Territorial Politics: Formative Identities and Networks in the Mississippi Territory, 1798-1817

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Abstract

This thesis considers the development of political identity in the Mississippi Territory, from its foundation in 1798 until the moment it achieved statehood in 1817. It focuses on the establishment of local networks of white settlers and local politicians, which helped to shape the political landscape of the Territory and ultimately dictated the relationship between the Territory and the Federal Government. It applies a microhistorical approach, honing in on local communities and political events, but draws connections between local issues and the national political landscape. In doing so, it challenges preconceptions about the aspirations of political networks within the Territory, the influence of the national political parties on the frontier, and the nature of citizenship and political loyalty on the fringes of the early American Republic.

The first chapter sets out the unique political framework established in the Mississippi Territory, and demonstrates how the first Territorial governor of the Territory, a Federalist, utilised that framework to limit democracy and local representation in the Territory. In turn, that served as the catalyst for the development of local political networks rising in support and opposition to the Governor. Those networks aligned themselves with the national political parties in order to subvert the Governor and secure their own authority. However, the second chapter challenges the notion that Mississippi's political networks can be neatly categorised as "Federalist" and "Republican". Instead, local politicians appropriated those party labels in order to secure influence and favour from the federal government and assert their authority on the local stage. That assessment is then tested through a case study of the Burr Conspiracy, which proves how fractured Mississippi's networks were, and highlights the fragility of the Territory's loyalty to the Union.

The third chapter presents two further case studies, focusing upon the establishment of two civic institutions at different moments in the Territory's history; Jefferson College and The Bank of the Mississippi. In doing so, it demonstrates how political networks evolved from partisan, self-interested groups which would sabotage bipartisan movements if they did not immediately benefit, to sophisticated networks of businessmen and merchants who worked together to set up a stable, secure and profitable bank. Finally, Chapter Four discusses land and settlement in the Mississippi Territory, exploring how migration shaped political networks, and showing how planters and federal officials clashed in their attempts to shape white settlement in the region. This culminated in regional divisions which shaped campaigns for Mississippi's statehood, which was only permissible on planters' own terms.

Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates how planters and local politicians were able to exploit the absence of federal authority and oversight on the early American frontier and cultivate unique political identities which furthered their own private interests and created a uniquely Mississippian form of American identity.

Acknowledgements

Completing a PhD is often considered to be a solitary experience, but so many people have contributed to this project in so many ways, that cannot possibly be said for this thesis. I was certain that I wouldn't be a person who went over one page in their acknowledgements, but I was also certain I would submit this within three years, so here we are…

I could not have asked for a better supervisor than Dr. Ben Marsh, whose enthusiasm for this project never wavered even when my own did. Ben repeatedly saw the value in this project, and his insights pushed this thesis to be so much more than it might have been. I've tried hard to not resent his vastly superior footballing skills, and I'm grateful that Watford never did follow up on that first victory over Liverpool in 2015 - I believe the aggregate score is now 25-7 to Liverpool since we started working together. Thanks also to Dr. Tim Bowman who, despite the project never becoming about the militia or the War of 1812 as initially intended, offered a supportive voice and provided many insightful comments throughout this thesis. My gratitude also goes to CHASE, who funded this project and gave me the opportunity to have such a fantastic experience over the last four years.

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Introduction

The Territories of the United States of America, from their inception to the present day, have enjoyed a complicated relationship with the Federal Government. Both historically and presently, the Territories sit on the boundaries of the Union, neither completely separate nor completely equal to the fifty states. In many ways, the original intent of the Territorial System has now been lost. It was originally designed, with the inception of the Northwest Ordinance, as a means of preparing a region for incorporation into the American Union as a fully-fledged state. The Ordinances provided a framework by which the Federal Government sought to prepare a region for statehood and to cultivate its inhabitants as citizens of a republic. Based around several population thresholds, the intention was gradually to introduce democratic rights to a territory's inhabitants, including the right to elect a representative assembly and the right to a representative at the US Congress. Yet America's territories today, and by extension its capital in the District of Columbia, have never, and may never, become American states. Citizens in the Territories and the District of Columbia are only represented by territorial representatives in Congress, without the same powers and authority of congressmen and senators, and citizens of the Territories do not have any votes in the Electoral College. People born within the Territories hold US passports, but do not receive the privilege of birthright citizenship.[1] In many ways, the Territorial System is, and was, a paradox, neither providing full democratic rights to citizens nor allowing autonomy and independence. This thesis

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[1] N. Weare, "Citizenship is a birthright in U.S. territories", *CNN,* 19/02/2014, accessed online [11/08/19] [https://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/19/opinion/weare-citizenship-birthright-samoa/index.html]

demonstrates that, right from its inception, the Territorial System was conditioned by regional circumstances and local conflicts, even as it proposed a Federal narrative of national constitutional progress and expansion. Officials on the ground mediated the meanings, labels, and institutions of Federal power as they negotiated new political, economic and demographic landscapes, and cultivated new identities at the margins of the republic. To fully understand the Territories and their evolutionary complexity, it is necessary to focus new light on the powerbrokers in the localities rather than the Federal machinery at the centre.[2]

The focus of this study is the Mississippi Territory. Founded in 1798, the American Revolution was fresh in the memories of politicians, federal and local alike. Many of the inhabitants of the Territory were veterans of the Revolutionary War, and many more were former inhabitants of the eastern states, particularly from Virginia, Georgia and the Carolinas, who had emigrated into the Territory. Thus, many residents of the formative Mississippi Territory were established citizens of the United States, who had enjoyed the privileges that that status bought them since the 1780s. Yet, even with the rhetoric of representation and democracy of the American Revolution fresh in the memory, inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory enjoyed few of the rights enshrined within the US Constitution and Bill of Rights, even if they had held

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[2] Peter Onuf has described the establishment of the Northwest Territory as a "colonial" government, which protected the Federal Government's property interests while offering inhabitants the "promise" of full citizenship. To Onuf, the Territorial system was the "embodiment of a vision of a more harmonious, powerful, prosperous, and expanding union." It offered a hopeful vision of American expansion – Thomas Jefferson's Empire of the Imagination before its time, but the system has not always followed through on the deal it apparently made with its citizens, which was always a partial phenomenon, particularly in its racial dimensions. See P. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987) p. XIII.

those rights prior to migrating to the frontier. This project explores the impact that this paradox had upon identity in the Mississippi Territory. It explores how inhabitants, rich and poor, came to terms with their status within the American Republic, and demonstrates how they were affected by that status, both positively and negatively. Within the Territory, there were times at which local politicians brought themselves closer to the Federal Government, both in their actions and in their rhetoric, putting their citizenship front and centre of debates. However, at other times they separated themselves, exploiting the distance between Washington DC and Washington, Mississippi, highlighting their uniqueness, and their status as *Missisippians*. Their decisions and positions, the product of interlocking agendas and self-interests, would shape the articulation of Territorial identity for decades.

The Mississippi Territory was founded at a time of political uncertainty across the nation. The delicate balance of power between the new Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties broadened those aforementioned grey areas, and allowed local politicians within the Territory the opportunity to find their own means of government and resistance. The first major theme of this thesis therefore addresses the ways in which local politicians and the inhabitants of the Territory engaged with the federal party-political model, creating their own loosely-connected factions which bore the labels of the national parties but rarely reflected their ideals and values. Furthermore, at the Territory's inception, the nation was about to rapidly expand, with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 offering a massive geopolitical shift across the continent. Thus, the Territory went from being on the frontier to far behind the frontier very quickly after its foundation, which compromised the appeal of the region to migrants in

some ways, while necessitating a full engagement with national trends in institutional and legislative development. It ceased to be a destination, and became a passing point on the way to new land and new opportunities. This had a profound impact upon Mississippian society, ushering in a wave of insecurity about the Territory's place in the nation, as the drive towards statehood became a matter of urgency. A second major theme this thesis addresses through a new focus on the Mississippi Territory is to explain how – contrary to ideals of solid progression – insecurity and instability actually permeated political culture. Politicians were insecure in their positions, and the alliances and networks they built were unstable and fractious. The Federal Government's control over the region was unstable, just as the Territory's borders with the Spanish were insecure, both of which were exploited by politicians and visitors alike. Poor farmers and migrants lived unstable lives, their livelihoods and lands constantly at the mercy of the planters who controlled the economy and the local government itself. In shaping Mississippi's identity, politics and identity, there was only so much that local politicians could control and, as will become clear across this thesis, disputes and crises tended to follow one after another, with the Territory's future in doubt on multiple occasions.

It is challenging to find contemporary maps of the entire Territory as, as figure 1 shows, only very small areas of the Territory were actually formally organised – not only is this a problem for modern historians, but it also tells us a great deal about the insecurity of the Mississippi Territory within the nation. In 1798, the Mississippi Territory did not leave a huge footprint upon the North American map, though it would grow to encompass what would become

the present day states of Mississippi and Alabama, a huge expanse of land. The below map, figure 1, though produced by the State of Mississippi in 1817 after it had achieved statehood, gives some indication of the initial size of the Territory in 1798 on the Mississippi side – one would have to replicate the thin strip of organised land, shown coloured on the map, on the Alabama side to understand the true size of the Territory at the time. Maps of the Mississippi Territory were, in general, created to facilitate land sales, and, in 1798, the Territory itself was still in the early stages of surveying, so was largely unmapped. For context, the area below the coloured section representing the Territory in 1798 is the Spanish-occupied West Florida to the East and the Louisiana Territory to the west. The area above shows Choctaw and Chickasaw lands which would be ceded across the Territory's existence, though it was formally ceded to the Territory by the State of Georgia in 1804 in the wake of the Yazoo Land Scandal.
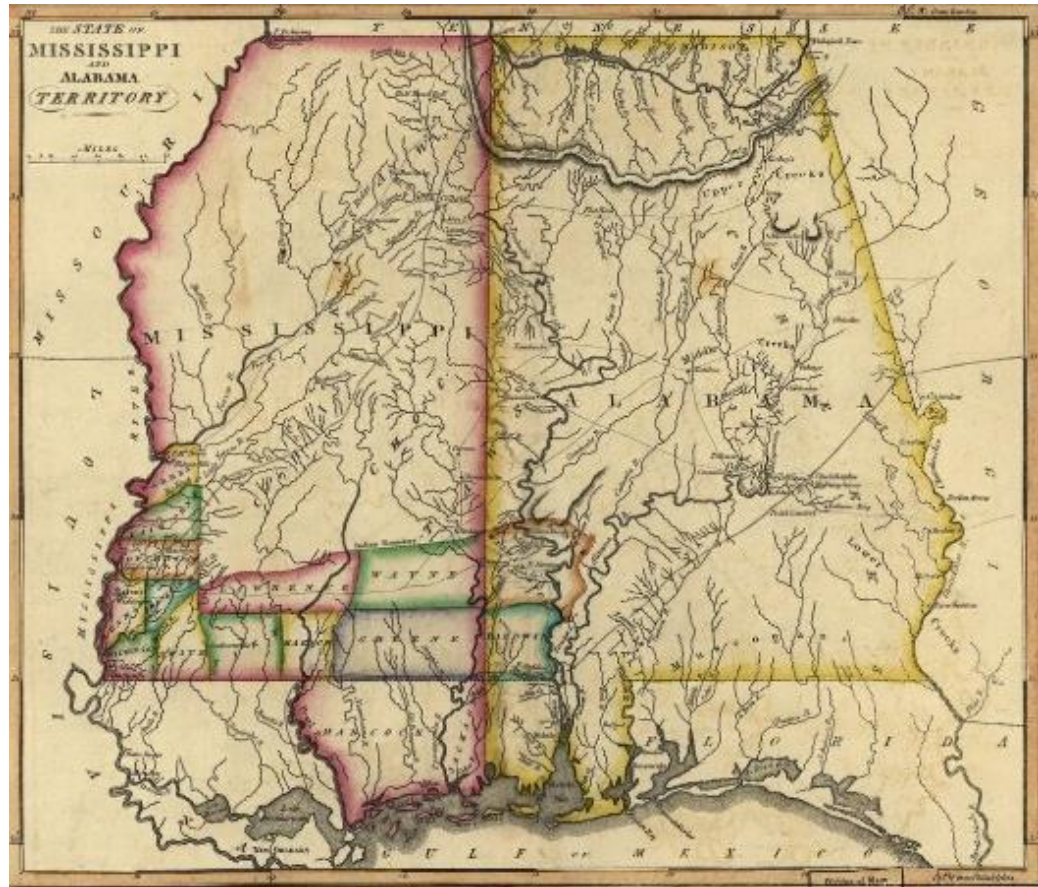
Figure 1: The State of Mississippi and Alabama Territory[3]

Figure 1 shows the number of counties in Mississippi at the point of statehood,

but at its inception, the Territory only had three. Adams and Pickering

(renamed Jefferson in 1802) Counties made up the Natchez District, on the

shores of the Mississippi River, and Washington County sat on the shores of

the Tombigbee River, eventually becoming a part of Alabama. Natchez, on the

Mississippi River, was the colonial heartland of the region, and the best-

established settlement. It was the seat of power for the Spanish Governor of the

region prior to 1798, was the centre of Mississippi society, with many planters

and notable inhabitants residing within the borders of the town. As such, it

became one of the most important ports on the Mississippi River, an important

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[3] Shallus, Francis. The state of Mississippi and Alabama Territory, Library of Congress, USA, S.l.: s.n., 181

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stop off for merchants and traders on their way to New Orleans. It was the means by which the merchants and planters of Mississippi accessed the markets in the major Northern cities of the Eastern Seaboard, and also the point of arrival for anyone travelling down the river from St Louis, the popular route for many migrants travelling from the North. Thus, over the Territorial era, Natchez became home to the establishment of Mississippian society. As the Territory grew, so did the Natchez District, with the population dispersing into nearby towns such as Greenville and Washington, which would become the capital of the Territory shortly after in 1802. It would be years before Washington County and the Natchez District would be connected.

Thus, the Mississippi Territory offers a fascinating insight into the early American experience. Focusing on Mississippi's territorial period enables a deeper understanding of how local politicians worked within the margins of the Constitution and Territorial Ordinances to manipulate the construction of local politics and political identity within Mississippi. Of course, it was not simply Mississippi's territorial status that made it unique – it was not the only territory to go through the Territorial process in the nineteenth century – but this thesis makes the case that its situational geography made local mediation paramount. The Mississippi Territory shared features with its northern territorial counterparts (in its constitutional configuration) yet would bear many of the institutional hallmarks of the West and the socio-economic aspects of the wider South (including its early reliance upon racial slavery). Mississippi's hybridity encouraged numerous internal conflicts among upstart political stakeholders, and their localised interpretations and battlegrounds would shape the way that they looked east towards Federal authority and older

states.[4] Being so detached from the political heartlands of the Northeastern United States, Mississippi was influenced far more heavily by New Orleans, and was inherently more sceptical of the federal government. Indeed, every territorial governor appointed in Mississippi was an outsider, and as this thesis demonstrates, political identity and political culture in Natchez and the surrounding areas developed in spite of, and in opposition to, the governor, not because of them.

As has already been observed, more attention has been paid to the Territory's predecessor of sorts, the Northwest Territory, or formally the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, which encompassed the eventual scope of six US states – a huge expanse of land. While Peter Onuf's monograph referenced earlier remains the most notable study of the early American territories, a number of other works have addressed the constitutional issues raised by the Northwest Ordinances.[5] These included work by Reginald Horsman, Robert Berkhofer and Daniel Barr, amongst others, all of which seek to understand the processes and principles of the federal politicians who sought to establish the Territorial System.[6] The same level of work has not been undertaken on the Mississippi Territory, which has generally remained the focus of very local studies published within the *Journal of Mississippi History*, especially in the

[4] For wider considerations of situational orientation, see for example, K. DuVal, *The Native Ground* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); M. Baud and W. van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands,' *Journal of World History* 8 (1997):211-242.

[5] P. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987)

[6] R. Horsman, 'The Northwest Ordinance and the Shaping of an Expanding Republic" *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol.73, No. 1 (Autumn, 1989) pp.21-32; Berkhofer, Jr. R.F. 'Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System', *William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol, 29. No. 2 (April 1972) pp.231-262; Barr, D.P. *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers Along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850* (Kent State University Press, 2006).

1950s and 1960s, or even more archaic and classic works from the early twentieth century.[7]

Existing studies of the Mississippi Territory have tended to concentrate disproportionately on the role of the governor in fostering identity and stability, leaving a disjuncture between scholarship on other territories (emphasising wider themes) and that on Mississippi (emphasising top-down actions) which this thesis seeks to resolve. The most notable of these is undoubtedly Robert V. Haynes' *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817*.[8] It is the most useful reference work on the Mississippi Territory, due to Haynes' in-depth research and knowledge of the archival material. Its chronological, narrative approach is an excellent introduction to the complexities of the Mississippi Territory, though it is limited in its discussion of the experiences of politicians in Mississippi Territory in relation to the wider landscape of the early Republic, nor does it seek to study how political systems and ideologies shaped the Territory beyond the political

[7] Many of these monographs and titles are discussed across the thesis as a whole, but they include: W.B. Hamilton, "Early Cotton Regulation in the Lower Mississippi Valley", *Agricultural History,* 15 (1941); R.V. Haynes, 'The Disposal of Lands in the Mississippi Territory', *Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 24, No. 4 (October, 1962); James, D.C. "Municipal Government in Territorial Natchez, *Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 27, No.2 (May, 1965); F.L. Riley, *Life of Col. J.F.H. Claiborne* (Jackson: Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, 1903); G.B. Toulmin, "The Political Ideas of Winthrop Sargent, A New England Federalist on the Frontier", *Journal of Mississippi History* Vol. 15, No.4 (October, 1953); J.H. Moore, "Mississippi's Search for a Staple Crop", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.29, 4, (Nov, 1967) pp.371-385; W.M. Drake, "The Framing of Mississippi's First Constitution", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.29, 4, (Nov, 1967) pp.301-327; W.B. Hamilton, "Mississippi 1817: A Sociological and Economic Analysis", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.29, 4, (Nov, 1967) pp.270-292; W.B. Hamilton, "Jefferson College and Education in Mississippi, 1798-1817", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Volume 3, No. 4 (October, 1941) pp. 259-276; R.C. Weems Jr. "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi*", Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 15, No.3 (July, 1953), 137-154; R.C. Weems Jr. "Mississippi's First Banking System", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (November, 1967), pp.386-408; C.D. Lowery, "The Great Migration to the Mississippi Territory, 1798-1819", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (August, 1968), pp.173-192; A. P. Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question, 1795-1803* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934)
[8] R.V. Haynes, The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010)

sphere. The study implies that the main barrier to prosperity within Mississippi was the lack of a strong leader. Thus, there is a distinct argument that it is the arrival of Robert Holmes as governor that galvanises the Territory and drives it towards statehood.

In contrast, this thesis demonstrates that, by the arrival of Holmes, Mississippi was already well on the way to statehood. That journey was not being led by governors, it was being led by local politicians and patriarchs who had redefined the Mississippian political system in their own image, and were driving it forward through their business endeavours and local networks of power. By remaining focussed on high level political activity, one does not get an understanding of how seemingly non-political events shaped Mississippi's road to statehood. Jefferson College, the Bank of the Mississippi, or the Nicholas Gray affair were not just events which demonstrated the dual roles local politicians operated under as businessmen and patriarchs, but underpin the entire political system. It was within these events, rather than in the Territorial Assembly, that the political identity of Mississippi was truly shaped.

 Central to nuancing our understanding of the political landscape of the Territory is this thesis's close interrogation of the overly-binary political language of "Federalist" and "Democratic Republican". Close attention to the sorts of Mississippi-centred episodes mentioned above challenge a characterisation of the Mississippi Territory's political factions as facsimiles of those of the Federal government. Politicians may have defined themselves by those labels, but they were not governed by them. Political labels acted more like signposts. They were recognisable by migrants and officials arriving in the region, suggesting that they might find a political home along the lines of what

they were familiar with in the states along the Eastern Seaboard. However, this thesis demonstrates that the reality was far more complex. Breaking down and reassembling these old definitions allows us to reinterpret the political culture of the Mississippi Territory, and to see it as more contingent and dynamic. Thus, while Haynes' work remains a useful narrative, this thesis intends to build upon it and offer a more nuanced understanding of political identity in the Mississippi Territory, and offer a corrective to this binary interpretation that links with other repositionings of Territorial development discussed below.

Haynes's study is the most valuable existing work on the Territory because it is precisely that – a work focused entirely upon the Mississippi Territory. Other monographs of note generally discuss either one area of the region – normally Natchez – or transcend the Territorial era, discussing Mississippi in the antebellum period more generally. D. Clayton James, for example, focused entirely on Natchez in the antebellum era. As a result, while important and relevant issues are discussed, the work is simultaneously too narrow in place and too broad in time period to provide genuine insight into the mindsets of the individuals whose lives the work focuses on.[9] More broadly, Frank Owsley's *Plain Folk of the Old South* is an example of works which only engage with the Mississippi Territory incidentally as part of the wider Deep South, as is the case with the majority of studies of migration in this era.[10] While these studies

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[9] D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).

[10] F.L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Updated Edition, 2008). See also T.D. Clark and J.D.W. Guice, *The Old Southwest, 1795-1830: Frontiers in Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); T.P. Abernethy, *A History of the South Volume IV: The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961); C.C. Bolton,. *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South:*

are certainly useful, this thesis intends to highlight the connections and disconnections between the micro and the macro, selecting case studies which at times present the Mississippi Territory within the wider United States, and at others intensely focus upon local networks within the Territory.

The historiography of the American Territories, however, extends beyond Mississippi, to the Northwest, Kansas, and up until the present day, providing a number of comparisons and contrasts for this study.[11] Donald Ratcliffe's work, which focuses on Ohio's Territorial period between 1793 and 1803, rekindled interest in the Territorial era.[12] Radcliffe argues that, in Ohio, partisan politics emerged early in the Territorial process and saw politicians bowing to public opinion and interest. In Ratcliffe's view, party politics in Ohio were democratic, not elitist, and allowed inhabitants to express their concerns about national and foreign policy issues. Furthermore, Radcliffe sees the political parties as tying closely to the national Federalist and Republican parties. For the interests of this study then, Ratcliffe provides a fascinating contrast. This thesis argues that the parties that arose in the Mississippi Territory were inherently elitist, and inherently local. A comparison with Ratcliffe would appear to demonstrate that there was no singular territorial experience in the early American Republic, and helps to demonstrate the unique circumstances developing in Mississippi. The Ohio Territory had the benefit of proximity to

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*Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississipp*i (Duke University Press, 1994); J.S. Otto . "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis". *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 51, No. 2 (1985) pp.183–200; J. Atack, "Tenants and Yeomen in the Nineteenth Century," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 62, No. 3, (Summer, 1988), pp. 6–32.
[11] See, for example, P.T. Ponce, To Govern the Devil in Hell: The Political Crisis in Territorial Kansas (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014)
[12] D.J. Ratcliffe, *Party Spirit in a Frontier Republic: Democratic Politics in Ohio, 1793-1821)* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998)

urban hubs of the North East. Its inhabitants, whether recent migrants or otherwise, developed within a political culture they already knew. Winthrop Sargent, first governor of the Mississippi Territory, was appointed due to his successes as Secretary of the Northwest Territory. He was, in the Northwest, undoubtedly successful and, arguably, popular. As chapter one of this study shows, his time in Mississippi was a total failure. Mississippi and its inhabitants were used to a more laissez-faire Spanish governor, and many of its notable citizens had actively moved away from the Union, only for it to catch up to them. In short, they were not accustomed to Federalism. Furthermore, they were also relatively political advanced. As Chapter One shows, prior to 1798, factions and political networks were beginning to take shape, and were lobbying for power and influence. This was not a region ready to have the democratic rights they expected taken away. Ohio and Mississippi were two very different territories. To truly understand eighteenth and nineteenth century American Territories, they all must be taken and studied in their own right.

While both Ohio and Mississippi operated under a similar territorial framework in the early Territorial era, the societies that flourished in each region were by no means similar. It would be impossible to compare the two without acknowledging the impact that slavery had upon the development of Mississippi. As has been noted, Radcliffe argues that the political culture of Ohio was distinctly partisan and democratic. The flourishing slave society of Mississippi effectively ruled out such a prospect within Natchez and the surrounding area. As is demonstrated in Chapter Three in the case study of the Bank of the Mississippi, political activity and culture was driven not by a desire to improve the region, but by a desire to improve the business interests

of the elite. The presence of slavery drove inequality, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. Slavery also dramatically impacted settlement habits within Mississippi. Due to the dominance slaveholders had in the market, poorer farmers were unable to sufficiently profit of their land to feed their families and also make profit. Thus arose the phenomenon of poorer farmers improving their land and preparing it for use, then selling it on to richer landowners. They would then move on to a new area and begin the process again. Thus, unless a large settlement was already present and growing around a local slave society, communities could not prosper, denying the opportunity for full engagement with the political system. For these reasons, Mississippi's political system could never achieve the level of engagement that Ohio's could. Furthermore, unlike Ohio, Mississippi was surrounded by both sides by threats. Both may have had a western frontier, but while Ohio was bordered by Pennsylvania to the East, Mississippi faced threats from West Florida. As is shown in chapter two, the dangers Mississippi faced from the east was a major influence in its perceived isolation from the Federal government. Inhabitants felt a significant lack of support, both from their governors and from Federal officials. In all then, the need to discuss the Mississippi Territory in its own right is evident – there were simply too many differences between the Mississippi Territory and the Ohio Territory to be able to draw reasonable parallels and to speak of one single territorial experience in the era of the early republic. Studying each Territory individually demonstrates their unique characteristics, but it also helps to demonstrate the complexity of the early American Republic.

Beyond Ohio, Edward Baptist's study of antebellum Middle Florida, though encompassing a broader time period up to the Civil War, provides a useful comparison considering the geographical proximity to Mississippi.[13] Furthermore, there are further intersections in his study of the role of the Union Bank and the importance of land speculation in defining the region. However, while the topics are similar, the results in Florida were vastly different to those in Mississippi. As this study shows, the Bank of the Mississippi, and the success planters had in acquiring land, was the making of the Mississippi Territory. Land and economic growth defined the latter Territorial period, and enabled Mississippi to achieve a level of maturity that made statehood almost inevitable, and saw planters establishing a hugely inequal and inherently elitist society in which poorer farmers lost out. In contrast, Baptist identifies over-speculation and the collapse of banking as the mechanism for creating a more democratic society. These failures made it difficult for planters to hold onto power, and saw the political parties (more clearly defined in Florida than in Mississippi) working to secure the votes of yeomen farmers, bringing them into the political fold in a way that was not seen in Mississippi. While the chronology of Baptist's study is not entirely analogous with that of this study, it remains a fascinating contrast. Though more closely related to Mississippi than Ohio, Baptist's study lies closer to Ratcliffe's than this thesis. This further demonstrates the need to delve further into Mississippi's territorial period, to understand its unique complexities and what drove such a different political culture.

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[13] E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2002)

Though the historiography of American territories provides plenty of direct

comparisons with Mississippi, it is necessary to broaden comparisons beyond

areas that were formally American territories. Brian DeLay and Pekka

Hämäläinen have both focused upon Texas in their works, with a focus upon

the US-Mexican War and the experience of Native Americans in the region.[14]

Again, the scope tends to be much broader within these works compared to this

study, but they provide important reference points for the experience of Native

Americans within frontier regions of the United States. Hämäläinen, focusing

upon the Comanche Empire, identifies a westward expansion sculpted and

moulded by the Comanche experience, identifying a phenomenon of "co-

evolution".[15] He identifies Comanches forging positive relationships with

American settlers, both politically and economically. This provides an

interesting contrast with Mississippi, further highlighting how geopolitical

conditions affected the development of states and territories in the American

South and demonstrating the need to take each region in its own right, rather

than taking one experience to represent a whole. DeLay's study has a more

trans-national focus than this thesis but further serves to highlight the unique

circumstances that American settlers faced. When compared to the Mississippi

Territory, DeLay and Hämäläinen present a region in which the United States

struggled to assert their authority as late as the 1840s. This is a key point of

comparison to the early sections of this study, which highlight the ways in

which Americans assumed control of the Mississippi Territory from the

Spanish between 1795 and 1798. Mississippi's inhabitants were much more

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[14] B. DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S-Mexican War* (New Haven.: Yale University Press, 2008); P. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008).
[15] Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, p.142.

able to use political networks and negotiation to shape the geopolitics of the region and, whereas the Comanches played an active part in the process in Texas, the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations of Mississippi struggled to influence the transition of Mississippi from Spanish to American authority. Indeed, as American authority in the region expanded, Native American nations would struggle to negotiate the mutually beneficial relationships they had previously cultivated with their Spanish counterparts.

Going further beyond the Territories, Gary Gerstle's study of the American state helps to illuminate how local elites in the American South were able to manipulate the federal government to their own ends.[16] However, in Gerstle's study it is the wide ranging power of state and local governments which facilitated this across the antebellum era. This thesis argues that elite authority did not manifest itself through the local and state governments, but through local, informal networks of power and through civic institutions including education and banking. This study identifies the precursor to what Gerstle identifies in the antebellum period – the elite of the Mississippi Territory had not yet developed a sophisticated way of exhibiting power through government and the law. They did, however, still display similar ambitions, using local networks of influence and familial ties to achieve control. They, too, would utilise the federal government to achieve their own objectives but, as is seen in Chapter One, they did so through broad declarations of party political loyalty, not through the framework of government. In summary, this thesis argues that the Mississippi Territory offers us more than just a spatial piece of a jigsaw of

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[16] G. Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

Federal or Southern expansionism: rather, set against existing territorial scholarship, it helps us to see how localised political cultures developed that mirrored some elements to the North, West, and South, but repudiated others.

Across these chapters, it should be remembered that the vast majority of individuals discussed were planters and slaveholders. Politicians' and planters' personal, economic motivations are regularly discussed here, and it must be acknowledged that all of this was facilitated by the presence of plantation slavery within the Mississippi Territory. David Libby's *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi,* is key in the ways in which it engages with slavery within the Mississippi, though it is more broad than simply focusing on the Mississippi Territory, and expands far earlier into the colonial era, and later in the antebellum period.[17] Recent works such as Adam Rothman's *Slave Country* and Walter Johnson's *River of Dark Dreams*, have helped to redress the focus of studies of society in the Deep South, and this project relies upon the vital work those historians, and the many others that are referenced across this thesis, have undertaken to highlight the role of plantation slavery in creating the society and economic model that the planters of the Mississippi Territory designed.[18] By combining these studies with a more politically focused local history, this thesis helps to develop a more rounded picture of Mississippian

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[17] D.J. Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835 (*Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004)

[18] A. Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); W. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); S. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); T. Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Classic works on the role of slavery in the South include See, for example, E.D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976); I. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North* America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

society. Rothman, Johnson and Libby have shown the importance of planters

and their economics interests in driving expansion across the American South,

demonstrating the ways in which their wielding their economic power to

influence the federal government. When combined with Gerstle's study

discussed previously, there is a clear trend in the historiography of the local

power influencing the federal government. This thesis identifies a similar

trend, but focuses on the local political level. By doing so, it illuminates the

early stages of the process which saw planters influencing the expansion of the

South. Before they could expand their "Cotton Kingdom", they had to develop

control at a local level. This thesis identifies how they did so.

This project has also been inspired by works which have focused on different

geographic areas, and different subject matters. The work of Kathleen DuVal

has been particularly insightful, both in her work on *The Native Ground*,

focusing upon the Native American nations of the Arkansas River Valley, and

in *Independence Lost*, in which she shifts the narrative of the American

Revolution onto a number of individuals and societies around the Gulf of

Mexico.[19] DuVal's approach, particularly in *Independence Lost*, demonstrates

the merits of reducing the scale of study, showing how individuals, before the

American Revolution, were able to enhance personal, political and economic

independencies by exploiting gaps between competing imperial interests. She

also demonstrates how the new American republic saw the Gulf Coast as its

own territory, rejecting those who lived in the gaps between those imperial

interests. Thus, it helps to illuminate the conditions in which the Mississippi

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[19] K. DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 2015); K. DuVal, *The Native Ground* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007)

Territory developed. It resonates strongly with the first chapter of this study, which sees inhabitants coming to terms with the new dichotomy established once Spanish influence in the region waned. DuVal demonstrates the power vacuum which saw individuals struggling to redefine themselves in the wake of the Revolution. This thesis explores how individuals in the Mississippi Territory were able to exploit that vacuum, and how they built networks of power to fill the gaps.

The work of historians such as Tim Lockley, Alan Taylor and Watson Jennison, amongst others, have demonstrated how effective studies of local communities can be, in the ways in which they take local case studies and local issues and map them onto the wider political and cultural landscape of the American continent.[20] They have all demonstrates the power of the slaveholder in the South, showing how they used their economic weight to push geopolitical ambitions and expand their personal economies. Though this thesis focuses more on the political than the economic, it contributes to the historiography of planters and slaveholders driving their own personal ambitions forward, for political and economic gain. Other works touched upon across this project, unsurprisingly, are the political histories of the Early Republic, of the political parties and of the ideologies of their leaders, most

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[20] T.J. Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); A. Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013); A. Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2016); M. Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); W.W. Jennison, *Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012); Burnard, T. G. *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Gallay, A. *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989)

notably Thomas Jefferson. Again, these are discussed throughout the thesis, particularly within the analyses of party politics in the Mississippi Territory and of the shaping of settlement in the Territory. Many of these works, such as those of Peter Kastor, Francois Weil and Roger Kennedy focus on the Louisiana Purchase.[21] Kastor and Weil's work on the Louisiana Purchase, though of course not strictly focussed on the Mississippi Territory, help to demonstrate the impact that other nations had upon the old Southwest. As has been mentioned this thesis focuses upon white settlers, who were committed to driving Mississippi towards American statehood. However, these works help to demonstrate the other influences on Mississippi which helped to differentiate it from other territories, such as those further North. They help to identify what made the Mississippi Territory unique among its counterparts – the influx of influences from different nations, whether they be French, Spanish, Chickasaw or Choctaw. While the focus of the works referenced here and this study are different, they collectively demonstrate the ways in which the expansion of the American South, through the Louisiana Purchase and through the development of the Mississippi Territory, was defined by local people, local cultures, and local ideologies.

Furthermore, Kennedy offers insight into the Federal Government's attempts to cultivate an American identity on the frontier and beyond, and alongside the other works mentioned here, provides useful insights into other governments and nationalities around the Gulf. They do, however, miss the opportunity to

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[21] P.J. Kastor, and F. Weil, (eds.), *Empires of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); P.J., Kastor (ed.) *The Louisiana Purchase: Emergence of an American Nation* (Washington: CQ Press, 2002); R. Kennedy, *Mr. Jefferson's Lost Cause: Land, Farmers, Slavery, and the Louisiana Purchase* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

explore the roles of local officials and politicians in response to the Federal Government. In all these works, along with the wealth of studies into Thomas Jefferson's vision for the West, the figure of the President looms large.[22] While they are valuable insights into the vision of the President, they limit our understanding of life on the borders of the republic, and of the lesser-known actors who shaped the American Territories in their own visions, actively embracing or challenging that of the Federal Government. Thus, by taking the opportunity to explore these opportunities, this thesis offers a different perspective on the growth of the American West. Indeed, this study does not "travel" particularly far. For the majority of these studies, the Mississippi River is the starting point. They aptly explore the creation of an American identity beyond this frontier. This thesis remains focused on the region that got left behind. Mississippi was briefly a frontier and the focus of the Federal government, but the development of political identity in the Mississippi Territory is a story of local politicians operating in a borderlands region that was no longer on the border of the United States. The Mississippi Territory belongs within the historiography of the Louisiana Purchase and westward expansion – it is undoubtedly a part of that history, with the Purchase having an unquantifiable impact upon the development of the Territory. However, this thesis explores what was left behind by the Territory. It focuses upon developing a political identity in spite of a lack of engagement from the federal

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[22] See, for example, D. Seefeldt, et al. (eds.) *Across the Continent: Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and the Making of America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005); J.P. Ronda, (ed.) *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West: From Conquest to Conservation*(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); P.S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

government, whereas other studies maintain a focus on federal government activity in shaping the western frontier.

If the heart of this study is the way in which partisan identities were constructed within the Mississippi Territory, it naturally also reaches towards questions about how national identity began to take shape as the territory moved towards statehood. A key reference point for this study is therefore David Waldstreicher's *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, which explores the development of national identity in the early American Republic, breaking down the ways in which citizens of the United States exhibited their national loyalty and identity.[23] Waldstreicher's methodology, in many ways, resonates with this study. Rather than building a picture of nationalism from the top-down perspective of Founders and Framers, the majority of his sources are from the lower level, the more active party officials, those who wrote in the newspapers for the masses. In that sense, Waldstreicher offers an important point of comparison. Yet his work is also based on states, specifically those in New England, a vastly different location to the early Mississippi Territory. However, despite these geopolitical differences, this thesis finds significant commonality with Waldstreicher's study. He identifies that, contrary to other assessments that formal political parties did not coalesce until much later into the nineteenth century, the early American Republic was a major era of development for national political identity. This is clearly synced with the way in which the political organisations of the Mississippi Territory formed early, and grew rapidly, even before the Territory was formalised in 1798.

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[23] D. Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

Furthermore, Waldstreicher argues that some of the creativity of partisan politics was lost as the era of the Federalist party began to fade.[24] A similar phenomenon could be identified in Chapter Four of this study, when compared to the activity discussed in Chapter Two. While political debate was still intense from 1812 onwards (particularly when it came to land issues), it had lost some of feist of the early period, where debates spilled out into bombastic newspaper articles, politically fuelled trials, and even duels. Furthermore, political activity in New England and in Mississippi achieved similar outcomes, with the earliest political parties forming in Mississippi to drive forward an expansion of suffrage and progression to more advanced territorial government, echoing the ways in which Waldstreicher identifies political engagement with making suffrage for all males inevitable.

However, it must be argued that this thesis also complicates Waldstreicher's assessment of the development of national identity as well. This thesis does not present the same trappings of political identity that lie at the core of his work. Although, like in New England, a great deal of political theatrics were present within Mississippi's newspapers, with debates and arguments being communicated through the papers of the *Misissippi Herald* and the *Mississippi Messenger*, oratory, celebration, and festivals were not so much a part of Mississippi's political culture. Furthermore, while this thesis agrees that political identities were relatively sophisticated in this period, what was generated in Mississippi was not a national identity. It was inherently local, arising out of a response to local issues rather than in opposition to issues at a national level. While this thesis certainly identifies similarities between the

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[24] Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, p.202.

construction of political identities in New England and the Mississippi Territory, it is by no means an exact parallel.

Beyond the key theme of political identity within the Mississippi Territory, this thesis also considers the importance of citizenship in Mississippi, with many territorial inhabitants coming to terms with moving from states where their citizenship was affirmed into a region where there was no such definition, or protection from the US Constitution. The development of ideas of citizenship in the early American Republic has received considerable attention within the historiography of the American Revolution and beyond. Douglas Bradburn identifies a "Citizenship Revolution" in the wake of the American Revolution, but argues that the adoption of the constitution and creation was not the catalyst for that revolution, and that it did not solve questions of citizenship.[25] Furthermore, Bradburn identifies Federalist attempts to define and impose a national standard of citizenship as a seminal moment which brought together diverse opposition groups to establish a defined American political identity. While Bradburn focuses on the national sphere, his study has fascinating parallels to the Mississippi Territory. The Alien and Sedition Acts, defined as the catalyst for resistance by Bradburn, did not impact significantly upon the Territory, but the parallel with the first Federalist Governor's attempts to impose punitive law codes are evident. As in Bradburn's study, a defined Mississippian political culture arose in Mississippi in opposition to Federalist doctrine, which in turn pulled them closer to citizenship within the American Union through allegiance with Jeffersonian Republicans.

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[25] D. Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union 1774-1804* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2009)

Bradburn's essay on citizenship in the era of the American Revolution

provides useful context for this thesis, demonstrating the complexity of

citizenship was within this period.[26] Though it focuses on the Revolution more

than the early Republic, Bradburn here argues that citizenship was defined by a

balance between the need for the state to maintain power and the demand for

popular representation. This resonates strongly with the themes present within

the first chapter of this study. As Mississippi's inhabitants grappled with how

to become citizens while residing within a Territory, their demand for voting

rights and a representative assembly won out over Governor Winthrop

Sargent's prescriptive and punitive law codes. Indeed, as the Territorial

Governor's authority wavered between 1803-1809, it could be argued that

Mississippi's inhabitants drifted further away from a desire to become full

American citizens, as the lure of Aaron Burr loomed large.

The historiography of American citizenship is not solely grounded in the

Revolutionary era. Rogers Smith, in a study that stretches from the Revolution

to Civil Rights, identifies the key drivers of citizenship as the elite, creating the

need for "a population that imagines itself to be a 'people'".[27] Focusing on the

Jeffersonian era, Smith demonstrates Jefferson's policies to have focused on

citizenship as a mutual obligation, requiring engagement from all inhabitants,

yet also highlights how exclusive and exclusionary their citizenship was in

practice. Compared with Bradburn, this provides a useful framework to

consider how successive Federalist and Republican leaders attempted to shape

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[26] D. Bradburn, ""The Great Field of Human Concerns": The States, the Union, and the Problem of Citizenship in the Era of the American Revolution" in P. Onuf and P. Thompson (eds.) *State and Citizen: British America and the Early United States* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press) pp.77-112.

[27] R.M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in US History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) p.6.

the Mississippi Territory's political identity. Undoubtedly, Republicans had more success than Federalists, but within this Southern territorial region, inclusion in the political process was driven by familial networks and geopolitical ties, not by the policies and doctrines of the national political parties. Linda Kerber, focusing on the ways the obligations of citizenship affected women, identifies five political obligations that define American citizenship: loyalty to the state, paying taxes, avoiding vagrancy, undertaking jury service and performing military service.[28] James Kettner identifies that, there was no consistent interpretation of citizenship contained within early American laws, and aptly highlights the difficulties in separating out loyalty at a local and at a national level.[29] Taken together, Kerber and Kettner help to demonstrate the difficulties of attaining and sustaining citizenship within the Mississippi Territory – there were few opportunities to demonstrate loyalty to both Mississippi and to the Union. Chapter Two of this study considers the case study of the Burr Affair, which is perhaps the best opportunity to test these definitions, but in doing so, Mississippians tended to come up short. There was a lax attitude to military service, with local leaders tending to take matters into their own hands rather than await instruction from the federal level. It is a case study which represents the importance of loyalty and citizenship as a two-way system. When Mississippi's inhabitants went looking for support from the federal government, they were often left wanting. Thus,

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[28] LK. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).
[29] J.H. Kettner, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978)

inhabitants became more self-sufficient, relying on local loyalties and allegiances, until the federal government was willing to accept them.

Furthermore, Barbara Young Welke's study of the role of law in establishing 'borders of belonging' in America helps demonstrate the ways in which white Mississippians asserted their control and their "belonging" while excluding those who they subjected. This started at the inception of the Territorial era, with prescriptive Federalist law codes designed to dampen the democratic spirit present in the Natchez District and maintaining the supremacy of a small elite. A key technique in doing so, as is echoed in Welke's work, was disenfranchisement. The entire framework of the Territorial Ordinance was designed to restrict the franchise, until certain thresholds were met. This encapsulates Welke's argument that law was a tool of subjection, which the white elite of Natchez strove to hold onto. As a whole, although these works on the topic of citizenship do not focus on the territories, and certainly do not delve into Mississippi's Territorial era, they provide frameworks which help to explain the motives and tactics of the white elite Mississippians who lie at the heart of this study. They demonstrate that, though Mississippi was far detached from the heartlands of the American Republic, the debates and battles over identity and citizenship taking place in the North East were also taking place in Mississippi, further highlighting the merit of a reappraisal of the Territory's political beginnings.[30]

As has already been noted, the focus on this study is upon the white settlers, planters and politicians who sought to shape identity in the Mississippi

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[30] B. Young Welke, *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth Century United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p.96.

Territory. As such, it is, for the most part, focused upon the town of Natchez and the surrounding area, including other notable towns such as Washington and Greenville. This is unavoidable for a study of this nature, as planters gravitated to the Natchez District as the centre of Mississippian society, and the area was home to the Territory's capital – Natchez, and then Washington. Thus, it was the hub of political activity, and where the majority of public and private institutions was based. However, other areas of note within the Territory will also be explored. Chapter Four focuses upon the divide between the East and the West of the region, expanding upon the difficulties politicians faced trying to maintain control over such a vast region, and the subsequent calls for partition that followed. Throughout the Territorial era, the majority of the region was unsettled by the white population. Those rural areas which had been occupied by white settlers was often done so by squatters – poor migrants who settled on land they had no right to, cultivating and improving it with the hope of being offered the chance to purchase it later. As such, those areas were unorganised and poorly recorded. Due to the lack of availability of archival material for the Territory, focusing upon the Natchez District and surrounding areas is the most illuminating approach for a project such as this.

The sources on which this study is based reflect its emphasis on building a new, composite history of the Mississippi Territory, focusing upon different, more varied sources than the histories that have come before it. Source selection is an issue that has plagued writing on the Mississippi Territory across the twentieth century, particularly in the *Journal of Mississippi History* articles referenced earlier. A reliance upon the same sources, over and over again, has resulted in many of works falling into the same anachronisms and

pitfalls and has obscured historical truths. This is one of key arguments of this thesis, and will be explored in Chapter Two, but is important to note here, particularly in understanding how this thesis will use those same sources. One of the reasons that the Mississippi Territory has gone understudied for long, perhaps, is the limited availability of archival material, particularly when it comes to understanding local party networks and the more informal communications that would have been commonplace across the Territorial era. We do not have, for example, complete records of the Territory's two major newspapers, the *Mississippi Herald and Natchez Gazette* and the *Mississippi Messenger*, which limits our ability to trace themes and developments over time.[31] While we also have limited collections of the papers of some private and public institutions in the Territory, and there are numerous useful documents contained within the various family paper collections stored in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the best surviving collections of sources are very much top level documents. The most extensively utilised documents are compiled in the *Territorial Papers of the United States*, volumes five and six, published by Clarence E. Carter in the 1930s. They are comprised of correspondence to and from Federal politicians, including the President and the Secretary of War, as well as relevant records of congressional debates, and other miscellaneous correspondence, such as letters to and from the Postmaster General.[32] These are a vital source for our understanding of the relationship between the Territory and the Federal

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[31] Both newspapers, alongside the various other, short-lived publications of the Territory such as the *Natchez Intelligencer*, are available on microfilm in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, microfilm series 35649.

[32] C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Volumes 5 and 6: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937)

Government, particularly as they include numerous petitions and proclamations from groups of citizens to the government. However, the focus of the collection is very much on the Federal, not the local. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History's Territorial Administration Papers collection offers a more local perspective on matters, but it remains a very top level collection as it is comprised entirely of letters to and from the Governors of the Territory.[33] As such, there are significant gaps within the archival material, which has made tracing local connections and networks difficult. Consequently, students of the Territorial era have traditionally relied on two classic scholars to fill in the gaps left by the Archives; J.F.H. Claiborne and Dunbar Rowland.

The family name Claiborne is notable for historians of the nineteenth century American South, and the Mississippi Territory in particularly. William C.C. Claiborne was the second governor of the Mississippi Territory, before becoming the first American Governor of New Orleans in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase.[34] His brother, Ferdinand L. Claiborne, was commander of the Mississippi Militia during the War of 1812 and the Creek War, and was a notable political presence across the era, as will be explored at several points in this thesis.[35] J.F.H Claiborne, or John Francis Hamtramck Claiborne was Ferdinand's son, and a notable figure in Mississippi's history himself, having served as a member of the House of Representatives for several years in the

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[33] Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488: Administration Papers, 1769, 1788-1817.
[34] D. Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 1, (Madison, 1907) p.427.
[35] Ibid, pp.423-424.

1830s.[36] In 1880, much later in life, Claiborne published a history of Mississippi, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, *with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*.[37] . Much of the work is based off his family's correspondence, and he had unparalleled access to state and territorial papers, as well as the private papers of his contemporaries and oral accounts they provided him, many of which are not fully available to modern historians. Thus, the account has often been used to fill gaps in our understanding, helping to identify individuals and how they aligned themselves within the parties and networks of the Territory. This is problematic, and has resulted in certain biases and hearsays transferring from Claiborne's work into modern histories. Indeed, Claiborne's bias must be noted. He entered politics as a Jacksonian and, had he been in politics during the time of the Federalists, he would surely have been a Jeffersonian, much like his uncle. As such, much of his account of the political history of the Natchez District and Mississippi Territory favours the Republican perspective, and can be extremely critical of divisive figures such as Andrew Ellicott and Winthrop Sargent. Thus, there is a need to reassess our understanding of identity and party networks in the Territory; many of the labels that individuals have had ascribed to them no longer fit. This is not to say there is not use in Claiborne's account, however. As it is based so heavily upon family and private papers, it can allow a contemporary insight into Mississippi's political figures. Indeed, it allows the historian to view the Territory's key individuals through the lens of a Jeffersonian-

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[36] F.L. Riley, *Life of Col. J.F.H. Claiborne* (Jackson: Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, 1903); R.V. Haynes, "Historians and the Mississippi Territory" *Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 29, No.4, (November 1967) pp.409-428.
[37] J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, *with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*, Vol. 1. (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1880)

Republican, and can, if used appropriately as a contemporary observer not a critical historical study, illuminate a study of identity and politics in the Mississippi Territory.

While Claiborne can be assessed as something of a contemporary source, the same cannot be said for the other source upon which many histories of the Mississippi Territory have been based. Dunbar Rowland, author of multiple works on the history of Mississippi. Rowland was the inaugural Director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, serving in that position for over thirty years from 1902 onwards.[38] Throughout that time, Rowland developed an unrivalled knowledge of archival material and produced a number of works, including *The Mississippi Territorial Archives: 1798-1803*, an important source for the early Territorial period which collated a number of useful archival documents, much as Clarence Carter did for the Territorial Papers.[39] On a similar theme he also edited and published *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi*, another useful source for the modern historian.[40] His most notable work, however, is his two volume *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, which serves as a biographical dictionary for important figures, places and events across nineteenth century Mississippi History.[41] The encyclopaedia is vast and significant reference work, and is an important introduction to new scholars of the region, as it helps to identify the backgrounds and activities of many significant figures of the

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[38] P. Galloway, "Rowland, Dunbar", *American National Biography,* [https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.1401163] last accessed 25/07/2019.
[39] Rowland, D. (Ed.), *The Mississippi Territorial Archives: 1798-1803* (Nashville, 1905)
[40] Rowland, D. *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi,* Vol. 1 (Nashvill.e: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1908)
[41] Rowland, D. *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 1 and Vol.2, (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907)

Territorial era. Within this thesis, the encyclopaedia is utilised as a reference work for biographical notes, utilised to note the backgrounds of Mississippi's planters and local politicians. Using Rowland's work to identify where inhabitants of the Territory migrated from, what their family history was, and other useful details along those lines, can help infer details about characters' political beliefs, motivations and broadly speaking, their identity.

However, the *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History* has been overused across works on the Mississippi Territory. Unfortunately, within the *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Rowland does not list his sources, so it is unclear where many of his assertions come from. The lack of archival material from this period has thus resulted in Rowland's claims being interpreted as fact. Historians have not scrutinised the claims made by Rowland when it comes to political activity and belief, and this has resulted in lazy connections being drawn between local and Federal politics. This thesis is not being contrarian for the sake of being so, but highlights that rigorously scrutinising the political networks of the Mississippi Territory reveals a great deal about both the real relationship between the Territory and the Federal Government, and the relationships between local networks of planters and politicians in the Territory itself. Whereas there has been a tendency amongst local studies to make claims about individuals' identity and loyalties based upon unreliable sources, this thesis has not followed unquestionably in those footsteps, and has approached issues of categorisation and identity with rigour and caution.

This thesis focuses on several case studies, or flashpoints, from across the Territorial era which illuminate the experience of life within an early American Territory and the development of identity within it. In doing so, it contributes

to far more fields of American history than a conventional, chronological history of the Territory would. The case studies discussed range from incidents which lasted months to events that sparked debates which smouldered away for several years. These have been woven together into the wider narrative of the Mississippi Territory to demonstrate how the Territory and the political debate within it evolved around the individuals who attempted to shape the identity of the region and its inhabitants. The topics discussed are somewhat weighted towards the first part of the Territorial era. This is somewhat inevitable due to the unrest and instability of the period between 1798 and 1809 in which the Territorial had three permanent governors and two interim ones, as opposed to the period between 1809 and 1817 when the Territory had one governor throughout. In line with this methodology, the thesis engages with existing scholarship in the context of the specific debates and flashpoints addressed, rather than providing a comprehensive overview at the outset.

Ultimately, at its core, this is a study of politics and identity on the edges of the United States. It is a definitively local study, focusing on local communities and tracing the development of political networks within the Mississippi Territory. However, in doing so, it illuminates our understanding of the wider American South, and of the ways in which the American Republic expanded over the nineteenth century. In terms of that identity, it proves that it was not the politics of the Federal Government who disseminated an American spirit and identity, but its local officials; the surveyors such as Isaac Briggs and Andrew Ellicott, and the commissioners such as Nicholas Gray. Yet it was not a Federal identity which blossomed on the frontier of the Mississippi Territory, but one that was created within the power vacuum of the lower Mississippi

Valley. Certainly, it bore some of the hallmarks of an American identity,

harking back to the American Revolution and putting independence and

democracy at the centre, yet its character was uniquely Mississippian. It was an

identity that was defined by Mississippi's status on the fringes of the Republic,

cultivated by politicians who were capable of speaking the language of the

Federal Government, but acting as self-sufficient, self-serving planters.

Chapter One
The Formation of Local Government and Political Networks

Writing from a temporary camp seven miles outside of Natchez in September 1797, Andrew Ellicott informed the United States Secretary of State that, in the process of establishing an American government in the Mississippi Territory, "the voice of the people for want of an elective representation is lost."[1] Ellicott, a United States commissioner appointed to draw the boundary between the United States and Spain along the Mississippi River, had voiced an opinion that would be echoed by political figures at both local and national levels throughout the early 1800s. Local politicians and their representatives to the federal government constantly struggled against the image of the wild frontier, where the inhabitants were not ready to engage with the American republican experiment. Central to this depiction of the Mississippi Territory was its foundation as part of the United States, and the United States government's policy towards its territories. This chapter will explain how Mississippi governance evolved, and what viewpoints and imperatives competed in the process of forming and expressing political identities in the early years of the Territory. It begins by discussing the context in which the Mississippi Territory was created, through analysis of the Northwest Ordinance and the ways in which that framework was transferred over to the Mississippi Territory, before analysing the early political history of the Mississippi Territory, both before and after the arrival of the first American governor of the Territory. It then concludes with a case study of Governor Winthrop Sargent's administration,

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[1] Andrew Ellicott to the Secretary of State, 24th September, 1797, in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Volume 5: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937) pp.3-8.

assessing his leadership and the responses of local politicians to his governance, tracing the establishment of Mississippi's political networks across the era. This chapter will demonstrate that, due to the uncertain inception of the Mississippi Territory, the development of an American identity within the Mississippi Territory was slow to develop, with stumbles along the way, thanks to the lingering involvement of the Spanish government.This would have meaningful implications for how future regional claims and issues were framed and redressed.

Before one can assess the role of lawmakers within the Mississippi Territory and the creation of a political identity, one must understand the Northwest Ordinances as a framework for the government of the region and understand how the Ordinances which governed the United States' Territories differentiated them from the rest of the nation. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the fledgling states and government almost immediately looked westward, with a burgeoning expectation that their nation would expand across the continent into the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes region. Not only did the West provide an opportunity for expansion and settlement, but it also offered the chance to greatly reduce the national debt through land sales. Yet, in the formative years of the Republic, the federal government lacked both the power and authority to control, defend and administer this land. Within the Articles of Confederation, written in 1777 and becoming the de jure constitution in 1781, there was provision for Canada's admittance into the Union, though there was no allowance for any new states, colonies or

territories.[2] Thus, there was a need for new legislation which would permit the government to organize the territories, establish some form of government on the frontier, and even prescribe for eventual statehood within the region. Several years of congressional committees and debates culminated in the creation of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, arguably the most important piece of legislation passed by the Continental Congress. Although created for the Northwest Territories, the Ordinances would become the foundation of all territorial governments to come, and among the first test cases was Mississippi. Indeed, the act of Congress establishing the government of the Mississippi Territory legislated that, 'the people of the aforesaid territory shall be entitled to, and enjoy all the singular rights, privileges and advantages granted to the people of the United States, north-west of the river Ohio, in and by the aforesaid Ordinance.'[3] Understanding the Northwest Ordinances and their prescriptions is thus critical to interpreting the framework of political life established in the Mississippi Territory. They provided a learning experience both for the Federal Government and for the first Federal office holders in the Mississippi Territory, who had significant involvements in the Northwest Territories. At its inception then, the Mississippi Territory carried tensions and paradoxes that reflected its organisation as a replica of the Territory that came before it, in spite of the particularities of its geography and cultural heritage.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the lower Mississippi Valley is not touched upon in the vast majority of the historiography relating to the Northwest Ordinance of

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[2] Transcript of *Articles of Confederation (1777)*, https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=3&page=transcript [last accessed 11/02/2018]
[3] *An Act for the Government of the Mississippi Territory*, in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Volume 5: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937) pp.18-22.

1787. Instead, its focus has tended to be upon Thomas Jefferson's role in the creation of the legislation, its meaning for Congress and the United States going forward, and its direct impact on the creation of new states in the Northwest Territories. Peter Onuf, for example, has focused on the drafting of the Ordinance and "how its meaning was contested and redefined by subsequent generations," and discusses the Ordinance's effect upon distinct regional identities in the Northwest.[4] But the Ordinance must also be seen to have had a significant effect upon the development of the southern territories as regions of the United States. The precedents set in 1787 had a significant impact upon the Mississippi Territory, much in the way that Onuf argues is the case further north. Onuf assesses that, thanks to the Ordinance, the creation of the states of the Old Northwest became intrinsically linked to the foundation of the United States as whole, and its settlers saw themselves as active participants in the development of the republic from a vision to a reality.[5] In this way, whilst failing to discuss the southerly states, Onuf provides a useful framework for examining the impact of the Ordinance in the lower Mississippi Valley. This study therefore takes the opportunity to test Onuf's claims about the Northwest Territory in a distinct regional context, far removed from the original model.

Several other works on the Northwest Ordinance tend to focus upon the lawmakers themselves, most notably Thomas Jefferson. Berkhofer, for example, bases his study of the Northwest Ordinance around a comparison with the Ordinance of 1784, a product of a committee headed by Jefferson,

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[4] P. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.xvii.
[5] Ibid, p.141.

who was the author of the plan.[6] He argues that aspects of the Northwest Ordinance stemmed from a fear that those in the west would grow isolated from central government, and thus be separated from the nation, perhaps growing closer to other imperial powers in the region.[7] This is particularly pertinent for the region under discussion in this study; the Mississippi Territory faced Spanish influences from both the east and throughout the territory itself, and there remained a considerable French population in Louisiana to the west.

The scholarship on governance and political identity in the Northwest Territory highlights a set of discrete but connected issues that bear comparison with what would unfold in the Mississippi basin. Berkhofer's focus on Jefferson also highlights questions of governance and republicanism which are of benefit to this study. "For governments to remain republican," Berkhofer notes, "Jefferson and others believed the size of the state must be small enough to preserve the homogeneity of the interests, opinions, and habits of the citizens."[8] Thus, whilst the lower Mississippi Valley is not under consideration in Berkhofer's study, it raises many relevant questions to be explored. However, when it comes to land acts, Berkhofer entirely ignores the Land Ordinance of 1785 within his study, an important act which detailed the creation of land offices and the sale of land in the frontier regions. Reginald Horsman has also focused upon individuals within the federal government and their role in the Ordinance, whilst attempting to highlight its continent-wide

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[6] See R.F. Berkhofer, Jr. 'Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System', *William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol, 29. No. 2 (April 1972) pp.231-262. Whilst Berkhofer does not discuss the Ordinance in reference to the lower Mississippi Valley, which further highlights the need for such a discussion, his conclusion on the relationship between the federal government and settlers in the west is useful for this study.
[7] Ibid, p.244.
[8] Ibid.

implications.[9] He further stresses the fact that Congress feared an inability to control the western reaches of its territories, culminating in a loss of allegiance to the United States. Yet at the heart of Horsman's argument is the idea that the Northwest Ordinance was not sufficient in itself to govern the land to the west, nor would it have provided the power to defend those lands under the Articles of Confederation; the Northwest Ordinance highlighted the need for a new US Constitution in 1787. Ultimately, it would be the Ordinance which provided the framework for westward expansion, and the new constitution which provided the power and security for it to succeed.

However it is also necessary to look beyond the immediate comparisons between the Northwest and Mississippi Territories and assess the Mississippi Territory in the broader context of American political development. As a whole, this thesis documents how the local government of the Territory grew from a small, restricted, limited body with no elected assembly into a much more self sufficient Territory, with a representative assembly and the ability to campaign heavily for statehood. Gary Gerstle has demonstrated how, despite the limitations placed upon the federal government at its inception, the states retained a great deal of power, arguing that they became "miniature Leviathans," with broad and not clearly defined authority and power.[10] In doing so, and by focusing on the powers of the state to police its citizens, he demonstrates a paradox at the heart of the US founding, with a federal government designed around liberal ideals, despite those values not existing at

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[9] R. Horsman, 'The Northwest Ordinance and the Shaping of an Expanding Republic', *The Wisconsin Magazine of History,* Vol.73, No. 1 (Autumn, 1989) pp.21-32.
[10] G. Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p.2.

the state level. This is highly pertinent to the Territorial system, where it was at a local level that harsh restrictions were placed upon the populace. In Mississippi specifically, harsh law codes were put in place in the early period and power rested entirely in the hands of five appointed, not elected, officials. In Gerstle's study, it is the US Constitution that enabled the federal government to use differing strategies to control the states – so to, was the case in the Territories, with the Ordinances providing the structure by which the government could limit the power of the Territory, and accept it as a state on the nation's own terms.

