connecticut Yankee who wrote a scathing critique of slavery based on his years of government service in the West—complied, promising to enforce the Spanish regulations until Congress created a territorial government for the region. Despite Stoddard’s assurances, later that year, Congress placed a host of restrictions on slavery in Missouri and seemed ready to extend the Northwest Ordinance’s Article VI prohibition on slavery across the Mississippi River. White Missourians responded with a confusing set of threats and pleas, demanding that the United States both permit and protect slavery.²⁴

Congress rescinded the laws restricting slavery in 1805, and American officials on the ground quickly cobbled together a slave code drawn from the laws of Kentucky and Virginia. Even with laws protecting slavery, American settlement remained impeded by still powerful Indian nations and by a morass of overlapping land claims, the result of Spanish officials’ issuing thousands of backdated, fraudulent land grants in 1803 and 1804. With most land tied up in potential lawsuits, the population of whites and black slaves grew slowly during the first decade of American rule, and the few Americans living in Missouri frequently complained about the difficulties of obtaining slaves. Until Americans began to migrate to Missouri in significant numbers after 1815, slaveholders and aspiring slaveholders in Missouri continued to acquire slaves in the haphazard way they had for the previous forty years: through exchange with merchants from New Orleans and Lexington, through the migration of French slaveholders from Indiana and Illinois, and through natural increase.²⁵

24. John Rankin to Amos Stoddard, Aug. 4, 1804, Amos Stoddard to Auguste Chouteau, Aug. 6, 1804, Amos Stoddard Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO; Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana* (Philadelphia, 1812). For the demands placed by the St. Louis elite on American officials, see Reda, “Joining the Union,” 68–77; Turner, “From Savagery to Slavery,” 150–56. For the passage and then expiration of laws restricting slavery, followed by the adoption of a slave code by American officials, see Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 51–54, 57.

25. Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 51–54, 57. For the difficulties of acquiring slaves and the slow rate of migration of Americans into the territory, see, for example, William C. Carr to Charles Carr, July 3, 1807, Sept. 8,

As in Louisiana and Missouri, American rule in the Natchez country would be marked by continuity more than change. When American officials arrived in Natchez in 1797, planters immediately pressed them to devote the powers of the state to securing the dominant planter class's interests in land and slaves. American officials in Natchez and policy-makers in Philadelphia quickly acceded to their demands. When white residents expressed concern that the United States would prohibit slavery, Pennsylvania Quaker Andrew Ellicott—who had become the de facto governor of the American Natchez country—issued a decree pledging that the United States would protect slavery. Ellicott then frantically wrote letters to officials and congressmen in Philadelphia imploring them to permit slavery once they created a territorial government. Meanwhile, the Natchez elite replaced their town council with a “Permanent Committee” that promptly sent their own petitions demanding that slavery be permitted under American rule. A Federalist-controlled Congress and Secretary of State Timothy Pickering readily accepted these demands, and Congress overwhelmingly defeated an effort to prohibit slavery in the newly created Mississippi Territory. A few months later, New England Federalist and former Secretary of the Northwest Territory Winthrop Sargent arrived in Natchez to serve as governor of the Mississippi Territory. Sargent promptly married the widowed plantation mistress Maria McIntosh Williams and struck up a close friendship with the former Spanish governor, who was also the godfather of Sargent's stepdaughter. Now a member of the planter class, he furthered the policies of his predecessor. Sargent instituted a harsh new set of slave codes, ordered the militia to enforce slave codes, police the movement of slaves, guard against slave rebellion, and patrol for “characters . . . whose pursuits are doubtful,” especially the banditti who periodically stole slaves for sale downriver in New Orleans. For planters and slaves in Natchez, American rule changed little.²⁶

1807, and Aug. 25, 1809, William C. Carr Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO. For slavery and the patterns of settlement in Missouri, including the dearth of American slaves and settlers before 1815, and the great rush of Americans after 1815, see Aron, *American Confluence*, 106–85; Reda, “Joining the Union,” 59–106; Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 51–64.

