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American identity in the Illinois Territory, 1809-1818

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AMERICAN IDENTITY IN THE ILLINOIS TERRITORY, 1809-1818

by

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Historiography

Many histories have been written about Illinois, both by early inhabitants and modern scholars. The histories are quite inclusive, yet none specifically address the topic that I am examining. Scarce material exists regarding the Americanism of the early settlers in Illinois. But, in fashioning my argument on the subject, I have taken from a variety of these sources bits and pieces of information about geography, demographics, economics, politics, and social life. My hope is that these facts and arguments will help to substantiate my suggestions regarding the mindsets of territorial Illinoisians. The work coming closest to my focus is an article written by Earl W. Hayter, "Sources of Early Illinois Culture," published in 1936 by the Illinois State Historical Library in the Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society. Through examples involving agriculture, economics, politics, and fashion, among other things, Hayter argues against the once dominant Turner thesis that considered the American West isolated and a catalyst for the creation of a new American lifestyle. Hayter contends, instead, that older cultural forms prominent in Europe and America slowly moved westward, and were only slightly modified by the "primitive environment[1]."

Hayter is most likely right, and his work illustrates one of the earlier statements of a frontier theory that still rings true today, but the breadth of his principles must be extended. Hayter shows how the culture, customs, politics, and economics of early Illinois were influenced by the rest of the United States as well as Europe. It is wise to

[1] Hayter, Earl W. "Sources of Early Illinois Culture," in Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for 1936 (Springfield, IL: Illinois State Historical Library, 1936), 81,96.

illustrate the cultural connection between the frontier and the rest of America, but I hope to show what these early settlers actually thought about the United States.

Sharing the same culture is one thing, but discovering what the early Illinoisians actually thought about being a part of America is unmapped historical territory. By extending the importance of the expansive categories of politics, social life, economics, communication, education, culture, and customs, I believe it is possible to prove that Americanism existed amongst the earliest American inhabitants of Illinois. It is possible to pry into their mindsets and speculate on their connections with America and the idea of America. A considerable hole exists in Hayter's scholarship. He mostly relates Illinois with the coming tide of culture, and therefore glosses over the intentions and beliefs of the earliest settlers, the squatters - those who set up their homesteads before culture could catch up to them. By examining the reasons why the pioneers moved west to Illinois and their lifestyles once in the territory, this paper strives to illustrate their feelings about the young nation and their place in it. Likewise the young meddlers, who came in expectation of the advance of established Euro-American culture, advanced to Illinois for certain reasons, and lived their lives in certain ways, pursuing certain tasks for certain reasons. An investigation of these motives will help to show their thoughts on America. By examining both groups, I intend to prove that both were "Americanistic," but for two different, competing American ideologies. The settlers practiced and basked in American individualism, living out the liberty and independence associated with the Spirit of '76 - the farther away from society and jurisdiction, the greater the freedom. The later settlers, the meddlers, followed the American dream - the dream connected with making a name

for yourself economically, socially, and politically. This involved creating town structures and connections to the rest of the nation and national government.

Writing a history of mentalities can be a difficult task, for it attempts to delve into the minds of historical people instead of simply analyzing what those people left us in actions and writing. This particular piece of history may be especially daunting because it will be the first to undertake this specific topic. The fact that this paper is a study of sentiment along the frontier adds to the difficulty. The frontier is called such because it marks the limits of a society. Common institutions and conveniences, such as schools, paper, or pencils, were not often available. An infrastructure that could preserve the few written records did not exist. Letters of families living in the wilderness were often few and insignificant to this study, diaries and journals seldom kept and less often preserved, contemporary descriptive literature was uncommon, and libraries were nonexistent. What little pioneer literature that did survive is either harsh and too realistic or nostalgic and too romantic, turning the pioneer into the noblest American[2].

The majority of the links we have with territorial Illinois deal with the townspeople: the newspapers, the letters and papers of several men and a few women, some scattered business papers, and various government documents. These scant sources, however, can show much about popular opinion, popular conversation topics, feelings of distance and connection, and nationalistic leanings. Still, these documents are the writings of less than 50 people, and territorial Illinois had at least 25,000 residents. Of the early Illinoisians whose papers are available to study, most were residents of towns or members of rural communities who held a prominent function, such as a teacher. Of the

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[2] Buley, R. Carlyle. The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950), 138.

squatters, much less is known. Many were illiterate and could offer no written legacy, and others who may have written have seen their works lost in the consuming wilderness. As must be the case, the frontier woman's side of the story may seem terse and lacking. But few writings from them are with us today.

This paper will focus on two groups of society, though as Henry Bradshaw Fearon, a contemporary traveler through Illinois stated, there were actually four that inhabited the Illinois Territory: the Indians, the French, the squatters, and a medley of lawyers, doctors, and farmers founding settlements and speculating[3]. I will not discuss the feelings of the Indians and the French because their point of view necessarily places them outside the study.

Though they were the first to inhabit the area, having been around since 8000 B.C., and though they still formed a sufficient number until Black Hawk's War that ended in 1832, the Indians were not Americans, nor were they outsiders who yearned to be American. Indians were a separate societal group whose lifestyle, customs, and culture clashed with spreading American jurisdiction and population. Thus, it is evident that the Indians in the territory held little else than ill will for the American nation.

As for the French, they, too, were not part of this national story. The adventurous French were the first Europeans to step foot in "Illinois," with the arrival of Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet in 1673. The French chose to settle along the eastern bank of the Mississippi River in the American Bottom, an area known for its bountiful soil. Kaskaskia became the prominent village, while Fort de Chartres, eighteen miles

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[3] Fearon, Henry Bradshaw. Sketches of America: A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles through the Eastern and Western States of America (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown

upriver, supplied protection[4]. But New France was an overextended arc of exploring, trapping, trading, and evangelizing, so nothing more sizeable than a village or a fort ever emerged in "Illinois" during the French reign, even when more importance was placed on colonies following the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713[5]. The few French villages practiced self-government, there was widespread ownership of land, and social mobility was possible and frequent[6]. Though Illinois became the property of Britain after the French and Indian War, many French families stayed. In fact, though the war ended in 1763, the French continued to exercise civil and political power until 1765, the year in which British troops finally reached the distant western territory. Many French inhabitants moved west across the river by 1810 because of the opening rush of American settlers[7]. Only one Frenchman served in Illinois's territorial government - Pierre Menard. But, even in 1817, more than half of Kaskaskia's population was French, and the town was the territorial capital at the time[8]. These old French families were accustomed to self-governance and self-sufficiency, and, when the United States assumed control, they did not meddle in politics, but they did not expect the government to meddle in their lives. The French in the Illinois Territory lived a life of peaceful coexistence with the American inhabitants. They did not exhibit Americanistic traits, but they were not necessarily against United States governance.

And since the British regarded Illinois as little more than a spoil of victory over a perennial rival and never settled it, that leaves the Americans. As mentioned above, Fearon divided the settlers into two remaining groups – the squatters and the enterprisers.

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[4] Davis, James. Frontier Illinois (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1998), 45.
[5] Ibid, 44.
[6] Ibid, 49.
[7] Jensen, Richard J. Illinois: A Bicentennial History (New York: Norton, 1978), 3-4.
[8] Buley, 40.

The squatters staked a claim and lived off the land without paying for it. Many early pioneers were squatters, but throughout the territorial years new individuals joined the practice, since finding an isolated area in the forests or prairies was still not difficult. The enterprisers were those who came to live in or near the towns of the budding territory. These included doctors, lawyers, politicians, farmers, and even a few teachers. This group sought economic and political power, and to get it, towns and communities had to be formed.

While the reduction of Illinois settlers to two groups may seem a bit crude, this dichotomy is plausible considering the demographic makeup of the territory. Because of the newness of the settlement, there was virtually no middle class. In fact, the social world of Illinois was relatively classless and free wheeling. Those whom we would label middle class today – merchants, bankers, publishers, lawyers, and doctors – were present, but they formed an entirely different group in the Illinois Territory: the meddlers. These professionals constituted the town populations of the Illinois Territory and became leaders. Since there was no landed aristocracy or slaveocracy, anyone who desired to obtain land, political power, or ownership of a business could easily do so. I will not delve into class distinction or discussion again. I simply wanted to explain my choice of categorizing the inhabitants into two sections.

And so I set out to prove that, for the case of the Illinois Territory, the Era of Good Feelings, was indeed so, if we are judging the period on the Americanism of the population. Still, the two groups of the territorial society, held vastly different types of Americanism dear to their hearts. While one group's Americanism strove to keep communication and connection with the rest of the nation at a minimum, the other's

wished to speed up the process of connecting the west with the rest of the country. For a brief moment in time, this snapshot from 1809-1818, when the roads weren't quite out to Illinois but were sure to arrive in the near future, both groups could feel satisfied and Americanistic, thinking that their version of the American dream could come true on the American frontier.

Introduction

In October of 1817, Robert Pulliam gathered some necessities, joined a few companions, and guided his herd of cattle up the Kaskaskia River through the tall prairie grass in the Illinois Territory. Upon reaching Sugar Creek, the group stopped and set up a loghouse, from which they would gather furs and collect sap from nearby maples. This was the beginning of the first permanent American settlement along the stream[9].

Earlier the same year and many miles to the east, newly elected President James Monroe toured the Atlantic coast, receiving jubilant cheers in every city. Even along the streets of Boston, a predominantly Federalist town, the Republican earned a hero's welcome. A writer for the *Columbian Centinel*, a traditionally Federalist paper in that city, proclaimed that an "Era of Good Feelings" had begun[10]. The nation was booming economically, war had been won against Britain, and a feeling of nationalism was said to have permeated the country.

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[9] Faragher, John Mack. Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1986), 3.
[10] Dangerfield, George. The Era of Good Feelings (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1952), 95.

As Pulliam trudged along the muddy, bumpy Indian trail that sufficed for a road in the Illinois Territory, many thoughts might have crossed his mind about his place in society as a settler on the frontier of the young nation. Whether they did or not, it is unlikely that Robert Pulliam, a squatter, ever read a copy of the Boston newspaper, or that he ever heard the reporter's catch phrase regarding the positive collective mentality of the country. It is possible Pulliam did not even know who the president was. Communication flowing westward and eastward was still as slow as the tree sap in Sugar Creek, and the transportation revolution was in its nascent stages, mostly evident only in the original thirteen colonies. By 1817, the National Road had not even reached Wheeling, (West) Virginia[11]. The Illinois Territory, established in 1809, was on the edge of the American frontier, and by the time of its statehood in late 1818, was still sparsely developed and only then in the southern third of the present state. Law enforcement was spotty, and land could easily be held by squatters. Illinois in its territorial phase, which coincided with the Era of Good Feelings, appeared to be cut off from the American national spirit and practical federal jurisdiction.