Brian Balogh has also focused on the issue of authority, though it focuses more on the central government than that of the state.[11] He shows that, in the early republic, the concept of self-government was designed to empower American citizens to control and exploit those outside the American system, thus demonstrating why the Constitution protected those privileges. However, in order to show the importance of power sharing between the federal and the state, Balogh categorises the Territories as areas in which the federal government was the only body of authority and had a monopoly on power. This chapter contends that this was not entirely the case – while the federal government may have final word on how the Territory developed, it was certainly not the only form of power exhibited within the region. Thus, the fact that the studies mentioned above focus on the relationship between the state and the federal government, helps to demonstrate the need to look beyond that relationship and into how power was shared within the Territories.

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[11] B. Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.199.

Both these works contribute to the wider field of American Political Development (APD). Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, founders of the *Studies in American Political Development* journal identify a process of "intercurrence" across US history, in which "relatively independent institutions moving in and out of alignment with one another" as being the drivers of change in the American political system.[12] This certainly echoes the history of the Mississippi Territory, which saw the political of the Territory and the central government coalescing at times and moving apart at others. APD also offers numerous other lenses by which one can explore the Mississippi Territory's political trajectory, focusing on the ways in which the rights of its inhabitants developed. Johann Neem's analysis of Thomas Jefferson's statecraft argues that Jefferson believed that American citizens should have opportunities to develop the capabilities necessary to enjoy the full use of their rights – he did not intend for the state to create citizenship and declare its people "free", but for the state to provide opportunities for citizens to establish their freedom and enjoy the rights it granted.[13] Neem's assessment is particularly pertinent for this chapter, which sees Mississippi's inhabitants working to align with Jefferson's Republicans, in order to secure the rights to a legislative assembly.

J.M. Opal's work on the development of Andrew Jackson's political thought also offers insight for this study. Opal recounts Jackson's frustration with the limits of American citizenship in the Mississippi Territory, with particular

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[12] K. Orren and S. Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.96.

[13] J.N. Neem, "Developing Freedom: Thomas Jefferson, the State, and Human Capability", in *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 27, (April 2013), pp.36–50.

reference to Jackson's attempts to sell slaves within the Territory.[14] While the focus of the article is upon how these limitations shaped Jackson, they provide an insight into how citizenship worked within the Territory – it was heavily confined by federal regulation – federal statutes and treaties with American nations mandated that, despite Jackson's protestations, American citizens within the Territory could not simply travel wherever their business took them, and were constrained by treaties signed by a government far away. Returning to Jefferson's impact on the Territory, Stephen Engel's study of hostility towards the judiciary provides another lens through which to assess the activity displayed in this, and the subsequent, chapter. This chapter shows how the judiciary and governorship of the Territory went hand in hand, with both appointed by the central government. Engel demonstrates how Jeffersonian scepticism of the judiciary developed due to Federalist principles that limited the autonomy of the states – one can certainly see parallels in how the first judges of the Mississippi Territory behaved. Engel's study demonstrates the issues found in the Mississippi Territory were not unique, and shows how the scepticism shown by the Territory's inhabitants towards a Federally appointed judiciary and governorship was emblematic of sentiments developing across the republic.[15] Mark Graber, too, focuses upon the Federalist tendencies of the judiciary, though demonstrates that judges were far more sensitive to political sentiment than Engel would suggest. This again, chimes with the ways in

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[14] J.M. Opal, "General Jackson's Passports: Natural Rights and Sovereign Citizens in the Political Thought of Andrew Jackson, 1780s–1820s" in *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 27, (April 2013), pp.69-85.
[15] S.M. Engel, "Before the Countermajoritarian Difficulty: Regime Unity, Loyal Opposition, and Hostilities toward Judicial Authority in Early America" in *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 23, (October 2009) p.193.

which judges operated in the Mississippi Territory, particularly in the tenure of the third governor, Robert Williams.[16]

Taken as a whole, American Political Development helps to provide further context for the creation of the Mississippi Territory, and offers useful points of comparison in aspects of the formation of the Territory, even if the focus is often on the later nineteenth century and beyond.[17] APD demonstrates that the institutions of American government, as Orren and Skowronek argue, are constantly shifting, moving together and apart, and creating friction on a regular basis. This is important context for the Mississippi Territory and for this thesis, which attempts to trace political relationships, both through personal networks and the institutions forged within them. Ultimately, it helps to demonstrate Mississippi's place in the nineteenth century as an early example of many of the political debates that would take place in states, territories, and in the central government, across the period.

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Whilst much of the Ordinance, and the subsequent document entitled 'An Act for the Government of the Mississippi Territory' in 1800, concerns the tricky issue of settling land disputes in their respective regions, they also lay out a

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[16] M.A. Graber, "Federalist or Friends of Adams: The Marshall Court and Party Politics", in *Studies in American Political Development,* Vol. 12 (Fall 1998), pp.229–266.
[17] See, for example, J. Gerring, "Party Ideology in America: The National Republican Chapter, 1828–1924" in *Studies in American Political Development,* Vol. 11 (Spring 1998), pp.44-108; E. Eisenach, "Liberal Citizenship and American National Identity" in *Studies in American Political Development,* Vol. 13 (Spring 1999), pp. 198–215; R.L. Einhorn, "Slavery and the Politics of Taxation in the Early United States" in *Studies in American Political Development,* Vol. 14 (Fall, 2000), pp.156-183.; J.A. Jenkins, "Partisanship and Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives, 1789–2002" in *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol.18 (Fall, 2004) pp.112-135; V. Lewis, "Party Control of Government and American Party Ideology Development" in *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 32 (October 2018), pp.188–216.

detailed structure of government which was designed to ease the inhabitants of the Territory into the Union.[18] Sections three to seven of the Ordinance outline how the Northwest Territory, and therefore the Mississippi Territory, would be governed. Central to the Ordinance are detailed stages of government which would allow the people of the Territory to be introduced to American democracy slowly, and not before they were ready in the eyes of the federal government. The territorial government would be led by a governor, appointed directly by the President for a period of three years unless dismissed early by Congress. The governor would be provided with a freehold estate of 1,000 acres for the duration of his time in office and expected to reside within the district throughout his term of office. The governor would be supported in his work by a secretary, appointed by Congress for a term of four years and granted a freehold of 500 acres, and three judges, 'any two of whom to form a court, who shall have a common law jurisdiction… and their commissions shall continue in force during good behaviour.' Thus, initially, the Mississippi Territory would have no say in its government, with power entirely in the hands of five appointed officials.[19]

Although these officials would be required to reside within the territory, they were not required to be from the region in question. Whilst those appointed would likely have government experience in some form or another, initial appointees were therefore almost exclusively northerners, with little

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[18] For the text of the Act outlining Mississippi's structure, see C.E. Carter (ed.), *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume V: The Territory of Mississippi, 1798-1817* (Washington: 1937) pp.18-22.
[19] Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9; Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

knowledge of life in the southern United States. Furthermore, this system was designed with the presumption that the frontiersmen of the Northwest Territories and the Mississippi Territory were not fit to take part in their government, with the notion that the elite should rule and the rest should follow, as displayed by Mississippi's first governor across this chapter. Of course, the power of these individuals had to be curtailed in some way, and this was achieved by restricting their legislative abilities:

> The governor and judges, or a majority of them, shall adopt and publish in the district such laws of the original States, criminal and civil, as may be necessary and best suited to the circumstances of the district, and report them to Congress from time to time: which laws shall be in force in the district until the organization of the General Assembly therein, unless disapproved of by Congress; but afterwards the Legislature shall have authority to alter them as they shall think fit.

By declaring this, Congress dictated that the territorial judges and governor could not enact any original law; they were only permitted to adopt laws that were already in existence within one of the states of the Union. This would be overseen by Congress, who had to approve every appropriated law. However, full oversight would only be achieved if citizens of the territory reported any irregularities to Congress directly. This would prove difficult to maintain as, at least initially, inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory were not even granted the right to elect a delegate to attend Congress.[20]

Thus, the original structure of territorial government was distinctly lacking in local representation, or even any form of elected representation. It was,

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[20] Ibid.

ultimately, a colonial form of government in anything other than name, albeit with a defined trajectory towards democracy. The Ordinance mandated that only once 'five thousand free male inhabitants of full age' inhabited the district would they receive the authority to elect a representative for their county or township to represent them in a general assembly. The Assembly would consist of one member for every 500 free white males, until there were twenty-five representatives, at which point the number and proportion of representatives became regulated by the territorial legislature. Members of the general assembly would then put ten names forward to Congress, who would then select five of them to form a legislative council, acting as a second house in a territorial bicameral system.[21]

Indeed, keeping track of the population of the territory was integral to the success of the territorial system. The Ordinance mandated that:

> whenever any of the said States shall have sixty thousand free inhabitants therein, such State shall be admitted, by its delegates, into the Congress of the United States, on an equal footing with the original States in all respects whatever, and shall be at liberty to form a permanent constitution and State government: Provided, the constitution and government so to be formed, shall be republican, and in conformity to the principles contained in these articles; and, so far as it can be consistent with the general interest of the confederacy, such admission shall be allowed at an earlier period, and when there may be a less number of free inhabitants in the State than sixty thousand.[22]

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[21] Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9); Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.
[22] Ibid.

In the case of the Northwest Territories, the federal government had a very clear idea of how the future states would look. There would be no fewer than three and no more than five, and the lines of division were clearly drawn.

There was no such coherence when it came to the Mississippi Territory, however, and this offered opportunities for individuals to exploit the vacuums of organised power and authority within the grey areas of the Territory. Rather than creating a reliance upon Federal officials, as was the federal plan, it actually empowered local politicians to improvise or impose their own frameworks of government. Arguments over whether the Territory would remain as one when it achieved statehood or whether it should be divided persisted across the period, and much of this was down to a question of migration. This issue will be explored in much greater depth later in this chapter, though it highlights the lingering, overarching influence of the Northwest Ordinances, and the federal government, on the development of the Mississippi Territory.

The Northwest Ordinance, then, was the basis of the act which governed the Mississippi Territory, shaping both its foundation and its future development. This chapter will now assess how the local government and influential citizens of the Mississippi Territory interacted with this governing doctrine and, in doing so, discuss how this affected the identity of the Territory. Did the governance of the Territory help to bring citizens into the Union and inspire a burgeoning of American national identity in line with the north-eastern states, as was the plan with the Territorial model, or did it cause the Territory to remain separated and divided, forging only regional ties? Whilst the political history of the Mississippi Territory has been discussed in existing literature, no work has tied the political narrative to the question of the territory's identity and its place within the Union.

At this point, it is worth returning to the historiography of the Mississippi Territory in comparison to that of the Northwest Ordinances, in order to understand how the existing scholarship has characterised the Mississippi Territory's political inception. As mentioned in the introduction, Robert V. Haynes' study refreshed scholarship of the Mississippi Territory, despite its antiquated origin.[23] Whilst books published both before and after it do feature the Territory's history, it has not been the focus of scholarship for many years. Prior to this, the most detailed study of the politics of the region was Arthur Preston Whitaker's 1934 study, though the book only discusses the period up until 1803 and is concerned with the Federal Government and its relationship with the French and Spanish empires in the region, rather than the local political climate. While it remains a useful resource, it is somewhat antiquated and unsurprisingly top-down in its approach – the majority of the key characters at a local level are barely even mentioned.[24] Indeed, the political history of Mississippi has fed into recent major economic studies, it has remained on the periphery.[25]Adam Rothman's study of slavery's expansion into the American west provides a greater insight into the development of the Mississippi Territory than any of the aforementioned studies, tying it in with the creation of the Deep South, and discussing the Territory's increasing reliance on slavery. *Slave Country* is an important work in the history of the Deep South and its role in

[23] R.V. Haynes, The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010)

[24] A. P. Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question, 1795-1803* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934)

[25] S. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 2014); W. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), J. Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

establishing a slave economy in the United States, placing the region in the wider context of the politics and geography of the early republic in a way that Haynes does not. In addition, it does provide insight into the political culture of the Mississippi Territory, though this is from an economic perspective, rather than as a study of politics and identity in the area. Thus, no recent study has effectively assessed the development of political ideology and identity in the Territory, and this provides an opportunity to triangulate scholarship to better understand regional evolution on the borders of the Union.[26]

Whereas there has been a lack of monograph-length studies into the topic in question, many articles were published in the mid-twentieth century in the *Journal of Mississippi History* which approached the politics of the region from many perspectives. Many misuse sources, come to incomplete conclusions or merely serve as a narrative or as a collection of sources, and ultimately, their assessments of political identity have been almost always localised and regionalised, and not connected to wider trends, in contrast to what this study offers. With regards to this chapter, articles by D. Clayton James and George B. Toulmin on the municipal government of territorial Natchez and the political views of Winthrop Sargent respectively are useful accounts, though such works are, almost without exception, local studies with limited purviews which do not offer any particularly meaningful conclusions.[27]

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[26] Other books which have featured the political history of the Territory include P.J. Kastor, (ed.) *The Louisiana Purchase: Emergence of an American Nation* (Washington: CQ Press, 2002) and P.S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

[27] G.B. Toulmin, "The Political Ideas of Winthrop Sargent, A New England Federalist on the Frontier*", Journal of Mississippi History* Vol. 15, No.4 (October, 1953), 207-229; D.C. James, "Municipal Government in Territorial Natchez"*, Journal of Mississippi History* Vol. 27, No.2 (May, 1965), 148-167.

Having outlined the structural framework of the federal Ordinances and the themes highlighted in Mississippi scholarship, the development of political identity will now be assessed through analysis of several key moments in the political history of the Territory. Covering the period from the formation of the Territory to the constitutional convention which established Mississippi's statehood, it will be shown that local politicians, both senior and junior, engaged and aligned with the national political parties whilst also defending their local interests at all times, ultimately creating a far more complex political identity than has previously been acknowledged.

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The Mississippi Territory's transition from Spanish to American ownership was borne out of confusion and miscommunication, and it had Andrew Ellicott at its heart. In 1795, the United States and Spain signed the Treaty of San Lorenzo, colloquially known as Pinckney's Treaty, recognising the boundary between Spanish Florida and the United States as the line of the 31st parallel and ensuring a peaceful border between the two nations.[28] The region in question, sandwiched between the Mississippi and the Chattahoochee rivers, had been contentious ever since the United States had claimed it in 1783, as it was also claimed by the Spanish following Britain's evacuation of the area in 1781.[29] In signing the treaty, the Spanish ceded the affluent and bountiful Natchez District to the United States, a region in which merchants and planters

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[28] 'Treaty of Friendship, Limits, and Navigation Between Spain and The United States', Article 2. October 27, 1795, in H. Miller (ed.) *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America, Vol. 2 - Documents 1-40: 1776-1818* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931)

[29] W.B. Hamilton, "Early Cotton Regulation in the Lower Mississippi Valley", *Agricultural History,* 15 (1941), p.20.

of both American and Spanish descent were profiting off the vast swathes of high quality land.[30] Indeed, as will be discussed in a later chapter of this project, the Treaty of San Lorenzo coincided with the arrival of Eli Whitney's cotton gin in the region, which would transform the economy and the landscape forever.[31]

In part because of this, although the treaty was signed by both parties in 1795, Spanish officials in the region almost instantly regretted their decision and delayed the transition of power. Sent to the region by the United States Senate as a US commissioner to negotiate the boundary line, Andrew Ellicott instantly proved to be a divisive figure who contributed to the delay in the treaty becoming reality.[32] A man remembered as a troublemaker of great repute, notable for his short lived role as surveyor and designer of the city of Washington, Ellicott did not hold the Natchez District in particularly high regard, writing that the people of Natchez were:

> The most abandoned villains who have escaped from the chains and prisons of Spain and been convicted of the blackest crimes. Natchez, from the perverseness of some of the people, and the ebriety of the negroes and Indians on Sundays, has become an abominable place.[33]

This was clearly not the hardy American yeomanry idealised in the westward projection of US republicanism. Ellicott's view epitomised a particularly

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[30] For an overview of the transition of the region from a tobacco based economy to a cotton one, see the classic study Arthur P. Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question, 1795-1803; A study in Trade, Politics, And Diplomacy,* (P. Smith, 1962) p.281.
[31] B.L.C. Wailes, *Report on the Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi, Embracing a Sketch of the Social and Natural History of the State* (Jackson, 1854), p.167.
[32] 'Treaty of Friendship, Limits, and Navigation Between Spain and The United States', Article 3. October 27, 1795, in H. Miller (ed.) *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America, Vol. 2 - Documents 1-40: 1776-1818* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931). Also available on the Avalon Project, Yale Law School, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/sp1795.asp], link accessed 27/07/20.
[33] Andrew Ellicott, *The Journal of Andrew Ellicott*, (Chicago, 1962) p.208.

Federalist approach to the lower Mississippi Valley, which held those on the

frontier to be far less capable citizens than those residing on the eastern

seaboard. Regardless of his views of the people, Ellicott clearly saw

opportunity in the Natchez District. Instead of undertaking the task of

surveying the 31st parallel as required, Ellicott took it upon himself to assert

the authority of the United States over the region. Most prominent amongst his

extra-curricular activities were his actions of 22nd February, 1797, when

Ellicott led a small armed force to Bayou Pierre, (about 60 miles north of

Natchez by Secretary Timothy Pickering's estimations) and on to Natchez, in

order to attempt to force the evacuation of the Natchez District's fortifications

by Spanish troops.[34] Ellicott had been instructed by President John Adams to

accept the evacuation of Natchez, but the bellicose nature of Ellicott's

operation allowed the strained relationship between the United States and the

Spanish to deteriorate further.[35] The gambit backfired and Ellicott failed to

oust the Spanish Governor Manuel Gayoso de Lemos from Natchez, despite

the somewhat unconvincing explanation that he was simply intending to

commence the surveying of the boundary as outlined in the 1795 Treaty.

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[34] 'Report of the Secretary of State to the President of the United States, of the proceedings of Andrew Ellicott, A. Ellicott, Esq. Commissioner for running the boundary line between the United States and East and West Florida', 10/06/1797 in W. Lowrie et al. (Eds.) *American State Papers: Foreign Relations* Volume 2 (Washington, 1832-1861) p.20. Accessed online via the Library of Congress' American Memory Collection <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsplink.html#anchor1>

[35] A. Ellicott, *The Journals of Andrew Ellicott* (Philadelphia, 1803), pp.38-40; Timothy Pickering to Commissioners Andrew Ellicott and Thomas Freeman, 14/09/1796, in M40, Domestic Letters of the State Department, 1784-1906 (RG 59, US National Archives)- also printed in *Executive Documents Printed By Order of the House of Representatives at the First Session of the Twenty Second Congress,* Volume 2 (Washington: Duff Green, 1831) p.58. and Andrew Ellicott to Governor Gayoso, 24th February, 1797, in W. Lowrie et al. (Eds.) *American State Papers: Foreign Relations* Volume 2 (Washington, 1832-1861) p.22. Accessed online via the Library of Congress' American Memory Collection <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsplink.html#anchor1>

However, a more significant and enduring consequence of Ellicott's arrival was that his assumed authority rubbed off on the inhabitants of the Natchez District. Elicott's abuse and exaggeration of Federal authority and the power invested in him by the Federal Government can be seen as a harbinger of things to come across the Territorial era, with Federal representatives repeatedly exploiting the often vague instructions provided to them in order to sculpt their own authority within the Territory. J.F.H. Claiborne, nephew of a future Mississippi Governor and the first genuine chronicler of the Mississippi Territory, noted that:

> Remote from the seat of government, with no mails, no political influence, no advisers, citizens alternatively of the British and Spanish governments, a completely isolated and helpless people, they took it for granted that a man who came with a military escort, with the flag of the United States, and who called the Spanish Governor to answer for every act he performed, must be a very great personage, invested with extraordinary powers…. And it began to be hinted that this very officious gentleman held in his pocket the commission of Governor.[36]

Ellicott was undoubtedly a clever individual, and was able to disseminate the idea that he was a legal representative of the United States, despite his role being nothing of the sort. Thus, Ellicott's role in the formative years of American ownership of Mississippi cannot be understated. Legally or not, Andrew Ellicott brought American democracy and government to Mississippi, and it was through Ellicott that the inhabitants of Natchez first experienced the United States, and

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[36] J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, *with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*, Vol. 1. (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1880) p.166.

formulated their political opinions through this lens. As will be shown therefore, whether a citizen approved or disapproved of Andrew Ellicott's actions significantly shaped their political views in the years to come.

After Ellicott's somewhat forceful attempts to drive the Spanish from Natchez, the struggle between the United States and the Spanish took on a more ideological turn, and as such, one can begin to see the growth of support for a pro-American faction within the Natchez District throughout 1797. Correspondence between Ellicott, the inhabitants of the Natchez District, and Secretary of State Timothy Pickering highlights the perceived increase in support for the American cause, with Ellicott writing that at least nine tenths of the inhabitants of the district were "warmly attached to the interests of the United States."[37] It was not long before, thanks to the intrigue of Ellicott, this increasingly divisive and ideologically driven debate turned violent, and in the spring and summer of 1797, there was increased violence and uproar on the streets of Natchez, until a committee of American sympathisers was formed and negotiated a peace with Gayoso.[38] The terms of this agreement were submitted to the United States Congress both by the Committee of Inhabitants and by Governor Gayoso. Under the terms of the agreement, the citizens pledged to help control the populace of the District and adhere to Spanish Laws, in return for the acceptance by Gayoso that the District should be seen

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[37] Andrew Ellicott, *The Journals of Andrew Ellicott* (Philadelphia, 1803), p.67; Andrew Ellicott to Secretary of State, 14/04/1797, Southern Boundary Papers (National Archives).
[38] Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier*, pp.16-17.

as neutral, and that the local militia would not be summoned except in the event of Indian attack or a riot.[39]

Whilst the agreement between Gayoso and the Committee of Inhabitants has been recognised in narratives of the Natchez District in this era, its wider significance has been somewhat underplayed.[40] This is the first example of a section of the Natchez elite forming a committee for political purposes and such committees would play an important role in the early years of the Mississippi Territory's existence within the United States. This set a precedent which allowed the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory to either directly engage with the governor or go beyond the existing structure and appeal directly to Congress. However, it is vital to note that this was not a representative body, reflecting the limitations of the Territorial model and demonstrating that the Mississippi Territory would remain in the hands of the few, not the many. Members of the committee were, in the first instance, elected by "the leading inhabitants of the District."[41] When the committee was formed in order to cease the unrest across the District in 1797 through negotiation, the group did not necessarily need to be elected. However, having proven the concept of a committee to be an effective method of controlling the populace, efforts would be made to replicate this in later years. Thus, this incident should be seen to have been an important moment in the political history of the Mississippi Territory, in that it created the opportunity for

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[39] Memorial to Congress by Permanent Committee of the Natchez District, 23/10/1797, in C.E. Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Volume 5 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937) pp.9-16.
[40] The formation of the committee of inhabitants was far from straightforward and has often been misunderstood by historians. Ethan Grant, for example, has conflated this committee with one composed of the enemies of Andrew Ellicott who could be known as the Committee of Safety. Grant, 'Anthony Hutchins: A Pioneer of the Old Southwest', p.417.
[41] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.17.

influential figures in the Mississippi Territory to shape their own destiny by being an effective political force in contrast to the model of external imposition dictated by the Ordinances.

The committee formed to end the violence of the spring was a unified body comprised of both Ellicott and his supporters and those who were suspicious of his motives. However, by the late summer of 1797, the situation in the District was moving towards an inevitable conclusion, after Gayoso was promoted to the position of Governor of Louisiana in June, effectively removing him from the equation in Natchez and highlighting the beginning of the end for the Spanish occupation of the region.[42] The result of this was political infighting amongst the Natchez elite, and the committee which had signed the agreement with Governor Gayoso split into two warring factions.[43] As Haynes assesses, the split began over three major issues: "cumbersome debts, conflicting land claims and identification of officials to administer the new regime."[44] This divide between the inhabitants of the Natchez District would shape the political history of the entire territorial era. On one side stood Andrew Ellicott and his supporters, the other could be identified as supporters of Thomas Green and his family, represented by his son-in-law Cato West, and the "temperamental and volatile" Anthony Hutchins, the figurehead of the faction.[45] This divide has generally been understood as being between wealthy

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[42] Holmes, J.D.L. *Gayoso: The Life of a Spanish Governor in the Mississippi Valley; 1789-1799* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968) pp.198-199

[43] Minutes of the Committee of Natchez Country, 12/09/1797, in M179, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, 1789-1906 (RG 59, National Archives, Washington DC) and quoted in Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.18.

[44] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory,* p.18.

[45] Grant, 'Anthony Hutchins: A Pioneer of the Old Southwest', p.416.

merchants, on the side of Andrew Ellicott, and planters on the other, though as this chapter will explore, there are more complex relationships in effect.[46]

The 'Permanent Committee of the Natchez District' wrote to Congress in October 1797 informing them of the agreement made that summer between the committee and Governor Gayoso, and claiming to be the "the legal representatives of the inhabitants of the District of Natchez and the guardians of that neutrality".[47] However, the signatories of this committee were not those who originally met with Gayoso. Whilst the original committee was formed of Anthony Hutchins, Bernard Lintot, Isaac Gaillard, William Ratliff, Cato West, Joseph Barnard and Gabriel Benoist, neither Hutchins nor West were signatories on the letter of the Permanent Committee to Congress. They were instead replaced by, among others, Peter Bryan Bruin, a controversial, pro-Ellicott Federalist who would later have Articles of Impeachment brought against him while serving as a territorial judge.[48] Having been excluded from the Permanent Committee, Haynes notes that, "Hutchins secured permission from Acting Governor Minor to hold a special election," which would take place on the 2nd September and create a "Committee of Safety" and an agent to treat with Congress.[49] What Haynes does not touch on is the more nuanced reason for Minor's agreement. Stephen Minor, the Secretary of the Natchez District under Governor Gayoso and his replacement as governor, was the region's largest plantation owner, largely responsible for the thirty-three-fold

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[46] D.J. Mitchell, *A New History of Mississippi*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), Chapter 3.
[47] Memorial to Congress by Permanent Committee of the Natchez District, 23/10/1791, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 5, pp.9-11.;
[48] 'Mr. Poindexter's Motion for an Impeachment of Judge Bruin of the Mississippi Territory', in *Early American Imprints*, Series 2, no. 16521 (Washington: A & G Way Printers, 1808)
[49] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.18.

increased production in cotton in the district since 1793, and Anthony Hutchins was the first planter in the region to attempt to grow cotton in the area.[50] The link between the two is evident, and highlights that the election of a Committee of Safety was not made in order to demonstrate the inhabitants' fondness of the democratic process, but for self-interested planters who wished to protect their interests. Despite Ellicott's attempts to disrupt the election, it went ahead and an eight person committee was created, headed up by Thomas Green's son Abner, and Cato West. It appointed Hutchins as an envoy to Congress, calling for the extension of popular government to the entire Natchez District.[51] It is worth noting that this incident, and the creation of the two rival committees which both attempted to dominate Natchez politics, is significant in the history of the Territory as a whole. As will become evident throughout this chapter, the establishing of political committees would remain an important form of political opposition throughout the territory's existence. It became a way of subverting the norms and frameworks of the American republic, particularly when it came to the restrictive and prohibitive Northwest Ordinance, which would inhibit the inhabitant's right to elected government.

Ultimately, the significance of these two factions comes down to their stance over how the Mississippi Territory ought to be governed once it became a territory of the United States. Both the Permanent Committee and the Committee of Safety attempted to highlight their influence and authority to Congress, with the Committee of Safety representing themselves as the only

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[50] Mitchell, *A New History of Mississippi*, p.52
[51] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State,* p.175.

democratically elected body.[52] In contrast, Ellicott, in a letter to Timothy

Pickering, highlighted his allies, as "the most respectable inhabitants" of the

district and directly attempted to undermine his opponents by stressing that the

Natchez District was not fit for popular government. In an attempt to discredit

his opponents, he wrote:

> This, like all other new countries, is settled by people of the three following
> discriptions [sic], Viz. persons of ambition, and enterprise, who have
> contemplated an encrease [sic] of fame, and wealth, others who have fled
> from their creditors, and some, (not a few), from justice… If such a
> settlement, where a large proportion of the inhabitants are deeply involved
> in debt, should have the sovereign power of legislating for themselves…
> the creditors would certainly be much injured, if not ruined, gentlemen of
> wealth, probity, and information neglected, if not persecuted, and to
> complete the misfortune, public confidence annihilated.[53]

Ellicott's message was entirely unambiguous, and his prejudices were clear.

Allowing the inhabitants of the Natchez District to elect their own government

would be a disaster, he argued, both for the United States and for the

merchants and creditors who helped to support the economy. Indeed, a

government structure akin to the Northwest Ordinance would protect both their

interests and his own, as a Federalist appointed by John Adams, whilst

compromising the interests of the planter faction who wished for greater

devolved power and engagement with the political system.

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[52] For more details, see Haynes, *Mississippi Territory,* pp.18-22. The election for the
Committee of Safety was a unique one in the early American era, as it allowed males over the
age of 18 to vote.
[53] Andrew Ellicott to the Secretary of State, 24/09/1797, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* 5, p.4.

Ellicott saw the establishment of the American territorial government as an opportunity to entirely discredit his opponents. Perceiving Anthony Hutchins to be the greatest threat, he went on the offensive. Prior to the writing of the letter to Pickering, in the aforementioned election of the Committee of Safety, Ellicott had been selected to be a commissioner to ensure the legality of the election, yet had entirely refused to engage with the intention of putting a halt to the election.[54] Furthermore, he blasted Hutchins, labelling him as the leader of "the party of British interest" and "the most inveterate anti-American in the District."[55] Returning to his letter to Pickering, Ellicott opened up his accusations to the Natchez planters as a whole, essentially detailing the cause of the division – the issue of land and debt:

> If such a settlement, where a large proportion of the inhabitants are deeply
> involved in debt, should have the sovereign power of legislating for
> themselves – In such a case, the creditors would certainly be much injured,
> if not ruined, gentlemen of wealth, probity, and information neglected, if
> not persecuted, and to complete the misfortune, public confidence
> annihilated.[56]

The implication was clear and forthright; to hand the right of representative local government to the planters would result in significant loss of stature for capable, intelligent and honest men. At any rate, he argued, it would be unconstitutional to allow a local government to meddle in merchants' account

[54] Grant, 'Anthony Hutchins', p.418.
[55] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p. 20.
[56] Andrew Ellicott to the Secretary of State, 24/09/1797, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* 5, pp.4-5.

books, and it would be impossible to form a competent government of characters such as Hutchins.[57]

Furthermore, the issue of slavery is prevalent in Ellicott's argument.[58] Government according to the regulations of the Northwest Ordinance would have prohibited slavery in the region. Whilst this would have been agreeable to Ellicott, as he notes, it would not have been acceptable to either the planters or the merchants of the Natchez District, where the entire economy was based on slavery, especially once cotton supplanted all other crops. Especially significant, in terms of this study, is how Ellicott described the institution: "Slavery though disagreeable to us northern people." The implication being that slavery was disagreeable to respectable characters, thus further reducing the character of those in Natchez. Indeed, this must be seen as hugely significant for the relationship between Federalist officials and planters in the Mississippi Territory, for later non-southern figures shared in the assessment and had to adjust to it in a way that was needless for politicians and federal agents in the northern territories, where social and economic landscapes differed. The distrust and disapproval of northern politicians towards southern society and their plantation system helped to create significant friction between the two groups. This was most evident in the transitional years, particularly between 1798 and 1803, and Ellicott's persistent involvement and influence within the Federalist party was integral to this.

As the foregoing suggests, even before the region became part of the United States, the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory were fractured into two

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid, p.5.

factions. Although little discussed in existing literature, these proto-factions mirrored the divisive national party-political climate in 1797. In Mississippi, as highlighted by Andrew Ellicott, the merchant faction was inclined to limit the extent of democracy in the region and leave power in the hands of the few, ideally with key officials shipped in from the North. This corresponded exactly with the beliefs of the Mississippi Territory's first American governor, Winthrop Sargent. In contrast, one can also see the connection between the views of the Green/West/Hutchins faction and the rising Democratic-Republican party on the national level. They represented a planter class which saw great opportunity in the Mississippi region, and desired protection from speculators and land companies who hoped to profit off the 'empty' land of the Mississippi region. As was discussed early in this chapter, this faction partly grew out of distrust of Ellicott himself. They appreciated what Governor Gayoso had done for them, in granting planters concessions and stability, and were less inclined to dismiss his friendship than those who went along with Ellicott. As Claiborne notes, Anthony Hutchins, the leader of this faction, believed Ellicott to have been a "mischief maker, hostile to the interests of the District, and of misrepresenting the views of the government.", whilst others believed he represented the "sentiments and wishes of the American Government." [59] From this, one can clearly see that the Territory was transitioning closer to the American government before 1798, and was already dividing into political camps, largely due to the rifts established by Ellicott.

This latter point is particularly prescient in light of the infamous Yazoo land scandal. Whilst the scandal will be focussed upon in greater detail in a later

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[59] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, pp.166-176.

chapter of this study, it is important to note the impact it had in the very early years of this period. Planters, such as Hutchins and West, had a great deal to lose from the controversial deal, which saw the state government of Georgia sell land in what would become the Mississippi Territory to four private land companies. Whilst the issue of land speculators was always on the horizon for planters in the Mississippi Territory, concern must have grown exponentially when General George Mathews arrived in Natchez. Mathews, a notable land speculator, had made his name as Governor of Georgia and it was he who signed the notorious Yazoo Land Sales into law.[60] Although it is not clear how much knowledge he had of the Yazoo Grants' illegality, Mathews was clearly complicit in the controversy. Evans, writing in the 1920s, speculated that Mathews was not guilty of anything other than "a culpable weakness", however it should be noted that, as an agent of a land company, his role was likely greater than simply as a signatory.[61] Whilst it is not immediately clear when he arrived, he had established himself in Natchez long enough that, by April 1798, letters addressed to him by the Secretary of State were making their way to Natchez. Such letters reveal his intention – to become the first US Governor of the Mississippi Territory. In one such letter, Secretary Pickering made this explicit, writing, "I do not know who he [President Adams] will name, but I know you have friends to recommend you, and it will give me pleasure to see you at the head of the government."[62] Such news would have cast fear into the hearts of the planters of Natchez. Not only was Andrew

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[60] Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question*, p.65.
[61] S.B. Evans, 'The Yazoo Fraud', *Georgia Historical Quarterly,* Vol.7, No. 2. (June, 1923) p.156.
[62] The Secretary of State to George Mathews 01/04/1798, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, 5, pp.16-17.

Ellicott clearly influencing the direction of the future Mississippi Territory, but a land speculator known to be an agent of the New England Company appeared on the verge of being the first territorial governor.[63]

Yet the Yazoo Scandal left a long shadow, and Mathews would never achieve his ambitions. Although Mathews was initially nominated to the position by John Adams, the name was withdrawn before it could be voted on in the Senate. Pickering sent a conciliatory letter to Mathews noting, "strong objections being made… and a negative likely to take place in the Senate – to avoid so unpleasant an event, the President preferred withdrawing your names." Pickering continued, "the capital objection to you… was that you were deeply interested in the claims of the company holding under the Georgia sales of the lands Comprehended in the new government."[64] After this, Mathews would never hold office again, and would remain out of the public eye for the foreseeable future. To some extent then, this was a short term victory for the Hutchins-Green faction, in that the Senate recognised the conflict of interest that would have been created, and thus forced the President to appoint a more impartial candidate. The Yazoo Grants would have a dramatic impact upon issues surrounding land speculation for years to come, but in denying a notorious land speculator the governorship, planters' interests were somewhat protected. This reprieve would allow planters to slowly assume control of the Mississippi Territory's government, particularly due to

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[63] R.V. Haynes, 'The Disposal of Lands in the Mississippi Territory', *Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 24, No. 4 (October, 1962) p229.
[64] Secretary of State to George Mathews, 08/05/1798, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, 5, p.31.

their engagement with Winthrop Sargent, the man who rose to the position in Mathews' stead.

To this point, it has been shown that the factionalism which would shape the political history of the Mississippi Territory was present before the United States even took over the government of the region. The key figure in this entire process was the meddling Andrew Ellicott, around whom the two parties formed. Ellicott and his allies painted their enemies as sympathisers with both the British and the Spanish who threatened to undermine the entire political process, whereas Hutchins, Cato West and their company believed themselves to be the only group fighting for democracy and the right to representative government, something they believed to be enshrined within the fabric of the new republic. Having seen off the threat of an administration led by George Mathews, the Committee of Safety was somewhat optimistic about the opportunities that status as an American territory would provide the Mississippi Territory. However, as will now be shown, their fight for fair and equal representation would not be solved in 1798.

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For all the factionalism and debate taking place within the Natchez District prior to 1798, the United States operated within a distinctly Federalist moment. It was a Federalist government who enacted the creation of the Mississippi Territory, set out its governing laws in line with the Northwest Ordinance and appointed its officers. Thus, a Federalist was appointed as its first governor, and Andrew Ellicott, as the only experienced and trusted government agent in the area, was asked to "encourage unanimity and a suitable Spirit among the

inhabitants at the Natchez [sic]."[65] He would be, in theory, the link between the people of Natchez, the new governor and the Federal Government as a whole. The concept of a "suitable Spirit" here is also important in assessing the ways in which the Territory was viewed by the Federal Government – the inhabitants had to be cultivated and groomed in order to belong in the Union. In practice, Ellicott spent his time professing to know the ins-and-outs of the region, and undoubtedly soured attitudes of the Federalists towards the inhabitants even further. The appointment of the Governor was not a straightforward process. The requirements of the role were diverse; it required "a man of energy, of application to business, and a military [this was underlined] character."[66] The first choice, General George Mathews, was an obvious fit. He had experience as a governor, and as a military commander, though his private enterprises made him ineligible in the eyes of the Senate.

The man who was shipped into the role as the inaugural Governor of the Mississippi Territory, and given the responsibility of establishing the American government there, was Colonel Winthrop Sargent. A firm Massachusetts Federalist with a puritan upbringing, he had studied at Harvard College and served in the Revolutionary War before becoming a surveyor and politician.[67] His primary experience for the role came as secretary of the Northwest Territory, thus making him one of the most knowledgeable politicians in the nation when it came to enforcing the Northwest Ordinances. Indeed, as the second-in-command to Governor Arthur St. Clair, he often served as acting-

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[65] Secretary of State to Andrew Ellicott, 01/04/1798, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, 5, p.18.
[66] Secretary of State to Winthrop Sargent, 04/05/1798, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, 5, p.27.
[67] George B. Toulmin, "The Political Ideas of Winthrop Sargent, A New England Federalist on the Frontier", *Journal of Mississippi History* Vol. 15, No.4 (October, 1953), p.207.

governor during his leader's regular trips away from the region, providing him with a great deal of experience as the leading official in a United States Territory.[68] Not only did this background provide him with the experience necessary to perform the role, but it also shaped his beliefs and perceptions. In order to assess the implications of his appointment for the Mississippi Territory, but also to understand the unprecedented events of his tenure, it is important to study his political and personal views.

However, this is not necessarily a straightforward process. As Benjamin Pershing noted, although Sargent occasionally made contributions to journals, he never documented his political ideas in one place.[69] As such, formulating his political positions requires study of his correspondence and personal papers throughout his political career. Indeed, one can utilise Sargent's past career to inform us of his views while in the Mississippi Territory, due to the fact that he was unwavering in his views; this was potentially a significant problem considering the undeniable differences between the Northwest and Mississippi Territories. As Toulmin asserts, Sargent's "puritanical background never left him despite his long residence on the outskirts of the infant republic." Sargent was obstinate in his refusal to accept that a democratic spirit and a desire for engagement with the democratic system could blossom on the frontier, regardless of whether it was the Northwest or Mississippi Territory.[70] Indeed, as will be shown throughout the rest of this chapter, Sargent demonstrated a distrust and disapproval of individuals in the Mississippi Territory, and worked

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[68] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State,* p.204.
[69] B. H. Pershing, "Winthrop Sargent: A Builder in the Old Northwest" (Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1927)
[70] Toulmin, "Political Ideas of Sargent", p.207.

to limit the powers of representative government for as long as possible. In this sense, Sargent was as staunch a Federalist as could be found, and this mentality would undoubtedly clash strongly with the inhabitants of Natchez, who were increasingly politically aware and seeking elected government.

Sargent's vocal declarations of his disregard of the frontiersmen of the Northwest Territory simultaneously highlight his belief in the merits of the Northwest Ordinance. On more than one occasion, he proffered these opinions to his colleagues. In 1790, he wrote: "The Power of making laws…,' even under the most particular Restrictions, can not in my Opinion with Propriety be at present delegated by us either to a Set of Men of our own choosing or, that may be publicly elected in Town Meetings… Great commercial Towns or Cities may some times I think be indulged with certain known and fixed Privileges in this Way, but they should always be expressly defined, in extent and Limitation."[71] Sargent clearly believed that the inhabitants in the Northwest Territory were not capable of forming a government, even if they were handpicked by the Governor, let alone elected by their peers. Furthermore, his support of the Ordinance extended beyond the issue of elected and representative government. Writing to St Clair in 1793, he highlighted his belief that the "blessing of Trial by Juries… is perverted to a Curse" in Hamilton County. With regards to the inhabitants themselves, he wrote that, "licentiousness is their Characteristic and the magistrate who shall dare enforce the laws which are adopted will of course become the Object of

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[71] Winthrop Sargent to Judges of the Northwest Territory, 25/07/1790 in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 3: The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1803*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937) pp.322-323.

their highest Displeasure."[72] Clearly, his lack of faith in inhabitants of the

frontier extended to the basic right of trial by peers, another right enshrined in

the US Constitution which did not extend to the territories.

The Northwest Ordinance was designed to allow for progression. Its stages

were designed to allow inhabitants to earn the right to elected and

representative government, and to be involved in the legislative and judicial

process. However, Sargent, as has already been implied, was unwavering in his

doubts. Writing three years after he denied the peoples' right to 'The Power of

making laws', he declared that "the people of Wayne and the three Western

Counties may be taken by the hand Sir and led to be every thing the United

States would wish them."[73]Again, he stressed that the people of the Northwest

Territory had to be sculpted into US citizens and were not ready to engage with

the republic. There was certainly a positive tone to Sargent's message, but he

was determined that the people would still require cultivating – he perceived

his role to be handholding and guiding the people to become citizens, refusing

to accept that they could do so under their own power. This is particularly

important to note with the Mississippi Territory in mind. As we have already

seen, even before Sargent became governor in 1798, there was a clamour for

democracy and equal and fair representation. The Northwest Ordinance was

accepted by the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory in part because it

allowed progression; so long as the Territory kept growing, inhabitants would

gain greater rights and eventually be accepted into the Union with statehood.

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[72] Winthrop Sargent to Governor St Clair, 12/02/1793 in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 2: The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787-1803*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937) pp.433-34.
[73] Winthrop Sargent to Timothy Pickering, quoted in Toulmin, "Political Ideas of Sargent", p.210.

Sargent, it appears, pushed back against this progression and seemed to believe that frontier territories were not ready for full access to the Constitution, ultimately implying that Sargent was, in this sense, not overly supportive of the model employed by the Ordinances – he was reluctant to encourage the development of the Territories that the framework laid out.

Furthermore, one particularly controversial stance perpetuates much of Sargent's writings. He was quick to criticize and castigate anyone who opposed him, whether they be inhabitants seeking extra powers, or fellow federal politicians he clashed with. In 1799, as Governor of the Mississippi Territory, he wrote that the assertion that citizens should elect their own militia commanders and officers was only a belief held by "some wicked and designing men."[74] In 1798, after arriving in Mississippi, he referred to his opponents in Natchez as "discontents" and "unprincipled Scoundrels."[75] Earlier, in 1795, he attacked those he disapproved of, warning that the power to legislate should be kept out of the "Hands of designing or ignorant Men."[76] In 1800, he referred to a Congressman, Thomas Davis of Kentucky, as "abusive and full of falsehood" when he was accused of poor governorship.[77] It is a mantra repeated throughout his writing, and it is particularly significant. Not only did Sargent hold views that directly opposed those of many frontiersmen, but he was unwilling to listen or negotiate. This self-righteous conviction resulted in trouble in the territories, where citizens felt restricted and repressed, but it also spelt trouble for the wider political sphere.

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[74] D. Rowland (Ed.), *The Mississippi Territorial Archives: 1798-1803* (Nashville, 1905), p.100.
[75] D. Rowland (Ed.) , *The Mississippi Territorial Archives: 1798-1803* (Nashville, 1905), p.66.
[76] Carter, *Territorial Papers*, 3, pp.322-3.
[77] Rowland, *Mississippi Territorial Archives,* p.259.

Sargent never attempted to convert his opponents to his way of thinking; he simply believed that he was right and that they should fall into line, reflecting the Calvinist roots of his political thought. Yet what is even more striking is that Sargent was apparently unaffected by the unpopularity caused by his oppressive views on representative democracy on the frontier. Two years into his tenure as the Mississippi Territory's governor, he wrote to John Marshall, stating that he accepted, "that I am not "over anxious of popularity" according to my acceptation of the Expression- no man however more ardently desires the approbation of the Wise and the Good more than myself, but I shall never be so far Degraded, as to become the Machine of the Multitude."[78] George Toulmin has noted that highlights a key problem with Sargent's governorship, and how his attitude ran contrary to the "democratic spirit" prevalent in the Mississippi Territory, however it also be taken as representing a key failing of the Federalist Party doctrine as a whole.[79]

Ultimately, what is clear is that Winthrop Sargent was, in terms of his political experience and views, a strong candidate for the role of Mississippi's Territorial Governor as far as President John Adams would have been concerned. He had exhibited competent leadership in the Northwest Territory and represented the views of the Federalist Party as a whole. However, certain mitigating factors must be taken into account. It is important to note the differences between the Mississippi Territory and the Northwest Territory, both in terms of geography and politics. Whilst the Mississippi Territory, had it become a state without divisions, would have been the second largest state

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[78] Winthrop Sargent to John Marshall, 20/11/1800, in D. Rowland, *The Mississippi Territorial Archives 1798-1803* (Nashville, 1905), p.315
[79] Toulmin, "Political Ideas of Sargent", p.229.

behind Virginia (before Virginia itself was divided during the US Civil War), the Northwest Territory was vast beyond compare; in modern day terms, it spanned the area of five modern states.[80] Yet, the size of the territory was not the only differing factor between the Northwest and Mississippi Territories. Whilst, as has been repeated, the overarching political systems were the same, the regions were made up of different people, with different economic interests, as well as different native American nations and different European imperial interests threatening the autonomy of the United States.

The contrast between the people of the two territories and their economy are inextricably linked. In the Northwest Territory, slavery was banned, whereas the Mississippi Territory was wholly dependent upon it. In part due to the aforementioned difference in scale, the population dispersion was extremely different. In the Mississippi Territory, the population was heavily centred upon Natchez and the surrounding area, resulting in the Natchez District becoming the cultural, economic and political centre of the region. Indeed, there were only two formally organised counties in the Mississippi Territory upon its inception – Adams and Pickering Counties.[81] In contrast, there were thirteen incorporated counties in the Northwest Counties, established in the governorship of Arthur St. Clair, many with significant towns as their county seats.[82] As such, the population was far more dispersed than in the Natchez District. Indeed, the territories also attracted different immigrants to them. Frank Owsley's classic thesis on the Old Southwest showed that there was a

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[80] Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and parts of Minnesota.
[81] D.C. James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968) p.102.
[82] For further information, see D.P. Barr, *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers Along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850* (Kent State University Press, 2006)

trend in the destinations of migrants from the eastern seaboard in the early American republic.[83] According to Owsley, broadly speaking, migrants travelled in columns across the country. Thus, those migrating to the Northwest Territory would largely have travelled from the north-eastern states, whereas those travelling to the Mississippi Territory would have departed from the southern states, such as Georgia and the Carolinas. Whilst this will be explored in greater depth in later chapters on migration and settlement, it is important to note that this did not only create differences in terms of the ideology and identity of new settlers in the territories, but it also impacted upon the economy of the regions.

Winthrop Sargent was never going to be comfortable in the Mississippi Territory. What is more, Sargent never wanted this role, as Timothy Pickering well knew. In a letter informing Sargent of his appointment, he wrote: "This appointment, I doubt not, will derange your plans for your future passing of life: but it may only be a temporary interruption."[84] Sargent did not see the Mississippi Territory in his plans; he wanted the governorship of the Northwest Territory to himself. He did not waste any time in documenting his disapproval for the new office. Before even having left the Northwest Territory, he acknowledged that the new venture was a unknown quantity to him, writing:

> From the best intelligence I have been able to procure there prevails in the
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> country of our destination, a refractory and turbulent spirit, with parties
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> headed by men of perverseness and cunning They have run wild in the

[83] F.L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Updated Edition, 2008) p.31.
[84] The Secretary of State to Winthrop Sargent, 04/05/1798, in *Carter, Territorial Papers V,* p.27.

recess of government, and every moment's delay in the adoption of rules

and regulations after the ordinance shall be promulgated most be

productive of growing evils and discontents.[85]

Sargent's prejudices, therefore, were shining through before he even arrived in

the Mississippi Territory. He was ready to arrive with a firm hand and to bring

order to the wild frontier. Yet, as has been shown, the Natchez District was

actually relatively developed, and was able to productively engage with the

former Governor Gayoso. In this sense, therefore, despite him being the model

of a Federalist of the frontier, Sargent was a poor fit for the Mississippi

Territory. Indeed, according to J.F.H. Claiborne, his contemporaries knew so,

stating that his appointment was questioned by many who knew of both his

nature and that of the territory: the "opposition to the nomination was not

sectional… put [sic] personal, based on his utter incompatibility in tone,

temper, sentiments and manners with the people he was sent to."[86] As such,

trouble was somewhat inevitable throughout Sargent's tenure. It has been

shown that there was a rise in political consciousness in the build up to the

establishment of the Mississippi Territory. Whilst it is true that the act

governing the Territory didn't provide its inhabitants with much autonomy, or

indeed any way of engaging with the government in its first incarnation,

Sargent's appointment was as much as a check on democracy as the act itself.

Thus, studying the early American Territories offers an opportunity to study

the limitations of the Federalist Party model on the frontier. Despite essentially

holding every single position of power among the Party and its allies in the

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[85] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, p.205.
[86] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, p.205.

Mississippi Territory upon its inception in 1798, the Federalist Party failed to assert authority within the Mississippi Territory and failed to garner any respect for their centralised forms of government. In appealing to, and attempting to foster, a sense of national mission or national identity, Federalists exposed themselves as being incapable of accepting the unique characteristics of the individuals Territories, and were unable to adapt their policies and their views to the circumstances faced by individuals there. The resistance they faced on the frontier must be viewed as being integral to their ultimate decline within the United States – as the nation grew, the Federalist Party was unable to win favour and new supporters, ultimately limiting their support to the North East and dooming their electoral prospects further afield.

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If Sargent already questioned his appointment before his tenure began, the circumstances he faced upon his arrival can only have made things worse. He arrived in the Mississippi Territory after a long journey down the river from Cincinnati suffering from illness, and without the requisite judges required to govern. In a different letter to Sargent, Pickering acknowledged that he would be without the full trappings of government as set out in the act establishing the Mississippi Territory; only two judges were appointed, neither of whom had any formal legal expertise. Furthermore, one of the judges was Peter Bryan Bruin, a chief supporter of Andrew Ellicott, and a significant target of the ire of Anthony Hutchins and the Committee of Safety.[87] This was a debilitating blow to Sargent, and he bemoaned his fortune to Pickering:

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[87] The Secretary of State to Governor Sargent, 10/05/1798, in Carter, *Territorial Papers V*, pp.32-33; Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.19.

My present State of health which for a considerable Time past has been extreme [sic] bad causes me some uneasy Apprehensions however for the immediate full Discharge of my Duties- and for the Absence of the Judges and Secretary I have much Regret-… 'twill therefore I apprehend be unfortunate for our Government should the Executive be constrained to visit the Mississippi Territory without the Judges- The people have been long anticapating [sic] that which is not in the Governours [sic] power to bestow.[88]

The desire in question was, in all likelihood, quite simply a government. The Mississippi Territory had been lacking in an effective form of government since Gayoso had departed the region, and the delay in appointing Sargent (after George Mathews was rejected), as well as his illness and infamous stubbornness, did nothing to speed up the process. The lack of a judiciary put a halt to Sargent's plans altogether, making a difficult job even harder.

Over the course of Sargent's years in office, the relationship between his administration and the people of the Natchez District and the wider Mississippi Territory deteriorated to such a point that his position became untenable. Sargent's failure to adjust his views and his processes in order to remedy the grievances of the local populace ultimately led to the confrontational political identity of the Mississippi Territory that is at the heart of this project. Winthrop Sargent, however, completely failed to see this political growth. If Sargent had a damaging preconception of the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory before his arrival, his opinions only got worse over the months following his arrival in Natchez. "They have such Variety of Interests, and Opinions," he wrote to

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[88] Governor Sargent to Secretary of State, 29/05/1798, in Carter, *Territorial Papers V,* pp.36-38.

Senator James Ross of Pennsylvania, "that I almost despair of reconciling them to each other, or Concentrating all their good Will to our Government." His wording here is particularly interesting: Sargent suggests the failure of the entire Territorial process here, arguing that the fundamental objective of the system – the reconciliation of the people and the Federal Government - was impossible. He continued: "amongst them some most unprincipled Scoundrels. – The worst Construction is insidiously given by them to every act of the General Government, and my Character and Conduct not unfrequently most grossly Misrepresented…"[89] Sargent actively engaged in the process of painting a picture of anarchy to the federal government. He frequently attempted to sour the government against the people of the Mississippi Territory, perhaps in an attempt to restrict their democratic rights and hold onto the position he held as one of the very few legislative officials in the region. Of course, Sargent may also have been painting such an unpleasant picture of his situation in order to make any of his achievements seem more impressive, though this seems somewhat unlikely considering his inability to make any progress whatsoever. However, it is important to consider the relationship between governor and citizens from the other perspective. In terms of understanding the Mississippi Territory's ideological development and the growth of its political culture, it is necessary to consider the Sargent administration from the aspect of the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory – if not a truly bottom-up viewpoint, at least the perspective of the Natchez elite,

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[89] Winthrop Sargent to Senator James Ross, in Dunbar Rowland, *The Mississippi Territorial Archives 1798-1803* (Nashville, 1905), p.66

who would help to shape the political climate of the Mississippi Territory for the duration of the period.

The important actors in Sargent's administration remained the inhabitants of the Natchez District that had been factionalised during the waning years of the Spanish occupation of Natchez. However, although Anthony Hutchins, Thomas Abner Green and Cato West remained influential among planters and Peter Bryan Bruin had risen to a position of authority on the other side, Andrew Ellicott was withdrawing from his politicized role. In May 1798, Ellicott had finally departed Natchez to commence his duties as a surveyor of the boundary line between Spain and the United States, a role of even greater significance since the US had finally began to assume control of Natchez.[90] Yet his influence persisted. Claiborne notes that one of Sargent's first actions as Governor, two weeks after he arrived at Natchez, was to visit Ellicott's camp on the boundary, in order to ascertain "*his* opinion of the leading people of the district, and *his* advice in regard to appointments."[91] This was, perhaps, unsurprising. Sargent clearly did not trust any advice he would receive from those inside Natchez, so it made sense to approach a fellow educated, northern Federalist for advice. Yet, this was a grave mistake for Sargent; Ellicott was a partisan trouble maker, who had been actively opposed by a large portion of the District. What is more, Sargent's prior actions had made such a meeting even less acceptable to the people; only a week earlier, he had informed them that he intended to delay making any appointments until he had had the

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[90] Secretary of State to Andrew Ellicott, 11/05/1798, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* V, pp.34-35.
[91] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, a Territory, and State,* p.208. The italicized emphases are Claiborne's own.

opportunity to get to know the inhabitants better.[92] Claiborne suggests that the

result of this was that the Mississippi Territory's inhabitants were "thoroughly

united" against Sargent's administration, though this goes too far.[93] The

Hutchins-Green-West faction became firmly opposed to Sargent's

administration through association with Ellicott, whereas Ellicott's allies must

have been content. What is more, Ellicott's supporters, such as Bruin, would

soon be in positions of power and influence. Thus, Natchez's inhabitants were

not united, but instead were even more divided than ever, as Sargent observed.

Ellicott's influence upon Sargent was almost immediate, right down to the

language he used, repeating Ellicott's own phrases, such as describing

inhabitants as "the most abandoned villains" to the Secretary of State on more

than one occasion.[94] Despite this, Sargent's first appointments were somewhat

conciliatory, with the appointment of Cato West as a militia commander in the

Natchez District, along with other members of his faction in lower positions,

suggesting that he intended to use West and his influence to control the

population.[95] However, many of these individuals refused their commissions

immediately, and West resigned his commission in 1799.[96] This refusal to

engage with Sargent's government, despite the invitation, is integral to this

study. It enabled Sargent to perpetuate the idea that his opponents were not

mature enough, nor capable enough, to engage with the American government,

and therefore any potential development of representative government ought to

be denied to them. However, the rejection of the opportunity to engage with

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[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid, p.207.
[94] Ibid. pp.207-208.
[95] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.30.

Sargent's government was actually a response to his own actions. There is little evidence that Sargent would have welcomed representative government once any targets were met – social reform and increased migration do not appear to have been at the forefront of his mind.

Despite the fact that the Northwest Ordinance and the subsequent Act for the establishment of the Mississippi Territory laid all power in the hands of five individuals, their powers were still restricted. Although they had a monopoly on legislative power, Sargent and his judges could not create original laws, instead only being able to adapt laws that existed in other states. On the issue of law and government, Sargent's writings suggest he did not believe the inhabitants of Natchez would accept any at all:

> The Task of the Judges and myself will be more and more arduous as they shall delay coming to the territory; released from Spanish Bondage, this Country would have received with Rapture, any Code of Laws from the United States, but being almost in a State of Nature, since their Emancipation, the very mildest statutes, I am apprehensive may be Considered as oppressive, - I shall, however… Continue to use my best endeavours, at all times to Conciliate them to Good Government, and the National Interests, remembering always my duty, to the Sovereign Authority[97]

The comparison made by Sargent here cannot be overlooked; by describing the inhabitants as being in a "State of Nature", he drew upon Hobbesian language often used to describe the Native American nations of the American frontier. In doing so, he further depicted the Territory's inhabitants as being incapable of entering into the Union. Indeed, even if Sargent believed any laws would be

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[97] Rowland, *Mississippi Territorial Archives*, p.90.

deemed oppressive, this did not prevent him from establishing some of the most severe law codes possible. What is more, Sargent, together with his judges once they had arrived, conspired to circumvent the Ordinance upon which the Mississippi Territory was founded. As such, Sargent established his own law code, which was not based upon any existing state legislation as it ought to have been, and in the words of Claiborne, was "repugnant to the established principles of the jurisprudence derived from the common law of England."[98] Sargent also added increasingly high fees upon passports for entering and leaving the Territory, as well as marriage and tavern licenses.[99] The former was particularly problematic for the Mississippi Territory and its economy. With high costs incurred upon entering and leaving the Territory, it became exceedingly difficult to transport goods to and from the region. The most efficient method of transport was by river and ocean, yet this would require travel down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, occupied by the Spanish and then the French, before goods would re-enter the United States in the North. Thus, a fee for exiting the Mississippi Territory meant there were three different taxes upon goods. Anthony Hutchins, unsurprisingly, made his feelings on the matter explicit to Sargent, but it must also be assumed that Sargent lost the affections of many Ellicott supporters over these high import tariffs, as many amongst that faction were merchants.[100]

On top of these overly harsh import penalties, Sargent's law codes themselves became a major topic of frustration among the Natchez elite. As Haynes

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[98] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory, and State,* p.209.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Anthony Hutchins to Governor Sargent, 10/08/1799, Mississippi Department of Archive and History Digital Collection, Series 488: Administration Papers, 1788-1817; 22.

correctly assesses, the lack of proper legal training of both Sargent and his judges resulted in a lack of knowledge of other states' laws, which contributed heavily to the creation of an original law code, rather than adoption of an existing one.[101] Yet, if Sargent believed he could get away with this due to the lack of cohesion and legal knowledge among the Natchez District, he was mistaken. Building upon the Committee of Safety established under the governorship of Miguel Gayoso, the opposition to Sargent established a new committee, designed to overthrow Sargent by highlighting the flaws in his government to Congress. Led by Hutchins and West, the group's task was aided by the division of the Natchez into two counties; Adams and Pickering.[102] The significant difference between the two counties was that Natchez was in Adams County, thus making the region somewhat urban by comparison. Merchants gravitated to Adams County, whereas the more rural Pickering County was home to many of the affluent plantations of the Territory, and therefore the planter faction led by the Green family, including Cato West. This, in theory, set up Adams County and Pickering County as polar opposites, one as a base of support for Sargent and one as a base for his opponents. Yet, as James has highlighted, Sargent's support in Natchez did not equal support across Adams County. Although Natchez was the hub of the Territory, property values were much lower in the urban centre than they were in the rural plantations of Adams County. Thus, the votes of Sargent's

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[101] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.36.

