

“Upon the Shoulders of Giants:” Deconstructing
the Lost State of Franklin, 1784-2005

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ABSTRACT

“UPON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS:” DECONSTRUCTING THE LOST STATE OF FRANKLIN, 1784-2005

KEVIN T. BARKSDALE

In 1784, the residents of the upper east Tennessee Valley declared themselves independent from their parent state of North Carolina. The political and economic leadership of the newly formed state of Franklin utilized the ideology, symbolism, and rhetoric of the American Revolution to garner local, regional and national support for the movement. After the state's collapse in 1788, the state of Franklin continued to attract supporters and admirers, who considered the movement to be a noble extension of the revolution. Over the last two hundred years, historians, politicians, abolitionists, and business leaders have recast the legacy and meaning of the state of Franklin.

I argue that the state of Franklin and its leadership were less than noble. East Tennessee's land speculators and local economic elite led the effort to create America's fourteenth state in order to protect and expand their landed wealth and political hegemony. During Franklin's brief four-year existence, the state's leadership engaged in dubious Cherokee land negotiations and pursued a policy of total Indian annihilation. Eventually, internal factionalism both within the statehood movement and the communities of the Tennessee Valley and North Carolina's highly effective “divide and conquer” diplomatic strategy led to the dissolution of Franklin.

Despite Franklin's demise, its legacy, both real and mythologized, persisted. This dissertation examines specific examples of how individuals and groups have constructed and reshaped the history and meaning of Franklin to serve their specific agendas. These efforts include: Ezekiel Birdseye's “Free State of Frankland” abolitionist effort, Andrew Johnson's use of Franklin during the 1860 secession debate, the historical interpretations of Franklin historians, and finally, Franklin's use in the twentieth century economic development of East Tennessee.

For Kelli.

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Introduction

In the winter of 1784 the political and economic leadership of the Tennessee Valley defiantly declared their independence from the state of North Carolina and formed the state of Franklin. Determined Franklinites actively lobbied the North Carolina state legislature and the federal government to support Franklin's admission into the union as America's newest state, but these efforts failed disastrously. Over Franklin's four year struggle to achieve political stability and acceptance, the embattled Franklinites managed to construct a backcountry bureaucracy which included a state legislature and judicial system. The Franks also engaged in a highly contentious expansionist program that brought them into direct conflict with their parent state, the federal government, and the region's Native Americans. The resulting Indian wars left hundreds dead and the Tennessee Valley communities reeling from the devastation of frontier warfare. After the state's violent collapse in 1788, descendents of the Franklinites recast the historical legacy and meaning of East Tennessee separatism. Over the last two hundred years, local historians, romance novelists, politicians, and regional business leaders have defended the image of Franklin as a noble extension of the American Revolution and the Franklinites as patriotic adherents to the principles of self determination. The goal of this study is to reexamine the history of the state of Franklin and to trace the origins and development of the mythology surrounding the movement to fashion America's fourteenth state out of North Carolina's Trans-Allegheny frontier.

Scholars of the history of the early American Republic have undoubtedly encountered numerous references to the state of Franklin. The statehood movement is often paired with other expressions of post-revolutionary frontier and agrarian radicalism, such as

Massachusetts' Shay's Rebellion or western Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion. The consequence of these problematic comparisons is to create an unrealistic portrait of three very different events. Unlike Shay's Rebellion or the Whiskey Rebellion, the Franklin separatist movement was rooted in the desires of an economic ruling class to cement their political power and expand their landed wealth. The radical anti-federalism of the Whiskey Rebellion and the struggle for economic independence underlying Shay's Rebellion are present in the Franklin movement, but flow from very different ideological springs and sought to achieve strikingly divergent objectives. The Franklinites' attacks on federalism and their demands for political sovereignty stemmed from neither economic marginalization nor political despotism. The instigators of the Franklin independence movement sought to shed the control of North Carolina and the federal government over the Tennessee Valley to defend and expand their already considerable regional hegemony. Franklin was not the radical manifestation of America's own independence movement, but rather an elaborate scheme to control the economic and political destiny of North Carolina's western frontier.

This study lifts the historical veil from the Franklin statehood movement to reveal the economic motivations and heated regional partisanship which characterized America's first post-revolutionary statehood movement. The study begins by depicting the political and economic climate which gave birth to the spirit of separatism in eastern Tennessee. The first chapters reveal the existence of a highly speculative land economy dominated by an ethnically and culturally diverse faction of frontier capitalists. The study then chronicles the turbulent four-year history of the state, from the political defeat of a remarkably egalitarian state constitution to the state's violent collapse at the Battle of

Franklin. It examines the bitter internal factionalism, destructive Indian policies, and failed diplomatic efforts (including an aborted alliance with the nation of Spain), which ultimately doomed the state. Finally, the study reexamines the social reconstruction of the state of Franklin, tracing its reinterpretation as a failed statehood movement to the heroic offspring of the American Revolution which it now symbolizes in the collective memory of East Tennesseans.

Chapter One

Land of the Franks: The Frontier Economy of Upper East Tennessee

The state of Franklin began with a journey by a forty-eight year-old Scotch-Irish militia captain, planter, and long hunter named William Bean. Captain Bean and his wife Lydia “Liddy” Russell ascended the Great War Path, following the Appalachian Mountains southwest through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia with their four children in tow, and settled in the Upper East Tennessee Valley. Bean is widely believed to be the first white man to permanently settle in the Tennessee frontier. Hundreds of families followed the Beans into the heart of the southwestern frontier to stake their claim to the rich resource laden lands of the future state of Tennessee.¹

In 1769 Bean built his mud-chinked log cabin at the mouth of Boone’s Creek, a small tributary of the Watauga River he named for his friend and hunting companion Daniel Boone.² After a year spent busily improving land, cultivating crops, avoiding Indians, and giving birth to their fifth child, Russell, the first white child bore to permanent settlers on the Tennessee frontier, the Bean Family moved even deeper into the Tennessee backcountry.³ The Bean Family finally settled along the banks of the lower Watauga

¹ Pat Alderman, *The Overmountain Men* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1970), 13-14; Brenda C. Calloway, *America’s First Western Frontier: East Tennessee* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1989), 71; LaReine Warden Clayton, *Stories of Early Inns and Taverns of the East Tennessee Country* (Nashville: The National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Tennessee, 1995), 38-39; Max Dixon, *The Wataugans: Tennessee in the Eighteenth Century* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1989), 5-6, 13; *First Families of Tennessee: A Register of Early Settlers and their Present-day Descendants* (Knoxville, TN: The East Tennessee Historical Society, 2000), 83; David C. Hsiung, “How Isolated was Appalachia: Upper East Tennessee, 1780-1835,” *Appalachian Journal* 16 (Summer 1989): 342-343; J.G.M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Charleston, SC: J. Russell, 1853; reprint, Baltimore, MD, Clearfield Company, Inc., 2003), 94-95.

² Calloway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 71.

³ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 13.

River at the junction between two key frontier routes, the Old Catawba Road and the Great War Path. Bean constructed a four-room log cabin that served as the family's home and as a small inn for settlers, fur traders, and speculators who ventured into the Tennessee wilderness. The modest inn, known respectively as Bean's Crossroads, Bean's Cabin, or Bean's Station, soon grew to include a tavern and a small blacksmith shop.⁴

The settlement of Bean's Station and the rapid blossoming of a small community surrounding the homestead typified the early development of the Tennessee frontier. During a "long hunt," Captain Bean and Daniel Boone camped above the future site of the Bean's Station settlement and the weary hunters undoubtedly made note of the abundance of water, land, game, nutrient rich soils, and economic potential that lay at the foot of the Alleghany Mountains. Bean left his Pittsylvania County, Virginia home and substantial landholdings to advance his family's economic fortunes. Despite the remoteness of Bean's Station, he managed to create a thriving and diverse business that served the needs of the newest settlers and entrepreneurs traveling the ancient Indian paths into the Great Valley of Tennessee. The same desires for land and prosperity that led Bean to ignore the threats posed by Indian massacres, harsh winters, and geographic and cultural isolation lured hundreds of frontier families into the southwestern frontier. The defense of these backcountry communities and the expansion of the region's land-based economy compelled the descendants of Tennessee Valley's first inhabitants to form the state of Franklin.⁵

⁴ Clayton, *Stories of Early Inns and Taverns of the East Tennessee Country*, 38-39.

⁵ Historian Max Dixon states that Bean was "a man of parts," meaning that he was a substantial landholder in Pittsylvania County, Virginia (Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 5-6).

After William Bean's pioneering effort in the Watauga Valley, several permanent settlements sprang up along the twisting banks of the Watauga, Tennessee and Holston Rivers. These Upper Tennessee Valley communities included: Carter's Valley, Shelby's Station, Sycamore Shoals, and the Nolichucky Settlements.⁶ Most of these early settlements developed similarly to Bean's Station. Men with economic vision and a desire to benefit from a rapidly expanding frontier economy established these communities. John Carter, founder of Carter's Valley on the Holston River, was a Virginia merchant and trader who settled in the region sometime in 1772. He and his partner Joseph Parker watched a small community flourish around the backcountry store they erected to capitalize on the lucrative Cherokee fur trade and the influx of new frontier families.⁷ The financial success of Carter's store led to its eventual looting by Cherokee Indians from the neighboring Overhill Towns who bitterly complained that the store competed with their own fur trade.⁸ In 1772, fifty-one year old Welshman Evan Shelby, a "hard-drinking Marylander," moved his family into the Watauga Valley, and settled on a 1,946 acre tract of land he called Sapling Grove.⁹ Shelby expanded his settlement, at the present-day site of the city of Bristol, Tennessee, by constructing a trading post and a small stockaded fort appropriately name Fort Shelby, to protect his investment. Shelby's Station, also known as "North-of-Holston," became a critical trading post and rendezvous point for settlers venturing into the southwestern frontier.¹⁰ Jacob Brown, an "itinerate trader" from South Carolina, and a small group of former

⁶ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 15-18

⁷ Ibid., 17; Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 74; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 107.

⁸ Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 74.

⁹ Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 10-11, Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 74.

¹⁰ Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 74-75; Samuel Cole Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin* (Johnson City: Watauga Press, 1924; reprint, Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1924), 330-331.

North Carolina Regulators established the Nolichucky River settlements.¹¹ Brown opened a small store, a gunsmith shop, and a blacksmith shop on the north bank of the Nolichucky River to cater to Indian fur traders.¹² In the spring of 1770, James Robertson, an Orange County, North Carolina farmer and participant in North Carolina's Regulator Movement, erected a settlement on a piece of land he called Sycamore Shoals.¹³ Robertson fled into the Watauga Valley to escape the violence surrounding the Regulator Movement. The Sycamore Shoals settlement quickly grew to include twenty families, most Robertson's own relatives.¹⁴ Capitalism drove the first frontier settlers into the wilds of East Tennessee, and their successful businesses became the fiscal engines driving the economic development of the Tennessee Valley.¹⁵

Following the close of the American Revolution, the backcountry communities eventually comprising the future state of Franklin experienced tremendous demographic and economic growth. By 1784, population increases and the rapid expansion of the regional marketplace transformed the underdeveloped Tennessee Valley frontier settlements. Historians Paul H. Bergeron, Stephen V. Ash, and Jeanette Keith described the "push-pull" effect responsible for this dramatic population explosion. Either legal or financial difficulties "pushed" early Tennessee Valley frontier families out of their communities, or economic potential "pulled" them into the region.¹⁶ In May of 1772, the Watauga settlers banded together and fashioned a quasi-frontier government they called

¹¹ Ibid., 76.

¹² Ibid., 76-77; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 18.

¹³ Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 71-72; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 15.

¹⁴ Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 71-72; James Robertson Papers, 1742-1814, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

¹⁵ Historian John Inscoe described the development of frontier mountain communities around backcountry stores east of the Allegheny Mountains (John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters: Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 27).

¹⁶ Paul H. Bergeron, Stephen V. Ash, and Jeanette Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 21-25.

the Watauga Association.¹⁷ The valley settlers formed the frontier government to “manage land affairs and facilitate governance of the colony.”¹⁸ Under constant threat from the original Native American land claimants and the looming revolutionary conflict, on July 5, 1776, the Watauga settlers sent a formal petition to the North Carolina General Assembly requesting to be annexed and formed into a frontier militia district or county.¹⁹ In April of 1777, North Carolina accepted their petition and temporarily established the Washington District. Seven months later, the North Carolina Assembly formally recognized the Wataugans by creating Washington County. Prior to the formation of the state of Franklin in 1784, administrative difficulties forced North Carolina to divide Washington County into Sullivan (1779) and Greene (1783) counties.²⁰ The counties of Washington, Greene, and Sullivan and the rapidly shrinking swath of Tennessee Valley land reserved for the Cherokee Indians comprised the boundaries of Franklin.²¹

The creation of the state of Franklin is rooted in the desire to exploit and control the vast natural resources and land of East Tennessee, and to dominate the rapidly expanding regional economy. East Tennessee’s frontier economy was a complex mixture of semi-

¹⁷ Mary Hardin McCown, *The Wataugah Purchase, March 19, 1775 at Sycamore Shoals of Wataugah River: the Cherokee Indians to Charles Robertson, trustee for the Wataugah Settlers: an Index of the Wataugah purchase, the North Carolina Land Grants, and Deeds Through 1782: a Bicentennial Contribution* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1976), 5-7; Frederick Jackson Turner, “Western State-Making in the Revolutionary Era,” *The American Historical Review* 1 (October 1895): 75-77.

¹⁸ Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 16.

¹⁹ Joyce Cox and W. Eugene Cox, comps., *History of Washington County Tennessee* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 2001), 53-55; Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 16-17; Watauga Association of Genealogists, comps., *History of Washington County Tennessee 1988* (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1988), 14-15.

²⁰ *First Families of Tennessee*, 66; John Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee from its Earliest Settlement up to the Year 1796, Including the Boundaries of the State* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891; reprint, Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1999), 68-69.

²¹ Emma Deane Smith Trent, *East Tennessee’s Lore of Yesteryear* (Whitesburg, TN: by the author, 1987), 118-121. According to a survey recorded in the *Senate Journal of 1788*, Greene County “is in its greatest Length about Ninety Miles long; in its greatest Breadth about forty-five Miles Wide, growing narrower by degrees until it comes to a point at the western part of the same, where the French Broad and Holston Rivers make a junction (Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, vol. 20 (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1903), 513).”

subsistent agriculture, early rural market capitalism, and expansive land speculation. The development of this mixed economy began with early frontier communities like Bean's Station and the other Watauga Valley settlements. Four critical factors collided to create the Tennessee Valley's frontier economy: population growth; the abundance of natural resources and land; geography; and the tenuous economic climate surrounding the American Revolution. The rapid growth of East Tennessee's population dramatically impacted the region's economy. Despite the scarcity of census information prior to the formation of the state of Tennessee in 1796, historians estimate the 1778 population of Washington County, at the time encompassing all of the eventual state of Franklin, at roughly 2,500 residents.²² This statistic reveals the tremendous regional growth in the six years following the settlement of the Watauga River Valley. The confusion presented by the division of Washington County into Sullivan and Greene counties and the incomplete nature of early tax lists further complicate efforts to ascertain precise population statistics. A July 1, 1791 census conducted by Southwestern Territorial Governor William Blount (after the state of Franklin completely collapsed in 1789, North Carolina ceded the region to the federal government creating the Southwest Territory) established the population of the eastern section of Southwest Territory at 36,043 residents, with approximately twenty-eight thousand of the settlers inhabiting the Tennessee Valley settlements.²³ Compiled tax lists for this same period show the population of a

²² Pollyanna Creekmore, comp., *Early East Tennessee Taxpayers* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1980), 187-190.

²³ Albert C. Holt, "The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee" (Ph.D. diss., George Peabody College, 1923), 263; Stephen B. Weeks, "Tennessee: A Discussion of the Sources of its Population and the Lines of Immigration," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 2 (June 1916): 246-249. After the state of Franklin completely collapsed in 1789, North Carolina ceded the region to the federal government adding to the creation of the Southwest Territory. In May of 1790, the United States government created the Southwestern Territory out of the land ceded by the state of North Carolina (Walter T. Durham, *Before*

geographically diminished Washington County to be 5,862 persons.²⁴ Despite the ambiguities of these census and tax records it is clear that the Tennessee Valley experienced a sustained period of population growth between 1772 and 1791. The increased population strained relations with the region's Native Americans, and the backcountry settlements' military preparedness and economy.²⁵

On May, 28, 1788, the well-traveled Methodist Bishop, Francis Asbury, wrote in his journal of the challenges and conditions he found when piercing the Smoky Mountains and descending into the Great Valley of the Tennessee:

After getting our horses shod, we made a move for Holstein [Holston], and entered upon the mountains; the first of which I called steel, the second stone, and the third iron mountain: they are rough and difficult to climb. We were spoken to on the way by the most awful thunder and lightning, accompanied by heavy rain. We crept for shelter into a little dirty house where the filth might be taken up from the floor with a spade.²⁶

Bishop Asbury's description of the Tennessee frontier inadvertently offered keen insight into Franklin's economy. The "rough and difficult" mountains made overland trade enormously challenging and separated the Tennessee Valley settlers from their state government in Hillsboro, North Carolina.²⁷ The abundance of rainfall created excellent growing conditions for East Tennessee's agrarian-based economy and the steel, stone,

Tennessee: The Southwest Territory, 1790-1796 (Rocky Mount, NC: Rocky Mount Historical Association, 1990), 1, 7).

²⁴ Hsiung, "How Isolated is Appalachia?," 340.

²⁵ Environmental Historian Donald Davis states that, "By 1788 more than twenty-five thousand individuals... had settled the upper reaches of the Tennessee Valley (Donald Edward Davis, *Where There are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 97)."

²⁶ Elmer T. Clark, ed., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* (London: Epworth Press and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), 568-569.

²⁷ Ibid.

and iron mountains Asbury identified reflected the tremendous wealth contained in the mineral resources buried in the surrounding mountains.²⁸

Franklin's "dual economy" functioned as both a traditional subsistence-based "household economy" and as a peripheral commercial marketplace.²⁹ Most recent frontier scholars believe that America's pre-industrial frontier economies began as semi-commercial and rapidly became "fully integrated in the world capitalist market system."³⁰ Historian Robert D. Mitchell's work on early settlers in the Shenandoah Valley reveals the existence of "nascent commercialism" on Virginia's frontier and the development of rural market capitalism following the "pioneer phase" of settlement.³¹ In her work on southern Appalachia, Wilma Dunaway argues that early land speculation, dense concentrations of wealth and land, the presence of slavery, and the immediate commodification of the region's natural resources provides ample evidence that the southwestern frontier fit into the "global capitalist paradigm."³² In his essay entitled "Competence and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," Daniel Vickers states that the notion of a pure "moral economy" was a romanticized "invention of the industrial age."³³ The first settlers of eastern Tennessee embraced frontier market

²⁸ Samuel Cole Williams, *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540-1800* (Johnson City, TN: The Watauga Press, 1928), 291-192.

²⁹ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 63-99.

³⁰ Dwight B. Billings and Kathleen M. Blee, *The Road to Poverty: The Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25-51.

³¹ Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

³² Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1-13.

³³ Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47 (January 1990): 3-29.

capitalism and positioned themselves to capitalize on the rapidly developing regional marketplace.³⁴

Mercantile sales and room rentals emerged as two of the earliest businesses on the Tennessee frontier. Entrepreneurs like William Bean, Evan Shelby, John Carter, and Jacob Brown built inns, taverns, and a diverse array of shops to serve the needs of the expanding population and market demands. Small inns sprang up across the Tennessee Valley and many of these businesses became hubs for commerce and the centers of community-building. In 1779, frontier land speculators laid out Tennessee's first town, Jonesborough (Jonesboro), and sold the rustic town lots at a lottery for sixty dollars each. Within a few years, local businessmen developed two inns, a blacksmith shop, and a tavern in the frontier town. In the present-day town of Blountville, in Sullivan County, young William Deery purchased an old frontier trading post and expanded it to include an inn and tavern. The financial success of the Old Deery Inn propelled the growth of Blountville and the small frontier community eventually became an important stagecoach stop at the turn of the century. Similarly, the town of Rogersville, on the banks of the Holston River, owes its early growth to the commercial success of town-founder Joseph Roger's frontier inn.³⁵

Most of the early Tennessee Valley inns doubled as taverns or distilleries. Whiskey distillation, sales, and consumption remained fixtures in frontier America. Due to the geographic and transportation obstacles confronting frontier farmers, whiskey distillation

³⁴ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters: Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina*, 1-10; Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1977); Robert Weise, *Grasping at Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850-1915* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

³⁵ Maxine Mathews, "Old Inns of East Tennessee," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 2 (1930): 22-25; Walden, *Stories of Early Inns and Taverns*, 17-22, 30-37.

served as a fiscally viable use of corn and other grains. The sale of whiskey at the various taverns and inns that dotted the Tennessee Valley frontier emerged as an important source of revenue for many frontier families. Bishop Francis Asbury's complaints of the poor conditions at the inns in which he boarded during his mission into the Tennessee backcountry omitted descriptions of the local home brew most travelers imbibed to sooth the aches and pains of rigorous mountain travel. As one historian commented, "a tavern host typically kept a tippling house for the sale of his own beverages."³⁶ The county courts customarily fixed prices for distilled spirits. In the early 1780s, the Sullivan County Court set the prices of "good distilled rye whiskey at two shillings, six pence per gallon and good peach or apple brandy at three shillings per gallon." Some of the most prominent men in the region ran ordinary houses in the Tennessee backcountry. William Bean, William Deery, James Allison, Isaiah Hamilton, Richard Minton, and Valentine Sevier, the father of future state of Franklin Governor John Sevier, all operated tippling houses. An inventory of Washington County estates illustrates the importance of whiskey distillation in the early East Tennessee economy. Men like Abraham Collet, Thomas Mitchell, and Thomas Dillard listed stills and vessels alongside their bibles and cattle in their estates.³⁷ Captain Thomas Amis, one of the most successful early merchants in Tennessee, moved his family from Bladen County, North Carolina and opened a small store and tavern in present-day Rogersville. Amis constructed his tavern and store "on a high piece of ground in sight of Big Creek" in what eventually became

³⁶ Mathews, "Old Inns of East Tennessee," 23-25.

³⁷ W.P.A. Historical Records Survey, *Records of Washington County: Inventories of Estates 1779-1821* (Nashville: U.S. Works Progress Administration, 1938), 9-11, 14, 20.

Hawkins County. Amis sold whiskey by the drink in his tavern and in bulk at his store.³⁸ Taverns also served as important meeting places in East Tennessee. The state of Franklin held its first senate meeting “in one of the rooms of the [Greeneville] town tavern.” Even the presumably abstinent Bishop Asbury commented that during his stay at Thomas Amis’ inn and tavern his host kept his guests “well-entertained.”³⁹ These early tavern and inn owners made a significant contribution to the growth and development of the Tennessee Valley.⁴⁰

Beyond public accommodations and grog shops, East Tennessee’s early economy included a wide assortment of other businesses. Thomas Amis’ store and tavern eventually grew to include a gristmill and forge, and most Tennessee Valley towns employed at least one blacksmith.⁴¹ A search of the first tax lists for the region reveals trades such as silversmiths, weavers, fullers, stone masons, millers, and miners.⁴² The mineral wealth of the stone, steel, and iron mountains of Tennessee’s Unaka Mountain Range remained largely untouched until the early 1790s, but the presence of earlier forges in the Tennessee Valley proves that some mining occurred prior to 1790. In 1770, Moses Embree moved his family into the Tennessee Valley, “took up land, erected a cabin, and built a forge making iron.” Embree’s forge is typical of an early iron-making operation on the southern frontier. “Moses made iron on a limited scale getting his ore up

³⁸ Lucy K. Gump, “Interpretive Transcription of an East Tennessee Business Record Book, Ledger B,” Special Collections, James D. Hoskins Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁹ Clark, ed., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, 568-569

⁴⁰ Kevin T. Barksdale, “Whiskey Distillation in Antebellum Western North Carolina,” *Tuckasegee Valley Historical Review* 5 (1999): 1-5; Paul M. Fink, “Jonesboro’s Chester Inn,” *The East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 27 (1955): 19-21; Holt, “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee,” 50-51; Walden, *Stories of Early Inns and Taverns*, 17-23, 28-37, 50-53. Greeneville served as the capital of the state of Franklin.

⁴¹ Walden, *Stories of Early Inns and Taverns*, 50-52; Gump, “Interpretive Transcription of an East Tennessee Business Record Book;” Alan N. Miller, *East Tennessee’s Forgotten Children: Apprentices from 1778-1911* (Baltimore: Clearfield Company, 2001), 147.

⁴² Holt, “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee;” 35-39.

on the top of the hill and on Jacob Knaff's farm." According to his descendents, the iron made in Moses' forge "was the first iron wrought in this section," and "the horses that went to [the Revolutionary War Battle of] King's Mountain were shod from iron made" at Embree's forge.⁴³ In 1784, Colonel James King also constructed an iron works in Sullivan County. Using twenty-five ton flatboats, King incredibly shipped his iron and nails, produced in an adjoining nail factory, to other Tennessee Valley settlements and to cities as far away as New Orleans.⁴⁴ Despite the small size of the furnaces, most producing less than five tons of iron a day, forges like Colonel King's Iron Works provided a vital economic link between the region and distant markets.⁴⁵

Despite the region's rich commercial diversity, agriculture dominated the Franklin economy. The rich soils of the Tennessee Valley, "well-watered by the small streams issuing from the adjacent mountains," are ideal for crops and the abundance of open land offers perfect conditions for raising cattle.⁴⁶ East Tennessee's temperate climate and ample precipitation add to the region's suitability for farming. Corn, wheat, rye, oats, barley, and millet became staple crops in the early East Tennessee agrarian economy.⁴⁷ Regional farmers raised hogs, sheep, horses, and other cattle in the hardwood forests and cleared pastureland surrounding their farms and communities.⁴⁸

⁴³ "A Revised Sketch of the Moses Embree III Family and the Quaker Migration South," Embree Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee University.

⁴⁴ John R. Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 191-193.

⁴⁵ *A Descriptive Review of the Industries and Resources of Upper East Tennessee Embracing the Vicinity of Johnson City, Jonesboro, Greeneville, Rogersville, and Morristown Together with Brief Notices of the Leading Members of those Communities* (New York: Enterprise Publishing, 1885), 15-16; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 42; Hsiung, "How Isolated is Appalachia?," 343-345.

⁴⁶ Watauga Association of Genealogists, *History of Washington County Tennessee 1988*; 6-11.

⁴⁷ *A Descriptive Review of the Industries and Resources of Upper East Tennessee*, 9, 14-16; J. Reuben Sheeler, "Background Factors of East Tennessee," *Journal of Negro History* 29 (April 1944): 167.

⁴⁸ Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 97-111; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 186-187; Holt, "The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee," 200-204; Hsiung, "How Isolated is Appalachia?," 344-345; Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 48-49; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 142.

Franklin farmers cultivated crops and raised livestock for household consumption as well as for local and regional markets. According to the Watauga Association of Genealogists, most of the farms in eastern Tennessee were “self-sufficient units,” but the few extant store ledgers challenge this assertion.⁴⁹ Most farmers grew at least some corn due to its multiple uses in the Tennessee backcountry. A farmer who harvested a good crop of corn could sell it to taverns for whiskey distillation and horse feed or to millers to be ground into meal for sale on the local market. Unquestionably, many Tennessee Valley farm families relied heavily on their own crops, orchards, livestock, and frontier ingenuity to survive in the wilderness, but the proliferation of stores and shops reflect their reliance on local markets for supplementation.⁵⁰

Commercial agriculture and the use of slave labor emerged as an early features of the Tennessee Valley frontier economy. In his examination of North Carolina’s antebellum mountain economy east of the Allegheny Mountains, John Inscoe argues that the “commercial character of mountain agriculture did not develop only after years of a basic subsistence economy. From its earliest development on, Southern Appalachia attracted both farmers and tradesmen who recognized the market potential of the region.”⁵¹

Many of the first Tennessee families that settled the region previously owned plantations and farms in North Carolina and Virginia. Historian Edward Michael McCormack states that, “In this area [the Tennessee Valley] the topography of the land was well suited for plantation agriculture and the efficient use of slaves.” It is estimated

⁴⁹ Watauga Association of Genealogists, *History of Washington County Tennessee 1988*; 6-11.

⁵⁰ Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 180-182; Holt, “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee,” 24-25.

⁵¹ Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 1-9, 39-40, 59-61.

that approximately ten percent of the early Watauga settlers owned slaves.⁵² Prominent early East Tennesseans, such as William Bean, John Carter, and George Lumpkin brought slaves into the region to farm large tracts of land. Franklin Governor, John Sevier, brought seven slaves with him when he settled on the Nolichucky River. Tax lists from Washington County list thirty-two slaveholders owning one hundred and two “black poles” for 1779. In 1781, an incomplete tax list from the same county lists seventy-two slaves for just the fifth district.⁵³

Many early Washington County wills list slaves among the estates bequeathed to heirs. William Bean left his wife Liddy a “negro girl” named Grace, and Franklin militia captain John Fain willed his wife Agnes “the negro Punch.”⁵⁴ A 1783 assessor return for Greene County, covering two of four county court-established tax districts, lists sixty-five slaves, and an unidentified tax list from the same year lists thirty-three “negroes.” A July 4, 1787 census for Sullivan County, carved out of Washington County in 1779, lists “twenty-three Black male slaves and eighty female” among a total county population of 2,066 residents.⁵⁵ Due to lower tax rates, slave owners on the Tennessee frontier preferred to own either female or child slaves.⁵⁶ A Washington County tax list from 1787 records eighty-six slaveholders owning 223 slaves. In 1788, the final year of the state of Franklin’s brief existence, it is believed that approximately 1,500 slaves worked in the Franklin counties. Although most East Tennessee slave owners owned fewer than three slaves, some of the most prominent men in the region commanded as many as twenty.

⁵² Edward Michael McCormack, *Slavery on the Tennessee Frontier* (Nashville: Tennessee American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1977), 2-6, 11-15.

⁵³ Creekmore, *Early East Tennessee Taxpayers*, 187-214; Pollyanna Creekmore, “Early East Tennessee Taxpayers XIV, Greene County, 1783,” *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 39 (1967), 118-130.