About the time Pulliam was returning south with his pioneering goods, Henry Eddy was making his way down the Ohio River. Eddy, a Vermont native who was educated in Buffalo, moved to Shawneetown, Illinois. The young enterpriser set up the *Illinois Emigrant* - the territory's second paper, and first on the eastern side. With the developing channels of communication in the East, it is likely that Eddy had heard the catchphrase for the era. If not, he would most certainly would have known who the President was. Eddy represents the "young meddlers," the group of eager Americans who

[11] Clark, Dan Elbert. The Middle West in American History (1937; reprint, New York: Crowell, 1965), 140-1 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

began to push west in hopes of striking it rich during the economic boom following the War of 1812.

The "Era of Good Feelings" was a brief period, named halfway through it, from about 1814-1818, in which nationalism and optimism is said to have gripped the country. It united members of formerly hostile parties up and down the East Coast, and it spread west with the communication and transportation improvements. The population numbers of Cincinnati and Louisville speedily increased. Still, certain areas in the country were removed from advancements, including Illinois. But change was right around the corner. The Illinois capital would move three times in 10 years as settlement would progress rapidly northward. Within a decade after the territorial period, canals would be built, railroad experiments would begin, and in 1844 the telegraph revolutionized communication, effectively bringing more of the nation together.

But the territorial years of Illinois, 1809-1818, represent a snapshot of a period within the rapid systemization in America. This single image shows a time when Americanism gripped the territory and people yearned to be linked, but the infrastructure did not grow fast enough to allow it. During these years, people raced westward, yet still desired to stay in touch with the East - to families, politics, money, and power. Many of these settlers went to Illinois for economic gain - to take advantage of the young nation's land and live the American dream of prosperity. Yet, precisely because of the void in communication, another faction of Illinoisians exhibited their Americanism in quite another manner - by staying outside of the government's jurisdiction. Many squatters came to Illinois for the free land, and stayed until their neighbors got too close. There were two sides to the American dream – one ironically involving getting as far away

from American governance as possible, and the other in which the individual engaged in society as much as possible. A dichotomy emerged between the squatters and the young meddlers. Yet, both confirmed that, at least in the Illinois Territory, it was indeed an "Era of Good Feelings." Illinoisians expressed their Americanism and connected with some strand of Americana.

Brief History of Settlement in Illinois

How was Illinois settled? During the territorial years, Chicago was but a fort at the entrance of a river, and the northern two-thirds of the present state were Indian country[12]. Groups of Americans had first pushed into Illinois country to live by the 1780s[13]. By 1800, the buffalo had disappeared from the Illinois landscape, and about 800-1,000 English-speaking Americans were living in the area[14]. Emigration to the territory was initially slow, but it would begin to rise steadily following the Louisiana Purchase. By 1810, there were 12,282 whites in Illinois, with the vast majority being American and only a few being the remaining French enclave[15].

The first settlers were predominantly Southern in background and in attitude, coming from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina[16]. In fact, 71% came from below the Mason-Dixon line[17].

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[12] Buley, 48.
[13] Ibid, 79.
[14] Davis, 112.
[15] Davidson, Alexander and Bernard Stuve. A Complete History of Illinois from 1673-1873 (Springfield, IL: Illinois Journal Company, 1874), 245.
[16] Jensen, 4.
[17] Buck, Solon J. Illinois in 1818 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 99.

The Americans first settled in a thin U-shape around the edges of the territory's borders[18]. This area consisted of the western side of the state along the Mississippi River that the French had first settled, wrapping around the Ohio River and up the Wabash River along the eastern border of the territory. Many patches of land within the U-shape were still wild[19]. Kaskaskia remained a popular destination for those wishing to live town lives[20]. Shawneetown, which was situated on the Ohio River near a government salt mill, also received immigrants. These towns were by no means bustling metropolises. Kaskaskia had fewer than 1,000 residents prior to 1810, while Shawneetown contained between 30 to 40 log buildings as late as 1818. Other than these two towns, Illinois was a land of scattered, rudimentary settlements, and many singular farmsteads with hundreds of acres in between. Before 1814, the bulk of settlers squatted on the land because the Kaskaskia land office did not survey due to a delay in confirming old French claims[21]. This early wave of immigration slowed to a standstill during the War of 1812[22].

Following the War of 1812, the Great Migration began[23]. This migration further augmented the number of Americans settling not only in Illinois, but in much of the western United States. Morris Birkbeck, an Englishman who established a town in Illinois, observed in one of his travel diaries that "Old America seems to be breaking up and moving westward[24]." Business boomed back east, and beneficiaries used or manipulated the increased revenue to stake a speculative claim in the west, with many

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[18] See Appendix A – a map illustrating the spread of settlers in America by 1820.
[19] Buck, 62.
[20] See Appendix B – a painting of Kaskaskia.
[21] Bond, Beverley W., Jr. The Civilization of the Old Northwest: A Study of Political, Social, and Economic Development, 1788-1812 (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 189.
[22] Davidson and Stuve, 246.
[23] Klose, Nelson. A Concise Study Guide to the American Frontier (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska UP, 1964), 47-48.
[24] Birkbeck, in Clark, 9 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

making the journey themselves. During this wave of settlement, many of the newcomers came from New England, and even European countries, not just from the South and West. These Americans heading west to earn an economic profit were the young meddlers, looking to capitalize on the American dream and strike it rich in the West. By 1818, the population of Illinois had reached the mid-20,000s[25]. Though Kaskaskia and Shawneetown were still the only sizeable towns by the end of the territorial years, many small settlements sprouted up along the rivers and even into the prairies.

The territorial years stand at the advent of the population boom in Illinois. With this rush west, however, connections to the east did not waiver. Transportation routes were still quite poor, so inadequate that for Christiana Holmes Tilson, "going to Illinois was more of an event than a trip now would be to the most remote part of the habitable globe. No railroads or steamboats to annihilate time and distance[26]." In fact, Illinois did not see its first steamboat until 1818.

Even within the territory, transportation was poor and communication was sluggish[27]. The few towns that had sprouted by 1818 were miles apart, and the connecting infrastructure, though burgeoning, was still sparse. It consisted of "little more than trails worn by use[28]." No stagecoach service was available in Illinois until statehood[29]. The Great Western Road, which wasn't so great, connected Shawneetown to St. Louis, through Kaskaskia. Narrower, overgrown trails branched off from this thoroughfare toward other settlements. The settlements were spread out because water

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[25] Darby, William. Emigrant's Guide to the Western and Southwestern States and Territories (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1818), 3, 187,299

[26] Tilson, Christiana Holmes. A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois. Ed. Milo M. Quaife (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1995), 11.

[27] See Appendix B – a map of the roads and towns that existed in the Illinois Territory.

[28] Buck, 120.

[29] Howard, Robert P. Illinois: A History of the Prairie State (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 112.

was a priority. The squatters needed timber, which only grew on river banks, so the land in between rivers – the prairie, was initially shunned. Settlers only started to live on the prairie during the Great Migration, and by statehood, sweeping meadows still separated most towns[30].

Though roads did not link Illinois to the rest of the country, and though it still took much time for news to travel within the territory, settlers still carried nationalistic sentiment. The squatters, the first in the territory, expressed their Americanism through the individualist ideals of the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the American Revolution.

Part I: The Squatter and Americanism

Robert Pulliam was born and raised in the Illinois Territory. His father started "Pulliam's Ferry" along the Kaskaskia River. By 1804, he was ready to move out on his own. He traveled toward the Mississippi River and staked a claim along Wood River, in a tiny American settlement. Just like his father, Robert did not buy his claim, but rather "squatted" on it. Living a "rugged" life, raising hogs and growing vegetables, Pulliam was 50 miles from the nearest government authority. Once during a hunting trip, Pulliam hurt his leg. His trip to find the closest doctor lasted so long that the surgeon had to amputate the injured limb. Wood River, though settled by Americans, was hardly uncontested area. Not only had the settlers not purchased the land, but the Kickapoo Indians also claimed it. Subsequently, Pulliam saw much violence during his years there.

[30] Buley, 20.

Following the successful end to the War of 1812, the land office at newly formed Edwardsville began to sell the land of Wood River. Rather than purchase his homestead, Pulliam decided to move on. He moved back north along the Kaskaskia, sticking to the waterways and timber, and staying out of reach of the government's jurisdiction and its land lot sales. It is unlikely that Pulliam ever paid to live in Illinois[31].

Pulliam's life in the Illinois Territory, briefly outlined in the beginning of Faragher's Sugar Creek, offers a strong anecdote about the squatters. His story is valuable, since not many of his counterparts left such evidence. Through his story, we catch a glimpse of the life of a common Illinois squatter, a life that was not often bequeathed in writing to posterity.

The squatters did not leave records of their thoughts, but by the pattern of their behavior we can deduce their level of Americanism. Their motives for traveling to Illinois and their subsequent lifestyles in the territory prove a lot about their connection to the nation. Though these people contained a different strand of Americanism and nationalistic fervor than the townspeople, they help to illustrate more completely the society of the Illinois Territory. By examining the squatters, we will be able to better understand the significance of the motives and actions of the meddlers.

Showing an apparent disrespect for American law and property, these pioneering settlers lived for free off land that the government owned but had not yet surveyed. These settlers, though, also held great respect for the American idea. It was because of the American struggle for independence and resulting democratic legislation that they were able to live individually. Most likely they did not forget this, and a certain air of patriotism mixed with their removing individualism. By looking at why the settlers came

[31] Faragher, 5-6.

to squat in Illinois and their lifestyle while in the territory, we can see evidence of this Americanism.