[102] This occurred on 2nd April, 1799 in a proclamation from Governor Sargent. For more information, see Dunbar Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 1, (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907) pp.23-24.

supporters were not enough to prevent the Grand Jury from being flooded with Sargent's opponents from outside Natchez.[103]

With their newly created base of support within Pickering County and the outskirts of Adams County, the new Committee, dubbed the Committee of 1799, perceived itself to be the only representative voice of the people of the Mississippi Territory with Cato West as the committee chairman. The events that followed adjusted the political landscape of the Mississippi Territory, and changed its direction for the following years. Over the course of 1799, Sargent's relationship with the inhabitants of Pickering, and to a lesser extent, Adams County, completed collapsed. Yet, the first opposition to Sargent did not come from Pickering County at all. Indeed, perhaps the greatest indictment of Sargent's attempts to govern was that the first major complaint delivered to him came from the Grand Jury of Adams County, supposedly the heartland of his support base. Presented to Sargent directly, the presentment wrote: "whereas a law directing the manner in which money shall be raised and levied to defray the charges which may arise within the several Counties is in several instances oppressive and may be attended with the most baleful consequences – We consider it as an imposition upon the good Citizens of this Territory and protest against the same."[104] The letter went on to present 20 grievances to Governor Sargent, ranging from a complaint about land speculators acquiring land and then leaving it empty, to the fact that "the Citizens of this Territory should be taxed according to limits and not according to the number or

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[103] D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968) p.103.
[104] Presentments of the Grand Jury of Adams County, 06/06/1799, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, pp.63-66.

property which may tend to the great injury of the poor."[105] Most damning, however, is their accusation that those who created the codes of law for the Territory made no effort to acquaint themselves with the region, and did not pay attention to the local circumstances and interests of the people:

> It was not a matter of choice our coming into this Territory as belonging to the united States – We were found here by them a useful industrious and we flatter ourselves not an unenlightened set of people much prejudiced in favor and wishing to become subjects of the U States a people descended from the same stock possessed of the same principles and animated with the same desire of freedom and expecting to enjoy in the fullest extent the same previledges [sic] and immunities in common with the rest of our fellow Citizens – We remark that in the formation of new Territories heretofore made the Inhabitants may be said to have had a vote in the government…[106]

The Grand Jury of Adams County had not held back. They railed against Sargent's strict law codes, and highlighted their case for representative government. Indeed, they make reference to the fact that it was the Federal Government migrating to the Mississippi Territory, not the other way around – Sargent and the government were the interlopers, not them. Furthermore, they describe themselves as a plurality, a unified set of people with a common interest, in stark contrast to Sargent's analysis of them. The presentments highlight the widespread dissatisfaction with Sargent's governorship, and highlight that the political situation in the Territory was not neatly divided

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[105] Ibid. p.65.
[106] Ibid.

across county borders, as Haynes has suggested.[107] This was not simply Republicans rallying against a Federalist governor. It was a frontier territory that was not yet divided along party lines rallying against a government which did not provide them with a representative democracy and employed an unconstitutional law code against them. Both groups also drew pointedly upon the same political language bequeathed by the American Revolution to make their cases, highlighting their desire to subvert the suggestion that Mississippi's inhabitants were not ready to become American citizens.

The presentments of the Adams County Grand Jury were, unsurprisingly, followed up by a similar presentment from Pickering County. Interestingly, whilst the Adams County presentment was signed by the collective jury, the Pickering County document lists each individual separately, as three jurors refused to sign. The list of names reads as a register of the supporters of Cato West, with himself, Thomas Green, and many other prominent 'Hutchinites' signing.[108] A shorter document, it contains much of the same spirit as the Adams County letter, with an important addition: they highlight their status as American citizens, begging Congress to "permit us to be enrolled under the endearing appellation as Fellow Citizens as we are Strenuously resolve to merit and Support the Character of Good Americans."[109] Together, these presentments represent the people of the Mississippi Territory working within

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[107] It is odd that Haynes omits these Presentments from his study of this topic, instead solely focusing on the committees of Cato West and Thomas Green in Pickering County. Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, pp.39-40.
[108] Presentments of the Grand Jury of Adams County, 06/06/1799, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.66; Presentments of the Grand Jury of Pickering County, 17/06/1799, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.68. Interestingly, Anthony Hutchins' involvement in this process was restricted as he was an inhabitant of Adams County, where he found much less support than Cato West had in Pickering County.
[109] Presentments of the Grand Jury of Pickering County, 17/06/1799, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.68.

the confines of the limited legal system they had access to in order to highlight the particularities of their American identity. Whilst the work of Cato West's Committee of 1799 has received greater attention in other works, these presentments are an important example of frontiersmen exercising knowledge of the American political and judicial systems to resist a governor who did not represent them and sought to restrict their inclusion in the American republic. Thus, even though Sargent repeatedly attempted to stress their inability to self-govern and engage in democracy, he actually forced them to actively engage with the system in whatever way they could.

Whereas the Grand Jury of Pickering County ended their presentments with a claim of their American identity, Cato West's Committee of 1799 put it front and centre. The formation of the Committee itself further demonstrates the ability of Sargent's opponents to work within the frameworks laid out by the American territorial system. Coming two months after the Presentments of the juries appeared to have fallen upon deaf ears, its first actions were to appeal directly to Governor Sargent, and subsequently the territorial judges, to demand change: "Let the laws be cut down to a constitutional standard," they wrote, "or rather let the Laws be adopted agreeably to the ordinance of 1787, and let them be administered with firmness, tempered with clemency and humanity."[110] Furthermore, they highlighted their anger that Andrew Ellicott had been given such influence upon the political appointees of Sargent, and demonstrated another act of legal and peaceful resistance: resigning from positions of authority within the territorial militia, as West himself had done.

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[110] Committee of Inhabitants to Governor Sargent, 26/08/1799, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* V, p.75.

Ultimately, the Committee pled for Sargent to alter his mindset, suggesting that the result would be that "the germ of Patriotism would expand."[111] This "germ of patriotism" was at the heart of the Committee's second letter, sent a day later to both Sargent and his judges, in which they referred to the federal government as "the Government we loved."[112] It is in this letter that the Committee highlighted the illegality of the law codes, and implied that they were willing to take more severe measures should Sargent remain unwilling to adjust the codes "in conformity to the Ordinance."[113] Despite the fact that Sargent consistently attempted to downplay the intelligence of the inhabitants of the former Natchez District, it is clear that the opposite was true. The Committee of 1799 demonstrated itself to be literate, aware of the law, and of the Northwest Ordinance, in a way that it is not clear that Sargent ever was. Furthermore, by refusing to engage with the inhabitants, he drove them to become even more engaged with the American system than they would normally have been.

The petitions of the Committee fell on deaf ears, with Sargent and the judges denying all charges and insisting upon the legality of his law code, but it was the Committee which ultimately won the debate.[114] Not only were Sargent's code overly oppressive, but they did contravene the Northwest Ordinance. Of twenty five laws put forward to Congress by the Committee of Inhabitants, seventeen of them were either fully or partially repealed. In a resolution of Congress on 9th May 1800 several laws, including the controversial "Law to

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[111] Ibid, pp.74-76.
[112] Committee of Inhabitants to Governor Sargent and Judges McGuire and Bruin, 27/08/1799, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, pp.77-78.
[113] Ibid, p.78.
[114] Governor Sargent and Judges McGuire and Bruin to the Committee of Inhabitants, 05/10/1799, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* V, p.86.

regulate taverns, and retailers of liquors, and concerning Indians", which allowed the governor to overcharge for tavern licenses, were repealed. The declaration noted that it appeared that "the said Governor and Judges not confining themselves to the authority vested in them by the ordinance aforesaid, have, instead of adopting, existing, laws, enacted, those which are new."[115] So in this practical sense, Cato West and his company were victorious. Yet, for the purposes of this study, it is more important to assess how West's Committee sought to gain victory by highlighting their American spirit and identity, in the face of Sargent's attempts to diminish it. West pitted backward-facing legal prescriptions against a forward-looking emphasis upon patriotism and a future within the United States, and came out on top.

Once the Committee failed to receive a satisfactory resolution through directly appealing to Sargent, their next step was to subvert him entirely. They nominated Narsworthy Hunter, an influential inhabitant of Pickering County, as a "special agent" to travel to the federal government, "in full confidence that he will execute the trust reposed in him".[116] Hunter's role was to directly appeal to Congressmen who would support the cause of the Committee, with two in particular in mind, Thomas Davis of Kentucky and William C.C. Claiborne of Tennessee, two young Democratic Republicans. This association with the Republican party had led various historians, such as Haynes and Clayton James, to assert that the Committee of 1799 was a partisan, Republican group. However, caution should be applied here: the Committee

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[115] Resolution of Congress re Territorial Laws, 09/05/1800, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, pp.92-94.
[116] From the Petition to Congress by Committee of Inhabitants, 02/10/1799, quoted in Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory, and State*, p.210.

engaged with these individuals as they were opposed to Sargent, John Adams and the Federalist Party as a whole. Rather than directly aligning with the Republican party, Cato West and his committee were working with whomever they could find to support their case, and it would be premature to link the divisions between supporters and opponents of Sargent at the local level to the growing divide between the Federalists and Republicans on the national stage. This is supported by the events of the subsequent years, which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, when the local factions of the Mississippi Territory divided once again over local issues. The policies and ideologies of the Republican Party were more beneficial to rural southerners on the frontier, but the Committee of 1799 represented a rejection of the Federalist Party, not an embrace of the Republican Party. The petitions to Congress represent a plea to be viewed as American, not a plea to be viewed as Jeffersonian.

Despite this, the embracing of an American identity by the Committee was explicit. The petitions go as far as to relate their plight to the beginning of the American Revolution by referring to the fact that they were being taxed without any form of representation:

> Your petitioners beg leave to remind Your Honourable Body that many of
> the Citizens of this Territory have fought and bled in the cause of America;
> a Cause which had for its Origin, the usurped power of Britain, to compel
> Americans to obey Laws and pay taxes which had not their own consent[117]

Furthermore, they highlighted that, "It is the birth right of every Citizen to have a Voice by himself or his representative in the framing of Laws and

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[117] Petition to Congress by Committee of Inhabitants, 02/10/1799, Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. 5, pp.78-82.

imposing of taxes."[118] Here, they also stressed their American spirit, reminding Congress that many of the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory were American citizens who had travelled to the Mississippi Territory in the years since the Revolution, having fought and died for America's independence. This did contract the message conveyed by the Grand Jury of Adams County discussed earlier in this chapter, that the US Government had migrated to the Territory, not vice-versa, but this was a strength, not a weakness. The multifaceted rhetoric of the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory reflects the region's position – they were Americans, but they were Mississippians first. They had been part of the Union and knew what it meant to American and, in some senses, they believed they knew more about what it was to be American than Sargent himself. They further bemoaned that it was undemocratic for power in the Territory to solely rest in the hands of four men. Men, who, they argued did not have "the qualifications, directed and prescribed by the Wisdom of the Ordinance, in order to blend their interest with that of the permanent Citizen – No lands in their own proper right are held by them."[119] In writing in such strong tones, they wholeheartedly rejected the depiction that had been painted by Andrew Ellicott and Winthrop Sargent that they were unfit to represent themselves. They highlighted their American identity and fought back against the implication that they were "soured with the general government;" indeed they anchored all their hopes in it. [120] Thus, this petition represents an awakening of sorts amongst the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory. We have seen how they were capable of forming committees and

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State,* p.211

voting blocs to restrict the power of Governors in the region, but this is the first example of them engaging directly with the Federal government. Clearly, identity was at the heart of this debate, in part thanks to the language first employed by Andrew Ellicott. There was no hope of gaining autonomy or representation without first embracing their American identities. As such, it must be argued that, even though Sargent attempted to diminish the American spirit and repress their right to democracy, this actively had the opposite effect, causing the Mississippi Territory to become more American in the face of such oppression.

Although the Committee of 1799 was able to successfully highlight the American democratic spirit in the Mississippi Territory, it was still impossible for them to gain the right to an elected assembly due to the restrictive population threshold; 5000 free, white, male inhabitants were needed. It has already been noted that one of the many complaints with Sargent was that he withheld the undertaking of censuses in order to track the population of the region. Despite this, the inhabitants pushed for the right to an elected assembly anyway: "We, therefore, pray your honorable body to extend to us the second grave of government contemplated under the ordinance."[121] This, they argued, was necessary as Sargent refused to engage with them, even when they communicated their grievances to him directly. Yet, as the table below shows, the Mississippi Territory contained under 8,000 inhabitants including women, children and enslaved.

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[121] Ibid.

County	1800	1810	1820	1830
Territory/State	8,850	40,352	75,448	136,621
Adams	4,660	10,002	12,076	14,937
Amite		4,750	6,853	7,934
Jefferson	2,940	4,001	6,822	9,755 (+1,471)[1]
Madison		4,699		
Pike			4,438	5,402
Washington	1,250	2,920		
Wilkinson		5,058	9.718	11,686

Figure 2: Population statistics in the early years of the Mississippi Territory[122]

Without the full data, it can be argued that, according to the Northwest Ordinance, the Mississippi Territory was not yet ready for the right to elections by law. However, Narsworthy Hunter provided Congress with inflated population statistics, and this was enough to convince Davis and Claiborne to push a bill through Congress.[123]

This, of course, was much to the displeasure of Sargent, writing to President Adams, "that the numbers in this Territory did not according to the ordinance entitle them to a Legislature".[124] He was technically correct, but it is somewhat ironic that he would bring up the Northwest Ordinance despite him actively flouting its laws in the establishment of his law codes. Yet, the Committee of Inhabitants had been successful in subverting his authority, and was granted

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[122] Dunbar Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1908) pp.241-242. Only the statistics for Adams and Jefferson County are relevant here. Pickering County was renamed Jefferson County in the years following the Election of 1800. Washington County became an official county in 1800, comprising the region generally known as the Tombigbee District.
[123] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.44.
[124] Winthrop Sargent to John Adams, 20/06/1800, C.E. Carter (ed.), *Territorial Papers of the United States,* Vol. 5, pp.105-107.

the right to a legislature elected by the people, which had the right to advise and consent on all nominations to the office by the Governor. The Governor also lost "the arbitrary power of making law… with the right by a two-thirds vote of overriding the objections of the Governor to any law they might chose to enact."[125] Sargent's humiliation was made even greater when Anthony Hutchins, Cato West and Thomas Green, along with five of their supporters, filled the eight seats on the legislative council from Pickering and Adams counties.[126]

<center>*****</center>

Ultimately, however, the Territory was still not united, and as the Territory grew, new political divides arose. In 1800, Washington County was incorporated into the Mississippi Territory, on the shores of the Tombigbee River, as far removed from Natchez as could be. Their experience will be discussed in far greater depth in the fourth chapter of this thesis, but it worth noting here. They were also entitled to a seat in the elected assembly, and returned the local patriarch, William McGrew.[127] The residents from Tombigbee also sent a petition to Congress, in which they wholeheartedly contradicted the Committee of Inhabitants from the western counties. They railed against the "self assumed authority" of Cato West, and rejected his petition to Congress as being unrepresentative. Furthermore, they agreed that Sargent had implemented high taxes, yet they did not support West's adoption of "No Taxation without Representation". In fact, they argued that

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[125] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, p.218.
[126] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.45.
[127] Ibid.

Mississippi's population consisted of a "heterogeneous assemblage of persons who have been mostly educated under monarchical governments, unacquainted with the beautiful fabric of the American constitution, and of Americans who have long since been disused to a system of representative legislation". This, they argued, meant that Mississippi was not ready for a second grade of territorial government, as they lacked men of sufficient character to represent them.[128] The district's major concerns were over the issue of land disputes, which had also been addressed by the Committee of 1799 but will be discussed in a later chapter. However, for the purposes of this study, the stance of the Tombigbee District raises interesting questions over the political identity of the Mississippi Territory outside of the confines of the old Natchez District. It strengthens the argument that the Mississippi Territory was not yet attached to political parties on a national level – patronage and patriarchy still played a major role, in terms of how elections were decided and how political factions were created. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the history of the Mississippi Territory should be seen in two phases – the formative years, in which it solely comprised of the Natchez District, and the rest of the period, once other counties started to be created and the Mississippi Territory could no longer be seen as one homogenous body.

It has been the purpose of this chapter to consider the development of an American identity in the formative years of the Mississippi Territory, and a focus upon the Natchez District is essential in doing so. Throughout this chapter, it has been shown that the growth of representative democracy in the

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[128] Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Tombigbee and Tensaw, 01/01/1801, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, pp.69-71.

Mississippi Territory was constantly challenged by key individuals in the region's history, who sought to restrict the power of the inhabitants of the Natchez District by labelling them un-American, and "running wild in the recess of government."[129] Yet, this should be seen as more indicative of the attitude of the Federalist Party towards the people on the frontier of the early American Republic, rather than actively reflecting upon the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory. In the years following the events of this chapter, Andrew Ellicott continued to defend his and Sargent's policies, arguing to James Madison that they had, "been abused, and injured by a faction in the Mississippi Territory. - I call it a faction, because with a few exceptions, it is composed of the most abandoned, and profligate part of the community, and consists of british subjects, discontented americans, and fugitives from justice."[130] Yet such words increasingly fell upon deaf ears. As will be shown in the next chapter of this study, Cato West and his faction would rise to be democratically elected and influential figures throughout the period, and continued to shape the history of the Mississippi Territory.

This chapter has demonstrated that at the heart of the Territory's rejected of the Federalist policies and attitudes of Sargent and Ellicott was a populace that was learning to express themselves in terms of their burgeoning American spirit and identity. American identity should not here be mistaken for political identity, which is at the heart of this project, but this depiction of a burgeoning American identity was one aspect of the wider political identity developed across this era. Indeed, in many ways, a portrayal of American identity

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[129] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, p.205.
[130] Andrew Ellicott to James Madison, 27/05/1801, Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 5, pp.126-128.

unlocked local politicians' ability to cultivate the region's political identity. In the face of the aggressive attitudes of these federally-appointed individuals, the inhabitants of the old Natchez District formed committees designed to negotiate for change as one united body, which successfully allowed them to negotiate with the Spanish Governor Gayoso, to positive effect. In the long term, such committees became even more significant, allowing the inhabitants of the Natchez District to subvert their oppressive local government to engage directly with the federal government. This was a peaceful process, and showed a populace that wished to negotiate in order to achieve the basic rights of democracy. This was in the face of the aggressive attitude of Governor Sargent, who constantly intended to repress a democratic spirit, and repeatedly lambasted the inhabitants of the Natchez District as criminals and fugitives. Thus, whilst the Federalist authorities attempted to discredit and to control them with harsh tax and penal policies, these citizens actually demonstrated more willing to work with the American federal government. Thus, it is evident, that even with the only the slightest trappings of full republican government, citizens on the fringe of the American republic were able to actively engage with, and embrace, the federal system. Their language implied that they were becoming inherently American, but this was not yet apparent in their parties, their labels or their policies.

An aim of this chapter was to assess whether settlers in the Mississippi Territory saw themselves as active participants in the political process, pushing the development of the American republic from a vision to a reality. As noted early in the chapter, Onuf identifies this as being a key characteristic of settlers of the Northwest Territories. In the case of the Mississippi Territory, the reality

is much more muddled. Settlers certainly took it upon themselves to drive forward the political development of the Mississippi Territory – the political activity demonstrated throughout this chapter makes that apparent. Yet it is the motive behind that political activity that shows the difference between Mississippi and the Northwest Territory. They did not take it upon themselves to usher in the Federal Government's vision of an American republic – instead, they were trying to bring about democracy in the Mississippi Territory to expand their own forms of power. The Federal Government provides the means for them to do so.

it has not been the intention of this study to argue that these events brought the Mississippi Territory in line with the federal government. There was still a disjuncture between national party politics and the local politics of the Mississippi Territory. Rather than rebelling against the Federalist Party as a whole, the inhabitants were rebelling against their depictions by individuals representing the Federalists. If Claiborne is to be believed, they did not even find quarrel with Sargent, but instead with his taking on of Ellicott's advice, which saw him attempt to hold the Mississippi Territory in a state of "vassalage."[131] As will become clear throughout the subsequent chapters of this study, the assessment that this created a united Democratic Republican Party in the rural areas around Natchez is utterly inadequate; the following years saw further divisions between the people of the Mississippi Territory, with Cato West unable to retain his position as de facto leader of a united group of inhabitants. As the Mississippi Territory grew, and the population spread over a wider area, the alliances which were formed in the formative

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[131] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, a Territory, and State*, pp.218-219.

years of the Mississippi Territory split into smaller groups, leading to a far greater deal of infighting and division. Whilst Cato West and his supporters did align themselves with the Democratic Republicans of Congress in order to overthrow Sargent's law codes, and certainly showed themselves to be eager to engage with the American political system as a whole, it would be wrong to assert that this brought the Mississippi Territory in line with the party political system of the United States in its entirety.

<u>Chapter Two</u>

<u>Political Loyalties and the Burr Conspiracy</u>

Thomas Jefferson's rise to the presidency in the election of 1800 is generally seen as having been a seminal moment for the Mississippi Territory as well as for the United States as a whole. Although the Mississippi Territory was established in 1798 in a uniquely Federalist moment in United States history, it would soon be profoundly shaped by the Republican Party. In 1800, vast areas of the Mississippi Territory remained unorganised and unsettled. The land encompassing the official territory was barely a third of the area it would become. The region was, in theory, the perfect testing ground of Thomas Jefferson's vision for westward expansion and an agrarian republic, which would stimulate migration and strengthen the United States' grip on the frontier. Adam Rothman highlights that Jefferson's Republicanism was both conservative and progressive. Conservative in the sense that "it intended to keep the country's social structure at an agrarian state of development, delaying its inevitable march towards a more decadent, industrial society," yet progressive in that "it demanded the transformation of the western "wilderness" into a commercially oriented agricultural society."[1] This was designed to attract migrants from the eastern seaboard into areas such as the Mississippi Territory in order to help develop a society more loyal to the United States. However, across histories of Jefferson's westward vision, the Mississippi Territory has often been overlooked. As the Louisiana Purchase pushed the frontier westward, it has generally been assumed that the Territory

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[1] A. Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) p.38.

had fallen into line with the United States and that its inhabitants had become loyal American citizens. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that that was not the case, and to challenge some long held assumptions about the early American territories.

The Mississippi Territory was slow to accept an American identity, and its political elite retained characteristics and intentions which were unique to the region, with local concerns and private ambition trumping federal loyalty. Whilst the ramifications of this for scholarship of the Mississippi Territory are evident, this should also inform research into other American territories, and of westward expansion more broadly. The previous chapter of this thesis challenged the assumption that the dethroning of Governor Winthrop Sargent was the result of a burgeoning of party sentiment, with his opponents turning to, and joining, the Republican Party. It argued that, while Sargent's administration did see the division of the political class of Natchez into two factions, these factions were not truly Republican or Federalist (as these labels were interpreted in Washington). In this chapter, this notion will be developed and elaborated upon. Rather than chronologically assessing the political history of the Territory, it will focus upon a case study which characterises the political climate of the Territory: the events surrounding the so-called Burr Conspiracy in 1806-7. This approach allows a far more nuanced study tracing the development of political identity from the establishment of territorial Mississippi to the establishment of the State of Mississippi, and presents an opportunity to examine a moment in Territorial history where the nation's focus was upon the Territory, and allows us to examine how local politicians

responded to that challenge.[2] Rather than the overly neat categorisations of Republican or Federalist (as applied in existing scholarship of this early period of the Mississippi Territory), close attention to points of political tension help to expose the more complex divisions in the region. Indeed, we might legitimately question to what extent inhabitants should really be seen as recognisably American at this point. Outside of the Mississippi Territory, the concept of national identity and loyalty has been challenged by historians in a far greater way, that is instructive perhaps thanks to the useful prism of the Louisiana Purchase.

The Louisiana Territory and, by extent, West Florida, underwent more dramatic geopolitical shifts than the Mississippi Territory in 1803 and this is reflected in the historiography of these regions which has, in recent years, shifted to questions of loyalism and identity over empires and geopolitics. Perhaps the most important recent study of identity and loyalty in the Old Southwest is provided by Peter J. Kastor, who assesses the borderlands region between Spanish, French and American territories in the region.[3] Kastor identifies a "weakness of nationalist sentiment" across inhabitants of the area and assesses that their identity can be far more correctly assessed as localist, and this did not begin to transform into any form of pro-American nationalism

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[2] For a more classic overview of this period, see R.V. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010); D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968); T.P. Abernethy, *A History of the South Volume IV: The South in the New Nation, 1798-1819*, (Louisiana State University Press, 1961). Other books which have featured the political history of the Territory include P.J. Kastor, (ed.) *The Louisiana Purchase: Emergence of an American Nation* (Washington: CQ Press, 2002); P.S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); D.J. Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004).
[3] P.J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

until the War of 1812.[4] Indeed, this argument is supported by Andrew McMichael, who argues that, in the examples of Louisiana and West Florida, the, "multifaceted nature of loyalty, as well as the mutability of national loyalty and identity on the Gulf Coast borderlands, and the degree to which political nationalism – inasmuch as it existed – relied on local issues and the promise of prosperity rather than loyalty to any single political entity."[5] This is an issue that is further supported by Sylvia L. Hilton, who argues that "many Americans clearly thought that their loyalty could be legitimately transferred to whichever power best protected their interests," and that loyalty in this region, at least as far as the Spanish were concerned, was a question of free choice.[6]

In the aforementioned works, the Mississippi Territory is included implicitly, rather than explicitly. There is a general sentiment that loyalties, localism and identity in the Mississippi Territory were far more defined than in bordering areas, which is reflected across histories of the Mississippi Territory. As has already been shown, these questions are generally considered in a party political context, and U.S. identity is generally assumed. However, this thesis will demonstrate that the Mississippi Territory belongs firmly within this narrative of uncertainty in the Old Southwest. From 1803 until the conclusion of the War of 1812, the survival of American identity in Mississippi was much more fluid than has previously been shown, in step with the flexible political

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[4] Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible*, p.28.

[5] A. McMichael, "William Dunbar, William Claiborne, and Daniel Clark: Intersections of Loyalty and National Identity on the Florida Frontier" in G.A. Smith and S.L. Hilton (Eds.), *Nexus of Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010) p.289.

[6] S.L. Hilton, "Being and Becoming Spanish in the Mississippi Valley, 1776-1803" in G.A. Smith and S.L. Hilton (Eds.), *Nexus of Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010) p.15.

beliefs of its politicians. Central to McMichael's argument on West Florida and the Louisiana Territory is David Potter's assertion that it is an error to assume that "the identity of people in terms of their national identity... transcends all other identities."[7] Potter's thesis was based on the assessment that loyalty should not simply apply to ideas of nationhood, but also relates to more personal and private matters such as family, self-worth, prosperity and community.[8] With this in mind, one cannot assume the loyalty of the politicians of the Mississippi Territory simply because they engaged with the American political system, but we must also explore how private interests shaped their loyalties and identities.

The primary focus of this chapter is to challenge the view that politicians in the Mississippi Territory were genuine members of the national Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties in the aftermath of Sargent's governorship and up to the beginning of the War of 1812. In contrast to any other works on the Mississippi Territory, it is based upon the assumption that Mississippi's politicians were not loyal to any national political party, an important distinction in the approach taken here. In doing so, it is necessary to consider how to accurately place individuals into groups. As the purpose of this project is to demonstrate that personal ambitions, economic gains and familial bonds were more significant factors than political factions, the terms F*ederalist* and R*epublican* are no longer appropriate terms to describe Mississippi's politicians. Whilst these party signifiers are still relevant to Governors Sargent, Claiborne and Holmes as they were generally appointed after having served in

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[7] D.M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa", *American Historical Review* 67 (1962) p. 924.
[8] Ibid.

the federal government elsewhere, to use them for figures such as Cato West, William Dunbar or Cowles Mead is inappropriate. Instead, these terms should be understood as having been appropriated and localised by politicians in Mississippi. These remained as important signifiers for newcomers into Mississippi's society, helping them to identify the dominant political and societal networks in the Natchez region. Furthermore, this chapter will demonstrate that even dedicated Republicans such as Robert Williams could lose sight of their party identities within the political climate of the Mississippi Territory. On more than one occasion, Robert Haynes refers to political labels becoming "shibboleths rather than guideposts," when referring to occasions when the supposed Republican Party divided, and does at times acknowledge the importance of family ties.[9] However, he does not go far enough when trying to explain these political divisions. Haynes is wedded to the idea of Republicans and Federalists, but recounts multiple occasions between 1801 and 1808 when the Republican party was completely divided. Indeed, he goes as far as to describe moments where political alignments were "based more upon personalities than principles" and more on "familial relationships than political ideologies or economic interests" than party affiliation.[10] Yet these remain temporary moments in Haynes' narrative. Rather than seeing these as temporary issues and secondary ones to party affiliation, they should be seen as a more fundamental problem within the party system in Mississippi, and as a result it must be questioned whether the terms *Republican* and *Federalist* should even be used at all.

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[9] R.V. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010) p.80, p.87, p.177
[10] Ibid, p.63, p.80.

In order to understand the significance of this political phenomenon, and to understand what these partisan labels meant within the Mississippi Territory, it is important to understand how local factions operated in other areas of the early Republic and the extent of their partisanship. One must, also, identify the characteristics of the national political parties and how far their influence extended outside of their political heartlands. The most immediate point of comparison, as was outlined in the introduction, can be found within the Ohio Territory. Within Ohio, factions rose in replication of the national political landscape and, importantly, were inclusive of the wider public beyond the elite. Donald Ratcliffe identifies a party structure which replicated its federal counterpart, enabling migrants to find their ways to parties they recognised and were comfortable with. [11] As this chapter demonstrates, political factions within the Mississippi Territory operated in a similar fashion, displaying signposts and signifiers to recruit migrants looking for a new political home. However, within Mississippi, these signposts were appropriations by inherently local organisations, which did little to progress the interests of those on the fringes of their parties.

Thus, considering how Mississippi's politicians cultivated support and expanded their influence, it is important to consider whether the means by which they did this was "borrowed" from other sources. This chapter explores how politics was played within Mississippi's newspapers, with barbed political attacks wrapped upon within allegories and fables. Newspaper writers would recast Mississippi's politicians as folk heroes or historical figures, not simply

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[11] D.J. Ratcliffe, *Party Spirit in a Frontier Republic: Democratic Politics in Ohio, 1793-1821)* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998)

for entertainment, but providing newcomers with ways of identifying the factions and what they believed. As Waldstreicher shows, newspapers also were key political tools in the North East. Indeed, New England's newspapers would take inherently local events and redefine them as national events, allowing the populace to partake in displays of both local and national political action simultaneously.[12] Clearly, there are parallels here with tactics employed in Mississippi, but the goals were somewhat different. Waldstreicher identifies how partisan factions used local events to influence the national debate, whereas in Mississippi, politicians manipulated national (and historical) events to define local support and influence local activity.

In recent years, the Federalist-Republican party system has received renewed attention in the historiography.[13] Ronald Formisano has argued that a national system of party politics did not exist.[14] He argues that, before the 1830s, partisanship at the federal level did not constitute a party system – they were, to all intents and purposes, "proto-parties", as this thesis argues was the case in Mississippi. A key characteristic that Formisano identifies is the lack of engagement of political leaders, who were quick to attack rivals but not truly engaged in the mechanics of party politics. A similar argument is put forward by James Sharp, further arguing for the existence of "proto-parties" instead of

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[12] D. Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) p.7.
[13] See, for example, D. Peart and A.I. P. Smith, (eds) *Practicing Democracy: Popular Politics in the United States from the Constitution to the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); J. Pasley, A.W. Robertson and D. Waldstreicher (eds) *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
[14] R. Formisano, *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790's-1840's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

establish party machines in the early Republic.[15] Reeve Huston has actively

challenged Formisano's perspective, arguing that, even if political parties did

not develop uniformly across the nation, their foundation can certainly be

attributed to the 1790s, not the 1830s.[16] Huston contends that, while earlier

political parties may not have been as disciplined as those in the 1830s, they

certainly functioned as a party machine – the 1830s saw innovation on existing

themes, not complete invention. Other historians, including Kerber, Jeffrey

Pasley and Douglas Bradburn have taken the Federalist-Republican model as a

unequivocal aspect of the early Republic.[17] Indeed, Bradburn highlights the

inevitability of the two party system, as even something that was

acknowledged by contemporary politicians, quoting Delaware's Samuel White

arguing that the "United States are now divided, and will probably continue so,

into two great political parties."[18] Bradburn also considers why there were only

two, not more, political parties, using a theory of "path dependence" and

tracing it back to the Constitution of 1787 itself. This, in itself, demonstrates

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[15] J.R. Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)

[16] R. Huston, "Rethinking the Origins of Partisan Democracy in the United States, 1795–1840" in D. Peart and A.I. P. Smith, (eds) *Practicing Democracy: Popular Politics in the United States from the Constitution to the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015)

[17] LK. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); D. Bradburn, ""Parties Are Unavoidable": Path Dependence and the Origins of Party Politics in the United States" in D. Peart and A.I. P. Smith, (eds) *Practicing Democracy: Popular Politics in the United States from the Constitution to the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); J.L. Pasley, "The Cheese and the Words: Popular Political Culture and Participatory Democracy in the Early American Republic" in J. Pasley, A.W. Robertson and D. Waldstreicher (eds) *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); S. Cotlar, "The Federalists' Transatlantic Cultural Offensive of 1798 and the Moderation of American Democratic Discourse" in J. Pasley, A.W. Robertson and D. Waldstreicher (eds) *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[18] D. Bradburn, ""Parties Are Unavoidable": Path Dependence and the Origins of Party Politics in the United States" in D. Peart and A.I. P. Smith, (eds) *Practicing Democracy: Popular Politics in the United States from the Constitution to the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015) p.23.

the benefit of exploring Mississippi's factions – as this chapter demonstrates, there were three unique factions vying for power within Mississippi, even if two claimed the same Republican heritage.

While this thesis does highlight that Mississippi's factions shared characteristics with the models that Formisano and Sharp identify, it is not its intention to argue that Federalists and Republicans did not exist throughout the Republic. Indeed, a core tenet of its argument is that Mississippi's politicians exploited and worked within the boundaries of a present party political system. It was that party political framework that allowed Cato West and his Committee of 1799 to gain support in his efforts to remove Winthrop Sargent from office, and with two parties claiming support from Jeffersonians, it is difficult to contend that the national parties were not powerful and desirable points of reference.

Though this chapter highlights the development of a party model, this did not lead to an increase in democracy, as it had in Ohio. Indeed, Johann Neem identifies that a party structure is not necessarily a good indicator of democracy, instead identifying the capability of citizens themselves as the most important factor.[19] Focusing on Massachusetts, Neem demonstrates how grassroots organisations came proxies for party competition in the period following the Revolution.[20] As this chapter demonstrates, the rival factions of the Mississippi Territory did establish organisations to promote learning and intellectual development in the Mississippi Territory, in line with Neem's

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[19] J. Neem, "Two Approaches to Democratization: Engagement versus Capability" in D. Peart and A.I. P. Smith, (eds) *Practicing Democracy: Popular Politics in the United States from the Constitution to the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015) p.247.
[20] J. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008)

assessment in Massachusetts. Unlike in Massachusetts however, this was not alternative to party politics in Mississippi, they were apolitical organisations, committed to the wellbeing of the Territory rather than for political gain. Furthermore, they existed alongside parties, rather than replacing them. Certainly, membership did reflect party political loyalties, but it would be going too far to identify these organisations as proxies for political parties.

Albrecht Koschnik's work on associations in Philadelphia also provides a useful framework for considering Mississippi's political networks.[21] There are certainly parallels – Koschnik identifies Federalists, particularly once they fell out of power, turning to cultural institutions to continue to serve the public. This aligns with the creation of the Mississippi Society for the Dissemination of Useful Knowledge, which has been defined as a Federalist organisation. However, this chapter contends that Mississippi's institutions were more muddled. The membership of the Mississippi Society was established by local network, and by local allegiance, rather than political leaning. Indeed, Kerber notes a Federalist fear of the western wilderness, yet Mississippi's Society actively engaged in efforts to expand and survey the border – even if Federalists were prone to establishing cultural institutions, that of Mississippi is not instantly comparable.[22] Taken together, Koschnik and Neem provide helpful points of comparison for the Mississippi Territory, but in Mississippi, political parties and their counterpart cultural organisations developed earlier, quicker and more expediently. They were less ways of circumventing

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[21] A. Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together": Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775–1840,* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007)
[22] LK. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

restrictions on parties to exert political pressure, but rather ways of expanding politicians' authority outside corridors of power, and for driving forward the "improvement" of the Territory. These civic organisations, as explored in this chapter, were not auxiliaries for political parties, but were reflective of the dual role of Mississippi's politicians as political actors and local cultural elites. As this thesis will go on to demonstrate, it is not always straightforward to intertwine these roles.

Across this historiography, it is clear that the local factions that formed in Mississippi were not completely unique to that region or era. Tyler Anbinder and Andrew Heath, focusing on New York and Philadelphia respectively in the mid nineteenth century present organic political factions which politicians attempted to control through various means of restricting and providing access to the political system. They present the political systems in their locales as being dependent on the ability of the populace to organise effectively.[23] Huston has also focused on antebellum New York, demonstrating how Anti-Renters were able to effectively form around the issue of rent and in opposition to landlords, which resulted in their ability to affect elections and elect officials into the local assembly.[24] What is apparent is that there was much less of a framework in Mississippi to be able to restrict political activity, particularly in the early era. Winthrop Sargent and his successors were in no position to

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[23] A. Heath, "Small Men, Best Men, and the Big City: Reconstructing Political Culture in Antebellum Philadelphia" in D. Peart and A.I. P. Smith, (eds) *Practicing Democracy: Popular Politics in the United States from the Constitution to the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); T. Anbinder, ""Peaceably If We Can, Forcibly If We Must": Immigrants and Popular Politics in Pre–Civil War New York" in D. Peart and A.I. P. Smith, (eds) *Practicing Democracy: Popular Politics in the United States from the Constitution to the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015).

[24] R. Huston, *Land and Freedom: Rural Society, Popular Protest, and Party Politics in Antebellum New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

restrict the ways in which local patriarchs built their networks and, as political factions became more sophisticated, there was little to no way of anyone outside the major networks organising significant opposition.

Ultimately, there are aspects of the Mississippi Territory's political factions that fall in line with trends identified within the historiography, but also significant areas of divergence, particularly when compared to other territories. Indeed, even if the Territory's political circumstances were not entirely unique in the Early Republic, that is telling in itself, showing a remarkable level of political sophistication, with networks that developed quickly in the ambition of achieving political dominance. The political transformation that occurred between 1798 and 1817 is comparable with processes that were still underway in the 1830s in other areas of the United States.

<p align="center">*****</p>

During William C.C. Claiborne's governorship, he marvelled that the 1802 elections to the territorial assembly resulted in the region being "disturbed by party divisions infinitely more rancorous than any I have witnessed in our Mother States."[25] The mention of party divisions, and the rhetoric of the "party spirit", is not uncommon in this period, and there are many references to such activity in the Mississippi Territory. Understandably, this party spirit has been interpreted as being between Federalists and Republicans, which caused much of the division and partisanship which plagued the early Mississippi Territory. It has given weight to the assumptions which will be discussed in this chapter

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[25] W.C.C. Claiborne to James Madison, 03/03/1802, in D. Rowland (ed) *Mississippi Territorial Archives: Executive Journals of Winthrop Sargent and W.C.C. Claiborne* (Nashville, 1905) p.388.

that the factional divides in Mississippi were between the two political parties. However, these assumptions must be challenged. The presence of Federalists and Republicans in the Mississippi Territory was not the cause of factional disputes in the Mississippi Territory, but instead was the consequence of existing rifts and divisions across the Natchez District. These political affiliations were mechanisms, not identities. That is to say, these divisions already existed, and the labels of Federalism and Republicanism have been ascribed by historians to divisions which were less political and more economic, cultural and, perhaps most importantly, personal. By assessing the motivations behind political actions, rather than following superficial evidence of party affiliation, this thesis aims to show how territorial politics and identities were layered onto national labels. Claiborne's use of the term "Mother States" is also interesting. It suggests that he did not view the Mississippi Territory as a genuine part of the Union, but as a 'child' that had to be nurtured into the Union. With this in mind, it's important to consider any supposed affiliation to national political parties in a similar way.

Claiborne's claims of party division reflected a longer period of assessing Mississippi's political climate. Writing to James Madison upon his arrival in the region in 1801, he wrote: "I am authorized to suppose, that the warmth of Party, has of late, considerably abated in this District."[26] It is interesting to note that Claiborne had been led to believe that factional politics had subsided in the Mississippi Territory since the departure of Winthrop Sargent. It suggests that Claiborne believed that factional politics in Mississippi was caused by

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[26] W.C.C. Claiborne to James Madison, 24/11/1801, in Rowland, *Mississippi Territorial Archives*, pp. 346-349.

individuals and personality, not traditional party political division. To add further weight, Claiborne's later suggestion that the factional divide was far greater than any he had seen in more established regions of the United States suggests that the factions of the Mississippi Territory were somewhat different in character. Elaboration was provided in a letter penned in January 1802, where he wrote of "Some few domestic factions & private parties," that were established before he came to office and that he could "act independent of any of them."[27] While it could be interpreted that Claiborne meant that Mississippi's factions were more aggressive and volatile than any he had seen before, this shouldn't be assumed. Having served in the federal House of Representatives since the late 1790s and borne witness to the acrimony and unrest surrounding the Election of 1800, it is extremely unlikely that Natchez's factions had anything to offer in political terms that he had not already seen. Instead, it was the nature of factional dispute that was unique, in that it was based around far more private and personal goals, as well as focusing on individuals. The "parties" that Claiborne spoke of were not in the traditional sense (as has previously been supposed). They were, at best, imitations of the political parties at a national level, with Mississippi's networks associating with, or appropriating the ideas of, the Federalist and Republican parties so as to legitimise their actions to newcomers to the Territory and to Federal politicians.

Yet historians highlighting the party political nature of sectionalism in the Mississippi Territory have pointed to the fact that, in 1802 and 1803, two rival

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[27] W.C.C. Claiborne to James Madison, 23/01/1802 in Rowland (ed.), *Mississippi Territorial Archives,* p.374.

organisations were established. One, the Mississippi Republican Society, was established by Cato West and Thomas Green in November 1802 and was theoretically designed to "spread the true faith" of Republicanism.[28] However, any real surviving evidence of the society's activities is lacking. Indeed, the only primary evidence supplied is a letter from one of the organization's founders in 1859.[29] Other than that, claims of the society's purpose go unreferenced, and it has been too easily taken at face value. It is wrong to suggest that the Mississippi Republican Society was evidence of dedicated Republicanism in Mississippi. In 1859, the Republican Party was a different entity entirely, and to rely on evidence from such a different political era is wholly insufficient. As this chapter will demonstrate, the activities of the Green-West faction cannot be aligned with legitimate Democratic-Republicanism, but rather as a local network of powerful planters and politicians seeking to assert their dominance over the Territory. The appropriation of the Democratic-Republican label may have helped to introduce newcomers into their faction, or was supposed to help them gain political influence at the national level, though as will be shown, this was not always successful. It is far more likely that the Mississippi Republican Society was a means of attempting to expand their influence over the region. It is no coincidence that its formation coincided almost exactly with the arrival of William Claiborne to serve as Governor. Rather than being a vehicle to spread Republicanism across Mississippi, the Society was a means to curry favour

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[28] W.B. Hamilton, "Jefferson College and Education in Mississippi, 1798-1817", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Volume 3, No. 4 (October, 1941) p.266.
[29] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.62.

with a new Republican governor and establish the Green-West faction as the most influential group in the region.

The second organisation, the Mississippi Society for the Acquisition and Dissemination of Useful Knowledge, was supposedly set up by Natchez Federalists in opposition to the Republican Society.[30] However, this is also a stretch. Incorporated in November 1803, the individuals involved in the creation of the society tended to be supporters of Winthrop Sargent, but there is little evidence to suggest the organisation was politically motivated. While one cannot take the Republican Society at face value, we can take the MSADUK at something resembling that. At its heart was William Dunbar who, as will be shown shortly, cannot easily be defined as a Federalist. With regards to his role within the Society, Dunbar was a planter, merchant and amateur scientist. Having settled in Natchez as early as 1783, he was one of the region's greatest planters and "gained an international reputation for his cotton."[31] Dunbar spent much of his later life in regular correspondence with Jefferson, and the two could genuinely be considered friends. This faction of Federalists should not be characterised by being obstructionist to the government, as Dunbar was a confidante of Jefferson and was key in supplying him information on the geography, climate and biology of the Southwest.[32] Indeed, though historians such as Haynes are keen to highlight Dunbar's federalism, there are only really three key characteristics: friendship with Andrew Ellicott and Winthrop Sargent, his occupation as a merchant and the

[30] Ibid.
[31] Rothman, *Slave Country,* p.48
[32] For a concise summary of Dunbar's career, see McMichael, "William Dunbar, William Claiborne, and Daniel Clark.".

wealth that came with it, and residence in Natchez, the heartland of the pro-Sargent faction. Haynes notes that Dunbar, as with many of Sargent's allies, "generally gravitated" to him from friendship with Ellicott – hardly a great endorsement of his political devotion.[33] He was a signatory on a letter to Sargent in March 1801 from inhabitants of Natchez thanking him for his service as Governor and extolling the virtues of his administration, and was elected to the legislature to represent Adams County and Natchez in 1802, briefly serving as Speaker of the House in 1803, but his political views are not overtly present across his day-to-day affairs.[34]

Other members of the MSADUK included Isaac Briggs, Chief Surveyor of the Mississippi Territory until 1806, multiple authors (both writers of fiction and scientific) and a number of affluent merchants and planters who had established themselves in the Natchez Region. What united the Society was an interest in nature and science and improving the quality of Natchez society. They were also largely bonded by proximity and friendship with Dunbar, highlighting again the importance of personal networks.[35] Yet there was also evidently an element of the Society which was genuine for the 'dissemination of knowledge'. For example, Abner Green was a member of this Society, yet he was both a prominent opponent of Winthrop Sargent and a member of the Green-West network through blood, closely related to Cato West through marriage.[36] To traditional historians of the Territory, Abner Green was a

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[33] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.40.
[34] Citizens of Natchez to Governor Sargent, 28th March 1801 in Carter *Territorial Papers* V, pp.122-123; D. Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi*, Vol 1. (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1908) p.5
[35] W.B. Hamilton, "The Southwestern Frontier, 1795-1817: An Essay in Social History" *The Journal of Southern History,* Vol. 10, No. 4 (November, 1944), pp. 389-403.
[36] *Mississippi Herald and Natchez Gazette*, 19/10/1804.

R*epublican*, suggesting there was very little political affiliation in the organisation. Thus, there is little available evidence to suggest that the organisation was overtly Federalist and, once again, this assumption has been made because of prior assertions of the character of individuals involved. Importantly, the intentions of the Society seemingly run counter to the traditional attitude of Federalists with regards to Natchez. Whilst the organisation was certainly for the benefit of the elite of Natchez, it did not necessarily have an elitist outlook. Rather, the MSADUK was a considerably local organisation, intended to improve the status of the Mississippi Territory, perhaps in order to provide increased influence on the national stage. The first chapter of this study demonstrated the extent to which Federalists treated the frontier with disdain, yet this Society was dedicated to improving the society and culture of the Natchez District, with inherently more trust and belief in the people of the Mississippi Territory than Federalists generally allowed. The two societies mentioned here may well have been formed in opposition to each other, but their disagreements relate far more to issues between Dunbar and his network and the West-Green faction than issues between Republicans and Federalists.

Of course, this is not to say that politically motivated factions did not exist within the Mississippi Territory. The Mississippi Territory was a deeply divided region, with political disputes and partisan actions regularly occurring, and we cannot necessarily treat supposed Federalists and Republicans as two sides of the same coin. It is, however, important to find a more effective way to define the partisan networks which have been defined as political parties. The supposed Federalist faction, for example, was more defined and united than the

equivalent Republican one. In the years following Winthrop Sargent's administration, his supporters became a minority in the Mississippi Territory, with Sargent's opponents taking steps to minimise their legitimacy immediately. Pickering County was renamed Jefferson County and the territorial capital was moved to Washington, still in the Natchez District but away from the town of Natchez, which was seen as being the heart of Federalism in the region.[37] As the minority faction, it is understandable that its members remained more united as they attempted to regain control over small parts of the territorial legislature, and there are no distinctive moments where the pro-Sargent network fractured or collapsed, perhaps due to the lack of authority they were able to exert.

To define that pro-Sargent faction as Federalist is to go too far.[38] Certainly, Winthrop Sargent was a Massachusetts Federalist, but his supporters had a plethora of other motivations for siding with him rather than mere political ideology. It would be more appropriate to define them as quasi-Federalists, in that they certainly self-defined as Federalists, but the actions and ambitions of

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[37] *Pamphlet Laws of the Mississippi Territory*, 1801-1802 pp.20-21 and pp.257-258, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[38] For further reading on definitions of Federalism and characteristics of the early national political parties, see Edling, M. *A Revolution In Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American* State (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2003); Elkins, S. & McKitrick, E. *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Hendrickson, D.C. *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Borden, M. *Parties and Politics in the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Arlington Heights, IL: AHM Publishing, 1967); Kerber, L.K. *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970); Breen, T.H. *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010); Rana, A. *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Fischer, D.H. *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Foner, E. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Seagrave, S.A. (ed*.) Liberty and Equality: The American Conversation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015); Pincus, S. *The Heart of the Declaration: The Founders' Case for an Activist Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016)

these individuals in Mississippi did not truly represent the intentions of the national party, as will be explored throughout this chapter. Central to this idea is the issue of patronage and personal networks. The key members of this faction were often related via marriage rather than political belief. Seth Lewis, for example, who was Chief Justice under Sargent and later attorney-general of the Territory, married into the family of Isaac Guion, a member of the US Army and a noted New York Federalist who developed a friendship with Sargent once he had settled in Natchez, and it appears that Lewis' political leanings stemmed from there.[39] As it transpired, neither Lewis nor Guion seemed overly perturbed by serving in a Republican administration, as they did under Robert Williams during a particularly acrimonious period in 1807.[40] George Poindexter, the supposedly Republican delegate to Congress, referred to the two as "enrolled among the participators of the Arbitrary measures, and frauds of Winthrop Sargent."[41] This is indicative of the prevailing attitude in the Mississippi Territory, that personal networks established political identity more than loyalty to political parties. Lewis, it should be acknowledged, did note that he "was known to be a Federalist" in his memoir, but this is characterised by others less by his politics and more by his friendship with Sargent and, in 1807, "his enmity to the present administration, and to the person of the President."[42] If true, this is actively contradicting the attitude of William Dunbar, who is generally viewed as a leading Federalist. Thus,

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[39] Taken from the unpublished private memoir of Seth Lewis. Kindly given to me by Cecile Wardlaw, a descendent of Lewis who resides in Jackson, Mississippi. p.1.
[40] George Poindexter to the Secretary of War, January, 1808, in C.E. Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. 5. (United States Government Printing Office, 1937) pp.604-607.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Seth Lewis, Private Memoir, p.13 and Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.605.

disliking President Jefferson was by no means a hallmark of Federalist identity in the Natchez region.

Mercantile activity was another key determinant of political affiliation, as shown again in the case of William Dunbar. It has already been demonstrated that the pro-Sargent faction rose from the merchants of Natchez who had previously been opposed to the Spanish government and the roots of the supposed Federalist faction of Natchez should really be seen as mercantile and economic interest, rather than political belief. Indeed, Seth Lewis had been a merchant in Tennessee before having been driven out of business and turning to a career as a lawyer, and it can be supposed that his allegiances in the Mississippi Territory were formed then.[43] Other supposed representatives of the Federalists in Natchez were merchants first. Abijah Hunt is defined as a "staunch, outspoken Federalist" by Haynes, and was mortally wounded in a duel by George Poindexter, who is defined as an "outrageous anti-Natchez politician".[44] However, Hunt never served any political role, outside briefly serving as postmaster, and the selection of his personal papers that remain in Mississippi do not suggest any great political motivations outside of his rapidly developing business ventures.[45] Indeed Haynes' claims that Hunt had always found Poindexter "repugnant" are derived from Mack Swearingen's 1934 study of the early life of Poindexter, a study which is somewhat lacking in source material and comes to overblown conclusions. As a source, it lacks sufficient evidence to make character judgements on Hunt.[46] This is somewhat

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.212.
[45] Abijah Hunt Papers, Z/0230.000/S/Box 1, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.
[46] M.B. Swearingen, *The Early Life of George Poindexter: A Story of the First Southwest* (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1934) p.6.

symptomatic of Mississippi's early historiography – assumptions have been repeated over and over again, despite never truly having been backed up. Hunt's status as a "staunch Federalist" is often repeated, yet never really defined. The often useful *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* produced by Dunbar Rowland, defines Hunt as a "strong partisan" who "sided with the Federal party", yet it is his wealth and mercantile expertise which is highlighted, and the *Encyclopaedia* does not provide further references.[47] Based upon primary material available on Abijah Hunt, it must be assumed that his political affiliations were defined by business ventures and personal networks established in Natchez. He is another of the signatories on the aforementioned letter to Sargent, yet his lack of traceable political activity, beyond hearsay, suggests this may have been a personal relationship rather than a public one.[48]

It is also important to consider the extent to which the supposed Federalists of the Natchez District actually demonstrated Federalist opinion in their politics. Sargent, as the embodiment of a traditional Federalist view, believed that government in the Mississippi Territory should be small and kept out of the hands of the local inhabitants. Yet, supposed Federalists in the General Assembly in 1804 actively campaigned for, and secured, measures which extended the franchise and reapportioned representation across the government of the Mississippi Territory. They requested of Congress that:

> …part of the ordinance which requires a free-hold in fifty acres of Land as the
> qualification of an elector of a representative may be so altered so that, having

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[47] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History Vol. 1.* (Madison, 1907) p.908.
[48] Citizens of Natchez to Governor Sargent, 28th March 1801 in Carter, *Territorial Papers* V, pp.122-123.

been a citizen of one of the United States, and having resided in the Territory one

Year next preceeding [sic] an election… or, if not a citizen.. having resided two

years in the Territory... and having paid a County or Territorial tax… may be the

qualification required.[49]

It is curious that Haynes acknowledges this yet does not question whether or

not the individuals he attributes as Federalists actually acted as such. Indeed,

he even highlights that the Natchez merchants who conspired to pass this

motion forged a temporary alliance with political enemies to do so.[50] The

legislation that these quasi-Federalists helped to enact in 1804 was the

antithesis of longstanding Federalist policy. The acts were self-serving on a

local level, helping to strengthen their own political networks and allowing

their geopolitical base of Natchez to thrive. Once again, local and personal

networks trumped any affiliation to the national party political organisations.

This is integral to the understanding of these quasi-Federalists in the

Mississippi Territory. Prioritising mercantile activity does not indicate a lack

of Federalist ideology, as it was also a key facet of the Federalist party at the

national level as well. What is more significant is the way in which this

economic activity was more important to the members of Mississippi's

"Federalist" network than politics. As has been shown, the actual politics of

Natchez' "Federalists" were not in line with those of the national party.

The quasi-Federalist merchants of Natchez were defined by their personal

networks and interests, but were at least a united body. Even between 1801 and

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[49] Memorial to Congress by the Territorial Legislature, 14/12/1804, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 5, pp.361-366.
[50] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.87. The memorials to Congress by the Territorial Legislature which express these changing laws can be found in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 5, pp.361-366.

1807, when the Territory had been dominated by opposing factions for over half a decade, Lewis, Guion and their faction clearly maintained a network of cooperation. They were ready to exploit weaknesses in their opposition during the dispute between Cowles Mead and Governor Williams in the wake of the Burr affair, which will be discussed in greater depth across this chapter, and were effectively able to maintain a degree of representation in the legislative bodies of Mississippi. Robert Weems notes that two Federalists, Winthrop Sargent and Abijah Hunt, were instrumental in establishing the Bank of Mississippi. This, he assesses, is due to the bipartisan nature of the venture; it was important to have Federalist representation to aid the process.[51] However, it would be more useful to see their involvement in light of their status as businessmen and merchants – they were wealthy and had strong business acumen, which were necessary attributes in order to guarantee the success of the Bank. It's also difficult to see how Winthrop Sargent could have been brought back into the fold of Mississippi government if this was a political decision. The Bank of Mississippi is a useful way of highlighting the endurance of the wealthy, merchant, quasi-Federalist faction of Natchez. The presence of individuals such as Sargent, Guion and Lewis, who brought their brand of federalism from outside Mississippi, gives this faction a veneer of legitimacy, making it easier to misassign their motivations or factional origins.

In stark contrast, members of the so-called Republican Party in Mississippi were by no means united. Across the period, there are examples of Republicans casting their opponents as members of a "junto"[52] and each group

[51] R. C. Weems Jr, "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi", *Journal of Mississippi History* Vol. 15, No.3 (July, 1953), pp. 137-154
[52] *Mississippi Messenger,* 11/08/1807

proclaimed themselves to be the true Republican faction in attempts to discredit opponents. The previous chapter of this study has already demonstrated that opponents of Sargent, in a faction led by Cato West, utilised the national Republican Party as allies as they tried to overthrow their Governor. This was a marriage of necessity rather than ideology. Indeed Seth Lewis noted that "as Mr. Jefferson had come into power by the triumph of Republican principles these men had all at once, forsooth, become first rate Republicans, at least so they proclaimed themselves."[53] This was a group bonded by familial ties rather than political views, and it became the foundation of the quasi-Republican spirit that developed across the period. Cato West, the individual at the heart of the anti-Sargent movement, came into that position through marriage. He was married to the daughter of Thomas Green, and was by that marriage the brother-in-law of Abner Green. Abner Green was married to Mary Hutchins, daughter of Anthony Hutchins, an Adams County planter who was at the heart of the anti-Ellicott faction of the Spanish occupied Natchez District. West rose to prominence off the back of Anthony Hutchins' influence after Hutchins took a step back from political life in his old age.[54] This faction maintained strength even after Cato West's political influence waned by virtue of the fact that Cowles Mead married Mary Green, daughter of Abner Green, and went on to become Governor Williams' Secretary, a position that West had previously held under Claiborne.[55] Thus, one of the primary factions of Republicanism in Mississippi, and there were many, was borne out of a feud which pre-dated the Territory itself between

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[53] Seth Lewis, Private Memoir, p.13.
[54] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Vol 2 (Madison: 1907) p.950; D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Vol 1 (Madison: 1907) p.911.
[55] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Vol 2 (Madison: 1907) pp.213-214.

Hutchins and Ellicott and its endurance signals that marital links and patronage were more important in upholding such factions than the spirit of Republicanism itself. Whereas the roots of the mercantile faction of Natchez were in support of Andrew Ellicott and Winthrop Sargent, the faction that has been identified as Republican was born out of opposition to those individuals.

The Green-West faction may have been dominant but was only one of many groups claiming to represent Republican ideals in the Mississippi Territory post-1801. After the appointment of Claiborne as governor and the accompanying decline of Sargent as a figurehead for the opposing faction, the anti-Sargent faction divided, perhaps without a figurehead of opposition for them to target. Importantly, the resulting divided groups remained definable by family ties and geographical links. This division first arose in 1802, between supporters of Claiborne and his brother, Ferdinand L. Claiborne, and the Green-West faction, over the foundation of Jefferson College and the location of the territory's capital. These events will be explored in much greater detail in the third chapter, as they provide an important insight into the private versus the public in the Mississippi Territory, but it should be noted how the supposed Republican party fractured so dramatically over the importance of location. The second instance of factional division came during the events of Robert Williams' governorship, and was perhaps more significant thanks to its similarities with the Winthrop Sargent affair. The remainder of this chapter will be focused upon those events, and the Burr controversy. These events, beginning in 1806 and rumbling on until 1808 were defining moments in the history of the Mississippi Territory, and highlight the extent to which assigning

the tags of *Republican* and *Federalist* to individuals in Mississippi in this era, is utterly invalid.

The below table, figure 3, is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the factions of the Mississippi Territory, and as this thesis demonstrates, those factions were incredibly fluid. Instead, it contains the individuals most frequently referenced in this chapter and across the work more broadly, simply categorising them into one of the three major factions for ease and as a reference point. The term "Establishment" is used to identify those who supported the governor of the day, whether that be Claiborne or Robert Williams, his successor. Those highlighted in green are individuals directly linked to the Green-West faction and Anthony Hutchins, either by blood or by marriage. It should be noted that some individuals are named more than once. Andrew Marschalk, for example, the editor of the *Misisissippi Herald*, wrote in support of both Winthrop Sargent and William Claiborne, so cannot be easily identified as being tied to either faction, and Ferdinand L. Claiborne was a staunch supporter of his brother, William Claiborne, but aligned himself with the Green-Wests once Robert Williams began his tenure as Governor.[56]

Quasi-Federalist	Quasi-Republican	
	Green-West	Establishment
Winthrop Sargent	Anthony Hutchins	William C.C. Claiborne
William Dunbar	Cato West	Ferdinand L. Claiborne
Andrew Ellicott	Thomas Marston Green	Robert Williams
Seth Lewis	Abner Green	Andrew Marschalk

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[56] For more detail, see Haynes, R.V. "Historians and the Mississippi Territory" *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 29, No.4, (November 1967) pp.409-428.