⁵⁴ Goldene Fillers Burgner, *Washington County Tennessee Wills 1777-1872* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1983), 1-3.

⁵⁵ Creekmore, *Early East Tennessee Taxpayers*, 187-214.

⁵⁶ McCormack, *Slavery on the Tennessee Frontier*, 2-6, 11-15.

The growth of the Tennessee Valley population and expansion of commercial agriculture magnified the importance of slave labor in the regional economy.⁵⁷

Early court records and inventories of estates provide evidence of a thriving Tennessee commercial cattle industry. Greene County court records list dozens of farmers registering their cattle marks and brands. In the August 1783 Greene County Court minutes, James Wilson noted his “poplar leaf” brand and Abraham Carter registered “a C ear mark [and a] crop of the right ear and a hole & slit in the left ear.”⁵⁸ Washington County estate inventories list an array of livestock. The 1781 estate of John Bond lists “four head of horses, nine head of cattle, four head of sheep, seventeen head of hogs, and sixteen pigs.”⁵⁹ Cattle drives north through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia became a fixture in frontier Tennessee. Historian John Finger comments that, “Settlers often kept one or two milk cows and raised the rest of the cattle as beef for local and regional markets.” East Tennessee’s commercial livestock industry also included hogs, sheep, and horses and the long livestock drives provided a constant market for both tavern and inn owners as well as for commercial farmers.⁶⁰

The Tennessee Valley’s backcountry economy was amazingly diverse, tightly connected to local and regional markets, and perpetually expanding. Despite the success of the region’s economy, Tennessee’s frontier entrepreneurs confronted two major

⁵⁷ Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, *Tennesseans and their History*, 38; Alvaretta Kenan Register, trans., *State Census of North Carolina 1784-1787: From the Records in the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Second Edition* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1987), 142; Sheeler, “Background Factors of East Tennessee,” 167-168.

⁵⁸ W.P.A. Historical Records Survey, *Tennessee County Court (Greene County) Minutes, 1783-1829* (Nashville: U.S. Works Progress Administration, 1936), 1-8.

⁵⁹ W.P.A. Historical Records Survey, *Records of Washington County: Inventories of Estates*, 2-3.

⁶⁰ Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 187-189; Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 45-46. Donald Davis asserts that, between 1771 and 1796, hogs dominated the inventories of farm estates in Washington County, Tennessee,” and that “pork was probably the most frequently eaten meat of the frontier period (Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 110-111).”

obstacles to their continued economic growth; geographical isolation, and the economic crisis following the American Revolution. The debate over the level of cultural, political, and economic isolation in the southern mountains remains a thirty-year fixture in Appalachian scholarship, but the Tennessee Valley settlers avoided economic isolation by cultivating close fiscal connections to local and regional markets. Despite their Herculean trade efforts, geographic distances from the centers of commerce and the region's treacherous mountainous topography created enormous difficulties for Tennessee Valley residents during the region's frontier stage.

The Unaka, Smoky, and Blue Ridge mountain ranges separated the Tennessee Valley from the thriving markets in eastern North Carolina and along the Atlantic seaboard. These formidable obstacles made trans-Allegheny travel and trade extremely difficult and forced most early travelers to enter and exit the region from the north. Pioneering mountain merchants on the eastern slope of the Alleghany Mountains maintained southern market connections to South Carolina, Georgia, and eastern North Carolina. The challenges of trading across the highest mountains in the east forced most Tennessee Valley merchants and commercial farmers to rely almost exclusively on markets in Virginia, Georgia, and the blossoming southwestern frontier. Those who did venture into upper East Tennessee from the east traversed rugged trans-montane passes, such as the Unicoi Trail and the Catawba Trail, and struggled through treacherous mountain gaps, such as Boone's Gap and Saluda Gap. The East Tennessee Valley itself is thirty to fifty miles wide and connects to the much larger Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. These two valleys provided the perfect corridor for traveling into upper East Tennessee from the north and most of the early traces utilized the valleys' gentle slope. Historian A.V.

Goodpasture states, “The open valley was like the mouth of a funnel” that “became avenues that channeled early migration” into the region. The Tennessee Valley’s northern and western commercial orientation fiscally and politically separated them from their state government and eventually fostered a sense of alienation and abandonment among the region’s leaders.⁶¹

Historian David C. Hsiung argues that, “East Tennessee’s road system and economic ties should dispel any notions that the region has been like a fly trapped in amber, isolated and untouched for generations.”⁶² Much like many of the other frontier roads in Appalachia, eastern Tennessee’s earliest transportation system utilized well-worn Indian paths, most likely carved out by buffalo or other large mammals thousands of years earlier, as the primary corridors to connect the region. Prior to the settlement of the region, traders, hunters, missionaries, and explorers traveled along the Native American hunting and trading paths that traversed the region. According to Wilma Dykeman, the early visitors to the “Tennessee country led a harsh, lonely, tenacious life.”⁶³ In 1673, two Virginians, James Needham and Gabriel Arthur, undertook an expedition into the Tennessee Valley and attempted to establish trade contacts with the Overhill Cherokee communities. Men like Adair, Needham, and Gabriel Arthur crossed into the Tennessee frontier following Indian paths like the Occaneechi Path, Great War Path, and the Great Buffalo Trail to trade English goods for furs and pelts with the native populace. These backcountry entrepreneurs became some of the first Europeans to witness the grandeur of

⁶¹ *First Families of Tennessee*, 19-23; Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 41-43; Hsiung, “How Isolated was Appalachia?,” 241-343; Holt, “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee,” 195-196. A.V. Goodpasture is quoted in Albert C. Holt’s articles entitled “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee.”

⁶² Hsiung, “How Isolated was Appalachia,” 339-344.

⁶³ Wilma Dykeman, *Tennessee: A History* (Newport, TN: Wakestone Books, 1975), 32-37.

the Great Valley of Tennessee and to confront the challenges the region posed to frontier commerce.⁶⁴

The first road construction undertaken by whites in eastern Tennessee corresponded with the military preparations surrounding the French and Indian War in the mid-eighteenth century. Most of these early war traces connected British forts, such as Fort Loudon and Fort Robinson. The English laboriously built these military roads to defend their Indian allies against the French.⁶⁵ Europeans carved out dozens of traces, including Colonel William Byrd III of Virginia's Great Road or Island Road, to transport wagonloads of supplies to the soldiers occupying these remote backcountry forts. The British used many of these military roads to wage war against the French-allied Cherokee towns, and eventually, these routes developed into critical arteries connecting the Tennessee Valley settlements to the north and east.⁶⁶

In 1775, "thirty axe-men" managed by Daniel Boone improved a small stretch of the Great Indian War Path, subsequently given the name Boone's Wilderness Trail, Boone's Trace, or the Wilderness Road. The Wilderness Road snaked through the northern section of the Tennessee River Valley and eventually terminated two hundred grueling miles later in Virginia's Kentucky territory. The road became one of the primary routes for thousands of frontier families settling east and middle Tennessee, as well as the Kentucky frontier.⁶⁷ Boone's road also fed the rapidly expanding East Tennessee economy and dozens of businesses sprang up along the rugged route. According to

⁶⁴ Callaway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 21-23; Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 95-96; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 40-44; Robert L. Kincaid, "The Wilderness Road in Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society Publications* 20 (1948): 37-39; Van West, ed., *Tennessee History: The Land, the People, and the Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 9.

⁶⁵ Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 32-35.

⁶⁶ Callaway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 25-26; Kincaid, "The Wilderness Road," 38-39.

⁶⁷ Kincaid, "The Wilderness Road in Tennessee," 37-39, 42-44.

Historian Robert L. Kincaid, “No point on the Wilderness Road had greater activity from 1775 to 1795 than the Watauga area.” “At the supply stations from Bristol to Long Island,” he writes, “the many thousands of travelers to the West stopped to visit with neighbors and friends, gather supplies, repair their guns, fill their packs, and push off into the wilderness in large companies with armed guards.”⁶⁸ The embryonic communities of the upper Tennessee Valley supplied the settlements in the Cumberland District (Middle Tennessee) and the Kentucky frontier.⁶⁹

Following the completion of the Wilderness Road, skilled axe-men carved out dozens of smaller traces across eastern Tennessee. Most of these early roads connected East Tennessee towns and communities to each other and to the region’s principal transportation arteries. Roads became the first public works projects in the region. During the American Revolution, the town of Jonesboro constructed roads that “linked the town” to settlements along the Watauga, Nolichucky, and Holston Rivers. The area’s economic elite often constructed privately funded roads linking their own farms and businesses to these feeder outlets. Men like John Sevier and John Tipton “marked off” roads to insure the success of their commercial ventures. The existence of these early roads promoted the fiscal connection between eastern Tennessee and regional markets, “yet the difficulties encountered establishing, maintaining, and using this limited set of roads argues for a powerful sense of remoteness.” North Carolina’s failure to improve their western frontier’s trade and transportation network emerged as one of the earliest arguments for the Franklin separatist movement.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Callaway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 25-27; *First Families of Tennessee*, 22-23; Hsiung, “How Isolated is Appalachia?,” 341-343.

⁷⁰ Hsiung, “How Isolated was Appalachia?,” 344.

More than any other factor, the economic consequences of the American Revolution shaped the Tennessee Valley's economic landscape. The financial cost of America's rebellion exacerbated an already calamitous national specie shortage and caused a disastrous disruption of the Tennessee Valley's agrarian economy. This turbulent economic climate proved to be the ideal condition for the emergence of a land and natural resource-based economy dominated by local elites who doggedly speculated in land and unyieldingly controlled regional politics.

Following the revolution, the economy of the new republic experienced a dramatic deflation in the value of both state and federal currencies, and the precipitous loss of the infinitely more stable British pound. Additionally, mounting debt, the loss of the lucrative trade with England, the fiscal inadequacies of the Articles of Confederation, and the destruction of the American merchant fleet and urban centers further exacerbated the post-revolutionary financial disaster. The frontier economy of the Tennessee Valley never relied heavily on paper money for business transactions. Instead, most local merchants and farmers utilized a combination of barter, trade, and cash payments. During the short-lived existence of the state of Franklin, the cash starved Franklin government enacted the Legal Tender Act that paid its civil officials with animal pelts. The 1785 legislation provided the Governor of Franklin one thousand deer skins annually, the Chief Justice and Attorney General five hundred deer skins annually, the Secretary of State four hundred and fifty otter skins annually, the county clerks three hundred beaver skins annually, and the members of the Franklin Assembly three raccoon skins per session.⁷¹ The economic crisis accompanying the American Revolution simply

⁷¹ Paul M. Fink, "Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 16 (March 1957): 200-203; WM. A. Henderson lecture entitled "Nolachucky Jack," 7 January 1873, Kings

sapped an already cash-poor region of specie and forced a greater reliance on traditional modes of exchange.⁷²

By 1782, the state of North Carolina stood on the precipice of financial collapse. In order to repay foreign creditors, militiamen, and the federal government, the state issued certificates or promissory notes to creditors and as payment to her revolutionary soldiers. When the notes became virtually worthless in a few short months, the results proved to be disastrous. In order to repay the revolutionary promissory notes, North Carolina sold off huge swaths of its western territory, including some of the land that eventually became the state of Tennessee. The sale of North Carolina's western territory initiated further state sanctioned land speculation in the Tennessee Valley, but the commercial investment in territory began much earlier for the region's economic elite.⁷³

Speculators settled, developed, and controlled East Tennessee. Whether they speculated in land, slaves, minerals, or commercial markets, the region's earliest settlers sought to cash in on the untapped and unclaimed (Cherokee, Creeks and Chickasaw tribes aside) lands of the Tennessee Valley. In a region as specie poor as East Tennessee,

Mountain Papers, Draper Manuscript Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (microfilm: Chicago: University of Chicago).

⁷² William K. Boyd, *History of North Carolina: Volume II, The Federal Period, 1783-1860* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1919), 3-5; Archibald Henderson, *North Carolina: The Old North State and the New* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1941), 378-380; Gerald R. Lee, ed., *The Tales and Notes of Henry E. Lee* (Lynwood, Australia: privately printed, 1985), 388-389; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-89* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1956), 120-122; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 64-66. Regarding the State of Franklin's payment of her officials in animal skins, historian John Haywood states that many early North Carolinians "preferred peltry to paper bills of credit" due to deflation and uncertainty of the exchange rates (Haywood, *Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee*, 120-121, 163-164).

⁷³ Boyd, *The History of North Carolina*, 3-4; Oliver Taylor, *Historic Sullivan: A History of Sullivan County, Tennessee with Brief Biographies of the Makers of History* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1988), 109-110.

slaves and land became the most stable mediums of exchange, and those who owned thousands of acres controlled the region's political and economic fortunes.⁷⁴

Land speculation emerged as one of the earliest and most lucrative business ventures in the Tennessee Valley. The first negotiations for land cessions occurred between the Watauga settlers, who were in fact squatters, and the Overhill Cherokee Indians. In October 1770, British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern Tribes, Captain John Stuart, negotiated the Treaty of Lochaber with the Cherokee, which ceded an enormous "triangle of land" in the upper Holston Valley to the British. The Wataugans held no official deeds for their settlements, but they hoped that the Treaty of Lochaber legitimized their squatter's rights. The treaty eventually inspired a second wave of backcountry emigration.⁷⁵ Despite being forbidden by the British government and the Proclamation Line of 1763 to purchase land from the Native Americans, the Wataugans remained determined to secure legal rights to the Watauga settlements.⁷⁶ In 1773, Wataugans James Robertson and John Bean negotiated a ten-year lease for land in the Tennessee Valley for five to six thousand dollars worth of "merchandise and trade goods, plus some muskets and household articles." Historian Max Dixon believes that

⁷⁴ Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 6; Daniel Jansen, "A Case of Fraud and Deception: The Revolutionary War Military Land Bounty Policy in Tennessee," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 64 (1992): 41-42.

⁷⁵ McCown, *The Watauga Purchase*, 5-6; James Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Asheville, NC: Bright Mountain Books, 1891), 45-47. The treaty negotiated at Lochaber, South Carolina also attempted to halt white encroachment on Cherokee lands, but "misunderstandings about the treaty" had the unintended consequence of encouraging white settlement in the region (Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 18-19, 22-23). A 1770 survey that accompanied the Treaty of Lochaber threatened the Watauga settlements when it was revealed that all of the East Tennessee settlements were actually in violation of the treaty. In response, the leaders of the Watauga settlements entered into the 1773 lease negotiations with the Cherokee and formed the frontier government they called the Watauga Association (Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 11-15, 22-23).

⁷⁶ British King George III decreed the Proclamation Line of 1763 in October of that year. According to Donald Davis, the proclamation prohibited white settlement west of the crest of the Appalachian Mountain chain in order to "keep the population confined" to the east coast in order to maximize the collection of taxes, promote regional trade, and to curtail Indian violence against white squatters (Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 94-95).

prominent Wataugans John Carter, Andrew Greer, and William Bean financed the lease agreement, and James Robinson's cousin, Charles, served as the trustee of the lease. Charles Robinson established an "informal land office" that collected payments from Watauga settlers and registered land claims. The success of the land lease deal granted temporary possession of the Watauga land, and many settlers believed that the lease agreement ensured future permanent ownership of their land claims.⁷⁷

On March 17, 1775, Richard Henderson, former North Carolina judge and successful land speculator, secured twenty million acres from the Cherokee for ten thousand English pounds. Henderson's land firm, the Transylvania Company, utilized the turmoil surrounding the American rebellion to secure an enormous tract of land that encompassed the entire Cumberland Valley in middle Tennessee and the southern section of the Kentucky territory. The Henderson Purchase, the largest private land purchase in American history to that date, paved the way for the settlement of Kentucky and set an important precedent for the Watauga settlers in attendance during the treaty negotiations at Sycamore Shoals.⁷⁸ Just two days after the Henderson Purchase, the Watauga settlers convinced the Cherokee to sell the land they previously leased for two thousand pounds. With the Watauga Purchase, Tennessee's earliest inhabitants finally secured two thousand square miles of land along the Watauga, Holston and Great Conaway (now New) Rivers. These two monumental Cherokee land deals allowed Jacob Brown to purchase two large tracts of the best lands encompassing the Nolichucky settlements, and John Carter to acquire the land surrounding his Carter's Valley settlements. Despite

⁷⁷ Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 18-19, 22-23; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 39-40; *First Families of Tennessee*, 34-35; Phillip M. Hamer, "The Wataugans and the Cherokee Indians in 1776," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 3 (January 1931): 108-109.

⁷⁸ Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 27-31.

dubious land claims and underhanded Indian treaties, these earlier land transactions between the future Franklinites and the region's aboriginal land claimants precipitated a destructive wave of speculation that eventually consumed the entire region.⁷⁹

On April 1, less than a month after the Watauga Purchase, the Wataugans opened a land office at the home of John Carter. Charles Robertson (Trustee), James Smith (Land Office Clerk), and William Bailey Smith (surveyor) oversaw the administration of the land office. The land office allowed the valley speculators to use the proceeds of the land sales to repay the financiers of the Watauga Purchase, to reserve the choicest parcels of land for the Watauga settlement's economic elite, and to "dispose of the remainder for the good of the community." Over the next few months, several of the more prominent Wataugans, including John Sevier, John Carter, William Bean, Jonathan Tipton, James Robertson, and Robert Lucas, purchased large acreages. Despite the accumulation of landed wealth by the Tennessee Valley's economic elite, individual farming families managed to purchase most of the land in two to four hundred acre patents. These initial land sales served as the first step in the economic stratification of frontier Tennessee.⁸⁰

The American Revolution and corresponding Cherokee Wars accelerated the distribution of land in East Tennessee. Campaigns against the British-allied Cherokee tribe brought thousands of militiamen into the Tennessee country, and many of these soldiers purchased land in the region. The continued threat of Cherokee and Tory attacks in the southern mountains, anguished pleas by the residents for protection, and the desire to defend their landholdings led to the eventual annexation of the Watauga settlements by

⁷⁹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 22-23; McCown, *The Watauga Purchase*, 6-7; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 109-111, 121.

⁸⁰ Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 31-33; McCown, *The Watauga Purchase*, 7. Ramsey offers a complete list of the patentees of the Watauga Purchase (Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 119-120).

the state of North Carolina. The creation of the Watauga District in 1776 and the subsequent formation of Washington County in 1777 legitimized earlier land purchases, as North Carolina recognized “the loyalty of the West to the Patriot cause.”⁸¹

The United States Continental Congress offered the first federal land grants on the Tennessee frontier immediately after declaring independence from Britain. Congress lacked the specie to raise an army so they utilized land bounties to recruit and pay Continental soldiers. Revolutionary leaders like Thomas Jefferson believed that offering America’s western lands to yeoman soldiers ensured the settlement of western lands and the spread of Republican ideals. The 1780 and 1782 land bounty acts guaranteed enlistees backcountry acreage, based on military rank, in military districts previously reserved for recruitment purposes. Because land speculators, valley settlers, and the Overhill Cherokee claimed the bulk of the available lands in East Tennessee, most of the land grants issued in what eventually became the state of Tennessee were in the Cumberland District of Middle Tennessee (Davidson County). Due to the complicated and costly nature of obtaining a title to the military land claims, many of these grants ended up in the hands of land speculators, including a number of prominent Franklinites. Land speculators “had both the money and political connections to acquire good land in the military districts,” and to “manage the complications and costs” associated with obtaining a title to the land.⁸² These “land-jobbers” used their political and economic

⁸¹ Ramsey includes a copy of the “petition of the inhabitants of the Washington District” in his work (Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 134-139). The majority of male Watauga settlers signed the 1776 petition. Many historians believe that this petition was the first instance of George Washington’s name being used to designate a geographical area (Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 47-51).

⁸² Jansen, “A Case of Fraud and Deception,” 41-67.

leverage, and sometimes fraud, bribery, and corruption, to amass enormous tracts of land in Tennessee.⁸³

Post-revolutionary land speculation in the Tennessee Valley demanded further land cessions by the Cherokee Nation, who claimed vast tracts of land in the lower Tennessee Valley, and the acquiescence of the North Carolina government to the interests of powerful regional land speculators. In 1783, a group of powerful and politically connected land speculators, led by William Blount, “pushed” the “Land Grab Act” through the North Carolina legislature. The act “offered for sale at a price of ten pounds per hundred acres all unappropriated land in the Tennessee country, with the exception of military counties and the Cherokee Reservation east of the Tennessee River and south of the French Broad and Big Pigeon.”⁸⁴ This often-overlooked piece of legislation reinvigorated land speculation in eastern Tennessee. The desire for land became so ravenous that the small land office opened by the state from October 20, 1783 to May 25, 1784 sold nearly four million acres of land. This period of wild speculation “created the foundations for large fortunes” for several prominent Franklinites and the preservation of these land claims played a central role in the Franklin independence movement.⁸⁵ Over the course of Franklin’s brief existence, securing access to the rapidly shrinking aboriginal territorial claims remained an important priority in the Franklinite’s political and economic agenda.⁸⁶

⁸³ Albert Bruce Pruitt, *Glasgow Land Fraud Papers Volume 2: North Carolina Revolutionary War Bounty Land in Tennessee* (Cary, NC: by the author, 1993), 1-4; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 274-275; Watauga Association of Genealogists, *History of Washington County*, 20.

⁸⁴ Dykeman, *Tennessee: A History*, 66-7.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 44-59; Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 39; Henderson, *North Carolina*, 384-385; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 279-281;

By the date of the first meeting of the Franklin Assembly in August of 1784, the frontier communities of eastern Tennessee had matured into a hierarchical society dominated by an entrenched economic and political elite. These men utilized their control of the economy to determine the region's political course for the next decade. The leaders of the state of Franklin derived their political and economic power from their entrepreneurial spirit, military prowess, and most importantly, their vast land holdings.

Chapter Two

Acts of Designing Men: Community, Conflict, and Control

Following the conclusion of the American Revolution, both the newly formed federal government and the state governments found themselves in difficult financial circumstances. Many political leaders believed that the most promising and expedient solutions to America's post-revolutionary economic crisis lay in the sale of the "uninhabited" western lands claimed by several expansive and powerful states and the southeastern Indian tribes. Beginning in 1780, congress began lobbying state leaders from New York, Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina to turn over their western territory to the federal government. Congress hoped to sell the land and use the proceeds to stall the mounting national debt. New York ceded her lands in 1780 and Virginia followed suit in 1781, but political leaders in North Carolina remained bitterly divided on the subject. During the April 1784 session of the North Carolina General Assembly, the financially embattled state finally agreed to cede her western lands to the federal government. The state relinquished "all lands west of the Appalachian mountain watershed," including the counties of Washington, Greene, Sullivan, and Davidson (in Middle Tennessee), to Congress in order to "hasten the extinguishment of the debts" incurred during the American Revolution and to avoid paying a potential "continental land tax" being considered in Congress.⁸⁷ This first Cession Act proved to be the spark

⁸⁷ Passage of the Cession Act of 1784 did not occur without considerable debate in the North Carolina Assembly. The Act was eventually passed with a vote of fifty-two for and forty-three against, with Washington, Greene, and Sullivan counties equally divided over the issue (Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 188).

that ignited the dormant separatist sentiments in the Tennessee Valley. The supporters of western independence waited less than six months after the passage of this act to declare their independence. Why did the residents and political leadership of the Tennessee Valley support the Franklin separatist movement? Why did a substantial number of East Tennesseans oppose the state of Franklin? Some of the answers to these questions are found in the region's ethnic, religious, and cultural composition, perpetual violence and warfare, and highly competitive commercial impulses.⁸⁸

The first families settling the upper East Tennessee Valley came from diverse ethnic and geographical backgrounds. These families traveled with disparate notions of community and culture that often clashed during the political turmoil following the Cession Act of 1784. The culture created by these frontier families fostered the principles leading them to both support and oppose the Franklin statehood movement. The Franklinites forged their communities in the fires of Native American and revolutionary combat, and whetted their separatist ideology with the tools of Protestantism, nativism, and socio-economic elitism.

The vast majority of Franklin residents migrated to the region from the states of Virginia and North Carolina. Pioneering settlers like William Bean and John Carter emigrated from the Shenandoah Valley and tidewater region of Virginia. Frontier entrepreneurs like Jacob White and Nashville founder James Robertson came from eastern North Carolina. Many prominent Franklin families, including the Sevier, Cocke, Carter, Campbell, Cage, Christian, Martin, Donelson, and Looney families, once called

⁸⁸ Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation*, 54-59; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, vol. 24, 561-563; Hugh Talmage Lefler, *North Carolina History: Told by Contemporaries* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1934), 120-121; Watauga Association of Genealogists, *History of Washington County*, 20-21.

Virginia home. Despite the prevalence of Virginia natives, historian James K. Huhta argues, “the greatest numbers [of East Tennesseans] came from North Carolina.”⁸⁹ Unquestionably, some of the most important families in early Tennessee history, including the White, Hutchings, and Love families, embarked from North Carolina counties east of the Allegheny Mountains. One of Franklin’s earliest historians, Judge John Haywood, agreed that “the population of Franklin was composed almost wholly of emigrants from Virginia and North Carolina.” Not all influential pioneer Tennesseans migrated from North Carolina and Virginia. Powerful regional leaders like Evan Shelby and John Tipton arrived in eastern Tennessee from Maryland, and several other prominent Tennessee Valley families relocated from Pennsylvania and South Carolina.⁹⁰

For a region long considered predominantly Scotch-Irish, the ethnic composition of frontier East Tennessee is surprisingly heterogeneous. The majority of the earliest inhabitants of the region traced their roots back to the British Isles. In a survey conducted by Tennessee historian Stephen B. Weeks, of the roughly 31,913 residents of the Tennessee country in 1790, approximately 83.1% were English, 11.2% were Scotch-Irish, and 2.3% were Irish. According to Weeks, “From these percentages it is evident that Tennessee was considerably ahead of the United States in the number of its citizens who traced their ancestry back to the British Isles.” Despite being less than twelve percent of the total population of Tennessee, many scholars still argue that the Ulster-Scots comprised the largest ethnic group of first families in Tennessee, meaning families

⁸⁹ James K. Huhta, “Tennessee and the American Revolution,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 31 (Winter 1972): 309.

⁹⁰ Haywood, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 275. John Tipton arrived in the Tennessee Valley in October of 1782 and purchased a farm a few miles from Sinking Creek in Washington County (Selden Nelson, “The Tipton Family of Tennessee,” *The East Tennessee Historical Society Publications* 1 (1929): 68-69).

who arrived before Tennessee was granted statehood in 1796.⁹¹ The story of the politically and religiously oppressed Ulster Scots and their flight to America is entrenched in the history of the region, but it often obscures East Tennessee's cultural diversity and the contributions made by these other ethnic groups.⁹²

In addition to the ethnically dominant Anglo-Saxon strains, Weeks' 1790 ethnic survey included Germans, Welsh, Dutch, Swiss, Alsatians, Africans, and French Huguenots.⁹³ Many of the most prominent frontier families traced their ancestry back to these minority ethnic groups. The Sevier, Vincent, and Amis families emigrated from France with groups of Huguenots who fled religious persecution and traveled amongst the Protestant congregations of William Penn.⁹⁴ Eminent Welsh families like the Shelby, Conway, Evans, and Williams families also called Tennessee home in the late eighteenth-century. The ethnic diversity of the Tennessee Valley fostered the region's distinct political and social culture.⁹⁵

The men at the epicenter of the state of Franklin controversy are representative of the region's ethnic heterogeneity. Franklin's only governor, John Sevier, descended from French Huguenots from the village of Xavier, who fled France after 1685 when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and began imprisoning the Protestant minority.⁹⁶

William Cocke, Franklin's emissary to the American Congress, and Landon Carter,

⁹¹ Weeks, "Tennessee: Discussion of the Sources of its Population," 249.

⁹² H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis Wood, Jr., *Leave-Taking: The Scotch-Irish Come to Western North Carolina* (Cullowhee, NC: Mountain Heritage Center, 1986), 1-6; Haywood, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 275-277; Sheeler, "Background Factors of East Tennessee," 168.

⁹³ Weeks, "Tennessee: Discussion of the Sources of its Population," 249.

⁹⁴ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 275-277.

⁹⁵ *First Families of Tennessee*, 25-27; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 275-277, 289-338. Weeks' 1790 ethnic survey offers these figures: Dutch 0.2%, French 0.3%, German 2.8%, and all others 0.1% (Weeks, "Tennessee: Discussion of the Sources of its Population," 249).

⁹⁶ Charles W. Crawford, ed., *Governors of Tennessee, 1790-1835* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1979), 32-33; George W. Sevier to Lyman Draper, February 9, 1839, King's Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 288-338.

Speaker of Franklin's first Senate, traced their ancestry to England.⁹⁷ The families of James White, founder of Knoxville and "early speaker" in the Franklin Senate, and Gilbert Christian, Speaker of the Franklin Senate in 1786, emigrated from Ulster.⁹⁸ The descendents of Presbyterian minister Samuel Doak, the Franklinite's spiritual and educational advisor, migrated from Ireland, and the well-traveled mercenary George Elholm, Adjutant General of the Franklin militia, came to America at the beginning of the revolution from the Duchy of Holstein in Denmark.⁹⁹ Even the opponents of the Franklin movement, usually referred to as Tiptonites after their leader John Tipton, came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Colonel John Tipton's family claimed its origins in Scotland, and Evan Shelby, probably the most politically influential opponent of Franklin, was of Welsh descent. The staggering ethnic diversity of the region's political and economic leadership laid the cultural and ideological foundation for both sides in the Franklin affair.¹⁰⁰

The region's cultural diversity led to the growth of several religious denominations in the Tennessee backcountry. By 1784, ministers representing no less than five denominations proselytized in upper East Tennessee, including Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Moravian, and Quaker. These churches and their congregational leadership played critical roles in the political, educational, and cultural development of the

⁹⁷ Paul P. Hoffman, ed., *The Carter Family Papers, 1659-1797, in the Sabine Hall Collection* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Library Microfilm Publications, 1967), 1-10; Sketch of the Life of General William Cocke, One of the Pioneers of East Tennessee, by his Grandson, Col. William M. Cocke, William Johnston Cocke Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Manuscript Department, The Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁹⁸ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 288-338.

⁹⁹ Neal O'Steen, "Pioneer Education in the Tennessee Country," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 35 (Summer 1976): 201-203.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 288-338; Dennis T. Lawson, "The Tipton-Hayes Place: A Landmark of East Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 29 (Summer 1970): 105-1-7; Nelson, "The Tipton Family of Tennessee," 67-68.