Why did the pioneers come to Illinois? Land was the primary desire for early Americans, fueled by the knowledge that the country was expanding in size and there was ample space to stake a claim. Most of the earliest settlers came from the South or the West. The yeoman farmers of those areas became the squatters of Illinois. Solon Buck, a noted historian of Illinois, states that these people came to Illinois for three reasons: the cheap or free land, the opportunity to escape the hierarchy of a slave society, and because of an "irresistible attraction of the wilderness[32]." The settlers surely knew that the new western land had become available through military and diplomatic efforts of the federal government. They knew that this land was under the American flag, though there often was not a land office on which to place Old Glory. They rushed west not to escape the east and form a new identity in the frontier, but because that was where the cheapest (read: free) land was. They wanted the cheap land so that they could live a comfortable life of self-sufficiency, and a comfortable life of self-sufficiency involves freedom in pursuing happiness. The land would help these settlers achieve individualistic independence, one aspect of the American dream. The second reason was to escape the slaveocracy. Although apparently aggravated with American society in the East and seeking a different, unhierarchical type of life, it does not follow that they were unhappy with America. In fact, what they wanted in the West was their ideal America, which offered as much individual freedom as possible. The yeoman farmers were caught in a caste system, and had little chance of moving into the planter class. Because they were not in the planter class, they were stuck in a rut of social perception and their lives were

[32] Buck, 102.

bogged down from above. Out west they could still be farmers, and, with their own patch of American soil, the politicking of the nearby plantation owners would be nonexistent. Finally, there was the attraction of the wild. This seems to be a common theme among many pioneers. Many had already moved once before, and most of them felt an urge to "grow up with the country[33]." This in itself, although the evidence is slim, could be perceived as Americanism, almost as if these pioneers regarded themselves as the vanguard and protectors of the "virgin" American lands in the West. No matter the motive, the settlers who traveled to Illinois and squatted were patriotic and were following their dream as Americans.

The early settlers did not seek land for economic profit, other than a sustainable life. They merely wished to live self-sufficiently off the land. Once the squatters or backwoods farmers settled their farmstead, they lived a life of virtually absolute self-sufficiency, and had no real contact with any American government body. Crops and plants were grown not for sale, but to be harvested and consumed by the members of the household. There was virtually no connection with the American economic market. Though they settled mostly along rivers and did not at first venture onto the prairies, the settlers were not concerned about having avenues of trade. The waterways were important because they alone provided the areas where timber grew, a resource necessary for many frontier functions. Each squatter realized his individual responsibility, and each family knew they would have to provide for themselves. They were independent. And, one assumes, they were thankful that America allowed them to be.

Education was nonexistent in the wilderness of the frontier, and settler children received a different type of knowledge, a kind which in a way still invigorated their

[33] Tilson, 7.

Americanism. Public support [illegible] minimal even into statehood in Illinois, so it was no better during the territorial years. [illegible] when it did arrive, it came to towns. Schools, if they had been in the country, could not have served towns. Children received most of their education from the surrounding environment of woods, animals, and plants[35]. With no formal schooling, the children did not learn lessons about Washington and war around wood stoves. They did, however, learn about the nation and the outside world from other sources. Anytime a traveler passed through the woods, or when another settling family passed a cabin in route to some more free land, tales would be swapped. From these stories, children got their first impression of the world[36]. Thus, squatters did hear about the outside world. Squatter families would most likely have heard tales of events that had occurred back East, and the novelty of the subject must have sparked some national interest, or at least curiosity, in their rustic, removed minds.

The far off towns and governments held little sway over these families. Jensen states that "for the most part, the typical pioneer was content to be left alone by the government. Taxes were low, services were non-existent, laws were few, and law enforcement spotty at best[37]." Tax collectors were ineffective, since going into the wilderness to collect taxes would be a futile effort. But this was probably not because the squatters would have met them with a shotgun at the front door. Well, they may have met them with a shotgun, but not as a means of saying they would not pay their taxes. Rather, taxes were not widely collected because of the lacking infrastructure. It was

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[34] Pulliam, John. "Changing Attitudes Toward a Free Public Schools in Illinois, 1825-1860" in History of Education Quarterly 7.2 (1967) 191-208.
[35] Buley, 338.
[36] Buley, 336.
[37] Jensen, 28.

simply not plausible for government officials to trek far out from towns when roads did not exist, Indian attacks were still a possibility, and no solid data was filed about the settlers in the backcountry.

This being said, though, the pioneers and gruff early squatters did hold little regard for laws, authority, and hierarchy, beyond their extended family[39]. They did not want government to intervene in their lives. Many of these early settlers had moved west to escape the clutches of American civil jurisdiction. Paradoxically, this contempt for law and government was an expression of their inherent Americanism. Squatters chose to live like this because of their beliefs in equality and freedom. Equality, independence – these are two key aspects of the American ideology. These squatters may have been running away from the jurisdiction of the American government, but they were not trying to escape the ideology of America. In fact they lived by a credo that included a strong patriotism. Theirs was the Spirit of '76: reverence for revolutionary heroes and pride in independence. Their nationalism lay in the fact that they strove to live as independently as possible. They viewed the Revolutionary War and the Declaration of Independence as symbolic of their ideology. They revered America because of the fact that the American system would not intervene in their life. They could bask in liberty and pursue happiness living on their own piece of free land within the boundaries of the nation that guaranteed them rights and had fought for a democracy and equality for every man against a tyrant.

This individualistic lifestyle had a patriotic element as well because of the Indian problem. If no potential enemy existed, and the settler only met with an abundance of uncontested land, then he and his family may not have felt as connected to America, or have felt the need to fan patriotic fever. Indians were still numerous in Illinois. Though

[39] Jensen, 7.

the Kaskaskia Treaty of 1803 nominally stated that the Indians ceded certain lands, several tribes remained. They roamed not only in the upper, wilder regions, but also below the Illinois River. Raids occurred sometimes, and frontier children were bombarded with tales of Indian savagery and murder. Though the squatter prided himself on his ability to live independently and protect his land, he knew he would be no match for a group of angry warriors. He knew he would need more than simply himself and his musket or hatchet, most likely even more than his neighbors' muskets and hatchets as well. Inevitably, a yearning for military protection against or a martial clearance of the Indians emerged in the squatter's mentality. Pioneer families, in desiring federal military protection, illustrated their acceptance of and connection to the Union. They may not have followed all of the laws and they may not have doffed their coonskin caps for a prominent delegate, but they recognized the importance of protecting themselves in a society and knew who would protect them. More important is the connection between the British and the Indians. Not only were Indians viewed as a threat, but they were thought to have been aided by the British. And anyone with the Spirit of '76 in their minds would automatically compound their distrust and hatred toward the British with this knowledge. And if you have a problem with one side or country, it is because you have taken an opposing stance. The squatters revered the War for Independence, and were subsequently vehemently suspicious about anything connected with a possible British plot. From 1809 to 1815, British –U.S. struggles dominated life in Illinois[40]. This continuous apprehension would only keep the ideas of British versus American in their minds, and Americanism could only have grown during this era.

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[40] Davis, 122.

The squatters must have been conscious of their nationalism, and were most likely proud of it. Their Americanism was expressed in ways that might seem to contradict the values and the mores of American society, but it did not contradict a large aspect of the American ideology – that of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. To this faction of Illinois society, living self-sufficiently off American soil in an individualistic manner was the American Dream.

Part II: The "Young Meddlers" and Nationalism

Unfortunately the primary source material for the squatters is lacking, and I cannot attempt to tackle their Americanism in more detail at this juncture. I will, thus, shift my focus to the other section of the Illinois Territory society – the young meddlers, and study their Americanism. Theirs differed, because their idea of the American Dream differed. Theirs was a dream of economic prosperity, political power, and social recognition. This could not be done along a creek with neighbors many miles away. Towns had to be formed for this dream to ferment, and that is exactly what this group of settlers did. These people moved to Illinois for the cheap land and the easy access to political and economic power, but they outreached the transportation and communication routes of the country. Thus, they yearned for the infrastructure to catch up with them as quickly as possible. They modeled their government after an American form, they did not take advantage of their possibly despotic roles, and these young leaders took every

opportunity to showcase their Americanism in hopes of strengthening ties with the rest of the nation.

The meddlers are a bit more approachable from the historian's perspective, for much more of their writing, public and private, has been preserved. The primary documents of the meddlers fall into two categories: personal and public. I hope to illustrate the Americanism and nationalistic fervor of this group through the personal letters, papers, and actions of several of them. Publicly, an invaluable resource has been passed down – the newspapers. Though the first newspaper in Illinois was not published until 1814, and though readership was not widespread if the squatter population is included, the articles, columns, advertisements, tone, and slants of the papers offer a solid picture of the day. This is what the meddling community of the towns was reading. This is the picture of America they received. This is what the few meddlers who owned the papers decided should go in the weekly sheets.

Personal Motivations

President Madison's document naming Ninian Edwards governor of the Illinois Territory is merely one sentence long, but it boldly states Edwards' "patriotism" as a deciding factor for his appointment. Madison trusted Edwards' patriotism, and he had no reason not to as Edwards demonstrated sound Americanism in his position. His life and papers offer strong examples of a meddler rich in Americanism who attempted to connect with the nation as much as possible. As governor of the territory, Edwards wielded virtually despotic power. There was no legislature, and he appointed the territorial judges.

Yet, even though he had ample opportunity to assume massive amounts of power, he never did[41]. Instead, he tended to look East for a continued connection with the rest of the Union.

Elias Kent Kane grew up in the Hudson River Valley, graduated from Yale, became a successful lawyer, and proved to be a classic example of a meddler with his move to Illinois. Kane journeyed to the territory in 1814. His reasons? His "spirit of adventure and enterprise mingled with political ambition[42]." Kane ventured to Illinois because he felt he could gain economic profit and political power, the typical mindset of the meddlers. Upon arrival in Kaskaskia, he immersed himself in the politics of the territory, taking an "immediately active part[43]." No power elite had been established in Illinois, so a newcomer could rise to prominence with relative ease. Kane helped establish the first constitution of the state, but he wanted to keep improving his social position. To do so, he became a United States Senator, proving that the highest success in Illinois would come from reaching back east and connecting with the federal system. The meddlers understood this, and decisions such as this illustrate their Americanism.

Edward Coles, who later became the second governor of the state of Illinois, was one of the group of settlers who came to the territory because of his hatred of the slave system. But, why he chose Illinois and how he acted once there, illustrates his meddling motives and his quest to stay in touch with the East and the federal government. Coles chose Illinois because he felt he could help prevent slavery from being written into the state constitution. This confidence in individual power shows how much clout one

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[41] Davidson and Stuve, 283.
[42] Chamberlain, Henry Barrett. "Elias Kent Kane: United States Senator from Illinois, and Author of its First Constitution." Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for 1908 (Springfield, IL: Illinois State Journal Company, 1909), 163.
[43] Ibid, 163.

meddler could wield in the territory. He arrived in Illinois with a letter of introduction written by James Monroe containing examples of his service for the federal government[44]. Thus, federal connections were revered by the Illinoisians. Coles knew he could use his American relations as leverage for power in the territory. The people of Illinois respected the leaders of the country, so a reference from such a figure would bolster the chances of success for Coles. Throughout his life in Illinois, Coles kept a correspondence with Jefferson and Nicholas Biddle, the president of the Bank of the United States. He had to stay connected with the rest of America and its leaders to maintain his own power in the West.