26. For the actions of the Natchez planters and American officials and policy-makers, along with Congress's decision to permit slavery in the Mississippi Territory in 1798, see Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 19–23. For Sargent, see Winthrop Sargent, *Sargent's Code: A Collection of the Original Laws*

Settlement and the expansion of slavery in Mississippi were inhibited by the same factors that limited American expansion into the Missouri country. Native Americans still claimed and controlled the far great majority of the territory, which included the later state of Alabama. In the Natchez District, the small portion of the Mississippi Territory open to white settlement, land sales were delayed until American officials sorted through the mess of overlapping British, Spanish, and Georgian land claims. Just as the Spanish had recognized outsized British land grants as a means to gain the loyalties of the planters, American officials eventually confirmed the enormous land grants that the Spanish awarded to planters, even though many grants were fraudulently issued and backdated to indicate that they had been made before the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo. In 1809, American officials managed to bring some public lands to market, but the Embargo and the corresponding drop in the price of cotton, Indian unrest, and the prospect of war with Great Britain all combined to limit white migration. American possession, then, only nominally changed the patterns of settlement and slavery. Farmers who had been unable to secure land titles in Kentucky and Tennessee continued to squat on the periphery of the Natchez country's plantation core, engaging primarily in subsistence farming. Within the plantation district, emigration and settlement mainly involved northern merchants and territorial officials who, like Winthrop Sargent, married into the planter class. Furthermore, the region remained closely tied to Spanish West Florida and New Orleans, which served as the Natchez country's main commercial centers for both the sale of slave-produced commodities and the purchase of slaves. Finally, Natchez planters continued to utilize the legal and illegal international slave trade through New Orleans along the Gulf Coast, along with intermittent slave sales from merchants heading downriver from Kentucky and Tennessee.²⁷

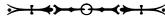
of the Mississippi Territory enacted 1799–1800 by Governor Winthrop Sargent and the Territorial Judges (Jackson, MS, 1939); “Address to the Territorial Judges,” May 5, 1800, and “Circular Letter to Slave-holders,” Nov. 16, 1800, in *Mississippi Territorial Archives, 1798–1819*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Nashville, TN, 1905), 2: 232, 311–12 (quote), 324–26; Rothman, *Slave Country*, 50–52.

27. For the mess of overlapping land claims, their resolution by American judges and land officials, and the slow rate of migration into the Natchez District and the Mississippi Territory, see Robert V. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795–1817* (Lexington, KY, 2010). For the great differences between the “first cotton kingdom” that was limited to the Natchez

Until 1815, the extension of American sovereignty into the Mississippi Valley did little to change either the patterns of slavery's growth and settlement, or the exercise of power between the imperial states that claimed sovereignty over these outposts, and the local settler groups who governed and dominated them. The end of the War of 1812 and the Napoleonic Wars, however, set off an important series of changes in the configurations of slavery and settlement, sovereignty and empire in the greater Mississippi Valley. American sovereignty in the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Valleys, and along the Gulf Coast would be secured as European powers abandoned their claims in the disputed borderlands of the United States. Andrew Jackson's rampages during the war severely weakened Native American resistance to American expansion and resulted in enormous cessions of Indian land in the southern interior between Georgia and the Mississippi River. Potential settler interest in those ceded lands soared as Andrew Jackson's soldiers returned home with tales of abundant and productive land. The onrush of speculators and settlers soon followed. Meanwhile, European demand for cotton, suppressed by the Napoleonic Wars, rose to new heights. Finally, the United States Navy, built up considerably as a result of the War of 1812, turned its attention to interdicting the illegal slave trade along the Gulf Coast, shutting off lower Mississippi Valley planter's main source of slaves. Over the next decade, American slavery from the Atlantic states would expand into the southern interior, the Mississippi Valley, and the Missouri country in an unprecedented, massive push. Only then would the older and isolated slave societies that dotted the American West prior to 1815 be absorbed into a massive and largely uninterrupted American empire for slavery.²⁸