Andrew Marschalk	Cowles Mead	William Lattimore
Abijah Hunt	Mary Hutchins	James Foster
Isaac Briggs	Mary Green	Harry Toulmin
Isaac Guion	Thomas Calvit	Thomas Williams
John Girault	George Poindexter	
Robert Dunbar	Mordecai Throckmorton	
Peter Bryan Bruin	David Ker	
John Steele	Narsworthy Hunter	
William McGuire	Ferdinand L. Claiborne	
Daniel Tilton	Samuel Terrell	

Figure 3: Notable Members of Political Networks within the Mississippi Territory

c.1798-1809[57]

Thus, the factions of the Natchez District and the Mississippi Territory as a whole were not so defined or politically motivated to be able to neatly define them as *Republican* and *Federalist*. Indeed, they themselves manipulated and appropriated these labels for their faction's benefit, either to gain influence on a more national stage or to make themselves more identifiable to new migrants. Whilst they can broadly be categorised as a Natchez-based mercantile network and a more rural, family-based faction of planters, they were also fluid. Ferdinand L. Claiborne is a key example of a supposed-Republican who formed a key part of the Claiborne supporting faction of

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[57] The majority of data presented here is the author's own analysis. However, Dunbar Rowland's *Statistical* Register should be consulted as an excellent reference point. Dunbar Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1908)

'Republicans' in 1802 yet shifted to be a key member of the Green-West faction, once Cowles Mead was its figurehead. This suggests that these factions were less defined by what they stood for than what they opposed, which is also reflected in the way that local newspapers became notorious for attacking political opponents, as will be shown. The supposedly Republican faction has been identified as such because they turned to Republicans at a Federal level in opposition to Winthrop Sargent. The pro-Sargent mercantile faction were united by their loathing of individuals such as Cato West and Cowles Mead, and were willing to align with traditional enemies such as Robert Williams to that end, and the awkwardly named Green-West-Mead faction, including Ferdinand and Poindexter, were united by their fervent opposition to Robert Williams, a governor who was significantly backed by Thomas Jefferson to the extent that he was re-appointed by Jefferson even in the face of such opposition. Thus, for the remainder of thesis, those previously defined as Federalists will be redefined as a faction of Natchez merchant elites, and those previously defined as Republicans will be classified on a more ad-hoc basis. Whilst the initial incarnation of the anti-Sargent faction can be easily defined as the Green-West faction, other groups must also be considered. These range from a pro-Claiborne faction, a pro-Williams faction and an anti-Williams faction, which encompassed parts of the Claiborne and the Green-West faction. At times, they were also a Greenville faction, or a Washington faction. Indeed, a separate group of Tombigbee-based partisans must also be considered. To prescribe definitive terms at this stage is to downplay the fluidity and complexity of the partisan networks of the Mississippi Territory. By escaping *Federalist* and *Republican* political labels, it is possible to achieve

a more nuanced assessment of politics in the Mississippi Territory. It allows us to reassess personal motivations and networks in order to understand loyalty and citizenship in the Mississippi Territory. As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, by stepping away from these definitions, one is able to understand responses to a crisis such as the Burr Conspiracy in a new, clearer manner.

In the wake of the Sargent affair, the Mississippi Territory transitioned into a new era of government under the governorship of the Virginian-born Republican William C.C. Claiborne. A member of the House of Representatives representing Tennessee from the age of 22, he was a young and enthusiastic member of the party, much admired by Jefferson.[58] As was mentioned in the previous chapter, he was one of the Congressmen that the quasi-Republican faction headed by Cato West turned to in protest of Sargent, so Claiborne seemingly had a vested interest in the Mississippi Territory and was known to its inhabitants. However, his governorship, and the peace and prosperity it brought, was cut short by major geopolitical shifts in the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase redefined boundaries, borders and frontiers, adding over 800,000 square miles to the territory of the United States right on the doorstep of the Mississippi Territory, bringing new opportunities and perils to settlers and migrants.[59] The economic and private

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[58] A very brief (but useful) background of Claiborne can be found in C.L. Summers, *The Governors of Mississippi*, (Pelican, 1999) pp.35-36.
[59] For a detailed history of the Louisiana Purchase, see for example S. Levinson and B. Sparrow (eds.) *The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) or P.J. Kastor and F. Weil, (ed.), *Empires of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), T.J. Fleming, *The Louisiana Purchase* (London: John Wiley, 2002), J.E. Pierce, "For Its Incorporation in Our Union": The Louisiana Territory and the Conundrum of Western Expansion, in *Making the White Man's West* (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2016)

impact of the Purchase will be explored later, but it also had huge political ramifications in that Governor Claiborne was appointed the first governor of the Orleans Territory, encompassing New Orleans and the surrounding area, in November 1803, acting as a provincial governor before the territorial system was established.[60] A new governor would not be appointed for over a year, leaving Claiborne's secretary, the notorious Cato West as acting-governor in Mississippi.

West's tenure was brief and provides for more interesting study when it comes to the dynamics between public and private interest in the Natchez District, as many issues were infrastructural and forced politicians to weigh up the personal economic benefits against the political implications for the territory.[61] However, it is necessary to discuss the dynamic between Claiborne and West in more detail here in order to understand how the political networks of the Mississippi Territory impacted the region's society, as well as to further understand the limitations of the *Republican* moniker. In the same letter to James Madison quoted above in which Claiborne hoped for the abatement of party spirit, he acknowledged the presence of a pamphlet written by former Governor Winthrop Sargent, defending his actions and attacking the "conduct of the President in relation to Mr Sargent," as well as "misrepresenting" Claiborne's character.[62] It resulted in the Territorial Assembly resolving, in defence of the Territory, that "A great majority of the citizens of this territory are much attached to the U.S.. and equally so to a free government: that they

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[60] Summers, *The Governors of Mississippi*, (Pelican, 1999) p.36.

[61] See Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory*, chapters 6 and 7 for a summary of West's tenure as Governor.

[62] W.C.C. Claiborne to James Madison, 24/11/1801, in D. Rowland (ed), *Mississippi Territorial Archives: Executive Journals of Winthrop Sargent and W.C.C. Claiborne* (Nashville, 1905) p.348.

will never be reconciled to oppression or confide in the man who oppresses

them: hence arose their great desire for a legislative assembly of their own, and

the removal of W. Sargent."[63] This was, perhaps, an indication to Claiborne

that party sentiment had not at all subsided in the region as he had been led to

believe. Indeed, the General Assembly also informed Claiborne that "the

political situation of the country in every view is much worse than before" the

publication of the new laws of the Mississippi Territory established by

Governor Sargent.[64] Evidently, in the eyes of the General Assembly, Sargent's

partisan lawmaking would take much longer to resolve than Claiborne

anticipated.

Yet neither the pamphlet, which was designed to secure Sargent's base of

support among Natchez merchants, nor Sargent's laws, were the main source

of partisan struggle for Claiborne, which in fact came from within his

supposed base of support. The Territorial Assembly had become increasingly

partisan in the wake of Sargent's dismissal. Disputes between the legislature

and the judiciary came to a head, resulting in the dismissal of Seth Lewis and

the subsequent appointment of the well-respected Thomas Rodney as a

Territorial judge. The historical record is somewhat lacking in evidence of the

source of this dispute, though it appears to have been related to the perennial

problem of land claims and disputes.[65] It was also around this time that the

counties of the Territory were renamed, with Pickering County, named for the

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[63] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 1, (Madison, 1907) p. 432.
[64] Ibid.
[65] For more details of the dispute between the judges and the assembly, which affected Lewis far more than his peer Peter Bryan Bruin, see the entry for the Territorial Judiciary in Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol 1. P.978. Despite Lewis being the one who took the fall, Claiborne actually considered him to be the only genuinely qualified lawyer of the three judges.

former Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, becoming Jefferson County.[66]

This was, again, a very public showing of respect to the new Republican president, demonstrating the extent to which the legislature wished to demonstrate its allegiance to the party, even if their actions did not truly reflect this. Indeed, the seat of the new Jefferson County was the appropriately named Greenville, home of Cato West and Thomas Marston Green, among others. It also further reduced the footprint of the Sargent administration, as it had been he who had named the county in Pickering's honour. The importance of geography to the networks of the Mississippi Territory is also visible in the actions of the assembly, in that the seat of government was shifted from Natchez to Washington in early 1802.[67] This took the seat of government and the meeting place of the territorial legislature away from the hub of pro-Sargent activity in Natchez, an important base for the merchants of the region, and into the more rural parts of Adams County, where the Green-Wests flourished. Although Washington was not far away from Natchez in geographic terms, this was an important geopolitical shift, putting power into the hands of the Green-West network.

On the face of it, these partisan moves should have suited Governor Claiborne. They helped to diminish any influence that may have been held by the supporters of the previous administration and should have solidified his base of support amongst those who had sought his help in overthrowing Sargent back in 1799-1800. Yet much of the opposition to Claiborne's administration actually came from within his own supposed base of support. Cato West and

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[66] Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 1, p.966.
[67] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory,* p.55.

his network may have turned to Claiborne for support against Sargent, but quickly turned on him once he took on the governorship himself. The fallout was not simply political, for any actual political arguments between Claibornites and the Green-West faction were somewhat petty, less about policy and strategy than patronage or the lack of it. Problems began with the perception that Claiborne was not appointing enough of Cato West's supporters, retaining some loyalty to the Jeffersonian principle of bipartisanship reflected in his inaugural address.[68] Even so, Claiborne had appointed number of West's network to key positions, including West himself, who took up the key position of Territorial Secretary. Abner Green became the Territory's treasurer, and West and Thomas Calvit became Justices of the Peace.[69] But West clearly felt that Claiborne did not go far enough, infuriated that Claiborne did not support the suggestion that the Legislature be moved once more, to Greenville, and by the governor's apparent rejection of the idea that the franchise should be extended.[70] Claiborne's apparent disapproval of the importation of slaves must also have been of some concern to the planters of rural Mississippi and contributed to the distrust of Claiborne among West's allies, demonstrating the extent to which political decisions and stances were as much about economic gain as they were about allegiance to a political ideology.[71]

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[68] Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, *Avalon Project*, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jefinau1.asp [last accessed 24/06/2017]

[69] Proclamation of Abner Green, 01/04/1802, in Rowland, ed. *Executive Journals of Sargent and Claiborne*, pp.397-399.

[70] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.63.

[71] Claiborne to James Madison, 23/01/1802, in Rowland, ed. *Executive Journals of Sargent and Claiborne*, p.374.

The divide between Claiborne and West and their respective supporters is a significant one. It demonstrates that the Cato West and the Committee of 1799's hatred of Sargent was not entirely borne out of political allegiance and views. Even after he had been replaced by an established Republican, who had served in the federal House of Representatives for Tennessee, the Green-West faction did not fall into line. Yet while the disputes between Claiborne and West are significant in themselves, it's also important to discuss how these were reported and politicised by Mississippi's fledgling media. By examining the way Mississippi's newspapers, in particular the *Missisippi Herald*, reported the fallout in the years following the events themselves, it will be shown that the national party political terms were appropriated not only for political advantage but also as a way of building Mississippi's society.[72] The way the *Herald* reported and retold the events of Claiborne's governorship, twisting events to fit a narrative, helped to inform new migrants to the Territory of its recent political history. *Republicanism* and *Federalism* were the only political factions any American migrant would have recognised, and thus, being able to identify the local networks of the Mississippi Territory was an important way of integrating into the community.

Mississippi's newspapers, unsurprisingly, had a history of partisanship, yet evidently remained influential within the Territory's society. The position of the Territory's "public printer" very much depended on who was in favour with the Governor at the time, generally shifting between Andrew Marschalk, printer of the *Natchez Gazette* and the aforementioned *Herald*, generally

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[72] The incorrect spelling of Mississippi is deliberate, though it is unclear why the editor, Andrew Marschalk, retained such an error. The missing 's' sometimes resulted in the name being spelled *Misissippi*, and there's a lack of consistency across the newspaper's run.

Natchez-centric and pro-Sargent, and Samuel Terrell, publisher of the *Mississippi Messenger*, though he was replaced by the more partisan John Shaw around the time of the Burr affair. Though Marschalk was generally viewed as being "Federalist" due to his support of Winthrop Sargent, it's clear that this was a marriage of convenience, as he also supported Claiborne and later Robert Williams against the Green-West faction. He was less a supporter of any of the governors and more an opponent of the belligerent Wests.[73] The newspapers regularly reprinted articles from around the states, including news from Congress, in order to keep inhabitants informed of wider current events, though the most interested articles were generally found on pages two and three of the standard four-page publication. It was there that local news and opinion pieces were published. Political commentary in the newspapers, particularly in the period before 1810, generally took the form of letters from readers under pseudonyms. It's not thoroughly clear who the authors of these letters were, but it's likely that they were the editors themselves, thanks in part to certain consistencies. Yet, despite the fact that there was a certain lack of authenticity behind any comment, they were clearly influential. In August 1802, for example, an anonymous letter claimed that William Dunbar's election to the General Assembly had been "procured by corruption." The accusation must have caused some commotion around the region as Dunbar

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[73] Complete collections of these newspapers are hard to find. There is no complete digitised run available, though select copies of the newspapers are available online at the Library of Congress. A complete series of hard copies is available at the MDAH. For a good summary of the newspapers' histories, see Haynes, *Mississippi Territory,* pp.173-175; For some further reading into newspapers in early America, see Pasley, J.L. *"The Tyranny of the Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Gabrial, B. *The Press and Slavery in America, 1791–1859: The Melancholy Effect of Popular Excitement* (University of South Carolina Press, 2016); Brown, R.D. *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

took the opportunity to publish his own letter two weeks later in order to deny the accusation.[74] In order to have elicited such a rapid response, the *Herald* must have had a sizeable readership among the enfranchised inhabitants of the Territory. This is important to keep in mind when discussing how the newspapers reported important political events – they clearly had a captured audience, and they were not simply preaching to the converted.

That being said, whilst the Territory's newspapers were certainly the main way of hearing of local events, reporting on political events was not necessarily a regular occurrence. Of course, there were regular advertisements and requests that could be found in any early American newspaper that give a flavour of the local society, but one could not rely on the papers for a steady source of news on the legislative council's activities, for example. Indeed, the most interesting reporting of the fallout between William Claiborne and Cato West did not come until five years later, in 1807. The coverage of Claiborne's administration in the summer of 1807 was not a coincidence however, being in the middle of a period of intense political debate between Governor Robert Williams and his secretary, Cowles Mead. Taking the form of several letters to the editor of the *Misissippi Herald* by two writers known as "Scurvy Grass" and "Dr Birdlime", the coverage of the political situation of 1802 discusses the foundations of the political networks of the Mississippi Territory and the warnings they should provide for the politicians of the day. Unfortunately, the series of writings is incomplete, as Scurvy Grass and Dr Birdlime apparently both suffered from illnesses which prevented publishing further reports; Scurvy Grass, for example, became "extremely ill with the Mulligrubs" on the

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[74] *Mississippi Herald*, 03/08/1802; *Mississippi Herald*, 17/08/1802

17th June, and was unable to continue to paint his portrait of the "Federalists and anti-Federalists" of the Revolution. [75] By the 15th July, "Mr Birdlime is despaired of by all of his physicians except one," and was equally unable to tell the tale of Claiborne's administration.[76] What has survived is highly satirical and requires some understanding of Mississippi's early history and society, as most of the characters involved were given fake names. Whilst some are not particularly clear as very few clues are revealed in order to reveal their true identity, others are more obvious. George Poindexter became "The Prince of Peace", Ferdinand Claiborne became "The Knight of Rueful Countenance" and Cowles Mead became "The Good Man Friday". Whilst these were literary references, drawing on *Robinson Crusoe* and *Don Quixote*, other pseudonyms drew on recent history, with references to Tallerand and the Baron von Steuben being allies of the Prince of Peace.[77] The stories are somewhat difficult to translate and must equally have been so for readers at the time. However, anyone with a good understanding of recent Mississippi history would have recognised the characters. Furthermore, by using these literary and historical nicknames, Marschalk (or his writers) provided importance reference points for new migrants into the Territory, turning the *Herald's* stories into something far more informative. Marschalk provided a highly partisan version of events which introduced the reader to all the main actors of the period in a way that any could understand.

The articles which appeared in the summer of 1807 in the *Herald* alongside accounts of Aaron Burr's trial in Richmond, Virginia, took the form of several

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[75] *Mississippi Herald,* 17/06/1807.
[76] *Mississippi Herald,* 15/07/1807.
[77] See, for example, *Mississippi Herald,* 17/06/1807.

letters from Mr Birdlime addressed to "Robert Williams, Esq. endeavouring to act the Governor of the Mississippi Territory." Despite this somewhat lukewarm introduction, the author quickly noted: "I have no cause whatsoever to induce me to hurt your feelings, nor those of any one possessed of sensibility," instantly aligning the articles against the Green-West faction, whom Williams had made great enemies of in the wake of the Burr Conspiracy. From then, Birdlime sets the scene of his visit to "Old Steadfast", apparently an elder statesman of the Mississippi Territory, and his conversations there with "Neighbour Spriggins", who had become a "violent enemy" of the Williams administration. In recounting the conversation, the author cleverly explains how unpopular Governor Williams had become in the Territory, highlighting the arguments against him (though stressing that he didn't agree). If the letters were serving as introductions, or reminders of the history of the Territory, then this literary explanation of current events would have certainly helped new migrants to acclimatise to the political situation. Furthermore, they also help create a bridge between the events of 1802 and 1807. By establishing the factional divides present between Governor Williams and his enemies, the author drew parallels between Winthrop Sargent and his enemies and, following that, W.C.C. Claiborne and his enemies. It's significant that, in the discussion of Spriggins' views, no party labels are used at all; networks are defined by support of, or opposition to, the governor at the time.[78]

The letter then switches focus to discuss the events of 1802:

> "You cannot forget that last winter was a year, our legislative assembly was so
> split up into parties that they could not, after many trials, elect a member to

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[78] *Mississippi Herald*, 17/06/1807

congress. The republican party, as they called themselves, were divided into the tools of *Claibourne* and the tools of *West*. A third party, almost equally numerous, called themselves *Federalists*. The tools of Claiborne and West hated each other – they both hated the Federalists, and the federalists hated both. The republicans, when united, carried every thing before them, but when divided, the federalists turned the scales."[79]

The implication that the Republicans had self-identified themselves as such, and that the third party "called themselves *Federalists*" is an important one to note. The *Herald* has often been considered a 'Federalist' newspaper, in direct contrast to the *Messenger* which was fervently a Green-West supporting publication and has thus been seen as 'Republican'. The suggestion here is that, as per the argument of this thesis, the terms were appropriated by the networks of the Territory rather than actually being based on genuine political opinion. The fact that this is being implied by one of the most important political newspapers in the Territory only adds weight to this assessment. Furthermore, the importance of patronage and networks is underlined. The use of the term "tools" of Claiborne and West is significant. It demonstrates the extent to which these networks were dependent on a patron at their head. The networks were based on the politics of personality rather than ideology. This further highlights that there was no real 'Republican' party at all, but instead there were multiple self-serving factions, which only came together when it suited the ambitions of both.

Despite discussing the falling out between Claiborne and West here, the author of these letters changed tactic in the subsequent two editions of the *Herald*.

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[79] *Mississippi Herald*, 17/06/1807

'Mr Birdlime' returns to the beginning of Claiborne's Governorship on 24th
June, and rebrands West as 'the old Roman Knight' and Claiborne as the
'young Governor Homespun.'[80] In this new version of events, West courted
the good graces of the Governor, finding that "a country girl of twelve or
thirteen years as not more courtable;" indeed, "No one knew better than old
Cato how to take advantage of those youthful ebullitions of patriotism and
virtue." [81] Although different to the original letter of the 17th June, the
sentiment remains the same, as Birdlime compared the governorship of
Claiborne to that of "old Trunnion" – alias Winthrop Sargent. It is suggested
that, in courting Claiborne's favour, West convinced him that "the friends of
old Trunnion were his inveterate enemies, and would remain so in despight
[sic] of every effort of conciliation." Furthermore, that "a great majority of the
good citizens were inimical to old Trunnion to that degree that they would
side, without hesitation, with any one who opposed or made battle with him."[82]
The politics of personality and patronage are clear once again here. This is
nothing to do with the ideals of Thomas Jefferson's Republicanism, but instead
about Cato West securing the support of the Governor in order to win partisan
victories over his personal enemies.

That message is made even more clear later in the letter. "You have but one
course to pursue," West supposedly informed Claiborne. "hoist the standard of
Republicanism and declare open war. The Cato West-and-othersites will rally
round you. They know the colours – They all dance to one turn – no matter for

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[80] *Mississippi Herald*, 24/06/1807
[81] Ibid.
[82] *Mississippi Herald*, 01/07/1807

the song ."[83] Thus, according to the author of these letters, potentially Andrew Marschalk, Republicanism was not a political ethos in the Mississippi Territory, but instead simply a signifier of partisan networks. Apparently, Cato West and his allies had appropriated the term, and would support anyone who purported to represent the party, no matter what their real beliefs were. Such a message was taken forward by the other writer, 'Scurvy Grass', on the 22nd July, who penned a somewhat clumsy comparison of Cato West and his namesake, Marcus Porcius Cato, the Roman Tribune of the late Republic, an enemy of Julius Caesar, writing, for example:

> Cato the Censor loved no Country but Italy, he hated all governments except the Republican.
>
> Our Cato loved, advocated and deprecated alternately the American and Spanish governments – Therefore the more liberal of the two.[84]

Although Scurvy Grass attempted a nuanced historical comparison, his letters are distinctly unsubtle. He, as well as Mr Birdlime, clearly intended to demonstrate to the readers of the *Herald* that 'Republicanism' in the Mississippi Territory was not real, but was instead fabricated and appropriated by the personal networks of Claiborne and West. The metaphors employed are thinly veiled, and do as much to discredit any supposed Federalists as well – although the faction is depicted as being more united than its enemies, they are defined by their opposition to Claiborne and West, and support of Sargent, than by any political notion.

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[83] Ibid.
[84] *Mississippi Herald*, 22/07/1807.

The letters of Mr Birdlime and Scurvy Grass in the *Mississippi Herald* in 1807 are an important insight into how Mississippians viewed their political factions. The timing of the publications was clearly significant – as will be demonstrated, it was a time of significant introspection when the loyalty and political identity of the Territory as a whole was being called into question, and those purporting to be 'Republicans' were at war with each other once again. By providing a history of the politics of the Territory, the articles provided signposts for readers. For those in the loop, they would seemingly be humorous and satirical, and for those new to the Territory or to politics, they would provide important signposts. They aimed to inform readers about the history of either faction in 1807 – though West was no longer active, the Green-Wests were still represented by Cowles Mead, and whilst Claiborne was no longer involved, Governor Williams was in a very similar position. Indeed, the articles would also have helped those with no knowledge of the factional networks of Mississippi at all. By explaining the links, however tenuous, to the national political parties, such articles would help migrants understand how the factions of Mississippi sought to align themselves. This then, explains in some way how political identity in Mississippi was formed and moulded. The appropriation of the terms 'Federalist' and 'Republican' meant more than simply currying favour at the national level. By using such naming conventions, the factions of the Territory were able to bring in new members and supporters, who would not have known any other political party than the two at the national level. Using these names gave a veneer of legitimacy to a system which was partisan and largely driven by patronage and personal, private networks.

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As has been discussed, the writings of the *Mississippi Herald* came from a particularly tumultuous time in the tenure of W.C.C. Claiborne's successor as Governor, Robert Williams. A North Carolinian Republican who had served three terms in the House of Representatives, Williams arrived in Mississippi in January 1805, beginning yet another period of instability and factional dispute in the Territory, culminating in a period of national crisis in the winter of 1806-1807.[85] The appointment of Williams itself was somewhat controversial in itself, with Dunbar Rowland claiming that "Col. Cato West… was generally regarded as the choice of the majority of the people," which caused an element of disaffection which would haunt Williams throughout his Governorship, and which will be explored in greater detail throughout this chapter.[86]

The defining incident of William's tenure was undoubtedly the Burr Conspiracy when, for a brief period of a few months, the eyes of the nation and the federal government were trained upon the Mississippi Territory. The arrival of former Vice-President Aaron Burr in January 1807 sparked suspicion and intrigue across the territory, to the extent that it resulted in all-out political war across the spring and summer of 1807, culminating in duels and cries for impeachment. It has already been shown that political affiliation in the Mississippi Territory was vague and oftentimes fraught, but the events surrounding the Burr Conspiracy elevated political divides in the Territory to another level, and provides a perfect case study for assessing political

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[85] Summers, *The Governors of Mississippi*, (Pelican, 1999) pp.38-39.
[86] D. Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi* (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1908) p.22.

relationships in the Mississippi Territory, affiliation to the national political parties within the Mississippi Territory and the spirit of American nationalism and in the Territory, which helps to inform wider questions of national and regional identity. It is therefore a hugely important subject which has been all too often overlooked as a side note by histories of the Burr Conspiracy and of the Mississippi Territory as a whole.

The best study of the Burr affair in Mississippi to date is provided by Haynes, whose helpful narrative encapsulates the major events of the period. However, Haynes fails to connect the dots between trends that seem persistent across the period; he is too happy to view fractures in the Mississippi Republican party as blips rather than inherent problems, as will be demonstrated here. The Burr affair is also discussed in D. Clayton James' *Antebellum Natchez,* but the account features worrying errors, including incorrectly stating that the Acting Governor at the time was Cato West, rather than Cowles Mead, rendering his assessment unreliable despite it being useful in other areas.[87] Furthermore, both he and Haynes lean far too heavily upon works that came before it, most notably from Abernethy.[88] Thomas Abernethy's classic work on the Burr Conspiracy as a whole, first published in 1954, has clearly been an influence on a great deal of work on Burr. As is standard for broader studies of Burr, his escapades in Mississippi are only the focus of one chapter and is again accurate while providing no real analysis, nor assessment of the political consequences

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[87] D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p.106.
[88] Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory*, chapters 9 and 10. Hayne's sections on Burr and the fallout are not always especially coherent and is somewhat lacking in analysis and his referencing leaves a little to be desired, with certain quotes not footnoted correctly.

for Mississippi.[89] The assessment here inverts the process, aiming to establish not what the events in Mississippi tell us about Burr, but what the Conspiracy can tell us about the Mississippi Territory.[90] The most recent study of the Burr affair, by James E. Lewis, has attempted to provide a new analysis, focusing on interpreting the impact of the events of the Conspiracy rather than re-investigating what happened. While this is certainly useful, New Orleans and the Orleans Territory are given far more importance in the narrative, with Governor Claiborne as a figure of greater analysis than his counterpart in Mississippi. Lewis' work is comprehensive and, in many ways, should be seen as a definitive study of the Burr Conspiracy as a whole, but there is undoubtedly a need for a more nuanced and focused study of Burr's impact on the Mississippi Territory. [91]

The focus of this study of the Conspiracy is not therefore Aaron Burr, and more focus will be given to sources from the Natchez District, most notably from Judge Thomas Rodney and other leading figures, and discussion of the events in local newspapers. These sources help to inform a study of Mississippian responses to Burr and allow us to gauge whether or not a sense of loyalty to the United States was present at the time, or whether the

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[89] T.P. Abernethy, *The Burr Conspiracy* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968). Abernethy also published a useful journal article on Burr in Mississippi in 1949: T.P. Abernethy, "Aaron Burr in Mississippi" in *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 15, no. 1 (February, 1949) pp.9-21.

[90] M. Lomask, *Aaron Burr: The Conspiracy and Years of Exile, 1805-1836* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982) The same is the case for the relevant volume of Lomask's biography of Burr; the Mississippi based incidents are glossed over in the wider narrative, and the Territory acts purely as the place where Burr is arrested. To a large extent, the same can be said of the work of P.C. Hoffer, which does not contribute a great deal to the narrative of the Mississippi Territory. P.C. Hoffer, *The Treason Trials of Aaron Burr* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008)

[91] Much of the work published on Burr since the 1980s has been based on M. Kline, *Political Correspondence and Public Papers of Aaron Burr* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). Kline's commentary on Burr's letters is invaluable for Burr scholars and provides a definite translation of the infamous cipher letter, Jefferson's key piece of evidence in Burr's treason trial in Virginia.

inhabitants were supportive of Burr. Subsequently, and perhaps of more importance to this thesis as a whole, the political fallout will be discussed, returning to consider the nature of party politics in the Mississippi Territory. The episode as a whole reinforces the notion that the terms *Republican* and *Federalist* are inappropriate and misleading, as there is little coherence between those political parties on a national level and those that claimed to represent the parties in the Mississippi Territory.

By 1806 the vast expanse of land ceded to the United States was loosely organised into the Louisiana Territory, and the governorship given to General James Wilkinson, the commander of the US army in the region. This became problematic for a variety of reason. Another, more pressing problem for the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory was that the Purchase resulted in increased aggression from the Spanish governments in Texas and West Florida; one right on the border of Mississippi, the other now only a few miles away, without a buffer from the French in Louisiana. The result was, unsurprisingly, increased belligerence from the Spanish, who felt increasing threatened by an expansive United States. This was coupled with growing distrust of the Spaniards, since Pinckney's Treaty in 1795. As Alan Taylor notes, Spanish Louisiana had "offered alternative destinations and constitutional models meant to entice Americans to forsake their independence. North America was riven with competing allegiances and multiple possibilities."[92] For the politicians of Natchez, who were eagerly

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[92] A. Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016) p.351.

anticipating Mississippi's population growth, Spanish America was a threat even before the Purchase.

Throughout 1805 and 1806, one of the major concerns of American planters in the Mississippi Territory related to the pre-existing claims to land authorised by previous Spanish and British governments. Several letters to and from the federal government to the Mississippi legislature highlight the concerns of settlers who feared losing their lands to these competing claims. It's important to note that, as one letter from William Lattimore to John Quincy Adams discusses, the lands of the Mississippi Territory had not been officially opened to sale by the American government, so settlers in the Territory did not necessarily yet have true ownership of their land. With the Yazoo Controversy still fresh in the mind and not fully resolved, American settlers were keen to ensure that the American government would protect their interests in the wake of increased Spanish activity on the border.[93] Increased Spanish authority in the Old Southwest also created a secondary threat for inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory. As has been demonstrated by Kathleen DuVal, Spanish governors were much more effective than their American counterparts when it came to engaging with the native Choctaw and Chickasaw nations in the region.[94] Thus, the potential rekindling of Spanish authority around the Gulf Coast increased fears that Native Americans would also grow increasingly dangerous to Mississippi's settlers. Indeed, from the 1780s up until the War of

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[93] See, for example, William Lattimore to John Quincy Adams, 11/04/1804, in C.E. Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. 5. (United States Government Printing Office, 1937) pp.454-456.
[94] K. DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Though DuVal's work is focused on the Arkansas River Valley, to the west of the Mississippi River, it still engages with the Chickasaw nation, among others, and is still a valuable study for assessing the relationship between early settlers and Native Americans.

1812, the Spanish continually provided the southern Indian nations with arms and equipment in order to disrupt American settlers. Despite the presence of Spanish officials, actual Spanish settlers were few and far between in the region, so a reliance upon sovereign Native nations made a lot of sense.[95] Furthermore, as Grenier has noted, one of the major motivations behind Mississippi's involvement in the Creek War of the mid-1810s was to force Native Americans away from the region, thus reducing Spanish influence around the Gulf Coast.[96] Spanish authority in the region was inextricably linked with concerns over a resurgence of Native American aggression, whether this was based on any truth or not.

However, a dislike for the Spanish colonies bordering the Mississippi Territory should not be mistaken for true loyalty to the United States. Across this period, it is still clear that Mississippi's inhabitants were also exasperated by the lack of action by the federal government. Isaac Briggs, the chief surveyor of the Territory, even went as far as to imply that inhabitants of the nearby Orleans Territory hoped that "they will shortly again pass under the mild, beneficent Government of Spain, and be relieved from the grievous oppressions of that of the United States."[97] Of course, this is not an especially reliable source, as Briggs was more disaffected by life in the region than most. He had grown frustrated over the lengthy process of surveying the Territory and had grown resentful of its people and their inactivity. Regardless, this should still serve as

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[95] K. DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 2015) pp.341-342.

[96] J.E. Grenier, "Wars on the Indians of the Trans-Appalachian West" in K. E. Holland Braund (ed) *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War & the War of 1812* (Mobile: University of Alabama Press, 2012) p.171.

[97] Isaac Briggs to the Secretary of the Treasury, 03/03/1606, in Carter, *Territorial Papers* 5, pp. 451-452.

a warning that identities and loyalties in the Southwest should not be assumed, even three years after the Louisiana Purchase. It also gives us some idea of how parts of the Southwest were viewed in the wider United States. Much of the historiography of the Mississippi Territory talks solely in terms of political parties and of American citizens, but such loyalties to the United States were not truly established by this point. Running alongside the conflicting party politics which will be explored in this chapter is also the question of whether Mississippi's inhabitants truly felt part of the United States. Briggs clearly felt that they did not, and he evidently felt out of place there.[98]

In the context of 1806, the Spanish threat was genuine.[99] The Territory itself was going through a period of transition, once again. In April 1806, Governor Williams left Mississippi for North Carolina, with the intention of returning with his family. In his stead, he left his recently appointed secretary, Cowles Mead. Mead had no demonstrable political experience, having recently failed in a bid to enter Congress as a representative for Georgia.[100] Barely twenty-nine years of age, Mead was hardly well equipped for the crisis which was to come. Tensions on the Spanish-American frontier began to come to a head around in the summer of 1806, when Thomas Freeman was appointed by President Jefferson to conduct a scientific exploration of the Louisiana

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[98] Briggs would shortly resign from his position, citing homesickness and baulking at the difficulty of the task of surveying the Territory. For a summary of Briggs' activities, or lack of it, see R.V. Haynes, "The Disposal of Lands in the Mississippi Territory" in *Journal of Mississippi History* Vol. 24, No. 4 (October, 1962) pp. 226-252 and Rothman, *Slave Country*, p.44.

[99] This topic is covered in more detail in Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, chapter 8. However, the account often lacks clarity and analysis. It should also be noted that Haynes draws heavily from Thomas Abernethy's *The Burr Conspiracy* here, and this has resulted in occasional errors. Abernethy's account is therefore more reliable, and should be used if a summary of events if required. This project intends to provide a more nuanced analysis of the Burr affair and what Spanish aggression on the frontier informs us about identity and loyalty to America in the Mississippi Territory.

[100] Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, p.977, p.213.

Territory. In a letter to William Claiborne, now Governor of the Orleans

Territory, Freeman reported that his exploratory party was met at the Red

River by a Spanish force and ordered to return to the American garrison at

Natchitoches, with force threatened if the Americans did not comply.[101] The

same Spanish force was also accused of ripping the American flag off a

flagpole in the centre of a Native American village, stating their intention to

"kill, take, or drive back" any Americans in the region.[102] Not long after this, a

Spanish force crossed into the Louisiana Territory from Texas, moving within

a few miles of the town of Natchitoches.[103] This finally prompted action from

the federal government, who had generally been quite lax in response to the

Spanish threat, which, as will be shown, caused a degree of frustration from

the people of Mississippi who did not feel suitably supported by their

government. However, even when the government did respond, they did so

through the Governor of Louisiana and the head of the army in the region,

General Wilkinson. Unfortunately, as was suspected at the time, Wilkinson

was a paid Spanish agent and had been since the 1790s, and as such, he was

not particularly keen on encouraging military action against the Spanish.[104]

Eventually though, American military action was required.

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[101] Thomas Freeman to Governor Claiborne, 20/08/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 208.

[102] John Sibley to Governor Claiborne, 26/08/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 209.

[103] Haynes twice mentions that, in doing this, "Spanish forces reoccupied Bayou Pierre" before moving to within seventeen miles of Natchitoches. However, this should be contested as Bayou Pierre was not a town, but a river.

[104] For a strong assessment of Wilkinson's actions and involvement with the Spanish, see D.E. Narrett, "Geopolitics and Intrigue: James Wilkinson, the Spanish Borderlands, and Mexican Independence", *William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol. 69 (January 2012), 101–146. A longer biography can be found in A. Linklater, *An Artist in Treason: The Extraordinary Double Life of General James Wilkinson* (New York, 2009)

Whilst the works mentioned throughout this chapter can provide adequate summaries of the particular events that took place, it's important to investigate the ways in which Mississippians responded to being unable to act against the Spanish, or to the opportunity to strike back. Cowles Mead clearly believed that Mississippi's citizens were ready to take up arms in the name of the United States, writing: "The alacrity with which the inhabitants flew to their ranks, joined to the general ardour pervading the whole territory, induces me to believe that every reliance may be placed in this people for personal aid if requisite to their honor and a free & spirited nation."[105] Furthermore when Ferdinand Claiborne, as commander of the Mississippi militia, took a detachment of Mississippi militiamen with him with the intention of dislodging the Spanish from Natchitoches, he wrote that, "on future occasion the Government will view in us a people attached to the principles of the Federal constitution, and ready at all times to pledge their lives and fortunes, in defending the honor and independence of the United States." He went on to write that he believed, they "seemed anxious to… exhibit the character of the Mississippi Territory in its true colors." Whilst this declaration of loyalty to the United States is interesting, what is of further note is a repetition that they wished to demonstrate themselves to be "so honorable to themselves, and auspicious to the particular section of the union to which they belong."[106] Of course, whilst this is a very top-down way of assessing the opinions of Mississippi's inhabitants, these letters do reference more than a simple loyalty to the United States, and demonstrates the ways in which national loyalty and

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[105] Cowles Mead to Robert Williams, 09/09/1806, in Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Executive Journals 1798, Series 491,Box 651.
[106] Ferdinand L. Claiborne to Acting Governor Mead, 10/10/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 678.

loyalty to Mississippi began to play off against each other as the era progressed. In Chapter One, there was a desire to enter the Union as fully recognisable American citizens, but as time went on, a more distinctly Mississippian form of identity began to emerge.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that that independent spirit, of pride in Mississippi, was appropriated by its commanders in order to demonstrate a degree of loyalty to the United States. This is highlighted by the fact that Claiborne actively congratulated himself and Mead for creating that loyal spirit, rather than it being organic. Indeed, when the militia were ordered to return to Mississippi by Wilkinson, who cited the fact that the Spanish had already left, Claiborne reported a great deal of "chagrin and mortification" across the ranks.[107] Despite a lack of further sources from this event, this mortification should be seen less as a disappointment that the troops were not able to demonstrate their American spirit, but more that they were not able to inflict casualties upon the Spanish The American identity portrayed here is contrived and created by Claiborne, rather than being organic.

The same belligerence towards the Spanish can be seen in 1806 in response to the threat from West Florida. Documents to and from Cowles Mead, shortly after his arrival in the region, suggest that the militia of Washington County, fronted by Colonel John Caller, were the instigators of violence on the frontier. Concerned by the threat the Spanish in West Florida posed, and in large part due to the fact that they had closed the port of Mobile to American business,

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[107] General Wilkinson to Major Claiborne, 03/10/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, document 214; Ferdinand L. Claiborne to Acting Governor Mead, 10/10/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 678.

Caller began planning to attack the well-fortified town, before being dissuaded by Judge Harry Toulmin.[108] It is worth remembering that Washington County was not too far detached from Adams and Jefferson Counties, and Natchez as a result. It would be easy to see the County as a backwater, detached from the centre of Mississippi society, but this is far from the case, at least in geographical terms. Thus, the fact that the militia of Washington County were planning on assaulting West Florida over the closing of Mobile to American trade can reveal a great deal about attitudes towards the Spanish across the Natchez District as well as the wider territory. It demonstrates that Mississippians were actually more interested in protecting their economic interests than defending from Spanish attack. Indeed, the Spanish military threat from West Florida was relatively minor and the actions of John Caller should be seen as pragmatic and self-serving, rather than defensive. This strengthens the previous suggestion that ideas of American pride and loyalty among the Mississippi militia were creatively mobilised by Claiborne and Mead.

This then, was the situation in Mississippi on the eve of the Burr Conspiracy. There was significant anti-Spanish sentiment across the Territory, and the lack of action in support of such sentiments from the federal government must have been concerning. At the very least, Aaron Burr believed this was the case. He had visited the region to visit General Wilkinson in 1805, who at the time declared "The western people disaffected to the government! They are bigoted

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[108] Joseph Kennedy to Thomas Hill Williams, 09/06/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 608; Captain Thomas Swaine to Acting Governor Mead, 05/08/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 642.

to Jefferson and Democracy."[109] Wilkinson, it should be noted, was in league with Burr throughout the affair and was, quite possibly, the real antagonist behind the plot. To some extent, this was known by the inhabitants of Mississippi, who were naturally suspicious of the General. In September, Cowles Mead wrote to Henry Dearborn, declaring that the people of Mississippi were of the opinion that "General Wilkinson is a Spanish officer."[110] Indeed, James Lewis' study of the Burr Conspiracy highlights the extent to which Wilkinson was not trusted across the United States, and especially in the west.[111] The suspicion was matched by Mead himself, who refused to comply with a request from Wilkinson to send 500 militia to New Orleans for defence in November. Mead's rejection was so swift that Wilkinson was able to respond barely 2 days after his initial request.[112] The general suspicion of Wilkinson in the Mississippi Territory was clearly significant if it was enough to refuse orders that were made on the grounds of regional defence. This highlights the extent to which the suspicion and unrest in the Mississippi Territory throughout 1806 and into 1807 was not borne out of a desire to defend America, but of suspicion of the Spanish. As will be shown, the receptions of Burr and Wilkinson, though undoubtedly in league

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[109] James Wilkinson to Aaron Burr, in E.P. Powell, *Nullification and Secession in the United States: A History of the Six Attempts During the First Century of the Republic*, (New Jersey: Lawbook Exchange, 2002) pp.161-162.
[110] Cowles Mead to Henry Dearborn, 10/09/1806, in D. Rowland (ed), *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, 1801-1816*, Vol. 4 (Jackson, 1917), pp.5-6.
[111] Lewis, *Burr Conspiracy*. This theme runs throughout the book but is of most interest in chapters 5 and 6, which are focused more upon Wilkinson and Burr in Mississippi and New Orleans.
[112] General James Wilkinson to Acting Governor Mead, 12/11/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 689; General James Wilkinson to Acting Governor Mead, 13/11/1806, Mississippi Department of Archives and History Digital Archives, Series 488, Document 690.

and without good intentions towards the United States, were remarkably different.

From November 1806 onwards, the Burr affair escalated.[113] In late November, Wilkinson arrived in New Orleans and, it appears, handed over a letter to Governor Claiborne, dated July 29, 1806. It was written in a cipher, from Aaron Burr, detailing Burr's plan to travel to Natchez with a force 2000 strong, and capture Baton Rouge on the way to revolutionise Louisiana and Mexico. It has now been proven that the cipher letter was a forgery, and has been used by historians focusing upon Burr's trial in Richmond to demonstrate that it was in fact Wilkinson who was the chief conspirator, and was attempting to frame Burr, who may not have known a great detail about the plot in reality.[114] Mead and Claiborne were both on high alert from then on, yet Burr would not arrive in Mississippi himself until 10th January 1807, by which time Mead had provided Ferdinand Claiborne with a large militia force to take Burr into custody, "as the common enemy of our Country."[115] From this moment on, the correspondence between Burr and those working on behalf of Mead were distinctly different in tone to any correspondence with Wilkinson. Thomas Fitzpatrick, a militia officer, wrote to Burr reassuring him that Mead felt he had been "vilified by rumor" and, that he would "receive all the benefits of individual civility, and the full and complete protection of the laws of the

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[113] Further evidence of the general attitude towards Wilkinson and the increased suspicion that there may be a conspiracy taking place can be found in Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, pp.154-156.

[114] For much more study of the Cipher Letter, see Lewis, *Burr Conspiracy*, Chapter 5. A translation of the letter itself, and a commentary on it, can be found in M. Kline (ed), *Political Correspondence and Public Papers of Aaron Burr*, Vol. 2 (Princeton, 1983) pp.973-990. The original letter, untranslated, can be found in the Newberry Library's Everett D. Graff Collection of Western Americana: Aaron Burr to James Wilkinson, 22/07/1806, Graff 502.

[115] Colonel William Scott to Major John Minor, 15/01/1807, Administration Papers Series 488, Box 105, Document 716, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Territory."[116] This was, perhaps, a consequence of Burr's company. Although

Mead had been expecting a force of around 2000 men, Fitzpatrick reported

something else: "There is nothing serious to be apprehended from Col. Burr at

this time, his whole force does not exceed 100 men and they are not all armed,

he has no cannon of any description, at least none ready for service."[117] Yet the

tone of the correspondence is still interesting. Burr was a fugitive from the

federal government and a political exile. Thomas Jefferson was vocal in his

hatred of Burr, and he was hated by the Federalist Party after having killed

Alexander Hamilton. Indeed, as Lewis has identified, even if some national

Federalists were seen to be questioning Burr's trial, it was less out of

admiration for Burr and more out of hatred for Jefferson.[118] He also highlights

the extent to which Federalists in early 1807 demanded an even stronger

response to Burr than Jefferson was willing to provide.[119] This relatively warm

welcome for Burr is further evidence to highlight the disparity between the

national political scene and attitudes in the Mississippi Territory.

Despite the fact that, on 23rd December 1806, Cowles Mead called for "the

officers both civil and military and the citizens of this Territory" to help to

defeat the "agents employed in this Country," Aaron Burr enjoyed something

of a celebrity status in the Natchez District.[120] Although he was arrested, he

complied willingly and was granted bail, paid for by two wealthy inhabitants

[116] Thomas Fitzpatrick to Aaron Burr, 15/01/1807, Administration Papers Series 488, Box 105, Document 717, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.
[117] Thomas Fitzpatrick to Cowles Mead, 15/01/1807, Administration Papers Series 488, Box 105, Document 719, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.
[118] Lewis, *Burr Conspiracy,* pp.100-105.
[119] Ibid, p.89.
[120] Cowles Mead to the Territorial Assembly, in Mississippi's Third Annual Report, quoted in Kline, *Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr*, p.1008.

of the Natchez District, Colonel Benijah Osmun and Lyman Harding.[121] These individuals have been defined as Federalists, yet there is no real evidence to define any of these men by these categorisations. It should be argued that the actions of Osmun and Harding do not reflect the standard attitudes of Federalists towards Aaron Burr, and that claims of these men's Federalist party affiliation is lifted from the work of J.F.H. Claiborne, which does not provide any evidence to support such claims other than a broad claim of support of John Adams and a lack of confidence in Jefferson.[122] Nothing of Osmun's reflects any great political interest; he was much admired by both Claibornes for his military service and generally refrained from political activism.[123] Harding, as a Massachusetts lawyer, exhibited more of the hallmarks of Federalism, again in part due to his heritage, and served as a local attorney-general under Sargent, but his political activity is described by Rowland as "genial" at best. Harding is another example of a pro-Sargent lawyer (he named his son Winthrop Sargent Harding) and merchant – in 1805, he invested heavily in the cotton industry and made a significant fortune in that manner.[124] Indeed, even if Federalists on the national level erred on the side of caution when accusing Burr, this was borne out of distrust of Jefferson, not personal respect for Burr, so such a personal show of support for Aaron Burr still remains a questionable act for any dedicated Federalist. Instead, we should see this as a military officer and a wealthy merchant seeing in Burr an opportunity. Burr brought with him charisma, celebrity and, importantly, an opportunity.

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[121] Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Vol. 1, p. 337, Vol. 2, p.366.
[122] J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, *with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*, Vol. 1. (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1880) p.286.
[123] Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Vol. 2, p.366.
[124] Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol.1, p.838.

Not long after Burr's bail was paid, the *Mississippi Messenger* commented, in support of Burr, that, "We see him always submissive to law, and friendly to our Territories, and their inhabitants… Burr threatens to invade the Spanish colonies, and our citizens arm against him. Our laws, our constitution, and dearest principles are invaded, and we are silent and calm spectators."[125] To the *Messenger*, Burr was not the enemy, Wilkinson was. It was a profoundly anti-Spanish gesture, and highlights the extent to which Aaron Burr was deemed to provide a unique opportunity to Mississippi's inhabitants. Even more interestingly, the *Mississippi Messenger* was a pro-Green-West faction newspaper. As will be shown later in this chapter, it became fervently anti-Williams when he began to side with Natchez merchants such as Seth Lewis and William Dunbar. This highlights the extent to which the Burr Conspiracy was a landmark moment in the history of the Mississippi Territory, and a point where it was utterly at odds with the national political landscape to the extent that national political parties became irrelevant. When political rifts did appear in early 1807, they were not along party lines. The Burr Conspiracy presented a test of the Territory's national profile of identity and loyalty, one which it seemingly failed. Instead of presenting itself as a united body and displaying its status as a part of the United States, it fractured and distanced itself from the nation.

Beyond this, the events of Burr's time in Natchez suggest something profound about Mississippi inhabitants' attitudes towards the United States. Clearly, Mississippi's inhabitants knew Burr was involved in a plot. Based on the

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[125] *Mississippi Messenger*, 20/01/1807.

aforementioned piece in the *Mississippi Messenger*, it was assumed that he was planning on attacking the Spanish. Indeed, Burr implied it himself:

> I have no such design, nor any other which can tend to interrupt the peace or welfare of my fellow Citizens, and that I harbour [neither] the wish nor the intention to intermedle with their Government or concerns – On the Contrary my pursuits are not only justifiable, but laudable, tending to the happiness and benefit of my Country Men and Such as every good Citizen and virtuous man ought to promote.[126]

This was, it appears, embraced by Mississippians. Newspapers declared that Burr should be embraced, militia officers such as Osmun took him in, and even territorial judges seemed to show their support for his venture. Thomas Rodney, one of Mississippi's most influential residents, declared his willingness to "put on the old '76 and march out in Support of Col. Burr and the Constitution".[127] The overwhelming tone of comments regarding Aaron Burr are in support of him and in opposition to General James Wilkinson. They are also, importantly, in support of any venture against the Spanish. It's important to consider, however, that such hatred of the Spanish does not equal support of the United States, even with the regular mentioning of the Constitution. Burr remained a criminal, a fugitive from the Federal government and someone that the Governor of Mississippi had arrested and intended to put on trial, even if he was convivial about it in the process. Scoring political points over the Spanish in the region, it seems, was more important than remaining on the side of the Federal Government, who had issued warrants for

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[126] Aaron Burr to Cowles Mead, 12/01/1807 in Kline, *Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr,* pp.1008-1009.
[127] Thomas Rodney to Caesar A. Rodney, 26/01/1807, quoted in M. Lomask, *Aaron Burr: The Conspiracy and Years of Exile, 1805-1836*, (New York, 1982) pp.214-215 and in Kline, *Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr*, p.1017.

Burr's arrest. The implication here is that the inhabitants of Mississippi, whatever faction they supported and whether a private citizen or a politician, felt that if President Jefferson or the US Army (represented by James Wilkinson) was not willing to act on the Spanish frontier, they would get behind someone who would. Thus, contrary to the views of historians such as Kastor and McMichael discussed at the start of this chapter, American loyalty and identity in the Mississippi Territory was not yet fully defined or certain. Again, Burr's presence and the promises he offered formed a test of the Mississippi Territory's identity

Burr's words themselves also present interesting views on the Mississippi Territory from an outsider's perspective. Appealing to them as *Citizens* (with emphasis on the capital 'C'), and as 'good Citizens' at that, speaks to the idea that Mississippi's inhabitants were as much a part of Burr's America as any other. Yet in contrast he refers to 'their Government', suggesting that the Mississippi Territory's government was unique in form and politics to that of the rest of the United States. Of course all the states and territories of the Union had a unique form of government, but the implication from Burr is that Mississippi's was known to be distinct. It suggests that federal-level politicians with knowledge of the Mississippi Territory knew its political identity differed from that of the rest of the Union. This is in keeping with what can be gleaned from correspondence between the Federal Government and Mississippi around this time – the Territory was very much left to its own devices, speaking to a wide division between the local government and that on the national level.

Perhaps the clearest indication of this unique political situation can be found in the trial of Aaron Burr itself. It was the catalyst to one of the more turbulent

moments in Mississippi's political history, where factions crumbled and reformed under new banners, and any semblance of loyalty was lacking. Significantly, it coincided with the return of Governor Robert Williams, who instantly took control of matters, demoting Cowles Mead back to the position of Territorial Secretary. He addressed the Legislative Council on the 28th January thanking Mead for his work in apprehending Burr and stating that he was proud of the "the zeal and patriotism exhibited by the people of this Territory" throughout the affair.[128] This was, however, simply lip service. As will be shown, he showed nothing but disdain for Mead upon his return, accusing him of being too kind to Burr whilst simultaneously being supportive of Burr himself. We have seen that public opinion in Mississippi, both from Natchez elites and from at least one significant newspaper, was learning towards support of Burr. Furthermore, there seemed to be a degree of consensus amongst politicians and legal minds in the Territory that they had no jurisdiction to put Burr on trial. Indeed, both Judge Thomas Rodney and Attorney-General George Poindexter argued as much, that the local supreme court had no right, and the trial should be suspended or aborted so that Burr could be sent to Washington, D.C. for trial by the federal government.[129] This does add an interesting dynamic to the proceedings - for all the feelings of support for Burr and his assumed plans, there was still a desire to uphold the laws of the Territory and of the U.S. constitution. This could, however, be attributed to a desire to keep Burr away from the hands of James Wilkinson,

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[128] Governor Williams to the Legislative Council, 28/01/1807, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488, Document 737.
[129] W.B. Hamilton, *Anglo-American Law on the Frontier: Thomas Rodney and his Territorial Cases* (Duke University Press,1952) p.80.

who continually attempted to convince Mead to send Burr to New Orleans, and sent men with orders to seize Burr just before his trial.[130]

Burr was eventually brought to trial in the Mississippi Territory, and stood before the Mississippi Supreme Court on the 2nd February.[131] It was a messy affair, and no character came out of it particularly well. Although it began on the 2nd of the month, it was instantly halted as George Poindexter, the prosecuting attorney, failed to appear.[132] The trial began properly the next day, with Judge Rodney presenting the case and Burr giving some words in his defence, though it remained relatively uneventful. On the third day of the trial, Poindexter arose and declared that the grand jury should be dismissed on the grounds that "he had nothing to law before them, and the Court had no Jurisdiction."[133] What happened next appears to have been confused by scholars of the trial. Haynes asserts, without references, that Judge Bruin was in favour of Poindexter's motion but Judge Rodney was against.[134] This is curious – as has already been mentioned, Rodney had previously declared that he did not believe he had the jurisdiction to try Burr either. It is more likely that Kline's account is correct, whereby it was not this motion that Rodney was against, but a later one from Lyman Harding that the trial be dismissed, which Rodney rejected on the grounds that Poindexter, as prosecutor, was not present.[135] Regardless, Poindexter's motion did fail, leading to the jury being

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[130] Abernethy, *Burr Conspiracy*, pp.218-219.
[131] The trial is helpfully documented in Kline, *Political Correspondence of Burr*, pp.1019-1021.
[132] Hamilton, *Anglo-American Law*, p.280.
[133] Kline, *Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr*, p.1019. Poindexter is also quoted the same in Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.162. However, neither author cites a source.
[134] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.162.
[135] Kline, *Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr,* p.1020, referencing Hamilton, *Anglo-American Law*, pp.261-263.

sent out to deliberate and return a verdict. That verdict acquitted Burr, stating

that they were "of opinion that Aaron Burr has not been guilty of any crime or

misdemeanour." However, the jury also presented that they found, "as highly

derogatory to the dignity of this Government, the armistice (so-called)

concluded between the Secretary, acting as Governor, and the said Aaron

Burr."[136] Thus, the jury actively condemned the work of Cowles Mead,

reopening the factional divisions that had existed throughout the early years of

the Territory. The way the jury spoke of "the dignity of this Government" is

also interesting, and gives us a sense of the way the grand jury viewed the

Territory. Its members seemingly recognised that that the Territory and its

inhabitants were under scrutiny during the Burr affair, and realised that they

were failing the test.

Unfortunately, official documentary evidence of the trial has not survived, and

there is no record of who actually made up the jury on the trial. It was

comprised of 23 men, drawn from 72 freeholders, but we have no knowledge

of their background or views beyond that.[137] Interestingly, the *Mississippi*

Messenger, in its report of the trial, wrote: "We deem it unnecessary to remark

that these presentments were not founded on any bill exhibited to the Grand

Jury, and that being negative, they met no further attention than mere

perusal."[138] Evidently, the editors of the *Messenger* did not wish to publicise

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[136] D. Rowland, *Third annual report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi, from October 1, 1903, to October 1, 1904, with accompanying historical documents concerning the Aaron Burr conspiracy* (Jackson, 1905), p.101. The presentments are also quoted in J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, *with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*, Vol. 1. (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1880) p.280.
[137] *Mississippi Messenger*, 10/02/1807; Kline, *Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr,* p.1019; Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.161; Hamilton, *Anglo-American Law*, p.260. Haynes claims there were 24 jurors, but the *Mississippi Messenger* reports 23.
[138] *Mississippi Messenger*, 10/02/1807

the critical nature of the jury's comments, leaning as it did in favour of Mead as an extension of the West-Green cohort. Indeed, two weeks later, the *Messenger* printed a letter from William B. Shields, commenting upon the presentments and defending Mead. Shields was one of the attorneys defending Burr, and believed that Mead had "acted with an [sic] single eye to the honor and safety of the Territory."[139] J.F.H. Claiborne claimed that the action of the jury was "purely partisan", and Thomas Rodney was also supportive of Mead, stressing that he had acted in good faith.[140]

However unjustified (both in fact and in legality) the presentment of the Grand Jury on Mead was, it was certainly controversial and significant. Evidently, the Jury felt that Burr was innocent, and that the actions taken by the territorial government and its agents in arresting Burr were unnecessary. Yet, in criticising Mead, they were also criticising William Shields, one of the individuals Mead sent to negotiate with Burr, who went on to defend him at trial. Indeed, even Mead was of the opinion that Burr was innocent.[141] On the face of it then, everyone involved shared similar views over Aaron Burr and the trial itself, which implies that the Grand Jury's presentment was unrelated to the Burr affair and was a veiled political attack on Mead. It is therefore necessary to explore who Mead's political enemies may have been. It has already been shown that Mead was part of the West-Green faction via marriage, and since 1805 one of their major political enemies had been the recently returned Governor Robert Williams. Cato West and his Greenville

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139 William B. Shields to the Editor of the Mississippi Messenger, *Mississippi Messenger*, 24/02/1807.
140 Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Territory,* p.284 (Haynes misattributes Claiborne's opinion as that of an observer); Hamilton, *Anglo-American Law on the Frontier*, pp.261-263.
141 Kline, *Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr*, p.1018.

based allies had assumed that West would rise to the permanent governorship upon W.C.C. Claiborne's appointment as governor of the Orleans Territory.[142] The relationship between Williams and the West-Green faction had not healed since then, and Williams promptly jumped on the opportunity to target Cowles Mead in the aftermath of the Burr trial. Thus, it can be assumed that the freeholders who made up the grand jury in the Burr trial were, at least to some extent, allies of Robert Williams. Although impossible to confirm, it is quite possible that the majority of the freeholders of the Mississippi Territory came from Natchez, or by extension Adam County, as its population was far greater than any of the surrounding counties.[143] This would go some way to explaining the attitude of the jury towards Mead, whose supporting base was largely made up of the inhabitants of Greenville, in Jefferson County. Either way it cannot be ignored that, even if a trial of national importance such as the Burr trial, partisan and factional attitudes still rose to the forefront.

Ultimately, the conclusion of Burr's trial was botched. Judge Rodney, dissatisfied with the jury's verdicts, refused to release Burr and demanded he be held in custody. In response, Burr fled and forfeited his bonds, writing to Governor Williams as he did so to declare his innocence and complain of mistreatment. He was eventually recaptured by the army and escorted back to Virginia, even as Governor Williams tried to return him to Natchez for a retrial.[144] However, even if the incident itself ended abruptly, it left a lasting

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[142] See Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, pp.78-82.
[143] Population statistics taken from D. Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1908) pp.241-242. The population of the Mississippi Territory in 1800 was 8850 and Adams County made up 4660 of that. By 1810, although Adams County only held a quarter, rather than half, of all the inhabitants, it still had 10,002 inhabitants compared to 4,001 in neighbouring Jefferson County.
[144] See Kline, *Political Correspondence of Burr*, pp.1020-1021.

legacy upon politics in the Mississippi Territory. We have already seen that, upon his arrival from North Carolina, Governor Williams congratulated Mead on his service. However, he quickly pounced upon the opportunity to attack him once the trial had concluded. In response, Mead following the example of his predecessor as secretary, Cato West, and refused to fulfil the duties of his office, in at least one instance hiding official documents away in his house to prevent Williams accessing them.[145] Indeed, the events following the Burr affair are the perfect example of how the supposed Republican party of the Mississippi Territory did not exist. Mead and Williams became the figureheads of two rival factions which vocally attacked each other and shaped Mississippi politics for years to come. As will be demonstrated, while both sides claimed to represent true Republicanism, the factional divide came to emulate the events of Winthrop Sargent's tenure, without even the façade of party politics.

Firstly, it is worth addressing the role of the national Republican party in these events, in order to highlight how detached it was from the factions of Mead and Williams. Once Aaron Burr was finally returned to the federal government, he was put on trial in Richmond, Virginia. The key witness for Jefferson's prosecution was, of course, General James Wilkinson with his cipher letter, with Jefferson arguing that "there was no room to doubt of the integrity, firmness & attachment of Wilkinson."[146] This was reflected by Republicans across the eastern seaboard, with various newspapers declaring their support for Wilkinson, who they argued had helped defend the Union. In

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[145] This is asserted, without reference, by Haynes and Rowland. However, in Governor Williams to Cowles Mead, 14/04/1807, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488, Document 767, Williams criticises Mead's refusal to fulfil his responsibilities.
[146] Quoted in Lewis, *Burr Conspiracy,* p.95.

contrast, Federalists and other supporters of Burr railed against Wilkinson, accusing him of putting the west on the verge of Civil War.[147] As has already been shown, Mississippians were highly suspicious of Wilkinson, including those who were meant to represent the Republican party. Seeing Wilkinson paraded by Jefferson as his star witness apparently caused a great deal of distress to individuals such as Cowles Mead, who wrote to Secretary of State James Madison declaring:

> when I see Genl Wilkinson and his mercenry [sic] bands wearing the laurels which should deck the brows of the brave yeomanry of this Territory, I cant [sic] keep down the glow of discontent. Who arrested Burr and his associates, and brought them to the pedestal of an offended Country – Who marched twenty four hours without food and lay the same length of time, without blanket or tent, under the deepest snow ever seen in this Territory, I answer my brave fellow Citizens of the Mississippi. While Wilkinson was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to magnify a bubble, This Territory without noise of expense arrested this mighty plot and shewed themselves the real friends of the Genl Government.[148]

Clearly, Mead was not impressed by the Republican government's support of Wilkinson, and perceived lack of support for the people of Mississippi. Mead's fury not only highlights the alienation of Mississippi as a whole from the United States, but also the disjuncture between the Republican party of the United States, and the factions that claimed to represent it in the Territory. Even if Mead's faction would claim to represent true Republicanism, there were clearly huge divisions between that idea and the reality. What's more, Mead's letter displays the hallmarks of Republican rhetoric. By referring to

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[147] Ibid, pp.264-265.
[148] Secretary Mead to the Secretary of State, 13/04/1807, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 5, pp.544-546.