John Messinger came to Illinois with lesser ambitions than Edwards, Kane, and Coles, but his letters home reveal his wish for a tighter union between the territory and the states. Messinger was born in Massachusetts in 1771, and moved to Illinois in 1802. One of the earliest American settlers in Illinois, Messinger surveyed land and later taught. He often corresponded with relatives in Vermont, especially his dear niece Olivia[45]. Nearly every letter Olivia sent to John included a lengthy paragraph on Vermont state politics. Messinger surely knew that he would never return to the East, yet he still took an interest in the politics. Why would he be interested? Political paragraphs such as these prove that Illinoisians held an interest in governmental affairs, and not simply in the territory. Messinger sought knowledge about the nation, and Vermont, of course, was part of the union. Even from the remote vantage point of Illinois, Messinger wished to gaze upon the activities of the country, demonstrating his Americanism. During the War

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[44] Washburne, E. B. Sketch of Edward Coles, Second Governor of Illinois, and of the Slavery Struggle of 1823-4 (1882, reprint - New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 45.

[45] Messinger, John. Letters to and from Olivia Lee and others. 1812-1817. Illinois State Historical Library Collection, Springfield, Illinois.

of 1812, Olivia sent intensely detailed accounts of Eastern seaboard battles to Messinger. Messinger must have been curious about the state of his nation's affairs, and not simply in the closer Western theatre of war. He was many miles away from the East coast, but Messinger wanted information regarding that region. He knew that he may never see his Vermont relatives again, but he could stay connected with them and the joining factor was the affairs of the United States, since they all lived on the land of one nation.

Public Opinion

The route Illinois leaders took to achieve statehood was rushed, and proved the Americanism evident amongst them. The census of 1818 was doctored, and numbers were augmented to quicken the process. The population number reported to the convention was 40,258 in the late summer of 1818, since territories had to have at least 40,000 to apply for statehood. Earlier in the year, however, the combined schedules from the territorial counties totaled 30,833[46]. The year before, a writer of a travel guide to the territory estimated that the population was no more than 25,000[47]. Is it possible that the number of inhabitants increased so significantly in one year? No. Evidence exists of double-counting and the documenting of families simply passing through. The meddlers of Illinois hoped to become a state as soon as possible. As a state, Illinois would hold a closer connection with the rest of the nation, the federal government, its protection and money. Though still in a distant region of the country, as a state Illinois would technically exercise as much power as every other state in the union. The fudging of

[46] Buck, 319.
[47] Darby, 299.

census numbers is yet another example of the push for national connection made by the meddlers. Their Americanism, which manifested itself in the wish to become as much a part of the nation as possible, even forced them to skirt the legal ethics of the country.

What people in the territory read can also show their stance toward the nation, and the reading lists of Illinois meddlers suggests Americanistic values. A proprietor of a general store in Kaskaskia sent a list of books he wished to be delivered from Pittsburgh. First, the fact that he had to go through a Pennsylvanian city to purchase the goods that would allow him to earn a living suggests he must have yearned for as tight of a connection as possible with the rest of America. But the books listed in the letter show what was popular to those Illinoisians who could afford books. Along with several religious works, the merchant requested six copies of the Life of Washington, four of Thomson's Late War, and two of the Life of Franklin. Since he received books from such distance, it is plausible that he would have only bought the ones that were sure to sell in Illinois. Thus, the people in Illinois must have been interested in the lives of two of their nation's founding fathers as well as an account of the war recently fought by the country.

Another piece of literature that reached a significant amount of Illinoisians was the newspaper. This collection constitutes my main facet of primary research. Though primitive, the newspaper of Kaskaskia shows the Americanism of the townspeople – the meddlers.

The Newspaper

On Wednesday, June 3, 1818, the people of Kaskaskia witnessed the steamboat "Franklin" surge upstream on the Mississippi River on its way to St. Louis.

The following Wednesday, the *Illinois Intelligencer* reported that the steamboat "Franklin" elegantly made its first trip north of the Mississippi and Ohio River junction, during which it glided past Jones' Ferry near Kaskaskia[48]. The *Intelligencer*, a weekly paper published in Kaskaskia, placed the tiny notice on the second page of the four-page spread.

As the citizens of the territorial capital watched the vessel go by, trudging up the great artery of the expanding United States, how did they perceive the nation? Gazing out at the water, the ship, and the seemingly endless land on the other bank, what did they think of the United States? If they decided to turn their back on the river and "Franklin," most certainly christened in honor of one of the famous founding fathers, and stare back toward the east, what did they think about the existing union? How patriotic were the residents of Kaskaskia, and of the Illinois Territory?

The newspaper is a medium that offers a wealth of clues in the search for answers to these questions. The placement, wording, style, and, of course, the content of the nascent rag sheet provide a firm foundation for the study of the Americanism of the townspeople and those who lived in nearby regions and were effected by the paper. Those who read the paper were certainly influenced by the tone and themes of the paper,

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[48] "Steamboat 'Franklin.' The Illinois Intelligencer 10 June 1818: 2.

and several members of society contributed to the literature included in the issues in the form of editorials.

The first paper in Illinois, the *Illinois Herald*, was published in Kaskaskia in 1814 by Matthew Duncan[49]. Only one issue still exists, so a sufficient study is unfeasible. The style of that paper, however, is quite similar to that of the *Western Intelligencer*, later the *Illinois Intelligencer*, so my study of the latter paper most likely would incorporate the traits of the earlier paper. Duncan actually sold the *Herald* to Daniel P. Cook, who changed the name to the *Western Intelligencer* when he restarted publication in 1816, so Kaskaskia had one paper that progressed through two name changes[50].

It has been stated that this early paper in Kaskaskia could only have been started for political reasons, since it could not have profited as a business venture due to the lack of subscriptions[51]. This may be mostly true, but the readership was rapidly expanding, along with the population. A quick glance at several items in the paper shows the broadening extent of the newspaper's reach. Several people with outstanding claims against them placed ads in the paper, stating to the debtors how and when to pay off their debt[52]. Why would someone spend money to place this ad in the paper if the intended party would not be expected to read it? Also, the post office issued a statement informing

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[49] Snively, E. A. "Newspapers and Newspapermen of Illinois." Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for 1904 (Springfield, IL: Phillips Brothers, 1904), 205.

[50] To study the *Intelligencer* I traveled to the one place that stocked it – the Illinois State Historical Library. I had intended to photocopy all of the weekly papers for 1816-18. Upon arrival, however, it became evident that a complete study would not be possible due to the "where" and tear of time, as several issues were missing. I also realized that the paper was extremely formulaic. Copying every issue for each year could become overkill and an unnecessary burden on the University's wallet, so I decided to copy papers from each year over the same month span. I chose May through July, along with several issues from September, October, and December. After pouring over the issues, I firmly believe that these months alone will suffice in showing how the newspaper illustrates patriotism in the territory. I also copied the December 25th issues, hoping for interesting information on themes and tones.

[51] Scott, Franklin William. Newspapers and Periodicals of Illinois, 1814-1879 (Springfield, IL: Illinois State Historical Library, 1910), xxv.

[52] "Notice." The Western Intelligencer 5 June 1816: 2; 25 June 1816: 3.

citizens by name that their mail would be sent to the dead letter office if not picked up. The post office believed an ad in the paper would reach the 92 names on the list[53]. But while the subscription numbers were increasing, the paper still had to work around the transportation problems of the day.

Paper was floated in on flatboats from eastern mills, and the Ohio River was often either too high or too low[54]. Certain weeks publishing ceased because of empty paper stock. Yet, even when the paper was not published, it proved the Americanism of the people. In the May 7, 1817, issue, the *Intelligencer* apologized to its readers for not publishing. But it did not apologize for not publishing in general, only because it could not offer the new laws passed in the United States Congress[55]. It appears that the people did not mind going a week without the advertisements, the scarce local news, and the foreign news, but they were perturbed enough to warrant an apology when they could not digest the proceedings of the legislature in Washington.

Dwelling on the transportation problem, one may question the extent of the readership outside of Kaskaskia. What about the eastern half of the state? Did they read the *Intelligencer*? Surely the poor road, or trail, system within the territory would keep the paper close to the Mississippi river settlement? The answer to the final question is most likely yes. Those on the eastern borders of the territory probably did not read the *Intelligencer*. They would have read *The Illinois Emigrant*, Eddy's paper published in Shawneetown. The *Emigrant* was the only other paper published in the territory, and Eddy began it in 1818. I had planned on studying this paper as well, but, once again, not much has been left of it for posterity. The State Historical Library of Illinois had only two

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[53] "List of Letters." The Western Intelligencer 9 July 1816: 4.
[54] Scott, xxvii-iii.
[55] "To Our Patrons." The Western Intelligencer 7 May 1817: 3.

issues - October 17 and December 25, 1818. To construct a comparison, I examined the *Intelligencer*s on or near those dates and found, thankfully, what I wanted. The styles were nearly identical, and many of the articles and ads overlapped. News usually reached Kaskaskia first, but the *Emigrant* eventually published it, too. Thus, Illinoisians on both sides of the territory were fed similar articles, and, therefore, similar themes and tones that inspired and illustrated Americanism in the region.

To begin my study of the *Intelligencer*, I will examine the structure of the paper, which remained consistent throughout the territorial years. Each issues contains four pages with four columns on each page. The one exception was the July 1, 1818 issue that included a two-page supplement, which was added to publish more federal laws.