Tennessee Valley and the state of Franklin. From the earliest exploration of the region, organized religion helped to transform the Tennessee Valley. Local historians point out that early explorers like Daniel Boone and Nathan Gist were “traditionally Baptists,” and ordained ministers often accompanied groups of would-be settlers into the backcountry. In 1758, Presbyterian missionaries from the Society for Managing the Mission and Schools traveled into Tennessee to propagate the gospel among the Overhill Cherokee. Led by such ministers as John Martin and William Richardson, these Presbyterian missionaries became the “first ministers to preach the gospel in the Tennessee country.”¹⁰¹ In 1761, North Carolina Baptist preacher Jonathan Mulkey accompanied a party of explorers venturing into the region. Mulkey eventually settled in Carter’s Valley in 1775, and was attacked by Cherokee Indians less than a year later. Presbyterian missionaries constructed Taylor’s Meeting House in 1773, and the small log building became the first structure used for religious instruction in the Tennessee backcountry. Circuit riders from various denominations often catechized from the log cabin, and also used the rustic structure as a fort and a school.¹⁰²

The Watauga residents organized the two earliest permanent churches in the region during the American Revolution, Sinking Creek Baptist Church and Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church. The Reverend Mathew Talbott, from Bedford County, Virginia, established Sinking Creek Baptist Church (originally called Watauga River Church) sometime between 1775 and 1783. Talbott, an early Watauga landowner, constructed the church on a small tributary of the Watauga River in what is now Carter County,

¹⁰¹ Calloway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 113-114.

¹⁰² Ibid.; Glenn A. Toomey, *Bicentennial Holston: Tennessee’s First Baptist Association and its Affiliated Churches, 1786-1985* (Morristown, TN: by the author, 1985), 25-29, 49-51.

Tennessee.¹⁰³ The first extant records from the church date back to July 5, 1785 and include a plea to an unknown “Virginia [Baptist] Association” to end “the [unspecified] divisions between us.”¹⁰⁴ Remarkably, the church is still in existence and is now considered the “oldest church in Tennessee occupying its original location and foundation.” Tidence Lane founded Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church between 1778 and 1779, considered by most state historians to be Tennessee’s first church. Reverend Lane migrated from Sandy Creek, North Carolina to Watauga in 1776, and constructed his church atop Buffalo Ridge in Washington County. The founding of these two frontier churches initiated a dramatic proliferation of Baptist churches across the Tennessee Valley.¹⁰⁵

Presbyteries soon followed these early Baptist churches onto the Tennessee frontier. In 1780, Presbyterian minister Samuel Doak organized Salem Church near Jonesboro, and soon after, Samuel Houston, and Hezekiah Balch, Presbyterian ministers from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, joined Doak in the Tennessee Valley.¹⁰⁶ These Presbyterian leaders played important roles in the development of the state of Franklin,

¹⁰³ Herman A. Norton, *Religion in Tennessee, 1777-1945* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 9-10; Toomey, *Bicentennial Holston*, 25-26, 49-51

¹⁰⁴ W.P.A. Copying Historical Records Project, *Records of Carter County: Sketch of Sinking Creek Baptist Church* (Morristown, TN: U.S. Works Progress Administration, 1938), 1; W.P.A. Copying Historical Records Project, *Records of Carter County: Papers Relating to Sinking Creek Baptist Church, 1783-1875* (Morristown, TN: U.S. Works Progress Administration, 1938), 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Calloway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 113-114; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 270-272; Toomey, *Bicentennial Holston*, 25-26, 49-51; Albert W. Wardin, *Tennessee Baptists: A Comprehensive History, 1779-1999* (Brentwood, TN: Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1999), 17-23. According to Herman Norton, the establishment of Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church “conformed to a pattern” for founding churches in the Tennessee backcountry. “Baptists often would come in a body from Virginia and North Carolina congregations and constitute the nucleus for a Tennessee church.” The Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church stood “eight miles north of present-day Jonesboro, Tennessee.” The numbers of Baptist congregations in the Tennessee Valley rose so dramatically that they “had sufficient strength to establish the Holston Association” in 1786, “the first such [religious] organization west of the Allegheny Mountains (Herman A. Norton, *Religion in Tennessee, 1777-1945* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 9-10).”

¹⁰⁶ Outline of life of Samuel Witherspoon Doak, Samuel Witherspoon Doak Papers, 1768-1925, Tennessee State Library and Archives; Norton, *Religion in Tennessee*, 3-7.

and used their pulpits for catechizing and politicking. The blending of God and politics fostered divisions within the Franklin movement, but the contributions of these Presbyterian ministers led to the creation of an exceptional frame of government and the establishment of the Tennessee Valley's first educational institutions.¹⁰⁷

Reserving the in-depth discussion of the Franklin Constitution and the role played by Presbyterian ministers in the Franklin movement for a later chapter, it is important to note the relationship between the Tennessee Valley's first schools and the efforts of Presbyterian ministers in the backcountry. The "pioneering Presbyterian ministers" of East Tennessee "brought with them the traditional Scottish practice of founding a school beside each church."¹⁰⁸ In 1780, Samuel Doak erected the first school west of the Appalachian Mountains beside his Salem Church. Doak's Martin Academy, named after North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin, eventually received an official charter from the North Carolina Assembly in 1783. In 1785, the Franklin government supported the academy, often called "Doak's Log College" by local residents, and in 1795 the school became Washington College.¹⁰⁹

During the early formative months of the state of Franklin, education emerged as a politically divisive issue. East Tennessee's prominent Presbyterian ministers led the effort to construct public schools, and utilize tax revenue to finance the construction and administration of these institutions. During the 1785 debates surrounding the drafting and ratification of the Franklin Constitution, the Reverend Samuel Houston, a Washington County Presbyterian minister, co-authored a radical constitution (ultimately

¹⁰⁷ Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 113-115; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 270-271.

¹⁰⁸ O'Steen, "Pioneer Education in the Tennessee Country," 205-207.

¹⁰⁹ Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 115-117; Norton, *Religion in Tennessee*, 3-7.

rejected by the Franklinites) that included provisions for building and financing schools in the state. According to section 32 of this document:

All kinds of useful learning shall be encouraged by this commonwealth [Franklin], that is to say, the future Legislature shall erect... one University. And, for endowing the same [university], there shall be appropriated such lands as may be judged necessary, one-fourth of all the monies arising from surveys of land hereafter to be made, one halfpenny upon every pound of inspected indigo, three pence for every barrel of flour, and one shilling on every hogshead of tobacco, forever. ... a Grammar School shall be erected in each county, and such sums paid by the public as shall enable the trustees to employ a master or masters of approved morals and abilities.¹¹⁰

Reverend Houston's effort to establish a state university and public school system in 1785 is remarkable considering that the State of Tennessee made no attempt to create a tax-supported public school system until the middle of the nineteenth-century.¹¹¹

Although the constitutional debates surrounding the public school efforts did not survive, most Tennessee historians believe that the Reverend Hezekiah Balch led the effort to abandon the progressive Franklin Constitution. Section 41 of the compromise constitution provided for a drastically scaled-back version of Houston's original proposal:

That a school or schools shall be established by the legislature for the convenient instruction of youth, with such salaries to the masters, paid by the public, as may enable them to instruct at low prices; and all useful learning shall be encouraged and promoted in one or more universities.¹¹²

The new constitution failed to provide the same levels of financial support or urgency for the construction of public schools. The controversy surrounding public school funding in the state of Franklin became one of several contentious issues that threatened the Franklin independence movement.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ramsay, *Annals of Tennessee*, 330.

¹¹¹ O'Steen, "Pioneer Education in the Tennessee Country," 207-208; Ramsay, *Annals of Tennessee*, 330.

¹¹² Haywood, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 346-347.

¹¹³ O'Steen, "Pioneer Education in the Tennessee Country," 207-209; Haywood, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 346-347.

Supporters of Franklin's public school initiative argued that education would have a civilizing effect on the Tennessee backcountry, and curtail crime and moral indiscretions. According to Episcopal minister Charles Woodmason, whose missionary work led him to visit the Carolina backcountry, the educationally deficient southern frontier was rampant with, "Lewd, impudent, abandon'd Prostitutes, Gamblers, Gamesters of all Sorts- Horse Thieves, Cattle Steelers, Hog Steelers- Branders and Markers, Hunters going naked as Indians. Women hardly more so. All in a Manner useless to Society, but very pernicious in propagating Vice, Beggary, and Theft." An examination of the extant East Tennessee County and Court records from the years surrounding the state of Franklin reveals a very different community than the one described by Woodmason in 1768. Residents of the Tennessee Valley were both highly literate and largely law abiding. The images of rough and tumble frontier communities in the Tennessee Valley do not hold up under scrutiny.¹¹⁴

From the earliest settlement, the Tennessee Valley settlers concentrated their efforts on maintaining law and order and protecting private property. According to one historian, the earliest residents of Washington County "lived, administered their laws, established courts and laid their penalties upon evil-doers according to the legal system of their parent States." Tennessee Valley settlers held the first court in the region on February 23, 1778 at the home of Charles Robertson. The lack of a permanent courthouse forced the Washington County residents to hold court in several private homes.¹¹⁵ Despite this limitation, the earliest court records reveal a community concerned with crime and punishment. At the second court meeting, local leaders appointed Valentine

¹¹⁴ O'Steen, "Pioneer Education in the Tennessee Country," 205-6.

¹¹⁵ Holt, *The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee*, 257-259.

Sevier, Jr., brother of the Clerk of the Court John Sevier, Sheriff of Washington County. During the August 27, 1778 meeting, the frontier court ordered its tax collectors for the several districts in the county to collect “sums” for the construction of a “court house, prison, & stocks.” These early court sessions provided the leadership of Washington County with an opportunity to establish tax rates, pay officials, fix prices on essential items, and most importantly, to sell and purchase property.¹¹⁶

A survey of the Washington County court records from 1777 through 1789 shows the preponderance of early cases to be breach of contract suits, land fraud cases, and misdemeanor criminal offenses. A typical example of a breach of contract case occurred on March 15, 1789 with a suit brought by Andrew Grier against Mark Mitchell. According to court records, Mitchell “made a certain promissory note... to pay unto the said Andrew... one-hundred and eight pounds Virginia money” for an undisclosed amount of land. Grier stated that Mitchell intended “to deceive” him and refused to “pay him the said sum of money.” In a region so heavily reliant upon land for credit, exchange, and investment, it is not surprising that cases involving land disputes are the most numerous types appearing in the court records. Several court cases dealing with relatively minor offenses, usually theft of livestock and cattle or slander suits, dot the early Washington County court records. In a July 29, 1781 case, William Deal accused Marshall Higdon of “having taken [several horses] in a clandestine manner.” The August 18, 1789 case of *Henry Colback v. William Blevins* involved accusations of “scandalous and defamatory” speech. According to court records, Blevins sullied Colback’s “good name” when he accused him of “stealing John Gorsach’s Bridle.” Colback defended

¹¹⁶ Mary Hardin McCown, Nancy E. Jones Stickley, and Inez E. Burns, comp., *Washington County Tennessee Records* (Johnson City, TN: privately printed, 1964), vi-4.

himself by stating that he “was good and honest and always kept himself free and clear from theft.” In addition to larceny and slander cases, several Tennessee Valley women initiated cases against men for fathering bastard children. In a December 28, 1779 case, Jane Odell stood before the court and accused Absalom Booring of “begetting [her] said child.” John Tipton and Henry Nelson, the two Washington County Justices of the Peace, ordered Booring arrested and brought before the court to “answer these charges.” Booring ultimately paid a small fine for having “carnal knowledge of her body [Odell].” These non-violent cases abound in the Washington County court records.¹¹⁷

Despite the relative peacefulness inside of the communities themselves, East Tennessee remained a dangerous and violent region throughout the eighteenth century. Native American attacks, revolutionary warfare, and bitter partisanship surrounding the state of Franklin fostered a lingering sense of fear and acrimony within the Tennessee Valley. A detailed analysis of the relationship between the regional Native American tribes and white East Tennesseans is contained in a later chapter, but it is critical to briefly mention that violent clashes between frontier whites and the southeastern tribes remained a powerful permanent feature of the region until the early nineteenth century. From the struggle between the British and the French-allied Cherokee warriors at Fort Loudon during the French and Indian War to the extremely bloody Cherokee and Creek wars following the collapse of the state of Franklin, the constant threat of Native American violence served as a salient political and economic issue.

Most of the Franklinites served in some military capacity, and several of their forbearers participated in the agrarian radicalism of the North and South Carolina

¹¹⁷ Washington County Records: Court Records, Receipts 1777-1794, East Tennessee State University Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City, TN; Washington County Court Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

Regulator movements. Prior to the American Revolution the South Carolina Regulators demanded that local government officials halt the roving bands of thieves and criminals terrorizing their backcountry farm communities. Farmers banded together to form extra-governmental police units, calling themselves Regulators, to end the anarchic situation. In North Carolina, the Regulators sought to end governmental and fiscal corruption. The North Carolina Regulators also formed a quasi-military force that challenged North Carolina Governor William Tryon and the region's political and economic leadership. On May 16, 1771, Governor Tryon and several thousand well-trained colonial troops crushed the backcountry insurgency at the bloody Battle of Alamance Creek, and many of the surviving supporters of the movement fled the region. The Regulator Movement is often hailed as the "first battle of the American Revolution," and several scholars maintain that many supporters of the movement immigrated into the Tennessee Valley to escape retaliation for their actions and to find freedom.¹¹⁸ Historian Thomas Perkins Abernathy challenges the assertion that "the colonization of the trans-Appalachian region" occurred as a "result of the Regulator trouble." Abernathy argues that the earliest settlers of the region "were seeking land rather than freedom" when they settled in the Tennessee Valley. Historians disagree over the significance of the Regulator Movement in the settlement of the trans-Appalachian frontier, but it is clear that at least a few former supporters and leaders of the movement, including Jacob Brown and James Robertson, settled in the upper East Tennessee Valley.¹¹⁹

The American Revolution and the Battle of King's Mountain transformed the socio-economic dynamics of the Tennessee Valley. The Revolution became the economic

¹¹⁸ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 20; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 45-49; Haywood, *History of Tennessee*, 50-52; Sheeler, "Background Factors of East Tennessee," 168.

¹¹⁹ Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 346-348.

springboard for many of the region's political and economic elite, and the events that occurred in the rolling hills of the North Carolina piedmont transformed a ragtag group of backwoodsmen into the "Rearguard of the Revolution." The involvement of Tennessee Valley settlers in the Revolution fostered the rank and file loyalty and radical separatism defining the state of Franklin movement and the political allegiance to North Carolina forming the ideology of the Anti-Franklinites.¹²⁰

Prior to 1780, the American Revolution seemed like a distant event for most residents of the upper East Tennessee Valley. The only significant manifestations of revolutionary violence in the region came in the forms of increased numbers of Overhill Cherokee attacks on white settlements and the prosecution of backcountry Tories. Trade relations and continued land encroachment by American colonists ensured the British support from the Overhill Cherokee. The intensification of Indian raids on American settlements created a highly volatile situation in the backcountry communities. In response to the threat of Cherokee violence, the Tennessee Valley settlers organized several revolutionary committees of safety, improved their frontier defenses and armaments, and expanded the ranks of their militia companies. The American Revolution opened an epoch of warfare between the Overhill Cherokee and Tennessee Valley settlers which lasted for several decades.¹²¹

Second only to the Cherokee, the danger posed by Tennessee Tories loomed as the greatest internal revolutionary threat to the valley settlements. Exact statistics regarding the level of loyalist support in the Tennessee backcountry are difficult to secure, but

¹²⁰ James R. Gilmore, *The Rearguard of the Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1886; reprint, Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company, 1974), 1.

¹²¹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 70-80; Calloway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 105-113; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 56-60; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 175-180.

Tennessee Valley settlers unquestionably believed Toryism to be a grave threat to their communities. According to John Finger, “Like Patriots in other areas, Tennessee settlers took decisive steps to stifle dissent in their midst.”¹²² Backcountry leaders and militia companies targeted known pockets of loyalists, forcing them to take loyalty oaths to the United States, to flee the region, or to languish in local jails. East Tennesseans targeted “nests of Tories” on the Nolichucky River and in the Watauga settlements, capturing roughly seventy suspected loyalists.¹²³ Adding to the challenges confronting Patriot supporters in the Tennessee backcountry, many eastern Tories fled across the trans-Appalachian frontier to escape prosecution in the east. By 1780, tales of Tory conspiracies and sabotage spread across the upper East Tennessee Valley. According to John Sevier’s biographer A.W. Pruitt, in the fall of 1779, Sarah Hawkins Sevier, John Sevier’s first wife, helped to foil a plot to assassinate Colonel Sevier by a “noted and infamous Tory” named Jacob Dykes. Dykes’ wife divulged the plan to Sarah Sevier “after receiving favors [quart of meal and a slice of meat] from the [Sevier] family.”¹²⁴

In response to the elevated threat of Tory violence, the Tennesseans formed two companies comprised of thirty “dragoons” to “patrol the whole country,” and to “capture and punish with death all suspected persons.” These patrols succeeded in capturing several high-profile Tory leaders, including Isam Yearley and Captain Grimes.¹²⁵ Many of the captured Tories faced their American accusers in the Washington County court. On February 23, 1778, an unidentified Tory was “imprisoned during the [remainder] of the present war with Britain, and the sheriff take the whole of his estate into custody.” In

¹²² Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 56, 61, 63, 83-88.

¹²³ Callaway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 96, 99, 107, 109.

¹²⁴ Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 54-56; A.W. Pruitt to Lyman C. Draper, September 4, 1851, Kings Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection.

¹²⁵ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 178-182, 209-211; Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 54-55.

another case, a loyalist identified as “J.H.” received a sentence of one year in prison “in order to prevent further and future practices of [a] pernicious nature.”¹²⁶ A patrol unit led by Robert Sevier captured and executed several Tories, including two loyalists accused of conspiring to assassinate John Sevier. In all, the Washington County court tried fourteen cases of high treason from 1778 to 1783. Tories like Dykes, Halley, Jesse Green, and John Gibson did not have the luxury of a court trial. Valley militiamen hanged these men for their loyalty to the British cause. In 1850 the son of Franklin Judge David Campbell recounted the backcountry execution of a Tory named Hopkins. After a two mile chase up the Holston River, David Campbell and a small party of frontier militia cornered the desperate Hopkins. Campbell’s son described what happened next:

Hopkins on making a bluff jumped his horse down it [Holston River] some fifteen or twenty feet into the river- [David] Campbell was here in pursuit and followed into the water- the jump threw Hopkins from his horse and before he could recover, Campbell was at him, and they had a long and most desperate encounter- Hopkins was the strongest man and was near drowning Campbell in the water when Edmiston and several others came up. By their assistance he was subdued and taken to the bank- Some of the company knew him, and knew some of his acts of felony- all knew his desperate character... The company held a consultation & decided that they would hang him and did so forthwith by sticking his neck into the fork of a leaning sycamore which bent over the river.¹²⁷

The arrests, prosecutions, and executions of local Tories galvanized the largely pro-American Tennesseans and stoked the flames of backcountry patriotism.

The Tennessee Valley’s first external participation in the American Revolution occurred early in 1780 when the British launched the southern theatre of their struggling campaign. After Burgoyne suffered a stunning defeat at the Battle of Saratoga in upstate New York in October of 1777, British King George III and his military planners decided

¹²⁶ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 181.

¹²⁷ Governor David Campbell to Lyman C. Draper, 30 March 1842, Kings Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection.

to move the war from the Mid-Atlantic region to the south.¹²⁸ This shift brought the main British thrust to the doorstep of the Tennessee Valley residents. During Britain's 1780 winter assault on Charleston, South Carolina, North Carolina General Henry Rutherford sent a request to the residents of his state to dispatch their militia units "for the defense of their sister state [South Carolina]." The city of Charleston fell to the British on May 12, 1780, but the militiamen of Washington County still heeded Rutherford's call. On March 19, 1780, the militia officers of Washington County, including John Sevier, Jonathan Tipton, Robert Sevier, Landon Carter, John McNabb, Godfrey Isbell, Joseph Wilson, and William Trimble, met "in order to raise one hundred men, agreeable to the command of the Honorable Brigadier Rutherford, to send aid to South Carolina."¹²⁹ In Sullivan County, Colonel Isaac Shelby recruited volunteers to fill the ranks of the Sullivan County militia. Despite the failure to save Charleston and British victories in South Carolina at Waxhaw, Ninety-Six, and Camden, Sevier and Shelby succeeded in raising roughly four hundred militiamen for the mission into South Carolina. The willingness of the Valley settlers to volunteer for a losing southern effort and to leave their homes and families largely unprotected from the Cherokee Indians demonstrated their level of commitment to the American cause.¹³⁰

Led by Colonel Isaac Shelby, the Tennessee volunteers saw their first revolutionary action during the assault on Fort Anderson at the Battle of Thicketty Creek. Fort Anderson, a small fort in the piedmont of South Carolina, housed both British soldiers and a large contingent of South Carolina Tories. On July 30, 1780, Colonel Shelby

¹²⁸ Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 380-384.

¹²⁹ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 210-217.

¹³⁰ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 70-75; Cox, *The History of Washington County, Tennessee*, 57-59; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 210-217.

dispatched William Cocke to demand the surrender of Fort Anderson. The British commander of the fort, Captain Moore, eventually agreed to surrender the fort, and the Washington County militia captured ninety-three loyalists, two hundred and fifty weapons, and one British Sergeant-Major. Following their victory in South Carolina, the East Tennesseans engaged the British and their regional loyalists at skirmishes near Cedar Spring and Musgrove Mill. These encounters served as a prelude to the defining revolutionary moment for East Tennessee, the Battle of King's Mountain.¹³¹

In May of 1780, British General Charles Cornwallis established his southern military headquarters at Camden, South Carolina. From Camden, Cornwallis and Major Patrick Ferguson drew upon the recent British military successes and waning southern support for the American cause to recruit local loyalists. By the fall of 1780, the ranks of Major Ferguson's Seventy-first Regiment Highlanders had swollen with the addition of Tories drawn from across the Carolinas. After sending a request to loyal North Carolinians to join the British cause, Ferguson menacingly paraded his regiment across the Carolina frontier capturing Patriots and recruiting Tories. Ferguson's backcountry campaign created confusion within the Tennessee Valley communities.¹³² Hundreds of "refuge" American supporters fled across the Allegheny Mountains seeking shelter amongst the East Tennesseans. One of these refugees, Samuel Philips, carried a message from Major Ferguson threatening to "march his own men over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay the country to waste with fire and sword."¹³³

¹³¹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 80-83, Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 219-224.

¹³² Cox, *The History of Washington County*, 57-60.

¹³³ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 219-224; Watauga Association of Genealogists, comps., *History of Washington County Tennessee 1988*, 18-19.

The danger posed by Ferguson's forces strengthened the resolve of the valley residents. Led by Colonel John Sevier (Washington County), Colonel Isaac Shelby (Sullivan County), Charles McDowell (Burke County, North Carolina), Andrew Hampton (Rutherford County, North Carolina) and William and Arthur Campbell (Washington County, Virginia), a motley group of Tennessee Valley, North Carolina, and Virginia troops met on September 25, 1780, at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River. The next day, the assemblage of roughly one thousand militiamen commenced their march toward the inevitable conflict at King's Mountain. Before they departed, the Reverend Samuel Doak treated the volunteer militia force to a passionate sermon. Mixing spirituality and patriotism, Doak urged the soldiers to "Go forth then in the strength of your manhood to the aid of your brethren, the defense of your liberty and the protection of your homes. And may the God of justice be with you and give you victory."¹³⁴

After a grueling ten-day march across the Appalachian Mountains, on the evening of October 6, 1780, the expanded force of fifteen hundred men made contact with Major Ferguson's loyalist regiment in the hills bordering the two Carolinas. The next day, the militia forces surrounded the British troops taking a defensive position atop King's Mountain. Sevier's Washington County militiamen formed a column on the right flank and Shelby's Sullivan County troops joined the Virginia forces to form a column in the center. Aided by North Carolina troops commanded by Charles and Joseph McDowell and Benjamin Cleveland, the Tennessee Valley men launched a withering attack on

¹³⁴ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 82-83; Archibald Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest: The Romantic Story of the Early Pioneers Into Virginia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Kentucky, 1740-1790* (New York: The Century Company, 1920), 289-291; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 223-226. Doak's sermon is reprinted in both Ramsey and Alderman.

Ferguson's forces. Utilizing guerilla warfare tactics honed during their encounters with marauding southeastern Indians, the battle lasted less than an hour. As the black powder smoke cleared from atop King's Mountain, the Tennesseans found themselves victorious. The American troops succeeded in capturing approximately eight hundred and killing one hundred and fifty British loyalists. American forces suffered only twenty-eight casualties and sixty-two wounded militiamen. The continued threat of Cherokee attacks against their communities did not allow the triumphant East Tennesseans to bask in their momentous triumph, and soon after the battle's conclusion, Sevier and Shelby led their troops back across the rugged southern mountains to a heroic welcome in the Great Valley of the Tennessee.¹³⁵

The Battle of King's Mountain and the mythology surrounding the men who fought there created a sense of civic pride amongst East Tennesseans. The leaders of the assault on Ferguson's forces parlayed their exploits into further political and economic hegemony in the rapidly expanding Tennessee frontier. The relationship between political and fiscal power and the battle some historians refer to as "the turning point of the American Revolution" is unmistakable. An examination of the militia leaders during the expedition reveals that most of the Tennessee Valley's able-bodied civic leaders served in leadership capacities during the battle. This connection extended into the post-revolutionary Franklin movement where men like John Sevier, Landon Carter, and William Cocke all held prominent positions both in the revolutionary militia and the Franklin government. Even the opponents of Franklin, men like John Tipton and Isaac Shelby, served as colonels in the King's Mountain volunteer militias and held positions

¹³⁵ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 90-104; Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 60-63; Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, 295-304, Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 230-240; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 461-462.

of power in the North Carolina government. There is no discernable difference between the percentages of King's Mountain participants among the supporters or opponents of the Franklin statehood movement, and it appears as though post-revolutionary developments on the Tennessee frontier played a much more critical role in determining state loyalties during the Franklin debacle. Each side drew heavily upon the rhetoric and ideology of the revolution and their experiences, both real and romanticized, during the Battle of King's Mountain to win local, regional, and national support for their causes.

Participants on both sides of the state of Franklin controversy came from comparable ethnic and religious backgrounds, and also shared similar experiences with localized Indian violence and revolutionary combat. If these variables fail to explain the development of bitter factionalism surrounding the state of Franklin movement, then perhaps the enormously lucrative and highly competitive nature of the region's economy may offer another explanation for the birth of vicious partisanship. Land speculation and ownership served as the primary method of accumulating wealth and power in the Tennessee Valley and in the state of Franklin's mixed economy. Within this economic framework, the Franklin movement is intimately connected to the effort to expand personal land holdings, defend land claims, and remove any barriers to speculative success.

A brief examination of the principal post-revolutionary leaders of the Tennessee Valley reveals a significant concentration of wealth amongst a relatively small number of families. During the state of Franklin's brief existence, John Sevier served as the embattled state's only governor. As one might expect, Sevier and his family's land holdings in Tennessee were remarkably extensive. "Nolichucky Jack," as the soldiers

who served under him lovingly referred to him, owned roughly 84,000 acres of land spread out in several counties and military districts. Sevier's brother Valentine claimed approximately 900 acres in Washington County. Landon Carter, Franklin's Speaker of the Senate and Secretary of State, claimed over 31,000 acres in the Tennessee Valley. The state of Franklin's most prominent attorney and diplomat, William Cocke, owned 11,000 acres of land, and Alexander Outlaw, sheriff of Greene County and one of Franklin's primary Cherokee negotiators, claimed nearly 19,000 acres of land. In all, the leadership of the state of Franklin maintained a disproportionately high level of land holdings, averaging approximately 6600 acres, in a region where most residents owned only a few hundred acres. In a time when property ownership became essential to fully participating in the embryonic American Republic, the leaders of the state of Franklin movement utilized their substantial land holdings to control the socio-economic dynamics and political destiny of an entire region.¹³⁶

Franklinites were not the only regional leaders with high concentrations of landed wealth. The Anti-Franklinites, or Tiptonites, also owned large swaths of land in the Tennessee Valley, but these acreages did not compare to the landholdings of the Franklinite leaders. John Tipton, leader of the efforts to derail the Franklin movement, claimed approximately 2750 acres of land, and North Carolina congressmen and loyalist during the Franklin affair, Thomas Hutchings, owned roughly 4360 acres of land in East Tennessee. Evan Shelby, perhaps the most politically powerful opponent of Franklin, maintained the largest landholdings, roughly 6000 acres of fertile bottom land. In sharp contrast to the Franklinites, the Tiptonite's leadership claimed an average of 2600 acres.

¹³⁶ Irene M. Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records & Earliest Tennessee Land History* (Baltimore: Clearfield Company, Inc., 2000); Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 289-325.

These figures lead to the conclusion that political influence in post-revolutionary East Tennessee corresponded to regional land holdings.¹³⁷

When considering the relationship between land ownership and economic and political power in the Tennessee Valley, the Franklin statehood movement must be recognized as the effort by the region's economic and political elite to protect and expand their wealth and influence. From Franklin's conception, East Tennesseans fused the rhetoric of religion and revolution to construct a popular myth to justify a separatist movement for an independent state, but obscured the economic underpinnings of the secession.

¹³⁷ Griffey, *East Tennessee Land Records*; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 330-338.

Chapter Three

“Agreeable to a Republican Government”

On December 14, 1784, a small contingent of regional frontier leaders met at the rustic log courthouse in Jonesboro to address the tenuous situation the communities of the upper Tennessee Valley found themselves in after the passage of the North Carolina Cession Act a few months prior. This motley group, comprised of the region’s economic, military, political, and religious leadership, confronted the socio-economic ambiguities created by the actions of the North Carolina Assembly. During this meeting of the as yet unnamed Franklin Assembly, the delegates debated declaring the Tennessee Valley counties of Washington, Sullivan, and Greene (formed in 1783) independent from the state of North Carolina.¹³⁸ The Reverend Samuel Houston recounted that one member rose in front of the assemblage, and impassionedly drew upon the legacy of the American Revolution to attempt to inspire and unify the delegates. The Franklinite pulled from his coat pocket a copy of the Declaration of Independence, and began to “show that a number of the reasons which induced their separation from England...applied to the [Tennessee Valley] counties.”¹³⁹ In what became the first of many contentious decisions made by the leadership of the Tennessee Valley, the members of the convention fatefully voted to adopt the state of Franklin’s declaration of independence.¹⁴⁰

The events of that winter day simultaneously obscured the realities of the North Carolina Cession Act, and illuminated the Tennessee Valley factionalism that divided the

¹³⁸ In 1783, the North Carolina Assembly divided Washington County and formed Greene County out of the western section (Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 185-186).