Mississippi's inhabitants as "brave yeomanry" and "Citizens", he invoked the Republican ideology of farmers rising up in defence of their lands. Yet, although Mead was playing up to that role, the remainder of the letter speaks to the idea that they were acting in defence of their own land, not that of the nation. Although the rhetoric is the same, the meaning is somewhat different when it is applied to the Mississippi Territory.

In contrast, if Governor Williams was outraged by the support of James Wilkinson, he did not show it. As Mead was venting his frustration to James Madison, Williams was working hard to discredit him entirely. Writing to Jefferson in May 1807, he wrote that Mead and George Poindexter were at the head of a party, "fomenting all the discontents they can among the people," and defending Wilkinson and his conduct.[149] In doing so, Williams was highlighting claims he had made as early as March 1807, whereby he accused Mead of causing just as much uproar in the Territory as the entire Burr Conspiracy.[150] The spectre of James Wilkinson became a key aspect in the factional disputes that ensconced the Mississippi Territory throughout 1807, with Williams accusing Mead and his faction of being overly critical of Wilkinson and too sympathetic to Burr, jumping on the bandwagon established by the Grand Jury. In contrast, Mead would accuse Williams of being too friendly to Wilkinson, taking personal insult at his depiction at the hands of Williams. Yet Mead would also accuse Williams of being overly sympathetic to Burr, and this was taken forward by the *Mississippi Messenger*, which

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[149] Governor Williams to the President, 30/05/1807, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 5, pp.550-552.
[150] Governor Williams to the President, 14/03/1807, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 5, pp.528-533.

charged Williams with "Burrism" and disloyalty to Jefferson.[151] It's worth remembering that the *Messenger* was thoroughly in support of Burr in January, but this quickly shifted once he became an opponent of the newspaper's patrons. Indeed, in a uniquely transparent article, the *Messenger* declared that "Governor Williams has never patronized the Messenger, the Republican paper… but on the contrary has given his subscription and support to the Herald, the warmly Federal press."[152] It should still be noted that these references to Republican and Federal newspapers do not mean a great deal and should be read as pro-Williams and anti-Williams, and this goes some way to highlight the importance of patronage to the debate at this time. These references are once again a case of appropriation, whereby the factions were taking on the guise of the national parties whilst engaging in their own disputes. This debate is less to do with political beliefs and much more to do with personal networks and financial gain.

Whilst the aforementioned letters to and from the federal government might imply that Williams was a loyal Republican and Mead was not, Williams' actions depict a different message entirely and highlight the extent to which there was no real Republican party in Mississippi at all. After Attorney-General George Poindexter was made Mississippi's delegate to Congress, he appointed in his stead Seth Lewis, the same key supporter of Winthrop Sargent. Indeed, in the aforementioned letter of March 1807, Williams wrote to Jefferson that Mead claimed he had been informed that "Robert Williams the Governor" was a "republican and an honest man, but to my astonishment I

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[151] *Mississippi Messenger,* 09/06/1807.
[152] *Mississippi Messenger,* 02/06/1807.

have found him to be the reverse in his conduct – his appointments have been Federal." Williams claimed this was a direct consequence of Mead marrying into the Green-West faction.[153] Yet Mead's supporters were not limited to that well-established Green-West network that had existed as long as the Territory had. Joining Mead and George Poindexter in an "unprincipled Combination" was Colonel Ferdinand L. Claiborne, leader of the militia and brother of W.C.C. Claiborne.[154] Under his brother's governorship, Claiborne had formed a key part of the opposition to Cato West and his faction, yet now would turn and join it in opposition of Governor Williams. Thus, the factions of the Mississippi Territory were clearly extremely fluid in 1807, and open to change on a whim. Political support was defined much more by personality than political belief. Furthermore, by informing Jefferson of the accusation that Williams was acting as a Federalist, Williams may have been implying that he was actually acting as a true Republican; in his First Inaugural Address, Jefferson had famously declared "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists."[155] By playing up to this sentiment, Williams drew a distinction between Jefferson's Republicanism and that of the Green-West-Mead network, tying himself to the former, further serving to highlight the chasm between the two political organisations.

Returning to the appointment of Seth Lewis, this was seen as a wildly partisan appointment, and came as quite the surprise to Mead's supporters. Poindexter defined him as a participator "of the Arbitrary measures, and frauds of

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[153] Governor Williams to the President, 14/03/1807, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 5, p.528.
[154] Governor Williams to the President, 14/03/1807, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 5, p. 529.
[155] Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, *Avalon Project*, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jefinau1.asp [last accessed 26/06/2017]

Winthrop Seargeant [sic],"[156] tying his political affiliation to Winthrop Sargent over the Federalist party as a whole. The appointment allowed the *Messenger* to attack Williams further, speaking of "federalists, alias Tories, alias Williamites."[157] Clearly, not only was the editor of the *Messenger* accusing Williams of Federalism, but he was also accusing him of being a traitor, tying his actions to the loyalist Tories of the American Revolution. It is important to note that the appointment of Lewis appears to have been a vindictive one. The Green-West faction had been intrinsic to the dismissal of Lewis as a Territorial Judge during the last period of unrest. His reappointment as Attorney-General must have been influenced by personal grudges and designed to anger the Mead-Poindexter-Claiborne triumvirate – there cannot have been any great political factors motivating it. Indeed, the *Messenger* made several claims after a Dr Carmichael was appointed as justice of the quorum in Wilkinson County, stressing that "Dr. Carmichael hates Thomas Jefferson… Dr. Carmichael hates Cowles Mead. Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are, says the Spanish proverb. You may know a man by his enemies – and by those he hates also, say we."[158] Poindexter would further back up this attack on Carmichael, stressing that he "generally known as the enemy of the administration."[159] Poindexter also highlighted Williams' other appointments, including Isaac Guion and William Dunbar – dedicated members of the Natchez elite.[160] As is quite clear, the tone of political attacks in the Territory

[156] George Poindexter to the Secretary of War, January 1808, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol 5.p.605.
[157] *Mississippi Messenger*, 07/07/1807.
[158] *Mississippi Messenger,* 07/07/1807.
[159] George Poindexter to the Secretary of War, January 1808, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol 5. p.604.
[160] George Poindexter to the Secretary of War, January 1808, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol 5. p.606.

quickly descended. Furthermore, despite the fact that the terms R*epublican* and *Federalist* are repeatedly uttered, the evidence behind each claim is always related to personality. The rhetoric always relates to individuals and their relationships and thus, personal networks were the defining characteristics of this political debate, not party loyalties.

Williams' response to claims that he had been appointing Federalists is also interesting in this regard. In a letter to Jefferson, he claimed he was acting in a bipartisan manner, writing that it was:

> in strict Conformity with your own Ideas of propriety… so as to secure "a sound preponderance of those who are friendly to the order of things so generally approved by the Nation" not thereby meaning to proscribe honest well meaning men heretofore federalist and now sincerely disposed to concur with the National sentiment and measures. This had the desired effect, but did not please a few restless characters who call themselves republicans.[161]

The "desired effect" mentioned here was a further reference to Jefferson's inaugural address and was intended to highlight the extent to which Williams was governing in a fashion in keeping with Jefferson's ideology. Williams went on to claim that Mead's faction, who could not abide his appointments, felt this way because of their dependence on "party" – which should be read as a dependence on factionalism, rather than national party lines. That is to say, the anti-Williams faction refused to let slip the veneer of Republicanism when it had become an easy stick with which to attack Williams. Both pro- and anti-Williams individuals resorted to the same tactics, in that they both claimed to

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[161] Governor Williams to the President, 14/03/1807, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol 5, p. 530.

either represent true Republicanism, or to represent the politics of Thomas Jefferson.

Political debate in the Territory across 1807 and 1808 descended into a war of words and insults. In a letter to the Legislative Assembly in December, 1807, Williams highlighted his Republicanism once again, proclaiming: "Men capable of such attempts to violate the laws of their country, and to disregard the obligations of citizenship, will now know that the attachments of this people to law, order and their government, are paramount to the insidious attempts of any."[162] Yet, even in a speech in which he proclaimed the loyalty of the Mississippi Territory, he could not refrain from personally attacking his enemies, simultaneously defending the rights of the inhabitants to challenge the government whilst also attacking his enemies with thinly veiled insults regarding their "false representations and licentious publications."[163] By the end of 1807, any concept of true and genuine Republicanism was in tatters. The pro-Williams *Misissippi Herald* and pro-Mead *Mississippi Messenger* had become littered with attack articles, reducing the political debate to a war on words. The *Messenger*, for example, would quote Cicero, before claiming, "We had intended to have published this quotation from Cicero, without any comment, for the particular consideration of Governor Williams… but as his excellency is not blessed with a very inventive genius, we conclude on second thought to assist his intellect, with a few observations."[164] At another point, the *Misissippi Herald* accused John Shaw, the editor of the *Messenger*, of printing

[162] Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488, Box 16794, Document 880. This was also printed in the *Mississippi Herald*, 17/12/1807.
[163] Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488, Box 16794, Document 880. This was also printed in the *Misissippi Herald*, 17/12/1807.
[164] *Mississippi Messenger*, 02/06/1807.

falsehoods in "gross contempt of the legislator", further noting Shaw's background as being from "the frog ponds of North Carolina", adding that "the English Vocabulary does not furnish terms sufficiently harsh by which to describe him… But why attempt to depicture a creature on whom the Divinity has indelibly fixed his mark! His countenance is a true index to his mind. To see him is to know him."[165] The war between the two newspapers became reflective of the war between the two quasi-Republican political factions, guided by the patronage the editors received.

Perhaps the biggest problem for those who have attempted to assign party labels to politicians in this era is the action taken by Thomas Jefferson in response to the factional splits in the Mississippi Territory. It could conceivably be argued that, for much of the post-Burr era, Robert Williams was actively becoming a Federalist. That is to say, if one was applying Federalist party labels where this thesis has sought not to, one could see Williams displaying little faith in the inhabitants of the frontier, deeming himself superior to those that were elected by the people, and employing in his administration those who had served under Winthrop Sargent as members of the Federalist party. Yet, despite significant protests from Cowles Mead, President Jefferson authorized all of Williams' appointments and actually reappointed Williams himself for a second term as Governor.[166] It's difficult to see how Jefferson would have done so if he believed Williams to be failing his duties or leaning towards becoming a Federalist. Indeed, he did so despite great pressure from the anti-Williams faction. In early 1808, Mead composed a

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[165] *Misissippi Herald*, 17/06/1807.
[166] Governor Williams to the President, 16/03/1808, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 5, pp.623-624.

petition to Congress calling for the removal of Williams as governor, in many ways reflecting the petition Cato West wrote regarding Sargent several years earlier. Williams was clearly affected by the letter, as he wrote to the President claiming the letter was a forgery, and that Mead could never have got enough support behind him to secure enough signatures.[167] To some extent, this was true, as Williams had dissolved the General Assembly and Legislature in order to prevent Mead's memorandum gaining traction.[168]

How best then, to understand Williams' actions? It has already been observed that governors of the Territory generally brought their politics with them from their homeland upon becoming governor, which would imply that Williams should have held the typically strong Republican beliefs of a North Carolinian. Yet his actions, in dissolving the legislature and calling into question the validity of territorial elections, were reminiscent of Winthrop Sargent, and were clearly defined as overtly Federalist by his opponents, particularly George Poindexter and John Shaw, the belligerent editor of the *Mississippi Messenger*. On the topic of the Northwest Ordinance being questioned, Williams argued:

> You censure the Ordinance; say it verges on despotism, and is derogatory to a free and enlightened people, and invoke my aid and that of the good people of the Territory to have it altered…I will observe that I have never been an admirer of Territorial governments nor have my opinions been secreted. Nevertheless, it is my duty, as well as every other officer, to administer the government as it is, and not as we may wish it, and every good citizen should give his aid in the same way,

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[167] Governor Williams to the President, 10/02/1808, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 5, pp.610-612.
[168] Governor Williams to the Legislature, 01/03/1808, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 5, p.614; Governor Williams to the Secretary of State, 08/03/1808, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol.5, pp.616-618.

thereby showing that we are ripe for self government and one that is better and more free… The sages of Seventy-six, whose wisdom, valor and patriotism broke the iron band of tyrrany, emancipated a world, and secured both civil and religious liberty for millions unborn, formed that very instrument, the Ordinance, which you now reproach with the epithet of despotism.[169]

The tone of Williams' defence here is decidedly Republican, but also highlights a great loyalty to the federal government, which certainly was not reflected by the people of the Mississippi Territory. If Williams' actions were somewhat Federalist and bordering on despotic, yet his words and the faith bestowed on him by Jefferson and James Madison display overt Republicanism, then one must come to the conclusion that neither label is particularly appropriate. Williams' actions, and his words, were guided by personal allegiance. His 'Federalist' appointments were actually appointments designed to attack his political enemies, and by highlighting his own Republicanism to the government he sought to discredit the supposed Republicanism of his enemies. If nothing else, Williams was highly pragmatic, and able to latch on to the support of the Natchez elite where he saw fit, because they were naturally opposed to his enemies in the Green-West faction.

As for Williams' enemies, it must be argued that their motivation for attacking Robert Williams was personal gain. After Cato West had been overlooked in favour of Williams for the governorship, the Green-West faction must surely have seen his absence during the Burr Conspiracy as an opportunity for themselves, through Cowles Mead, to finally secure the position of Governor. Although, particularly through the *Mississippi Messenger*, Poindexter, Mead

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[169] Governor Williams to Robert Tanner, quoted in Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 2, pp.978-979.

and Ferdinand Claiborne repeatedly highlighted the virtues of their Republicanism, this must be treated with scepticism. As has already been noted, Williams consistently had the support of Jefferson's Republicans on the national level, but more importantly, the anti-Williams faction clearly never truly saw eye-to-eye with said Republicans. This was most apparent during the Burr Conspiracy, where Mead felt betrayed by Jefferson's support of General Wilkinson and never felt that his actions in apprehending Burr had been appreciated. Furthermore, Mead and Claiborne were dismissed from their positions in the local government and the militia by Williams, and this was supported by Jefferson and Madison. The intense partisanship of this era, propagated by this faction, was based around using personal networks and influence based on geographic areas to achieve personal power. It was not about securing the authority of a political party as party loyalty was only rhetorical and did not exist within the Mississippi Territory in reality.

Ultimately, the purpose of this chapter has been to highlight the extent to which the party labels of *Republican* and *Federalist* had divergent meanings in this era of Mississippi politics. Despite having been labelled as a united Republican party, there were a multitude of factions who operated across the region which claimed to represent the true Republican party but actually only represented the interests of the members of their network. In contrast, while the group traditionally defined as Federalists were a much more united group, they should really be characterised as a Natchez centric mercantile faction, as they were actively willing to engage with Republican governments if it suited their interests and displayed political opinions which did not reflect those of the national Federalist party. As was shown at the beginning of the chapter, this

does not necessarily make Mississippi unique among other states and localities in the early Republic, but it does highlight how complex Mississippi's politics had become. This was not a political backwater, but an increasingly politically active region. Factions and their tactics developed rapidly, even more so than in locales closer to the urban political hubs of the North East United States.

 The events surrounding the Burr Conspiracy highlight this, and also serve to demonstrate the extent to which local politicians in the Territory were keen to jump on opportunities for personal gain, both economic and political. The Conspiracy is further evidence to suggest that the factions of the Mississippi Territory were different entities from those of the wider United States, and further expose that, contrary to the assumptions made by numerous historians of the old Southwest and the Louisiana Purchase, that the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory were not yet fully established as citizens of the United States, or of its political institutions. Citizenship and party affiliation were highlight contingent upon the wider political climate of the Territory and were very much works in progress, especially in the build up to the War of 1812.

Chapter Three
Civic Institutions in the Mississippi Territory

The moving of the Territory's capital from Natchez to Washington in 1802

ought to have been a significant moment in the Territory's history. It

demonstrated a Territory that was moving away from its eighteenth century

past and looking ahead to a new, American future – the name of the new

capital implying as much. Yet although the political centre of the Territory

moved away, Natchez remained at the heart of life in the Territory, and that

presented a political problem. Natchez remained, even after their national

decline, the home of the self-proclaimed Federalists of the Mississippi

Territory, the merchants of the Mississippi Society for the Acquisition and

Dissemination of Useful Knowledge and the former supporters of Winthrop

Sargent. Indeed, it remained home to the most significant buildings in Natchez,

and was the natural destination for all visitors. This chapter explores two

attempts to establish institutions outside of the Natchez city limits, both of

which were, on appearance, for the good of the people of the Territory, but

which also offered local politicians and planters the opportunity to win

political and economic victories.

Broadly speaking, this chapter will assess the ways in which the political class

of the Mississippi Territory sought to use their private economic and social

powers to influence the politics of the Territory. It will analyse the ways in

which private and public interests clashed across the Territory's history in

order to understand whether or not the planters were more interested in

protecting their private interests and assets rather than in performing their civic

duties to their best abilities, and how planters approached the combination of

ideas of virtue and collectivity. In doing so, it will focus upon moments in the Mississippi Territory's history in which the private and public interests of politicians clashed, assessing their motivations and the implications for the Territory. Jefferson College and the Bank of the Mississippi provide another way of looking at the networks that have been examined across this thesis. As has been shown throughout this thesis so far, personal motivations had a major effect upon the development of loyalty and political identity in the Territory, with personal networks and ambitions outweighing loyalty to the nation and, at times, even to the Territory itself.

Thus, this chapter consists of two case studies. The first focuses upon attempts to found Jefferson College, what would have been the first higher education institution in the Territory, around 1803. The second focuses on the establishment of the Bank of the Mississippi in 1809, which would become one the most stable banks in the antebellum Deep South. While both had the backing of the local government, and both attempts came from individuals who were members of the Territorial Assembly, these were private enterprises. The would-be founders of both institutions were eager to highlight the benefit to the public and to the Territory's prestige, for they were both corporate civic institutions. They were also both areligious, and entirely dependent on public patronage and goodwill due to lack of government funding. Therefore, the two institutional case studies have a lot in common, though occurring at two different moments embedded within the political chronologies already established. The College study is set during the administration of Governor Claiborne, while the Bank of the Mississippi was founded during Governor David Holmes' premiership. Focusing upon these two events at different

points in Territorial history allows for an examination of the development of the nature of power within the Territory. The studies allow an insight into the relationship between public and private power and authority, and the true nature of the political factions of the Territory. The successes and failures of these institutions highlight the motivations of all the individuals involved, demonstrate what was and was not deemed acceptable in the political dispute, and ultimately provide a test the assertions made across this thesis about the nature of the political relationships of the Mississippi Territory and their relationship to the power and authority of planters within the Territory.

To assess the impact of Mississippi's institutions, it is necessary to explore how similar institutions impacted political systems beyond the territories. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Johann Neem and Albrecht Koschnik have undertaken studies to explore how political parties utilised private institutions for their own purposes. In Chapter Two, this focused upon the MSADUK and Mississippi Republican Society, but it is useful here to compare the development of Mississippi's college and bank. In Philadelphia, Koschnik identifies Federalists turning to cultural institutions as a method of continuing to maintain influence and authority once their electoral chances diminished.[1] Likewise, Neem identifies a similar process in Massachusetts, demonstrating how grassroots organisations came proxies for party competition in the period following the Revolution.[2] However, Neem argues that these organisations were not organic, nor spontaneous; they were dependent upon the state. In

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[1] A. Koschnik, "Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together": Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775–1840, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007)
[2] J. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008)

keeping with Koschnik's analysis, Neem demonstrates that Federalists were leaders in this regard, incorporating libraries, banks, colleges and other businesses, supported by the local government. Neem also highlights how colleges, particularly Harvard, became weapons in the political war between Federalists and Republicans, using its governing board to ensure dominance for either party.[3]

It is easy to draw comparisons between Neem and Koschnik's works and the Mississippi Territory. As this chapter demonstrates, the College and the Bank clearly became political bargaining tools, and methods for the elite, who were already engaged in politics, to expand their influence. They were also, however, genuine efforts to improve the wellbeing of the Mississippi Territory. As this chapter demonstrates, the divergence can really be identified in the role of those pertaining to be Federalists in the Mississippi Territory. Whereas Neem and Koschnik see their institutions as Federalist endeavours, the Mississippi "Federalist" faction were much more passive in their role in setting up Jefferson College. The membership of the Board of Governors, who battled to establish the organisation, were largely made up of the Green-West faction and supporters of Governor Claiborne. Granted, the faction was already in decline by this stage, with its fortunes dwindling alongside Winthrop Sargent, but this still runs contrary to the idea that Federalists turned to civic institutions once their political fortunes waned. That comparison is more apt in the case of the Bank of the Mississippi, in which the Federalists were more heavily engaged, with figures such as Winthrop Sargent being part of its foundation. However, as this chapter demonstrates, the Bank of the Mississippi was so

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[3] Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners*, pp.81-90.

successful because it was founded with the intention of protecting the profits of the elite, not as part of a campaign to help improve the fortunes of the Territory.

Whether the differences between Philadelphia and Massachusetts' institutions and Mississippi's highlights more about the nature of its factions or the nature of its institutions, this comparison highlights the worth in exploring Mississippi's civic bodies in more depth. However, when considering Jefferson College, the drive to establish better education was a proxy for party competition. This chapter highlights how important the factions deemed the location of the College to be, as it would help improve the fortunes of their own locales. However, this chapter contends that this was, again, less to win the support of the populace politically, and more to do with bolstering their own bases. Additionally, comparisons can also be drawn between the Bank of the Mississippi and that of Territorial Florida, as explored by Edward Baptist. Baptist highlights how Florida's Union Bank was dependent upon land speculation, and planter's slave based business enterprises.[4] The Bank of the Mississippi and Florida's Union Bank both operated in similar fashion, supporting land and slave acquisition and speculation through loans and subsidies. Yet, as Baptist demonstrates, the Union Bank lacked the stability of its Mississippi counterpart, which endured across the War of 1812 and was considered the most stable and secure bank in the region. Whereas, albeit not intentionally, the Union Bank help yeoman farmers gain influence and voting power, the Bank of the Mississippi did the opposite, strengthening the hold of

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[4] E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2002)

planters in the region and encouraging the reconciliation of the political factions of the Territory through mutual interest.

Comparing Mississippi's institutions to their counterparts in other states and territories is helpful, but ultimately it is difficult to draw too many conclusions, purely due to how different the two case studies within these chapters are. Following Koschnik's model, one would expect to see the Federalist-leaning faction of the Territory uniting in support of Jefferson College, but they did not to usher in its development. While they played a far more important role in the development of the Bank, this was just as much a tale of enterprise and networking (considering the rehabilitation of Winthrop Sargent) than it was about political authority. It is difficult to align the politicking behind Jefferson College with the examples put forward by Neem and Koschnik because it was so inward looking – there was no effort made to see past local differences for the benefit of the Territory, and neither was it used to develop power on the territorial level.

The history of Mississippi's institutions was largely written in the 1960s and earlier, appearing across the various issues of the *Journal of Mississippi History*. These articles, though somewhat outdated, are still the key reference points for modern histories of the Territory, having been used by Haynes and James, amongst others.[5] W.B. Hamilton, for example, published an influential piece on Jefferson College in 1941, and Robert C. Weems Jr.'s study of The

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[5] R.V. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010); D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968)

Bank of the Mississippi was equally important when published in 1953.[6] A second article by Weems on the subject of the bank was published in 1967.[7] In the same issue of the journal, Margaret Moore explored the development of Protestantism in the Territory, touching on the importance of religion and the church in the establishment of Mississippi's society.[8] Moore's study of the religion of the Territory is important to this project as it touches upon the ways in which religion helped to cultivate social networks across the Territory, demonstrating that networks were not solely created for political purposes. The private economic interests of planters has also been explored by historians such as John H. Moore, Robert Haynes and Charles Lowery.[9] However, these different elements of territorial history are generally treated independently of each other. The following two chapters intend to bring these facets together in order to explore how they impacted upon the Territory's networks and politics, demonstrating a more nuanced approach to both the political and economic history of the region. But it is first necessary to relate how the schemes to form educational and financial enterprises in Mississippi developed in the shadow of the foremost established "institution," that of plantation slavery.

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[6] W.B. Hamilton, "Jefferson College and Education in Mississippi, 1798-1817", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Volume 3, No. 4 (October, 1941) pp. 259-276; R.C. Weems Jr. "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi*", Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 15, No.3 (July, 1953), 137-154

[7] R.C. Weems Jr. "Mississippi's First Banking System", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (November, 1967), pp.386-408. Weems' article is based on an unpublished PhD thesis: "The Bank of the Mississippi, A Pioneer Bank of the Old Southwest 1809-1844" (Columbia University, 1951)

[8] M. D. Moore, "Protestantism in the Mississippi Territory" *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (November, 1967), pp.359-369.

[9] J. H. Moore, "Mississippi's Search for a Staple Crop", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (November, 1967), pp.371-385; W.B. Hamilton, "Early Cotton Regulation in the Lower Mississippi Valley", *Agricultural History*, 15 (January, 1941) pp.20-25; C.D. Lowery, "The Great Migration to the Mississippi Territory, 1798-1819", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (August, 1968), pp.173-192.

The study of slavery's political and economic institutionalisation have burgeoned in recent scholarship, though the majority of studies of the expansion of slavery and the private interests of planters engages with the Antebellum period rather than the Territorial. Adam Rothman's *Slave Country* explored the development and expansion of plantation slavery in the Old Southwest, effectively discussing the global nature of the institution of slavery and the economic motivations of the planters involved.[10] John Craig Hammond offered a similar study in 2007, arguing that the expansion of slavery in the West during the period between 1790 and 1820 was down to local, popular politics led by planters and private citizens rather than the federal leadership or Founding Fathers.[11] This idea was expanded upon by Walter Johnson, who argued that the growth of the cotton industry was so major that it became an imperial expansion in the Antebellum era. By doing so, Johnson focused upon the motivations of planters, not politicians, as the driving force behind American expansion. The previous chapter demonstrated the ways in which responses to Spanish belligerence on the frontier and The Burr Conspiracy were dictated by private, economic ambitions and concerns, and Johnson's work provides evidence to show how this private ambition only became more and more influential in the policies of the Southwest.[12]

However, such studies are not limited to the Southwest. Watson Jennison effectively discussed the expansion of slavery in Georgia and highlighted the driving influence of private, economically motivated planters, whom he argued

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[10] A. Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005)
[11] J.C. Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007)
[12] W. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)

were actively attempting to remove power from coastal elites in order to protect their economic interests.[13] Alan Taylor's work on Virginia also highlights a similar situation, demonstrating how plantation politics had a profound impact upon national politics and foreign policy in the Revolutionary era.[14] Furthermore, Manisha Sinha's study of South Carolina, though focused on the Antebellum era, highlighted the dual role of planters as slaveowners and politicians, asserting that the two were inherently linked and that politics in the slave states were dictated by planters and their economic ambitions.[15][16] Timothy Lockley's work on Georgia illuminates the role that poor farmers and yeomen played in shaping the policies of a state founded upon the institution of slavery. By focusing upon the relationships between poor whites and enslaved African Americans in the face of the dominating planter class, his work highlights the complexity of these burgeoning societal networks and the impact they had upon the direction in which the region was heading.[17]

Put together, the significant historiography of the politics of slavery in the early 19th century offers a great deal of context. Though these studies differ in time period and geography, focusing more generally on the road towards the Civil War, they demonstrate the ways in which the Mississippi Territory's inhabitants' private interests and ambitions were inherently linked to the

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[13] W.W. Jennison, *Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012)
[14] A. Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013)
[15] M. Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000)
[16] S. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
[17] T.J. Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001)

Territory's political history. Furthermore, the example of the Mississippi

Territory shows that political ambitions of planters and slaveholders were not

new, or unique, in the Antebellum period, but had actually existed in the

Southwest since the 1790s. As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, it is

impossible to separate the political culture of Territorial Mississippi from the

private ambitions of its politicians, or from the economic climate in which

these politicians worked as planters and slaveholders. Rather than seeing

political developments over the course of the history of the Mississippi

Territory as a sign that the region was becoming more American, and moving

closer to the Union, we should instead view them as a burgeoning autonomy in

the Mississippi Territory. Indeed, there existed an as-yet untested contrast

between the original thirteen states who had a shared experience of struggle

and bloodshed in the maelstrom of revolution, and the new territories and

states forming further west, which did not have that same history. Just as Cato

West and the Committee of 1799 utilised the framework of the Constitution in

order to achieve their own ambitions rather than in order to demonstrate their

engagement with the Federal Government, the planters and merchants of the

Mississippi Territory embedded themselves in the local government of their

territory for their own pragmatic goals, not out of any great sense of civic duty.

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While it may not have served as the capital of Mississippi for long, Natchez

remained its most the important urban hub throughout the Territorial period.

Already nearing its centenary by the beginning of the 19th century, by 1812 it

was an "uneven" and irregular town, poorly laid out with few public buildings.

That was, at least, the opinion of architect Levi Weeks, writing to his associate

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Epaphras Hoyt in September 1812. The town was situated on a bluff, "about 300 miles by the course of the river from New Orleans, 150 in a direct line," at a point where the Mississippi River was around three quarters of a mile in width. According to Weeks, the town was divided into two distinct districts. Natchez-under-the-Hill was situated on the plains below the main city, on the shores of the river. It was liable to flooding, and Weeks reported that several acres of land there had been lost over the past four years due to the shifting tides of the Mississippi. Under-the-Hill could be found, "great number of small houses which accommodate boatmen and the like, and where the filth of creation reside." Much like in any port town, it was there that the commercial activity of Natchez largely took place, with boats stopping off there on the way down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As a whole, the city had a rough radius of one mile, though it was reported that "it is not regularly laid off, only 30 squares of about 300 feet each, each square containing 4 lots – some of those lots are again subdivided to suit convenience." In addition, being by the river and on a hill meant that the land upon which the city was built was uneven: "you are constantly ascending and descending as you pass through in any direction – the Streets run northeast and southwest and all right angles." There was only in the city wide enough for a carriage to transport goods down to the river, which wound down the hill throughout the city. [18] In all, it was a far cry from the logically laid out cities of the North East, perhaps somewhat

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[18] Levi Weeks to Epaphras Hoyt, 27/09/1812, in Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Levi Weeks Papers, Z/1081.000/F/Folder 1; For more information on the history of Natchez-Under-The-Hill, see V.H. Matthias, "Natchez-Under-The-Hill", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.7, No.4 (October, 1945), pp.201-213.

ironic considering the role that Andrew Ellicott had played in the planning of the nation's capital.

Despite being the central hub of the Mississippi Territory, Natchez did not have a great deal of public space. It had been replaced by Washington as the Territorial Capital around 10 years before Levi Weeks penned his description of the town. As an architect, he clearly took significant notice of the buildings and infrastructure of the city. He noted that, "the Public Buildings are a city hall, a market house, a catholic church, a small Methodist meeting house, and engine house and a new church." Of the homes, he reported that, "the houses are extremely irregular and for the most part temporary things, but of late a number of good houses have been built." Weeks claimed to have been in the process of building a townhouse at the time, believed to have been that of Lyman Harding. Said house was outside of the marked lines of the city, but he claimed that it would be "the most magnificent building in the Territory."[19] The impression we get of Natchez from Weeks is far less romantic and picturesque than the more idealised accounts that can be found in many early nineteenth century travel writings and emigrant guides. In the 1830s, Robert Baird, for example, described Natchez as "one of the most beautiful places in the Valley of the Mississippi," though, more appropriately, Samuel Brown wrote in 1817, "the inhabitants are distinguished for their wealth, luxury and hospitality; this remark is only applicable to the merchants and rich planters; for there are great numbers of poor dissipated wretches; of all nations, and of

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[19] According to the notes on the document file at the MDAH, the mansion was Auburn, in the heart of Natchez.

all colors."[20] Levi Weeks' account, however, is one of the few that have survived from an inhabitant of Territorial Natchez. It provides an important insight into how Natchez was built, but also how its people lived and their livelihoods, which will be explored later in this thesis.

However, Levi Weeks' account of Natchez is not only useful in enabling us to understand how Natchez looked and sounded in the Territorial era; it also helps to explain another of the Territorial Government's most problematic issues. Incorporating land disputes, the limitations of the Northwest Ordinance, and the perennial problem of residents putting their private interests over the benefit of the Territory, the dispute over Jefferson College, Mississippi's first higher education institution, became a focal point in Mississippi's early history. At the heart of the issues which arose from the debate was the irregularity of Natchez. Having been built over a century earlier, it did not conform to the structured grid layout upon which the Mississippi Territory had been surveyed. Once again, the design of the Mississippi Territory did not bear any resemblance to the reality on the ground. This became a significant problem when the Territorial Government began plans to introduce Jefferson College. As per the ordinances establishing the land policy of the Territory, one lot of every township surveyed ought to have been left clear for the purposes of education and said Act of Congress granted Jefferson College an appropriate amount of this land upon its inception. Unfortunately, as will be explored in this chapter, the available lots in the city were either already occupied or of considerable land value, causing a clash between wealthy

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[20] R. Baird, *View of the Valley of the Mississippi or the Emigrant's and Traveller's Guide to the West,* (Philadelphia: H.S. Tanner, 1834) p.267; S. R. Brown, *The Western Gazetteer; or Emigrant's Directory* (Auburn, NY: Southwick, 1817) p.234

inhabitants' private economic values and their civic duties.[21] The opportunity to found a College was one that was enthusiastically taken up within the Territory. It was perceived that it would provide a new level of prestige to the Territory, demonstrating its capability to become a fully-fledged member of the United States, capable of producing learned gentlemen without the need to send them away from the Territory for education. Indeed, educational institutions carried enormous weight in the Republican-dominated nation post-1800; it was perceived that education could help the Territory transform from a rural backwater to a centre of culture and learning on the frontier, and would allow common people, not just the elite, to take an active part in civic life.[22] Thus, a college's endowment was a prestigious and socially-profitable boon for the politicians who could establish it. Fundamentally, the debate over the founding of Jefferson College came down to one question – where would it be built? The choices and their complexities were obvious – selecting either Natchez, Washington or Greenville would actively favour one of the three major factions of the Territory. For a bipartisan venture which required support across all factions, this was problematic.

In order to understand the significance of the debate surrounding Jefferson College, it's necessary to return to the temporary Governorship of Cato West. In the previous chapter, attention was drawn to the three main networks in operation amongst the political classes in the wake of Governor Sargent's dismissal, solidifying during the Claiborne administration. Not only were these

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[21] "An Act Providing for the Disposal of Land South of the State of Tennessee" in C.E. Carter (ed.), *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol.5 (Washington: 1937) pp.192-205.
[22] For more detail on colleges in early America, see M.Katz, "The Role of American Colleges in the Nineteenth Century", *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Summer, 1983), pp. 215-223; S. L. Hyde, *Schooling in the Antebellum South: The Rise of Public and Private Education in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama* (Louisiana State University Press, 2016)

networks indelibly linked to family and patronage, but they were also inextricably tied to the geography of the wider Natchez region. As we've already seen, the pro-Sargent, quasi-Federalist, merchant network was based in Natchez, with the majority of its influential members residing there. For example, William Dunbar owned many plots in the city and the surrounding area, including his plantation, known as The Forest, and a town house called The Grange in the city itself.[23] As was explained by Levi Weeks, Lyman Harding resided there, and it's known that Aaron Burr resided alongside Harding and Benijah Osmun while in Natchez, placing Osmun as a Natchez resident as well. Furthermore, Winthrop Sargent became a resident of Natchez after his dismissal from the governorship, residing in his mansion, Gloucester from 1800 onwards, which it's believed that Weeks also had a hand in renovating in 1808.[24]

Natchez, however, was no longer the political centre of the Territory. Almost immediately upon the removal of Sargent, the legislature was relocated to Washington. Compared to Natchez and the merchant faction, the faction which identified and supported the development of Washington was not so much based in the town itself, but one which saw logic in developing it as a genuine capital for the Territory, in terms of politics, finance and education. Thus, it was less that the networks that were based in Washington had a vested interest in the town for any great personal or romantic reason, but simply that it made sense. It is not easy to define this network as it was highly fluid and subject to

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[23] D. Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 1, (Madison, 1907) pp.351-352.
[24] Last Will and Testament of Winthrop Sargent, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0601.000/F/Folder 1; National Register of Historic Places, Gloucester/Bellevue, https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/76001085.pdf [last accessed 10/07/2018]

change based on the political climate, though it was generally in opposite to the Green-West faction, despite nominally being "Republican". That is to say, during the Claiborne administration, this faction was made up of Claiborne's own family and its supporters, in opposition to both the Natchez network and the Green-Wests. However, after W.C.C. Claiborne left for New Orleans and Ferdinand Claiborne fell in with Cowles Mead, George Poindexter and the West-Greens, the Washington establishment became Robert Williams' network.

The third and smallest of the three urban hubs in the region was Greenville. Though Greenville is currently the county seat of Washington County, the town was a different entity entirely during the Territorial period. Its name reflected its political foundation: it was the family home of the Thomas Marston Green and Abner Green, part of the family that Cato West and Cowles Mead married into, establishing the Green-West faction. The family networks of Cato West and Cowles Mead were never more powerful than when the two served as temporary governors in the wake of Claiborne and Williams' respective departures from the territory, but it was under the authority of Cato West that we can see the greatest attempts to consolidate their power in Greenville. At no point was that more prominent than in the Jefferson College debate between 1801 and 1806, when each faction – the Natchez merchants, the Green-Wests of Greenville and the Washington-based Claibornites – staked their claim to be the site of the College. As a whole, this geopolitical debate is representative of the fact that politics in the Mississippi Territory was more based upon patronage than political affiliation, and that its politicians' loyalties were not to political parties or to the Territory itself, but to their own ambitions

and those of their families. The concept of the College being motivated by Territorial development also offered a façade under which self-interested planters could conceal their true motives.

Jefferson College caused two disputes. Firstly, over the town in which the College would be placed and secondly, over the specific plots of land in Natchez to be given to the College for fundraising. One aspect that was never challenged however, was the name. In the spring of 1802, Governor Claiborne declared that: "Every Government which aims at the general welfare and happiness, ought to direct its views to the advancement of Literature, as the most efficient means. But the very preservation of a Republican Government in its genuine purity and energy, depends upon a diffusion of knowledge, among the body of Society".[25] With such a Republican message at the heart of Claiborne's declaration that the Territory needed an educational institution, it's hardly surprising that it would be named in Thomas Jefferson's honour, especially considering the renaming of Pickering County in the same way. Of course, both ventures could be seen cynically, designed to win favour from the President. It may have worked: Claiborne would soon receive the Governorship of New Orleans in thanks for his work in Mississippi. All the same, the underlying message of Claiborne's declaration was that he intended for Jefferson College to be sponsored and cultivated by the territorial government, inherently linking the fate of education in the Territory to its politicians. Indeed, Claiborne stated that: "A Seminary of Learning, established at some situation central to the Population of the Territory, fostered

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[25] W.C.C. Claiborne's Address to the General Assembly, 04/05/1802, in Dunbar Rowland (ed) *The Mississippi Territorial Archives, 1798-1803: Executive Journals of Governor Winthrop Sargent and Governor William Charles Cole Claiborne* (Nashville, 1905) p.431.

by the Government, and placed under the direction of a well selected Board of Trustees… [would] become a fruitful Nursery of Science & Virtue." [26] Thus, the location of the College became a distinctly political decision, as the government would be perpetually linked to its progress. However, the addition of a Board of Trustees suggested that private citizens would be responsible for its wellbeing. As such, one of the consequences of the College was a blurring of the lines between the public and the private.

Such a melding of private and political views was evident in the way in which the Board of Trustees was assembled. According to the minutes of the first meeting, its members included Claiborne himself, William Dunbar, Anthony Hutchins, Daniel Burnet, Abner Green, Cato West, Thomas Calvit, and Felix Hughes.[27] Evidently, there was a concerted effort to bring together all the networks of the Mississippi Territory in something of a bipartisan manner, suggesting that the intention was to place the College above the bickering and arguing that had dominated recent territorial politics. The trustees also included influential inhabitants of the Tombigbee District as well, demonstrating the intention that the College would serve the entirety of the Territory and be a unifying organisation.[28] Indeed, the individual records of those invited to join the board reflected that. John Girault, part of the Natchez merchant network, informed Claiborne that: "Although my accepting the appointment of Trustee to Jefferson College will much interfere with my domestic business, I cannot withhold my mite of service towards the promoting so desireable [sic] an

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[26] Ibid, pp.431-432.
[27] W.B. Hamilton, "Jefferson College and Education in Mississippi, 1798-1817", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Volume 3, No. 4 (October, 1941) p.264.
[28] Hamilton, "Jefferson College", p.265.

institution; I therefore do cheerfully accept the same."[29] Girault, a member of the Natchez elite affiliated with Winthrop Sargent and William Dunbar, displayed an attitude reflective of that faction here.[30] His words strike a similar tone to the mission of the Mississippi Society for the Acquisition and Dissemination of Useful Knowledge, which declared its intention to improve the reputation of the Mississippi Territory and its inhabitants, particularly through the promotion of education. While some studies of the attempts to set up the College have suggested that Claiborne had to force the plans upon the citizens of the Territory, it is apparent that many inhabitants of the Territory leapt at the opportunity.[31]

Admittedly, the enthusiasm for the College and its board was not universal. A week before Girault was appointed, Robert Dunbar refused to join, claiming that he would be "capable of so little aid to that Institution."[32] It is possible that Dunbar was their first choice, and his refusal meant that Girault took up the role – by March 1803, the committee had already been established and this late appointment may have been to fill a remaining role. Though it's not entirely evident from the documents available who Robert Dunbar was, it is known that William Dunbar had a son named Robert, and as William was in his mid-50s at this point, it's quite possible that this was an attempt by William Dunbar to

[29] John Girault to W.C.C. Claiborne, 10/03/1803, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Document 228.

[30] Girault was "an Alderman in & for the City of Natchez" by appointment of Governor Claiborne. See *City Officers of Natchez*, 17/03/1803, in D. Rowland (ed) *Mississippi Territorial Archives: Executive Journals of Winthrop Sargent and W.C.C. Claiborne* (Nashville, 1905) p.601. Furthermore, he was a member of the Mississippi Society for the Acquirement and Dissemination of Useful Knowledge, *Mississippi Messenger,* 12/10/1804.

[31] Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory*, p.63.

[32] Robert Dunbar to the Board of Trustees, 02/03/1803, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Document 224.

ensure his family remained involved in the management of Jefferson College. If that was the case, then Girault would have been a suitable replacement for Robert, being as he was one of the leading merchants in Natchez society and a friend of Dunbar himself. As will become clear, the fact that every major faction was engaged in promoting the welfare of the College would actually hinder its progress significantly and potentially extended the time it took to complete the process of opening the institution.

The Board of Trustees was not the only example of the importance of private citizens to the wellbeing of the College; they were also instrumental in the funding of the college as a whole. One of the first public declarations of the Board of Trustees was a plea for donations, and one of their first acts was to form a committee in order to start a fundraising lottery.[33] According to Hamilton, no public funding was appropriated for the foundation of the College, forcing the Board of Trustees into attempting more novel fundraising techniques. The lack of public funding is significant, particularly as it is apparent that the College did have the support of the local government. By directing the responsibility of funding the institution onto the general public, Jefferson College became more than simply a means of promoting education; it became a further test of the inhabitants' civic values. Jefferson College was not to be Claiborne or West's project, but it was meant to be owned by the people of the Mississippi Territory, helping to cultivate Republican virtue and civic pride. Unfortunately, the records of the lottery are no longer available,

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[33] W.B. Hamilton, "Jefferson College and Education in Mississippi, 1798-1817", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Volume 3, No. 4 (October, 1941) p.265. Hamilton quotes from the original statute of Jefferson College, which can be found in H. Toulmin, *The statutes of the Mississippi Territory, revised and digested by the authority of the General Assembl*y (Natchez: Samuel Terrell Printers, 1807) pp.411-414.

but it appears that it was unsuccessful.[34] Everyone who entered the lottery

eventually had their fee refunded, as apparently it could not drum up enough

interest to make it worthwhile.[35] We do, however, have some record of how

the lottery was orchestrated, and its failure does not appear to have been

through lack of effort. Interested parties could purchase tickets for five dollars

from a number of sites, including Bayou Pierre, Coles Creek, Ellicottville,

Washington, Natchez and St Catherine, all across the territory. Indeed, an

advertisement in the Mississippi Herald reveals who was selling these tickets –

Ferdinand Claiborne, Andrew Marshalk, Thomas Marston Green, Daniel

Burnet, Isaac Gaillard, William Dunbar and David Lattimore were all listed.

These figures were some of the most prominent in all of the Territory, so its

failure had nothing to do with a lack of top-down support. The failure of the

lottery suggests a failure to engage the wider public of the Mississippi

Territory. All of its major politicians and network leaders were involved in its

management, but this was not enough.[36] Perhaps this suggests simply that the

College did not inspire any great widespread support and that, once again,

private citizens were choosing their own fortunes over those of the Territory.

Alternatively, this could also point to a complete disjuncture between the

leaders of the Territory and its people. For all that the leading lights of the

Territory were driving the idea of the College in order to promote the

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[34] The Library of Jefferson College is no longer accessible, having closed when the College failed in the 20th century. The main source for these events is now the Founding of Jefferson College Papers collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and articles such as Hamilton's in the *Journal of Mississippi History* which were able to utilise that resource.

[35] Hamilton, "Jefferson College", p.265.

[36] *Mississippi Herald and Natchez Repository* , 18/07/1803. It's not clear why this edition of the *Herald* had a different title to the usually *Mississippi Herald and Natchez Gazette*. Though it appears the same as the usual editions of the *Herald*, it is much longer, being twelve pages long rather than the standard four.

education of the Territory, it appears that the common folk were simply not interested. In light of the attitudes displayed by private citizens across this thesis, the former seems the more likely reality. Private citizens of the Mississippi Territory, including politicians in their private affairs, repeatedly chose their own private enterprises over the needs of the Territory – self-determinism was quickly becoming a defining characteristic of the region, and public institutions tended to suffer as a consequence.

Although the issue of funding the College was far from resolved, the Board of Trustees swiftly moved on to the contentious issue of the College's location, highlighting that the two issues were intertwined – the location of the College could determine its value, both in terms of the profitability of the land it was granted and the value of donations it could receive from patrons. . For the college to have any chance of succeeding, it needed to retain the support of all three factions, requiring a great deal of compromise. The College was instantly dependent on the goodwill of both private citizens and the federal government in this regard. Claiborne, in his role as President of the Board of Trustees, wrote to Congress in January 1803, declaring: "Our local government has no lands to bestow upon us. But we trust that the Legislature of the United States in whom the right of our soil is vested will give aid to an institution which will tend to establish Republicanism in the minds of the youth of the territory and be the firmest band of our attachment to the Union."[37] In making this declaration, the Board also revealed a political motivation behind the College – securing statehood. Whilst the lands granted to the College by the Federal

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[37] Memorial to Congress by the Trustees of Jefferson College, 03/01/1803, in C.E. Carter (ed.), *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. 5 (Washington: Government Printing Office. 1937) pp.181-182.

Government were seemingly undesirable to the Board, as they were never truly considered a first choice, the acquisition of land by the College would still have been important, allowing a useful source of income to supplement any offers from private citizens. As it transpired, these government grants of land would become significant, as they offered a neutral compromise should no other plot be deemed accessible.

However, the goodwill of the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory did not come easy to the Board of Trustees. Any offer of land from private citizens often came with a catch, evident in the two best documented offers of land, from Mordecai Throckmorton on one hand, and John and James Foster on the other. Throckmorton, a member of the Green-West network, offered around twenty acres of land near Greenville, and the Fosters offered a smaller plot of around twelve to fourteen acres in Ellicott's Spring, near Washington. [38] While none of the names here were those of the most influential members of either faction, it is evident that they were acting as representatives of their networks. For example, once the Fosters offered their plots of land, conditional offers of funding came in from figures such as Ferdinand L. Claiborne and Seth Lewis, who at the time had fallen into favour with the Claibornes. If the Ellicott's Spring site was chosen, a whole wave of funding would have been opened up to the College by the Claibornite faction, highlighting the extremely transparent ways in which the networks were seeking to assume control of the College. Similarly, Hamilton asserts that various citizens offered "divers

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[38] Hamilton, "Jefferson College", p.267; R.V. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010) p.64. The reference provided by both historians for these sources seemingly leads down a blind path. Hamilton's reference is out-of-date and Haynes' reference does not seem to correspond to any records in the relevant archive.

sums" of money should the College be situated at Greenville.[39] It's clear that the factions were aggressively pursuing control of the College, and the Board of Trustees was evidently in a difficult position, being as they were in dire need of funding. However, it would appear that the Board of Trustees itself retained a degree of impartiality, thanks to its bipartisan make-up, though this could have derived from competitive rather than collaborative interests. All the same, William Claiborne was the one who appointed the Board, and remained its President. One must assume that it would have been relatively straightforward for him to accept the patronage of Washington and locate the College there. As such, it should be noted that the Board of Trustees seems to have been made up of inhabitants who were interested in promoting the wellbeing of the Territory. Whether or not this was reflected by the general public, however, is in much more doubt.

In March 1803, Territorial Judge David Ker proposed a site in Greenville to the Board of Trustees, arguing that it was "nearer to the centre of the Territory & its future population, & close to the seat of the supreme court and probable seat of the legislature."[40] This proposal apparently caused a great deal of acrimony. Hamilton records that the March board meeting was poorly attended and that those remaining members voted through the proposal, but it's clear that, by May, there had been something of a reversal.[41] The decision to award the College to Greenville was swiftly revoked, but it was the manner in which it did so that makes this a particularly striking moment in the College's history. Writing to Governor Claiborne on the 31st May, Ker declared that he had been

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[39] Hamilton, "Jefferson College", p.267
[40] Hamilton, "Jefferson College", p.267
[41] Ibid.

charged with "having corruptly and for personal views wished to fix the College near Green-ville [sic] and with having before the last meeting… combined with the members from Jefferson District in an underhand scheme for establishing that objective." Ker went on to bemoan the fact that he had been accused, "as one of the committee who reported the proposals of land for the site of the College with having in that report stated the quantity of land proposed by Messrs Foster [Ellicott's Spring, near Washington], as less than the real quantity offered."[42] The implication here is evident, that Ker and the rest of the Committee were partisans, attempting to mislead the Board of Trustees into giving Jefferson College to Greenville by lying about the amount of land offered by the Foster family. These charges were, to Ker, "highly dishonourable… and even calculated to ruin my respectability as a public character. What is a judge without integrity and truth?"[43] Evidently, for all that Jefferson College seemed to be a bipartisan effort, one could not remove the influence of the Territory's factions from the equation. Although the Board of Trustees was made up of members of each network, there was a great deal of suspicion amongst them, with each faction determined that the other should not gain a victory. There remained friction between the desire to further the fortunes of the Territory and the desire to secure victory for each member's own faction, and it appears that the two were not reconcilable.

Without actually having the voting statistics for the Board of Trustees one can only speculate, but it is quite possible that Ker's decision to back Greenville

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[42] David Ker to W.C.C. Claiborne, 31/05/1803, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Z/0059.000/S/Folder 1, Document 231.
[43] Ibid.

would have driven an even deeper wedge between the two supposedly Republican factions. The fact that a decision made in March 1803 by a depleted Board could have been overturned in May suggests that a significant number of its members had been absent and that well over half would have been against the decision, and aggressively so. As such, those attacking Ker at the May meeting of the board must have been both members of the Natchez faction and the Washington Claibornites. Indeed, Ker accused Governor Claiborne of malpractice as chairman, writing that "you [Claiborne] sat patiently in the chair and heard me accused of immorality without calling the room to order."[44] There is a significant disjuncture between how the Board of Trustees looks on paper to how it appears to have acted. On paper, we see a group drawn from all influential networks of the Mississippi Territory coming together for the good of the Territory. The reality appears to be the opposite. Although the intent may have been there, the bipartisan Board simply appears to have resulted in constant dead ends. The Board was clearly brought together with the best intentions of the Territory in mind, but they were unable to put their own self-interest aside when it came to actually establishing the College, a stark reminder that there was no tradition of trust within Mississippi politics – the rules for interpersonal relationships and dynamics of conduct of politics had not yet been fully established within the fledgling government.

If the Board of Trustees was not going to divide the population by settling for Greenville or Washington, then this new committee was in need of compromise. In July 1803, the "The committee appointed by the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College to view the different sites offered as donations

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[44] Ibid.

for Jefferson College" put forward the town of Selsertown as a potential site.[45]

The chairman of the Committee, John Girault, resolved:

… that the vicinity of Selsers Town is, in the opinion of this committee, the most proper place
for the site of the College aforesaid, and that we do recommend to the board of trustees to
accept the offers of donation of lands made, and subscription for money… and also that they
purchase the land, of Mr Richard Curtis, for the use of the College, providing the price does
not exceed 2000 dollars for all his land, in that neighbourhood. [46]

Selsertown was founded by George Selser, a migrant from Pennsylvania who
founded an inn in the area before developing it into a hamlet who would
eventually become President of the Bank of the Mississippi in the late 1810s.[47]
More importantly, however, Selsertown was almost equidistant between
Greenville and Washington, thus serving as a helpful compromise. Though this
may appear surprising considering John Girault's strong ties to Natchez, it's
worth noting that the rest of the committee included Thomas Marston Green,
David Ker and William Lattimore.[48] Thomas Marston Green cancelled out
Girault's partisanship as a devoted member of the Green-West network,
though David Ker may have offered more support for Greenville, and William
Lattimore provided a degree of impartiality as the elected representative to
Congress for the Mississippi Territory. This was as close to an impartial and
balanced committee as was possible; it had close links to the territorial

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[45] Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Z/0059.000/S/Box 1, Document 233.
[46] Ibid
[47] George Selser Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0606.000/F/Folder 1
[48] A record of this meeting was recorded in the *Mississippi Herald and Natchez Repository*, 18/07/1803.

government, as well as two of the major factions, and its proposal was clearly designed to bring progress to discussions.

Yet the proposal of Selsertown was also rejected, further strengthening the assessment that partisanship was rife within the Board, meaning any progress had stagnated for over six months. Even though David Ker's supposed partisanship was reined in by the other members of the new committee, leading to the objectively neutral suggestion of Selsertown, almost equidistant between Washington and Greenville, this still wasn't enough to convince the Board. It would appear that, in this case, compromise was not the solution after all, and that a political victory would be won one way or another. To compromise on Selsertown would also have been to compromise on the lucrative endowment of the College, and this was deemed unacceptable. The remaining question would be whether or not those purporting to be Republican could put their interests aside and make a decision that would benefit either the Green-Wests or the Claibornites; if not, any notion of party loyalty must have been absent. Unfortunately, there appears to be no indication that any compromise between the two networks was forthcoming. A proclamation of the Board of Trustees, dated 10th June 1803, declared that they intended to "precure a Building suitable for the present at the Town of Washington" in order to commence the teaching of literature, classical languages and geometry as soon as possible.[49] This was built upon by a further petition to the Legislative Council from the Board of Trustees, declaring that they had, "accepted of a plat or survey of land near the town of Washington and included a large Spring, by the Name of

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[49] Declaration of the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College, 10/06/1804, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Document 237.

Ellicott's Spring, given by Msrs John and James Forster and Randal Gibson for the site of Jefferson College, and having determined by vote, that the building of said College, shall be erected either on said survey of land or on such other adjoining spot as they may hereafter procure for that purpose."[50]

Hamilton and Haynes both suggest that this was the result of an agreement between the Claibornites and Natchez "Federalists", which would suggest there had been a complete collapse in the relationship between Claiborne and the Green-West faction, despite their supposed Republican loyalties.[51] Indeed, the dispute was clearly long lasting and bitter, and did not go unnoticed in the wider Mississippi community. Edward Turner, in November 1803, wrote that: "there has lately been a great difference about the site of a College, which has produced many personal prejudices."[52] The emphasis that the dispute had taken on a personal tone is significant, highlighting that this was not a debate over the wellbeing of Jefferson College or over the future of education in the Mississippi Territory. The debate over the location of the College was deeply personal, dictated by loyalty to the networks and factions of the Mississippi Territory and by private interest and alliance. The fact that these private interests could not be put aside for a venture which was supposedly bipartisan and in the interests of the Territory is striking.

What is more, even though the plans to establish Jefferson College were bipartisan, the proposal as a whole was distinctly Republican. It is worth

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[50] Petition of Board of Trustees to Legislative Council of the Mississippi Territory, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492 Z/0059.000/S/Box 2 Document 233.
[51] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory,* p.64; Hamilton, "Jefferson College", p.268. Once again, such claims reference the minutes of the board meetings of Jefferson College, which are no longer accessible.
[52] Edward Turner to John C. Breckenridge, in Carter, *Territorial Papers,* V, 02/11/1803, p.268.

noting the similarities between the words of William Claiborne when he established his plans and those of other founders of colleges and universities in early America. Claiborne discussed a place where "our Youth would be collected into one community, and would form the early ties of intimacy, which would bind their Hearts in union & friendship through Life."[53] The words are interesting in themselves, seemingly challenging the factions and networks of the Territory and suggesting that the College could be a solution to the division in Mississippi's society. In comparison, when plotting the foundation of the University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson called for a "University on a plan so broad & liberal & *modern*, as to be worth patronising with the public support, and be a temptation to the youth of other states to come, and drink of the cup of knolege [sic] & fraternize with us."[54] The distinctly Republican message is similar here – the foundations of these educational institutions were to improve the quality of individual in the United States, giving its youth the opportunity to forge their own livelihoods and inviting the rest of the States to share in that knowledge. In the context of the Mississippi Territory, it's clear that Claiborne envisaged that the College would grant legitimacy and improve the Mississippi Territory's reputation at the national level, particularly in the eyes of the Republican federal government. The fact that the dispute over the location of Jefferson College divided the two factions claiming to represent Republicanism in the

[53] Ibid, p.422.
[54] "From Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 18 January 1800," Founders Online, National Archives, accessed 12/07/2018, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-31-02-0275. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, *vol. 31, 1 February 1799–31 May 1800,* B,B. Oberg (ed) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) pp. 319–323.]

Mississippi Territory surely confirms the assessment that they were barely Republican at all.

Despite all of this, and much to the chagrin of the Green-Wests, it appears that the Board had settled on Washington as the site of the College once and for all. Yet, by the end of the year, the future of the College looks to have been in doubt yet again. In December 1803, Cato West, in his role as Secretary of the Territory, declared that he intended to, "locate the donation of an out lot of thirty acres ajoining [sic] the City of Natchez by the act aforesaid made to Jefferson College."[55] The Act that West referred to here was an Act of Congress from March 1803, regulating the disposal of land in the Mississippi Territory. The act declared that "thirty six sections" were to be "located in one body by the secretary of the Treasury for the use of Jefferson College, and also with the exception of such town lots not exceeding two, in the town of Natchez, and of such an outlot adjoining the same not exceeding thirty acres, as may be the property of the Mississippi Territory."[56] Evidently, the Federal Government granted this land to the College in order for it to have been a source of income, which took on a whole new level of importance when the lotteries intended to fund the College failed, and private donations were not forthcoming. By the time of West's proclamation, he was Acting-Governor of the Mississippi Territory, as Claiborne had left to assume his new position of New Orleans. The problem this caused seems somewhat predictable. As the de facto leader of the Green-West faction, West must have been frustrated, even

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[55] Cato West, 22/12/1803, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492 Z/0059.000/S/Box 2 Document 235.
[56] An Act Providing for the Disposal of Land South of the State of Tennessee, 03/03/1803, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.203.

angry, by the way in which Greenville had been overlooked for the College, and his actions when it came to the land in Natchez suggest a degree of obstructionism.

Earlier in the year, Governor Claiborne had ring-fenced a portion of land in Natchez "on which stands the house formerly occupied by the Priests of that place, and in which the courts of justice for the District and county of Adams are now holden, and also the lot adjoining the before mentioned lot, for the use of Jefferson College."[57] Cato West's proposed plans however, were more contentious, encompassing plots of land which were in active public use and of considerable value. This would change the debate around the College. No longer would the dispute rest between the Claibornites and the Green-Wests, but instead it would centre around Natchez and its inhabitants. Certain plots of land in the city were, of course, more valuable than others, and the merchants of the city knew this more than most.

The thirty acres allocated to the College by Cato West were to be, "beginning at the south end of the front street of said city and running at right angles with the same, westwardly to the highest part of the River Bluff thence northwardly along said bluff and eastwardly to the front street."[58] Front Street, Natchez was, at the time, one of the most prominent streets in the city, running centrally through the main urban area. If we trace the borders of the acreage as outlined by West, it becomes apparent the land would also have bordered the Mississippi River. This was clearly valuable land. While Claiborne had

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[57] W.C.C. Claiborne, March 1803, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492 Z/0059.000/S/Box 2 Document 234.
[58] Cato West, 22/12/1803, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492 Z/0059.000/S/Box 2 Document 235.

allocated land on which disused buildings stood (the Committee found them in "very bad repair"), Cato West seemed to have offered some of the most valuable land in the City.[59] Of course, West may have claimed that in doing so, he was securing the future fortunes of the College as the land would be easily monetised, it's easy to see why the people of Natchez would have been unhappy that such land was being given away to an outside organisation. Whether West actively did so in order to claim revenge against the rival factions who dismissed Greenville by taking away valuable land in Natchez may never be certain but is certainly worth exploring. If this was the case, Jefferson College, or at least the idea of it, had again devolved into a political bargaining tool used to score cheap victories over rivals.