The front page looks like your average nineteenth century broadsheet, with an emboldened header – the paper's title, and four long, skinny columns with several headlines throughout. The front page was dominated by news and laws of the United States. Many front pages were packed with the most recent acts passed by the federal Congress in Washington. Some acts were so long that they spilled over onto the next week's front page, and so on. The act establishing the Second Bank of the United States covered the front page for three straight weeks[56]. For nearly a month, the citizens picked up their papers, and the first item they saw was a prominent federal bill. With such placement, the bill's importance and effect on them must have been considerable. Not only certain U.S. laws, but also several U.S. national news topics graced the first page for weeks at a time. For six consecutive weeks, a sectioned article entitled "OUR RELATIONS WITH SPAIN" took up at least half of the front page, with the headline

[56] "An Act" The Western Intelligencer 22,29 May and 5 June, 1816: 1.

running across the top, just below the paper's title[57]. On certain occasions territorial news appeared on the primary page, and brief ads and notices were scattered on many, but, in general, the news and laws of the United States was always the focal point of the front page. J. H. Burnham argues that it is because the readership did not extend into the wilderness that the paper contained only a "meager" amount of local news[58]. I agree, and attempt to build on that statement. Since it was the meddlers reading the paper, the broadsheet contained what they wanted. Thus, the paper's setup proves that the meddlers primarily wanted national news, illustrating their brand of Americanism.

The inside two pages included interchangeable parts, though a general pattern did exist. The second page was where one would look to find European or global news, Indian relations information, and scattered news from around the country through the reprinted reports of different newspapers. It usually was not until the third page that a citizen could find any news or views relating to the Illinois Territory. In fact, not much news on the territory was printed. On that page was a sub-heading, which showed the paper's name in between two parallel, bold lines. Under this sub-heading was a short message from the paper, either about politics, paper information, or the editorials that followed. The editorials, an intrinsic ingredient of the paper, were written, often anonymously, by citizens and concerned political ideas. These pieces and their relation to patriotism in the territory will be discussed later in this study. The third page, like the second and sometimes the first, contained several ads and notices in addition to the news. The ads were often for new stores or goods, notices of stray animals, land sales, town lots, lawyers, doctors, debt claims, and rewards for runaway slaves.

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[57] "Our Relations With Spain" The Illinois Intelligencer 13, 20, 27 May and 3, 10, 17 June, 1818: 1.
[58] Burnham, J. H. "An Early Illinois Newspaper: Extracts from its Files." Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for 1903 (Springfield, IL: Phillips Brothers, 1904), 179.

The back page was almost always a hodgepodge of short blurbs. Many notices, advertisements, rewards, town lot sales, and job offers dotted the sheet. Two or three acts passed by the President were also repeated on the back page, while several Treasury Department notices were often laid out as well. To the reader, these federal snippets created the opposite bookend to the front page's attention to the nation. The reader put the issue down with the last thing read usually being an act of the President from Washington. The general structure of the paper illustrates how the person would have perceived the paper, its news, and the importance of the information. National news and federal laws, being of primary importance, opened the issue; reports from around the nation and the globe followed; editorials by locals was displayed next; and the last news was the executive acts on the back page.

From the news about the United States, readers of the *Intelligencer* would feel a connection with otherwise distant neighbors in the union. The stories came from earlier editions of Eastern papers. The news briefs were not simply restricted to what was going on in Washington or in the nearby states of Indiana and Kentucky. Articles were lifted from papers in Boston, Baltimore, New York City, Pittsburgh, and New Orleans to name a few. Two examples of a normal issue will suffice to showcase the wide range of places. In the June 12, 1816 paper, stories were reprinted from a paper in Carlisle, Pennsylvania; the *Nashville Whig*; and the *New York Gazette*[59]. The next summer, in the July 2 issue, the *Intelligencer* used articles from a Philadelphia paper, the *Catskill Reporter*, and the *Norfolk (Va.) Herald*[60].

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[59] The Western Intelligencer 12 June 1816: 2.
[60] The Illinois Intelligencer 2 July 1817: 2.

As with the rest of the United States, the Intelligencer enabled Illinoisians to learn about the goings on in other countries and form some type of opinion about their connection to them. The second page of the paper often included bits from Europe and other areas around the globe. News reached Illinois from Montreal, Paris, London, Spain, Ireland, Chile, Algiers, France, Jamaica, Cuba, Gibraltar, the South Seas, Austria, and Bavaria. The country most talked about was England. One article discusses the hot gossip topic in London – the pending marriage of the Princess of Wales[61]. Certain foreign figures had gained enough popularity that they were discussed under the heading of their name, such as "Bonaparte" or "Duke of Wellington." Many of the foreign news articles came from places where the U.S. had a direct or vested military or economic interest, such as Algiers, Cuba, and Chile. Thus, when Illinoisians read about foreign news, they still realized it was interwoven into the policy of the nation.

These articles and their tone illustrate a ambivalence among the people of the Illinois Territory. On the one hand, they are eager to feel more worldly and welcome the global news. We also learn from a few articles that they were not only eager to read the world news, but the citizens were also excited when world travelers came to the United States. The July 31, 1816, issue includes a headline that yells "MACEDONIAN ARRIVED![62]" Also, the July 1, 1818, paper contains an article about the newly arrived group of British citizens intending to settle in the Illinois Territory[63]. This group was led by Morris Birkbeck and George Flower and would form a famous English settlement in the southeastern part of the territory. The citizens of Illinois held a fascination with the rest of the world, and were curious when a foreign native came to shore.

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[61] "The Princess of Wales." The Western Intelligencer 12 June 1816: 3.
[62] "Macedonian Arrived!" The Western Intelligencer 31 July 1816: 3.
[63] "Emigration." The Illinois Intelligencer 1 July 1818: 3.

On the other hand, however, certain articles created an "Us vs. Them" outlook. Anecdotes were occasionally added to the mix to lighten the paper up, and one in particular seemed to show a rift between America and Britain. It followed the story of an American naval officer who tricked the Brits and made them look ignorant[64]. The image is that of the smart and crafty American fooling the old and dull Brit. Perhaps the fresh wounds from the War of 1812 may not have been healed yet. In the December 25, 1816 issue, sections from a Dublin, Ireland, newspaper were reprinted. In response, an Illinois citizen focused on one Irish trial in particular that was covered in the articles. It dealt with a man who was hung for stealing the daughter of a friend and making her his wife. The Illinoisian was shocked at the punishment, and stated that this trial and punishment "would be considered novel in this country[65]." I do not want to speculate that the frontier people had developed a holier-than-thou attitude about America, but they certainly believed things were done differently in this country than in others. This feeling came from articles such as these. Another article with a similar tone was written by Cook, and was actually a letter concerning his departure for London. He writes about certain aspects of Britain, and mentions the work houses. He states that the "work house, a name and place that once sounded odiously to Englishmen and I hope ever will to an American has become an enviable situation; many I was assured had made an application....[66]" He refuses to go into detail about the wretchedness of the work houses. The gist of his statement is that the English have succumbed to this system, but he hopes the Americans never will. If the U.S. does not, then they have done a better job of housing and planning than the British. These incidences of "Us vs. Them" necessarily creates Americanism. A

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[64] "Anecdote" The Western Intelligencer 31 July 1816: 2.
[65] "Hung for stealing a Wife" The Western Intelligencer 25 December 1816: 3.
[66] Cook, Daniel P. "Extract of a letter." The Western Intelligencer 10 September 1817: 3.

reader must choose a side. Do you side with America or a foreign entity? With the war just won, the economy booming, and land and prestige going for cheap prices, it was quite an easy decision in the Era of Good Feelings.

While certain articles looked with disdain toward aspects of European culture, the paper included stories about tragic events throughout the United States to create a sense of compassion in the Illinois citizens toward their fellow Americans. Reissuing stories from all over the nation, the paper let Illinoisians know that other Americans suffered from time to time, and, well, if you're reading about it, then you are connected closely enough to feel sorry for them. The shrinking country aided Americanism. The paper spoke about a "HORRID ACCIDENT IN VA," an "INDIAN MURDER," and the "SHIPWRECK," in which several Americans perished during a boating accident off Long Island[67]. The article concerning the calamity in Virginia is signed by an "Amer. friend," and nonchalantly describes the Virginia shoreline as if the story had taken place nearby in Illinois. The story of murder described a Cherokee attack on a waggoner. The man was described as a commoner, but stated that General Andrew Jackson had made arrangements to bring his killers to trial. The people of Illinois could see that all Americans, though subject to attacks, would be defended by the national army and judicial system. In the shipwreck article the paper listed the names of all of those who died. It is possible that some in Illinois knew the deceased, directly or indirectly. The tone of the piece is that of a national compassion, with the final sentence relieving the Illinoisian reader that the New York survivors had all arrived home.

It must be said that tragic events were not the only events that sparked Illinoisians to think in connection with other parts of the country. A July 31, 1816, article described

[67] The Western Intelligencer 9 July, 24 July, 1816: 3, 2; 2 July 1817: 3.

the grand pageantry of a South Carolinian wedding[68]. Also, the Federal Acts plastered across the front page illustrate this point. The Acts printed in the Intelligencer were not simply the federal laws dealing with Illinois, or even with neighboring states. Glaring out to the Intelligencer reader on the front page of one issue was an act calling for the relief of the supervisors of Clinton County, New York[69]. The paper showed an equal amount of concern for every corner of the country, so the reader received information about the entire United States. Why show an equal amount of concern? Because the publishers of the paper, as well as the politicians and the most of the townspeople, wanted to be connected with the nation. They were proud of the nation, and wanted their Americanism to show interest in every part of the country.

By examining the technical aspects of the *Intelligencer*, we can see additional ways of how the paper persuaded the people to think in an Americanistic manner. The style in which the paper laid out the news shows how they advocated the federal system, while the language used in headlines and articles portrayed a strong union, with more thought given to country than to territory. The setup evoked the federal hierarchy, with national news coming before state news. As mentioned above, page one was almost always the spot for national information. Also, when it was prudent to mention acts of the national Congress and those of the Illinois legislature, the paper never failed in putting the Congressional bills first. To look at the ladder headline structure on page two of the May 13, 1818 edition is to blatantly see the federal system[70].

Word choice can be the difference between a reader conjuring up Americanistic images while reading an article or a reader glossing over the article with no thought to its

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[68] "Matrimonial Lottery." The Western Intelligencer 31 July 1816: 2.
[69] "An Act." The Western Intelligencer 9 July 1816: 1.
[70] The Western Intelligencer 13 May 1818: 2.

meaning about the nation. The language evoked by the *Intelligencer* is that of avowed Americanism. Readers could not help but notice the connections between themselves and the rest of the young nation after reading these issues. Take, for instance, the string of weeks mentioned earlier when the paper ran a continuing article about American relations with Spain. That was the prominent headline on the prominent page of the paper. But more important than placement, in this case, is language. The articles were entitled "OUR RELATIONS WITH SPAIN." Not "American," not "United States," but "Our." The word choice draws the readers into the crowd. They feel as if they have as much at stake in diplomacy with Spain as those Americans in New Hampshire or Georgia. The word "our" pops up often throughout the papers, especially when dealing with foreign relations. When writing about the exploits of the United States army, the Intelligencer simply stated "The Army[71]." It did not need to say U.S. or American Army. There was only one force, and that was the army of the nation. If Illinoisians needed protection, they would get it from "The Army" - the American army. This feeling of national unison permeates through the papers. It would be an educated guess that the word "America" appears more times than "Illinois" on the pages of these issues.