¹³⁹ Watauga Association of Genealogists, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 20; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 19; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 149-151; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 28-34.

Tennessee Valley communities and ultimately destroyed the Franklin statehood movement. The state of Franklin was never really a unified political movement to secure the independence of the westernmost section of North Carolina in order to protect and defend the communities of the Tennessee Valley. From its conception in the mind of Washington County, Virginia resident, Arthur Campbell, to its collapse in the fall of 1788, economic motivations, internal divisions, and communal discord characterized the separatist movement. Upon closer scrutiny, the “noble beginnings” and radical revolutionary political agenda of the movement melt away and reveal essentially a conservative movement rejecting social, political, and economic innovation in exchange for the preservation of land holdings, political hegemony, and the frontier status quo. The leadership of Franklin quashed the efforts of more progressive elements within the Tennessee Valley to bring about meaningful political and social change within the region. A brief examination of the struggle over the Franklin Constitution and the inner-workings of the Franklin government from 1784 to the end of 1785 exposes the movement’s fiscal motivations, political conservatism, and bitter internal partisanship.

The North Carolina separatist movement originated in neighboring Washington County, Virginia. Colonel Arthur Campbell of Royal Oak called Washington County, just across the heavily disputed northern border separating Virginia and North Carolina, home. In addition to his geographical proximity, Colonel Campbell also maintained close military, economic, and personal ties to the Tennessee Valley. During the American Revolution, Campbell served alongside Evan Shelby and William Campbell as commander of the 70th Regiment of the Washington County militia. Although he “missed” the Battle of King’s Mountain in order to protect Washington County from

British loyalists, Campbell dispatched his Virginia regiment to rendezvous with the Tennessee Valley Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals in 1780. Campbell's Washington County militia fought alongside Sevier and Shelby's troops at King's Mountain, and also joined in the joint Virginia-North Carolina campaigns against the Overhill and Chickamauga Cherokee Indians that followed the defeat of the British forces.¹⁴¹ In addition to serving during the Revolution with several of the Tennessee Valley's most prominent citizens, including John Sevier, Isaac Shelby, and Joseph Martin, Colonel Campbell was also related to several influential Franklinites, including his brother David Campbell, who served as Franklin's "chief judge."¹⁴² Campbell's connections to the region also included extensive landholdings in Sullivan County, North Carolina, where the Virginia resident owned approximately 1240 acres along the Holston River.¹⁴³ Campbell's important connections to the Tennessee Valley gave him tremendous influence among the Tennessee Valley inhabitants and a personal stake in the region's political and economic fortunes.¹⁴⁴

In January of 1782, Colonel Campbell became aware that the state of Virginia passed a resolution expressing willingness to cede her northwest territory to Congress. Despite mounting criticisms that that he was "mainly interested in private aggrandizement," Colonel Campbell used his political and economic clout within southwest Virginia to win

¹⁴¹ James Hagy, "Arthur Campbell and the West, 1743-1811," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 90 (October 1982): 461-465; Hartwell L. Quinn, *Arthur Campbell: Pioneer and Patriot of the "Old Southwest,"* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 1990), 57-75; Governor David Campbell to Lyman C. Draper, 30 March 1842, Kings Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection, Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 495.

¹⁴² Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 28, 291-294; Laura E. Luttrell, "Some Founders of Campbell's Station, Tennessee: A Genealogy of Alexander, David, and James Campbell," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 26 (1954): 107-109.

¹⁴³ Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records*, 127.

¹⁴⁴ James W. Hagy and Stanley J. Folmsbee, "Arthur Campbell and the Separate State Movements in Virginia and North Carolina," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 42 (1970): 20-21.

support for a new western state.¹⁴⁵ In a scene foreshadowing the Franklin movement, Campbell argued that the ineptitude of the Virginia state government in dealing with the Cherokee tribe and the shared economic interests of the western residents made the creation of a new state the obvious decision.¹⁴⁶

In April of 1782, Campbell circulated a proposal amongst his fellow Washington County residents to gauge the level of support for a new state. Campbell's proposal, called the "genesis of the State of Franklin movement" by historian Samuel Cole Williams, received support from many Washington County residents and his vision of a new state rapidly gained momentum.¹⁴⁷ By the summer of 1782, the boundaries of Campbell's independent state carved out of southwestern Virginia grew to include portions of western North Carolina, including the Tennessee Valley settlements and Virginia's newly developing Kentucky Territory. He began contacting Tennessee Valley leaders to garner support for his statehood effort. It was within these correspondences that Campbell, John Sevier, William Christian, William Cocke, and David Campbell formulated the plan and principles for a popularly supported statehood movement. The exchanges between the future Franklinites and the Washington County militia colonel reveal the strategy utilized by both parties to win support for their independence movements. In a series of depositions taken between 1785 and 1786 during the state of Virginia's prosecution of Arthur Campbell for "mal-practices and misconduct in his Office of a Justice of the Peace," it was divulged that Campbell defiantly implored his fellow westerners to refuse to pay Virginia's public taxes or to elect citizens to Virginia's

¹⁴⁵ Hagy, "Arthur Campbell and the West," 463-465.

¹⁴⁶ Lewis Preston Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia, 1746-1786, Washington County, 1777-1870* (Richmond: J. L. Hill Printing Company, 1903; reprint, Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1979), 391-392.

¹⁴⁷ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 5.

General Assembly.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, Campbell's accusers leveled accusations of treason, stating that he "openly and secretly, [attempted] to induce the Inhabitants of Washington County to Separate from this [Virginia] Commonwealth." Campbell's communications with the Franklinites exposed his resentment towards Virginia for not using more forceful tactics to halt Cherokee Indian violence, failing to utilize state taxes for desperately needed internal improvements in the region, and denying the western leaders political influence within their state government in Richmond. These arguments supporting separation failed to receive broad support in southwest Virginia, but they resonated with Campbell's neighbors in Washington County, North Carolina.¹⁴⁹

Historian James William Hagy argues that, "Campbell appears to have had little influence in Franklin," but the level of correspondence, military and familial connections, and obvious similarities between the two movements belies this assertion. Despite claims that Campbell "could not have directed the [Franklin] movement from his home sixty or seventy miles away," and the unwillingness of Franklin's leadership to allow him to "manipulate them," Campbell's immediate influence is pervasive throughout the movement.¹⁵⁰

The arguments offered by Arthur Campbell for independence reemerged during the turmoil surrounding the controversial North Carolina Cession Act of 1784. The North

¹⁴⁸ William P. Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts from January 1, 1785, to July 2, 1789, Preserved at the Capital at Richmond, vol. 4* (Richmond: R.U. Derr, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1884), 73, 93.

¹⁴⁹ Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia*, 390-395.

¹⁵⁰ Hagy, "Arthur Campbell and the West," 405-407; Governor David Campbell to Lyman C. Draper, 30 March 1842, Kings Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection. The residents of Virginia's District of Kentucky also felt Campbell's influence. In December of 1784, the residents of the Kentucky District assembled in Danville to consider creating a separate state out of the western fringes of Virginia. In a situation remarkably similar to the Franklin movement, a small group of thirty land speculators, military officials, and civic leaders voted twenty to ten to create the independent state of Kentucky. According to Thomas Abernethy, the fact that "preponderance" of the twenty supporters of statehood were land speculators "is obvious (Thomas P. Abernethy, "Journal of the First Kentucky Convention Dec. 27, 1784-Jan. 5, 1785," *The Journal of Southern History* 1 (February 1935): 67-68)."

Carolina cession debate polarized North Carolina's political leadership. On one side, supporters of the Cession Act argued that, by passing the legislation, North Carolina could diminish much of its enormous revolutionary debt and aid the struggling federal government in "defraying the expenses of the late war."¹⁵¹ Opponents of the act believed that it was not in the interest of North Carolina to cede its vacant land to Congress because of the growing numbers of taxpayers moving into the region and the unwillingness of state leaders to abandon their Tennessee Valley constituency. These patriotic and nationalistic arguments masked the ulterior motives of many of the partisans in the debate.¹⁵²

In reality, the cession debate centered on the struggle to control North Carolina's valuable western lands. Many of the leaders of the future Franklin statehood movement doggedly lobbied the North Carolina Assembly to pass the Cession Act. These same delegates used the eventual passage of the Cession Act to justify their political separation, arguing that their December 1784 declaration of independence came as a reluctantly forced response to the abandonment of their communities by their parent state. In truth, most of the economic leadership of the Tennessee Valley supported the Cession Act of 1784, and capitalized on the post-revolutionary fiscal crisis plaguing North Carolina and the federal government to secure political and economic control over their own communities and more importantly the vast swath of unclaimed and valuable western lands.¹⁵³ Powerful regional land speculators and local economic elites, including Stockley Donelson (Surveyor for the Franklin Government), Charles Robertson (Speaker of the

¹⁵¹ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 19-21.

¹⁵² Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, *History of Tennessee, Vol. I* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1960); Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 147-148.

¹⁵³ Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 54-62.

Franklin Senate), Joshua Gist (Franklin judge and member of the constitutional convention), and David Looney (Justice of the Peace under Franklin), voted for the Cession Act. The residents of the Tennessee Valley were divided on the subject of cession, but Franklin historian Samuel Cole Williams argued that “In all probability a large majority [of residents of the Tennessee Valley] would have favored it [Cession Act].” Williams believed that the “Virginian element,” comprising the majority of the residents, “never felt a warm attachment to North Carolina” and considered themselves “alienated from the mother state.”¹⁵⁴ Historian Thomas Perkins Abernethy challenged William’s assertions. Abernethy argued that cession was “opposed by the men who lived beyond the mountain,” and that the “vote on the question of cession was a very clear-cut matter between the east and the west, and the east, with the help of [land] speculators [specifically Richard Caswell and William Blount], won.”¹⁵⁵ Despite vocal resistance to the legislation, in an unusual collaborative effort, the Tennessee Valley leadership joined with North Carolina’s eastern economic elite to secure passage of the act in April of 1784. Eastern supporters of the act defended their decisions by stating that the Tennessee Valley resident’s perpetual war with the regional Native American tribes was unnecessary and exceedingly costly, and that “the inhabitants of the Western Country are the scourings of the Earth, fugitives from Justice.”¹⁵⁶

The passage of the Cession Act of 1784 ignited the separatists sentiments planted into the political consciousness of the Tennessee Valley by Arthur Campbell. According to Abernethy, “The whole history of the State of Franklin grew out of the miscarriage of the

¹⁵⁴ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 22-26.

¹⁵⁵ Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 54-62.

¹⁵⁶ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 28; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 188; Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, *History of Tennessee*, 149-151; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 148-150; Henderson, *North Carolina*, 384-385.

plans of the land speculators.”¹⁵⁷ Regional supporters of the Cession Act believed that passage of the legislation would open up land the state of North Carolina previously reserved for the Cherokee by allowing for the renegotiation of land treaties and the intensification of localized warfare against the embattled tribe. Other proponents of the act believed that “congressional ownership of the western land would raise land prices,” and since “one of the provisions of the Carolina [land] cession was the guarantee of all land entries already made,” many large land owners outside and inside the region stood to financially benefit from the legislation.¹⁵⁸ The Cession Act removed several of the obstacles to further regional land speculation and to the intensification of the genocidal campaign against the Cherokee Nation, as well as galvanizing the Tennessee Valley populace under the banners of statehood and independence.¹⁵⁹

During their first convention, held on August 23 and 24, 1784, the political leadership of the Tennessee Valley met at the Jonesboro log courthouse to address the challenges caused by the Cession Act. The forty delegates to the August meeting agreed to form an association, similar to the Watauga Association, to maintain law and order and to defend themselves from the “tomahawk of the savages.”¹⁶⁰ The assemblage elected John Sevier president and Landon Carter clerk of the convention, and the body also formed a committee to “take under consideration the state of affairs” within the region. Finally, the group agreed to petition North Carolina for “countenance” regarding the possibility of forming a separate government and drafting a permanent or temporary constitution.

¹⁵⁷ Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 58.

¹⁵⁸ G. Melvin Herndon, *William Tatham, 1752-1819: American Versatile*, 50-51; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 24-25.

¹⁵⁹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 189.

¹⁶⁰ William Alexander Provine Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

Before adjourning on August 24th, the valley delegates agreed to hold a second convention the following month and reappraise the situation.¹⁶¹

The news of the August convention quickly reached North Carolina's eastern political leaders, who became furious at the actions of the Jonesboro delegates. Many of North Carolina's congressional leaders believed that the residents of the Tennessee Valley violated the provision within the Cession Act requiring that the ceded lands "be deemed a common fund, for the benefit of all existing and future States of the Union."¹⁶² The Cession Act also mandated congressional consent before a new state could be created out of the ceded lands. For simply contemplating the possibility of forming a separate state, opponents of the Cession Act leveled accusations of treason against the Tennessee Valley leaders. The Cession Act emerged as a divisive political issue in the 1784 state elections, and eastern congressional leaders recently opposing the legislation attacked the act in the fall session of the North Carolina Assembly. At the October 22nd session held in Newbern, North Carolina, oppositional state congressional leaders forced a vote on repealing the Cession Act, arguing that the act did not adequately compensate North Carolina for her land donation nor did it provide reimbursement for the money the state spent on Indian expeditions. Under considerable protest, in late October an act to repeal the Cession Act was passed by a vote of thirty-seven to twenty-two in the House of Commons and nineteen to eleven in the Senate. North Carolina defiantly reclaimed her

¹⁶¹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 188-190; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 149-151; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 26-29.

¹⁶² Henderson, *North Carolina*, 384-385.

western territory. The repeal of the Cession Act thrust the Tennessee Valley separatists into a political firestorm that eventually engulfed the entire region.¹⁶³

It was during the second convening of Tennessee Valley leaders that the first signs of bitter internal factionalism emerged within the separatist movement. The forty-three delegates met again at the Jonesboro courthouse on December 14th and quickly realized that the repeal of the Cession Act divided them over the issue of forming “a distinct state, independent of North Carolina.”¹⁶⁴ The delegates supporting the creation of a separate state argued that, by ceding their western territory, North Carolina left the Tennessee Valley communities exposed to attacks by regional Indian tribes. Proponents of statehood also charged the state of North Carolina with unfairly raising taxes in their region and failing to use the tax revenue to improve their communities. In a report presented by William Cocke, the Franklinites defended their case for separation. The report stated that the creation of an independent state would encourage people to settle the region, “which would strengthen us, improve agriculture, perfect manufacturers, encourage literature and everything truly laudable.” The report goes on to state that an independent state offered solutions to the regional shortage of specie and allowed regional taxes to be used to improve the local situation.¹⁶⁵ After a short prayer offered by the Reverend Samuel Houston, twenty-eight delegates agreed with the committee’s report

¹⁶³ Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 69-71; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 190-191; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 35-37. Historian Archibald Henderson states that North Carolina repealed the Cession Act because “it did not properly safeguard North Carolina’s interests.” Led by William R. Davie and Hugh Williamson, powerful eastern state political leaders argued that North Carolina “needed to consider the welfare of the people at home.” Regarding opposition to the repeal of the Cession Act, twenty members of the North Carolina House of Commons dissented from the majority vote, calling the repeal “disgraceful.” Opposition leaders argued that those who voted to repeal the act did so out of financial considerations and failed to support the new republic (Henderson, *North Carolina*, 384-385).

¹⁶⁴ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 152-155.

¹⁶⁵ Plan of Association presented by William Cooke and Joseph Hardin, September 16, 1784, William Alexander Provine Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

and voted “yea” on statehood, including the Reverend Houston, Gilbert Christian, William Cocke, and Valentine Sevier. No one pointed out the hypocrisy of Charles Robertson, Stockley Donelson, and Joshua Gist, men who openly supported territorial cession a few months earlier, using the passage of the Cession Act to justify their affirmative vote for an independent state.¹⁶⁶

Initially, John Sevier, the future governor of the state of Franklin, led the regional opposition against forming a new state. The North Carolina Assembly had recently appointed Sevier Brigadier-General of the newly formed militia of the District of Washington, and the expansion of the regional militia into a full brigade coupled with the repeal of the Cession Act apparently addressed his concerns regarding the region’s vulnerability to Indian attacks. Just prior to the start of the December convention, Sevier conceded that, “The grievances which the people complained are redressed, and my recommendation to them is that they proceed no farther in their design to separate from North Carolina.”¹⁶⁷ According to John Haywood, William Cocke “had an interview with him [Sevier] and [temporarily] erased” his resistance to the statehood effort. Sevier eventually voted in favor of a separate state, and Colonel John Tipton, David Looney, and Daniel Kennedy led the “nays” during the contentious vote. After a vote of twenty-eight to fifteen, a delegate rose and “declared the three western counties independent of North Carolina.”¹⁶⁸ The assemblage of Tennessee Valley community leaders, now calling themselves the “Assembly at Frankland,” agreed to reconvene early in 1785 to discuss “public sentiment” and the ratification of a Franklin constitution. The December

¹⁶⁶ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 191-193; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 152-155.

¹⁶⁷ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 287-288.

¹⁶⁸ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 154-155.

vote signaled the birth of the state of Franklin as well as the beginning of a determined resistance to the statehood movement. From the ashes of political defeat, John Tipton erected a powerful anti-statehood movement seeking to destroy the state of Franklin.¹⁶⁹

As a new year opened, the residents of the Tennessee Valley found themselves embroiled in a controversy threatening to tear apart their rapidly expanding communities. The first months of 1785 initiated a new round of political contentiousness between North Carolina, her regional loyalists, and the Franklinites. The internal divisions within the region and the Franklin movement itself left the embryonic state with an uncertain future. Many of the members of the Franklin Assembly maintained reservations regarding the constitutionality and benefits of declaring their independence. In a letter dated January 2, 1785, John Sevier shared his concerns with Colonel Daniel Kennedy of Greene County. Sevier reasserted that North Carolina's repeal of the Cession Act and bolstering of the regional militia numbers "satisfy the people with the old state" and made the creation of "a new state" unnecessary.¹⁷⁰ According to Tennessee historian J.G.M. Ramsey, Sevier also sent an "official address to the people of Greene County" cautioning them to "decline all further action in respect to a new government."¹⁷¹ During the 1789 debate over extending a pardon to John Sevier for his actions as Franklin's Governor, the North Carolina Assembly acknowledged that he originally attempted to delay separatist efforts to hold a vote on statehood among the Tennessee Valley residents. Despite Sevier's warnings, the wheels of statehood continued to grind forward.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 287-288; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 189-190.

¹⁷⁰ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 41-43

¹⁷¹ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 291-292

¹⁷² Mary French Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example, Watauga to 1849* (Nashville: Aurora Publishers, Inc., 1974), 156; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 154-155.

In March 1785, the elected delegates from the three Tennessee Valley counties reconvened at the Jonesboro courthouse. It was during this first official meeting of the Franklin Assembly that the supporters of statehood learned the full extent of North Carolina's resistance to the state of Franklin. During the spring meeting, the Franklin legislature elected John Sevier, finally convinced of the necessity of statehood, to be Franklin's first governor. The assembly went on to elect David Campbell Judge of Franklin's Superior Court, Joshua Gist and John Anderson assistant judges, Landon Carter, Speaker of the Senate, Thomas Talbot, Clerk of the Senate, William Cage, Speaker of the House of Commons, and Thomas Chapman, Clerk of the House of Commons.¹⁷³ Franklin's first elected political leadership wielded enormous economic power within the region, and maintained in excess of 131,000 acres in Tennessee Valley land claims.¹⁷⁴ With thousands of acres of land at stake, it comes as little surprise that the first act passed by the Franklin Assembly established "the legal claims of persons claiming property under the laws of North Carolina, in the same manner as if the State of Franklin had never formed itself into a distinct and separate State."¹⁷⁵ The legislature went on to pass a number of additional acts on March 31st, of which two more were concerned with land claims. The other acts dealt with taxation and economic issues, the election and compensation of government and judicial officials, the creation of four new counties (Wayne, Spencer, Caswell, and Sevier), the establishment of a state militia, the

¹⁷³ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 57-63; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 194.

¹⁷⁴ Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records*.

¹⁷⁵ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 194; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 292-293.

procurement “of a great seal for the State,” and finally, “an act for the promotion of learning.”¹⁷⁶

In addition to the election of legislative leaders and the passage of numerous individual pieces of legislation, the Franklinites also elected “state officers,” court officials, and military personnel. Those appointed to important positions within the Franklin state government included: Landon Carter, Secretary of State; William Cage, Treasurer; Stockley Donelson, Surveyor-General; Daniel Kennedy and William Cocke, Brigadier-Generals of the state militia; and William Cocke, “Commissioner of Franklin” to Congress. James Sevier (Washington County), John Rhea (Sullivan County), Daniel Kennedy (Greene County), Thomas Henderson (Spencer County), Joseph Hamilton (Caswell County), and Samuel Weir (Sevier County) comprised the state’s judicial leadership. These men also commanded significant economic power within the Tennessee Valley and laid claim to hundreds of thousands of acres across the Trans-Allegheny frontier.¹⁷⁷

The Tennessee Valley’s land-holding elites were not the only interested parties present at the March Franklin Assembly. By February, North Carolina governor Alexander Martin had grown increasingly concerned regarding the actions of the Franklinites. Governor Martin dispatched Major Samuel Henderson, brother of Judge Richard Henderson, to travel to the Tennessee Valley and apprise him of whether the Franklin movement drew its support from “a few leading men” or “whether it be the

¹⁷⁶ Isaac C. Anderson to Governor David Campbell, April 11, 1846, King’s Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection; Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records*; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 155-156.

¹⁷⁷ Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records*; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 295-296.

sense of a large majority of the people that the State be dismembered at this crisis.”¹⁷⁸

Henderson carried with him a letter from Martin addressed to Brigadier-General John Sevier, which the governor read before the Franklin Assembly. The exact content of that letter did not survive for scrutiny, but judging by the hasty response of the Franklinites, the letter unquestionably challenged their declaration of statehood, and demanded a full disclosure of reasons behind their actions. The frenetic excitement surrounding the creation of the Franklin government gave way to the defense of their sovereignty.¹⁷⁹

On March 22nd, William Cage and Landon Carter crafted a response to Governor Martin’s inquiry. In a carefully worded defense of the independence movement, the Franklinites argued that the passage of the Cession Act and the “unjust reproaches” of North Carolina legislatures “convinced [us] it was the Sense of the [North Carolina] Genl. Assembly to get rid of” the Tennessee Valley communities. According to Cage and Carter, the state of Franklin emerged out of necessity in order to “obtain the best terms” possible from the federal government and to defend themselves from the “frequent murders committed by the Indians.” Additionally, the two Franklinites argued that both the North Carolina Constitution and the United States Continental Congress “encourage” and “consent” to the erection of new states in the west. The letter concluded by stating, “We unanimously agree that our lives, Liberties, and Property Can be more secure & our happiness Much better propagated by our separation, & Consequently that it is our duty and inalienable right to form ourselves into a New Independent State.”¹⁸⁰ A personal

¹⁷⁸ Alexander Martin to Samuel Henderson, February 27, 1785, Newspaper Abstracts (JJ), Draper Manuscript Collection; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 61-63.

¹⁷⁹ Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 197-199; Henderson, *North Carolina*, 388; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 292-294. Judge Richard Henderson controlled the successful land speculating organization known as the Transylvania Company.

¹⁸⁰ Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 22* (New York: AMS Press, 1886-1907), 637-642; Landon Carter and William Cage to Alexander Martin, March 22, 1785, Newspaper Abstracts

letter from John Sevier to Governor Martin accompanied the legal and constitutional defense composed by Carter and Cage and endorsed by the Legislature of the state of Franklin. Sevier's appeals were much more personal and purported to convey the true sentiments of the citizens of Franklin. Sevier stated that, "The people of the Country Consider themselves Illy Treated, first being ceded without their consent, Secondly by repealing the act in the same measure," and that the failure of North Carolina to compensate the Indians for lands previously purchased have made "an Indian War [likely] This Summer." Both letters attempted to appease Governor Martin by stressing that the Franklinites considered themselves to be "friends" of North Carolina, and by "begging" Martin to allow the state of Franklin to exist without interference. These appeals ultimately fell upon deaf ears as Governor Martin and North Carolina's political leadership launched their efforts to destroy the new state.¹⁸¹

On April 25th, North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin responded to the Tennessee Valley separatists with a calculated and threatening manifesto. The manifesto challenged the arguments for statehood presented by the Franklinites, and asserted that "a considerable number, if not a majority" of the "leaders of the present revolt" actually voted for the Cession "Act they now deem impolitic, and pretend to reprobate, which in all probability would not have passed but through their influence and assiduity." The governor also stated that the North Carolina Assembly repealed the Cession Act because of the "uneasiness and discontent" it caused the Tennessee Valley residents. Additionally, by expanding the Washington County militia district and establishing a court in

(JJ), Draper Manuscript Collection. A copy of Carter/Cage letter to Martin is also contained in Alexander Martin's Governor Letter Book in the North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh.

¹⁸¹ John Sevier to Alexander Martin, March 22, 1785, Alexander Martin's Governor Letter Book, North Carolina State Archives.

Washington County, Martin believed that the state government removed “the only general inconvenience and grievance they [Tennessee Valley residents] labour under.” Martin’s manifesto systematically refuted the arguments put forth by the Franklinites for separation, asserting that “restless ambition and a lawless thirst of power” are behind the movement, and that the citizens of the Tennessee Valley “have been seduced from their Allegiance” through “specious pretences and the Acts of designing Men.” Martin demanded that the Franks “return to their allegiance and duty, and forbear paying any obedience to any self-created power and authority unknown to the Constitution of the State, and not sanctioned by the Legislature.” Martin reminded the Franklin supporters that, “far less causes have deluged States and Kingdoms with blood,” and that the actions of the Franklinites could set a precedent for other groups to engage in “dangerous and unwarranted procedures” that may ultimately destroy the new American Republic.¹⁸²

The manifesto circulated widely among the Tennessee Valley residents. The two distinct responses offered to Martin’s manifesto illustrate the passionate communal dichotomy emerging within the region. The Franklinite’s counter manifesto accused Governor Martin of attempting to “create sedition and stir up insurrection among the good citizens of this State, thinking thereby to destroy that peace and tranquility that so greatly abounds among the peaceful citizens of the new happy country.” The Franklinites argued that North Carolina’s “own acts...invited us to the separation,” and that the creation of the state of Franklin “saved the State [of North Carolina] from impending [financial] ruin.”¹⁸³ The response from John Tipton and his Anti-Franklin supporters

¹⁸² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 642-647, Alexander Martin to John Tipton, April 25, 1785, King’s Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection.

¹⁸³ Sevier counter-manifesto, May 14, 1785, Letters concerning the independence of the State of Franklin, North Carolina State Archives; “State of Franklin: A Proclamation,” May 15, 1785, Newspaper Abstracts

polarized the Tennessee Valley and forced the Franklinites to attach a statement to their counter-manifesto demanding that all Franklin citizens obey the laws of the new state. In a May 13th letter to Governor Martin, Tipton pledged his obedience to North Carolina and to Martin's "commands." Tipton informed his "Excellency" Governor Martin of his willingness to "continue to discountenance the lawless proceedings of my neighbors."¹⁸⁴ These two divergent reactions to Martin's pleas for the abandonment of the statehood movement highlighted the expanding rift emerging within the Tennessee Valley communities. The relatively small population and intimate communal connections insured that the frontier communities could not escape the impending political turmoil.¹⁸⁵

In the spring of 1785, the growing tensions between the Franklin government and their parent state gradually subsided with the election of Richard Caswell to the North Carolina governorship. Governor Caswell maintained close personal and economic ties to the Tennessee Valley, and he and Governor Sevier remained both close friends and business partners. Prior to the Franklin movement, Sevier, Caswell, William Blount, Griffith Rutherford, John Donelson, and Joseph Martin formed a land company to purchase the Muscle Shoals territory on the Tennessee River. Muscle Shoals, at the "bent" of the Tennessee River in present-day Alabama, offered a tremendous economic windfall for land speculators able to secure its purchase from the Cherokee Nation.¹⁸⁶ The

(JJ), Draper Manuscript Collection; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 72-73; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 648. John Sevier was the sole name on the counter-manifesto.

¹⁸⁴ Alexander Martin enclosed a copy of his manifesto in the April 25 letter he sent to John Tipton. Tipton's expression of loyalty convinced Governor Martin that it was "proper to send you the enclosed manifesto" and he requested that Tipton "make the same [manifesto] public thru your county (Alexander Martin to John Tipton, April 25, 1785, King's Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection)."

¹⁸⁵ Dave Foster, *Franklin: the Stillborn State and the Sevier/Tipton Political Feud* (Pigeon Forge, TN: Top Ten Press, 1994), 7.

¹⁸⁶ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 73-76. The Muscle Shoals project lasted from 1783 to 1789 and eventually became intertwined with the state of Franklin (A.P. Whitaker, "The Muscle Shoals Speculation, 1783-1789," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 12 (December 1926): 365-367). Sevier

governors of Franklin and North Carolina did not limit their joint speculation to the Muscle Shoals land deal. In a bizarre business arrangement, newly elected North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell and the governor of the rebellious state of Franklin actually speculated in land together during the Franklin affair. According to North Carolina land grant records, Sevier and Caswell purchased a two hundred acre plot of land in Greene County. The two partners applied for the grant on June 7, 1784 and received the grant on November 15, 1787. In addition to Governor Caswell's business dealings with John Sevier, Caswell also owned 5480 acres of land in Sullivan, Greene and Washington counties.¹⁸⁷ Governor Caswell maintained a substantial economic stake in the avoidance of bloodshed in the Tennessee Valley. In a letter dated May 14, 1785, Sevier informed Governor Caswell of the accusations leveled in former governor Martin's manifesto and reiterated that the Tennessee Franks "will not be intimidated" into abandoning their plans.¹⁸⁸ Both Sevier's letter and Caswell's June 17th response reflected a more civilized tone. Caswell assured Sevier that he did not intend to pursue a policy of confrontation, and, in fact, hoped to delay action against the Franklin government until after he consulted with the North Carolina Assembly.¹⁸⁹ The animosity between the two states further abated when John Sevier assured Richard Caswell that the Franklinites "wish to do nothing that will be inconsistent with the honor and interest of each party." Sevier closed his October 17th correspondence by extending his government's "hearty and kind

biographer Carl Driver argues that Sevier's discouragement of the independence movement in 1784 and early 1785 among his fellow Tennessee Valley residents was economically motivated. "Sevier actually began to discourage the creation of a new state because he was afraid it would interfere with the Muscle Shoals speculating project he was involved in (Carl Driver, *John Sevier: Pioneer of the Old Southwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 72-87)."