There was apparently a great deal of confusion over the situation with the Natchez lots. In October 1804, nearly a year after the original offer from Cato West, the Board of Trustees petitioned that it was "not until we saw the publication of a Petition to Congress from the City of Natchez did we know of any claim, or pretended claim of the city to any of the public lands, within, or adjoining it."[60] The root of the problem was not simply over the value of the land to the city and its inhabitants, but also over whether Congress even had the rights to grant it to the College. According to the City of Natchez, the lots of land that had been allocated to Jefferson College by West, as per the ordinance of Congress, had been marked out for public use by the former

[59] Report of the Committee of the Board of Trustees, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492 Z/0059.000/S/Box 2 Document 238.

[60] Memorial to Congress by the Trustees of Jefferson College, 05/10/1804, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492 Z/0059.000/S/Box 2 Document 257.

Spanish Governor, Manuel Gayoso. According to one deponent in the legal case which attempted to solve the dispute in 1804:

His Excellency Governor Gayoso did inform him together with any others, that the present line of the front Street should forever be continued in front of the Town, and that no buildings whatsoever should be permitted to be raised on the green between said line and the Bluff, unless it might be found necessary to build a market House, which the People were at liberty to do so, at their own Expence, for the convenience of the Town.[61]

There was apparently no formal record of this declaration available at the time or at present, but it was claimed that regular applications had been made for small tracts of the land, but they had always been refused, with the reason being that "the land was purchased from an Individual by Government, for the express purpose of laying off a Town" as well as to ensure that a certain area of land between the town and the river should stay clear, "in order to contribute to the health of the Settlers."[62] Regardless of whether or not this was a formal and legal arrangement, it must be assumed that Cato West knew of it if it were the case that several requests to build on the land had been denied. Indeed, these developments must surely have brought up in the minds of the inhabitants the ghosts of the Yazoo Scandal; the idea of engaging in disputes over archaic Spanish claims once more must have been disconcerting.

A number of witnesses called to provide evidence of Governor Gayoso's ruling by the City of Natchez. What is apparent from these is that a significant proportion of the inhabitants of Natchez would rather retain the parkland and public space that Gayoso had protected rather than see a College opened,

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[61] Deposition of Ebenezer Rees, 11/10/1404, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.335-337.
[62] Deposition of Ebenezer Rees, 11/10/1804, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.335-337.

which would theoretically have done a lot of good for the Territory as a whole.

Perhaps the issue lay in the fact that the College would not actually have been

built there, but that the public land would only have been used to provide

financial aid to the College. The framing of the debate here is interesting. One

deposer argued that "it would be a peculiar hardship to divest this growing

City of the right of so great a privilege as that of the Common and of so

necessary an Acquisition besides an Eclipse to the glory & splendour

thereof."[63] That is to say, the deponent clearly saw the growth and

improvement of the City of Natchez as being more significant than the

development of a higher education institution for the Territory as a whole. It is,

perhaps, worth noting that the man responsible for gathering these depositions

was Lyman Harding, acting as a committee member of the "common council

of the city of Natchez".[64] As has been mentioned previously in this thesis,

Harding was an ally of William Dunbar and was a key member of the Natchez

mercantile faction. There is a connection to be made, therefore, between this

debate and the continual struggle between the major factions of the Territory.

While the merchants of Natchez had supported the Claibornites in securing

Washington as the site of the College, there was evidently some backlash when

it became apparent that the College intended to use prime Natchez land for

financial gain. Clearly, there was a reluctance to see a rival town gain all of the

prestige of being the site of the College, while to some extent footing the bill.

This argument takes on another layer when one considers that Cato West,

leader of the third faction, was the instigator of this dispute. Whilst it may be

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[63] Deposition of Anthony Hutchins, 13/10/1804 in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.337-338.
[64] Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.335.

an exaggeration to suggest that he masterminded such a plan in order to ensure the Claibornites and the Natchez merchants didn't remain in coalition, there was surely some foul play involved.

Taking a closer look at the depositions, many of the names are not particularly notable as, in order to have been able to provide evidence, the deponent would have to have been an inhabitant of Natchez since the time of Gayoso's governorship. Though they had been gathered by the committee of the City of Natchez for political reasons, their depositions seem somewhat apolitical and sincere, reflective of an appreciation of the city they had lived in. Of the three deponents recorded by Clarence Carter's *Territorial Papers of the United States*, only one is of genuine note. The other two, Ebenezer Rees and Polser Shilling never appear to have held political office, though Rees was evidently a successful merchant due to his regular appearance in court records of his purchases and sales.[65] Both affirmed that they had lived in Natchez since the 1780s and insisted that Gayoso had enforced "that the space before mentioned should always remain open and unoccupied for the health and convenience of the Town", except for a publicly funded market house, which had been opened with Gayoso's permission, highlighting another complex element to the College debate – environmental variability.[66] The third deponent was Anthony Hutchins, who had famously enjoyed good fortune in Gayoso's administration and was the former patriarch of the Green-West faction, before having been overtaken by Cato West. Evidently, something had changed in Hutchins'

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[65] Deposition of Ebenezer Rees, 11/10/1804, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.335-337; Deposition of Polser Shilling, 18/10/1804, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.338-339; M.V. McBee (ed), *The Natchez Court Records, 1767-1805* (Baltimore: Clearfield, 1994) p.498.
[66] Deposition of Polser Shilling, 18/10/1804, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.338-339

political views. Hutchins was perhaps the biggest proponent of the Spanish government left in Natchez, so it is evident why he would have wished for Gayoso's laws to remain intact. Furthermore, by 1804, Anthony Hutchins was no longer simply affiliated to the Green-Wests. While one of his daughters had married Abner Green and one had married Thomas Marston Green, another of his daughters had married Ferdinand L. Claiborne, brother of Governor W.C.C. Claiborne.[67] This adds strength to the Claiborne's decision to side with Cowles Mead and George Poindexter in 1808, but at the time may have simply pushed Anthony Hutchins into a neutral position, where he was unwilling to take sides in this dispute. Hutchins' extended family also highlights the fluidity of networks in the Mississippi Territory, showing how one individual could hold links to every faction of the Territory.

The City of Natchez was clearly determined to retain its common space, supposedly for the health and prosperity of the population. Unsurprisingly, the Board of Trustees of the College were less than enthused by this response. Addressing Congress directly, they highlighted the fact that the land had been granted to them as a result of an Act of Congress, and that the City of Natchez "have no colour of Title to those Lots; they can have none founded either in Law or Equity." They clarified that comment by stating that Natchez was built on:

…a Tract of land purchased by the Officers of Spain, from Major Stephen Minor who then resided on it, for the purposes of establishing a Town thereon; part of which tract was laid out in lots, and the residue reserved by the Governor, until the demand for lots should make it necessary to extend the Town. The out-lot located and claim'd for the Use of Jefferson

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[67] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 1(Madison, 1907), p.914.

College, is part of the reserv'd lands of the aforesaid Tract. The two Town lots remained the property of the Government, were appropriated for the Use of the Clergy of the place, consequently those lots and lands became the property of the United States, without any possible room for a question. And that the authority of the City of Natchez (not two Years in existence) can pretend to claim any of the public Lands within it's [sic] limits is to us a matter of surprise.[68]

This had become a somewhat unusual event, whereby the trustees of Jefferson College were defending the Federal Government's claim to land *to* the Federal Government. Moving on from a legal standpoint, they went on the offensive, arguing that, "if buildings erected between the present Town and the river would affect the health of the Citizens, Towns in no situation, to be healthy, ought to exceed very circumscribed limits," and that they "are deeply interested in the prosperity of the City of Natchez." They further returned to the College's mission statement, arguing that "without one literary Institution in operation among us, and seeing our Youth growing up in Ignorance, and consequently unqualified for the Duties of good Citizens, what must be our Impressions?"[69]

The Trustees' argument was largely an idealistic one, harking back to the Republican idea that uneducated citizens were not useful to the Union. Yet there was also a legal angle to the debate. Their assessment was that, if the land was under the ownership of the Spanish government in the 1790s, then that ownership must have transferred to the US government after the Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1795, not to the City of Natchez itself. This, they believed, was the

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[68] Memorial to Congress by the Trustees of Jefferson College, 05/10/1804, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.333-335.
[69] Memorial to Congress by the Trustees of Jefferson College, 05/10/1804, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers*, V, p.333-335.

federal government's land and therefore Cato West was at liberty to give it to the College. Although the depositions from the City of Natchez arrived in October 1804, the issue had clearly been rumbling on since December of the previous year, when West first announced the plans. So much is clear from a letter in April 1804 to West from William Lattimore, the Territory's delegate to Congress.[70] From this letter, it's clear why there was such a problem – all the legalities of the land disputes had happened in such a short space of time that it was unclear which ones predated which.[71] Most interesting, Lattimore provides an assessment of the actual health risks of building on the site:

Does the college essentially depend upon the possession of the lands in question? Certainly it does not, seeing that it may be otherwise supported, whether by equivalent donations from Congress or additional contributions from individuals. Will the actual lot so called be built upon, be possessed by the college? It will in all probability. Can it be done without materially affecting the health of the town? Observation and reflection convince me that it cannot, and in this opinion I have the concurrence of the most scientific and best informed men in Congress. The diseases which of late years have been alleviated with such mortality in our seaport towns, are general perhaps invariably to be discovered to arrive in the immediate vicinity of the town where the houses are expanded, and consequently where the air is confined. Space for the free circulation of pure salubrious air, which is now desired in vain for those towns, yet remains to the town of Natchez, but if it should be occupied by buildings, I have no doubt that it will become a source of frequent and fatal disorders. What equivalent can be given for the loss of that advantage?[72]

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[70] Lattimore, it should be remembered, was also a member of the committee of Jefferson College which was chosen to scout out potential sites for the foundation of the College, so did hold a vested interest.
[71] William Lattimore to Cato West, 20/04/1804, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Document 240.
[72] William Lattimore to Cato West, 20/04/1804, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Document 240.

To Lattimore's mind, building the College upon the site actually did pose serious health risks to Natchez. This is particularly prescient considering the problems that Yellow Fever caused up and down the Mississippi River, but especially in New Orleans.[73] On this, he concluded that, although Cato West expected him to support to claims of the College, he could not do so. It would, he claimed, have done more harm than good for the College, in its infancy, to be associated with the deterioration of health at the heart of the Territory. To him, the general opinion of the Territory, and the standard of its inhabitants as citizens, would be far worse should the health and wellbeing of Natchez decline, than if it did not have a College.

Lattimore summed up his opinion in a letter to Secretary of State James Madison, which was also forwarded to Cato West, labelling the debacle as "this interfering and embarrassing act," without which, a compromise could have been achieved far sooner.[74] Indeed, he may well have been correct. A conclusion to the sorry affair did not arrive until November 1805, when Governor Robert Williams arrived and finally settled the matter with a degree of impartiality. He decided that, although no formal claim to the land was ever found, he and his commissioners could never be certain that the land that West had allocated to the College were the government's to offer, and there fore "the College can derive no claim and right of title to the same."[75] He could not resist a slight dig at West and Claiborne however, proclaiming that: "In order

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[73] See K. Olivarius, "Immunity, Capital, and Power in Antebellum New Orleans", *American Historical Review,* Vol. 124, Issue 2, (April 2019), pp. 425–455,

[74] William Lattimore to James Madison, 19/03/1805, Founding of Jefferson College Records, 1803-1805; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d., Series 492/Box 18233, Document 241.

[75] Proclamation of Governor Williams, 18/11/1805, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. 5, pp.426-427.

therefore that the interest of the said College may not be jeopardized, and the Governor for the time being embarrassed, should any or a part of said lots located aforesaid be found not to be the property of the United States… [they] may be made to the greatest possible advantage for the use of the College, as soon as the land the property of the United States shall be regularly ascertained."[76] That slight of West and Claiborne is a reminder that partisan attitudes were very much at play across this entire ordeal. Jefferson College may have begun life as a Jeffersonian-Republican idea to improve the standards of the Mississippi Territory, bringing the frontier Territory closer to the Union and allowing democracy to flourish there, and mobilising a watchful and cynical kind of bipartisan support, but it did not end as such in this era. By the time the College finally found appropriate funds and lands, the Territorial period was over – it was not until 1818 that lands were granted, near the town of St. Stephens on the Tombigbee River.[77]

What then, can we learn from the trials and tribulations of the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College in the early Territorial period? Although, as was highlighted in the early part of this chapter, there seemed to have been a sentiment of conciliation and a desire for progress among the major factions of the Territory when it came to the College, this appears to have been at best premature, or at worst disingenuous. Their venture was marked by failure at every juncture; when it came to uniting in order to find a suitable site, when it came to securing funds, and then when it came to securing land in Natchez for investment. The way in which the factions acted and reacted to each other in

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[76] Proclamation of Governor Williams, 18/11/1805, in Carter (ed), *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. 5, pp.426-427.
[77] Hamilton, "Jefferson College", p.271.

this instance is worth exploring individually as, while all engaged with the College differently, each one put their own interests above those of the College and, by association, the Territory and its inhabitants. The two supposedly-Republican factions are perhaps most interesting here, because it is over Jefferson College that we see any semblance of party loyalty dissipate. The Green-Wests clearly assumed they had taken the upper hand when David Ker proposed the site of Greenville, only to have been denied by what appears to have been an alliance between the Natchez quasi-Federalists and the Claibornites. They subsequently withdrew their support and, according to Hamilton, their financial support, in order to deny the success of the College's plans to settle in Washington.[78] Cato West's subsequent plans to provide land for the College in Natchez were at best ill-conceived, and at worst devious. Although the quasi-Federalists and Claibornites appear to have united over a rejection of Greenville and decision over Washington, they were split apart once again by West's offer of land, as it pitted those whose interests rested with Natchez over those who wanted to see a successful College be founded in Greenville.

Whilst W.C.C. Claiborne was the most instrumental figure involved in the beginnings of Jefferson College, even he was not immune to the partisan politicking which so hindered its progress. It's already been shown that he was willing to stand back and allow one of the judges on Mississippi's Supreme Court to be attacked by the rest of the College's Board of Trustees, and to allow a decision that had been voted on, albeit by a depleted Board, to be overturned. Although Claiborne did not stay in the Territory to see the Natchez

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[78] Ibid, p.268.

debacle unfold, having moved to New Orleans, he was undoubtedly partly responsible for its lack of progress before that time. Indeed, the faction of his supporters that he represented in Washington, whilst potentially being less obstructionist than the Green-Wests, demonstrated no willingness to compromise with those they supposedly shared political beliefs with. Though Claiborne would certainly have argued that his faction were a truer representation of Republicanism than their Greenville counterparts, they were much more willing to align with those they deemed to be Federalists, that is to say the Natchez merchants, than they were with their fellow quasi-Republicans. Like their rivals in Greenville however, they demonstrated that their own personal successes came before those of the College, and therefore by their own admission, the Territory itself. By refusing to reach a compromise over the location, both factions of "Republicans" demonstrated their own personal grudges came first, much to the detriment of the College, and to the reputation of the Territory.

The quasi-Federalists of Natchez are very much the third party in this story. Although William Dunbar and Isaac Guion were active members of the Board of Trustees, they seemingly took a step back when it came to negotiations over the location of the College and, importantly, acting as mediators in the process. Guion certainly must have played a key role, as chair of the committee, in suggesting the objectively neutral site of Selsertown, but that appears to be where their neutrality ended. To all intents and purposes, they aligned with the Claibornites in order to secure the site in Washington but, as has been observed, this coalition was disrupted by the problems caused by Cato West in Natchez. It's difficult to establish whether or not the faction actively played a

role in bringing together the depositions and legal argument in order to block the College acquiring the land in Natchez, but if this was the case, it certainly points to them putting their own fortunes, and those of Natchez, above those of the Territory. Indeed, bearing in mind their common membership of the Mississippi Society for the Acquisition and Dissemination of Useful Knowledge, their role in delaying the land acquisition, as highlighted by the role of Lyman Harding, suggests where their loyalties and priorities lay. Even if the key members of the mercantile faction who sat on the Board of Trustees were not the ones blocking the acquisition of land, this still demonstrates the extent to which the people of Natchez prioritised their own fortunes above those of Mississippi as a whole.

Ultimately, the case of Jefferson College demonstrates that, even when preaching a message of inclusivity, development and bipartisanship, the inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory failed to unite over a common goal. The earlier section of this study showed that, for all the attempts of the Board of Trustees to galvanise the populace to aid in financing and supporting the institution, they only received a widespread apathy in return. This highlights the general lack of support for Governor Claiborne's enterprise, which he claimed would benefit the entire Territory and improve its standing on a national level. Clearly, and fairly, the inhabitants of the Territory preferred to look after their own private interests before putting money into an institution such as Jefferson College, which was not receiving financial aid from the local government itself. Furthermore, the College's failure shows that that private self-interest even spread to those who were seeking to establish the College

itself. Although it appeared that the bipartisan Board of Trustees was designed to remove party and factional loyalties from the debate, it only served to exacerbate them.

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This far, this thesis has been concerned with the early Territorial period, discussing the unrest and upheaval in the era up until the crisis of Governor Williams' administration, which also encompassed the majority of the debate over Jefferson College. The second case study moves beyond that period to look at how the Territory and its inhabitants evolved once a period of relative political stability arrived in the region. By focusing such a study on the Bank of the Mississippi, the first banking institution in the Territory, one can see how factions had evolved in the face of the Territory's growth, in the context of the nation being embroiled in an international war, and then in the period of relative stability that followed. The catalyst for that stability was the arrival of the fourth permanent governor of the Territory, David Holmes of Virginia, the last territorial governor and first state governor of Mississippi. That his appointment was confirmed in 1809 and endured throughout the 1810s speaks to his enduring, unifying role, especially considering that this period coincided with a national crisis over the War of 1812. Holmes would serve as the state's governor until 1819, before taking up a seat in the Senate representing Mississippi until 1825, and then finally returned for a second term as Mississippi's governor until retiring due to ill health in 1826.[79] It is perhaps

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[79] D. Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 1, (Madison, 1907) p.879.

telling that J.F.H. Claiborne who, as has been demonstrated was known to be a partisan historian, claimed that Holmes "assuaged the violence of party by the suavity of his manners, the blandness of his temper, and his inflexible official and personal integrity. He had no enemies."[80] Even while treating Claiborne's work with a degree of scepticism, it's fair to say that Holmes had a remarkable impact upon the Mississippi Territory.

That impact was visible when it came to the Bank of the Mississippi. The Bank was comparable to Jefferson College in that it was a moment in which the private and the public interests of politicians might have merged, but also in the individuals who worked to establish it. It was also comparable in that, just as Jefferson College was a distinctly Republican venture, the establishment of a Bank was a quintessentially Federalist move, designed to support the merchant class which made up much of their support base. Furthermore, much like Jefferson College, the Bank's board was comprised of individuals from across the networks of the Territory, drawing on the influence of merchants, planters and politicians alike. In one of the few studies of the Bank of the Mississippi to date, Robert C. Weems Jr. suggests that five of the Board were Federalists and "at least seven were staunch Republicans."[81] The implication of this assessment from Weems is that the leading figures of the bank were a bipartisan group who, as with Jefferson College, had come together for the benefit of the Territory. That benefit, admittedly, was more pragmatic and self-

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[80] J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State, with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*, Vol. 1. (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1880) p.303.
[81] R.C. Weems Jr., "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi", *Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 15, No.3 (July, 1953), p.141; Weems, largely working in the 1950s, is the only historian to have focused upon the Bank of the Mississippi, having produced an unpublished thesis at the University of Columbia in 1951. He subsequently published at least two articles in the Journal of Mississippi History on the history of the bank, which generally lack in referencing but provide a useful overview of the topic.

serving. Even more so than with education, providing a strong financial institution for the Territory directly aided those wealthy merchants and planters who helped to establish it. However, if the board of the Bank is considered from a different angle, it appears more pragmatic than it does bipartisan. Considering the fact that those that have been defined as Federalists in the historiography were more likely to have been financially savvy merchants and businessmen, it makes sense that the more agriculturally minded, rural "Republicans" would have wanted their advice and support. Indeed, it makes a great deal of sense that the Bank of the Mississippi sought advice from a variety of economic groups. Weems explains this himself to some extent, noting that at least four of the committee were lawyers, three were professional businessmen or merchants, and several more were landowners and planters.[82] These people were not selected because they represented a variety of political views, but because they all brought individual expertise. Rowland highlights how intentional this was, recording that the subscribers to the stock of the Bank were to be "a body politic and corporate."[83] This demonstrates a marked shift from the policies of Jefferson College, and perhaps suggests that, by 1811 when the Bank began operations, it was possible to bridge the earlier rifts between the networks of the Mississippi Territory.

Pertinent to this is the rehabilitation of the former Governor, Winthrop Sargent. As was shown in the first chapter of this study, the administration of Winthrop Sargent was the catalyst for the division and factionalism that would shape the early Territorial period. Thus, the fact that Winthrop Sargent was

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[82] R.C. Weems Jr., "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi", *Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 15, No.3 (July, 1953), p.141.
[83] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 1 (Madison, 1907), p.181.

chosen to be the first President of the Bank in 1809 suggests either a remarkable transition in his image, or that politics were not important to stakeholders at all. Indeed, by this time, the most important aspect to Sargent's career to those stakeholders must have been his successful plantation, Gloucester, on the outskirts of Natchez, recorded as being one of the largest estates in the region.[84] Though very little documentary evidence survives of Sargent's role in the Bank, it's clear from the archival record that his tenure as President was not a particularly long one, as he resigned from the role on 14th June, 1811.[85] Evidently, Sargent's role between 1809 and 1811 was to get the bank up and running, ensuring it had a stable foundation from which to develop and prosper. That Sargent was the one that the Territory turned to suggests a transition in the thinking of the leading figures of the Mississippi Territory. No longer were they entirely dictated by partisan sentiments and the intense feuds of the past. Instead, they were more forward thinking and pragmatic, assessing their peers by their private enterprises and expertise, rather than either their political views or their personal relationships.

Indeed, Sargent's allies were also influential in the establishment of the bank, with Lyman Harding and Abijah Hunt among those traditionally seen as Federalists involved in the process, implying that the leaders of the Territory favoured strong, secure financials and business expertise over political views. Some caution must be used here, however. Although it has been noted that the creation of the bank coincided with a downturn in partisan actions in the wake

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[84] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 2 (Madison, 1907), p.597; R.C. Weems Jr., "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi", *Journal of Mississippi History,* Vol. 15, No.3 (July, 1953), p.144.
[85] Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371

of Holmes' arrival in the Territory, all was not entirely well within the political elite. As was noted in the previous chapter of this study, Abijah Hunt was wounded in a duel with the Territory's delegate to Congress, George Poindexter. This is pertinent to the Bank's fate for, as Weems notes, this duel came two days before the opening of the Bank in 1811.[86] Whilst the duel was over issues of honour rather than being explicitly political, there is no doubt that the partisan tensions generated between 1806 and 1808 were consequential, with Poindexter and Hunt hailing from two opposing factions - Poindexter allied with the Green-Wests and Hunt was a key member of the Natchez elite. This implies then, that instead of there being a complete calming of factional dispute in the Territory, we should see a growing divide between politics and economics. Even though the Bank was comprised of many of the leaders of Mississippi's factions, it's clear that they were able to look past those very public differences in favour of an institution which would support and improve their private enterprises. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Holmes' arrival brought in an era of relative economic prosperity for the Territory, and this encouraged the politicians of the Territory to utilise the strengths of their rivals for economic gain.[87]

That development in ideology brought success with it, in that the major distinction between the Bank and Jefferson College is that the Bank of the Mississippi was far more successful, not only in bringing the Territory's key figures together, but also in the results of the venture. Over the remainder of the Territorial period, the Bank established itself as one of the most reliable in

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[86] Weems, "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi", p.145.
[87] Ibid p.137.

the entire nation.[88] For the purposes of this study, this reliability can be best seen through the prism of the War of 1812. The actions of the Bank's directors during the national crisis of 1812-1815 help to illuminate the ways in which the political class of the Territory engaged with the Federal government and allow us to gain an insight into the state of the Territory's identity at this time. Were they still acting out of self-interest, even though partisan differences had faded, or was there an increasing desire to do well by the Territory and the nation as a whole? Alternatively, were they simply trying to protect their own shared investments? Of course, by using the bank's records, we can also see the ways in which the people of the Territory interacted with the institution, tracing its popularity through its transactions across the War. From this, we can learn how heavily affected the businessmen and planters of the Territory were, and how invested they were in the bank itself. As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, there was a marked difference in this regard between interactions with the Bank and interactions with the Jefferson College lottery, for example. Throughout all of this, it must be remembered that it was in the interests of said businessmen and planters to have a strong bank in the Territory, and the incentive was much more direct than it was for the College – an operational bank's benefits far exceeded those of a College on a private, economic level.

Although the Bank of the Mississippi was not the first, or only, bank in the Territory, J.F.H. Claiborne's writing makes it clear why it was necessary.[89] As he notes, "up until 1809, the circulating medium of the Territory was chiefly Spanish coin- doubloons, dollars, halfs, quarters, pistareens and picayunes. The

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[88] Ibid p.140.

[89] D. Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 1, (Madison, 1907) p.181.

only currency was the receipts given at the public gins for cotton deposited there to be ginned."[90] The lack of regulation and control here, plus the lingering involvement of the Spanish government, at least in name was clearly of some concern to the Territory's government, as well as its planters, just as it was with Jefferson College. Claiborne goes on to explain that "the ginner was bound by law to deliver the proceeds baled to the holder of the receipt within four months, under heavy penalties," but even then, there must have been a degree of concern that their finances were entirely reliant on this credit system, based solely upon the good faith of others. Although that credit system would not entirely go away with the advent of the Bank of the Mississippi, such a development added legitimacy and further regulation to the system. Although Claiborne's overview of the bank is certainly helpful, his opinion of its value is particularly interesting. Discussing the efficacy of the bank, he noted that "from its outset to its close, [it] was wisely conducted, in the interest of the whole community, and supplied a currency that was never dishonoured. It had no favorites; was ruled by no clique; was never used to favour monopolists and speculators; to depress and augment prices; or to practice any of those frauds that have made the American banking system so justly obnoxious."[91] As with all of Claiborne's assessments, we must take this with a degree of scepticism, due to his well-documented biases, though that concern is less of an issue with this institution. As has been noted, and as Claiborne comments, the bank was governed by "no clique" – the Board was formed of a diverse group of individuals, therefore benefitting a far wider group of inhabitants that it might

[90] J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, *with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*, Vol. 1. (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1880) p.301.
[91] J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, *with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens*, Vol. 1. (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1880) p.301-302.

otherwise have done. It speaks a great deal to the improvement of relations between the political networks in the Territory in the wake of Holmes' arrival that the inhabitants would put such faith in a private institution (albeit with the government's approval), rather than simply working within their own factions.

The faith that was instilled in the Bank is evident from its credit records. The Bank kept thorough records, from which it is possible to see a great deal of consistency in its business, even during wartime. In records dating from 1811 to 1814, it's clear that, while the bank's systems were refined over time, the bank did get busier. Indeed, there was no significant drop off of business during the disruption of the War of 1812 whatsoever, even with the lingering presence of the British in the Gulf. Though wars were often good for business, the Mississippi Territory was in a compromising geographic position, surrounded by British and Native American enemies. Unfortunately, credit notes were not uniformly dated, and bank officials did not seem to store them in a uniform manner, or divide them with any consistency. The following charts demonstrate the number of credit notes in the first halves of the years 1812, 1813, 1814 and 1815. Due to the ways in which these records are stored, it is difficult to accurately sort the notes into regular time periods. However, these charts remain instructive, and offer a representation of the activity of the Bank across a turbulent period. Furthermore, the records are far less consistent for the second halves of the year, and it is not clear whether there was always a downturn in activity after August, or whether it is simply due to a lack of records. It is possible that harvest times affected the bank's business, with loans and another activity likely taking place in order to help planters to prepare for the harvest, with profits coming in at the start of the year. Of

course, it is also likely that winter affected mercantile business, particularly as business was so dependent on trade coming down the Mississippi River. The charts below demonstrate such consistency, showing that, over the course of the War of 1812, there was no significant change in the business of the bank, at least in the first halves of the year, where records are more detailed. Though records do survive for 1811, they are far more sporadic as the practices of the bank were only just being established. It was not until later in that year that a regular template for credit notes was developed, meaning that it is difficult to draw any reliable conclusions from the year as a whole.[92] The left hand axis of the graphs represent the number of credit notes stored in the Bank's archive. These credit notes mostly formulaic slips of paper, acknowledging a business transaction between two individuals and signed by the cashier. They do not reveal a great deal about the nature of the transactions, but the consistent numbers of notes stored in the Bank suggests that public trust in the Bank was not greatly disrupted by the War of 1812 and that business continued to flow through the Bank, demonstrating the effective public service that the Bank was offering.

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[92] Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 37-41.

Figure 4: Credit notes in the first half of 1812

Figure 4: Credit Notes stored in the Bank of the Mississippi in the first half of 1812[93]

Figure 5: Credit notes in the first half of 1813

Figure 5: Credit Notes Stored in the Bank of the Mississippi in the first half of 1813[94]

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[93] Data drawn from Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 37-41.
[94] Data drawn from Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 37-41.
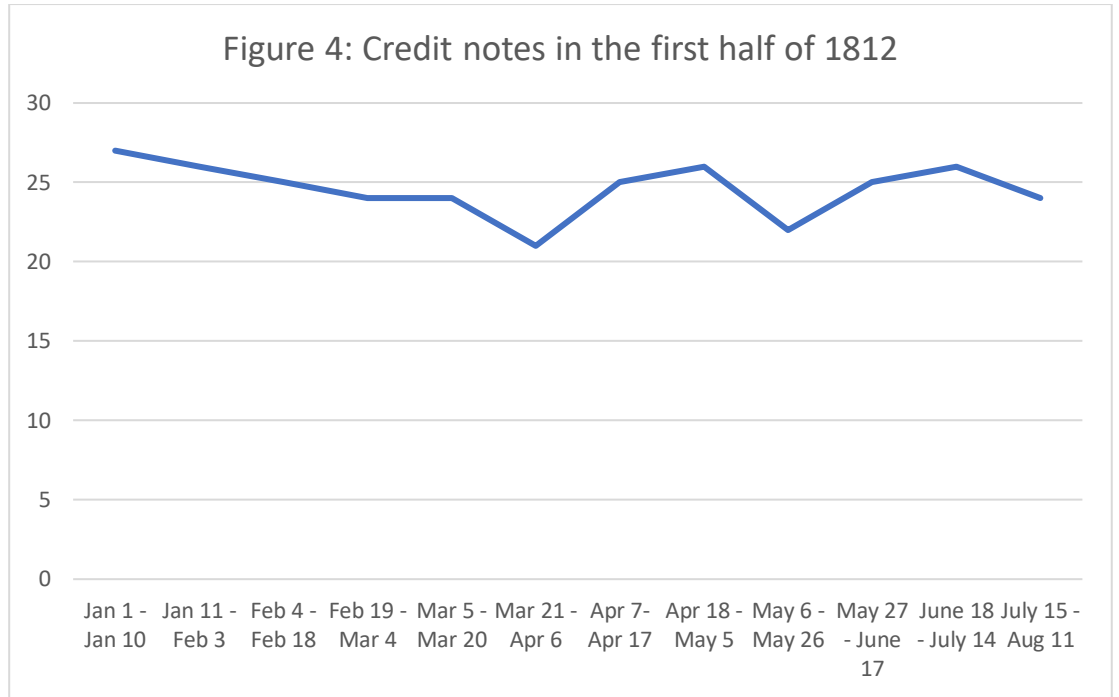
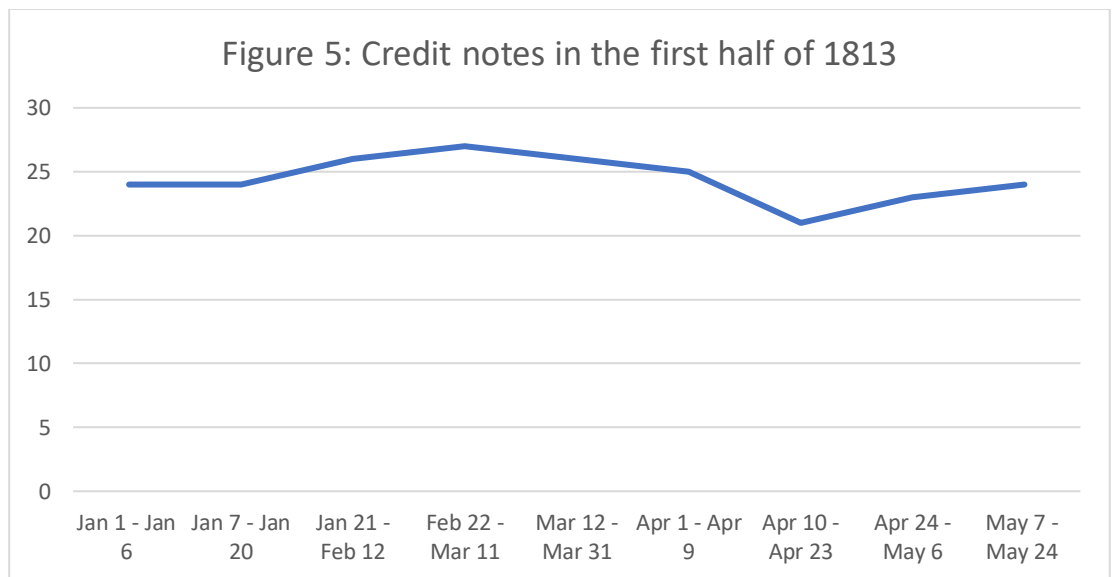Figure 6: Credit Notes Stored in the Bank of the Mississippi in the first half of 1814[95]

Figure 7: Credit Notes Stored in the Bank of the Mississippi in the first half of 1815[96]

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[95] Data drawn from Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 37-41.

[96] Data drawn from Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 37-41.
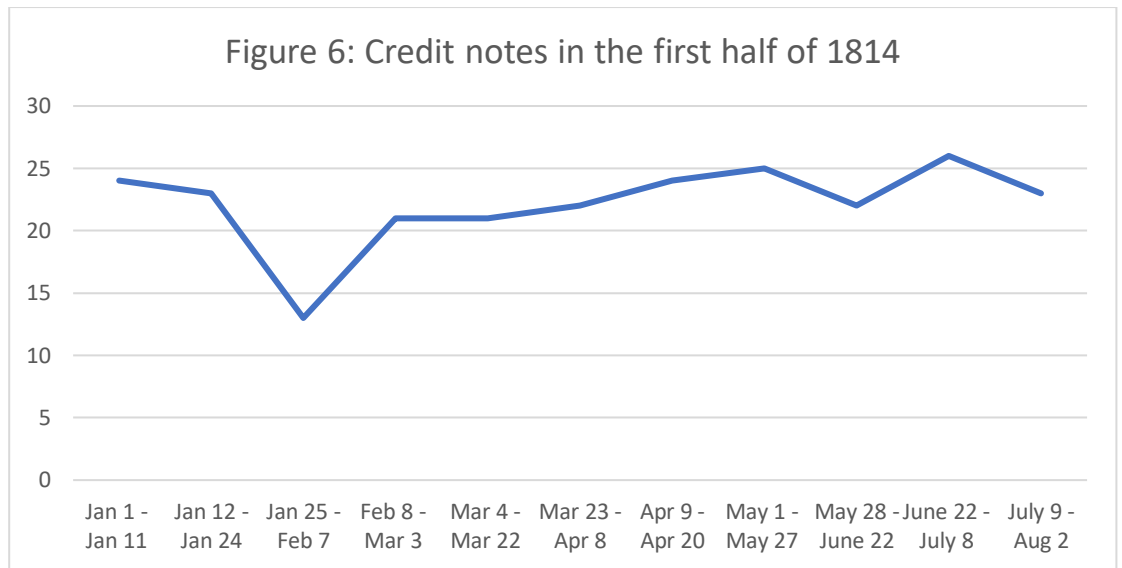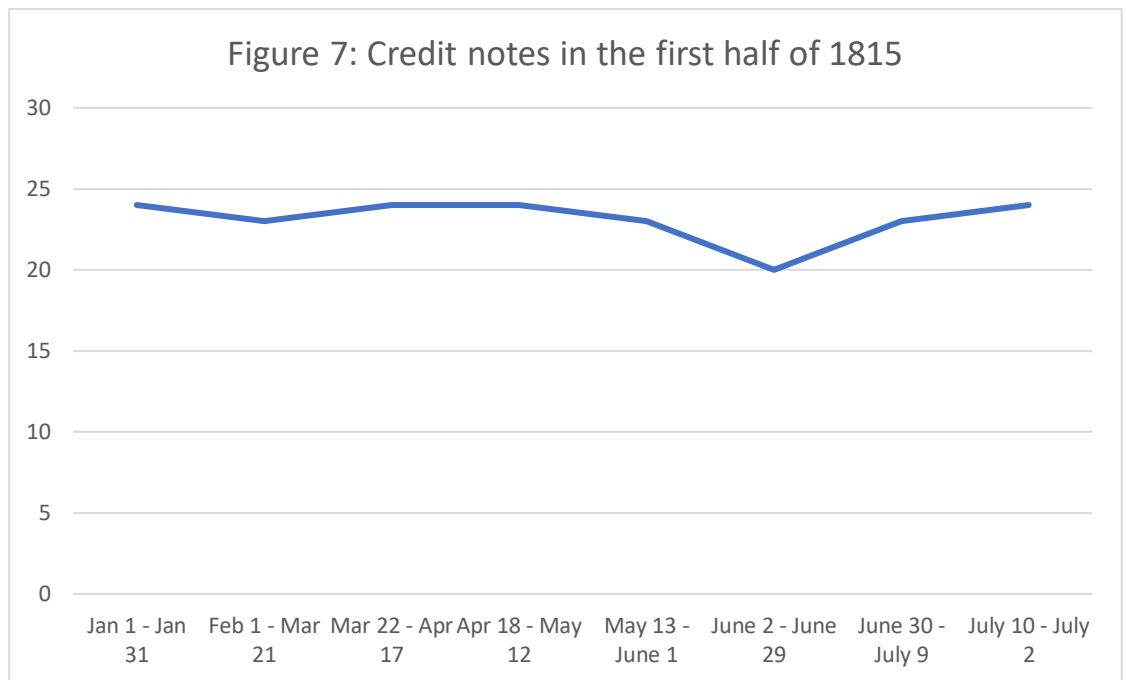
These credit notes also give some indication of the trust that inhabitants quickly placed in the bank. By and large, the notes consisted of requests from individuals to the cashier, at this time Gabriel Tichenor. Ranging in value from around fifty dollars up to eight hundred dollars, the notes requested that money be delivered from their accounts to that of an associate, meaning that Tichenor was responsible for the smooth running of business in the Mississippi Territory.[97] That one man was trusted to do such a task is striking. Monthly dividend reports suggest that Tichenor was extremely capable of the role, with excellent recordkeeping apparent throughout, and he must have been in some way responsible for the bank's progress.[98] Furthermore, Tichenor would later become responsible for the processing of Revolutionary War pensions in the Mississippi area during the 1820s and 1830s, implying that his smooth operating of the bank led to greater things individually.[99] In addition, the records give some idea of the standing of the bank's clientele. Perhaps it is unsurprising that founding members of the Bank such as Ferdinand L. Claiborne, Cowles Mead, Abner Green and Abijah Hunt would have entrusted their finances to Tichenor and the Bank, but it still highlights that this bank catered to the top end of society, politically and economically speaking.[100]

On such a note, it is worth exploring the bank's founding mission in more detail, or at least how the directors envisioned it. Writing to the Territory's Legislative Council in 1814, the directors stated that "This institution was

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[97] Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 37-41.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 33-34.
[100] Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000/S. Boxes 37-41.

created for the furtherance of the agricultural and commercial interests of the territory, and your memorialists believe this has been managed with the most impartial view to the objects of its creation."[101] Evidently, the directors claimed to be working towards the economic security of the Territory, with the entire population's interests at heart. Yet there was clearly something more pragmatic about the bank's role which was, to an extent, self-preserving. This particular memorial focused upon plans to pass a bill in the Territory which would levy a tax of fifty cents on every one hundred dollars of capital stock in the bank, suggesting that the bank ought to be exempt from direct taxation. Addressing the Council directly, they wrote that "every stockholder vested his money in the full belief that the Government which created the institution would never impose on it an insupportable burden by such taxation." This was backed up by the claim that the "stock at no time has been above par, clearly showing that no abusive advantages have been obtained."[102] The stance taken by the bank's directors here is fascinating. We've already seen how many of the bank's original directors were, first and foremost, politicians, or at very least local office holders. This represents a marked difference between these individuals' public lives and their private interests.

Of course, it is also worth considering why the local government attempted to introduce this tax, allowing an important insight into the state of the Territory, and the nation from the perspective of Mississippians, in the latter years of the War of 1812. It is noted that "the government of the union… where every

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[101] Memorial to the Legislative Council by the Directors of the Bank of the Mississippi, 02/12/1814, Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371
[102] Memorial to the Legislative Council by the Directors of the Bank of the Mississippi, 02/12/1814, Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371

possible source of service was necessary to be resorted to, have indirectly

taxed the operations of all banking institutions to the full extent it was

supposed they could say, when the assumed principle that they were free from

all over taxation, this revenue is raised by stamps on bank notes and discounted

notes."[103] This would surely have hit the Bank of the Mississippi hard, based

on the amount of business conducted via bank and credit notes by Gabriel

Tichenor. However, the Directors claimed that it would barely do a quarter of

the damage that the Territory's proposed tax would have brought in.[104]

Somewhat curiously, the Territorial Papers of the Mississippi Territory do not

contain any legislation of government correspondence relating to the bank at

all, but the fact that the Territorial Government wished to impose such a

seemingly harsh tax upon the Bank requires questioning.[105] In 1811, the Board

of Directors had written to the Treasury Secretary, Albert Gallatin, stating that

"the board of directors of the Bank lately established in this place have directed

us to tender the services of our Bank to the offices of the Governor in any way

that might be useful." This included, in their words, protecting the "public

money" and being responsible for the security of the Territory's income.[106]

Indeed, there is some indication that the Bank continued to support the local

government in a significant fashion. As was mentioned earlier, Gabriel

Tichenor became responsible for the administration of the region's pensioners

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[103] Memorial to the Legislative Council by the Directors of the Bank of the Mississippi, 02/12/1814, Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371

[104] Ibid.

[105] As is mentioned in Robert C. Weems Jr, "The Makers of the Bank of Mississippi", Journal of Mississippi History Vol. 15, No.3 (July, 1953), p.140, there is no surviving legislative journal from 1809 dealing with the establishment of the Bank either.

[106] Board of Directors of the Bank of the Mississippi to Albert Gallatin, 12/08/1811, Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z/0094.000, Box 6, Folder 61.

in the 1820s, but the records show that this process had actually begun in 1818, when the bank was made responsible for selecting an agent for the payment of all military pensions.[107] Of course, the major reason for this is that, with the Territory transitioning into a state, the bank became the official state bank, transferring out of private ownership.[108] For this to have happened, there must have been a strong relationship between the bank and the Holmes administration. That, despite this, the Territory sought to tax the bank harshly suggests trying economic times in the Mississippi Territory. Furthermore, the fact that the bank's directors attempted, and seemingly succeeded, in striking down the bill suggests an increased disjuncture between the private roles of its directors and their roles as statesmen in the Mississippi Territory, reflecting the complex dual roles undertaken by politicians and planters in the Jefferson College debacle years earlier. Yet another angle on this issue of taxation is the way in which the bank responded to indirect taxation from the federal government, which was seemingly more amenable to them than a direct tax from the territorial government. This indicates another shift in the identity of the Mississippi Territory, and the bank was significant in this process. As will be shown in the remainder of this chapter, the Bank of the Mississippi was integral in seeing the burgeoning of a relationship between the Territory and the rest of the United States beyond politics, helping Mississippi to become an economic player on the national stage, rather than just as a provincial, frontier territory.

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[107] Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z100094.0001/S Box 33, Folder 426.
[108] Bank of the State of Mississippi Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Z100094.0001/S Appendix 1: History.

As has been shown, the foundation of the Bank of the Mississippi helps to illuminate the ways in which the Territory's society had evolved since the Burr affair. Yet the actions of the Board in the latter years of the War of 1812 also provide some of the most compelling information available with regards to the Territory's place within the United States. As the Bank grew in strength, the decisions that it made over the course of the War reflect the relationship between the Territory and the southern states, but also the Territory's connection with the Federal Government more broadly. Such evidence clarifies how the War affected the Territory beyond military matters, and demonstrates where the loyalties of the region lay. Central to the business conducted by the bank during the War of 1812 was the safeguarding of specie, from where the bank could acquire it. Detailing the importance of specie payments to the Territorial government, the Directors claimed that, "This Mississippi Bank, with a view to support public credit and foster the agricultural and commercial interests of the Territory, has used extraordinary exertions to supply the vaults with specie, and continue to honor all its engagements, which it will continue to do, if protected by your honorable body."[109] Although, as has been shown, much of the bank's business was based on credit, its control of currency in the Territory was one of its fundamental purposes. Finances aside, the coinage of the Territory was something of an ideological matter. As we've already seen, the Territory was dependent on Spanish currency, and transitioning into an economy dependent on US specie was vital should the Territory wish to apply for statehood, for it would have improved the efficacy of trade routes up and

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[109] Memorial to the Legislative Council by the Directors of the Bank of the Mississippi, 02/12/1814, Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371

down the Mississippi River. Achieving this would require an influx of specie from outside of the Territory, the most logical choice being from the established banks of New Orleans.

Such a link between the Bank of the Mississippi and those of New Orleans, which became de facto partners, was ideal for the Territory, providing access to specie payments from a reliable, nearby source.[110] Unfortunately for the Directors of the bank, however, the War of 1812 would soon disrupt the flow of specie into their vaults. In the same memorial to the Legislative Assembly as was mentioned above, the Directors explained the issue: "Your memorialists further state, that from the unforeseen calamity of the times, many respectable banks have declined their payments in specie and these in Louisiana, with which ours was most connected, have long since done so."[111] As such, in the midst of the trying economic climate in wartime, the bank found itself without a regular source of specie payments. Not only that, but this further highlights the stability of Mississippi's bank, which was able to continue its operation for a significant amount of time after those more established banks of the South had. All the same, the issues this created were enormous. Consequently, the directors of the Bank had to turn to the North to secure specie, at a much increased cost.[112]

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[110] Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371
[111] Memorial to the Legislative Council by the Directors of the Bank of the Mississippi, 02/12/1814, Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371
[112] City of Natchez to the Directors of the Bank of the Mississippi, 18/10/1814, Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371

This was an important moment for the Mississippi Territory as a whole. The War of 1812 is generally seen as a war which crystallised some form of American national identity, but the Mississippi Territory was far removed from the major theatres of battle.[113] Instead, the Bank of the Mississippi played an integral role in bringing the Territory and Northern banks and business together. By looking north for specie payments, the Directors demonstrated that the Mississippi Territory was a legitimate market for northern banks to become involved and invested in. This action was as symbolic as it was practical; while it certainly helped the bank's financial situation in the short term and allowed it to keep operating, it was also an important step in integrating Mississippi into the Union, at a time at which calls for statehood were on the rise.

Unfortunately, specie payments from the north were not particularly long lasting, further suggesting that the action was more symbolic than otherwise. Although the memorial mentioned above was dated from December, there's evidence to suggest that the specie payments from the North were already over by then. In October 1814, a collective of merchants and traders from Natchez petitioned the directors of the bank to suspend specie payments, resulting in a resolution that the bank would, "discontinue payments in specie when the amount in the vault shall not exceed 15 thousand dollars." This, they declared, was the result of American currency being "directed to the illicit trade in

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[113] For studies of the War of 1812 and how it shaped identity and culture in the United States, see for example: A. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Vintage, 2011); N. Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). Taking a different approach, K.E. Holland Braund (ed.) Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War and the War of 1812, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012) discusses the War of 1812 in the South, demonstrating how different the experience of war was for those in the Mississippi Territory.

British goods at Pensacola."[114] Evidently, the war was beginning to affect the finances of the Mississippi Territory by this point. Dunbar Rowland offers some elaboration here, suggesting that the northern banks ceased specie payments due to British agents attempting to "drain the North of coin".[115] This is in keeping with the claims that the merchants seemed to be making in the Mississippi Territory, suggesting that the British were attempting similar tactics in the Gulf of Mexico as well. Indeed, the bank itself resolved to actively respond to the problem, stating that they sought to, "discourage a drain of money from the directory for the purchase of British goods, whereby the invading enemy is fashioned with his means of annoyance."[116] Here, again, it's clear that the Bank of the Mississippi was at the forefront of events, even going as far to dictate policy in order to try and disrupt British operations in the region. Thus, the bank must be seen as having played a key role in the development of the Mississippi Territory as a candidate for statehood in the early 1810s. It quickly became the most stable, visible institution in the Territory, therefore becoming a vehicle for trust and security, which would have been particularly importance for national perception of the region and its stability. It demonstrated remarkable financial maturity, even claiming itself able to remain in operation throughout the crisis of late 1814, stating that: "the directors believe that by a judicious management of this institution, they will be enabled to continue their business in its usual role, and taking into view the great spark to public credit which the measure solicited would produce, deem it

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[114] Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371
[115] D. Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 1, (Madison, 1907) p.182
[116] Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371

their duty to thus continue, until the government shall direct otherwise."[117] More than any other institution or individual in the Mississippi Territory, the bank proved that Mississippi was more than a backward frontier territory, and could operate independently even in the harshest economic climates.

Ultimately, this chapter has sought to align private interests with corporate and public initiatives, demonstrating how members of the political class of the Mississippi Territory developed their private interests over this period. By contrasting the failure of Jefferson College with the success of the Bank of the Mississippi, it has been shown that partisan politics and the networks which dictated them had changed significantly in the wake of the Burr affair, coinciding with David Holmes' tenure as governor. Whereas the development of Jefferson College was totally disrupted by partisan clashes based around the geopolitics of the Territory's networks, these networks came together and worked alongside each other, lending their own strengths to the operation, in order to secure its success. For all that the founders of Jefferson College declared their desire to improve the Territory through the Jeffersonian-Republican ideal of education, they were unable to move past their political disputes at the local level, and the College stagnated as a consequence. Yet, by 1809 and the establishment of the Bank of the Mississippi, the opposing factions were able to work together in order to achieve a common goal, and actually built an institution which would help to shape the future of the Mississippi Territory.

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[117] Bank of the State of Mississippi Minute book, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Microfilm, Z/1853.000/M/Roll 36371

Thus, two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the political leaders of the Mississippi Territory were far more willing to put political disputes aside when the benefit to their private, economic affairs was evident. Whilst this may not be surprising, it stresses that we cannot take territorial politicians' words at face value, as while they spoke of working together for the good of the Territory, their actions prove the opposite was the case. It also further stresses that the so-called Republicans of the Mississippi Territory were not wedded to that party for anything other than the name and for the political gain that came with it. Jefferson College was a plainly Republican idea, but the two "Republican" factions' arguments were the major reason it failed. Even if they did hold Republican political views, they were secondary to their own personal ambitions. The contrast with the Bank of the Mississippi is stark. Here, we see "Republicans" siding with their most intense rival, Winthrop Sargent, in order to establish a bank which would further their business and mercantile interests. Indeed, the bank itself was undoubtedly a Federalist notion, so their willingness to help it succeed further demonstrates their pragmatism, and that their private interests trumped all, and further demonstrates how concepts of Federalism endured beyond its political heyday. Indeed it is clear that there was a significant change in the ways planters approached notions of virtue and collectivity across the Territorial period. In the earlier period, "Republicans" would align with their Federalist rivals in order to score points over their "Republican" rivals, but by the time of the Bank, all parties were willing to work together, demonstrating a more sophisticated mindset and a more stable economic climate that both planter and merchant elites were invested in, through the more opaque "institution" of slavery.

Secondly, it is evident that the Bank of the Mississippi became hugely important in developing the Mississippi Territory as something of an economic force in the United States, helping to transform it from a backwater to a productive region with a modern economy. That the planters and merchants of the Mississippi Territory were able to engage further with the Federal Government and even disrupt the British in the Gulf of Mexico during the War of 1812 is testament to the political power the bank wielded. This is, of course, in keeping with recent historiographical trends, which have seen the planters of the Deep South cast as empire builders who were responsible for the moving of the frontier and for driving the United States westward.[118] Whilst the records of the Bank of the Mississippi are far from complete, it's clear that its creation was a defining moment in the history of the Territory, granting it credibility and demonstrating its inhabitants' ability to build a lasting, effective institution in a way that they were not capable of doing only a few years earlier. The bank's success implies that the Territory came out of the disaster that was the Burr Affair looking to rebuild its reputation, and in doing so, successfully brought the region closer to achieving statehood.

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[118] See, for example, W. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Havard University Press, 2013)

<u>Chapter Four</u>
<u>Land, Settlement, and the Road to Statehood</u>

While the three previous chapters have been concerned with local politicians and influential planters in the Mississippi Territory, largely within the Natchez District, this chapter aims to take a broader view of the Territorial era. Using the slow crawl towards statehood as a lens, it investigates the key facets of that process: migration, settlement, land acquisition and population growth. In doing so, it reveals the true complexity of the development of identity on the frontier. It also highlights the unique nature of that local identity, thanks to the challenges that politicians and inhabitants faced from Indians, old settlers from previous governments, squatters, the government itself and, in what has been an undertone to this entire thesis, the libertarian heritage of the American Revolution. By their very natures, these are complicated issues. This thesis has shown that it is impossible to map national political loyalties and labels onto existing parties in the Territory, and this chapter further reveals that it is impossible to simply map settlement onto the federal government's blueprint for the Territory. Furthermore, it is important not to simply see migration as an economic issue, or citizenship as a political one, as the two were inextricably linked and interchangeable.

The chapter focuses upon a Territory not simply in transition, but one that was under transformation. While many of the broader themes discussed here are not new to the historiography of the South in this period, this chapter argues for a new, far more local approach to these issues. It seeks to demonstrate how the individuals at the heart of this thesis began to understand the true economic potential of the land they held. The foundations of Mississippi's cotton

economy were developed in the Territorial era, thanks to the ways in which planters and wealthy merchants dominated the developing landscape of the region. However, the chapter will also highlight migration into the region more broadly, exploring how poorer migrants and settlers engaged with Mississippi's culture and society, using a little-known land dispute as a case study to demonstrate the apparent land hunger which came to represent the Territory's later period. This chapter, therefore, focuses upon Mississippi's inhabitants far beyond the borders of the Natchez District, of Adams, Jefferson and Washington County. It demonstrates the hugely significant role plantation slavery played in defining the settlement pattern of the Territory, and the impact that had upon the region's identity and society. Ultimately, this chapter is a study of Mississippi's road to Statehood, reflecting on how all these factors combined to create a distinct identity in terms of both politics and the region's place in the Union. It will be argued that the planters and local politicians of the Territory had to circumnavigate a unique set of challenges and difficulties in order to transition from a Territory to a State, but that at the heart of the problem were their own pragmatic, partisan and private interests, which fundamentally shaped local identities in the Mississippi Territory in a far greater way than has traditionally been appreciated.

The issues discussed in this chapter, such as land, migration and economics, have received far more attention in histories of the period than any others. Hamilton's socioeconomic study of the Territory on the eve of statehood is a highly useful synthesis of population statistics, demographics and economics

which provides a solid foundation for any discussion such as this.[1] In the same edition, John H. Moore discussed Mississippi's struggles to find a profitable crop, and Winbourne Magruder Drake discussed the framing and context surrounding Mississippi's first constitutional convention.[2] Both these essays are dependent on secondary literature, with a lack of primary research present for the areas of Moore's study which focus on the Territorial period. It focuses more on publications from the mid-19th century, reflecting a wider issue with the historiography of the period. Published around the same time, D. Clayton James offers a more comprehensive overview of the issues surrounding the Territory's development from territory to state, though the author was better known as a scholar of General McArthur during World War Two and the Korean War, and consequently his work on Natchez tends to lack originality.[3] More recently, David J. Libby focused specifically upon slavery in frontier Mississippi, providing a strong overview of the relationships between slaves and slaveholders in the region, which naturally intersects with the issues explored in this chapter.[4] As ever, Robert Haynes' study of the Mississippi Territory is a useful starting point for exploring these issues, though the problems apparent with his analysis, as discussed in this thesis, remain clear.[5] Ultimately, the literature presented here demonstrates a fundamental issue with the historiography of the Territory. While they all remain helpful, they are now

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[1] W.B. Hamilton, "Mississippi 1817: A Sociological and Economic Analysis", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.29, 4, (Nov, 1967) pp.270-292.
[2] J.H. Moore, "Mississippi's Search for a Staple Crop", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.29, 4, (Nov, 1967) pp.371-385; W.M. Drake, "The Framing of Mississippi's First Constitution", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.29, 4, (Nov, 1967) pp.301-327.
[3] D. C. James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968)
[4] D.J. Libby, Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835 (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004)
[5] R.V. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010)

somewhat dated – while they provide interesting factual notes and are worth reading, their focus on economics and politics respectively has meant that there remains a need to discuss how such matters became integrated and, in the process, helped to shape Mississippians' emerging sense of relational identity.

Other academic studies of slavery and migration in the early 19th century South take less of a microhistory approach and generally explore beyond the Mississippi Territory both in geography and chronology. Exploring the wider Mississippi River Valley, Adam Rothman's *Slave Country* is a key study of how migration and slaveholding helped to shape the region, contrasting Thomas Jefferson's ambitions with those of planters in the area, thus demonstrating the ways in which slaveholders were in part responsible for the expansion of the Deep South.[6] Similarly, Walter Johnson's *River of Dark Dreams* explores the concept of a slaveholder's empire by studying Antebellum Louisiana.[7] While they have a different overall ambition, with differing time periods and geographies, these studies are reflective of recent historiographic trends which demonstrate the importance of migration, land ownership, and slave holding in the development of the American South in this period. By moving away from a Jefferson-oriented narrative, scholars have argued that identity in these regions was not created and shaped by politicians, but by planters.[8] This chapter seeks to demonstrate how there was a distinct

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[6] Rothman, A. *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005)

[7] W. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 2013).

[8] See, for example, S. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 2014); J. Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); M. Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); C. Yirush, *Settlers, Liberty, and Empire: The Roots of Early American Political Theory, 1675-1775* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

lack of liberty in the settlement of the Mississippi Territory. This thesis has already demonstrated that the Mississippi Territory was not the Turnerian crucible of American identity that has previously been perceived, and this chapter will demonstrate how land, and the way in which it was shaped by slaveholding, was as significant as politics in defining Mississippi's identity. Migration is typically understood as an economic issue, defined by push/pull factors such as land hunger, which encouraged migrants to venture to the frontier. However, the history of the Mississippi Territory imposed a distinctive political framework over the economics and demographics of migration. As with the institutions discussed in the previous chapter, factionalism, authority, and self-interest shaped opportunities and alignments in particular ways, and at times threatened to destabilise the entire territorial process.

In November 1803, a group of inhabitants from "Washington District", situated on the "Mobile Tombecbee and Alabama rivers [sic]," wrote to Congress appealing for "a division of the Territory and that a Seperate [sic] Government be established within the now District of Washington independent of that of the Mississippi Territory."[9] This was not the first time that residents on the Tombigbee River had voiced their discontent; they had previously done so in 1800 in order to protest against Cato West's intentions to progress Mississippi to the second stage of territorial government. At that time, they had declared that Mississippi's population consisted of a "heterogeneous assemblage of persons who have been mostly educated under monarchical

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[9] Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Washington District, 05/11/1803, in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Volume 5: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), pp.290-292.

governments, unacquainted with the beautiful fabric of the American constitution, and of Americans who have long since been disused to a system of representative legislation."[10] Evidently, these petitions pose significant challenges to a study of identity in the Mississippi Territory, and are reflective of the huge gulf between the established local factions of the Natchez region and the wider Territory. At the heart of this gulf were issues of land, settlement, property and self-government.

Observing that "we cannot partake of the full benefit of this Territorial Government," Washington District's residents implied that politicians in Natchez served only themselves.[11] Yet this wasn't simply an issue of politics, but one of population and identity:

> From the late and rapid migration to this District from the State of Georgia and other parts of the United States, the number of our inhabitants is estimated as more than three thousand, all of whom now reside within the District of Washington and are subject to the Laws of the Mississippi Territory, which are enacted at the distance of nearly three hundred miles from us, all of which distance is a howling wilderness with its usual inhabitants of Savages and beasts of prey… That part of the Territory on the Mississippi and the settlements on the Mobille Tombecbee and Alabama rivers [sic] are composed of people different in their manners and customs, different in their interests, & nature appears

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[10] Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Tombigbee and Tensaw, 01/01/1801, in Carter, Territorial Papers, V, pp.69-71. For further detail on this initial petition, see chapter one of this study.
[11] Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Washington District, 05/11/1803, in Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers.* V, pp.290-292.

never to have designed the two countries to be under the same

Government.[12]

To the people of Tombigbee, being governed by the legislature and executive in Natchez or the town of Washington was hardly any different to being governed directly by the Federal Government, or some imperial power. They saw few of their interests represented in Natchez's assemblies, nor in the factional disputes which threatened the Territory's future. Indeed, they noted that "the inhabitants of his District labour under all the disadvantages of being subject to an authority far removed from us without an opportunity of receiving benefit or assistance from it."[13] The rhetoric here is familiar, being similar in tone to that used by Cato West only three or four years earlier, but also harks back to the mantras of the American Revolution. More broadly, the lamentations of the inhabitants of Washington District represent a new problem for the Mississippi Territory. The Territory was supposed to be on the road to statehood, but how could it achieve that goal when half the Territory seemingly wished to secede?

Fundamentally, the purpose of the United States' territorial system was to bring new states in the Union. However, throughout the first decade of the Territory's existence, there were no great signs of progress for Mississippi. Though the population of the Territory had grown, by 1810 it was nowhere near the necessary threshold. While it can be difficult to establish accurate population statistics, in that inclusion or omission of slaves in population figures can often distort statistics, the most detailed study was published in the

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[12] Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Washington District, 05/11/1803, in Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers.* V, pp.290-292.
[13] Ibid.