Also evident in the *Intelligencer* is the frontier citizens' reverence for the heroes of America. Certain articles were carried from other papers involving the dealings of famous Americans. Some Illinoisians who contributed to the paper also spoke highly of those patriots who came before them. John Adams and his son were both featured in the September 10, 1817, issue. A short blurb about John Quincy Adams' family arriving in Washington City was printed[72]. Why would the people of Illinois, so far from the east

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[71] "Latest from The Army." The Illinois Intelligencer 27 May 1818: 2.
[72] "Washington City." The Western Intelligencer 10 September 1817: 2.

coast, care if Adams moved from city to city? They cared because they harbored a genuine respect and interest for their nation's leaders –past and present. Federal leaders and heroes were the celebrities of the day for Illinoisians. John Quincy's father was placed in a letter by Cook. The letter, sent to the *Intelligencer* from New York, regarded his return from London. His first paragraph is this: "I arrived at this place on the 6th last, after a passage of sixty days from London. Mr. Adams and family also came in the same ship[73]." Cook obviously enjoyed the fact that the former president traveled aboard the same vessel. But he put it in the first paragraph because it was an attention-getter. He put it so high in his letter because he knew people in Illinois would hold the same sentiment for the mention of Adams' name. Adams was an American legend, and the people of Illinois would eagerly digest any news regarding him, especially when a fellow territorial citizen was writing it. An 1816 issue contained a small notice that a famous military leader was scoping out land in Kentucky for possible settlement[74]. One can almost sense the excitement of Kentuckians about the possibility of this "gallant commodore" living in their state. And though Commodore Barney was not moving to Illinois, the citizens of that territory could only have beamed at this news. If Barney was willing to settle out west, what about other heroes? Could Illinois be in their future? On July 2, 1817, readers of the Intelligencer learned about the progress of a monument to Washington in Baltimore, Maryland. The city's gazette wrote that, when finished, "this grand and magnificent structure will be hailed as the pride and ornament of Baltimore[75]." The people of Illinois learned of patriotic feats such as this, and they saw how proud their fellow countrymen were for producing such monuments. In the July 1, 1818, paper, a

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[73] "Extract of a letter from Daniel P. Cook." The Western Intelligencer 10 September 1817: 3.
[74] "Commodore Barney." The Western Intelligencer 25 December 1816: 1.
[75] "Washington Monument." The Western Intelligencer 2 July 1817: 3.

letter written by Benjamin Franklin to his daughter in 1779 was reprinted[76]. This was not exactly breaking news, so why did the paper publish the letter? If viewed in the debate concerning Americanism in the Illinois Territory, it can be seen that the letter was included as yet another means of connecting the readers to America and its past. Reading about Franklin would surely remind Illinoisians not only of the spectacled genius, but of his place in the annals of United States history during the era in which the country was founded. The informative letter aimed at relaying a lesson proves that the people of Illinois would read Franklin as an authority. This particular article involves Franklin's feelings on the economy and how highly he valued it. The paper is using Franklin as an expert witness in their particular view of the subject. The *Intelligencer* knew that the words of Franklin would have a profound influence on the territorial inhabitants, since they saw him as a national hero. It is because of articles such as these that I believe the Illinoisians who watched the steamboat "Franklin" from the banks of Kaskaskia not only knew who the boat was named after and why, but that they cherished this tangible memory of one of their founding fathers.

Moving toward the editorials, we will now study the words of Illinois inhabitants and several Americans from different states to help make judgments regarding their nationalistic fervor. In doing so, we will hark back to several of the above principles, such as relations with the rest of the States and the world, language, and sentiment toward past heroes and laws. The *Intelligencer* was initially started for mainly political reasons, and the editorials certainly support this claim. Most deal with a certain aspect of governance, and the number of editorials published significantly increased as the territory progressed toward statehood and a constitution. Many issues included one or two

[76] "Dr. Franklin." The Illinois Intelligencer 1 July 1818: 2.

editorials, though some contained three. The manner in which these small treatises will be examined in this study is individually and chronologically. Some of them lack relevancy and will be excluded, but many included at least a statement illustrating the Americanistic leanings of the author. These editorials used federal law or the idea of "America" to back their claims, and this will become evident below.

In the June 25, 1816, paper, an editorial signed by "A CITIZEN" discussed the need of importance of voting knowledgeably in the election. In the brief editorial, the writer speaks to the readers, who are the citizens of the territory of Illinois, and calls on them to help develop good politicking in the territory. He does not refer to them as Illinoisians, or the people of Illinois. Instead, he calls them "the people of the United States[77]."

In the last issue of 1816, published on December 25, the *Intelligencer* chose to print in the editorial column extracts from Governor Slaughter's speech to the Kentucky legislature. Slaughter spoke against political factions. The paper declared that it published the statement "for the important political principles [it] contain[s], and we trust, when those principles shall be universally acknowledged in our government, that all doubts as to its permanency and durability will inevitably be destroyed and the temple of American liberty will no longer be profaned....[78]" First of all, the paper is looking toward other states in the union, which implies a level of cooperation and trust within the United States. More importantly, though, is the phrase "temple of American Liberty." This shows the high esteem in which the *Intelligencer* printers placed the freedom given to

[77] "For the Western Intelligencer." The Western Intelligencer 25 June 1816: 2-3.
[78] "Western Intelligencer." The Western Intelligencer 25 December 1816: 3.

them by America. America and its promises are almost a religion to the young meddlers who publish the *Intelligencer*.

An editorial signed by "ONE OF THE PEOPLE" and published on May 13, 1818, shows a strong connection with the other states, as well as competitions with good intentions. The writer urges the territorial citizens to send only the ablest to the state constitutional convention. He states that, if this is done, "we shall have but little reason to fear that we shall not have as good a constitution as any state in the union[79]." He wants to ensure that the brightest will assemble to make the Illinois constitution, so the finished product does not lag behind the other states. He is in contact with the other documents, and wants his state's law sheet to serve the union just as well.

Following the above editorial in the same issue is another piece signed by "ONE OF THE JURY." The angry author is fuming because a citizen questioned the jury on which he sat of suspicious tactics and a wrongful verdict. He decries the insult flung at him and his fellow jurors, but he also expands the reach of his words: "The insult...is a reflection not only upon the honor of those gentlemen who composed the jury, but upon the majesty of our laws[80]." Since the territorial court system was based on systems from eastern states, which, in turn, were based on the American ideals of governance, "our laws" implies the laws of the United States. When he speaks of their "majesty," he illustrates his pride for the legal codes of the nation, and thus show a pride in the country in general. In effect he is stating that his adversary spit on the Constitution of the United States with his remarks against the jury. Why would this juror choose this argumentative route, if he thought his adversary held no respect for the Constitution? Thus, he believed

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[79] "To the People of Illinois: No. II." The Western Intelligencer 13 May 1818: 3.
[80] "For the Intelligencer." The Western Intelligencer 13 May 1818: 3.

that the writer, just as he, loved the national laws, and would be hurt if it was said he was against them.

"ONE OF THE PEOPLE" wrote again for the following week's paper, continuing his insistence on forming the best state constitution possible. He basks in the potential for greatness which Illinois held. He states that Illinois could form the best constitution in the union by taking the good measures from certain state constitutions and leaving the hindering measures out[81]. At first glance, this may appear to support the Turner thesis that the west was a self-creating medium. However, the writer was not advocating a completely new system of government. He respected most of the laws of the United States, and wished to reuse them in the Illinois constitution. He also, realizes, however, that some laws may be better left unwritten, looking (eastward) in hindsight.

Also in the May 13th paper, the *Intelligencer* offers its thoughts on the coming convention and statehood. It speaks of the importance of including education and allotting one section of each town to a school. In making this argument, the paper uses nationalistic language: "such a course can never fail to rear a population that will never suffer a republic to moulder on their hands; but will always be ready to defend their country and punish its wrongs[82]." While speaking about state formation, thoughts on the state's place in the union are never far off. This passage offers an inkling of manifest destiny: "Thus our empire is fast, rising, and like a vigorous tree, pushes forth its branches to the west, increasing its strength and adding to its beauty[83]."

The *Kentucky Argue*, a newspaper in the nearby state, offered an editorial to the *Intelligencer* on May 27, 1818. Speaking of the possible statehood of Illinois, the

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[81] "To the People of Illinois: No. III" The Western Intelligencer 13 May 1818: 2-3.
[82] "The Western Intelligencer." The Western Intelligencer 13 May 1818: 2.
[83] Ibid, 2.

neighboring paper said, "we hail thee, sister Illinois, and are eager to welcome you into our happy union[84]." Those who read this statement could only feel anxious to be a part of a union of states that holds no qualms between one another. This statement, however, does prove that underlying currents of regionalism did exist, however. Though it is a "happy union," Kentucky calls Illinois a "sister," because of the Western connection. Tones of regionalism will later conclude the discussion of newspapers.

Two other editorials appear in this edition. The first, written by "ANTICIPATOR," concerns the problem of bribery in elections. He states that in the northern states "either custom or law has made it at least unfashionable" to pay for votes[85]. The writer possessed a knowledge of the laws and constitutions of other states in the union, which suggests a tendency to connect or relate to other entities within the union. This could only strengthen Americanism. The other editorial was written by "A friend to equal justice." This bickering author complains about the tax system, and in doing so points to the tax laws in other states constitutions[86]. Thus, much like "ANTICIPATOR," this writer knew about the goings on and legal codes of other states in the union.