country until 1815, and the "second cotton kingdom" that was created by slaves and slaveholders from the Atlantic states in the 1820s and 1830s, see John Hebron Moore, "Two Cotton Kingdoms," *Agricultural History* 60 (Autumn, 1986), 1-16; Christopher Morris, *Becoming Southern: The Evolution of a Way of Life, Warren County and Vicksburg, Mississippi, 1770-1860* (New York, 1995), 3-41. For the continued migration of northeastern merchants to Natchez and their marriage into the local planter class, see Herring, "Natchez, 1795-1830," 181-90; Rothstein, "The Remotest Corner." For planters' reliance on the international slave trade and smuggling, see Herring, "Natchez, 1795-1830," 204-207; Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi*, 39-52.

28. For the great expansion of American settlers and slaves into the west after 1815, see Rothman, *Slave Country*, 165-216; Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, 201-20;



In the Ohio Valley, the expansion and prohibition of slavery likewise stemmed from a territory's colonial and imperial past, the growth of slavery in the lower Mississippi Valley, and the continuation of settler, imperial, and Native American conflicts. In what would become the states of Kentucky and Tennessee, the growth of slavery was spurred by the expansion of plantations in Spain's Mississippi Valley empire and its integration with the larger Atlantic world. As early as the 1770s, planters in the Ohio Valley produced everything from staples and stores such as barrel staves and hemp rope, to luxuries such as tobacco for their planter counterparts downriver in Natchez and Louisiana. Furthermore, Kentucky and the portion of the Southwest Territory that became Tennessee served more as colonies of Virginia and North Carolina than as territories of the United States. Virginians first began colonizing Kentucky in the 1770s under the authority of Virginia, which governed Kentucky as its westernmost counties. By 1790, there were nearly 12,000 slaves there. Similarly, North Carolinians initiated settlement in what became the Southwest Territory, and by 1790 there were perhaps 3,400 slaves in the emerging plantation core around present-day Nashville. With the settlements south of the Ohio River firmly committed to slavery and increasingly integrated with the Spanish-controlled Mississippi Valley, the federal government was in no position to restrict slavery's expansion, a measure that would have likely driven American settlers straight into Spanish arms.²⁹

Aron, *American Confluence*, 149–85; Hammond, “Uncontrollable Necessity.” For American soldiers’ coveting of Creek lands, see Rothman, *Slave Country*, 138.

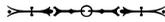
29. John R. Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition* (Bloomington, IN, 2001), 99–131; Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore, 1996); Andrew R. L. Cayton, “‘When Shall We Cease to Have Judases?’: The Blount Conspiracy and the Limits of the Extended Republic,” in *Launching the “Extended Republic”: The Federalist Era*, ed. Ronald J. Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, VA, 1996), 156–89; Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 9–12. For the ways that Kentucky planters supplied staples and luxuries for their planter counterparts in Natchez and Louisiana, see, for example, Abyal Hunt to John Wesley Hunt, Nov. 9, 1798, John Wesley Hunt Papers, Special Collections, Transylvania University, Lexington, KY.

Finally, the Northwest Territory also demonstrates how the realities of settlement and slavery, sovereignty and empire could work against slavery's establishment, growth, and expansion. While French settlers had established a few small settlements that included African American slaves in the Illinois country in the 1720s, from the Seven Years' War in the 1750s through the Indian Wars of the 1790s imperial rivalries, imperial policies, and war continuously impeded settlement by European Americans. In the 1760s, British sovereignty forced many French settlers (and slaveholders) to flee from the Illinois country into Spanish Missouri, while Indian resistance and the Proclamation of 1763 stalled settlement from the east. In the 1770s, the War for American Independence continued to impede settlement even as settler interest in the region piqued. From the 1780s through the mid-1790s, settlement from the East was thwarted by British and Native American resistance to American expansion into the region, along with jurisdictional disputes that tied up land sales. Meanwhile, in the Illinois country, Article VI and American indifference to the concerns of the French inhabitants led to further emigration into the Missouri country. Since the 1750s, then, no imperial power had used slavery to encourage settlement and secure its claims of sovereignty. Through the mid-1790s, the Old Northwest was the one region in the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys where slavery was all but nonexistent and where settlement by European Americans was all but stalled.³⁰