¹⁸⁷ Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records*, 134, 361.

¹⁸⁸ John Sevier to Richard Caswell, May 14, 1785, Letters concerning the independence of the State of Franklin, North Carolina State Archives.

¹⁸⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 648.

wishes” to “the parent state.”¹⁹⁰ As one Franklinite exclaimed, “We have now the most friendly assurances from North Carolina, since Governor Martin’s administration has expired.”¹⁹¹ These amicable exchanges marked an amazing de-escalation of the friction between the governorships of the two sides, but failed to calm the rising tension between partisans outside and inside the Tennessee Valley.¹⁹²

During the closing months of 1785, the Franklin government engaged in its first treaty negotiations with the Cherokee tribe and attempted to secure approval from the Continental Congress for their state. On June 10th, a small delegation of Franklinites, including John Sevier, Joseph Hardin, Luke Boyer, Ebenezer Alexander, Joshua Gist, and Alexander Outlaw, traveled to the mouth of Dumplin Creek to purchase “all the lands lying and being on the South side of Holeson (sic) and French Broad Rivers, as far South as the ridge that divide the Waters of Little River from the Waters of Tenessee (sic)” from the Overhill Cherokee.¹⁹³ Despite the attendance of only a fraction of the Cherokee’s leadership, this land deal added an enormous tract of land to Franklin’s boundaries and encouraged hundreds of new families to settle in the Tennessee Valley. The Treaty of Dumplin Creek escalated warfare between the Franklinites and the Cherokee tribe, but Franklin’s leaders hailed the treaty as a major economic triumph.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ John Sevier to Richard Caswell, May 14, 1785, Letters concerning the independence of the State of Franklin, North Carolina State Archives.

¹⁹¹ “Letter from a gentlemen in Franklin to his friend in Virginia,” August 17, 1785, Newspaper Abstracts (JJ), Draper Manuscript Collection; Alice Barnwell Keith, *The John Gray Blount Papers, Volume One 1764-1789* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1952), 191.

¹⁹² Walter Faw Cannon, “Four Interpretations of the History of the State of Franklin,” *The East Tennessee Historical Society Publications* 22 (1950): 3-5; Quinn, “Arthur Campbell,” 81; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 313-318.

¹⁹³ Only a small contingent of younger Cherokee chiefs, including Ancoo, Chief of Chota; Abraham, Chief of Chilhowe; the Bard, the Sturgeon, the Leach, the Big Man Killer, and the translator Cherokee Murphy, attended agreed to the Treaty of Dumplin Creek (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 22*, 649-650).

¹⁹⁴ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 77.

On May 16th, Franklin's emissary to the United States Congress, William Cocke, presented Franklin's case for statehood before that body. In a memorial presented to the Continental Congress, Cocke reiterated the reasons behind the statehood movement and formally requested "Congress to accept the offered [North Carolina] cession and to receive us into the federal union."¹⁹⁵ On May 20th, a congressional committee took under consideration "whether Congress had, or had not a right to Accept the cession, & whether it was not still binding upon the State, notwithstanding the repealing Act." The committee issued their opinion the very same day, accepting "the cession of western territory made by North Carolina."¹⁹⁶ According to North Carolina congressman Richard Dobbs Spaight, who was absent from the deliberations, but was adamantly opposed to Congress upholding the Cession Act, "Contrary to the established rule, the report was taken up, and Acted on, the same day [May 20th] without allowing any time for consideration or giving any notice to the member from the State."¹⁹⁷ Without the participation of North Carolina's representative, congress voted seven states for, two states against, and one state split to reject recognizing Franklin as a state.¹⁹⁸ Despite being denied congressional recognition by a single vote, William Cocke and his fellow Franklinites believed they fared well in New York. Virginia Governor Patrick Henry wrote to Thomas Jefferson that, "The new Society sent Wm. Cocke to Congress to solicit [sic] Admission into the Union. His Mission was fruitless, tho' he said the contrary as I am told."¹⁹⁹ Congress accepted their argument against the repeal of the Cession Act and a number of powerful

¹⁹⁵ Landon Carter and William Cage to the Continental Congress, May 16, 1785, Letters concerning the independence of the State of Franklin, North Carolina State Archives.

¹⁹⁶ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 85-88.

¹⁹⁷ Paul H. Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, Vol. 22* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1976), 435-435.

¹⁹⁸ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 85-88; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 203-204.

¹⁹⁹ Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 8 25 February to 31 October 1785* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 508.

states, including New York and Pennsylvania, supported their statehood movement. The savvy Cocke remained in New York for several weeks attempting to increase support for Franklin, but the effort to secure congressional approval for America's fourteenth state remained stalled for the immediate future.²⁰⁰

Under the backdrop of the Indian negotiations at Dumplin Creek and the failed effort to secure congressional approval for their state, the Franklin legislature met for a second time at the log courthouse in Jonesboro. During this brief August session, the Franklinites discussed the daunting task of drafting a permanent Franklin Constitution. The delegates resolved to meet at the Greeneville Presbyterian Church, in the new Franklin capital of Greeneville, "on the second Monday in November... for the express purpose of adopting the then existing frame of government or altering it as the people see proper."²⁰¹ The November constitutional debate irreparably fractured the Franklin movement and further widened the breach between Franklin's supporters and her opponents.²⁰²

Prior to the November constitutional convention, the state of Franklin existed under a slightly modified version of North Carolina's state constitution. At the December 1784 meeting of the Franklin Assembly, the delegates agreed to accept a temporary constitution modeled on that of their parent state and to reconvene within a year to adopt a permanent frame of government. According to the Franklinites, they "patronized her [North Carolina] constitution and laws" in order to "influence Congress to precipitate our

²⁰⁰ Sketch of the Life of General William Cocke, Cocke Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, The University of North Carolina.

²⁰¹ No records exist regarding the August assembly at Jonesboro, but Williams states that the Franklinites hoped to expand their state's boundaries by passing an act "for the encouragement of an expedition down the Tennessee river to take possession of the Bent [present-day Muscle Shoals, Alabama] (Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 90-93)."

²⁰² Richard Alan Humphrey, "The State of Franklin: Clergy, Controversy, and Constitution," *Appalachian Heritage: A Magazine of Southern Appalachian Life & Culture* 7 (Fall 1979): 35-36.

reception into the federal union.”²⁰³ The sixty-four delegates to the constitutional convention represented both the political and economic leadership of the Tennessee Valley, but the region’s Presbyterian religious leaders led the heated clash over the ratification of the document.²⁰⁴

On November 14th, the first day of the constitutional convention, the Reverend Samuel Houston, minister of the Providence Presbyterian Church, read before the Franklinites for the first time a radical frame of government. Houston’s former teacher the Reverend William Graham, head of Liberty Hall Academy (now Washington & Lee University) in Lexington, Virginia, and Virginia separatist Arthur Campbell aided Houston in composing the extraordinary document.²⁰⁵ The constitution, entitled *A Declaration of Rights and a Constitution, made by the representatives of the freemen of Frankland*, blended the visionary democratic principles of Campbell with the Presbyterian morality of Graham to create one of the most unique frames of government ever conceived. The authors of the Houston-Graham Constitution divided the document into two sections, *A Declaration of Rights* and *The Constitution or Form of Government*. The Declaration of Rights closely resembled the state of North Carolina’s 1776 Declaration of Rights, with the first clause powerfully asserting the concept of popular sovereignty. The document also listed twenty-four civil liberties, including the right to be treated fairly before the law, freedom of the press, the right to bear arms, right to

²⁰³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 637-640.

²⁰⁴ James William Hagy, “Democracy Defeated: The Franklin Constitution of 1785,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 40 (Fall 1981): 240. According to Richard Alan Humphrey, the Tennessee Valley’s Presbyterian leadership wielded more political influence than the region’s Methodist and Baptist leaders because they “outnumbered” the other denominations, had more “educated clergy,” established more churches (twenty-three) and academies (two), and “took an active interest in the political establishment of the State of Franklin (Humphrey, “The State of Franklin: Clergy, Controversy, and Constitution,” 35-36).”

²⁰⁵ William Graham also taught Samuel Doak, Hezekiah Balch, Samuel Newell, and David Campbell at Liberty Hall (Hagy, “Democracy Defeated,” 244-246).

assembly, and the freedom “to worship Almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences.” The constitutional section offered sweeping changes to the North Carolina Constitution and greatly expanded the electorate in the Tennessee Valley. The Houston-Graham Constitution “limited the power of the [political] officials and provided for a wide participation in the government” by calling for a unicameral legislature, population-based political representation, and allowing “Every free male inhabitant of this State...a vote in electing all officers chosen by the people, in the county where he resides.” The document restricted the influence of the region’s entrenched political leadership by forcing representatives to reside in the county which they represented, limiting the terms of elected officials, allowing for direct popular elections of most state officials and militia officers, and publishing “all Bills of a public and general nature...for the consideration of the people, before they are read in the General Assembly for the last time.” In addition to these political elements, the constitution also encouraged “learning” by erecting one university and allocating land and tax revenues for the construction of “a Grammar School” in each county. Interspersed among these democratic ideals, the Presbyterian architects of the constitution inserted several unusual religious-based political restrictions, including denying citizens “of an immoral character, or guilty of such flagrant enormities as drunkenness, gaming, profane swearing, lewdness, or Sabbath breaking” from holding political offices, and restricting political access to citizens who deny the Judeo-Christian god, heaven and hell, the Old and New Testaments, or the Christian Trinity. The proposed Franklin Constitution also described several secular limitations on political participation, including prohibiting ministers, lawyers, and doctors

from serving in the Franklin Assembly, and placing property qualifications on members of the House of Representatives.²⁰⁶

The Houston-Graham Constitution's melding of Enlightenment principles and the Protestant Reformation generated an enormous amount of controversy among the convention attendees. After completing his reading of the constitution, the Reverend Houston moved the assembly to vote on ratifying the document. In response, assembly members opposed to the Houston-Graham Constitution asked that the Presbyterian minister Hezekiah Balch be allowed to address the convention. Despite not being a member of the Franklin Assembly, the Reverend Balch "animadverted severely upon the manuscript constitution."²⁰⁷ Those in attendance did not record the nature of Balch's criticisms, but his arguments appear to have been effective. In a vote of twenty-four to nineteen, opponents of the Houston-Graham Constitution defeated the proposed frame of government. Governor John Sevier immediately moved to formally ratify the modified North Carolina Constitution. Despite the efforts of the Reverend Houston and his supporters to replace the North Carolina Constitution, the Franklin Assembly voted to accept Sevier's constitution as the permanent frame of government for the state of Franklin.²⁰⁸

The ratification of the amended North Carolina Constitution initiated a fiery "pamphlet war" between partisans on both side of the issue. Despite residing in a region

²⁰⁶ Joshua W. Caldwell, *Constitutional History of Tennessee* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1895), 58-61; Fink, "Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin," 204; J.T. McGill, "Franklin and Frankland: Names and Boundaries," *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 8 (1924): 248-250; Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 82-88; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 323-334; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 94-97. The use of the name Frankland by Campbell and Houston symbolized the democratic principles espoused in the document. The rejection of the name Frankland, or "land of freemen," and the adoption of Franklin, named for Benjamin Franklin, by the assembly signaled the end of radicalism within the statehood movement.

²⁰⁷ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 323-324.

²⁰⁸ Hagy, "Democracy Defeated," 249-251.

devoid of printing presses, supporters of both frames of government covered the Tennessee Valley with political tractates proclaiming their positions on the constitutional debate. A group supporting the Houston-Graham Constitution, calling themselves the Franklin Commonwealth Society, published two pamphlets defending the rejected constitution entitled “Principles of Republican Government by a Citizen of Frankland” and “Essay on Government by a Citizen of Frankland.”²⁰⁹ A third William Graham-penned pamphlet, entitled “An Address to the Inhabitants of Frankland State,” sharply criticized the federal government, members of the clergy, and opponents of the Houston-Graham Constitution. Graham’s pamphlet evoked such ire among leading Franklinites that “the [Washington County] court directed the sheriff to burn it,” and “an effigy of Graham was [also] burned.”²¹⁰ Supporters of the new Franklin Constitution countered by publishing their own pamphlets and utilizing legal and physical intimidation to curtail dissension. Eventually Hezekiah Balch “brought charges against [William] Graham before the predicator of the Presbyterian Church” in Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Presbytery ultimately censored Graham.²¹¹

According to historian James William Hagy, the Greeneville convention “brought about a sharp conflict between the supporters of the greater state of Frankland and the lesser state of Franklin, between the friends of Arthur Campbell and the supporters of John Sevier, and between the advocates of political equality and the partisans of privileges for a few.” In his work on the constitutional debate, Hagy established two competing constitutional camps. On one side, the group led by Arthur Campbell and

²⁰⁹ Hagy, “Democracy Defeated,” 246-252.

²¹⁰ Humphrey, “The State of Franklin: Clergy, Controversy, and Constitution,” 37.

²¹¹ Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 206-207; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 323-324; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 95-98.

Presbyterian ministers Samuel Houston and William Graham advocated a frame of government based on a union between democratic principles and moralistic religiosity. On the other side, the group led by the Reverend Hezekiah Balch, John Sevier, and William Cocke hoped to mitigate radical changes in the Franklin government by ratifying the existing modified North Carolina Constitution. He down plays the influence economic considerations and future land dealings played in the constitutional debate. Instead Hagy believes that the defeat of the radical Franklin Constitution occurred because “men like John Sevier... did not want to lose their status by a constitution which would limit the control of the governor or other officials.” Additionally, Hagy believes that the acceptance of the North Carolina Constitution “would drive less of a wedge between” the parent state of North Carolina and the Franklinites. Hagy argues that, “records [of the constitutional convention] do not support [the] interpretation” that the democratic frame of government presented by Houston and Graham “was killed by the desire for land.”²¹² Thomas Perkins Abernathy challenges Hagy’s assertion, countering that John Sevier and supporters of the North Carolina Constitution hoped to maintain control over the political and economic fortunes of the Tennessee Valley by blocking the democratization of regional politics. According to Abernathy, “if this influence [Sevier and his land speculation financiers William Blount and Richard Caswell] could be overthrown by adopting a really democratic form of government, anyone who had power and influence might acquire property in the new country.” In reality, these two interpretations actually work in conjunction with each other. The connections between political power and land holdings, and the political challenges the radical “clerical”

²¹² Hagy, “Democracy Defeated,” 250-256.

constitution offered to Sevier and his supporters threatened the regional hegemony of Franklin's leadership.²¹³

The debate over the Franklin Constitution provides an excellent example of the internal dissension within the statehood movement and the Tennessee Valley. An examination of the nineteen convention members who dissented from the ratification of the modified North Carolina Constitution reveals that men holding high-level positions within the Franklin government and within the opposition contingent supported the Graham-Houston Constitution. The nineteen members of the Franklin state government opposing the adopted constitution included David Campbell, David Looney, and Samuel Newell. The rejection of the Houston-Graham Constitution also expanded the ranks of the Anti-Franklinites by attracting several prominent Tennessee Valley residents to their cause. Several of these men initially supported statehood, but the events of the Franklin constitutional convention ultimately led to their disaffection. After expressing their opposition to the modified North Carolina Constitution, Robert Love, James Stuart, Peter Parkinson, and George Maxwell joined John and Joseph Tipton in their effort to destroy the state of Franklin. The controversy surrounding the Franklin Constitution exacerbated the lingering hostilities between the Tiptonites and the Franklinites, and the rejection of the far more democratic plan of government expressed in the Houston-Graham Constitution alienated several of the new state's most ardent supporters.²¹⁴

During the final days of 1785, the residents of the Upper Tennessee River Valley found themselves in a precarious position. Their state government remained in political limbo after failing to secure recognition from the federal government. The Tennessee

²¹³ Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation*, 78-79.

²¹⁴ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 166-167; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 96.

Valley communities, once united behind the American Revolution and perpetual Indian warfare, found themselves torn between two bitter factions competing for control over their region's political and economic future. The passage of an act by the North Carolina Assembly in November that offered "to put into oblivion" the actions of the residents of Washington, Greene, and Sullivan counties regarding "an independent government" further threatened the fragile loyalty of Tennessee Valley supporters.²¹⁵ Despite these challenges, the leadership of the state of Franklin remained confident in the success of their statehood movement. The concerns over internal and external resistance to Franklin paled in comparison to the potential financial and political rewards independence offered the Tennessee Valley's economic elite.

²¹⁵ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 43.

Chapter Four

“The Strange Spectacle of Two Empires”

As the year 1786 dawned, the residents of the Tennessee Valley found themselves embroiled in a highly contentious contest to determine the political future of their bitterly divided communities. During the previous two years, the region’s economic and political leadership succeeded in securing widespread support for the state of Franklin independence movement, but failed to garner the necessary congressional approval for admittance into the union. The debilitating failure of William Cocke’s congressional lobbying effort, and the escalation of opposition to statehood from a swelling minority faction within the Tennessee Valley and North Carolina ensured an uncertain and perilous future for the Franklinites.

From January of 1786 until the winter of 1787, supporters and opponents of the state of Franklin intensified their efforts within the Tennessee Valley. North Carolina’s state leadership initiated a highly effective “divide and conquer” political strategy within the Franklin counties that succeeded in further polarizing the region and ultimately contributed to the downfall of the rebellious state. The Franklinites countered North Carolina’s efforts to destroy their statehood movement by launching an intense public relations campaign to attract support from influential state and national political leaders. In conjunction with this propaganda blitz, the Franklinites continued their efforts to expand their state’s boundaries and their personal landholdings by engaging in further speculative land ventures at Muscle Shoals on the “Great Bend” of the Tennessee River. The Muscle Shoals land scheme eventually drew the Franks into an aborted military

coalition with the state of Georgia against the unfortunate landholding Creek tribe. The efforts of both the Franklinites and Tiptonites resulted in the intensification of regional tensions, and the danger of further bloodshed in the Tennessee Valley.²¹⁶

In an act passed at the November 1785 session, the North Carolina legislature attempted to further fragment the residents of the Tennessee Valley by introducing legislation pardoning Franklinites for their previous rebellious actions contingent upon the return of their political allegiance to their parent state. The “act of pardon” served as the first diplomatic salvo in North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell’s political strategy for restoring the valuable Tennessee Valley territory and the residents’ political loyalties to North Carolina without initiating civil war.²¹⁷ Over the next two years, this “divide and conquer” strategy combined economic and political concessions with the extension of North Carolina’s state bureaucracy into the region to foster internal opposition to the state of Franklin. For roughly two years, the residents of the Tennessee Valley “were presented with the strange spectacle of two empires exercising at one and the same time over one and the same people.”²¹⁸ The violent political and economic repercussions and communal discord resulting from the existence of two competing political systems within the Tennessee Valley sowed the seeds of Franklin’s violent demise.²¹⁹

The origin of North Carolina’s detente with the Franklin government can be traced to the relationship between North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell and the embattled state’s political leadership. Governor Caswell’s very public friendship with Franklin Governor John Sevier, extensive regional landholdings, and his desire to increase his

²¹⁶ Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, *Tennesseans and their History*, 44.

²¹⁷ Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 85.

²¹⁸ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 339.

²¹⁹ Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 10; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 173.

Tennessee Valley land claims undoubtedly influenced his strategy for dealing with the rebellious Franklinites. In a letter, dated July 12, 1786 to Governor Sevier, Caswell addressed the strangely amicable relationship between himself and the rebellious Franklin leader:

I am much concerned that you have not received my Letters, two I recollect to have written since the Time you speak of, which I suppose have fallen into other hands your information of my thinking it too low to Correspond with a Governor of Franklin I cannot well reconcile with my own feelings, if you mean as a Governor merely I answer, That the State which I have the Honor to be chief executive Magistrate of, not having recognized the State of Franklin, it would be impolitic & inconsistent with my Station to carry on a correspondence with you under that Character whatever my private sentiments maybe, and this I think I formerly advised you, if on the contrary you allude to private Correspondence, be assured that it always did and will give me pleasure to Correspond with you and that it is my intention to do so either in public or private life, at all convenient opportunities.²²⁰

As historian Thomas Abernathy succinctly states, “there could have existed, under the circumstances, no real hostilities between Caswell and Sevier, although legally Sevier was governor of a state in rebellion against the state of which Caswell was governor.”²²¹

In striking contrast to the animus that characterized former North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin’s policies toward the Franklinites, the Caswell administration’s “divide and conquer” strategy sought to peel off internal support from within the region and topple the Franklin government with as little loss of life and disruption to the land based regional economy as possible. The Caswell administration’s new tactics proved to be both tremendously successful and tragically deadly.²²²

The November legislation, offering full citizenship rights in exchange for the Franklinites’ reversion of their political allegiance, also directed loyalists to organize regional elections to select representatives to the North Carolina legislature from

²²⁰ Richard Caswell to John Sevier, 12 July 1786, Draper Manuscript Collection, Tennessee Papers (XX).

²²¹ Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 80-81.

²²² Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, *Tennesseans and their History*, 44; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 114.

Washington, Sullivan, and Greene counties and to appoint regional civil, judicial, and military officials. In essence, the North Carolina Assembly asserted that the “governmental posts held by individuals who were still in rebellion” must be filled with North Carolina loyalists.²²³ The Caswell administration hoped to further divide the Franklin movement by “building on the dissention that the Tipton (Anti-Franklinite) camp was generating.”²²⁴ The 1786 regional elections demonstrated the existence of a growing internal opposition to the state of Franklin and offered an unusual opportunity to express political dissent. The existence of dual state mechanisms within the Franklin communities added to the growing confusion and hostilities within the region. The results of holding the North Carolina governed elections in Franklin paid significant political dividends for the Caswell administration.²²⁵

In response to North Carolina’s election demands, on July 19, 1786, acting Washington County Sheriff George Mitchell reluctantly announced that, “there will be an election held the Third Friday in August next, at John Rennoe’s near the Sycamore Shoals to choose members to represent Washington county in the General Assembly of North Carolina.”²²⁶ The Franklinites rallied their own regional supporters and began preparations to hold separate elections for the North Carolina Assembly on the very same day. In what Franklin historian Samuel Cole Williams characterized as “a fatal error,” the Franklinites intended to demonstrate the level of regional support for their independence movement by electing officials to the legislative assembly of the state from which they

²²³ Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 10-11.

²²⁴ Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 85.

²²⁵ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 173; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 337-339.

²²⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 18*, 243-245; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 172-173.

had recently rebelled.²²⁷ Additionally, the Franklinites hoped that the election of two representatives to the North Carolina Assembly might convince North Carolina legislators to agree to support Franklin's statehood bid in the upcoming November state legislative session. The August elections reflected the rising intensity of partisanship engulfing the Tennessee Valley, and fueled the growing anti-Franklin sentiment threatening the new state.²²⁸

Throughout the summer of 1786, partisans from both sides prepared to hold the contentious elections in the Franklin territories. As the political campaigning intensified, the two opposing parties rallied under the banners "new state" and "old state" men.²²⁹ By the opening of the August elections, both groups managed to secure substantial approval for their candidates, but the surging level of support behind the anti-Franklinite (old state) faction illustrated the growing opposition to the statehood movement within the Tennessee Valley. The results of the August elections came as little surprise to the region's voters, since both sides erected their own polling stations and calculated their own election returns. The Franklinites held their elections in Jonesborough and unanimously elected Landon Carter and Thomas Chapman to serve as Franklin's representatives to the North Carolina legislature. Despite accusations of voter intimidation, old state supporters managed to hold their own elections at the home of John Rennoe on Sinking Creek in Sycamore Shoals. The Tiptonite faction predictably elected John Tipton as Senator and cast their votes for two outspoken critics of the state of Franklin, James Stuart (Stewart) and Richard White, to serve as representatives to the

²²⁷ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 107-109.

²²⁸ John Allison, *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*, (Nashville: Marshall & Bruce, 1897), 32; Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 173-175; Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 10.

²²⁹ Lawson, "The Tipton-Haynes Place: A Landmark of East Tennessee," 108-109.

North Carolina House of Commons.²³⁰ “Without violence and in an orderly manner,” both sides managed to conduct elections in the state of Franklin. The ramifications of these two elections ultimately proved to be far from “orderly” or non-violent.²³¹

An examination of the results of the August 1786 elections demonstrates the growing sectional fragmentation of political support within the Tennessee Valley. Although hard polling numbers are scarce, there is a distinct voting pattern in the Franklin counties. In the counties in which the two leading figures of the political battle resided, John Tipton in Washington County and John Sevier in Sullivan County, locals tended to lend their political support to their neighbors. In Sullivan County, support for John Sevier and the “new state” movement remained strong. According to the returns made by polling inspectors, all 254 votes went to the two Franklinites. In Washington County, an area in which “disaffection to the Franklin government began to manifest itself,” citizens cast all 179 ballots for Tipton’s old state candidates. The overwhelming support given to three old state men in Washington County proved to be another “ill-omen to the future fortunes of Franklin.”²³²

²³⁰ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 175; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 338-339; Watauga Association of Genealogists, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 21. It does not appear as though the Franklinites elected a representative to the North Carolina Senate and the North Carolina House of Commons did not qualify the elections of either Carter or Chapman. None of the Franklinites attended the November convening of the North Carolina Assembly. Samuel Cole Williams points out that a number of old state supporters accused Franklin’s militia of threatening violence if they did not vote in Jonesborough (Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 107-109).

²³¹ In a report read before the North Carolina House of Commons on November 23, 1786, John Tipton and Thomas Hutchings states that “Inhabitants [of Washington County] were warned to meet at the last mentioned Election [elections held by Franklinites in August of 1786] by the acting Military officer of said county at General Muster under certain penalty.” The report goes on to accuse Franklinites of “detering” residents from “attending the [North Carolina inspected] elections” with “the above mentioned threats (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 18, 243-245).”

²³² Bergeron, Ashe, & Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 44; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 18, 243-245. Both side appointed their own poll inspectors. Joseph Tipton (John Tipton’s son), Robert English, and William Hughes served as election inspectors for the Tiptonite backed elections in Washington County, and Robert Rogers, Samuel William, and Anderson Smith oversaw the Franklin backed elections (Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 238-239; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 108-109).

The August legislative elections served as just the beginning of North Carolina's effort to topple Franklin by exacerbating the growing antagonisms within the Tennessee Valley. As support for Franklin began to diminish, old state loyalists commenced electing and appointing civil, judicial, and military officials to influential posts within the region. New state supporters quickly countered these efforts by electing Franklinites to many of these same positions. In Washington County, Tiptonite forces appointed Jonathan Pugh "North Carolina sheriff," and in Sullivan County Franklin supporters commissioned Andrew Caldwell sheriff.²³³ The erection of competing state bureaucracies quickly involved the region's judicial system, as both sides appointed their own judges and clerks and organized parallel court systems. The Franklinites appointed John Sevier's son James to be Washington County court clerk and the Tiptonites selected Thomas Gourley as their clerk of court. As lecturer William A. Henderson described in his 1873 speech to Knoxville, Tennessee's Board of Trade, "Each county had a Franklin sheriff and a North Carolina sheriff, two sets of legislators were running at the same time, two courts held their sessions as regularly as the other side would let them."²³⁴

The existence of competing legislative and judicial systems ultimately led to clashes between the opposing Tennessee Valley partisans. The regional court systems became the battleground in which proponents on each side of the Franklin issue waged disruptive campaigns. In the competing Washington County courts, John Tipton held sessions "under the authority of North Carolina" at Buffalo, and James Sevier presided over the Franklin court just ten miles away in the town of Jonesborough. The distance separating these two court systems failed to prevent violent confrontations from occurring

²³³ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 173-174; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 339.

²³⁴ Henderson, "Nolachucky Jack," Draper Manuscript Collection, Kentucky Papers (DD).

throughout 1786 and into 1787. According to Tennessee historian John Haywood, “As the processes of these courts frequently required the sheriffs to pass within the jurisdiction of each other to execute them [state laws], a recounter [sic] was sure to take place. Hence it was necessary to appoint the stoutest men in the country to the office of sheriff.”²³⁵ One such encounter occurred in late 1786 when John Tipton and fifty armed men burst into James Sevier’s Jonesborough courtroom and removed court papers from the court clerk and threw the “justices out the doors.” The Franklinites responded by invading John Tipton’s courtroom in Buffalo, reclaiming the Franklin court documents, stealing North Carolina court papers from court clerk Thomas Gourley, and turning “the court out of doors.” The courtroom violence eventually involved the two leading political figures in the Tennessee Valley. The only direct physical confrontation between John Sevier and John Tipton occurred in the Jonesborough courthouse.²³⁶ According to Haywood, a verbal altercation between the two former Revolutionary War soldiers eventually escalated into violence, “when Sevier, no longer able to bear the provocations which were given to him, struck Tipton with a cane. Instantly the latter began to annoy him with his hands clinched. Each exchanged blows for some time in the same way with great violence and in convulsions of rage.” Eventually those present at the courthouse brawl managed to separate the two combatants, but incidents like this one became commonplace. So routine in fact, that Haywood quips, “families took lessons in pugilism

²³⁵ Judge John Haywood’s account of the courtroom raids serves as the only contemporary account of these incidents. Haywood also states that the court records of both judicial systems “were retaken” by each side several more times and eventually most of these important legal records (including marriage and estate records) were lost. This courthouse raids also resulted in the loss of the majority of the state of Franklin’s historical records (Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 173-174).