The idea that a new state could improve upon the existing law codes of the United States was addressed again in the following issue, again by "A friend to equal justice." He wrote about picking conventioneers without property requirements, saying that was an ideal of the founding fathers to keep an English-like aristocracy from forming. He has nothing but respect for the framers of the Constitution, which he said was "made by the greatest, the wisest, and best of men.... Men who were worthy of the name of

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[84] "From the Kentucky Argue: New State." The Illinois Intelligencer 27 May 1818: 2.
[85] "For the Intelligencer." The Illinois Intelligencer 27 May 1818: 3.
[86] "Communicated: No. I – An oppressive system of taxation." The Illinois Intelligencer 27 May 1818: 3.

republicans[87]." He also respects the federal laws and system of government: "Our fathers made great improvement in the science of government; and we shall be culpable if we do not strive to perfect it[88]." Thus, the writer sees the formation of a new state and a new constitution as a chance to improve upon an already excelling form of government. The author would not condone a government and a constitution in Illinois that was not based on the Constitution of the United States.

The question of slavery reached the Illinois papers with intensity during 1818, and a frequent contributor, who signed his material as "Agis," led the charge to keep the institution from being written into the constitution. To buttress his arguments, "Agis" did not deploy religious points, but rather, used the United States Constitution. On June 17, 1818, he writes that slavery is "plainly inconsistent with the law of Congress[89]." The next month, "Agis" wrote that, by implementing slavery, Americans had deprived Africans of "that which every American esteems dearer than life – I mean their liberty" and that liberty is an unalienable right "which every genuine American professes." He baited the Illinoisians, daring them to go against an "American" value. His language implies an importance placed on being American and adhering to the American system of governance and values. Attempting to sway the opinions of the meddlers, "Agis" took advantage of their Americanism. Slavery was never written into the Illinois legal code, and the editorials of "Agis" played a significant role in blocking that institution's induction. His words proclaiming the supremacy of American law and the moral principles of being an American were well received in Illinois. Editorials such as this and

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[87] "Communicated: No. II – An oppressive system of taxation." The Illinois Intelligencer 3 June 1818: 3.
[88] Ibid, 3.
[89] "To the People of Illinois." The Illinois Intelligencer 17 June 1818: 2-3.

their reception illustrate that the meddlers of Illinois sought to unite with the rest of the United States as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

The paper's articles and advertisements also show how the meddlers and many citizens of the Illinois Territory yearned for an increased connection. The paper itself wanted closer links with the nation through increased western development, since the "western journalist, like the speculator, businessman, or politician, profited directly by the growth of his community[90]." Advertisements, editorials, and notices illuminate this desire. Many ads for new stores scream to the reader with headlines stating "CHEAP NEW GOODS." Where do these goods come from? In many ads, written below the headline, is a statement telling the citizens that these goods come from Philadelphia and Baltimore[91]. The proprietor of the store placed this sentence in the ad because consumers must have placed more importance on goods from eastern stores than from the west. Of course, manufacturing had not yet reached the west, but, nevertheless, this still had the effect of connecting the cultures of the nation. As Hayter mentioned in his article, American culture was simply slowly moving west. Progress was pushed into the paper, with giant headlines for "VACCINE" or "IMPORTANT INVENTION![92]" The Illinois frontier soaked up progress and American culture as it slowly made its way across the dirt roads and down the rivers to the west.

Several letters to the paper from prominent Illinoisians confirmed that territory leaders wished to gain as much connection with the nation as possible. Jesse B. Thomas, a judge and later a delegate of the state, dropped off a letter to the *Intelligencer* on the

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[90] Buley, 13.
[91] "New Goods." The Western Intelligencer 25 December 1816: 4.
[92] "Vaccine" The Illinois Intelligencer 17 June 1818: 4 and "Important Invention!" The Illinois Intelligencer 24 June 1818: 4.

morning of May 7, 1817. The paper that came out that evening included his letter, which was a plea for the federal judges to spend more time in the territory. This may appear to be discontent with the federal government. The letter, however, can be looked at from a different angle. In the context of this thesis and its evidence, it appears that Judge Thomas was more impatient than upset, and that he merely wanted more of a federal presence in Illinois. More of a federal presence would place the territory in more of a national context, and would only augment Americanism. Thomas wrote this statement filled with both praise and impatience: "At this time too when the population of the territory is rapidly increasing – when the transaction of business is daily emerging and the character of our infantile country is to be established, good policy requires that the guardians of justice should be vigilant[93]." A justice himself, Thomas was willing to lay aside his pride and admit that the federal judges were the absolute "guardians of justice" in the nation, of which the territory was a part.

Daniel P. Cook illustrated his yearning for a stronger national connection in his letter outlining his platform as a candidate. Education was his first priority, and this is a most worthy cause, but following education was a call for a canal from the Illinois River to Lake Michigan. He writes: "A Canal then uniting the waters of the Illinois with those of Lake Michigan completes this passage. This Canal when properly understood by the national government will be found an important item of internal improvement, and will, I have no doubt, secure the warmest patronage of the government. As a means of binding the eastern and western interests, facilities to commercial intercourse are necessary. As a means of defence[sic] in an English or Savage conflict, facilities to transportation of men

[93] Thomas, Jesse B. The Western Intelligencer 7 May 1817: 3.

and provisions ...are necessary[94]." Cook believes that connecting Illinois to the rest of the nation for commercial, military, and political gains is the second most important item to address in the Illinois Territory behind educating young patriots.

No records or journals exist that document the specific events of a July 4th holiday in the Illinois Territory. However, the *Intelligencer* allows us to glimpse at the probable style of celebration in 1818. Great importance was most assuredly placed on the anniversary of independence, since a notice of a town celebration was printed in the editions before and after the special day. On December 25 of both 1816 and 1817, nothing relating to Christmas was written (of course this could also just be Illinoisians sticking strictly to the American ideal of separation of church and state). The notice on June 24 states that a dinner will be held in Kaskaskia, and "the people are invited to attend[95]." It appears the July 4th celebration in the Illinois town was the definition of American democracy and equality. Everyone in this classless town was asked to join the festivities. The notice on July 8, states that the day was celebrated by the "citizens generally" and "the toasts and oration are omitted this week for the want of room[96]." It should be safe to assume that the town produced quite a magnificent celebration for the patriots of the nation and its independence.

Of course, not all was rosy in the Intelligencer. Or, at least, some of the news and structure would prove to be ominous in light of the forthcoming sectional crisis. No regional disdain was evident in the Intelligencer during the territorial years, even in editorials concerning slavery's place in the state constitution. However, the simple fact that the nation was cut into regions by headlines such as "LATE FROM THE SOUTH"

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[94] Cook, Daniel P. "To the Electors of Illinois." The Illinois Intelligencer 8 July 1818: 2.
[95] "4th of July." The Illinois Intelligencer 24 June 1818: 3.
[96] "4th of July." The Illinois Intelligencer 8 July 1818: 3.

show that, if pressed, the country could retreat into familiar regions[97]. With the Missouri Compromise occurring in 1820, the "South," and the "West," and the "North" became more than just convenient locators for news headlines. But during the Era of Good Feelings, the regions were simply patriotic parts that made up the whole that was the United States – a rapidly expanding nation in every sense of the word.

Conclusion

The Boston reporter got it right. It truly was an Era of Good Feelings throughout the nation, even in the disconnected West. The Illinois Territory contained two types of settlers, the squatters and the young meddlers, and both displayed Americanism. This did not simply stem from the War of 1812 or the subsequent economic boom. The feeling of nationalistic recognition also came from convictions of what it meant to be American, and a recognition of the privilege of going out and achieving the American Dream. Tucked into the timbers along the rivers and out on the barren prairies, the squatters practiced Americanism in the form of love for independence, individualism, and the right to pursue happiness self-sufficiently. In the towns, Americanism consumed the minds of the meddlers, as the community leaders, merchants, and professionals sought to earn economic gain. To do so, they realized they must make as many connections as possible with the rest of the United States. Those with political power miles away from any federal accountability did not abuse their status. Instead they sought to mimic Eastern systems of governance and keep in close contact with Washington. Letters back and forth

[97] "Late from the South." The Illinois Intelligencer 27 May 1818: 2.

across the States illustrate a keen interest amongst Illinoisians for Eastern seaboard politics. Each week townspeople read about American and foreign politics, fashion, and diplomacy in the newspapers. The papers illustrate an intense desire of the Illinois meddlers to learn about and be apart of the young nation. This was not the west of Turner. This was not a region that bred creation and a new style of government and culture. As Hayter stated, a small dose of frontier improvisation was inevitable, but the general cultural flow was that of America moving west.

The Illinois Territory was an interesting time and place in American history. For it was during an era of unprecedented economic and nationalistic growth and optimism. Yet, that being said, Illinois was still beyond the fluent limits of communication and transportation in the young nation. The meddlers were a part of this economic growth and nationalism, but being in Illinois they were out of the proverbial loop. For this reason, they yearned for connections to the East, and that is why they governed the territory as they did, read the articles that they did, and lived their lives as they did.

The Era of Good Feelings ended abruptly with the financial panic of 1819 and the Missouri Compromise in 1820, but, as the Illinois example shows, the period was indeed a snapshot in history when nationalism was rampant and connected a nation of truly scattered villages[98].