The limited presence of European settlement and slavery in the Northwest's past meant that slavery would play little role in the establishment of American sovereignty in the region in the 1780s and 1790s. The patterns of settlement in the Northwest in the 1790s also favored the exclusion of slavery. While non-American slaveholders comprised the bulk of the non-Native population of the Mississippi and Missouri Valleys, in the Northwest, American settlement was led by loyal Continental Army officers and settlers from New England. Both groups were committed to establishing American sovereignty; both were committed to maintaining the Article VI exclusion of

30. Furstenberg, "Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier;" Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York, 1997), 185-267; Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington, IN, 1987).

slavery. Even in the Northwest, however, imperial rivalries and a colonial past that included slavery allowed the institution to persist in the French settlements around Vincennes and in the Illinois country. Nonetheless, no empire tied slavery to the establishment of effective sovereignty in the Northwest. And the relatively late large-scale migration of European Americans into the region meant that slaveholders had only a small and ultimately insignificant presence there. With slavery connected to neither settlement nor sovereignty, Congress and American officials could and did ignore French and American pleas for the suspension of Article VI in Indiana and Illinois.³¹



In the history of empires and slavery in the North American interior, the ultimate exclusion of slavery from the old Northwest was exceptional. But so was the old Northwest's colonial and imperial past, which was largely unencumbered by either European American settlement or slavery. If something like a "virgin west" with regard to European settlement and slavery existed anywhere after the 1780s, it was to be found in the Northwest Territory. Elsewhere in the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Valleys, slavery was central both to settlement and claims of sovereignty, whether by imperial powers such as France, Britain, or Spain; local European American settler groups such as the planters of Natchez, New Orleans, St. Louis, Kentucky, and Tennessee, or Native American nations and confederacies such as the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees. Imperial powers had long used slavery as an instrument of empire building; when the United States began expanding into the contested Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Valleys, it responded to the demands of white settler groups and quickly did the same. That the United States protected and promoted slavery as a means of securing sovereignty in the Missouri, Ohio, and Mississippi Valleys was unexceptional.

This understanding of the relationship between slavery, settlement, and sovereignty transcended sectional and partisan boundaries. When in

31. Andrew R. L. Cayton, "Radicals in the 'Western World': The Federalist Conquest of Trans-Appalachian North America," in *Federalists Reconsidered*, ed. Doron Ben-Atar and Barbara B. Oberg (Charlottesville, VA, 1998), 77–96. For the ultimate exclusion of slavery from the old Northwest by the Americans who settled there, see Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 76–149.

power in the 1790s, the Federalists—who understood both the importance and limits of federal power in the West—consistently favored protecting slavery whenever the establishment of American sovereignty seemed to require it. Federalists readily allowed passage of the Southwest Ordinance in 1790. As Governor of the Northwest Territory, Federalist Arthur St. Clair ruled that the Article VI prohibition on slavery would not be applied to property in slaves already owned by French and American settlers. Not a single Federalist objected to Kentucky or Tennessee statehood on the grounds that it permitted slavery. In the late 1790s, northern Federalists were instrumental in seeing that the United States would permit slavery in the Mississippi Territory. Andrew Ellicott pledged that the United States would permit slavery in the region. Secretary of State Timothy Pickering and President John Adams endorsed Ellicott’s decision, recommending that Congress permit slavery in the Mississippi Territory in their report to Congress. In Congress, Thomas Hartley—a Pennsylvania Federalist who routinely presented Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society petitions—argued against efforts to apply Article VI to the Mississippi Territory. In Natchez itself, Governor Winthrop Sargent established and enforced a draconian slave code.³²