²³⁶ Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 207-208.

from each other at public meetings.”²³⁷ These incidents increasingly forced Tennessee Valley residents to choose sides in this escalating affair.²³⁸

The presence of two independent civil and judicial systems in the Tennessee Valley led to confusion among the region’s inhabitants in the most basic areas of everyday life. Beginning in late 1786, it became necessary for residents of the Franklin counties to be married in both court systems in order to ensure the legality of their nuptials in the future. According to one writer, “When some Franklinite would win or steal some North Carolina maid, it is said that, if the lady was all political and self-willed, the ceremony had to be performed under both governments, from which we may conclude that it was not unusual to find a man who had been twice married, but had never had but one wife.”²³⁹ In addition to the matrimonial challenges caused by the competing court systems, residents of the Tennessee Valley also confronted the fiscal dilemma of choosing to which state government to make tax contributions. Most citizens resolved this quandary by “choosing to pay neither” state’s taxes. “Those citizens who elected to deal exclusively with one side [North Carolina or Franklin] risked the wrath of the other.”²⁴⁰ In an April 9, 1787 letter to Benjamin Franklin, Governor Sevier conveyed his anger towards the bureaucratic anarchy gripping the region. Sevier stated, “They have [North Carolina], contrary to the interest of the people in two of the counties, to wit, Washington and Sullivan, by their acts removed the former places of holding courts to

²³⁷ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 174-174.

²³⁸ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 175.

²³⁹ William A. Henderson lecture “Nolachucky Jack,” 7 January 1873, Draper Manuscript Collection, Kentucky Papers (DD).

²⁴⁰ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 174-174.

certain places convenient to the disaffected [Tiptonites], as we conceive, in order that they might have a pretext to prevaricate upon.”²⁴¹

Amidst the political chaos, in October of 1786 the Franklin Assembly convened once again at the rustic Greeneville capital building. The deteriorating political situation within the region, a potential lucrative land deal, and a proposed joint invasion of Creek territory with the state of Georgia dominated the legislative session. During the meeting, the Franklinites appointed two of their most eloquent and experienced spokesman, William Cocke and David Campbell, to attend the upcoming November session of the North Carolina Assembly. Franklin’s leadership charged the pair with the unenviable task of convincing the North Carolinians to relinquish their challenge to Franklin’s statehood. Once again, the Franklinites placed their state’s political destiny in the hands of their most skilled orator, William Cocke.²⁴²

As the November legislative session approached, Governor Sevier dispatched a letter to Governor Caswell intended to again convince his gubernatorial counterpart of the justness of the Franklin separatist movement. Sevier’s letter is a masterful attempt at diplomacy and conveys the amicable relationship between the two governors and business partners:

Our Assembly has again appointed Some Commissioners to Wait on the parent State, who I hope will cheerfully Consent to the separation as they once before did [Sevier is referring to the Cession Act of 1784]. It gives us inexpressible Concern to think that any disputes should Arise between Us, More especially when we did Not in the first instance pray the Separation, but after the same was done by Act of your Assembly, We Humbly Conceived we should do No Wrong by endeavoring to provide for ourselves. Neither had we the Most distant Idea that the Cession Act

²⁴¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 396; John Sevier to Benjamin Franklin, 9 April 1787, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 10, 290-291.

²⁴² Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 215; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 347.

would be Repealed, otherwise Matters might Not have been Carried to the length they are.²⁴³

Sevier assured Caswell that the Franklinites did “not Wish to separate from you on any Other terms but those that may be perfectly Consistent with the Honour and interest of each party.” Sevier concluded his appeal with one final plea for separation. Sevier writes, “there is no Set of people Can think more highly of your Government than those who Want separation, and they only wish it to answer There better Conveniency, and tho’ want to be separated in Government, wish to be united in friendship.”²⁴⁴ Sevier’s correspondence succeeded in convincing Governor Caswell to reconsider the Franklin movement, but Franklin delegates William Cocke and David Campbell faced a much greater challenge in swaying the stubborn representatives of the North Carolina legislature.

The November session of the North Carolina legislature held in Fayetteville provided yet another opportunity for the Franklinites to present their case for separation and to garner backing from within their parent state for the movement. Attendees of the fall meeting witnessed the effort by the Franklinites to redefine and expand the reasons for their disunion from North Carolina. Although no records of the legislative session survive, undoubtedly the Franklinites formulated these new arguments for independence at the October 1786 Franklin convention.²⁴⁵ During the Cession Act debates of 1784, the Franklinites argued that North Carolina’s abandonment of the Tennessee Valley communities forced their separation from North Carolina. Sevier reiterated this idea in

²⁴³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 659-661; 672-673.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 177-179; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 215. A sudden illness costing David Campbell the use of his eye prevented the Franklin judge from attending the session, but he dispatched a letter, carried by William Cocke, to Governor Caswell presenting his case for separation (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 659-661; 672-673).

an October 28, 1786 letter sent to Governor Caswell, but the same letter also contained several new arguments promoting separation. Sevier contended that,

Our Trade and Commerce is Altogether Carried on With other States. And whether It Can be suggested that the benefit of the Government Can be Extended from five to eight hundred Miles distant, is a matter I leave to your Own good sense to Judge of. And further, it Can not be supposed that the inhabitants who reside at that distance Are not equally entitled to the blessings of Civil Government as their Neighbors who live East, South, or any other point, and not one-fourth of the distance from the seat of Government [Fayetteville]; besides the incomparable advantages of the roads and easy Communications that you have on the East of the Appalachian.²⁴⁶

At the Fayetteville convention, William Cocke presented Franklin's case to the distinguished body. In what one legislative attendee sarcastically described as "pathetic," William Cocke "depicted the miseries of his distressed countrymen," and implored the representatives to support Franklin's effort to create an independent state.²⁴⁷ Cocke's principal argument for Franklin's political sovereignty focused on the necessity of collecting state taxes to maintain a militia force for the defense of their communities from the threats posed by the region's aboriginal "savages." Cocke maintained that neither the state of North Carolina nor the federal government "had any interest in their safety." Cocke contended that the creation of Franklin occurred out of necessity, and he bluntly asked the delegates, "What were the people of the ceded territory to do to avoid the blow of the uplifted tomahawk?" The gifted barrister reflected, "Immediate and pressing necessity called for the powers to concentrate the scanty means they possessed of saving themselves from destruction. A cruel and insidious foe was at their doors. Delay was but another name for death." Cocke concluded his lengthy address with this eloquent appeal:

If the mother shall judge the expense of adhesion too heavy to be borne, let us remain as we are, and support ourselves by our own exertions; if otherwise, let the means for the continuance of our connection be supplied with the degree of liberality

²⁴⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 660-661.

²⁴⁷ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 18, 790-791.

which will demonstrate seriousness on the one hand and secure affection on the other.²⁴⁸

In a letter to Governor Caswell dispatched by the seriously ill Franklin Judge David Campbell, the Franklinite urged the North Carolina governor to support “the ratification of our independence.” Campbell offered essentially identical reasons for Franklin’s separation from North Carolina. He wrote, “If we set out wrong, or were too hasty in our separation, this country is not altogether to blame, your state pointed out the line of conduct, which we adopted; we really thought you in earnest when you ceded us to Congress.” Campbell also addressed the Native American conflict that threatened the Tennessee Valley settlements and astutely concluded, “Our laws and government must include these people [Cherokee] or they will become dangerous.” Campbell remarkably closed his correspondence by claiming, “Nature has separated us; do not oppose her in her work; by acquiescing you will bless us, and do yourself no injury, because you lose nothing but people who are a clog on your government, and to whom you cannot do equal justice by reason of their detached situation.” The Franklinites combined economic concerns, political marginalization, and the looming threat of Native American violence with the earlier abandonment arguments to create a persuasive justification for independence. Unfortunately for the new state supporters, these arguments fell upon deaf ears in the Fayetteville assembly.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Mary French Caldwell described William Cocke as “magnificent” man who “was tall, handsome, well-proportioned man, with dark skin, black hair, and flashing black eyes,” and whose appearance could “capture the attention of his audience even before his masterful appeal was heard (Caldwell, *Tennessee: A Dangerous Example*, 171-172).”

²⁴⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 651-652. The November session of the North Carolina General Assembly commenced on November 20, 1786. In a response penned on February 23, 1787, Governor Caswell assured John Sevier that, “nature never designed the settlers there [Franklin] to be longer under the same Government {North Carolina} with the people here, than their numbers and opulence would enable them to support a Government of their own (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 617-618). ”

The North Carolina Assembly clearly failed to see urgency in the Franklin issue, with both the Senate and House of Commons waiting three weeks to even address the Franklinites petitions for statehood. In a stinging report, the North Carolina Senate stated that, “the Legislature of North Carolina cannot accede to a separation at this period.” While empathizing with the “sense of suffering of those people [Tennessee Valley residents] during the anarchy which has long prevailed among them,” the distinguished legislative body deflected the Franklinites’ arguments for separation. Responding to the Franklinites abandonment claims, the Senate stated:

It appears to your Committee that some designing persons in that Country have so far deluded many of the citizens as to make them wish a separation under an Idea that they, by the act of cession passed in June 1784, were forever secured from this Government and its protection, and would be an emancipation from slavery. This Notion pervaded the minds of a majority for some time, while led on by blind infatuation; but when they were equal partakers with the rest of the State in the mild influence of its Constitution and Laws and were equally represented in its Councils.²⁵⁰

The senators also openly condemned Franklin’s leadership, blaming them for the “recent anarchy” and characterizing the state of Franklin as “highly reprehensible.”²⁵¹

The North Carolina Senate also included an offer of reconciliation with its firm rebuke of the Franklin movement. Undoubtedly influenced by the Caswell administration’s détente, the senate attempted to reestablish support for North Carolina in the Franklin counties by again passing “an act of oblivion, so as to conciliate and quiet the minds of those who may have, through Blindness or passion” supported the state of Franklin. In addition to extending a full pardon to the Franklinites for a second time, the Senate offered to “release” the Tennessee Valley residents “from the payment of taxes which have become due for the years 1784 and 1785.” The representatives concluded

²⁵⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 18, 85-86; Vol. 22, 653-654.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

that the Tennessee Valley inhabitants “enjoyed none of the benefits of [the North Carolina] government” during those years, therefore “they ought not in Justice to be taxed with its burthens.” The senate closed its December report by further extending a diplomatic olive branch. In a generous concession eventually supported by governor Caswell, the senate stated, “altho’ a separation is at this time impracticable, yet whenever wealth and numbers of the Citizens on the western waters so much increase as to make the same necessary, that then we are free to say a separation may take place upon friendly and reciprocal terms and under certain Compacts and Stipulations.” The Senate accepted the report and forwarded the document to the House of Commons, where on December 15th members “concurred.” The report destroyed any hope among the Franklinites that North Carolina could be convinced to agree to their separation, and over the next several weeks, the North Carolina government continued its “divide and conquer” strategy.²⁵²

The North Carolina Assembly next turned its attention to the recent violence surrounding the Tennessee Valley’s judicial system. In an attempt to prevent a repeat of these events, both the senate and the House of Commons passed acts removing “the place of holding Courts in the County of Sullivan.” In a clear swipe at Franklin Governor John Sevier and the Sullivan County Franklinites, the North Carolina assembly attempted to destroy the principal court used by the Franklin Government. The assembly also targeted the Franklin court at Jonesborough in Washington County by passing a bill that restructured the county courts and appointed “Commissioners to fix on the most convenient place for holding” the new court. In a final effort to assert their authority in the rebellious Franklin counties, both the house and senate agreed to a resolution “to

²⁵² Ibid., 85-87, 89, 96, 112, 130, 324, 354, 355,. The North Carolina Assembly actually passed the bill of pardon a few days later.

prevent doubts as to the right of Sovereignty and Jurisdiction in and over the Counties of Washington, Sullivan, & Greene.” The failed diplomatic efforts of Sevier, Cocke, and Campbell and a North Carolina Assembly determined to maintain control over the Tennessee Valley forced the Franklinites to look elsewhere for support for their statehood movement.²⁵³

In response to the defeat of their bid to secure support for their movement from within the North Carolina Assembly, the Franklinites initiated a remarkable propaganda campaign aimed at earning the approval for their separation from influential state and national leaders. In June of 1786, leading Franklinites opened a line of communication between themselves and their state’s namesake, Benjamin Franklin. In addition to their nomenclatural tribute, the Franklinites hoped to align themselves with one of America’s most celebrated citizens. In two separate letters, the Franklinites subtly requested Franklin’s support for their statehood effort. In an April 1787 communication, Governor Sevier informed Franklin of the state’s failed efforts within the North Carolina Assembly and the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Tennessee Valley caused by the competing state bureaucracies. Sevier then revealed the true intentions of his correspondence:

I have thus given your Excellency the outlines of our past and present situation, and beg leave to inform you, that, from our known patriotic and benevolent disposition, as also your great experience and wisdom, I am, by and with the advice of our Council of State, induced to make this application, that, should you, from this simple statement of the occurrences, think our cause so laudable, as to give us your approbation, you would be pleased to condescend to write on the subject. And any advice, instruction, or encouragement, you may think we shall deserve, will be acknowledged in the most grateful manner.²⁵⁴

The aged revolutionary leader never responded to Sevier’s requests, and apparently the Franklinites ultimately failed to win Franklin’s support.

²⁵³ Ibid., 117, 133, 158, 171, 183, 358; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 119-120.

²⁵⁴ John Sevier to Benjamin Franklin, 9 April 1787, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 10, 290-291.

The events unfolding in the Tennessee Valley drew the attention of other prominent Americans, including Patrick Henry, James Monroe, Richard Henry Lee, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. Unfortunately for the Franklinites, most of these figures opposed their efforts, or at least the manner in which they were being carried out. In a letter mailed from Paris, Thomas Jefferson described his feelings regarding the state of Franklin to George Washington. Jefferson wrote of his “increased anxieties” caused by the “late example of the state of Franklin,” and warned Washington that these separatist tendencies could spread to Virginia. In a letter to Virginia congressman Richard Henry Lee, Jefferson again described his displeasure with the actions of the Franklinites. Jefferson stated, “I am anxious to hear what is done with the states of Vermont and Franklin. I think that the former is the only innovation... which ought to be admitted. If Congress are [sic] not firm on that head, our states will crumble to atoms by the spirit of establishing every little canton into a separate state.”²⁵⁵ The inability of the Franklinites to convince one of the United States’ most vocal proponents of western expansion and the creation of new states exemplifies the enormous challenges facing their diplomatic effort. Even Jefferson’s fiercest political foe, Alexander Hamilton offered a trenchant criticism of the state of Franklin. In his essay *Federalist* #6, Hamilton utilized the “revolt of a part of the State of North Carolina” as proof for the necessity of a strong federal government. Hamilton warned against “those who endeavour to lull asleep our apprehensions of discord and hostility between the States.”²⁵⁶ Had the Franklinites managed to secure the support of at least one of these prominent Americans, then perhaps

²⁵⁵ Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 8*, 215-261, 279-280, 286-288, 508.

²⁵⁶ Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, Volume 4: January 1787-May 1788* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 316-317.

their efforts to secure approval within the halls of the United States government and the North Carolina Assembly might have been more successful.²⁵⁷

Despite waning support within the Tennessee Valley and public condemnation from political leaders across the United States, the resilient Franklinites managed to form a brief alliance with the state of Georgia. The two states formed their accord upon a shared political and economic objective, securing the coveted bottomlands stretching from the great bend of the Tennessee River to the North Carolina border, an area collectively known as Muscle Shoals. Historian John Finger appropriately described this coalition as “a marriage of convenience between Georgia and Franklin, arranged by speculators.”²⁵⁸ Land speculation at Muscle Shoals commenced two years prior to the formation of the state of Franklin. In 1783, a group of prominent North Carolinians, including William Blount, Richard Caswell, John Donelson, Joseph Martin, and John Sevier formed a land company in order to raise venture capital to purchase the valuable property from the Native American claimants. The investors hoped to convince the aboriginal tribes, which in 1784 included the Creeks, Chickasaws, and Cherokees, to peacefully relinquish their lands so that the speculators might profit from land sales to would-be settlers and the resulting financial opportunities. According to historian A.P. Whitaker, the Muscle Shoals land “was valuable for farming purposes and for trade with both the neighboring Indian tribes and the growing white settlements in the Mississippi Valley.”²⁵⁹ Before separatist sentiments plunged the region into chaos, North Carolina congressman and

²⁵⁷ Caldwell, *Tennessee: A Dangerous Example*, 169-171.

²⁵⁸ According to historian John Finger, William Blount “served as paymaster” for North Carolina troops in the Revolutionary War and was elected to the North Carolina Assembly in 1781 and a state delegate to Continental Congress in 1782. Finger argues that, “From the outset [Blount’s] his politics and business were inseparable (Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 99-100, 107, 113).”

²⁵⁹ Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation, 1783-1789,” 365-366, 369-370.

prominent land speculator William Blount and his business partners managed to secure a controversial claim to the Muscle Shoals land from the Chickasaw for roughly \$5000 dollars in trade goods and convinced the Georgia Legislature to establish a new county, named Houston, out of the Muscle Shoals acquisition. The original Muscle Shoals Company eventually dissolved during the Franklin movement, but the former investors in the aborted venture did not relinquish their desire to profit from speculating in Native American land.²⁶⁰

The Muscle Shoals land scheme inevitably became intertwined with the state of “Franklin’s expansionist plans.” The valuable lands on the “Bent [Bend] of the Tennessee River” and the Native Americans who remained the principal obstacle to the success of the lucrative land deal cemented the bond between the state of Georgia and the Franklinites.²⁶¹ The Muscle Shoals connections between these two governments are multi-fold. First, after a 1782 survey of the territory, surveyors determined that the Muscle Shoals district, originally thought to be within North Carolina’s borders, lay within the territorial bounds of Georgia. Additionally, a number of influential Georgians, described by William Blount as having “a great Thirst for Tennessee Lands,” served as members on the original Muscle Shoal’s company commission.²⁶² The links between the Tennessee River land deal and the Franklin government are also readily apparent, with John Sevier, Valentine Sevier, Anthony Bledsoe, and John Donelson (father of Franklin’s

²⁶⁰ *Cherokee and Creek Indians* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974), 102-105; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 376-377; Cora Bales Sevier and Nancy S. Madden, *Sevier Family History with the Collected Letters of Gen. John Sevier First Governor of Tennessee* (Washington: privately published, 1961), 59.

²⁶¹ Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 64-67, 75-76, 80.

²⁶² Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation, 1783-1789,” 366-371; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 377-378. The 1782 survey also proved that South Carolina held a claim to some of the Muscle Shoals district and the Muscle Shoals land company also invited a number of prominent Palmetto State figures, including Wade Hampton, to join the business commission (Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 107, Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 64-67, 75-76, 80).

chief surveyor Stockley Donelson) all serving in leadership capacities in the Muscle Shoals Company. The political and economic leadership of Georgia and Franklin believed that the Muscle Shoals district could remedy their states' mounting fiscal problems, encourage frontier settlement, and increase their personal fortunes. Both governments also conveniently subscribed to similar policies for expanding their states' borders, including the use of violence and intimidation to force the Native American populace to acquiesce to land cessions.²⁶³

In 1786, hostilities between the state of Georgia and the Upper Creek tribe, led by mixed-breed Alexander McGillivray, erupted and again plunged the Muscle Shoals land deal into question. An unknown Virginian who maintained contact with the Creek chief described McGillivray's intentions to an associate:

I am informed that Alexander McGillivray is using his utmost exertions to engage the Creek Indians in a War not only with Georgia but with the Western parts of Virginia and No. Carolina. He has said to some of his friends that his object is to make war as hot as possible at first, which will induce overtures for peace, and make the United States be glad to grant advantageous terms, such as to acknowledge the independence and sovereignty of the Creek nation, and admit them as a member of the federal Union.²⁶⁴

The Creek War ultimately drew the political leadership of Franklin and Georgia into an alliance because Georgia lacked the financial and military resources to mount a successful assault on the Creeks and the Franklinites lacked any legal territorial claims to the Muscle Shoals lands. In exchange for Georgia's political support of the Franklin movement and the cession of Muscle Shoals land to the Franklinites, the leadership of the

²⁶³ *Cherokee and Creek Indians*, 104-106; Kenneth Coleman and others, eds., *A History of Georgia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1977), 91. The state of Georgia suffered under similar financial strains as North Carolina and the state of Franklin. The loss of British markets, a shortage of specie, mounting debt, and the enormous expense of combating the Native American groups threatened the financial stability of Georgia.

²⁶⁴ *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, Vol. IV, 333-334.

state of Franklin agreed to join the Georgians in their war with the Creeks.²⁶⁵ One politically astute North Carolinian offered his view of the events unfolding on the Tennessee River, bluntly declaring that, “If I were to venture a conjecture, the good of the commonwealth is not at the bottom, but the views of a few crafty land-jobbers, whom you know, who are aiming at purchasing the great bend of the Tenasee [sic] from the Indians, and if not successful that way, to contrive a quarrel, and drive the natives out by force.”²⁶⁶

Throughout 1785 and 1786, the leadership of Franklin and Georgia, many former partners in the original 1783 land company, continued to correspond regarding the future of Muscle Shoals. Under the direction of the recently formed Bend of the Tennessee Company, the Franklin Government briefly attempted to operate a land office to parcel out the Muscle Shoals lands before eventually being driven out of the region by the Creeks.²⁶⁷ The efforts to settle the “Great Bend of the Tennessee” intensified during the spring of 1786. North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell clearly understood the concerns of the Creek Nation and expressed his empathy in a letter to Creek leader Alexander McGillivray. Caswell assured McGillivray that the North Carolina Assembly “expressed a concern that any citizens of this State should have given your people any

²⁶⁵ Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 80; *Cherokee and Creek Indians*, 6-8, 108-109; Coleman and others, *A History of Georgia*, 92-93; Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 11; Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 33-34. Alexander McGillivray served as an outspoken and skilled leader of the Upper Creeks. He opposed any land cession to white settlers and managed to utilize diplomatic relations with the Spanish, British, and American governments to benefit his Creek followers. It remains unclear whether the Franklinites understood the similarities between their political agenda and that of the Creek Nation. The Creek Nation was divided into two groups, the Lower Creeks and Upper Creeks. The Upper Creeks inhabited the upper Chattahoochee River Valley in present-day Georgia and the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and upper Alabama rivers in present-day Alabama (John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), 3-6).

²⁶⁶ Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation,” 371.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 374.

just cause of Complaint by their encroachments upon the Hunting grounds of the Creek Nation.” The governor reassured the Creek chief that, “nothing shall be done under the authority of the State respecting your people but what shall be strictly Consistent with the Ties of Friendship.”²⁶⁸

Amidst the intensification of Creek warfare and Caswell’s efforts to avoid further bloodshed, Georgia Governor Edward Telfair and the Franklinites initiated preparations to rend the Muscle Shoals lands. Colonel Anthony Bledsoe described the resulting Creek reaction in a May 12, 1786 letter to North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell. The Franklinite responded that:

The Creeks say that what they are doing is in consequence of the Attempt of Settling the Bent of the Tennessee. John Taylor, the half breed that we sent to the Cherokees, says there is one hundred and fifty Creeks coming against this Country to lay waste, and in all probability anything in the future will be done in the name of the Creeks. I am desired by Col. Robertson and others to request your Excellency to write to the Governor of Georgia on the subject.²⁶⁹

Governor Caswell articulated his concern over the mounting frontier tensions in a July 1786 letter to John Sevier:

I am much obliged by the information which you have pleased to give me respecting the conduct of the [Muscle Shoals] Commissioners & the business transaction regarding the Tenesa [sic] Lands and Happy to learn that they are considered so delightful and Rich. I am very glad the attempt for settling them was not made, or rather no Attempt was made to Survey the Lands.²⁷⁰

Despite the state of Georgia and the “land-jobber’s” willingness to delay the survey and settlement of the Muscle Shoals lands, Alexander McGillivray and his Creek followers continued their effort to drive whites from their lands. In another letter to Governor Caswell, Alexander Outlaw, a representative to the Franklin Legislature,

²⁶⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 619-620.

²⁶⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, , Vol. 22, 676-678.

²⁷⁰ Richard Caswell to John Sevier, 12 July 1786, Draper Manuscript Collection, Tennessee Papers (XX).

described Creek attacks on frontier settlers leaving several Indians and whites dead on the banks of the Holston River. Despite Caswell's rising alarm regarding the future of the Muscle Shoals land scheme, he remained "hampered by [his] obligations to North Carolina" and could not "render" any meaningful support for the efforts against the Creeks.²⁷¹

Continued resistance to white encroachment by the Upper Creeks hastened the opening of discussions for a joint campaign against the tribe by the states of Georgia and Franklin. In a May 14, 1786 letter to Georgia Governor Telfair, John Sevier warned that, "The success of the Muscle Shoals enterprise, greatly depends on the number [of troops] that will go down to that place. A small force will not be adequate to the risk and danger that is encountered, and the people here [Franklin] will not venture to so dangerous a place with a few."²⁷² Governor Telfair dispatched Major Caesar Augustus Christian George Elholm to serve as arbiter for the proposed alliance. Elholm emigrated from the Duchy of Holstein (present-day northern Germany) during the American Revolution and fought alongside Georgia troops at the siege of Savannah and along the banks of the Ogeechee River.²⁷³ His service to the state of Georgia during the revolution "so ingratiated himself with [newly elected Georgia] Governor [George] Mathews and the Legislature, that he was received by the Executive Council with marks of honor; was

²⁷¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 18, 607-608, 756-758; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 113-114. In February of 1787, Governor Caswell made several attempts to have Franklin and Georgia to force the removal of their citizens from the Creek lands near the Muscle Shoals district. In a April 1, 1787 response to Governor Caswell's demands for the removal of Franklin citizens from the disputed territory, Colonel Thomas Hutchins informed the governor that, "The People on the Indian Hunting Grounds I learn are very Obstinate & suppose will pay little or no respect to your Excellency's Proclamation for their Removal (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 678-679)."

²⁷² Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 376-382.

²⁷³ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 140, 309-310.

invited to a seat in their meetings.”²⁷⁴ After the war, the state of Georgia commissioned Elholm adjutant-general of the Georgia militia. During the war, Elholm also served under South Carolina General Francis Marion and probably met future Franklin Governor John Sevier during the southern campaign of 1780-1781. Sevier and Elholm’s camaraderie made him the obvious choice to secure a military alliance between Georgia and Franklin against McGillivray’s Creeks. Elholm spent much of 1785 and 1786 in the Tennessee Valley hammering out the logistics with the Franklinites.²⁷⁵ By the outbreak of the Creek War in the spring of 1786, the leadership of Franklin considered George Elholm one of their own, and during one of his trips back to report to Governor Mathews, the battle-tested veteran reciprocated his admiration for the Franklinites by lifting a toast wishing “Success to the State of Franklin, his Excellency John Sevier, and her virtuous citizens.”²⁷⁶

By the fall of 1786, Georgia and the Tennessee Valley Franks succeeded in finalizing the details of their military alliance. In a resolution passed on October 13, 1786, the Franklin Legislature agreed to aid the state of Georgia in their war against the Creeks.

²⁷⁴ William Bacon Stevens, *A History of Georgia, From Its First Discovery by Europeans to the Adoption of the Present Constitution in MDCCXCVIII*, vol. 2 (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1972), 380-382.

²⁷⁵ *New York Gazette*, 29 September, 1787, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper’s Notes (S); Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 172. At the March 1787 assemblage of the Franklin Legislature, the Franklinites honored Elholm by naming one of the two newly created districts the Elholm District. The representatives of Franklin named the other district the Washington District, thus elevating Elholm to the level of one of America’s most celebrated citizens (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 140). In a letter addressed to Joseph Martin a few weeks after the Battle of Franklin, an angry Tiptonite offered a far less glowing account of George Elholm’s emigration from Europe. According to the author, “As to Major Elholm, there need to be no more said of him, than that the cause of his Coming to America was his wanting to dispose of the King of Poland and his granting a free toleration in religion to his subjects. That he sacrificed his native country, his fortune, and his friends to his ambition. (Member of the Tipton Party to Joseph Martin, 20 August 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, King’s Mountain Papers (DD).” After the eventual abandonment of the military invasion of the Creek lands in 1788, Elholm remained in the region and served as the Franklin militia’s “adjunct and drill-master (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 309-310).”

²⁷⁶ William Bacon Stevens, *A History of Georgia, From Its First Discovery by Europeans to the Adoption of the Present Constitution in MDCCXCVIII*, vol. 2 (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1972), 380-382.

The Franklin resolution revealed the details of the planned attack on the Creeks. The resolution stated:

the Creeks had declared war against the white people, and had committed several murders on the frontier of late; and the consequence of which, he [Telfair] had sent a Peace Talk to the nation of Indians, and that from the best accounts he could get, they intended to make vigorous assaults on the white people, as soon as they gather corn; and that the said state [Georgia] intends to carry on a vigorous campaign against the Indians, if they do not treat with said state, and were to march by the first of November next.²⁷⁷

The resolution also pledged “one-fourth of the militia of each [Franklin] county...to march on horse to the frontiers of this state [Georgia].” Alexander Outlaw reiterated the arrangement to Richard Caswell. Outlaw explained that,

The Georgians are now carrying on a Campaign against the Creeks and have sent for our Assistance and the Cherokees have offered to go with us, and the Chickasaw have sent to us to let them know when we go, and they offer to Assist us. I expect that the Men will March from here against the Creeks and your Assembly should take our local Situation under consideration and pass a separation Act on such conditions as will do justice to us all and make the purchase from the Indians.²⁷⁸

In September of 1786, Major Elholm returned to Georgia carrying the Legislature of Franklin’s “sealed instructions” relating their intent to provide Georgia “one thousand rifleman and two hundred cavalry” in their ongoing war with McGillivray’s Creeks.²⁷⁹ Sevier also sent Governor Telfair a personal note informing him that the Creek attack may need to be “procrastinated” in order to give the Franklin army adequate time to muster.²⁸⁰ As 1786 drew to a close, both states hurriedly made preparations for the impending assault on the Upper Creeks.

²⁷⁷ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 378-383.

²⁷⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 18*, 758; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 378-383.

²⁷⁹ George Elholm to Edward Telfair, 30 September 1786, John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

²⁸⁰ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 378-383.