[98] Mintz, Steven. "The Era of Good Feelings" (An online textbook chapter) Available: http://www.gliah.uh.edu/resource_guides/content2.cfm?tpc=8

APPENDIX

A – Map showing trade and immigration routes in the Western United States by 1820

B – Picture of Kaskaskia during territorial years

C - Map showing the Illinois region from 1781-1830

A and C taken from:

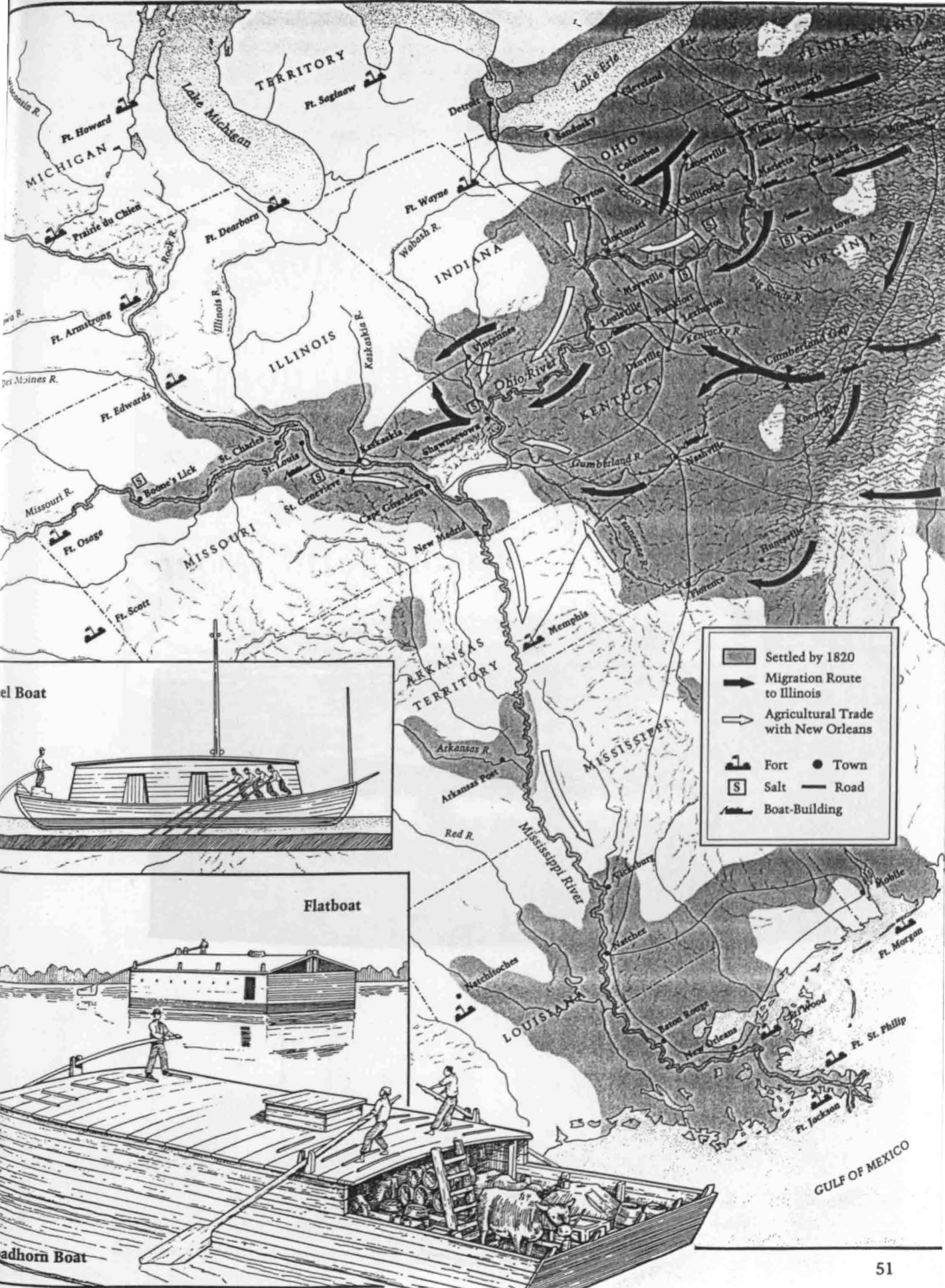
Historic Illinois From the Air by David Buisseret

Pages 51 and 47, respectively

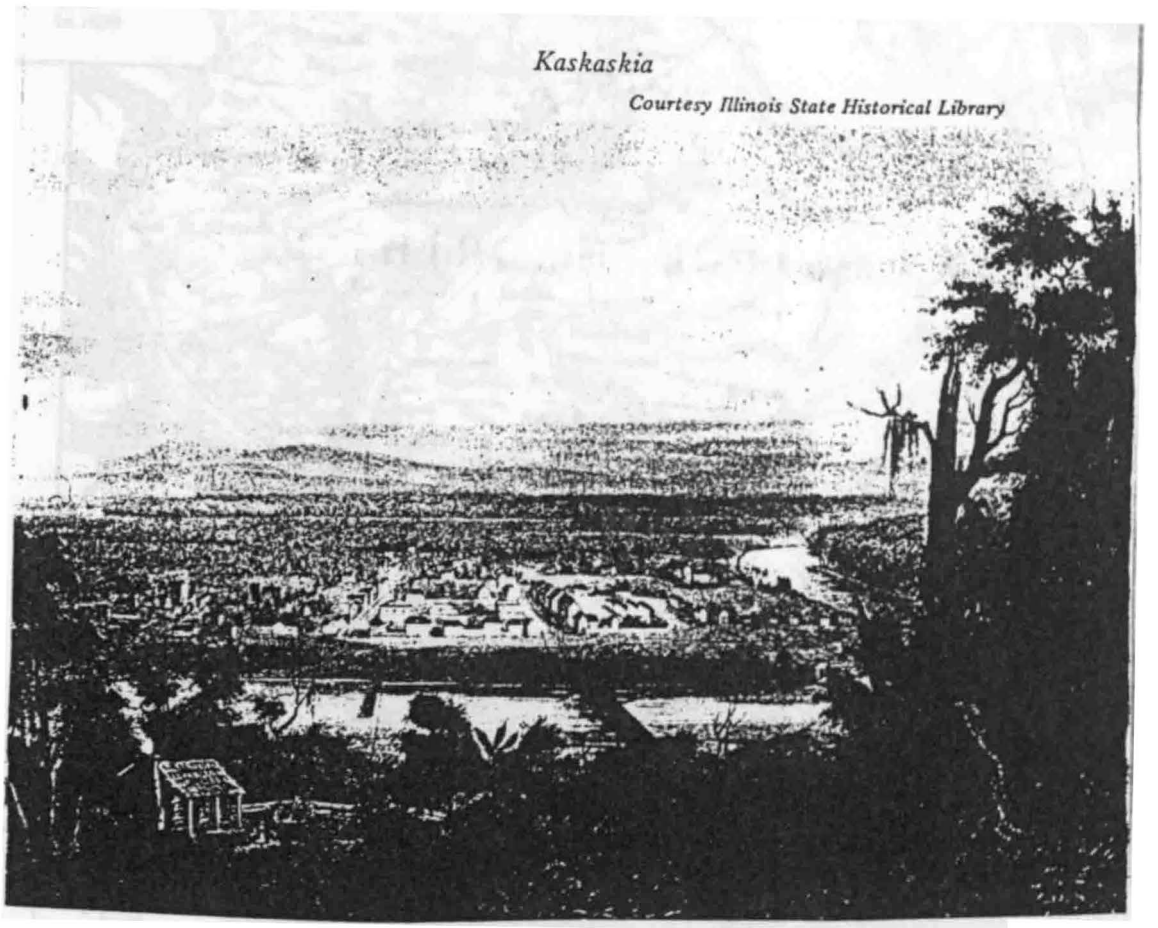
B taken from:

Illinois: A History of the Prairie State by Robert P. Howard

Page 122

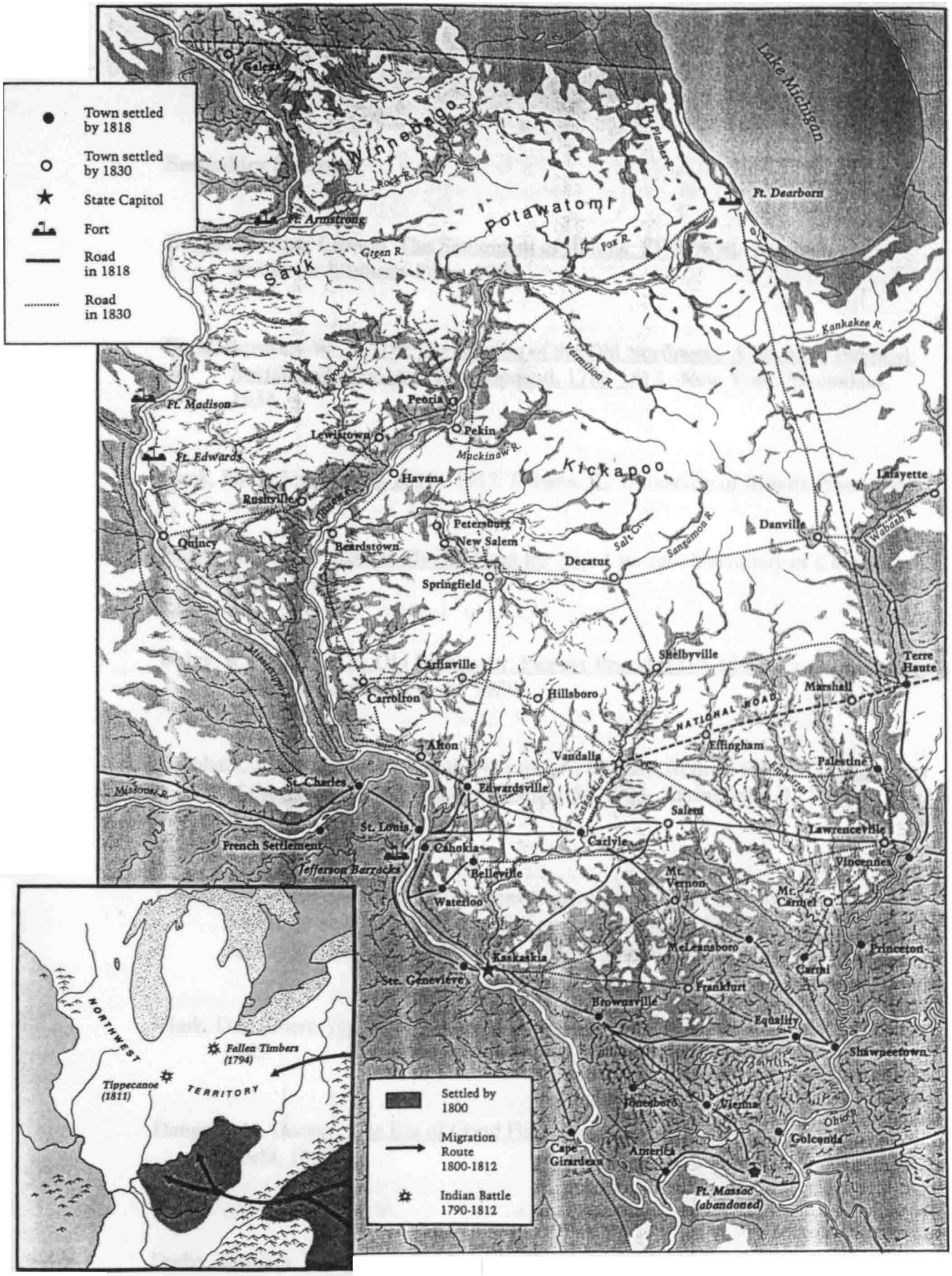


66. Map showing trade and immigration routes on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in the early 1820s



Kaskaskia

Courtesy Illinois State Historical Library



62. Map showing Illinois region, 1781–1830

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