Many Federalists exhibited the same understanding about the relationship between slavery, sovereignty, and empire during debates over slavery in the Louisiana Purchase. Indeed, those Federalists who were most knowledgeable about the importance of slavery in the Mississippi and Missouri Valleys consistently opposed efforts to place restrictions on slavery in Louisiana. Jonathan Dayton—New Jersey senator, future Burrite, and western land speculator extraordinaire—was the Senate’s most vocal advocate of the international slave trade. Now in the Senate, Timothy Pickering voted against numerous restrictions on slavery and cautioned that prohibiting the international slave trade would lead to white rebellion against American sovereignty. John Quincy Adams spent his evenings preparing for the debates by reading the Abbe Raynal’s history of slavery and commerce in the Caribbean. Like Pickering, he voted against several restrictions on slavery in Louisiana, and questioned

32. For the Federalists and the West, see Cayton, “Radicals in the ‘Western World’”; David Andrew Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville, VA, 2008).

the wisdom of a prohibition on the international slave trade. Other northern Federalists objected to the Louisiana Purchase—not because they feared that it would lead to the expansion of American slavery—but on the grounds that Louisiana was already part of a vast Caribbean empire for slavery.³³

The actions of these northern Federalists were hardly hypocritical, nor do they suggest that Federalists were somehow “proslavery.” Instead, Federalists such as Andrew Ellicott, Timothy Pickering, Winthrop Sargent, Thomas Hartley, John Quincy Adams, and Jonathan Dayton understood that the close connections between slavery, settlement, and sovereignty both pre-dated and transcended the powers of the American nation state. In recent years, historians have located the origins of an American “empire for slavery” in the Jeffersonian Republicans, and more precisely, their leader. Indeed, Douglas Egerton has suggested that an Adams and Federalist victory in the election of 1800 might have resulted in a Louisiana Purchase “under free-soil conditions.” Given the realities of slavery and empire in the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Valleys, such an outcome is difficult to imagine. It is equally difficult to foresee how British, French, or Spanish control of the Missouri, Ohio, and Mississippi Valleys would have reversed slavery’s growth in the interior of the North American continent. The expansion of slavery and sovereignty in the half-century between the 1760s and the 1810s was a process bigger, more sustained, and more complex than any group of founding fathers, the American nation–state, or planters from the Atlantic slave states.³⁴

Ultimately, neither a revolutionary promise of an empire for liberty, nor a weak, overextended nation–state could overcome the post-colonial realities of white settlers clamoring for more slaves, geopolitical conflicts that encouraged European powers to bid for those white settlers’ loyalties, and growing trans-Atlantic demand for slave-produced commodities, which dictated that the expansion of European American sovereignty into the continental interior would be accompanied by African American slavery. The United States, then, did not so much create an empire for slavery in the interior of the North American continent so

33. For the Federalists and slavery in the Mississippi Territory and the Louisiana Purchase, see Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 19–29, 35–46.

34. Egerton, “The Empire of Liberty Reconsidered.”

much as it oversaw, shaped, and confirmed the outcome of processes long underway. As historians continue to situate the new American nation in broader Atlantic, continental, and global contexts, it is to those processes—processes that encouraged the growth of both empires of slavery and empires against slavery—that historians should increasingly turn their attention.³⁵

35. On the writing of the history of the United States in overlapping North American, Atlantic, and global contexts, see Andrew R. L. Cayton, "Writing North American History," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (Spring 2002), 105–11; Zagari, "Significance of the 'Global Turn'"; Johann N. Neem, "American History in a Global Age," *History and Theory* 50 (Feb. 2011), 41–70.