As the military commanders of Georgia and Franklin continued to organize their troops, the economic and political leadership of both states drew increasingly cordial in their diplomatic relations. In an extract from the Georgia Executive Council minutes recorded by Secretary J. Meriweather, the governing body declared that they, “entertain a high Sense of the friendly relations of the People of Franklin, and at the same time feel every Disposition to Continue the Correspondence between the Honorable John Sevier and his State.”²⁸¹ For the struggling Franklinites, the military alliance with the Georgians offered desperately needed support for their faltering statehood movement. In a letter sent to Governor Mathews, Governor Sevier bemoaned the continued resistance to their independence being offered by the state of North Carolina. Sevier then included this impassioned appeal for further support for his state:

When we remember the bloody engagements, we have fought together [during the revolution] against the common enemy, the friendly, kindly, and mutual supports afforded between the State of Georgia and the people of this country, it emboldens us to solicit you, Sir, and through you the different branches of your government, that you will be pleased to afford the State of Franklin, such of your countenance, in promoting the interest of our infant republic, and reconciling matters between us and the parent state, in such a manner as you in your magnanimity and justice, may think most expedient and the nature of our case deserve.²⁸²

By their willingness to ally with the Franks, the state of Georgia helped to legitimize the state of Franklin. Undoubtedly, the Franklinites hoped that the precedent set by Georgia’s recognition of their state might influence the actions of other states and more importantly the United States government.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Meriweather, J., 20 July 1787, Draper Manuscript Collection, Kentucky Papers (DD).

²⁸² John Sevier to George Mathews, 25 June 1787, William Alexander Provine Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

²⁸³ John Sevier to Gilbert Christian, 28 November 1787, John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 399.

As preparations continued throughout the opening months of 1787, letters of encouragement from prominent Georgians reached the Tennessee Valley. In February of 1787, General Elijah Clark dispatched a letter from Augusta, Georgia to his compatriot and fellow revolutionary soldier, John Sevier, containing these words of reassurance:

Assure yourself of my ardent friendship, and that you have approbation of all our citizens, and their well wishes for your prosperity. We are sensible of what benefit the friendship of yourself and the people of your state will be to Georgia, and we hope you will never join North-Carolina more. Open a land Office as speedily as possible, and it cannot fail but you will prosper as a people; this is the opinion current among us.²⁸⁴

In another exchange with Governor Sevier, Clark pledged his support for Franklin and reiterated his disapprobation with the actions of the North Carolina government. Clark wrote:

I am sorry to hear you have not peaceably established yourself in the State of Franklin, and that the unhappy contention yet prevails with the State of North-Carolina, and more particularly when they think of reducing you by force of arms. These ideas have not proceeded from any assurance from this state, as it is the received opinion of the sensible part of every rank in Georgia, that you will, and ought to be, as independent as the other states in the Union.²⁸⁵

Another Georgian, described as a “gentleman of distinction and character,” also professed his support for the fledgling state. He assured Governor Sevier, the “different opinions of a number of the greatest politicians in our state respecting yours... [is] that it will support itself without a doubt; and from what I understand, would give every assistance in their power.” The show of allegiance emanating from Georgia cast a much needed ray of hope across the Tennessee Valley for the Franks.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 383-387.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.. According to Pat Alderman, Elijah Clark “had been a guest in [Sevier’s] home (Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 219).”

The proposed joint military campaign against the Creeks also provided the Sevier administration with a diversion for the Tennessee Valley residents from the escalating political factionalism within their own communities. In what eventually became a recurring strategy, the leadership of the state of Franklin utilized Indian warfare to distract the region's unwitting inhabitants from the communal discord threatening their homes and families. Tennessee historian J.G.M. Ramsey also recognized this tactic stating, "The only chance of preserving the integrity of his [Sevier] government, was that the projected campaign would silence the clamour of the malcontents, and restore harmony and concert to the distracted members of his little republic." In a region galvanized by revolutionary and frontier combat, Nolachucky Jack sought to unify his constituency once again under the glory of his battle flag. Unfortunately for the Franklinites, the Creek campaign never came to fruition.²⁸⁷

In October of 1787, Alexander McGillivray and his Creek followers broadened their insurgency against the white settlements on the Holston River. Washington County, Virginia resident Arthur Campbell described the deteriorating situation to Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph:

Yesterday Mr. Ross [David] told me he had a letter from Holstien [sic], mentioning that a large body of Creek Indians had crossed the Hiwasee river, and was in full march against the Holstien Inhabitants... Gen'l [Elijah] Clark had an engagement of six hours in one day with the Indians, and that a fort with a large number of families were besieged by the enemy. He further relates that a Gent. Overtook him after he set out, saying that 500 Creeks [had] reached the Settlement on the French Broad.²⁸⁸

The increasingly bleak circumstances surrounding the conflict with the Creek tribe, a series of failed peace negotiations, and numerous logistical delays in the joint campaign

²⁸⁷ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 397.

²⁸⁸ Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, Vol. IV, 353-354.

placed increasing pressure on the financially unstable Georgia treasury. A.P. Whitaker explained the predicament Georgia found herself in at the close of 1787, “Georgia’s finances became more and more disordered, the munitions supply more and more depleted, until, as the governor of the state put it, she had a war on her hands without the means to wage it.”²⁸⁹

In the final months of 1787, newly elected Georgia Governor George Handley was forced to open formal negotiations with the Upper Creeks. In conjunction with his state’s ratification of the United States Constitution, Governor Handley agreed to pursue the federal government’s fiscally beneficial policy of peacefully negotiating with the Native American tribes.²⁹⁰ Focused on plans by Franklin surveyor Landon Carter to “make as many surveys as possible” of the Muscle Shoals territory, John Sevier remained totally unaware of the treaty negotiations.²⁹¹ In a February 19, 1788 correspondence, Governor Handley finally delivered the disappointing news to Sevier. Handley informed the Franklin leader that the United States “Congress, agreeable to their act of the 26th of October, ordered one Commissioner to be appointed from each of the states, North-Carolina, South-Carolina, and Georgia, to hold a treaty with the Indians, and we now only suspend our operations till the determinations are known.”²⁹² The tremendous

²⁸⁹ Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation,” 374-376. Whitaker described Georgia Governor Hadley as “more pacific” than former Governor Mathews.

²⁹⁰ Stevens, *A History of Georgia*, 382-383.

²⁹¹ In a September 19, 1787 letter, Landon Carter informed John Sevier of the ongoing survey of “six hundred and forty [acres] each which will be the size of the warrants when made out.” Carter does not mention the location of the surveys, but the historical context of the letter points toward the Muscle Shoals property (Sevier and Madden, *Sevier Family History*, 81, 86-87, 92).

²⁹² Stevens, *A History of Georgia*, 382-383; Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation,” 374-376.

political and financial rewards held out by the planned military alliance dissolved and once again delayed the acquisition and development of the Muscle Shoals territory.²⁹³

The collapse of the Tennessee River speculative venture and the coalition with the state of Georgia added to the bitter disappointment caused by the ineffectual diplomatic efforts in the North Carolina Assembly and among some of the United State's most influential statesman. The majority of Franklin's political leadership began to realize that their state's days were numbered. The communal disorder sparked by North Carolina's "divide and conquer" political strategy and the mercurial rise of a strident opposition faction within the Tennessee Valley forecasted the mayhem that clouded the final months of the malignant state of Franklin.

²⁹³ Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 84-85; *Cherokee and Creek Indians*, 105; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 21*, 527-528; Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 15-16; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 383-400; ; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 189-193.

Chapter Five

“Whare the Fire of Peace is Always Kept Burning.” Land, Diplomacy, and the Tragedy
of the Tennessee Valley’s Principal People

On June 8, 1787, Cherokee Chief King Fisher delivered an impassioned “talk” to Indian agent Joseph Martin. The aging King Fisher pleaded with Martin to “move these people [Franklin settlers] off our lands” so that “our people have room to live and hunt.” The Cherokee Chief implored him to see to these “matters so that our young seed may grow up in peace,” and the “few of us left” might keep “the land we live on.” King Fisher’s conversation with Joseph Martin encapsulated the tragedy of the previous twenty-five years of Anglo-American/Indian relations in the Tennessee River Valley.²⁹⁴

The two principal elements defining the European/American Indian strategies and agenda are all contained in the chief’s “talk.” First, the primary goal of Anglo-American Indian policies centered on the unrelenting pursuit of coveted Indian land. Second, the tactics utilized by whites to acquire Indian territory involved some combination of extralegal white encroachment, the creation of paternalistic relationships through treaties and official governmental negotiations, and the uncompromising use of violence and physical intimidation. King Fisher’s request also reveals the complex diplomatic strategy utilized by the regional tribes in their effort to avoid bloodshed and preserve what was left of their way of life. These frontier dynamics existed from the beginning of permanent white settlement in the Tennessee Valley, and continued largely unabated until

²⁹⁴ King Fisher “Talk” to Joseph Martin, June 8, 1787, Cherokee Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville. Joseph Martin is considered by many scholars to be the Cherokee’s closest ally. Martin lived among the Cherokee for several years and eventually married the daughter, Betsy, of the Cherokee’s “beloved woman” Nancy Ward. Martin’s familial connections with the tribe and long tenure as a North Carolina, Virginia, and United States Indian Agent often placed him in precarious positions during the decades of frontier conflict (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 217).

the Tennessee Valley's white settlers reduced the regional tribes and their land holdings to insignificant levels at the close of the eighteenth-century. The leadership of the state of Franklin and their Native American policies fit onto this tragic continuum, but their ferocity and unquenchable thirst for land dramatically escalated regional violence in the Tennessee Valley. The rapidly expanding regional population and economy fueled the desire to expand Franklin's geographical boundaries and natural resource based market economy. The Native Americans emerged as the primary obstacle to the region's growth and stability, and the Franklin government undertook one of the most draconian Indian policies of the eighteenth-century. An examination of the relationship between whites and the Tennessee Valley's principal Native American tribe, the Cherokee, reveals the tragic consequences of the violent relationship between the two groups. Despite the courageous diplomatic efforts by the Cherokee, the Anglo-American Indian policy, aimed at securing Cherokee land through dubious treaties, undermining armistice attempts, and engaging in perpetual bloody warfare, plunged the Tennessee Valley into decades of turmoil.

The first interaction between the Tennessee Valley's native residents and the Spanish adventurers who journeyed into the region appeared to be cordial. In the summer of 1540, Hernando de Soto and a group of roughly six-hundred Spanish soldiers traveled north from Florida and arrived in the Tennessee Valley. According to Tennessee historian John Finger, "There appears to be no major trouble in this first encounter between Tennessee Indians and Europeans." De Soto briefly visited several Indian towns on the Little Tennessee and French Broad Rivers before departing southward. After a short visit by another Spanish explorer, Juan Pardo, in 1567, the Native Americans living in the

Tennessee River Valley did not encounter another white traveler until the late seventeenth-century. One can only imagine the misconceptions and mythology that emerged during the one hundred and fifty year absence of whites among the Amerindian people. Despite the relatively peaceful beginnings of European/Indian relations, the Spanish explorers' demands for food, women, and information on potential riches foreshadowed the pending tensions between the two cultures, one rooted in capitalist expansion, the other in cultural preservation.²⁹⁵

During the century and a half absence of Europeans, the once expansive and powerful Mississippian Culture chiefdoms splintered and smaller tribal organizations quickly filled the vacuum. In the upper East Tennessee River Valley, the Overhill Cherokees emerged as the dominant tribal group. The Cherokee, or "principal people," rapidly extended their political, economic, and cultural influence throughout the southeast. The Cherokee had a matrilineal clan-based society, devoid of notions of private property and the accumulation of land or wealth. The Cherokee's "communal subsistence" economy, utilizing a combination of agriculture, hunting, and gathering, required vast amounts of land to provide for the populace.²⁹⁶ The Cherokee people lived in a relatively peaceful community, where a system of privileged retaliation mitigated inter-tribal warfare and the existence of powerful war chiefs in each town ensured a strong cohesive military preparedness.²⁹⁷ The socialist utopias often used by some

²⁹⁵ Finger argues that epidemic diseases brought by the Spanish, such as smallpox, measles, and influenza, and internal tensions led to the dissolution of the Mississippian chiefdoms (Van West, ed., *Tennessee History: The Land, the People, and the Culture*, 7-8).

²⁹⁶ Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 31-32.

²⁹⁷ Other tribal groups also occupied the Tennessee River Valley, including Creeks and Choctaws. The Cherokee tribe was divided into three general grouping, Overhill, Middle, and Lower Cherokees. The Overhill Cherokees occupied East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. The Middle Cherokee resided

historians to depict pre-contact Indian societies did not exist. Through out the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Overhill Cherokee forced the remaining Indian tribes out of the region and rapidly cemented their control over the Tennessee River Valley. By the time of the second arrival of whites in the region, the Cherokee population numbered roughly ten to twelve thousand people.²⁹⁸

Prior to permanent white settlement in the Tennessee Valley, most contact between Europeans and the Cherokee involved trade and Protestant missionary efforts. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, white traders ventured into the Tennessee River Valley to trade with the Overhill Cherokees. In July of 1673, two British traders, James Needham and Gabriel Arthur, traveled from eastern Virginia into the Tennessee frontier to open direct trade with the interior tribes.²⁹⁹ Despite the efforts of Needham and Arthur, geographical distance and Cherokee reluctance led to the failure to secure permanent trade relations with the Overhill Cherokees. Large-scale trade between the two groups did not materialize for several more decades.³⁰⁰

By the opening of the eighteenth century, entrepreneurs from the Carolinas, Virginia, and Georgia finally established trade relations with the Overhill Cherokee. These businessmen traveled great distances to trade inexpensive British goods, such as guns, hatchets, farm implements, and other metal wares, for the furs and pelts of whitetail deer and smaller game animals. The demands for furs in Europe created an enormous market for animal pelts, and the Cherokee helped to supply the growing global market. The fur

in South Carolina and the Lower Cherokee lived in North Georgia (Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*, 14-16).

²⁹⁸ Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 59-70; *First Families of Tennessee*, 33; Van West, *Tennessee History*, 8-9.

²⁹⁹ Finger, *Tennessee Frontier*, 24-25

³⁰⁰ West, *Tennessee History*, 9-10.

trade resulted in tremendous socio-economic consequences for the Cherokee tribe. Prior to the fur trade, Cherokee hunters maintained a sacred relationship with their prey and they treated any animal harvested with respect and a deep sense of appreciation. The Cherokee took great pains to utilize the entire animal, including meat, bones, pelt, internal organs, and bodily fluids. As profits replaced necessity, the European fur trade destroyed the spirituality of the hunt. The fur trade also increased inter-tribal conflicts by stretching the available hunting lands, depleting animal stocks, and introducing cutthroat capitalist competition into the Native American communities.³⁰¹

The fur trade drew the Cherokee into a disastrous dependent relationship with the Europeans. The Tennessee Valley's Native American communities became reliant upon European trade goods for survival and these financial relationships quickly became military alliances as the white nations competed for control over North America and its rapidly emerging economy. According to John Finger, "Trade... was usually the dominant consideration in relations with Britain, France, Spain, and later the United States."³⁰² By the opening of the French and Indian War in 1756, the Cherokee found themselves faced with a critical decision. The tribe maintained significant trade relations with both the French and the British, and both nations sought to draw the tribe into a military coalition. The English constructed Fort Loudon in the Tennessee Valley to bolster Cherokee support for their war effort. Despite the efforts of the British in the region, the Cherokee's lucrative economic relationship with the French and often acrimonious business dealings with the English convinced them to side with France in the conflict. From the 1758 opening of hostilities in the area until the signing of the Treaty of

³⁰¹ Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 59-70; Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, 31-35; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 22-26.

³⁰² Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 24-27.

Holston on November 19, 1761, Cherokee warriors fought ferociously against British troops and their Native American allies.³⁰³ Amidst a ruinous smallpox epidemic and insurmountable odds, the Tennessee Valley's principal people assaulted English forts, plundered British towns, and fought pitched battles with well-trained and heavily armed British regulars. As the fighting subsided in the so-called Cherokee War, both warring parties faced the consequences of battle. Fort Loudon lay in ruins and several important Cherokee towns no longer existed. The human casualties proved to be staggering as hundreds of Cherokee and British combatants sacrificed their lives for European imperialism.³⁰⁴

The end of the French and Indian War signaled a new phase in Cherokee/European relations and inadvertently paved the way for the first white settlements in the Tennessee Valley. In November of 1763, the Cherokee Nation attended a large peace conference, held in Augusta, Georgia, in which they agreed to "a treaty of mutual peace and friendship." The British used the Treaty of Augusta as part of a larger strategy to resuscitate the war-torn Indian trade network.³⁰⁵ Also in the fall of 1763, the British created an artificial geographical barrier separating eastern white settlements from the rapidly retreating Native American communities of the trans-Appalachian frontier. The

³⁰³ The Cherokee initially agreed to ally with the English during the French and Indian War. The Cherokee demanded that the English construct forts near their principal towns in order to provide protection from the French and their Indian allies. The English responded by constructing Fort Loudon near the Cherokee town of Tellico on the Little Tennessee River. Eventually the Cherokee sided with the French during the conflict and on August 8, 1760, Fort Loudon fell to a sizeable force of warriors led by Oconostota, chief of the Overhill Cherokees. The Cherokee destroyed the Fort and after allowing the women and children to escape, eventually executed the Fort's commander, Raymond Demere, and twenty-nine English soldiers. The fort's second in command, Captain John Stuart, escaped execution with the help of Cherokee Chief Atakullakulla (Little Carpenter) and the Englishmen eventually became Superintendent of the Southern Tribes under the victorious British regime. Captain Stuart also became one of the most sympathetic British officials to the Cherokee tribe (Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*, 39-45).

³⁰⁴ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 4-5; John Preston Arthur, *Western North Carolina: A History From 1730 to 1913* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1914), 68-69; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 56-60; Van West, *Tennessee History*, 10-12.

³⁰⁵ Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*, 45-46.

Proclamation Line of 1763 demarked an imaginary boundary running along the crest of the Appalachian Mountain chain that served as a dividing line for the two seemingly incompatible societies. The proclamation prohibited white settlement and land speculation west of the Appalachian Mountains and created a border between the two generally hostile peoples. In reality, the Proclamation Line of 1763 only briefly appeased the Native Americans as illegal white encroachment by British colonists increased dramatically with the conclusion of Indian hostilities at Augusta. The Overhill Cherokees left the Augusta meeting convinced of the security of their Tennessee Valley homes and hunting grounds, but the years between the conclusion of the French and Indian War and the American Revolution witnessed the steady advance of Anglo-American settlements.³⁰⁶

The period between the closing of the French and Indian War in 1763 and the development of the Watauga settlements in the 1770s is often called the decade of the Long Hunter. During the 1760s, hunters from across the southeast traveled into the Tennessee frontier to hunt the region's plentiful wildlife. Men like Daniel Boone, William Bean, Samuel Callaway, Henry Scaggins, and Elisha Walden spent months, thus the moniker long hunter, tracking deer, bear, and buffalo across the Tennessee Valley. Many of these long hunters returned to their communities with descriptions of the region's abundant wildlife, unclaimed arable lands, and economic potential. These frontier accounts inspired the first permanent white settlement of the region. The long

³⁰⁶ Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 94-95.

hunters became the first whites to ignore the Proclamation Line of 1763, but soon itinerate traders and devout Protestant missionaries followed in their footsteps.³⁰⁷

It comes as little surprise that the resumption of Cherokee hostilities coincided with the development of the Watauga settlements. The illusion of royal protection from white encroachment quickly faded away as British Indian agents and colonial entrepreneurs pressured the Cherokee to voluntarily cede their lands. Treaties like Hard Labor in 1768 and Lochaber in 1770 forced the Cherokee to relinquish huge sections of their land to British Indian agents and land speculators.³⁰⁸ According to Cherokee historian James Mooney, “While these transactions were called treaties, they were really forced upon the native proprietors, who resisted in each turn and finally signed only under protest and on most solemn assurances that no further demands would be made.”³⁰⁹ Even in these early negotiations with British officials, the Cherokee demonstrated the remarkable ability to engage in tense diplomatic negotiations. As hundreds of white settlers illegally poured into their lands and “guns rattled all over the Holston hills,” the Cherokee attempted to mitigate the inevitable loss of land by simultaneously appealing to the British Crown and negotiating with frontier entrepreneurs.³¹⁰ Unfortunately, the Cherokee’s desire and

³⁰⁷ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 12; Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 4, Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 68-71. King George III forbid English colonists from trespassing on Native American lands. King George clearly wanted to avoid another round of expensive Indian warfare and also hoped to prevent the loss of tax revenue from settlers venturing into the American backcountry.

³⁰⁸ Callaway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 70-72.

³⁰⁹ The Cherokee signed the Treaty of Hard Labor on October 14, 1768. The treaty extended the boundaries of Virginia and North Carolina, but did not include the Watauga settlements. The Treaty of Lochaber, signed on October 18, 1770, further extended the boundaries established by the Treaty of Hard Labor. Despite these land treaties, most of the Watauga settlers remained squatters on Cherokee land (Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*, 45-46).

³¹⁰ Davis, *Where There are Mountains*, 94-95; Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 5-7, 10.

ability to defend their land could not withstand the march of Anglo-American expansion. Diplomacy turned into despondency, and negotiations gave way to violent resistance.³¹¹

The settlement of the upper Tennessee Valley exacted a steep price from both the Overhill Cherokee and the Watauga settlers. Early settlers like William Bean, James Robertson, Jacob Brown, and John Carter erected communities on territory claimed by the Cherokee and protected by the Proclamation Line of 1763. The Wataugans total disregard for tribal sovereignty and British authority stoked the coals of smoldering Cherokee resentment. In addition, the gradual replacement of the Indian fur trade with a land and natural resource driven market economy further eroded the relationship between Tennessee Valley's white squatters and the Overhill Cherokees. Isolated incidences of Cherokee aggression occurred sporadically in the build up to the American Revolution, but epidemic diseases and casualties incurred during the French and Indian War depleted the Overhill Cherokee population and prevented the tribe from successfully repelling the white squatters. The Cherokee instead chose to continue to utilize diplomatic negotiations and incremental territorial concessions to appease the Wataugans. This delaying tactic culminated in a series of massive land sales, including the purchase of huge tracts of land by frontier speculators like Richard Henderson, Jacob Brown, and John Carter. The Tennessee Valley settlers became increasingly aware of the Overhill Cherokee's growing anger over continued white encroachment and the abandonment of mutually beneficial business arrangements.³¹² The Wataugans created the quasi-governmental frontier organization known as the Watauga Association to unite the disparate Tennessee Valley

³¹¹ Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, 66-67.

³¹² Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 53-56; Van West, *Tennessee History*, 13-15.

communities together against the Cherokee and to secure their “illegal” land claims.³¹³ The defense of these land claims eventually drew the Watauga settlers into a bloody war against the Cherokee and convinced the Tennessee Valley’s principal people to ally with the British during the American Revolution.

By the end of 1774, powerful land speculators controlled thousands of acres of Cherokee land in the Tennessee Valley and much of the tribe’s leadership began to question the policy of white appeasement. Cherokee leaders like Dragging Canoe criticized large white land purchases and agitated for armed conflict in a desperate effort to preserve their hunting grounds. Dragging Canoe informed a British Indian Agent that the Cherokee “were almost surrounded by White People, that they had but a small spot of ground left for them to stand upon and that it seemed to be the Intention of the White People to destroy them from being a people.”³¹⁴ The previous decades of conciliation, trade and military relations, acculturation, and racial inter-mixing created deep divisions among the Cherokees. Indian leaders like Atakullakulla (Little Carpenter) hoped to continue to utilize diplomacy to preserve their tribal sovereignty, but internal pressures for war against the white squatters continued to mount.³¹⁵ As the first shots of America’s war for independence rang out across the rolling hills of Massachusetts, the Cherokee began their own struggle for tribal sovereignty in the Tennessee River Valley.³¹⁶

³¹³ Dixon, *The Wataugans*, 6-12, 16-18.

³¹⁴ Hamer, “The Wataugans and the Cherokee Indians in 1776,” 114-115.

³¹⁵ Atakullakulla (also spelled Attakullakulla and Attacullaculla) is describes as a man who “was remarkably small, and of slender and delicate frame; but he was endowed with superior abilities.” The Cherokee Chief is best known for his diplomatic skill and became the primary advocate among the Cherokees for appeasement (Van West, *Tennessee History*, 14-15).

³¹⁶ John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1988), 14-17; Albert V. Goodpasture, “Indian Wars and Warriors of the Old Southwest, 1730-1807,” *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 4 (March 1918): 4-5.

Historian Randolph C. Downes states that, “The outbreak of the Revolutionary War was viewed as a godsend by the leading warriors of the Cherokee nation. It seemed to give them the opportunity to correct the mistakes they had made in the years from 1769 to 1775.”³¹⁷ The growing disillusionment among the Cherokees over the failure of peaceful diplomacy to halt white encroachment created the ideal opportunity for the British to convince the tribe to join their cause. The Cherokee’s disastrous decision to cast their lot with the soundly defeated French during the French and Indian War did little to deter their willingness to again ally with another European nation to protect their interests. The Cherokee’s leaders believed in the inevitability of a British victory over the rebelling American colonists, and more importantly over the Tennessee Valley squatters. The desperate tribe trusted that British military success equated to the removal of the white trespassers from their Tennessee Valley hunting grounds.³¹⁸

In 1776, the Cherokee “plunged the upper Tennessee frontier into a racial conflict that ... resulted in an overwhelming defeat of the tribesmen.”³¹⁹ Cherokee Chief Dragging Canoe led the tribe during the second Cherokee War. The Cherokee’s plan for the 1776 invasion of East Tennessee called for approximately seven hundred Cherokee warriors to form three separate divisions to attack the scattered white settlements in the Tennessee Valley’s recently established Washington District. The first group of three hundred Cherokee warriors, led by Cherokee Chief Old Abraham of Chilhowe, hoped to lay waste to the Nolichucky and Watauga settlements. The plan also called for a Cherokee Chief identified only as the Raven to take a small detachment and destroy the Carter’s Valley

³¹⁷ Randolph C. Downes, “Cherokee-American Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley, 1776-1791,” *The East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 8 (1936): 35-36.

³¹⁸ Hamer, “The Wataugans and the Cherokee Indians in 1776,” 108-109.

³¹⁹ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 149-165.

settlement. The remaining Indians, led by Dragging Canoe, targeted the southernmost settlements at Long Island.³²⁰ The three-pronged attack might have succeeded in its goal of the total obliteration of the Tennessee Valley settlements if not for the actions of the Cherokee's "Beloved Woman," Nancy Ward. Using white traders as go-betweens, Ward warned the valley settlers of the impending attack and undoubtedly saved hundreds of Wataugans.³²¹

During the months that followed, the Tennessee Valley militiamen repelled the Cherokee warriors at the Battle of Island Flats and the assault on Fort Watauga. As Cherokee forces retreated, a retaliatory force of several thousand Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia militiamen, led by Colonel William Christian, invaded the Cherokee territory. As the Anglo-American forces surrounded several Cherokee towns, many of the tribe's leaders met to weigh the options presented to them by Colonel Christian. When faced with the decision to either "treat or be destroyed," most of the tribe's leaders wisely supported negotiating with Colonel Christian, but a small vocal faction, led by Dragging Canoe, refuse to submit.³²² As Dragging Canoe and his supporters secretly escaped to Chickamauga Creek (near present-day Chattanooga, Tennessee), the remaining chiefs sent word to Colonel Christian that they were prepared to negotiate a peace treaty.

³²⁰ After learning of Dragging Canoe's plans for a Second Cherokee War, the Watauga settlers appealed to North Carolina and Virginia for help with the impending attack. North Carolina created the Washington District out of the southernmost settlements and Virginia created the Pendleton District out of the northern settlements (thought to be in Virginia). The Washington District became Washington County, North Carolina, and the Pendleton District became Sullivan County, North Carolina (Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 29-34).

³²¹ The actions of Nancy Ward during the American Revolution made the Cherokee councilwoman a frontier legend. She is given credit with saving the life of William Bean's wife Lydia, after she was captured during the attack on Fort Watauga (Callaway, *America's First Western Frontier*, 97-105).

³²² Many of the leaders of the State of Franklin movement participated in repelling the Cherokee invasion and in Colonel Christian's counter invasion, including John Sevier, Gilbert Christian, William Cocke, John Campbell, John Carter, Evan Shelby, and Joseph Rhea (Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 149-165).

On June 20, 1777, several months after the Cherokee War's conclusion, Cherokee leaders met with Nathaniel Gist, an emissary dispatched by George Washington, at Long Island to negotiate the terms of the treaty. The subsequent Great (Long) Island Treaty required the Cherokee to remain neutral during the remainder of the revolution and to return white prisoners and stolen livestock to the Tennessee Valley settlers. The Great Island Treaty also required that the Cherokee cede roughly five million acres of land, "everything east of the Blue ridge [Mountains]," to their white conquerors. The Cherokee War left hundreds dead on both sides and several critical towns, settlements, and forts destroyed.³²³ The brief and bloody conflict also increased the ranks of Dragging Canoe's Chickamauga Cherokee, an increasingly desperate, determined, and violent Cherokee splinter group calling themselves the Ani-Yunwiya ("the real people").³²⁴

The signing of the Great Island Treaty of 1777 failed to curtail Cherokee violence on the southern frontier. Cherokee warriors from Dragging Canoe's Chickamauga Cherokee continued to conduct raids on the upper Tennessee Valley settlements and Cherokee tribal leaders from the Middle and Lower Towns escalated their war efforts against Americans in South Carolina and Georgia. The Great Island Treaty further fractured the Cherokee Nation, never really politically unified to begin with, and rendered the more

³²³ Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*, 52-54; Van West, *Tennessee History*, 16. The Treat of Great Island is also called the Treaty of Long Island, but should not be confused with the Treat of Long Island conducted in 1781. The Cherokee ceded all of the Watauga settlements with the Treaty of Great Island.