1960s by W.B. Hamilton. Writing a socioeconomic analysis of the Territory's population, he established that, of a total estimation of a population of 46887 by 1816, 25447 were white, and 21440 were non-white.[14] Yet, he also estimates that the Territory's total population in 1810 was 40112, suggesting a marked lack of growth.[15] Mississippi's politicians would all have been paying close attention to the number, as they required around 70,000 inhabitants in order to apply to Congress for the right to hold a Constitutional Convention. For those with an interest in the Territory's transition into statehood around 1810, the population figures may well have been concerning. Though the population had grown, the rate of migration into the Territory was relatively minute, and would come to a near halt during the War of 1812. While that's not necessarily to say that the Territory was lagging behind in its journey towards the Statehood, population growth was certainly stagnating. There was only one precedent for the territorial system thus far, with the Northwest Territory taking sixteen years to transition into the State of Ohio between 1787 and 1803.[16] However, as this chapter will explore, there was a sentiment that

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[14] Hamilton established that non-white inhabitants made up 42.02% of the population of the Natchez District in 1800, rising to 47.99% in 1810 and 54.77% in 1816. He estimated a Territory-wide percentage of 45.73% in 1816., 25447 W.B. Hamilton, "Mississippi 1817: A Sociological and Economic Analysis", *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol.29, 4, (Nov, 1967) p.271.

[15] Hamilton, "Mississippi 1817", p.277. That statistic is corroborated by Dunbar Rowland, who estimated that the Territory's population was already 40352 by 1810. [15] These figures were relatively well known in the period, with Samuel Brown, a contemporary travel writer, suggested that there were only over 44,000 inhabitants in the Mississippi Territory in 1816, the year before it transitioned from territory to state. Dunbar Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi,* Vol. 1 (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1908) pp.241-242; S. R. Brown, *The Western Gazetteer; or Emigrant's Directory* (Auburn, NY: Southwick, 1817) p.245.

[16] For more details on the Northwest Ordinance, see Horsman, R. 'The Northwest Ordinance and the Shaping of an Expanding Republic', *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol.73, No. 1 (Autumn, 1989) pp.21-32; Onuf, P. *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); Berkhofer, Jr. R.F. 'Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol, 29. No. 2 (April 1972) pp.231-262.

the Mississippi Territory was struggling towards that threshold. Thus, the potential dangers of a division of the Territory, as requested by the Tombigbee settlers mentioned above, were worrying for those who wished for statehood, to say the least. The leading factions of the Mississippi Territory, even while they pursued self-interested positions, recognised the wider benefit of incorporation into the Federal Union, and all their fighting and jostling for position came with the expectation that statehood was on the horizon.

In order to understand how migration and settlement worked in the Territory, it is important to return to the Ordinances upon which the Territory was founded. Indeed, although established long before the Mississippi Territory, the Northwest Ordinance and the 1785 Land Ordinance had pronounced effects on how the people of the Mississippi Territory saw themselves in relation to the United States as a whole.[17] Assessing the relationship between the Mississippi Territory and the Northwest Ordinances is a complex task.[18] As such, it is necessary to briefly discuss the legislation itself in order to understand the connections between the laws governing the Mississippi Territory and those already in existence. Firstly, therefore, one must understand the individual functions of the two Ordinances in question. The Northwest Ordinance, passed in 1787, referred to "the government of the territory of the United States North West of the river Ohio", and details the governing structure of the Northwest Territory. It provided for the appointment of a governor, a secretary, and a

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[17] See, for example, R. Horsman, 'The Northwest Ordinance and the Shaping of an Expanding Republic', *The Wisconsin Magazine of History,* Vol.73, No. 1 (Autumn, 1989) pp.21-32; R.F. Berkhofer, Jr. 'Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System', *William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol, 29. No. 2 (April 1972) pp.231-262; P. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[18] Northwest Ordinances, here, is a reference to both the original Northwest Ordinance and the 1785 Land Ordinance.

court of three judges to form the basis of a territorial government, and an

elected assembly once there were "five thousand free male inhabitants of full

age in the district", thus forming the territory's legislature.[19] The Ordinance

then details six articles, governing freedom of religion, the right to trial by

jury, the means by which the territory can become a state and its relationship

with the existing states and, finally, the criminalisation of slavery.

Whilst the Northwest Ordinance dealt with the governing of the territory, the

Land Ordinance of 1785, officially entitled "An Ordinance for ascertaining the

mode of disposing of lands in the Western territory", is concerned specifically

with the distribution of land.[20] It lays out the means by which unsettled land

was to be surveyed, in the aftermath of cessions from both individual states

and from, in the future, the native inhabitants. As the Act reads:

> The Surveyors, as they are respectively qualified, shall proceed to divide the
>
> said territory into townships of six miles square, by lines running due north
>
> and south, and others crossing these at right angles, as near as may be, unless
>
> where the boundaries of the late Indian purchases may render the same
>
> impracticable, and then they shall depart from this rule no farther than such
>
> particular circumstances may require.[21]

The Land Ordinance essentially ordered the land in the Western territory to be

divided into a grid, with a large network of surveyors trusted with the task

working alongside the Geographer of the United States. This was not a

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[19] "An Ordinance for the government of the territory of the United States North West of the river Ohio" in P. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp.60-64
As an aside, it is interesting to note that this does not specify white inhabitants, especially considering the Ordinance's ruling on slaver.
[20] United States Continental Congress; Library of Congress, Cont Cong no. 112 [New York, 1785] 'An Ordinance for ascertaining the mode of disposing of Lands in the Western Territory' http://lccn.loc.gov/90898126 [last accessed 18/11/2018]
[21] Ibid.

metaphorical grid but rather a physical one, not to be drawn on a map but instead, "The lines shall be measured with a chain; shall be plainly marked by chaps on the trees."[22] The process was a huge undertaking, with each surveyor simultaneously aiding the government to chart the new territories and being responsible for even distribution of land in these regions.[23]

This process of surveying and dividing up land was the same process which was undertaken in the Mississippi Territory, led by the chief surveyor, Isaac Briggs.[24] Furthermore, the process by which this land would be then distributed was the same as was outlined in the ordinances of the Continental Congress. In March 1803, "An Act regulating the grants of land, and providing for the disposal of the lands of the United States, south of the state of Tennessee (a)" was passed, providing a means by which the government could sell land in the Mississippi Territory.

> That, for the disposal of the lands of the United States within the Mississippi Territory, two Land Offices shall be established in the same; one at such place in the county of Adams, as shall be designated by the President of the United States, for the lands lying West of "Pearl River", sometimes called "Halfway River"; and one at such place in the county of Washington, as shall be designated by the President of the United States, for the lands lying East of the

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[22] Ibid.

[23] For a more comprehensive study of federal land policy in this era, see H. B. Johnson, 'Gridding a National Landscape', in M. Conzen, *The Making of the American Landscape* (Oxford: Routledge, 2nd edition 2010); Meinig, D.W. *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on Five Hundred Years of History, I, Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven, Conn. 1986), and II, Continental America, 1800-1867(New Haven, Conn., 1993)

[24] A. Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) p.39.

Pearl River; and for each of the said offices a Register and Receiver of Public Moneys shall be appointed.[25]

This process of dividing and distributing land via two land offices demonstrates an attempt by the federal government to ensure continuous settlement of the Mississippi Territory could occur. This was in keeping with the regulations detailed within the 1785 Land Ordinance, which went further in detailing exactly how land would be distributed by the land offices, including the language of the land patents settlers would receive.[26] However, few settlers could afford the 640 acre plots of land that the survey created. Thus, these plots of land were regularly split up and sub-divided to create more manageable and affordable squares of land. Indeed, many slaveholding planters often only claimed 320 acre plots. This was, at least in part, due to the fact that land was to "be sold under the price of one dollar the acre,"[27] ensuring that such plots were only accessible to the wealthiest of planters, and even the smallest of claims were out of the reach of many. As such, poor settlers and immigrants had to resort to alternative methods of acquiring land in the West.

Neither the Land Ordinance of 1785 nor the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 explicitly mentioned the government's policy on squatters – those who had settled on unclaimed land prior to the surveying of land. Indeed, they also do not provide any guidance on how the Mississippi Territory should have dealt

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[25] "An Act regulating the grants of land, and providing for the disposal of the lands of the United states, south of the state of Tennessee (a)", *Statues at Large*, *7th Congress, 2nd Session*, Chapter 27, 1803, p.229. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=002/llsl002.db&recNum=266

[26] *Journal of the Continental Congress,* Volume 28. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=lljc&fileName=028/lljc028.db&recNum=390 p.379.

[27] United States Continental Congress; Library of Congress, Cont Cong no. 112 [New York, 1785] 'An Ordinance for ascertaining the mode of disposing of Lands in the Western Territory' <http://lccn.loc.gov/90898126>

with competing land grants from British, French or Spanish governments, for obvious reasons (the Northwest regions did not have such issues with competing claims). Thus, the 1803 statute relating to the Mississippi Territory is entirely original in this respect. With regards to British and Spanish claims, the Act dictated:

> That any person or persons, and the legal representatives of any person or persons, who were resident in the Mississippi territory on the twenty-seventh day of October in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five, and who had prior to that day obtained, either from the British government of West Florida or from the Spanish government, any warrant or order of survey for lands lying within the said territory, to which the Indian title had been extinguished, and which were on that day actually inhabited and cultivated by such person or persons, or for his or their use, shall be confirmed in their claims to such lands in the same manner as if their titles had been completed.

Furthermore, in dealing with squatters, the Act legislated that those who inhabited land the region once it became a territory in 1798 could be granted their land as long as the inhabitant did not already own land granted by some other government, and the land in question was not subject to any other land claim. It also stressed that said individual would be entitled to a preference in becoming the purchaser of that land from the federal government at the same price as other land in the territory.[28]

Thus, the act did include some provision for those who already occupied land in the Mississippi Territory to retain it and purchase it, though it should be noted that this land was not free. This Act, that is to say, was not some late variation of colonial headright schemes, nor an early incarnation of the 1862

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[28] Ibid.

Homestead Act, whereby land could be granted to citizens for free after five years of improvements. Indeed, whilst the legislation for the Mississippi Territory differs from the Northwest Ordinances in its noting of squatters, it is inadequate for dealing with them, considering many would have been too poor to purchase their land under the law. Furthermore, allocating land to these squatters was a difficult process. The federal government's surveyors worked towards establishing a formulaic, rectangular, structured system and land occupied by squatters did not fit into this system. Prior to the organization of the Mississippi Territory, land occupation was sporadic and irregular, with settlers claiming land as they pleased. Evidently, as surveyors attempted to place a grid over this land, clashes occurred.

Of course, the settlement patterns of white inhabitants were not the only barrier to the structured organization of land in the Mississippi Valley. Key studies of the Mississippi Territory's formative years have neglected the extensive Native American population of the region.[29] Settlers emigrating from the eastern states were not moving into empty land, but land occupied by several Native American tribes. Furthermore, the settlement patterns of the native Chickasaw, Choctaw, Red Stick and other Creek tribes were even more diverse and sporadic than those of white squatters. Thus, the only way that effective implementation of the federal government's land policy could occur would be via the acquisition of Indian land. Here, officials returned to the guidelines laid out in the 1785 Land Ordinance, which was designed with land "purchased of the Indian inhabitants" in mind. It stipulated that, should the boundaries of any

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[29] R. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010); R. Kennedy, *Mr Jefferson's Lost Cause* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

subsequent Indian purchases render the grid set up to be impracticable, then the

surveyors would have the ability to depart from the rule as far as necessary. [30]

This, however, only answered one problem for surveyors. Whilst they were

granted the power to adjust their surveys to take into consideration the

unpredictable pattern of land acquired from Native Americans, this did not

solve any issues when it came to land that was still inhabited by the tribes.[31]

As was a problem for Native Americans across the continent, the native tribes

of the lower Mississippi Valley were characterised by disunity throughout the

early nineteenth century. Furthermore, it proved challenging for natives to

adapt to the different forms of government and diplomacy in play during this

period, as control of the lower Mississippi Valley fluctuated between Spanish,

French, British and American rule. Yet in the same way, it also offered

opportunity and the creative space for Native nations to find their own ways of

exploiting the complex nature of power in the region. The Creek confederation

had its strongest relationship with the Spanish, whose governors generally

understood that it was in their interest to cooperate and trade with the Natives.

Whilst this benefitted Natives at the time, it created issues in the forthcoming

years, particularly after the sale of Louisiana to the United States. With neither

the Spanish nor the French showing any real desire to expand further in to the

continent, the rapid expansion of the Americans into the Mississippi Valley

represented a new danger to Native Americans. Indeed, this effect was

worsened by Spanish abandoning their alliances and friendships with the

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[30] United States Continental Congress; Library of Congress, Cont Cong no. 112 [New York, 1785] 'An Ordinance for ascertaining the mode of disposing of Lands in the Western Territory' <http://lccn.loc.gov/90898126>
[31] For more information, see Miller, D.W. *The Taking of American Lands in the Southeast: A History of Territorial Cessions and Forced Relocations, 1607-1840* (Jefferson: North Carolina, 2011)

Natives of the Mississippi Valley, forcing them to act alone against a "radically new vision of Indian-white relations."[32]

Importantly, the impact of the influence of French, Spanish, British and American claims to the territory was to create an "absence of clearly defined systems of power."[33] Richard White has highlighted the undeniable issues over competing land claims between European and American settlers, as well as Native Americans; these competing claims, as well as those of squatters in the region, are a crucial factor in understanding the settlement of this territory. Furthermore, by utilising the growing collection of census records from Louisiana in the late colonial period, Paul Lachance demonstrates how, although the Spanish were nominally in control of the area, that power 'was more apparent than real'.[34] Thus, there was a real vacuum of political power in the years leading up to the Purchase. Indeed, Lachance's assessment is that there was no single dominant population base of white settlers; with immigrants arriving from all over America and even further afield, it is improbable that any single identity would have emerged amongst southern white settlers in the early 1800s. In addition, it is even less likely that any such identity would be tied to the growing national identity borne out of the northern states during the War of 1812.

As settlers pushed into the lower Mississippi Valley, armed with "a providential sense of American destiny", many sought to profit from selling off

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[32] K. DuVal, *The Native Ground* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) p.179.
[33] P.J. Kastor, and F. Weil, (ed.), *Empires of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009) p.6. White's article within this edited collection is entitled "The Louisiana Purchase and the Fictions of Empire"
[34] Kastor & Weil, *Empires of the Imagination*, p.9. Lachance's article within this edited collection is entitled "The Louisiana Purchase in the Demographic Perspective of its Time".

vast "unclaimed" areas, which were actually claimed by various Indians, Spanish, Congress and even some states.[35] Yet, from the perspective of white settlers, acquiring land from Native Americans was not a simple, regimented process. As Kathleen DuVal has noted, there was an underlying misunderstanding between Native Americans and U.S. Settlers when it came to American expansion, largely thanks to the completely decentralized nature of the process.[36] Indeed, during the "great land rush", as defined by John C. Weaver, massive territorial expansion was linked to the territorial ambitions of private individuals with interests in planting and manufacturing cotton.[37] It was the cotton planters, not the federal government, who were pushing the boundaries of the frontier; a frontier almost entirely bereft of governmental oversight. Sven Beckert assesses that the states' monopoly on violence was "still a distant dream", yet the issue ran even deeper; the state had little to no control over settlement on the frontier until 1806 at the very earliest. With settlers pushing into their land at will, it was particularly difficult for Native Americans to counteract, thus weakening their position when the federal government finally moved in to propose land treaties and cessions.[38]

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[35] A. Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) p.37; K. DuVal, The Native Ground (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) p.175.

[36] K. DuVal, *The Native Ground* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) p.175.

[37] See J. C. Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003) pp.72-76.

[38] For more information on the experience of settlement on the frontier, see Barr, D.P. *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers Along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850* (Kent State University Press, 2006); Bolton, C.C. *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Bolton, C. C. "Planters, Plain Folk, and Poor Whites in the Old South." in Lacy K. Ford, ed., *A Companion to the Civil War and Reconstruction,* (2005) p. 75–93; Dippel, J.V.H., *Race to the Frontier: "White Flight" and the Westward Expansion* (New York: Algora, 2005); Gallay, A. *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989); Hammond, J.C. *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West*

The process of acquiring land from Native Americans via treaties had begun in the South with a huge cession of the Creek Confederacy's lands in Georgia, which were subsequently converted into cotton farms in the early 1800s.[39] However, it was not until the defeat of the Red Stick confederacy in the Creek War, which ran parallel to the War of 1812, that large scale land treaties became commonplace. Indeed, as Rothman suggests, the five years after the defeat of the Red Sticks established "the pattern for Indian removal west of the Mississippi."[40] Perhaps the most significant of these treaties was the Treaty of Fort Jackson, signed in 1814, which brought the Creek War to a conclusion following the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. It also included a major land cession, one of the largest of the era, opening some of the Mississippi Territory's most valuable to land settlement and would eventually leave to the complete displacement of the region's tribes. However, such a large acquisition of land did prove challenging for the federal government. The original survey of the Mississippi Territory had been a long and arduous process; Chief Surveyor Isaac Briggs regularly aired grievances to his family and colleagues, complaining of the difficult landscape and of squatters and eventually resigned from his role in 1806.[41] It was not until 1812 that the Mississippi Territory was fully surveyed and the land office open for sales and acquisitions. In comparison to this, the Treaty of Fort Jackson was signed on 9th August, 1814

(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Pratt, K.W. *Expansionists of 1812* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1957); Smith, G.A. and Hilton, S.L. (Eds.), *Nexus of Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s,* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010).

[39] S. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014) p.107.

[40] A. Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) p.168.

[41] See, for example, Harry Toulmin to Isaac Briggs, 17 December 1806, *Briggs-Stabler Papers, 1793-1910,* MS. 147, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore. Quoted in A. Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005)

and the ceded land was incorporated into Madison County in June 1815,

emphasizing the speed in which the area was inhabited, if not entirely legally.

These land acquisitions and the subsequent land rushes had a plethora of

effects upon the landscape and society of the Mississippi Territory. However,

whilst the political implications of the treaties are well covered in the

historiography of the region, and the wider history of Indian land removal have

also been studied, the intricacies of the relationship between white settlers in

the Mississippi Territory and Native Americans is often overlooked. The

various native tribes of the Mississippi Territory enjoyed a mutually beneficial

relationship with the Spanish government in the late 1700s, yet this changed

dramatically once the United States assumed control of the region; it is evident

that US settlers were far less interested in maintaining the status quo than their

predecessors. Indeed, as with the settlement of Madison County, the federal

government had little control over its own citizens. Thomas Jefferson

envisioned the region as a "training ground" for natives, in order to turn them

from hunters into farmers, essentially using the Natives to cultivate their own

land and prepare it for white farmers to come into the region.[42] However, as

has been shown, settlers often rushed into unoccupied land in order to claim it

as quickly as possible, with little regard for any current occupier, native or

otherwise.

One such example is of this tension is the case of John Montgomery, a citizen

of Amite County. In July 1809, Montgomery wrote to Governor David Holmes

appealing for his aid following an apparent raid on his land by a band of

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[42] K. DuVal, *The Native Ground* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) p.179.

Native Americans. Montgomery reported that "the Indians burned my house and all that was in it except what they carried away", leaving him "in a state of sufferance for want of it." Montgomery, however, fails to mention the fact that a group of white settlers pursued and captured the Natives, tying them up and beating them, though this group implied that they did so against his wishes. The intricacies of the violence between the whites and the natives are not necessarily the most important elements of this tale however. Moses Foster, the man hired to visit the Choctaws to ascertain further details for the case, assessed that the quarrel arose over a trade deal. Foster admitted to Holmes that his memory of the case had faded over time, the letter dated nearly a year after the event, but recalled: "Mr Montgomery let [the Choctaws] have some spirits for a best Dear Skin to make a pear [sic] of boots" and then recalls that the quarrel began over a bridle.[43] This example is just one of countless cases which demonstrate how intertwined the experience of the Native American and the white settler was. Native Americans had grown accustomed to trading with their new neighbours, and had done so effectively with the Spanish, in part because it suited the Spanish to maintain good relations. However, American emigrants were far more interested in extending either the borders of their own nation, or improving their own personal wealth. As has been discussed, the Federal government regarded the Natives to be savages waiting to be civilized, and individual settlers did not appear to have any real interest in establishing

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[43] John Montgomery to David Holmes, 26/07/1809, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488, Administration Papers, 1788-1817, Doc. 975.

strong trade links with their Native counterparts, playing into the overarching

idea that the Western lands were "empty" and ready to be settled.[44]

Indeed, cases such as this were only exacerbated as the era went on,

particularly since new tracts of land would be coming available to white

settlers. In 1806 for example, surveyor Thomas Freeman wrote to the head of

the General Land Office, Josiah Meigs, informing him that: "The savages have

very recently committed Murders & Robberies in the tract of the country we

shall be employed in – Our surveyors will, in a few weeks be scattered over a

Surface of nearly 200 by one hundred miles in extent, on fatigue, and incapable

of protecting themselves, a small trespass by even a few straggling Indians

would drive them out of the field."[45] Freeman went on to decry the lack of

support offered by the government, stating he had not been offered sufficient

funds to defend his men.[46] Of course, one must take Freeman's concerns in

context compared to the huge suffering inflicted upon the Choctaws and

Chickasaws who were forced off their land in the wake of the War of 1812 and

Creek War, but it is undeniable that the perceived injustice claimed by US

surveyors and settlers in the Mississippi Territory contributed to the ways in

which white Mississippians engaged with the federal government. The

increased sentiment of self-preservation, that these inhabitants would have to

look after themselves, may sound Jeffersonian in its essence, but was actually

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[44]See also a number of affidavits in Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series
488, Administration Papers, 1788-1817 corresponding to the case, such as from Moses Foster
and William Jones.
[45] Thomas Freeman to Josiah Meigs, 02/04/1806, in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the
United States*, *Volume 6: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government
Printing Office, 1937), p.677.
[46] Ibid.

something more.[47] It wasn't that the people of the Mississippi Territory were happy to be separate from the rest of the Union, defending their own land in their own way, far from the grasps of Congress. Instead, Mississippians actually wanted, and asked for, the support of the Federal Government, and it was the fact that such aid was not forthcoming which created the isolated mentality of the Mississippi Territory. Indeed, in the above discussed letter from Harry Toulmin to the President, Toulmin noted "indications of a cordiality between the leading men in this district and the persons who have been engaged in stirring a lawless war on the Spanish possessions,- the bold avowal of a disposition on the part of the federal and territorial governments to co-operate with the revolutionists."[48] The mention of the federal government here is not implying that Congress was also supporting revolutionists in West Florida, but that people of the Mississippi Territory were suggesting that the federal government would support them, though this was unfounded. What makes this statement significant is the implication that Mississippi's inhabitants were seemingly attempting to engage in an illegal war upon the

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[47] For further reading on characteristics of Jeffersonian-Republicanism and its significance for the frontier, see Tucker, R.W. and Hendrickson, D.C. *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Seefeldt, D., Hantman, J.L., Onuf, P.S.(eds.) *Across the Continent: Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and the Making of America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005); Ronda, J.P. (ed.) *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West: From Conquest to Conservation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997) P.J. Kastor, (ed.) *The Louisiana Purchase: Emergence of an American Nation* (Washington: CQ Press, 2002); P.S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); S. Levinson and B. Sparrow (eds.) *The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Kastor, P.J. and Weil, F. (ed.), *Empires of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); R. Kennedy, *Mr Jefferson's Lost Cause (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Onuf, P.S. (ed.) *Jeffersonian Legacies* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993); Curtis, C.M. *Jefferson's Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
[48] Judge Toulmin to the President, 06/02/1811, in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Volume 6: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), p.176.

Spanish in order to protect their own lands, rather than seeking aid from the federal government in this matter. The unique geopolitics of the Mississippi Territory, isolated from the federal government and bordered by Spanish enemies, created this unique relationship between white settlers in the Territory and Washington, DC.

Tension between Native Americans and white emigrants was not the only source of unrest when it came to the settlement of the Mississippi Territory. As early as 1770, a form of Homestead Act had given farmers the opportunity to "gain title to land by clearing it and commencing its cultivation,"[49] though this was by no means definitive. Well into the 1810s, squatters feared the impact of the arrival of the planter class in the Mississippi territory, who came with both the finance and political influence to claim any land they desired, often forcing poorer farmers away from the land they had spent years cultivating and into gullies and onto hills.[50] Indeed squatters, particularly those who had settled around the Tombigbee River, greatly resented the way the federal government had approached the settlement of the Mississippi region. The 1770 Act may have offered provision to allow them to gain title for their land, but they had to *clear* it. This did not simply mean clearing trees and foliage for farming; it also meant taking, and defending, it from Native tribes. As Haynes notes, Tombigbee settlers were particularly troubled by the fact that the majority of good, fertile land in the region was already held by Natives.[51] Settlers in the territory felt the government was not doing enough to help clear these lands. In

[49] R. Kennedy, *Mr Jefferson's Lost Cause* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p.209.
[50] Ibid, p.81.
[51] R. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010) p.75.

reality, this was an accurate assessment; the defence of the frontier was largely being left to private enterprise, to small farmers who needed to hold onto this dangerous land, as it was of little interest to planters who didn't need to take such risks.

This tension between the native Choctaw and Chickasaw nations had a profound effect upon Mississippi's political identity, as well as affecting white inhabitants' settlement patterns. The threat of attack from indigenous peoples, who were perceived to have had strong links with the Spanish governments in West Florida and beyond Louisiana, led white settlers to look to the Federal Government for aid.[52] Whilst this strained relationship between white settlers and natives may not appear new, the impact it had upon the development of a unique spirit among Mississippi's white inhabitants cannot be ignored. Almost no issue features more heavily in the administration papers of the Mississippi Territory than native affairs, and the tension between the two peoples is palpable.[53] Silas Dinsmoor, an Indian Agent, declared in 1809 that, "Indians called for satisfaction on a number of charges against citizens of the United States for murder", and similarly, a few years earlier, Cato West was involved in a case involving the murder of a native at the hands of white settlers.[54] These cases, including that of John Caller during the Burr Affair, are indicative of the attitude of white Mississippians towards Natives. They were perceived, not incorrectly, of leaning towards the Spanish with their loyalties, but it was also perceived that the Federal Government would do little, if anything, to

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[52] See, for example, John Caller's attack on Mobile as explored in chapter two of this thesis.
[53] See, for example, Samuel Mitchell to Governor Claiborne, 28/05/1803, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488, Administration Papers, 1788-1817, Doc. 163.
[54] Silas Dinsmoor to the Secretary of War, 08/12/1809, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.675; Acting Governor West to David Berry, 29/05/1804, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Series 488, Administration Papers, 1788-1817, Doc. 354.

defend their citizens. The focus on "citizens" by Silas Dinsmoor is equally fascinating in the context of this study, being an example of a Federal Official within the Territory defining Mississippians as citizens of the Union. Indeed, the link between the Spanish and the Indian nations on the eastern side of the Territory was observed by Territorial Judge Harry Toulmin in a letter to President James Madison in 1811, writing: "As to the Spaniards; it is said that a talk has lately been given to the Indians at Pensacola, creating the expectation of a war with the U. States."[55] This would have resonated particularly strongly with poorer farmers, who would only have been granted their land should they have been willing to defend it themselves, without military assistance.

It is clear then, that at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Mississippi Territory was in a state of unrest, with tension between the federal and local governments, early settlers, emigrants and natives. At the heart of the unrest over migration was a desire among settlers to claim land early and thus, surveyors and land registrars became some of the most important individuals in the entire Mississippi Territory, responsible for the provision of land which would shape both the politics and the economy of the region. This is visible in the above reference to Freeman's letter, in that surveyors were encouraged to start surveying land long before it was actually cleared, but it caused most problems for the Land Offices themselves. The registrars of the Land Offices of the Mississippi Territory often found themselves inundated with requests and claims for land, particularly in the wake of new tracts being opened for

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[55] Judge Toulmin to the President, 06/02/1811, in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Volume 6: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), p.176.

purchase and settlement. One such individual was Nicholas Gray, appointed to the position of Register to the Mississippi Territory in March 1815.[56] Gray's name does not appear in Rowland's *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, but as this study demonstrates, it certainly deserves to, for his actions as registrar of the office West of the Pearl River was highly controversial and sparked debate across the Territory.[57] While Gray has been skimmed over by historians of the Territory, his contribution to the process of land settlement in the Territory should not be overlooked. A New Yorker, Gray started off life in the Mississippi Territory as he meant to go on – aggressively. Bemoaning his appointment, he wrote to the Secretary of State complaining of the measly salary of only five hundred dollars per annum. Such dissatisfaction was not particularly uncommon among surveyors – former chief surveyor Isaac Briggs had resigned his commission in 1806 when he deemed the task unworthwhile compared to the hardship it had cost him – but Gray's proposed solution was novel to say the least.[58] Gray noted another unfilled position in the Territory at the time, that of Territorial Secretary, and suggested that he could also be offered that position in order to remunerate him for "the great expense of removing my family from New York to Washington Mississippi, and the heavy cost I have sustained by residing in New York for these two years past."[59] Unsurprisingly, the request fell upon deaf ears and Gray was not appointed Secretary, but his bold request does inform a great deal about how Northerners viewed the Territory. Moving to the Territory was not just a

[56] Nicholas Gray to the Secretary of State, 30/03/1815, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, VI, p.516.
[57] All the land offices of the Mississippi Territory were named in such a way based upon whether they engaged with land east or west of Pearl River.
[58] Rothman, *Slave Country*, p.44.
[59] Nicholas Gray to the Secretary of State, 30/03/1815, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, VI, p.516.

logistical hardship to them, but it was also perceived as a backwater. Federal employees' attitude to the Territory seemingly reflected Mississippi settlers' perceptions of said attitude and, as will be shown, this resulted in a misunderstanding of the political climate of the Territory and the importance of fair distribution of land.

Accusations of impropriety on Gray's behalf appeared within six months of his arrival in the Territory. In December 1815, Josiah Meigs wrote to him, noting that "Representations have been made to me that lands have been sold by you at private sale pending the late public sales and before they closed."[60] Gray was alleged to have illegally facilitated the sale of land that was not yet open to public settlement, thus aggravating individuals who were not able to acquire land in the process. The fact that a criminal case was brought against Gray demonstrates the demand for land in the later territorial period. Indeed, in his defence, Gray observed that "the clamour was so great to enter lands which had been offered at auction, that the Receiver and myself thought it wisest to gratify them, having come from a distance and complaining of the expense of waiting."[61] Clearly, not only was there a huge clamour to receive access to land, but it's also telling how apparently far individuals had come to claim land. By the end of 1815, migration was beginning to speed up again following the conclusion of the War of 1812, coinciding with a series of Native land cessions resulting from the Creek Wars in the South. As a result, public land auctions such as the one Gray was presiding over, were hugely important.

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[60] Josiah Meigs to Nicholas Gray, 06/12/1815, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, VI, p.597.
[61] Nicholas Gray to Josiah Meigs, 30/12/1815, in Carter *Territorial Papers*, VI, p.633.

That importance is underpinned by the fact that the prosecuting lawyer for the Gray case was none other than former Governor, Robert Williams. Since leaving office, Williams had taken up residence on a plantation in Louisiana.[62] Thus, much like Winthrop Sargent, Williams had integrated into Southern society following his tenure as Governor and had, to all intents and purposes, become a planter, thus highlighting another unique facet to Mississippi's history. Former political officials such as Sargent and Williams effectively went "native", becoming local agents of continuity, increasingly institutionally minded and local in their outlook. Williams' interest in a case such as Gray's is evident – as will be explored in this chapter, planters held a vested interest in seeing the unpopulated areas of the Deep South used for plantation slavery. This was not simply financial, but also part of a civilising mission to ensure the region was populated by "useful" agriculture which could help both the region's economy and society thrive.[63] Williams apparently became involved in the case at an early stage, and seems to have been responsible for bringing it to court at all. While the paper trail of the case is somewhat difficult to piece together, it's clear that Williams had a different view on the matter from Gray. Writing to one of the owners of the tracts in question, Williams inferred that "Nicholas Gray sold you several tracts or Sections of land at private sale, before offered at public sale," on the basis that he had "made sundry charges against the Register [Gray] to the Commissioner of the General Land Office [Josiah Meigs]."[64] The fact that Williams, a former governor and wealthy

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[62] D. Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 2, (Madison, 1907) p.974.
[63] See Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, chapters 1 and 2; Rothman, *Slave Country*, especially chapter 2.
[64] Robert Williams to unknown, 12/03/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.

planter, would be bringing such charges against a fellow public officer, especially before having the evidence to prove it, highlights the importance of 'correct' land disposal to the planters of the Mississippi region, and the extent to which the process of disposing land was inherently political, though not along party lines. Whilst Williams did have some expertise in such affairs, having been originally sent to the Territory in 1803 as part of a commission to verify land claims in the Territory, this should not be seen as a simple legal dispute.[65] As much as this was about due process, it was an issue of class. Against the backdrop of the Territory desperately trying to encourage migration and settlement in order to cross the population threshold for statehood, the fact that Williams was attempting to delay the acquisition of land suggests that he wanted to ensure the land was going to the 'correct' people, who would utilise the land in the best way to benefit planters. To them, poorer farmers would not have been able to monetise the land in the same way. Although, as will be shown, poorer farmers played a hugely important role in the creation of Mississippi's cotton empire, Williams apparently thought otherwise.

Further context for the case is offered in a letter from Williams to Josiah Meigs, in which the following circumstances were put forth:

> 1st. That the said Section of land being vacant was never sold or offered for sale until the public sales of the lands of the United States under the proclamation of the President in October last, and then being offered was not bid off, but the same was afterwards and before the public sales closed sold by the register at private

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[65] D. Rowland (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History,* Volume 2, (Madison, 1907) p.972.

sale contrary to the express letter of the law providing for the sales of the lands of the United States.[66]

In this case Williams' accusation is based around a man named Caleb Perkins, who it appears was one of the main beneficiaries of Gray's alleged fraud, who acquired a section of land which had been "made by the present Surveyor to embrace fractional Section no.96… This is conceived to be contrary to law and Justice."[67] Williams went on to allege that the same Surveyor as discussed earlier, Thomas Freeman, had assisted Perkins' claim by "erasing and substituting other lines and courses; embracing a much greater land than was originally claimed and confirmed leaving the signatures of the former Surveyor and his Deputy affixed thereto," thus certifying "on oath to surveys they never made or approved and by which lands declared vacant by the then competent authorities are made to appear not so."[68] The situation surrounding Perkins' claim is representative of the problems faced by surveyors of new land in the Territory. It was difficult to mark out land claims in order to not clash with older, pre-existing claims. With memories of the Yazoo Land Scandal fresh in the minds of politicians, inhabitants and settlers alike, it's understandable that individuals would be on the lookout for potential fraud and wrongdoing. Yet, what is significant is that court cases such as these flew in the face of efforts to encourage settlement across the Mississippi Territory. In 1815, politicians in the western side of the Territory increasingly favoured division of the Territory for statehood (contrary to their viewpoint in the earlier Territorial period).[69]

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[66] Robert Williams to Josiah Meigs, 11/01/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] See Rothman, *Slave Country,* p.172.

Consequently, the region needed a significant population boost in order to push it over the required threshold. These legal disputes from planters, represented by a former Governor, highlight how planters and their own personal needs and interests, now dictated the future of the Mississippi Territory in a greater way than their local political representatives, all the while eluding the party labels that have been previously assigned to them. While it is true that planters would have benefitted from statehood, and that those involved in the Bank of the Mississippi appeared to be working towards that goal, there was still a huge amount of private intrigue involved in this process.

This private ambition was encapsulated by another of Robert Williams' clients, William Vousden Cary. Though we have very little information on Cary, it must be assumed that he was a descendent of William Vousden, a long time inhabitant of the Territory, who had settled near Bayou Pierre in the 1770s, when the region was still under British dominion, and had received land grants from both the British and the Spanish administrations.[70] Thus, this was a relatively old family in the Natchez District with significant landed interests. Vousden Cary's caveat was against Charles M. Lawson who had bought a tract of land in "Section 39 in Township No. 1 of Range 3 West", but this was believed to actually be land belonging to the Vousden family.[71] The accusation levelled at Lawson, or rather at Nicholas Gray, was that the land "was offered and sold when it was not returned on the maps as vacant, but shaded by the Surveyor as covered by a Spanish patent with William Vousden's name

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[70] Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, p.887.
[71] Robert Williams to Josiah Meigs, 15/01/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.

written therein."[72] This resulted in the land "being prematurely sold and in a manner which precluded any intended competition and correction afterwards."[73] Of course, the reason this case was brought forward was that Cary claimed to have "possessed and cultivated this tract and Section of land ever since the year 1808." Cary then claimed to have been waiting until the land came up for public sale, so that he could then purchase the land that he had cultivated. The fact that Gray had allegedly allowed the land to be sold before it went up for public sale therefore robbed Cary of the land that he had spent time and money improving.[74] This issue, essentially, is the same problem that squatters encountered, as touched upon earlier in this chapter. Evidently, Cary had been trespassing upon Native lands which had not yet been open to US settlers, but had spent time improving and cultivating the land in order to add it to his family's plantations or to sell it on for profit once the land office had opened it for sale.

This legal dispute between the clients of Robert Williams and Nicholas Gray includes some of the strongest testimony available for the study of land disputes in the Mississippi Territory, and sheds further light on both the inequalities inherent in the process, and the inherently political nature of the process itsel. From it, the extent of the Territory's squatting problem is apparent. Andrew Williams, of Adams County, also testified that, "he purchases the improvements made on a certain section of vacant land, of James Hall, and has remained in peaceable possession thereof ever since."[75]

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Deposition of Andrew Williams, sworn to Ebenezer Rees, Justice of the Quorum, 10/02/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.

Evidently, this is an example of a squatter, having improved the vacant land they occupied, selling that land privately without having ever actually owned it, only for the land to have been sold by Nicholas Gray at the land office without giving Andrew Williams notice. The same case was made by Adam Benjamin, who offered more legal grounds than Williams by referencing the land act of March 1803.[76] David Hunt was another deponent with a similar situation, who offered further insight into the case. Arguing that he had "resided with his family on said tract or Section of land for upwards of Ten years… he became purchaser of the same from the United States; and made the following payments but owing to the hardup of the times he as with many others had it not in his power consistently with a due support of his family, to be so punctual in his payments as to prevent a forfeiture of said tract of land."[77] Hunt further claimed that he had attempted to repurchase his forfeited land only to be informed by Nicholas Gray that the land had already been sold to one Thomas Hurst.[78] Robert H. Morrow also claimed to have been wronged by Gray, arguing that the laws for the disposal of lands in the Territory decreed that it was not for the Register of the Land Office to decide between two applicants, but for it to be decided by lot. He tried to purchase improvements on a tract of land, only to be informed by Gray that he had already sold it to Absolom Griffin without giving any notice.[79]

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[76] Deposition of Robert Williams on behalf of Adam Benjamin, 04/04/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.
[77] Robert Williams to Josiah Meigs on behalf of David Hunt, 04/04/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Robert Williams to Josiah Meigs on behalf of Robert H. Morrow, 01/02/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.

Such issues were clearly complex matters of land ownership, where unclear laws did not appear to help formulate any legal precedent. Many disputes were resolved out of court. Charles B. Green, for example, revoked his legal claim to land that had been sold by private sale after discovering that the purchaser, Peter Bisland, had improved the land himself prior to the purchase.[80] Bisland was a well known planter of Adams County, residing in a large plantation house outside of Natchez known as Mistletoe.[81] The implication here supports the suggestion that planters were hoping to ensure the "correct" sorts of people were acquiring new land in the region. Green was clearly aware that Bisland would turn the land into an extension of his already extensive plantations, therefore benefitting the Territory's economy and thus was willing to step aside from his land claim. Indeed, Bisland had claimed multiple tracts of land in Jefferson, Adams and Amite counties in the later 1810s, suggesting that he was the owner of multiple plantations.[82] This further demonstrates the near-monopoly that planters held over this process, which would have limited opportunities for new migrants into the region, again running contrary to the ambitions of the Territory's government. However, it is worth considering the role that Nicholas Gray played in these events, and whether or not one can establish his motivations for seemingly breaching so many regulations while in office. Fortunately, the records of the case are extensive, but they paint a genuinely bizarre series of events.

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[80] Deposition of Charles B. Green, date unknown. Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.
[81] *Mistletoe,* National Register of Historic Places; 001-NAT-5505-NR (accessed via ancestry.co.uk)
[82] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management: Mississippi Land Office patents, 1800-1820. CV-0109-386; CV-0110-188; CV-0109-281; CV-0109-385.

Indeed, several outlandish claims appear within the documents of the case. George Ford suggested that, when he made an application Gray for a "fraction of land", Gray, "without the least provocation… abused & insulted, & with force put this deponent out of his office", then tore his application in two.[83] Subsequently, Robert Williams finally documented his series of charges against Gray, suggesting that Gray refused to divide large fractions of land in order to sell half or quarter of tracts to one person, but then would subsequently divide the same land and sell it to others, apparently deliberately creating disputes. More tellingly, he was wont to refuse land of less than 160 acres to people, only to them sell the same amount of land to others. This suggests Gray was being highly selective with those he would grant land to, but it's not quite clear whether or not this was to benefit planters, or simply those he had relationships with. Williams certainly believed the latter, suggesting that Gray sold a tract of land to a New Yorker who had visited with him, only to then say that that man had been cultivating the land for "upwards of 30 years", thus valuing the land far higher. He then refused to do the same for a Mr Stone of Natchez, who was in "precisely the same situation."[84] Thus the implication was less that Gray was favouring a certain calibre of settler, but more that he was simply corrupt and engaging in illicit private sales. However, that is significant in its own right. It implies that the disposal of land was a severely mismanaged process, at least in the Mississippi Territory, and suggests that, for all the urgency with which the Territorial Government hoped to increase the population, the actions of federally appointed land agents

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[83] Deposition of George Ford and Thomas Bell, 17/01/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.
[84] Robert Williams to Josiah Meigs, 14/03/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.

served only to inhibit the process. Local connections, personalities, and factional ambitions in the Territory trumped due process or formal alignments.

The events of the 5th March 1816 seem to have encapsulated the struggle between the Territorial and the Federal. Conjuring up a metaphor for the wider issue, Robert Williams, a planter and former Territorial politician, and Nicholas Gray, a New Yorker, former army colonel, and federal appointee, came to blows in the offices of the Land Office. According to the written testimony of several witnesses, Williams attended the Land Office on 5th March 1816, a curious move in the midst of an ongoing legal enquiry.[85] Upon claiming he had business with Gray, Williams was ordered out of the office repeatedly, with Gray claiming that "if he did not go he would put him out." Williams responded that "he had business with him as Register, and that it was not his Office, but the publics, except as Register, and that every man had an equal right to come into the Office, and have his business done with him as Register." Subsequently, "Gray made use of the most abusive language and imprecations towards said Williams…Gray got over the Counter, seized hold of said Williams, attempting violently to push him out door. Williams resisted and a scuffle ensued."[86] Bizarrely, once Williams was forced out the office, he apparently patiently waited outside for others to conduct business with Gray, before re-entering the office with papers to present to the Register. Unsurprisingly, the dispute erupted again, and Gray, "got over the counter… and violently seized said Williams… on which a second encounter took place between them, with blows by each," and Gray "positively refusing him

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[85] Ibid; Testimony of Philip Andrews, Louis Winston and James Long, 06/03/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.
[86] Ibid.

peaceable admittance into the office."[87] It's already been noted that Gray acted similarly towards another claimant, George Ford, who was one of the witnesses for this event, but the same can be said for a number of settlers. Abijah Clark testified that he was pushed out of Gray's office after claiming unfair treatment, and James McKee suggested something more petty entirely. He claimed that Gray refused to do business with him on a certain day, but McKee insisted as he lived seventy five miles away from the Office. When he finally succeeded in acquiring a tract of land, Gray snatched the certificate out of his hand and would not return it until McKee had paid him twenty five cents.[88] All in all, at a time at which the Territory was supposedly uniting, this affair cast serious doubts over the respectability and professionalism of the Territory's key office holders.

In a later statement by William H. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury, to Meigs, the significance of Gray's behaviour was highlighted. The depositions in the case, he wrote, "exhibit… a charge of high criminality in a form so direct as to render an investigation of the case indispensable to the character of that Officer, as well as of the Government."[89] Thus, the implication is clear. Not only was Gray's rude and erratic behaviour unacceptable for a person in his position, but it also reflected poorly upon the government as a whole. While that connection has been made throughout the thesis, it is significant that the Federal Government was taking notice. The fact that the Secretary of the Treasury had entered into the debate, encouraging Meigs to organise an

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Testimony of Abijah Clark, 14/03/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1; Testimony of James McKee, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.
[89] William H. Crawford to Josiah Meigs, 10/07/1817, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.

investigation "with the least possible delay," highlights the potential dangers posed by the affair.[90] Indeed, an individual named Masefield Ludlow had earlier written to William Lattimore, the Territory's delegate to Congress, to require of correct procedure in the event that, "the people of a State, or Territory, is materially injured by an officer of government."[91] The implication is clear – that the actions of representatives of the government, whether elected or appointed, directly impacted upon the relationship between the Territory and the State. Crawford was evidently aware of this, and must have been concerned that the incident would tarnish any positive feelings that the residents of Mississippi had towards Congress. At a time of increased cooperation between the local and national governments, and in a Territory on the verge of achieving statehood, it's clear that this connection remained fragile at best. Land disputes had, of course, always been divisive across the Territory, but it's significant that they showed no sign of settling down across the Territorial era. While disputes at the beginning of the era tended to be the result of historic claims causing overlaps between plots of land, with individuals having been granted lands by successive governments, later disputes were caused by private ambition, with influential Territorial planters eager to ensure the potential of the region's land was maximised.

From the documents available on the case of Nicholas Gray, it is difficult to establish an outcome. [92] Either way, for the purposes of this study, it is useful

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Masefield Ludlow to William Lattimore, 13/12/1816, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, B.L.C. Wailes Papers, z/0076.000/s, Box 1.

[92] Crawford's letter to Meigs is one of the latest letters available, and the results of the trial itself are not present within the collection. Gray, however, seemingly resigned his post in 1818 and died not long after, in 1819, having seemingly suffered ill health throughout his time in the Territory. Indeed, the little that has been written on him generally appears in family histories

to consider how emblematic the relationship between Gray and Williams was of wider relations between the Mississippi Territory and the federal government. Previous studies of the Territory have suggested that David Holmes had a calming effect upon the populace, helping to cultivate an environment in which the legislature could formally begin the process of acquiring statehood.[93] While this may have been true in a political context, it is clear that there was still a great deal of scepticism and resistance to outsider involvement and representatives of the federal government in the later Territorial period.

With that scepticism and resistance in mind, Mississippi's road to statehood was a challenging one, sculpted by debates over land such as the one involving Nicholas Gray. Mississippi's vast landscapes were integral to Mississippi achieving statehood because migration was an essential part of the Territory's population growth. Mississippi's future was highly dependent upon that population growth as, without it, it would not reach the necessary population threshold required for statehood, as outlined in the foundational ordinances discussed earlier in this thesis. However, development into a state of the Union was not a straightforward process for the politicians and planters of the Mississippi Territory. As has been made clear throughout this thesis, there was no singular vision guiding the Territory throughout the 1810s. While David

online and are concerned with his role in the Irish Rebellions of the early 1800s. These present an unfortunate man with little experience of professional work, overwhelmed by the task and conned into agreeing to illegal sales. See, for example, D. Goodall, "A Postscript to 1798: Nicholas Gray and his Family in America", *The Past: The Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society,* No. 31 (2011-2012), pp. 41-51. Other accounts of Gray's life are located on family history blogs such as, D. Gray, *Nicholas Gray Jr: The Wexford Lodge Survives a Yankee Siege* <https://thewildgeese.irish/profiles/blogs/nicholas-gray-jr-the-wexford-lodge-survives-the-battle-of>[Accessed 18/05/2018].
[93] See, for example, Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier,* with particular reference to chapter 16.

Holmes endured as the Territory's Governor into Statehood, his presence alone was not enough to prevent the process from being marred by further divisions and disruptions. It would be these divisions, more than any other in the Territory's history, which would shape Mississippi's future, both in a figurative and very literal sense.

Ultimately, it is impossible to discuss Mississippi's transition into statehood without a focus upon migration. As has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter and throughout this thesis as a whole, the success of the statehood campaign lay in encouraging migration and settlement into the Territory. It was, in reality, the poorer farmer, often known as the yeoman farmer, who would really shape the political debates over statehood. The population threshold for statehood in the late 1810s was around 70,000, yet even with that number of inhabitants, statehood would not have been a certainty. Earlier in the 1810s, notions began to appear that the Territory should not be admitted into the Union as a single state. If it had, at the time, it would have been the second largest state in the Union behind Virginia. Considering the rocky political climate across the Territorial period, it is perhaps unsurprising that this caused consternation across the region, especially considering how localised factional support was. While this study has a whole has focused on the western side of the Territory in order to assess the relationships between the networks of Cato West, Cowles Mead, the Claibornes and so on, it has also touched upon the inhabitants of the Tombigbee District, far detached from the machinations of the politicians in the former Natchez District. While, in 1801, Tombigbee was the only established and organised region on the eastern side of the Territory, it would be later joined, around 1808, by Madison County

further north.[94]   Concepts of "country versus the city" were not new to the

Mississippi Territory, but the push towards statehood added new focus to the

debates.[95]

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It was a telling measure of the localism and regional factionalism in the

Mississippi Territory that its path to federal statehood itself splintered into two

constituencies. The early fears and objections of the Tombigbee District,

discussed above, would culminate in the creation of the Alabama Territory, but

it is instructive that amidst the disputes over sovereignty and jurisdiction, the

rhetoric of political identity – including in this case the heritage of the

revolution – was again carefully mobilised to lend credence to arguments.

Members of Washington County advocated for two territories to be established

– one in Mississippi, one in Alabama. Of course, they would prove to be on the

correct side of the debate in the long term, but such an idea was a dangerous

one for politicians in the western region. To split the Territory would have

required an even greater number of inhabitants to push for statehood, and

members of Adams and Jefferson Counties feared, at least in the earlier

Territorial period, that a divided Territory might never achieve their ambitions

of Statehood. In 1814, Congressional Delegate William Lattimore would voice

his concerns about his desires to see the Territory divided, but, as an inhabitant

of Natchez he was encouraged strongly to push for statehood for the entire

region, as politicians in the West believed there would not be enough popular

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[94] There are two Madison Counties in the present day South – one in Mississippi and one in
Alabama. To avoid any confusion, the one mentioned here is the one in Alabama.
[95] W.B. Hamilton, "Mississippi 1817", pp.278-280.

support for a division.[96] To politicians in Natchez, Greenville and Washington (the town, not the County), finally united, the debate was about achieving statehood as quickly as possible, but, to those in the east, the matter was far more about ideology, individual freedom, and the right to self-government. Calls for division would only get louder with the incorporation of Madison County in 1808, but firstly, it's worth addressing the concerns raised in that initial petition of 1803.

At the heart of the concerns, was a concept of identity:

> From the late and rapid migration to this District from the State of Georgia and other parts of the United States, the number of our inhabitants is estimated at more than three thousand, all of whom now reside within the District of Washington and are all subject to the Laws of the Mississippi Territory, which are enacted at the distance of nearly three hundred miles from us, all of which distance is a howling wilderness with its usual inhabitants of Savages and beasts of prey. That part of the Territory on the Mississippi and the settlements on the Mobille Tombecbee [sic] and Alabama rivers are composed of people different in their manners and customs, different in their interests, & nature appears never to have designed the two countries to be under the same Government.[97]

The Committee's words are some of the clearest on the topic of the Territory's identity written across the era, and contribute a different dimension to the disputes discussed throughout this thesis. The residents clearly highlight their

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[96] William Latimore to Burnet, October 25, 1814, *Governor's Correspondence and Papers,* Mississippi Department of Archives and History; *Washington Republican,* November 4, 1814; *Washington Republican*, April 13, May 17, July 20, September 17, November 23, 1814.
[97] Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Washington District, 25/11/1803, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.290.

provenance as largely being from the State of Georgia, but the route from Georgia was the most common migration path for inhabitants of the Mississippi Territory in general.[98] Geographically, this is logical, due to the shared border; while migrants did travel from the Carolinas, Virginia and occasionally further north, the suggestion that the majority of settlers were from Georgia is not unrealistic, especially in Washington County. Yet, the same would certainly be said of those in the Natchez area. More likely, the inhabitants of Washington County were referring to those in positions of authority within the Territory. As has been identified already, Winthrop Sargent was a Massachusetts man, William C.C. Claiborne was a Virginian who had arrived in Mississippi via Tennessee. It was not really until 1804, a year after this petition, that the Tombigbee region really acquired its own representative in government, beyond the few members of the Legislative Council it sent to Washington. That year, Harry Toulmin was appointed as a Territorial Supreme Court Judge, with jurisdiction over the Tombigbee District. Although technically speaking, he was a replacement for Ephraim Kirby, there's no suggestion that Kirby's role was ever specifically for the eastern region.[99] Toulmin would soon become a significant advocate for Washington and later Madison Counties, and became the most influential politician in the Territory outside of the Natchez District. Ironically, Toulmin was by no means a local, having been born in Somerset, before settling in Kentucky and serving as Secretary of State there.[100] Toulmin's appointment in 1804 certainly helped the region to highlight its plight, and heightened the

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[98] See F.L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* ((Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Updated edition, 2008)
[99] D. Rowland, *Encyclopaedia of Mississippi History*, Vol. 2 (Madison, 1907) p.793.
[100] Ibid.

differences between the East and West. The debate itself provides an interesting contrast to the existing feuds that have been discussed throughout this thesis. While the majority of disputes took on a partisan angle, with political ideology at stake, the debates over division were far less party-political, instead resting on notions of identity. Of course, there were political undercurrents to the statehood debate, but they were much more to do with the right to self-representation than any ideological difference.

Those political ideas of self-representation appeared throughout the petition, and particularly prominent is the way in which the petitioners recalled ideology of the American Revolution:

> The inhabitants of this District labour under all the disadvantage of being
> subject to an authority far removed from us without an opportunity of
> receiving benefit or assistance from it, consequently there is such a want
> of energy in our Government that society seems rather to work an injury
> to the better part of the community, than to benefit, they having
> surrendered a part of their rights to that society which is incapable, from
> its situation, of securing the balance.[101]

Just as Thomas Rodney had during the Burr Conspiracy, and Cato West had before him, the members of Tombigbee appealed to the patriotic sensibilities of Congress, suggesting that their plight was not too dissimilar to that of the Colonies during the Revolution, as they were so far detached from the legislative assembly so as to receive none of the benefits. In drawing this comparison, they helped to demonstrate just how ubiquitous these claims had become. It would be easy to draw the conclusion that appropriating the rhetoric

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[101] Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Washington District, 25/11/1803, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, V, p.290.

of the Revolution was a sign that the region identified with the new nation and that its inhabitants were exhibiting some form of American loyalty and identity. However, the way in which this rhetoric became so commonplace throughout the Mississippi Territory between 1800 and 1810 suggests that its usage was far more pragmatic. To simultaneously suggest that the inhabitants of the eastern Mississippi Territory were so far detached in terms of ideology and identity but to then use the same tactics to appeal to Congress using the rhetoric of the American Revolution implies that, even if they did believe it themselves, neither faction truly embodied that revolutionary spirit. This is not to say that rival factions could not have regional differences but still celebrate being part of America, but such bold declarations of loyalty and identity cannot be taken at face value in the context of the Mississippi Territory.[102] This is in keeping with the findings of this thesis as a whole. Declarations of loyalty and party spirit were political tools used across the era, but they were used to score political points and win political debates, rather than actually being definitive shows of loyalty to the federal political system.

Ultimately, the early petitions of the Tombigbee region failed, and would continue to do so until they picked up steam with the incorporation of Madison County in 1809. Meanwhile, life in the Territory continued while these debates raged on. Outside of the meeting halls and debating chambers of Tombigbee, Washington, Natchez and Pearl River, the Territory and its population continued to shift and evolve, as a pertinent reminder that these debates would ultimately be settled by the movements of the yeomen farmer and lower

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[102] The idea that regional differences and American identity were not mutually exclusive is best explored in D. Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) p.246.

classes of citizens, not the planters and politicians. It is harder to grasp an understanding of poorer farmers than it is to trace the lives of rich Eastern planters; they simply do not leave as many records. One of the most practical ways of tracing planters is through the records of the Land Office, which show the land claims within the Mississippi Territory. Yet as has been noted, many poorer farmers did not attempt to buy land; they simply took it and tried to hold onto it. As such, contemporary travel writers act as very useful sources, as they intended to document life in the far reaches of the American Republic for those who sought a new life away from the Eastern Seaboard. While each writer has their limitations, in part due to the fact that the majority of emigrant guides, manuals and/or directories were published in the eastern states, they provide us with an insight into the early American South, but equally as significant, how it was viewed by the rest of the nation. Many were published in the 1820s and 1830s, but the early guides of William Darby and Samuel Brown are of significant use to this thesis.

The authors themselves had lofty intentions for their works, with Brown noting:

> The chief objects embraced are, Boundaries, Latitude and Aspect of the Country, Soil, Climate, Diseases, Vegetable, Mineral and Animal Productions, Rivers, Lakes, Swamps, Prairies, Portages, Roads, Counties, Settlements and Villages; Population, Character and Customs of the Inhabitants, Indians, Antiquities, Military Posts, Situation and Price of Lands, Price Current, Trade, Extent of Navigable Waters, Expences [sic] of travelling, Directions to Emigrants, etc. etc.[103]

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[103] S. R. Brown, *The Western Gazetteer; or Emigrant's Directory* (Auburn, NY: Southwick, 1817) p.v.

Thus, although writers were not always successful in their aims, the sheer volume of work, and the ambition of that work, is of great value to the historian. Taken from *The Western Gazetteer*, a guide produced by Samuel Brown, this list is largely representative of the topics of discussion throughout the emigrant's directories of the Mississippi Valley. It would not be unreasonable to expect that the latter two sections would take precedence throughout the guides, though this is far from the case. Within *The Western Gazetteer's* sections relating to Louisiana and Mississippi, referred to as a new state throughout the section due to the book's publication in 1817, there is not a single mention of the expense of travelling to the territory, or advice upon gathering resources for doing so. The Western Gazetteer is described by R.C. Wade as "the immigrant's bible", yet it is rather selective in the information it provides. In a work which covers the entirety of the western frontier, there is very little consistency; as an example, the author has far more to say of Louisiana than he does of Missouri, Michigan or, indeed, Mississippi. Brown's knowledge of Mississippi appears to be largely based upon letters from those who have journeyed there such as 'Mr Lattimore' (evidently William Lattimore), and other emigrants' guides such as that by Bartram, which is often relied on for geographical details of the region around Baton Rouge. The book does provide directions and distances to and from the various settlements, but they are not explicit and they certainly do not form a comprehensive guide to the new state of Mississippi; as a guide for travel around the Mississippi Valley, it is inferior to others.

Indeed, Samuel Brown is never explicit in his advice to potential emigrants, a trait reflected across the majority of guides. In contrast to this, the extremely

detailed *The Emigrant's Guide to the Western and South-Western States and Territories* by William Darby frequently and explicitly talks directly to potential settlers.   As has already been mentioned, Darby's guide features extensive description of the lower Mississippi Valley and could be used to map a route across the states far more efficiently than the aforementioned works. Indeed, as has been noted, Darby's guide is full of wisdom and advice for new settlers, for example: "Any person from the northern states, intending to remove to, or visit any part of Louisiana, Mississippi, or Texas, below 33° N lat. would find it for his benefit to go to New Orleans, or Mobile by sea, and to arrive in those cities as late as November." Darby also tailors his advice to his varied readership; he recommends that settlers and their families travel only in the spring, whilst acknowledging that traders, merchants and seamen may not have that luxury. Beyond this, Darby actively tries to dispel existing preconceptions, such as with regards to the climate:

> If the spirit of emigration in the United States was not checked by the common, though unfounded belief, that southern situations were less favourable to health than northern, a very great change of local population would take place.[104]

In many respects then, Darby's guide is the most valuable guide available to the historian of the Mississippi Territory. Indeed, Henry Brackenridge, who was one of the most widely respected authors, wrote that he was indebted to Darby for his "statistical view", and commented that he "has been engaged for a number of years in preparing an elaborate work on Louisiana [and Mississippi]. Possessing strong original genius, with considerable

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[104] W. Darby, *The Emigrant's Guide to the Western and South-Western States and Territories* (New York: Kirk & Mercein, 1818) p.121.

acquirements, and indefatigable industry, the public may expect something substantially useful in his labors."[105] His knowledge of what people in the Eastern states wished to know is also highly useful; he, as an example, writes: "A question is demanded by almost all persons from the eastern and middle states, whether this, or any other part of Louisiana, affords good mill seats?"[106] before providing a detailed answer, including comparisons with other states and territories. Thus, Darby's guide is the first of the earlier wave of emigrant's guides to provide a systematic assessment of the Mississippi Valley, tailored to truly benefit potential settlers of any social standing.

However, not all travel narratives were written by explorers and adventurers commissioned by Thomas Jefferson and the Federal government such as Lewis, Clark and Pike. Perhaps one of the most insightful narratives is provided by Timothy Flint, a "New England missionary who settled in Louisiana".[107] Flint's *Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi* recounts his voyage down the Mississippi River, through Missouri and down to New Orleans. Throughout his narrative, he notes elements of life in the Valley that other authors were not interested in; he discusses the affection that emigrants had for the land in which they settled as well as the disadvantages of immigration, particularly on the moral of inhabitants.[108] In this way, Flint's account is somewhat sociological, and thus is extremely important for a study of this nature. Yet it is important to note the nature of this

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[105] H.M. Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana; Together with a Journal of a Voyage up the Missouri River, in 1811* (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear and Richbaum, 1814) p.5.
[106] Darby, *The Emigrant's Guide to the Western and South-Western States and Territories,* p.101.
[107] F.L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Updated Edition, 2008) p.31.
[108] T. Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi* (London: Feffer & Simons, 1968) pp. 174-175.

travel narrative; it is made up of Flint's recollections, as the title suggests. That is to say, it is not a real time account of his journeys or even an authentic journal kept throughout his travels; as the editor to the 1968 edition of *Recollections of the Last Ten Years* notes, Timothy Flint had lost all his daily journals from his wanderings "up and down the Mississippi River".[109] Whilst such errors do have an impact upon the integrity of the account as a source, it also provides an invaluable insight into the life of a non-slaveholder in the lower Mississippi Valley, albeit somewhat detached from the Mississippi Territory itself.

McDermott argues that there are, in fact, "compensating values in the recollections of one who has lived in a new world for ten years before he writes about it, for he can give us a contemplative view of that experience not possible in daily jottings."[110] This, he argues, is in contrast to the aforementioned, more conventional, travel narratives such as those by Meriwether Lewis which are more observational than critical. Flint did not intend for his *Recollections* to be a guide, but it instead a work of general interest, aimed at informing those in the Eastern states about the lives of the inhabitants of the newer areas of the United States. Thus, for the purposes of this project, it is a useful insight into the lives of emigrants to the Mississippi Valley, though it must be used with caution due to the inevitable prejudices and preconceptions of the author. Flint, for example, attributes "the influence of imagination" and "the material of poetry" as having huge impacts upon decisions to emigrate, particularly amongst the illiterate, who "are not always

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[109] J.F. McDermott (ed) 'Foreword' in T. Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi* (London: Feffer & Simons, 1968), p.vii.
[110] Ibid.

aware of all the elements of motive that determine their actions."[111] However, Flint suggests that he bases this upon "hearing numberless narratives from the people,"[112] implying that this is not simply his assumption. Admittedly, he does not mention his sources, but it should be asserted that this is a flaw in the writing style of the era, whereby authors did not wish to disrupt their narrative as is shown below. Yet it gives the sense that this an apolitical narrative, therefore providing important insight to this study. This is one of the few examples of a writer which genuinely seeks to understand the experience of emigrants, both rich and poor.

Taken together, the guides of Brown, Darby and Flint are a vital insight into the experience of settlers in the Mississippi Territory and the surrounding area. They are some of the only available sources to discuss the experience of the poor farmer migrating to the Mississippi Territory. Despite the caveat that much of this evidence is broadly conceived around migration to the lower Mississippi Valley, be that Louisiana or Mississippi, they remain useful for considering the experience of migration into this region broadly in order to ascertain how that related to the politics of the Territory. Thus, returning to the concept of squatting in the Mississippi Territory, Darby noted how, "After the opening of the land offices in Louisiana, the commissioners found a number of claims for land held by actual settlement, without any title." Darby suggests that whilst the land offices did attempt to respect these claims, and many acres were appropriated to these land squatters, this was not always viable. Indeed, the claims of squatters resulted in competing claims, disrupting the organised

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[111] Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years, p.175*.
[112] Ibid, p.174

settlement envisioned by the Federal government. As is discussed in Darby's

account, between the hubs of Natchez, Mississippi and New Orleans,

Louisiana, there was no appropriate place to form a township due to the

"irregularity of claims";[113] there may have been free land, but it overlapped

with the sporadic and uncoordinated settlement claims of yeomen farmers.

Rothman takes this argument further, demonstrating that local politicians in the

Territory, such as Harry Toulmin, actively encouraged squatters to settle in the

Territory, and sought to protect them, arguing that "Men of capital do not like

to vest their active property in a wilderness," so the fact that squatters were

self-scouting and improving land actually helped the process of improving

land.[114] In doing so, squatters tended to improve land value by up to 50%. This

highlights the extent to which the Jeffersonian vision for the settlement of the

Mississippi Valley was far detached from reality; whilst the government

wished to draw logical, straight settlement lines, this simply did not correspond

with the pre-existing settlement of the territory which preceded US ownership

of the land. Indeed, whilst the emigrant's guides and the land offices portrayed

the official view of emigration, seeing it as coordinated and logical, the process

was far more complicated and untidy. The process of land division may have

been effective in the sparsely populated regions further north, but was far less

practical in the lower Mississippi Valley, due to the substantial number of pre-

existing settlers.[115] Not only this, but the local government of the Mississippi

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[113] W. Darby, *The Emigrant's Guide to the Western and South-Western States and Territories* (New York: Kirk & Mercein, 1818), p.6.
[114] Rothman, *Slave Country*, p.168.
[115] Mississippi Department of Archives and History - Series 488: Administration Papers, 1769, 1788-1817; Documents 975-993.

Territory actively encouraged less-than-legal methods of settlement in order to improve revenues.

Of course, it must be remembered that many of these squatters and poor farmers were not necessarily recent emigrants; this land was not as empty as many Americans perceived it to be. This serves to highlights a further complication to emigration for the poorer class of settler; there may have been free land, but there was a significant deal of competition for that land. Whereas richer planters had the finances to fight rival claims, and the governmental support to win them, this could not be said for the yeomen, who had to settle for what they could find. Furthermore, it is not as easy to understand the motives for emigration by poorer farmers compared to the wealthy; the economic benefits of moving to the West were less pronounced for yeomen and harder to benefit from. As Samuel Brown wrote, the vast majority of work in the new state of Mississippi was performed by slaves, each costing around one thousand dollars.[116] With the price of land as high as it was, it was difficult for yeomen farmers to make profit from emigration, as will be shown later in this chapter. The traditional view of emigration to the West would have one believe that emigration by the poorer classes was a journey of optimism; they would venture west with the belief that they could better themselves and find a new life for themselves and their family. Yet this assessment is challenged by Timothy Flint in his *Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi*. Flint does not deny the "influence of the imagination" in encouraging emigration, though suggests that "the saturnine and illiterate emigrant may not be conscious that such motives had any agency in fixing him

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[116] Brown, *The Western Gazetteer*, p.235.

in this purpose,"[117] implying that there was some form of fantastical motive behind the emigration of yeomen. However, Flint himself does not seem convinced by this explanation. Whilst he admits that very few emigrants undertook the voyage simply to find better and cheaper lands (except, he says, the Germans), he reports a strong impression that emigrants were not happy to have had to leave their homelands. Emigrants into the Mississippi Valley, according to Flint, retained a strong affection for their own country, and held a disposition to consider their current place of residence as a form of banishment.[118]

As has been shown in this section, some of the best evidence available with regards to emigration into the Mississippi Territory comes from contemporary commentators. The opinions and observations of these authors is undoubtedly a beneficial source in allowing us to trace pathways of migration, but prejudices and generalisations are commonplace and can often mask the reality. Actually tracing the journeys from the East coast to the Mississippi Territory is altogether more challenging. In terms of the secondary literature on this topic, the classic study is that of Frank Owsley, who studied the "plain folk" of the Deep South across the 19th century. Owsley identified three major columns of westward expansion, splitting the nation's migration habits from north to south. Thus, according to this model, the settlers of the Mississippi Territory largely travelled from the southern Atlantic states of Georgia and the Carolinas.[119] John Otto has expanded upon Owsley's, now classic, thesis, and

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[117] T. Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi* (London: Feffer & Simons, 1968) p.175.
[118] Ibid, pp.174-176.
[119] F.L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* ((Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Updated edition, 2008)) pp.74-75.

asserted that emigration into the lower Mississippi Valley came in waves, as the region filled up from the frontier. To summarize Otto's study, he assesses that the "ancestral plain folk" from the backcountries of Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia led westward migration up to, and in some cases beyond, the southern frontier between the 1770s and 1830s. These poorer migrants were followed by wealthier migrants, including large numbers of slaveholding planters from the more affluent areas of the southern Atlantic states, nearer the coast. Following the southern planters were farmers of English and Germanic heritage from Pennsylvania, pursued by their wealthy counterparts from the North.[120]

However, this perception of the poorer classes inhabiting the frontier and the richer inhabiting the areas further inside the territory is flawed. As has already been shown, the acquisition of land in the Mississippi Territory is not as linear as Otto's assessment would suggest – Madison County, part of the backcountry of Mississippi, was not open to large scale settlement until 1814. He is right to highlight that the 'backcountrymen' of the Atlantic states led westward migration, but that does not simply mean that they travelled further in order to find land. Indeed, as was noted earlier, Sven Beckert highlights that it was the cotton planters, not their poorer counterparts, who truly pushed the boundaries of the new nation. "The frontier planters," Beckert argues, who were "at the rough edges of the Empire of Cotton, had well-dressed and well-spoken company."[121] Beckert's argument further supports the ideas explored in previous chapters of this thesis, helping to demonstrate the ways in which rich

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[120] J.S. Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis", *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 51, No. 2 (May, 1985), pp.184-185.
[121] Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, p.106.

planters, particularly in their roles as local politicians and businessmen, shaped foreign policy and expansion in the Mississippi Territory. Again, the dominance of the rich, slaveholding planter clouds the routes of migration and settlement undertaken by poor farmers who were, to politicians at least, mere statistics when it came to counting populations.

Yet the initial emigration of the yeomen is only one aspect of this study. One must also consider what happened once they arrived in the lower Mississippi Valley. It might be assumed that due to the relatively high cost of land and the poor road network, which was documented by the territory's chief surveyor, Isaac Briggs, settlers would stay in one place once they arrived.[122] However, this is far from the case; as Owsley highlights, "the long move from the older states into the new territory was seldom the final move… the agricultural immigrant after reaching the region of his choice often moved about several times within the same general community."[123] Yet, in this respect, Owsley is understating the situation; yeomen would move throughout the entire Mississippi Territory, not just within a single community. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French political thinker, wrote: "In the United States, a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden and lets it just as the trees are coming into bearing."[124] Tocqueville perceived a restlessness amongst the American people, fitting in with Flint's assessment of poorer settlers being unaware of their motivations for emigration. Thus, even when settlers relocated to the Mississippi Valley

[122] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory* p.130.
[123] F. L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Updated edition, 2008) p.66.
[124] A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol.2, chapter XI, pp.136–37. http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/DETOC/ch2_13.htm <accessed 21/08/2018>

and found themselves land to settle, they did not spend their lives in one place. Indeed, one of the main differences between the richer and poorer settlers is simply the need to create an income. Timothy Flint stresses the difficulties of actually making money in the Mississippi Valley. "The difficulty of finding a market for the surplus produce," he writes, "is not a diminutive evil… The plan of sending in flat-boats to New Orleans the surplus of the farms, will not answer in such an overstocked market as that."[125] Thus, not only could farmers not afford to purchase the land they settled, neither could they actually produce an income off that land. In fact, it may well have been the case that spending one or two years cultivating land, and then moving onwards, was actually more profitable. A good example of this comes from the memoirs of the Ramsey family, who migrated from Georgia to Mississippi around 1807. The two Ramsey sons frequently relocated throughout the territory, with one writing, "improving new places and selling them out to other newcomers (and there were many) was better for him [the writer's brother]; more money in it; than to remain at one place and make larger improvements."[126] This is a departure from the argument of Robert Haynes, who argues that yeomen were fearful that speculators would buy up lands they had already cultivated;[127] it actually appears that poorer farmers *wanted* to sell to the rich. This switches the narrative around the poor farmer in the Mississippi Territory. They were not simply pawns in the wider political and economic machinations of rich planters, but important cogs which helped to develop the economy and political model of the Territory. They had far more agency than has previously

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[125] Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years* p.179.
[126] A.C Ramsey, Diary, Chapters 3-4, quoted in F. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South,* p.69.
[127] Haynes, *Mississippi Territory*, p.75.

been acknowledges, with their itinerant settlement and work patterns being a positive, rather than a negative.

This phenomenon is also discussed by John Majewski and John Hebron Moore. Majewski demonstrates that planters from South Carolina migrating west would bring with them different farming practices from migrants from further north – that of shifting cultivation, which required a greater expanse of land, as they would allow their land to spend more time in fallow.[128] Indeed, Majewski suggests that it was this practice which limited the development of learning institutions and communities within Mississippi and other southern regions, as planters and communities would have to be so far detached from each other due to their farming styles. Furthermore, it also made it much harder to establish market places and regular trading.[129] In this regard, Majewski fails to acknowledge that learning institutions and communities did develop across the western Mississippi Territory, but the argument certainly helps to demonstrate the challenges for both eastern and western politicians within the Territory cultivating a sense of unity for a push towards statehood. In addition, Moore identifies that, in antebellum Mississippi, "wise cotton growers anticipated the destruction of land by acquiring tracts larger than they planned to cultivate at the time they were setting up plantations, so that they would have a reserve of virgin soil to exploit in the future."[130] This helps to explain the experience of the poor, yeoman farmer in the Mississippi Territory. While they may have been in the vanguard of settlement in the Mississippi Territory,

[128] J. Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) p.27.
[129] Ibid, p.25.
[130] J. H. Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old South-West: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) p86.

their role was to prepare land and sell it on, rather than establishing a homestead for their families in the long term.

Furthermore, this presents a distinctly pragmatic view of the settlement of Mississippi, different from the vision of Roger Kennedy, who argues that "a yeomen might become attached to land he had cleared and planted, where he had chosen to live, where his children had been born and his wife had toiled beside him."[131] Instead, whereas one may assume that the non-slaveholding farmer would take more care of their land because they felt more personal pride and attachment to it than a planter who could afford slaves to work it and could afford to buy extra land at will, the reality appears to be different. Poorer settlers were, at least in this respect, just as economically driven as planters, though on a significantly smaller scale. The difference between the two classes of settlers is not that the poor looked after land for personal use; they had to look after their land so they could sell it on for profit, before moving onto new land to cultivate that (likely via squatting, not purchasing land). Of course, it is hard to draw definitive conclusions on the motives of non-slaveholders due to the sheer volume of migration and the limited records available, though the evidence presented here appears to shatter the illusion that yeomen were driven by some romantic desire to find their own land for future generations of their family to live off. If one combines Flint's assessment that migrants didn't really feel a sense of belonging in the Mississippi Valley, with the idea that farmers maintained land in order to try and sell it on, rather than out of personal investment in that land, one gains a very different impression of the settlement of the region. Farmers were almost nomadic out of financial

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[131] R. Kennedy, *Mr Jefferson's Lost Cause* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p.13.

necessity, and were essentially cultivating land for richer emigrants to turn into plantations. In this, there is a degree of shared experience between poor farmers in the Mississippi Territory and the native nations of DuVal's Native Ground.[132] Poor yeoman farmers found ways to exist within the models of politics and economies established by the poorer farmers, and were able to exploit that for their own enterprise, rather than simply being victims of it. Indeed, poor farmers were not individuals whose culture and identity were shaped politicians and planters in the Mississippi Territory. They had their own agendas and ways of life, and certainly helped to shape identity in the Mississippi Territory in their own ways.

Thus, the experience of the yeoman farmer identifies a number of problems for Mississippi's politicians in the later Territorial period. Firstly, their nomadic lifestyles made it challenging to keep track of population growth, as it was difficult to identify whether settlers in a region were new to the Territory, or had simply moved from a different county. Secondly, although politicians in both the East and West habitually made sweeping claims of identity, whether separating themselves from the other, or to highlight the community and shared regional identity of their region, the nomadic migration patterns of yeoman farmers makes it unlikely that any shared concept of identity could ever have occurred. In the years following the Burr Conspiracy, individuals such as Ferdinand Claiborne travelled the rural regions of the Territory in order to gain signatures to overthrow Robert Williams as Governor, in a move which supposedly brought rural inhabitants into the political networks of the elite, but their settlement patterns suggests that this could not possibly have been the

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[132] K. DuVal, *The Native Ground*.

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case. Coupled with the divisions and partisanship presented across this thesis, the lifestyles of yeomen farmers suggest that any shared identity was either a political tool, or a figment of the imagination.

On a practical level, understanding the impact of this intra-territorial migration is challenging, but it is necessary to do so in order to understand why the eastern population began to crave a separation of the Territory. As was demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, there is some disagreement over the total population of the Mississippi Territory, let alone that of individual counties. [133]Hamilton identifies a redistribution of the population of the Territory from around 1810 onwards, at which point Adams County, previously the heartland of the Territory, began to be outsized by the surrounding Territories, but his focus is more on establishing percentages of the white population in the western Territory. The best available data then, is provided by Dunbar Rowland, but this is limited in that it only offers figures taken from the US Censuses every decade, and does not take into account the multitude of state and unofficial censuses taken between 1810 and 1817 when the local government was hoping to push for statehood. The figures recorded by Rowland for relevant counties are as follows. The statistics for both Madison and Washington counties are not included beyond 1810, as they became part of the Alabama Territory following Mississippi's statehood in 1817.[134]

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[133] Hamilton, "Mississippi 1817", p.276.
[134] Dunbar Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi,* Vol. 1 (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1908) pp.241-242.

County	1800	1810	1820
Territory/State	**8,850**	**40,352**	**75,448**[135]
Adams	4,660	10,002	12,076
Jefferson	2,940	4,001	6,822
Madison[136]		4,699	
Washington	1,250	2,920	
Claiborne		3,102	5,963
Franklin		2,106	4,001
Amite		4,750	6,853
Wilkinson		5,068	9,718
Warren		1,114	2,653
Wayne		1,253	3,323
Baldwin		1,427	

Figure 8: Population Statistics by County in the Mississippi Territory[137]

Considering the rate at which new counties were being incorporated,

Mississippi's local politicians could reasonably expected a rapid population

boom in the second decade of the 19th century. Yet the first half of the 1810s

actually saw a great slowing of migration, in no small part due to the outbreak

of the War of 1812 and the great disruption caused by the Red Stick, or Creek,

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[135] Only Counties that existed in 1810 are included in this table, as more were added in the wake of statehood in 1817 – this is simply to provide an indicator that the Territory did indeed reach a population threshold of c.70,000.
[136] Baldwin, Madison and Washington Counties were only recorded in 1810, as they became part of the Alabama Territory after Statehood.
[137] Dunbar Rowland, *The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi,* Vol. 1 (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1908) pp.241-242.

War in the South.[138] Significantly, the growth in Adams County between 1810 and 1820 was barely 2,000, demonstrating a significant slowing down for the former heartland of the Territory. Nearly every other part of the Western Territory grew the same amount, or more, suggesting that the Natchez District was by no means as attractive as it had formerly been. Indeed, the formal US censuses only tell one side of the story here. As Hamilton demonstrates, the 1815 legislative assembly election saw more votes cast in Madison County than in Claiborne, Adams and Wilkinson Counties combined.[139] Indeed, maintaining his focus upon the white population of the Territory, he notes that, "Whereas in the Natchez District there were 17,000 whites," counted in the special Territorial census of 1816, "the section east of [the] Pearl [River] now in Mississippi counted 8500 and the Alabama side 19,500. Madison County alone turned in 10,000 free whites."[140] The change in fortunes here is stark, but also somewhat understandable. One might assume that as the frontier was pushed further westward, settlers would flock to the furthest reaches of the Republic in order to find opportunity. However, this chapter has demonstrated that it was the Western part of the Territory which was most populated, most developed, and which had the majority of the improved land. If settlers were hoping to find empty land, ripe for opportunity and free from the grasps of planters, it would not be found on the shores of the Mississippi River. Indeed, the closer one came to the Mississippi River, the easier it was to access the markets at Natchez, New Orleans, and beyond. Consequently, the empty land

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[138] For more detail on the impact of the Red Stick War upon the Deep South, see K.E. Holland Braund (Ed.) *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War and the War of 1812* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012)

[139] Hamilton, *Mississippi, 1817, p.280.*

[140] Ibid.

available in the Mississippi Territory was actually in the East. The wave of migration into the Territory in the 1810s did not push the frontier, but filled in the spaces behind it. The Mississippi Territory was, in reality, no longer a frontier region. Thus, the more adventurous, pioneering settler would push beyond the Mississippi River and into the Louisiana Territory, whereas the richer planter was more likely to purchase pre-prepared land in proximity to the Mississippi River. As such, the eastern Mississippi Territory actually became a more enticing area for migrants seeing land in the wake of the War of 1812. Indeed, post-War treaties such of the Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814 forced many Native Americans off their ancestral homes and offered new opportunities to US settlers. Coupled with the distance from the local government, still based around the Natchez District, the opportunities for development in what would become Alabama are evident.

As well as the outbreak of war, 1812 also saw significant developments in the statehood campaigns of both the East and the West sides of the Territory. George Poindexter, formally acting as the Territory's delegate to Congress but informally acting on behalf of the Natchez District, had previously declared that he, "felt it my incumbent duty to resist with firmness the attempt to divide the territory," and subsequently set about petitioning Congress to admit the Territory as one.[141] In a significant milestone both for Poindexter and for the Territory, a Bill for the admission of the Mississippi Territory into the Union as one passed the House of Representatives in December 1812. Coming off the back of a memorial to Congress which declared that the inhabitants of the

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[141] Circular by Poindexter in the *Natchez Weekly Chronicle*, June 25, quoted in Hamilton, *Mississippi, 1817*, p.279.

Territory "respectfully and solemnly protest against the contemplated division of this Territory or any diminution of its original limits," the Enabling Bill proposed to Congress only partially respected those requests.[142] It proposed that the Territory would be admitted as one, but that the Territory's constitutional convention, "shall enter into an ordinance, forever irrevocable, that so soon as the population, east of the river Tombigbee, and west of the state of Georgia, shall amount to sixty thousand free [white] inhabitants, the said territory shall be divided into two separate and independent states." A further caveat ordered that the new state would only be entitled to one member of the House of Representatives until a petition took place, thus condemning Mississippi to a few years of existence as a second-tier state.[143] In many ways, the Bill suggests something of a half measure, not truly addressing any of the major issues within the Territory. Indeed, as Hamilton succinctly notes, the Bill was rejected by the Senate after having passed through the House of Representatives, suggesting that the Senate agreed that the proposal was inadequate.[144]

However, there were more complex reasons behind the Senate's rejection of the plan, as evidenced by a number of further petitions from inhabitants of the Territory, largely relating to requests for an extension to the deadline for payments for land. This was a sign of the increasing hardship felt by the Mississippi Territory around the outbreak of the War of 1812. One petition, signed by, amongst others, Cowles Mead and Ferdinand Claiborne, noted that

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[142] Memorial to Congress by the Territorial Legislature, 09/11/1812 in in C.E. Carter (Ed.) *Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Volume 6: The Mississippi Territory* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), pp.331-332.
[143] An Enabling Bill 18/11/1812, Carter, *Territorial Papers* VI, pp.332-333.
[144] Hamilton, *Mississippi, 1817*, p.279.

"the long restrictions on commerce, and many other Local and incidental causes, preclude every hope of preventing… lands from reverting to the Public." Much like Dinsmoor's earlier use of the term "Citizen", the use of the term "Public" suggests an understanding that the Territory's inhabitants were fully fledged citizens – there is certainly a concept of public ownership here, albeit one that planters and politicians were keen to avoid land falling into the hands of. It should be noted that, despite the fact that many of the undersigned were notable politicians, they describe themselves as being "principally employed in the pursuits of agriculture."[145] That extension, in itself, is perhaps unremarkable, but other petitions on similar issues requested far more longlasting outcomes – in short, the extension of the deadline became an extension of the Territorial period. Two weeks after the first, another memorial was sent to Congress, noting that, although the inhabitants of the Territory were proud and loyal Americans, they were displeased that the federal government had deemed it necessary to impose limitations on commerce within the Territory. The memorialists, all representatives from the Western territory, noted that "their constituents do and have annually paid up to two thirds of the Territorial Revenue, and that the "peculiar situation" of the Territory left it highly susceptible to the worst effects of war. They declared that their "Table has been more than ever crowded with petitions for the relief of debtors", and that they had granted a further fourteen month stay of execution, due to the poor economic climate. With that in mind and, they believed, with the backing of the majority of the people, they requested that

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[145] Petition to Congress by Citizens of the Territory, 02/12/1812, in Carter, *Territorial Papers* VI, p.335.

Congress should not "pass any Law for the admission of the Mississippi Territory into the Union on the footing of a State," until either the Territory reached 60,000 inhabitants, or the People of the Territory requested it. The irony, of course, was that Poindexter, acting as the Territory's representative to Congress, had already requested and introduced an Enabling Bill to push statehood through.[146] Similar petitions were posted throughout December 1812, with one acknowledging that sentiments had indeed changed in 1812 – while the majority of inhabitants had previously supported a statehood campaign, they now believed the majority would be in favour of postponement, if "the Sense of the people were now ascertained".[147]

These petitions make it clear that there was a stark contrast between private and public interests for individuals such as Mead (speaker of the House of Representative at the time), Claiborne, Daniel Beasley (representative of Jefferson County), and Samuel Postlethwaite (son in law of William Dunbar, representative of Adams County and board member of the Bank of the Mississippi). Even if many of the other signees were planters first and foremost, it remains significant that so many would put their private interests before the Territory's future. While many of the concerns of the Territory's economic climate here may well have been valid, it remains significant that local politicians and planters sought to go against the intentions of the Territorial government, particularly George Poindexter as delegate to Congress, in order to attempt to delay statehood.

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[146] Memorial to Congress by Members of the Territorial Legislature, 15/12/1812, in Carter, *Territorial Papers* VI, p.339-341.
[147] Memorial to Congress by Citizens of the Mississippi Territory, December 1812, in Carter, *Territorial Papers* VI, p.349.

It is evident that land played a key role in Mississippi's road to statehood, not just in terms of migration and settlement, but in the business interests of planters. Statehood and autonomy for Mississippi had been present in debates since the Territory's inception, so to see so many representatives of the Territory request a cancellation of an Enabling Bill is a stark change. Historians such as Hamilton have attributed the failure of Poindexter's bill to uncertainty over the division of the Territory, but it is clear that economic uncertainty, and the threat that that had for the private interests of influential inhabitants, also played a role. The Senate's own report on the Bill stated that the relevant committee "had not been able to form a conclusive opinion on the subject… The embarrassed situation of the land titles in that territory, the want of numbers of its population, and the great division that exists among the inhabitants in relation to the question of its being made a state have induced the committee to report" that the Bill would be delayed until the next session."[148] Ultimately, the clash between public and private interests discussed here shaped the later history of the Mississippi Territory, just as the disputes between the networks of the Territory dictated the first half of the period.

A further wrinkle in Poindexter's designs for statehood in 1812 came from the confusion surrounding the annexation of West Florida. When the region came into the ownership of the United States, it was divided, with only a small portion allocated to the Mississippi Territory, and the rest to the Orleans

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[148] Report of the Senate on Enabling Bill, 26/02/1813 in Carter, *Territorial Papers* VI, pp.358-359.

Territory.[149] While this theoretically boosted the population of the Territory, it in fact only caused a further headache for Governor Holmes. While, in organizing the region, Holmes declared "the laws of the Mississippi Territory, and the ordinances and acts of Congress relative thereto, are in force within said County," his more private correspondence with Harry Toulmin, the judge with jurisdiction over the eastern Territory, suggested something less certain.[150] Only a month and a half after his proclamation, he wrote:

> The act of Congress annexing the County now called Mobile County to this Territory is so very defective that I find it impossible, consistent with my authority, to extend to the inhabitants the full benefit of the laws without the aid of the Territorial Legislature. I do not think I can legally authorize a Court to be held by the County Justices, as all the places for holding Courts in the Territory are designated by law…. I do not feel myself authorized (as yet) to exercise authority in any part of the Country but that to which Governor Claiborne has extended the laws and authority of his Territory.[151]

This was, in part, a military matter, as the town of Mobile would not be occupied by American forces until 1813, but for the purposes of this study, it also helps to demonstrate the extent to which citizens of the eastern Mississippi Territory did not enjoy the same rights and privileges as those in the West. As Rothman argues, the regional clash between east and east was "tinged with a whiff of class conflict, with the westerners representing the wealthy plantation districts along the Mississippi River and the easterners speaking for the poorer

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[149] R.V. Haynes, *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010) p.335.
[150] David Holmes, "Proclamation Organising Mobile County", 01/08/1812, in Carter, *Territorial Papers* VI, p.305.
[151] Governor Holmes to Judge Toulmin, 28/09/1812 in Carter, *Territorial Papers* VI, p.325.

population of yeomen farmers and poorer planters."[152] The ways in which new areas of the east were incorporated into the Territory evidently reinforced the two tiered system that appears to have existed within the Mississippi Territory, dividing the rich from the poor and the east from the west.

From 1812 until 1815, statehood debates faded away behind the more pressing concern of the War of 1812 and Creek Wars. As has already been noted in this and the previous chapter, the economic impact of the War had a stark impact upon the Territory, and the statehood debates rising out of the conclusion of the conflict were not the same as those before it. The demographic shifts in the wake of the War have already been documented in this chapter, and they had a profound effect upon the statehood debate. Whereas the Western Territory had been campaigning for entry into the Union as a whole and the Eastern Territory had been calling for a division, in 1815 each camp's position entirely reversed. In the wake of the War of 1812, inhabitants of Madison County and the Tombigbee District began to campaign for a united territory, whereas those in the West wanted to divide the Territory.[153] The impact of the aforementioned demographic shifts upon the intentions of the respective sides of the debate. In a memorial to Congress in 1815, the Territorial Legislature reiterated its desire for statehood irrespective of the size of the population, in part due to the loyalty to the Union it had showed during the War of 1812. It further observed that:

> The Mississippi Territory, though extensive in limits and having some
>
> very fertile lands, will not admit of a very great population. Vast tracts of

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[152] Rothman, *Slave Country*, p.173.
[153] This positional change has been well documented in, for example, Rothman, *Slave Country*, p.173; Hamilton, *Mississippi, 1817*, p.280.

country lying Within its limits are not habitable by reason of its sterility,

and on that account, the population of this Territory must ever be vastly

inferior to that of some of the states already in the Union. Your

Honorable body are aware that most of the burdens incident to the

Government of a large state, will necessarily fall upon one that is small.

While your Memorialists see much good that would result from the

admission of the Territory into the Union, with its present limits, they

anticipate much evil from its division, and would look to such an event as

most calamitous.[154]

This may sound as though the Territory Legislature was reiterating the same

claims as it was previously, but this time, support for the Bill was not universal

amongst Western politicians. Indeed, as Hamilton notes, the entire delegation

from Adams County, the largest, oldest and most established County in the

State, voted against this resolution.[155] This was a significant step in the

statehood process, but also reveals the real motivations of local politicians. For

all that those campaigning for statehood argued that Mississippi and its

inhabitants displayed, "a patriotism, and feeling an attachment to the Union"

which they believed to be equal to any other in the nation, politicians were not

willing to simply accept any motion for statehood.[156] Evidently, their own self-

interest outweighed their desire to gain entry to the Union, and they would

only support a statehood campaign which supported their own interests. They

had wanted admission to the Union as a whole, but although that was looking

increasingly possible and likely by 1815, they suddenly changed their minds

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[154] Memorial to Congress by the Territorial Legislature, 05/12/1815, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, VI, p.594.
[155] Hamilton, *Mississippi, 1817*, p.280.
[156] Memorial to Congress by the Territorial Legislature, 05/12/1815, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, VI, p.594.

once they saw the increasingly promise and prosperity in the Eastern Territory. In short, politicians only wanted statehood if the conditions suited their own private interests. Indeed, Rothman takes this further by suggesting that Westerners had transitioned into supporting a division once they realised that division would grant the South two additional senators, which would assist it in maintaining its political influence and rights. This is in keeping with the suggestion that Mississippi's planters were the ones driving politics and expansion, as it would give them more political power in future debates over slavery, though they may not have realised it at the time. [157] From the research undertaken in this thesis, it's not clear whether or not Mississippian politicians genuinely saw the South as a wider region, but the Territory's political history is littered with the presence of individuals from the wider South, and from the interactions between Cato West and W.C.C. Claiborne in 1800 onwards, through the Burr Conspiracy and into the War of 1812, there was a certain spirit of cooperation between Mississippi, New Orleans, Tennessee and the rest of its bordering states.

Ultimately, though there were further debates on the topic in 1816 and 1817, the fate of the Territory rested in the hands of the United States Senate. As it had in 1812, the Senate opposed admitting the Territory as a whole, perhaps assisted by the fact that William Lattimore, the Territory's Representative to Congress, was a Westerner and would now lobby for division rather than full admission. Eventually, a Bill authorizing the division of the Territory passed in March 1817 and the western half of the Territory was permitted to conduct a Constitutional Convention. The Eastern Territory was reorganised as the

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[157] See Rothman, *Slave Country,* p.173.

Alabama Territory and would join the Union two years later. While the intricacies of the Constitutional Convention will be touched upon in the conclusion of this thesis, the process of campaigning for statehood, as well as the other issues explored in this chapter, reveal a great deal about political loyalty and identity in the later Territorial era. This later period can be characterised less by party political wrangling, and more by planters asserting their authority over the Territory. It is less a story of party loyalty, and more a story of loyalty to the Union, or a lack of it. The land disputes encapsulated by the Nicholas Gray case study present a disjuncture between the local and the federal, whereby local planters sought to subvert the rulings and land sales of a federally-appointed official for their own purposes. This was not a new clash however – whereas the federal and the local worked relatively well together in political terms, the early Territorial era was marked by feuds between federal officials and local inhabitants over Native American policies.

Thus, this chapter has demonstrated the importance of land to the history of the Mississippi Territory, both in terms of migration and settlement, and in terms of public policy and politics. It has further highlighted how the fate of the Mississippi Territory was dictated by the local elite; planters who would put their own economic success over their commitment to the wellbeing of the Mississippi Territory. While the case of The Bank of the Mississippi in the previous chapter suggested a burgeoning sense of patriotism and a desire to improve the Mississippi Territory economically, this chapter has instead shown that the Territory's elite were much more interested in their own gains. The case of Nicholas Gray shows that local elites wanted land acquisition to be handled not by the federal government, but in their own interests, ensuring

valuable land went to important planters who could maximise profits. Furthermore, the multiple campaigns for statehood demonstrate that elites in the West, in the Natchez District, only wanted Statehood if it could ensure their own political power. Although the dimensions of political debate had shifted away from "Republican" versus "Federalist" in the later Territorial era, it's clear that pragmatism and personal business interests still dictated politics. Thus, even on the eve of Mississippi's admission into the Union, it is impossible to portray the Territory as a burgeoning site of American identity and patriotism. The Territorial era was supposed to prepare the Territory to enter the Union as active participants, with its inhabitants as fully fledged American citizens, but it instead only served to increase the power of local elites, who then saw statehood as an opportunity to expand the region's power.

Taken as a whole, the experience of the planter and local politician in the Mississippi Territory up to the eve of statehood is a fascinating study of local power on the frontier of the Early Republic. Whereas at the start of the period, politicians were wielding informal and discretionary powers in order to subvert political frameworks and assert their own authority, by the later 1810s, they were actively engaged with traditional, formal and institutional powers in attempts to control the future of the region. In different terms, planters played Territorial cards in Federal games and Federal cards in Territorial games, all with a view to form their own power structures which would enable them to dictate the political and economic future of Mississippi. In circumnavigating the complex web of difficulties in the region, from Native powers, foreign governments, new and old settlers, the Federal Government and the mysticism of the ideology of the Revolution, planters shaped a unique heritage within the

Mississippi Territory. By focusing in on the intricacies and challenge of their

Territorial experience, this thesis has illuminated the ways in which hybrid

forms of power were able to persist within an increasingly present national

framework.

Conclusion

In 1798, the Mississippi River was the edge of the United States of America, and the Mississippi Territory was a distant, romantic locale (at least in the eyes of travel writers such as William Darby and Samuel Brown). Yet, by 1812, the United States had moved on. No longer was Mississippi a western frontier, and nor was it a destination. The further the frontier was pushed beyond Mississippi, the less likely it would be that new settlers would be attracted.. As has been demonstrated across this thesis, planters assumed more and more control as the Territorial era progressed, in terms of politics, the economy and society – dominating lands, institutions, and positions of authority, particularly in the western regions of the Territory.

That power ended up concentrated in these hands ought not to detract from what this thesis has sought to demonstrate: that Mississippi's Territorial Era was characterised by diverse factions and forces which competed over the region's future. Only gradually did early optimism, opportunity, and rivalry fade to be replaced by a system dominated by planters in positions of authority. The Territory was founded in a conservative, Federalist, moment, with heavy restrictions on liberty and democracy, but the inhabitants of the Territory attempted to subvert the Governor's authority by demanding a representative government, the right to vote, and more of the liberties offered to citizens of the United States, creatively deploying the rhetoric and labels of the Early Republic. In many ways then, the early years of the Mississippi Territory showed signs of optimism. Though the founding government was restrictive, many local politicians displayed an apparent desire to align with the American

political system in order to drive through progressive reforms, opening the Territory up as a site for the development of a republican (and Republican) spirit, which would in itself act as an enticing prospect for white migrants and potential settlers – the presence of slavery within the Territory helped entice wealthier white settlers even more However, what had started at as a seemingly genuine move for more democracy and transparency between the Governor, the Legislative Assembly, and the inhabitants of the Territory, largely descended into a distinctive kind of partisan politics. Politicians became more interested in scoring political points over rivals than making genuine improvements for the Territory and its white population. Significantly, though, the party system developing in Mississippi was inherently local, utilising the labels of the national political parties, but fighting local battles over local issues. It was this, perhaps rather than any other factor, which gave the early Mississippi Territory only a veneer of American spirit and nationalism. Real interests and ambitions hove into view when exposed by episodes of tension or controversial issues such as the Burr affair, showing more complex attitudes towards the parties and federal power and politicians.

Alongside the burgeoning partisan politics of the early Territorial Era, public and private enterprises failed and flourished in equal measure, highlighting the intrinsic links between politicians and planters in the Territory. Both Jefferson College and The Bank of the Mississippi offered opportunities for improvement, in terms of culture, education and economics. Jefferson College, a distinctly Republican endeavour, was proposed at a time of strength for the supposed Jeffersonian Republicans of the Territory. Quasi-Federalists had been in decline since the collapse of Sargent's administration, and those

pertaining to be Republicans held many positions of power in the Territory, seemingly enough to push such ventures through. Yet that promise crumbled under the weight of deep partisan divides among "Republicans" in the Territory, highlighting the self-serving nature of politics in this era. If a proposal did not directly support a politician's, or his family's, individual goals, it would not be supported. Jefferson College failed due to an inability to find consensus among politicians, who looked out for their own fortunes before those of the wider region. It serves not only to highlight the pragmatism of local politicians and an absence of party political loyalty, but also to demonstrate that, from an early point, the Territory's politicians served themselves and their localities first, and the wider population second. Though the Territory had the potential to act as a promising destination for migrants, the inability to establish such institutions was a significant limiting factor.

The Bank of the Mississippi, however, was an altogether more successful venture by Mississippi's elite. The gap of several years between the decline of Jefferson College and the rise of the Bank of the Mississippi implies a period of stability within the Territory, yet the nation was embroiled in the War of 1812 throughout. Any sense of stability may well have been brought about by the arrival of the fourth permanent governor, David Holmes, which seemed to reduce the hostilities between rival political factions. However, the success of the Bank suggests a maturity that had not previously been seen amongst the Territory's elite. Indeed, as much as Holmes may have been responsible for the region's newfound harmony, the Bank itself was a contributing factor. Whilst the College was a distinctly Republican venture, the Bank of the Mississippi was certainly a Federalist one, albeit after the heyday of the Federalist Party

proper. Despite that, the enterprise of establishing the Bank united the elite of the Mississippi Territory. Whereas in the early 1800s, individuals could not see past their differences or bear to see a rival faction flourish, the founders of the Bank acknowledged the need for a wide range of expertise. For example, "Republican" planters admitted the Territory's merchants, traditional "Federalists", had the necessary economic experience help the Bank prosper. Thus, where Jefferson College had failed, the Bank succeeded. Furthermore, the Bank of the Mississippi, particularly in the latter years of the War of 1812, helped to bring the Territory closer to the Union. When specie payments from New Orleans stalled, the Bank turned to Northern banks for support, thus simultaneously making the Territory dependent on the Union in a way it hadn't before, and also demonstrating the expertise and sophistication of the Territory's banking system to the Union, being the only Southern bank to continue operations throughout the War of 1812.

However, for all that the Bank demonstrated an increased level of sophistication from the merchant and planter elite of the western Territory, the arrival of such infrastructure certainly limited opportunities for others. As the elite became more aware of the commercial opportunities present within the Territory, there was a perceived need to ensure that those opportunities were maximised. Thus, attractive land became harder and harder for new migrants to acquire. This later Territorial era saw land, settlement, politics and economics become intertwined even more than they had been previously. The increasingly business-savvy elite, having already overcome party-political differences, now saw the opportunity to drive policy and expansion in the Territory and even further westward. They came to dictate the interactions between Territorial

officials and Native Americans, prospering off the draconian terms of a multitude of post-war treaties, and even began to dictate who could purchase the land acquired in those treaties. In this way, as the Bank of the Mississippi had pulled the Territory closer to the Union in economic terms, it also helped to create a disjuncture between federal officials and planters, who had their own intentions when it came to land sales. At no point was this more obvious than in the Nicholas Gray affair, which saw increasingly violent interactions between local officials and federal representatives, each of whom were seeking to shape the landscape of the Territory, both politically and geographically. As the planter elite became increasingly belligerent in ensuring the right people acquired the right land in the Territory, the fallacy of the optimism of migration was revealed; the Territory was not a land of opportunity, where migrants could build new lives for themselves. Instead, it was becoming increasingly conservative, designed around maximising the business enterprises of the elite.

Furthermore, as political discussion and debate turned increasingly towards statehood in the later years of the era, migration, settlement, economics and politics all became inextricably linked. As the regular petitions from Tombigbee residents demonstrate, migrants into areas of the Territory beyond the Natchez District were becoming increasingly isolated and dissatisfied by their lack of agency and political representation. As the population threshold of 70,000 came increasingly into focus, the progression of the Territory into statehood became dependent on population growth, either through migration or through internal demographic growth. For much of the era, becoming a state was talked about as an opportunity to be seized for the Territory, one that

would help establish the region as an economic and political power in the Deep South. Yet as the debates progressed and, significantly, migration caused demographic shifts amongst the population, western politicians' intentions became more evident. The campaign for statehood was less about a desire to improve the territory on a National level, and more about consolidating in the hands of the politicians of the wealthy wider Natchez District. Western politicians' shift from encouraging entry into the Union as one whole state to blocking that in favour of division highlights the extent to which their own personal gains were prioritised over those of the Territory. While the suggestion that they did so in order to ensure the South had additional senators in Congress must be entertained, it seems strange that they would only consider that on the eve of the Territory achieving statehood. Indeed, throughout this thesis, it has been shown that there was a lingering rivalry between Mississippi and its border states, with little obvious embracing of a Southern identity any more than a national one.

This thesis has also demonstrated how other federal and territorial actors shaped the culture of the region. Individuals such as surveyors and land office officials have previously been seen as facilitators of American expansion, but this thesis has highlighted that their roles were even more significant. These men were shapers and vectors of American identity in the Mississippi Territory. From Andrew Ellicott and Isaac Briggs to Nicholas Gray, surveyors and land commissioners arguably had a greater impact upon the borders of the Republic than has previously been acknowledged in political histories. These individuals were not simply bureaucrats enabling planters and local politicians to shape the land around them, but active participants in the Territorial process,

with their own ideologies and intentions. While this thesis has argued that disputes between planters and land officials was a proxy for the wider dispute between local and Federal governments and systems, future work might consider these surveyors in their own rights. As we have seen, Isaac Brigg's difficulties in surveying the Mississippi Territory, and his subsequent resignation, had vast ramifications for the progress of the Territory. By resigning his position, Briggs delayed the organising of the Territory into lots, postponing the successful settlement of the region and disrupting the economic and demographic progress of the Territory. While the consequences of Briggs' actions may have been incidental, the knock-on effect is evident. The delay it caused resulted in the Territory stagnating. It resulted in the disaffection with the federal government present during the Burr Conspiracy, and ultimately, it facilitated the increased power wielded by Federal officials such as Nicholas Gray.

Where Briggs' actions were motivated by personal dissatisfaction, Nicholas Gray's were entirely motivated by opportunism, and both had a profound impact upon the Territory. Gray effectively sought to profit off the land hunger and demand for land in the wake of the numerous Treaties which had opened up vast swathes of land in the Northern Mississippi Territory after the War of 1812 and the Creek Wars. By selling land in advance of it legally being available, to people that Gray himself chose, Gray made a lasting impression upon the landscape of the Territory, literally and metaphorically. In doing so, Gray prevented planters and local politicians, including Robert Williams, the former Governor, from dictating who should acquire which plots of land. In theory, Gray's process of restricting the power of plantation owners should

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have been a positive for the inhabitants of the Territory, and especially for new migrants, but there was nothing egalitarian about either policy. Whether Gray was attempting to secure a larger legacy for himself, or simply attempting to secure a significant fortune, he undoubtedly played a role in shaping land acquisition in the later Territorial era. It was the bureaucrats and commissioners who dictated the land they could, or could not, purchase. Additionally, the processes that Briggs, Gray and their counterparts oversaw limited the opportunities of earlier migrants, who had hoped to acquire land by squatting. As the final chapter demonstrated, those individuals could only hope to survive by taking land, improving it, and selling it on for profit. In this way, poorer migrants became transient, moving around the Territory in order to survive. Thus, they were never able to form lasting communities, contributing to the sense that it was only the elite, and the bureaucrats, who were able to shape communities, networks and identities within the Mississippi Territory. Ultimately, both Briggs as a surveyor and Gray as a commissioner, though their motivations were different, both came to shape identity and loyalty in the Mississippi Territory. The previously misunderstood, or overlooked, aspect of the territorial process and experience further highlights how pragmatic early American migration truly was.

The issues of land, migration and settlement helped to shape the emerging geography and social topography of the Mississippi Territory. However, the political networks that forged the laws, and consequently the culture, of the region also defined the region. As the first three chapters of this thesis demonstrated, one of the major issues in understanding the networks that existed across this era is one of nomenclature. Although local politicians were

quick to self-identify as either Republicans or Federalists, conveniently aligning with the national political parties, it has been shown that historians cannot take their words at face value, for two major reasons. Firstly, there were no distinct Federalist or Republican parties, instead being multiple smaller factions and networks all claiming to be the true representatives of the national parties. Secondly, even if one could divide individuals into two broad political schools, it has been proven that those individuals would abandon any party political loyalty in favour of self-interest.

The trend to define individuals in the Territory as Federalist or Republican is understandable, as networks were broadly defined by their support or opposition to the Territory's respective governors. Thus, the larger, macro studies of the region which tend to discuss economic matters in the Deep South can often overlook the nuances of Mississippi's unique political system. Yet, in addition, purely focusing upon local politics can cause oversights in themselves, as the networks of the Territory transcended politics, crossing into personal enterprise and, significantly, familial ties. Furthermore, Mississippi's distinct cultural heritage was evidently a major factor. As was demonstrated in the first chapter, the original partisan networks were defined by their relationship to the old Spanish government. Support or opposition to the former Spanish Governor Miguel Gayoso helped to define the early party politics of the Mississippi Territory. His American supporters, particularly in the form of Anthony Hutchins, the first patriarch of what would become the Green-West dynasty, formed in rivalry to Gayoso's detractors, who would later align themselves with Winthrop Sargent, the first American governor, therefore branding themselves as Federalists despite their tenuous connection

to that national party. The unique conditions of Mississippi's transition from Spanish to American ownership, including the three years between the Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1795 and the arrival of Sargent in 1798, cannot be ignored when considering the shaping of identity in the Mississippi Territory. Many of the major historical works referred to in this study have identified a wider Southern culture established by ambitious planters and politicians, but it is overly simplistic to ignore the unique circumstances present within the Mississippi Territory which shaped the politics, economy and culture of the Old Natchez District and beyond.

The transition from Spanish to American government was a difficult one. Central to it was another federal official, Andrew Ellicott, around whom much of the early political debate formed. Though his role was to survey the boundaries established by the Treaty of San Lorenzo, he took a much more active role in trying to establish American rule in the region, which impacted upon the networks already forming for and against Governor Gayoso. Rather than political parties or networks becoming affiliated with policies and ideologies, in the Territory they became attached to people. Thus, those who supported Ellicott against Spanish rule naturally transitioned into becoming supporters of Sargent. Likewise, those who distrusted Ellicott and who had benefitted from Spanish governance leant the other way, joining Hutchins, Cato West and others opposed to Sargent's administration. Thus, it is apparent that, right from the Territory's inception, patronage and local networks of kinship and business, not political belief, defined partisan lines. Furthermore, this highlights the importance of the individual to the networks of the Territory. Individual officials such as Andrew Ellicott were far more influential

in the political history of the Territory than has previously been supposed. The roles of these early Federal officials went far beyond that which was defined by Congress, and shaped networks of political belief throughout the Territory's existence.

Honing in on the Sargent Administration, this thesis demonstrated that utilising party political labels became an important tool of resistance for individuals such as Cato West and the rest of the Committee of 1799. Inhabitants of the Territory who had previously supported Ellicott and shifted into supporting Sargent quickly appropriated the moniker of the Federalist Party in order to curry favour with the new governor, whereas their opponents searched for an identity with which to resist him. It would be unfair, however, to suggest that resistance to Sargent came simply because of who he was. Sargent's administration also provides a useful case study to explore the limitations of Federalism on the fringes of the Republic. Sargent took a similar approach in Mississippi as he had to his role as Secretary and Acting-Governor of the Northwest Territory. He ensured the franchise was restricted, introduced proscriptive penal laws and sought to deny the Territory's right to progress beyond the first stage of Territorial government. Rather than being a problem unique to the Mississippi Territory, Sargent's trials and tribulations speak to a wider issue in the historiography of the Early Republic, as the Federalist Party faltered in the election of 1800 not just in the cities of the Eastern Seaboard but on the frontier and in the backwaters, where their ideas fell on deaf years. Natchez may have been home to merchants who naturally favoured the Federalist Model, but beyond the small borders of the Natchez District, planters and farmers had little time for urban elites from the North bringing in

regulations that limited their autonomy. It was this, as much as anything else, which Cato West and the Committee of 1799 opposed. Indeed, their turn towards Jeffersonian-Republicanism in response was less out of a belief in that political system, and more to do with opposition to the Federalist model.

Thus, Cato West's turn to Republicanism was borne out of opportunism, not idealism. While the Republican Party was certainly more in keeping with planter ideology on the frontier than their Federalist counterparts, this study has demonstrated that West's turn to the party, in the form of W.C.C. Claiborne and his allies in Congress, was an expedient one, and a formative moment for the Mississippi Territory. While Sargent and the Federalists were quick to dismiss the Territory's inhabitants as "running wild in the recess of government," it is evident that a burgeoning recognition of American identity did exist within the Territory.[1] Even if the turn to Republicanism was a pragmatic one, the Committee of 1799's actions of resistance were sophisticated and, in large part, took inspiration from the legacy and rhetoric of the American Revolution. They also, as has already been mentioned, demonstrated that they learned from their surroundings and from both their, and others', experiences. Just as they had learned to negotiate with Governor Gayoso, West and his faction negotiated with Congress to subvert Sargent, clearly exploiting the growing divide between Federalists and Republicans in the Federal Congress. Although this has not been identified in the historiography, it is not an entirely new observation – the analysis of

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[1] Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State*, p.205

contemporary newspapers from the era in chapter two of this thesis highlights the extent to which this was well known at the time.

As has been detailed across this study, the historiography of the Mississippi Territory has tended to rest upon categorising the factions that developed during the Sargent Administration as being Federalist and Republican, replicating the model of the wider United States political system. However, by undertaking a far more local study of the political networks of the Mississippi Territory, this thesis has demonstrated that such an approach is far too simplistic. Although, in the era of Sargent's and Claiborne's administrations, there were theoretically two main recognisable networks, these do not simply align with the national parties, even if the networks themselves claimed they did. Indeed, as the third chapter demonstrated, it is a stretch to refer to two main parties due to the multitude of disagreement arising out of different areas of the wider Natchez District. Ultimately, the terms *Federalist* and *Republican* had divergent meanings, and this thesis has identified a number of features distinct to Mississippi's political networks that help to differentiate the system from the national party system but also to highlight the unique nature of the Territory. In so doing, it has demonstrated the limitations of nationalism and its impact upon identity in the Territory, a feature that might warrant revisiting in other locales.

Mississippi's political networks were primarily defined by patronage and geography. Across the Territorial Era, familial ties, whether by blood or marriage, are identifiable as being key reasons for parties and networks forming and dissolving. The most notable example of this is the Green-West faction, which initially formed in the 1790s under the patronage of Anthony

Hutchins. One of Hutchins' daughters, Mary, married Abner Green, whose sister married Cato West. Furthermore, the enduring influence of the Green-West faction continued after West's decline due to the fact that Cowles Mead later married Mary Green, thus joining the Green-West faction despite his prior links to the Claibornes. Local politicians in the Territory did not join a faction because of any great political belief, but because their family were affiliated with that faction. Thus, rather than being identifiable by political belief, networks were identified by individuals, as characterised in the editorials from Natchez's newspapers explored in the second chapter. Those writings make it clear that, despite not being large organisations, the factions and networks around the Territory had a degree of cultural or popular notoriety, and that key figures and features were instantly recognisable to inhabitants. The appropriation of the national political party labels thus became a useful tool for new inhabitants to identify the parties. Mississippi's factions had no names, and individuals like Cato West and William Dunbar will have meant little to new settlers and immigrants, so the appropriation of the *Federalist* and *Republican* monikers became a vital tool of recruitment for local party politics, even if the parties themselves bore limited resemblance to those titles.

Furthermore, this dependence on family and local relationships meant that factions were tied to localised areas around the Territory. In the early period, Greenville was home to the Green-West faction, the proto-Federalist merchant faction were based in Natchez, and the Claibornes, or more establishment "Republicans", were based in the capital, Washington. Indeed, as the era progressed and the Territory grew, politics retained a geographical focus. This geopolitical twist almost entirely defined the statehood debate, with the East

and West of the Territory divided over whether or not the Territory should be split in two for statehood. As such, Mississippi's political history was shaped by these regional hubs, and desires to see improvement in localised areas often trumped desires for improvement across the Territory, and they were also demonstrated to outweigh political loyalty. Jefferson College, and the failure to establish it, exemplifies this fact. While it was an undoubtedly Jeffersonian-Republican venture, the Claibornite Faction and the Green-West faction, both of which pertained to be representatives of the Republican faction, failed to reach consensus on where it should be based, and jeopardised the future of the institution. Indeed, despite founding the Mississippi Society for the Dissemination of Useful Knowledge, the proto-Federalist faction also failed to support a venture that would have been in keeping with the intentions of that organisation when it came to threaten an area of public land within the boundaries of Natchez itself. There are two significant conclusions to be drawn here. Firstly, that local networks were more significant in a political sense than party affiliation and, secondly, that local political networks and loyalties regularly trumped the needs of the Territory or, in a wider context, loyalty to the United States as a whole.

By failing to agree on a site for Jefferson College, the Claibornites and the Green-Wests clearly demonstrated where their loyalties lay. Despite the fact that both sides highlighted the benefits that the College would bring, often repeating Republican-style messages, neither would concede any ground in the debate over where the College should be built. Despite the fact that the Board of Trustees was made up of members of every major political faction in the Territory, no consensus could be reached. Neither the Green-Wests nor the

Claibornites were therefore interested in bringing a distinctly Republican institution to the Territory. It would have helped to educate future politicians, acting as an incubator for the Republican Party in the Territory, but this was clearly of less significance to the Territory's faction than the prestige of their towns playing host to the institution itself. Their willingness to sabotage the College to score points against their political rivals is highly representative of their positions across the early Territorial period. Furthermore, going beyond the political networks of the Natchez District, both the case of the College and the wider debate over the future statehood of the Territory demonstrated that factions and political parties were unwilling to put the future of the region first. They were unwilling to push for an institution such as the College if it wasn't in their interests but, more pertinently, they were unwilling to enable the transition to statehood at the expense of their political power and authority. Indeed, as the final chapter showed, they were only willing to advance to statehood if the conditions (whether it be admission as a whole or as two states) would enable them to maximise their authority. Thus, the thesis as a whole has demonstrated that local power and authority, as well as political point scoring, were more important to the networks of the Mississippi Territory than both the national political parties and the future of the Territory itself.

In addition, even when the spotlight of national attention was fixed upon the Territory, local parties did not demonstrate genuine loyalty the federal cause. The case study of the Burr Conspiracy offered a vital insight into the flimsy nature of national loyalty in Mississippi, as well as showing us how fluid factions could be within the Territory. At the very basic level, it demonstrated that, even a few years after the Jefferson College affair, the "Republican" Party

was still fractured. Importantly, the dispute between Robert Williams and Cowles Mead demonstrated how local party networks responded to the arrival of an outside Republican as their governor. The open rebellion of Mead, Ferdinand Claiborne and George Poindexter against the Republican Governor, despite that faction also purporting to be Republican, reflected that Mead and his company were not Republicans at all. It also showed that their desires for personal power and authority outweighed the need for stability amongst the "Republican" factions of the Territory. Furthermore, the Burr Conspiracy highlighted the complicated nature of loyalty to the Republic within the Territory. It exposed the limitations of support for the Federal Government, particularly in response to perceived Spanish belligerence on the frontier and from West Florida, and demonstrated that inhabitants were more willing to act in defence of their own, private land than they were to defend their Union.

Yet, there were signs of development in some areas across the era. As the 1810s progressed, networks evolved, ventures became bipartisan, and the lines between political groups began to blur. This was not entirely organic, but as a consequence of a noticeable shift in the ideology of planters. "Republicans" and "Federalists" alike began to realise that their political rivals could offer partnerships which would boost their own private business interests. Whereas individuals and factions were unable to come together to found Jefferson College, the Bank of the Mississippi was far more successful. The members of its founding Board are evidence of this – even a citizen as divisive as former Governor Winthrop Sargent was rehabilitated into the community thanks to his business expertise, and was chosen as the inaugural founder. The Bank demonstrates that political allegiances came second to business expertise for

planters in the Territory; so-called Republicans realised they needed the specialist knowledge of the merchants of Natchez, and vice-versa. In bringing their expertise together, the Bank came to be one of the most stable in the history of the nineteenth century American South, and endured through the War of 1812 when all others in the region failed. The Bank enabled planters and merchants to access new customers and markets, expanding the economic enterprises of the Territory and, thanks to the acquisition of specie payments from the North, brought the Territory's economy closer to that of the Union itself. The Bank of the Mississippi was undeniably one of the major successes of the Territorial era, and it facilitated much of the regional expansion into the West that has been so well documented in the historiography, arguably achieving what political correspondence had not. Thus, with regards to their private interests, planters in the Territory began to see the benefits of a closer relationship between the Territory and the Federal Government, even if they were still unwilling to give up political power to bring the Territory into the Union. This is emblematic of the experience of the planter in the Mississippi Territory. Planters played up to the Federal Government when it suited them privately, and resisted it when it threatened their local systems of power.

Ultimately, this thesis has proven the importance of casting a local lens upon the enterprises of planters and politicians on the fringes of the Early American Republic in under to understand the shaping of politics and identity in the South. By focusing on local communities and networks, it has proven that the Mississippi Territory helps us to understand how it was possible for planters to develop unique, hybrid forms of power, and how they were able to maintain them within an increasingly present national framework. It has shown that

experiences of westward migration and of life in Mississippi were not dictated by federal politicians such as Thomas Jefferson, but local planters doubling as politicians, by local federal agents ranging from Indian Agents to Land Surveyors, and by Native American nations and poor farmers operating in the grey areas between the systems of power that politicians and planters tried to enforce.

The need to focus on some of the more minor characters bearing the early Republic and settler colonialism westward has also emerged. Far away from New York, Boston and Washington, local politicians and planters exploited the power vacuums caused by the Territorial system and made a lasting impact upon the American West. While it is true that, compared to the eastern states, the Mississippi Territory was a backwater, it was by no means bereft of political talent. The burgeoning factions of the Territory reinvented themselves regularly, evolving as the political climate shifted, and proved their ability to make genuine contributions to the Federal Government. Individuals such as Cato West successfully subverted Federal ordinances and Federal officials in order to shape the region in their own vision. They existed within the power vacuums that were prevalent across the American West, and prospered by playing a clever game; they bore the hallmarks of Republicanism and spoke the language of loyalty to the Union, but actively exploited the distance between themselves and the Federal Government in order to create their own, unique brand of American identity. This project has not intended to glorify these individuals, many of whom were slaveholders, and nearly all of whom were self-serving in their ambitions. By focusing on the local experiences of

these individuals, this project has illuminated our understanding of identity and society in the Mississippi Territory.

The Mississippi Territory was undoubtedly transformed in the nineteen years it spent in the Territorial system, but it shaped the Territorial system just as much as it was shaped by it. Mississippi's local politicians identified the weaknesses and ambiguities of the system, and acted accordingly, building their own networks of power and authority where the Ordinances left them undefined. They were not always successful, and often sabotaged themselves and their quest for authority and autonomy, by refusing to settle or compromise. However, their actions defined the region for years to come. The American Territorial experiment succeeded in that it transformed Mississippi from a Spanish colony to an American state within twenty years, with a fully-fledged constitution and a defined system for clearing and cultivating land, having forced countless Native Americans off their land and homes. However, the state it created was American only on its own terms, its leaders uncompromising on its entry into the Union. It was not the Federal Government, nor the Union itself, which shaped identity on the in the Mississippi Territory, but the individuals who lived and governed there, accessing and deploying a new political language and a new institutional framework. The Mississippi Territory was established by a Federalist government, designed by a Jeffersonian-Republican vison, but it was shaped, compromised, and cultivated by the local politicians and planters who lived within it.

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