³²⁴ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 303. Historian John Finger argues that the Chickamauga Cherokee "were complex in composition." "Besides an undeniable core of Overhill Cherokee, they incorporated an exotic mix of peoples whose common denominator was opposition to white settlement." This mixture included: Creeks, Shawnees, Delaware, a few African-Americans, and "whites ranging from prominent traders to French-speaking boatmen (Van West, *Tennessee History*, 16)."

moderate elements within the tribe ineffectual. As East Tennessee historian Brenda Callaway states, “the Cherokee War had not ended but only begun.”³²⁵

In the Tennessee Valley, tensions between the Cherokee and the white squatters continued to mount, and another cycle of violence seemed inevitable. British Indian agents supplied the Cherokee tribe with weapons and pressured their warriors to attack valley settlers. Dragging Canoe’s Chickamauga Cherokee terrorized the Tennessee Valley settlements and in April of 1779, Colonel Evan Shelby retaliated with a raid on the group’s forces at Chickamauga Creek. By using boats to launch a stealthy attack, Shelby’s force of six hundred militiamen caught Dragging Canoe’s soldiers by surprise. The Chickamauga Cherokee fled their homes and Shelby’s forces torched all twelve of the group’s towns.³²⁶ The final revolutionary conflict between the Overhill Cherokees and the Tennessee Valley militiamen occurred shortly after the militia force’s resounding victory at the Battle of King’s Mountain in 1780. The combined forces of John Sevier’s Washington County, North Carolina militiamen and Arthur Campbell’s Washington County, Virginia militiamen swooped down on the Overhill Cherokees. The raid on the Cherokee towns proved to be catastrophic for the tribe. John Sevier’s youngest son James, only sixteen at the time, described the engagement:

We had not pursued them more than ten miles before we found them [Cherokee] prepared for battle. The onset was made by the Indians without any effect on the fire being returned, the Indians broke for a cane-brake & saved themselves. Thirty or more, however were run into the open pine wood, killed, and strange to tell, this last battle was fought & so many Indians killed, and not a single white, & but one slightly wounded.³²⁷

³²⁵ Callaway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 107. By 1780, there were roughly five hundred Chickamauga Cherokees (Van West, *Tennessee History*, 16).

³²⁶ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 49; Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*, 55.

³²⁷ Major James Sevier to Lyman C. Draper, August 19, 1839, John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

The frontier militia forces destroyed all but two of the Cherokee towns in the Tennessee Valley, and burned their yet to be harvested cornfields. The Cherokee “once again gambled [by siding with a European nation] and lost.” The ultimate defeat of the British in the American Revolution left the Cherokee Nation “abandoned to their worst enemies.”³²⁸

The conclusion of the American Revolution did not halt frontier violence between the Tennessee Valley settlers and the Cherokee. White encroachment continued and many of the Cherokee remained steadfast in their efforts to protect their territory. The persistence of violence on North Carolina’s western edges resulted in tremendous financial expenditures for the fiscally struggling state. The post-revolutionary financial crisis coupled with the expenses of Indian warfare further exacerbated the region’s dire economic situation. The state of North Carolina reevaluated their post-revolutionary Indian policies and began to rely more heavily on cost efficient diplomacy rather than costly armed conflict. The Tennessee Valley’s leadership viewed the return to Cherokee appeasement as a huge mistake. Despite the reservations of western settlers, North Carolina restored diplomatic relations with the Overhill Cherokee and for a brief period following the revolution it appeared as though further frontier violence might be avoided. These hopes quickly vanished as the political and economic leadership of the Tennessee Valley began to clamor for independence and vocally criticized North Carolina’s conciliatory Indian policies.

The beginning of the political conflict between North Carolina and the future Franklinites occurred immediately after the destruction of the Overhill Cherokee towns in

³²⁸ Downes,” Cherokee-American Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley,” 35-39.

1780. The defeat of the Cherokee initiated a new wave of white encroachment in the Tennessee Valley. By 1781, white squatters extended their western settlements to “within a day’s walk” of many of the Overhill Cherokee’s most important towns. The Cherokee’s leadership pleaded with North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin to “have all your people moved off our land.”³²⁹ In a correspondence between Governor Martin and Overhill Cherokee Chief Old Tassel, the desperate Cherokee informed the governor that, “Your people from Nolichucky are daily pushing us out of our lands. We have no place to hunt on. Your people built houses within a day’s walk of our towns. We don’t want to quarrel.”³³⁰ North Carolina’s eastern leadership did not “want to quarrel” either. In 1783, the state began to make concessions to the Cherokee, including the establishment of a new boundary line against white settlements. Despite the efforts of eastern North Carolinians to curtail frontier violence, Tennessee Valley settlers continued to press southward and westward. The region’s militia units engaged in dozens of raids on Cherokee towns throughout 1783, and continued to argue in the North Carolina Assembly that the state needed to increase military expenditures for the safety and security of their western frontier. The two divergent strategies to deal with the Overhill Cherokees created palpable tensions between the state’s eastern and western leaders.³³¹

In 1784, the North Carolina Legislature decided to rid itself of its Indian problem by passing the Land Cession Act. The nearly bankrupt state hoped to repay its revolutionary debt to the federal government while removing itself from the impossible task of

³²⁹ William P. Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts From January 1, 1785 to July 2, 1789, Vol. IV* (Richmond: 1875-1893), 56.

³³⁰ Old Tassel to Joseph Martin, September 19, 1785, Cherokee Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

³³¹ Callaway, *America’s First Western Frontier*, 115-119; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 59-60; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 271-273. In September of 1782, John Sevier commanded two hundred militiamen in another raid on Dragging Canoe’s Chickamauga Cherokee (Downes,” Cherokee-American Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley,” 37-41).

balancing the interests of the Cherokee and the Tennessee Valley settlers. North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin wrote to the Cherokee in 1784, “that the Great Council of thirteen American States [Continental Congress], at Philadelphia should transact all affairs belonging to the Red People.” The Land Cession Act of 1784 provided the political opening for the Tennessee Valley’s frontier leadership to enact their new Cherokee policies. A future Franklinite outlined the objectives of the new policy as “the disposal of the Indian country, fix the limits of the new State [Franklin], and appropriate the lands, as a fund, to the support of our own government.” The Franklinites rejected the ideology of Indian appeasement and initiated a new strategy that combined the threat and focused use of violence with increasingly corrupt Indian negotiations. The Cession Act provided the rationale for the Franklin statehood movement and the birth of the state of Franklin provided the political freedom to radically transform Anglo-American/Cherokee relations on the Tennessee frontier.³³²

In 1785, the newly established Franklin government wasted little time in initiating their new Indian policy and expanding their settlements. By passing the Cession Act, North Carolina ceded much of her influence over frontier Indian diplomacy to the federal government, and the Continental Congress proved initially unable or unwilling to intervene in the Tennessee Valley. North Carolina and Virginia Indian Agent Joseph Martin wrote to Virginia Governor Patrick Henry:

Gov. [Alexander] Martin Tells me he is well informed that the Greatest part of the Cherokee and Creek Indians are for war, occasioned by the State of Franklyn [sic] passing an Act to Extend their Boundery [sic] within Twenty [miles] of Chota without Holding any Treaty with them. He also informs me that he has Declined holding any Treaty with the Indians, as the people over the mountains has separated themselves from North Carolina.³³³

³³² Downes, “Cherokee-American Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley,” 40-41.

³³³ Joseph Martin to Patrick Henry, April 16, 1785, Draper Manuscript Collection, King’s Mountain Papers.

In another exchange, Martin tried to persuade Governor Henry that it was imperative for the state of Virginia to remain neutral in the impending Indian war. Martin writes:

Indeed when I consider the encroachment which you inform me they are making on the Cherokee Lands, I find it necessary to direct you to give very particular attention to the subject. If you shall discover that the resentment is likely to terminate in hostilities, which in the common course must reach our [Virginia] settlements, you are to communicate to the Indians in somewhat specific manner a solemn assurance that the State of Virginia is not a party, ordering or assisting in the encroachment on their territory. That we wish not to have any dispute with them. You are to insist upon the observance of a strict neutrality towards the citizens of Virginia.³³⁴

The leaders of the state of Franklin were free to pursue their own Indian stratagem unimpeded by the federal government, Virginia, or North Carolina, and unencumbered by revolutionary financial obligations or unwanted outside influences. The Franklin Indian policy served as one aspect of a larger strategy aimed at organizing the Tennessee Valley's scattered communities into a unified state and then creating a public domain out of the unimproved and unclaimed territory to finance the nation's fourteenth state. In addition to the internal factionalism within the Tennessee Valley communities, the Franklin political strategy faced a serious hurdle. The Cherokee maintained claims to the only remaining substantial tracts of unsettled land in the region and the embattled tribe did not intend to make any further land cessions. To the Tennessee Valley's elites, the Overhill Cherokee represented the single greatest obstacle to their efforts to consolidate the Tennessee frontier, strengthen the region's land and resource dependent economy, and maintain their political hegemony.³³⁵

On May 31, 1785, the Franklinites negotiated their first formal treaty with the Overhill Cherokee. The two sides held the diplomatic discussions, ironically called "a Treaty of

³³⁴ Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 25.

³³⁵ Downes, "Cherokee-American Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 40-41.

Amity and Friendship,” at the mouth of Dumplin Creek and the French Broad River (present-day Jefferson County, Tennessee). Alexander Outlaw, Joseph Hardin, Luke Boyer, Joshua Gist, Ebenezer Alexander, and John Sevier represented the state of Franklin and Anchoo, Chief of Chota; Abraham of Chilhowe (Chelhowa); The Bard Head Warrior of the Valley Towns; the Sturgion of Tallassee; the Leach from Settico; and the Big Man Killer from Tallassee represented the Cherokee. The Franklinites dispatched their most skillful negotiators and most experienced Indian fighters, including their governor, their speaker of the House of Commons, an assistant judge, and a militia captain. Many of the most influential and circumspect Cherokee chiefs did not attend the meeting, including Old Tassel, Dragging Canoe, and Hanging Maw.³³⁶ It is unclear whether these chiefs simply refused to attend or the Franklinites failed to invite Cherokee leaders possibly resistant to further land cessions. Whatever the reasons, the absence of the principal Cherokee chiefs imbued the Treaty of Dumplin Creek with a sense of illegitimacy, and offered the Franklinites an unmistakable advantage in the treaty negotiations.³³⁷

The Treaty of Dumplin Creek provides an archetypal example of the state of Franklin’s Indian diplomacy in application. First, the Dumplin Creek treaty served two purposes, to force the tribe to formally recognize illegal land claims previously made by white squatters, and to secure further territorial concessions. One Franklinite paternalistically stated that the treaty negotiations aimed “to incorporate them

³³⁶ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 204-205; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 649-650.

³³⁷ Downes, “Cherokee-American relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley,” 42-43; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 289-325.

[Cherokee], and make them useful citizens.”³³⁸ Governor Sevier argued that previous white “settlements, even if unjustly made, were nevertheless made and could not be undone.” Sevier pressured the Cherokee delegation to accept the inevitability of relinquishing land already settled by whites in the Tennessee Valley. Sevier also attempted to shift the blame for white encroachment away from the state of Franklin by stating, “I am taking [sic] every measure in my power to prevent Encroachments on the Indians’ Land. This, however, is a difficult Task, because North Carolina actually sold the Land up To these [Cherokee] Towns.”³³⁹ The Franklinites also hoped to further extend their state’s land holdings in an effort to boost the state treasury and free up land for speculators within the Franklin government. The treaty eventually agreed to by the Cherokee delegation provided the tribe with clothing and trade goods for “all lands lying and being on the South side of the Holeson [sic] and French Broad Rivers, as far South as the ridge that divide the Waters of the Little River from the Waters of the Tennessee.” Not surprisingly, the land deal proved to be extremely lucrative for the Franklinites. For an amount of “reasonable and liberal compensation,” the state of Franklin secured thousands of acres of valuable Tennessee Valley bottomland. A word in the final sentence of the treaty reveals the true nature of the Dumplin Creek land deal: “bargain.”³⁴⁰

The second characteristic of the Franklin Indian strategy demonstrated by the Treaty of Dumplin Creek is the selective assemblage of Cherokee leaders by the Franklinites. By excluding Cherokee leaders possibly hesitant to sign away huge swaths of land for very little compensation, the Franklinites assured their negotiators highly agreeable treaty

³³⁸ Letter from Caswell County resident to a gentlemen in Washington County, Virginia, May 26, 1785, Draper Manuscript Collection, Newspaper Extracts.

³³⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 651-652.

³⁴⁰ Downes, “Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley,” 42-43; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 651-652.

delegations and lucrative diplomatic arrangements. This strategy did not go unnoticed by the Cherokee chiefs excluded from Dumplin Creek. In a “talk” delivered by Old Tassel, the Cherokee Chief stated:

Some of them [Franklin negotiators] gathered on the French Broad [Dumplin Creek], and sent for us to come and treat with them; but as I was told there was a treaty to be held with us [Treaty of Hopewell negotiated in South Carolina later that year], by orders of the great men of the thirteen states, we did not go to meet them, but some of our young men went to see what they wanted. They first wanted the land on the Little River. Our young men told them that all their head men were at home; that they had no authority to treat about lands. They then asked them liberty for those that were then living on the lands, to remain there, till the head men of their nation were consulted on it, which our young men agreed to. Since then we are told that they claim all lands on the waters of Little River, and have appointed men among themselves to settle the disputes on our lands [establishment of Franklin land office], and call it their ground.³⁴¹

Old Tassel’s letter also reveals a third element of the Franklin Indian policy, the misrepresentation or manipulation of the terms of treaties. Despite the verbal commitment to delay officially sanctioning land claims until the principal Cherokee chiefs could be consulted, the Franklinites proceeded to validate squatter claims and initiate the legal mechanisms for the sale of the Cherokee territory. The ruthless focus on securing land, strategically selecting Native American leaders for treaty negotiations, and the prevarication of diplomatic terms characterized the Treaty of Dumplin Creek and all future Franklin Indian negotiations.³⁴²

Nationalist historians argued that America’s native peoples failed to grasp the nature of European/American diplomacy, the concept of property ownership, and the dynamics of frontier capitalism. To these scholars, this fundamental misunderstanding of the

³⁴¹ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 319. Old Tassel’s complete letter is reprinted in Ramsey’s *Annals of Tennessee*.

³⁴² Samuel Cole Williams states that the Treaty of Dumplin Creek resulted in a large number of settlers occupying Cherokee lands, including members of Reverend Samuel Houston’s family, Samuel Wear, and Samuel Newell (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 78-80).

European socio-economic mindset led to the tragic consequences that cost the American Indians their homeland, culture, and lives. The diplomatic strategy utilized by the Overhill Cherokee during the Franklin movement refutes these misconceptions. The Tennessee Valley's people of the sacred fire engaged in a series of treaty negotiations with the federal government, the state of North Carolina, and the state of Franklin. The tribe sought to curtail the loss of their lands through formal diplomatic channels and resorted to violence out of desperation.

The first effort to halt the advance of Franklin settlers occurred prior to the dubious treaty negotiations at Dumplin Creek. During the Cession Act controversy, the Overhill Cherokee petitioned both the state of North Carolina and the Continental Congress to intervene in the situation unfolding in the Tennessee Valley. North Carolina agreed to meet with an Indian delegation at the end of 1784 to discuss the details of a new treaty, but the territorial cession prevented the meeting from occurring. With the repeal of the Cession Act, North Carolina once again agreed to meet with the leaders of the tribe. Because of the absence of a public domain in the Tennessee Valley, the federal government initially held little interest in intervening on behalf of the Cherokee. "Congress did not do as it was doing at that very time in the Northwest, that is. Build garrisons, supply troops, and remove squatters."³⁴³ Despite the reluctance of Congress to directly intercede in the conflict, the federal government did agree to provide frontier diplomats to aid the southern states in treaty negotiations with the southeastern tribes. As the situation quickly deteriorated on the Tennessee frontier, congressionally appointed

³⁴³ Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 42-43.

Indian agents and North Carolina negotiators agreed to meet the Cherokee leadership at Hopewell, South Carolina.³⁴⁴

The Cherokee and American diplomats conducted the Treaty of Hopewell without consulting or including the Franklin government. From November 18-29, 1785, Benjamin Hawkins, Joseph Martin, Andrew Pickens, and Lachlan McIntosh, the congressionally appointed Indian commissioners, engaged the Cherokee in a series of talks. The negotiations proved to be strikingly different to those held between the Franklinites and the Cherokee at Dumplin Creek.³⁴⁵ First, the Hopewell negotiations included all of the tribe's principal chiefs and over a thousand representatives from various Cherokee towns. Second, the participants in the meetings considered the diplomatic agendas of both parties, and negotiators held the maintenance of peace as being equally as important as the protection of land claims. Finally, the results of the Treaty of Hopewell proved to be mutually beneficial for both parties. As one historian stated, "The treaty held at Hopewell... is an admirable example of how generous a government can be with Indians when lands in question do not belong to that government."³⁴⁶

Whatever the motivations behind the equity displayed by the federal government at Hopewell, the treaty came as a much-needed diplomatic success for the Cherokee Nation. In exchange for recognizing the United States government as "sovereign of all our land," the tribe secured the restoration of the territory forfeited after the signing of the Great Island Treaty in June of 1777.³⁴⁷ The American representatives also agreed to disavow

³⁴⁴ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 205-207.

³⁴⁵ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 207; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 61-62.

³⁴⁶ Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 43.

³⁴⁷ Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*, 61-62.

Franklin's Treaty of Dumplin Creek. As important as the reclamation of their Tennessee Valley lands, the Treaty of Hopewell convinced the Cherokee that the members of the United States Continental Congress might be sympathetic to their cause. This perceived alliance instilled the tribe's leadership with the confidence to continue to resist both the advance of the Franklin squatters and the use of political and military pressure by the new state for further land cessions. The Franklinites reacted quite differently to the news of the South Carolina negotiations. Congress's willingness to make concessions to the Cherokee, and to exclude the rebellious state's leadership from the treaty negotiations strengthened the resolve of the Franklinites to defend their statehood effort. The land returned to the tribe by the Treaty of Hopewell also meant that several of the state of Franklin's most significant towns and communities, including the new capital of Greeneville, now rested in Cherokee territory. The treaty signed at Hopewell proved to be a watershed moment for the Tennessee frontier that simultaneously rekindled the Overhill Cherokee's hope that the American government intended to remove the white squatters from their lands, and strengthened the Franklinites resolve to expand their state's geographical boundaries and defend the land claims of their citizens.³⁴⁸

The negotiations at Hopewell signaled the beginning of an unusual political dynamic on the Tennessee frontier, the existence of two competing state governments. The state of North Carolina completely ignored the land cessions contained in the Treaty of Dumplin Creek and the Franklinites responded by refusing to recognize the terms of the Treaty of

³⁴⁸ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 334-335. According to Pat Alderman, "the final boundaries agreed on at Hopewell started at the Cumberland River 40 miles North of Nashville and ran to a point six miles South of the Nolichucky and southward of Oconee River." The Treaty of Hopewell also included a provision that provided the Cherokee Nation the authority to "punish" any white settler who settles illegally on tribal lands. The extension of Cherokee justice into the lives of Americans created a backlash against the Treaty of Hopewell among many North Carolinians as well as Franklinites (Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 207).

Hopewell. The Cherokee Nation faced the uncertainty of two state political systems conducting discrete Native American policies. The confusion caused by the divergent diplomatic efforts quickly spread among the valley residents as both states continued to maintain separate judicial, political, and military infrastructures. For the Cherokee, the escalation of political tensions between North Carolina's Tennessee Valley loyalists and rebellious Franklinites and the persistence of white encroachment on their hunting grounds forecasted the resumption of frontier violence.

The year 1786 opened with a renewed determination by both the Franklinites and the Overhill Cherokee to defend their homes. Franklin's Chief Judge David Campbell clarified his state's position in a November 30, 1786 letter to North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell. Campbell stated:

I suppose it will astonish your Excellency to hear there are many families settled within nine Miles of the Cherokee Nation. What will be the consequence of those emigrations? Our laws & Government must conclude those people or they will become dangerous. It is in vain to say they must be restrained. Has not all America extended their back Settlements in opposition to Laws & proclamations? The Indians are now become more pusilanimous [sic], and consequently will be more & more incroached [sic] upon. They must, they will be circumscribed.³⁴⁹

Cherokee Chief Old Tassel echoes the determination expressed by Judge Campbell in a talk delivered to Joseph Martin on April 10, 1786. Old Tassel warned Martin that, "Some of my young men have lately come from the Western Tribes of Indians and they tell me they are preparing for War and they will most certainly strike on your Frontiers the Spring and Summer." In a remarkable display of compassion, the aging chief stated:

We are very sorry that your people are suffered to Come in our Country making disputes; we want to live in peace with our friends, the White people, and will never Quarrel with them if we can help it. We therefore hope that you, our elder Brother, will take pity on us and do us Justice and keep your people from us, only such as you point out to trade with us, which we shall take great care of. We are very afraid that

³⁴⁹ Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 651-652.

we shall be blamed if the men who have gone out do any Mischeif [sic] but we can not help it, we did everything we could to stop them. We have been waiting a long time to see the people moved off our lands on the South side of the French Broad river, but they still come nearer.³⁵⁰

Despite the previous territorial cessions and diplomatic concessions agreed to by the Overhill Cherokee, the unwillingness of the state of Franklin to halt the advance of their citizens insured the rekindling of hostilities in the Tennessee Valley.

The resurgence of backcountry bloodshed commenced in the spring of 1786 with a series of Cherokee raids against white valley settlements. Led by mixed-blood chief John Watts, Cherokee forces, roughly one thousand strong, attacked settlements near present-day Knoxville. The tribe specifically targeted the Beaver Creek home of Mr. Briam due to its location only a few miles from the Cherokee town of Chota. The attack served as a warning against future encroachment on the north side of the Holston River.³⁵¹ The Indian attacks terrorized the Tennessee Valley settlers and forced frontier whites to hastily organize a volunteer militia force to retaliate against the Overhill Cherokee. Led by Governor Sevier, one hundred and fifty mounted Franklinites amassed at Houston's Station to conduct their invasion of the Cherokee's valley towns. After crossing the Tennessee River, the Franklin militia forces attacked the Hiawassee Valley Towns, burning three villages and killing fifteen Cherokees.³⁵² The destruction of the Overhill Cherokee towns resulted in a brief pause in combat, and both parties used the lull in fighting to prepare for future confrontations. Joseph Martin described the uneasiness gripping the Tennessee Valley during the late spring of 1786. Martin warned Governor Caswell, "The accounts from the Cherokee Country are somewhat alarming." He

³⁵⁰ Clark, ed., *State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 18, 595-596.

³⁵¹ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 341-344.

³⁵² Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 43-44; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 62-63; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 175-176.

recounted the violence of the previous months and cautioned the governor that the Cherokee recently warned the Franklinites that,” they did not wish for war but if the white people wanted war it was what they would get.”³⁵³

As spring gave way to summer, Dragging Canoe’s Chickamauga Cherokee continued their attacks on the region’s white settlements. Joseph Martin described these assaults to Governor Caswell:

The Dragon [sic] Canoe which is one of the Chiefs, is much attached to the Spanish Interests and I believe will join the Creeks. He killed two traders the latter part of the winter on their way to the Chickasaws from Cumberland. Ellis Haslin, one of the principal Traders in the Cherokee Country, informed me he saw a party of Creeks & Chickamawgahs [sic] on their way to Cumberland and endeavored to turn them back but they told him they were at open war with the Virginians [confusing Franklinites with Virginians] and they would not go back.³⁵⁴

The leaders of Franklin did not distinguish the Overhill Cherokee from the Chickamauga Cherokee and therefore often unfairly retaliated against towns that “all seemed very Friendly.” The threat posed by the Chickamauga Cherokees convinced the Franklinites to conduct a preemptive strike against the valley towns. On May 12, 1786, Franklin militia Colonel Anthony Bledsoe informed Governor Caswell of the situation:

Immediately after my return from [the North Carolina state capital] New Bern I found the peaceable situation of our little flourishing Country disturbed by the Indians stealing Horses, &c., and soon proceeded to Hostilities; as enclosed I send you a List of the Names of the several persons killed and wounded, in consequence of which I have Ordered look outs in different parts of the Country and am Obligated to call on the Militia continually, which is very oppressive. Our Country being a frontier alround [sic] and in all appearances likely to be invaded on every quarter, and driven to stations and fortifications leaving their property exposed to the savage, to the destruction of this Infant Country and we seem to be at a loss to know with Certainty by what hand we suffer in particular.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 18*, 603-604. During this period, Spanish-American Indian agents secretly encouraged the regional tribes to attack the Tennessee settlements. The Spanish provided weapons and supplies to the southeastern tribes in their effort to expand their territorial holdings in North America.

³⁵⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 18*, 604-606.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 607-608.

Colonel Bledsoe concluded his correspondence by “loudly calling [North Carolina] for assistance” and looking to Governor Caswell “to revenge her Blood.” Bledsoe then requested permission to lead a raid “against some small Town[s] of the Chickamawgahs [sic]”³⁵⁶

Governor Caswell reluctantly approved Colonel Bledsoe’s request for a raid on the Cherokee valley communities, and in August of 1786, a group of two-hundred Franklin militiamen, led by William Cocke and Alexander Outlaw, marched into the Overhill Cherokee territory. After destroying an Overhill town, the Franklinites forced the tribe into treaty negotiations.³⁵⁷ Amidst the threat posed by the invading Franklinites against their homes and families, the Overhill Cherokee leaders, led by Old Tassel and Hanging Maw, met with Outlaw and Cocke at Chota Ford from July 31st to August 3rd. During the talks, the Franklin negotiators accused the Overhill Cherokee of murdering “our young men,” stealing horses, robbing, and most importantly, abandoning the land agreements contained in the Treaty of Dumplin Creek. Old Tassel defended his tribesmen by stating, “The men that did the Murder is bad men and no warriors is gone, and I can’t tell you where they are gone. They live in Coytoy at the Mouth of the Holston. This is all I have to say; they have done the murder.” The Franklinites argued that the Cherokee must relinquish all of the land “on the North side of the Tennessee and Holston [Rivers]”

³⁵⁶ The list of persons provided by Colonel Bledsoe killed by the Cherokee included the names: Joseph Thomas, William Gubbins, Pear Planting, William Miller, David Lucas, William Shannon, Thomas Frigit, and Samuel Buckhannon. The Cherokee wounded Squire Grant, John Patton, Thomas Patton, John Frazier, William McGee, and Andrew Barber during the spring of 1786 (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 18, 607-608).

³⁵⁷ Downes, “Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley,” 44; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 63-64; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 342-343. Samuel Cole Williams states that Colonel Logan and the Kentuckians destroyed the Cherokee town known as Crow Town (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 140-141).

because North Carolina “has sold us all the Country.”³⁵⁸ In reality, North Carolina never sold the Franklinites any land and many of the state’s political leaders actively sought to destroy the embryonic state. The savvy Cherokee Chief Old Tassel called the Franklinites bluff, stating, “I will tell you about the land. What you say concerning the land I will talk to Congress about and the man that Sold it. I shall look to them for it. You say North Carolina sold you the land Over the River. We will talk to all head men about it.” The Franklinites eventually pressured the Cherokee into signing the Treaty of Coyatee. Perhaps in the entire history of Anglo-American/Indian diplomacy, no single treaty contained the level of intimidation as that conducted on the outskirts of Chota. The treaty warned the Cherokee that,

if you kill any more of our people we will come down and destroy the town that does the mischief unless you bring the rogues to us. And as you may not be any more deceived, we now tell you plainly that our great councilors have sold us the lands on the north side of the Tennessee [River] to the Cumberland Mountains. And we intend to Settle and live on it, and if you kill any of our people for Settling there we shall destroy the town that does the Mischief. And as your people broke the peace you made with Congress and us, and killed our men, it was your Faults that we come out to War. We have a right to all the ground we marched over.³⁵⁹

At Dumplin Creek and Chota, the Franklinites combined their fundamental misunderstanding of the Cherokee Nation’s tribal structure with physical threats, verbal trickery, and posthumous manipulation of the terms of the treaty to systematically plunder the Tennessee Valley land from the Overhill Cherokee. From the first land sales to the Wataugans to the Treaty of Coyatee with the Franklinites, the march of white settlements eventually extended across the entire Great Valley of the Tennessee.

As with the previous treaties agreed to by the Cherokee, white encroachment and Indian resistance persisted after the signing of the Coyatee agreement. Over the next two

³⁵⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 656-658.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 342-343; Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 213.

years, both the Franklinites and various elements of the Overhill and Chickamauga Cherokee sporadically clashed on the Tennessee frontier. Most of these isolated events involved small backcountry skirmishes and resulted in the relatively small loss of life. In the winter of 1787, a detachment of one hundred and thirty militiamen from Virginia's Kentucky Territory, led by Colonel John Logan, attacked an innocent group of Chickamauga Cherokee mistakenly believed to be responsible for "depredations on the Kentucky-Path."³⁶⁰ The Kentuckians killed seven Cherokee and wounded several others. Arthur Campbell described the situation that followed:

The party of Indians proves to be hunters from the friendly Towns, to the number of 17, and was returned with their skins. The Chief that was killed belonged to Chota. On the news reaching the Towns, the Indians assembled in a rage, blamed the Virginians [the Kentucky Territory still being part of Virginia], and threatened to take satisfaction.³⁶¹

The Cherokee also engaged in their share of frontier violence. Most Native American incidents involved the theft of horses and cattle or attacks on small groups of white hunters and traders. In reality, the isolated incidents occurring in the Tennessee Valley after the treaty of Coyatee simply continued the hostile relationship between the region's Native American and white residents.

Despite the continued failure of backcountry negotiations to secure the removal of white squatters from their hunting grounds, the Cherokee maintained their commitment to diplomacy. The year 1787 not only witnessed the drafting of a new United States Constitution, but also the reengagement of the federal government and the state of North Carolina in southeastern Indian affairs. In July, newly elected North Carolina Governor Samuel Johnston issued a "Proclamation forbidding any of the Citizens of the State

³⁶⁰ Joseph Martin to Alexander McGillivray, April 15, 1788, Cherokee Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

³⁶¹ Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, Vol. 4, 254-256.

[Franklin/North Carolina] from entering on the Indian Territory without the Order of the Commanding Officer of that Quarter.” Johnston also instructed Joseph Martin “to use his utmost efforts, to restrain the people in his District [Washington] from further outrages & by every means in his power to conciliate the minds of the Indians and to act altogether on the defensive.”³⁶² Notwithstanding the federal government’s inability to enforce the territorial agreements spelled out in the Treaty of Hopewell, the Cherokee still held onto their belief that further frontier bloodshed could be avoided by using diplomatic channels and direct pleas to prominent American political figures. Cherokee chiefs continued to correspond with state and federal leaders and meet with various Indian agents to secure their territorial boundaries. At a March 24, 1787 meeting at the Overhill Cherokee town of Chota, Hanging Maw described the tribe’s frustration with the United States government to Indian agent Joseph Martin. Hanging Maw stated:

We have been looking for You a great while to see if nothing can be done for us Respecting our Lands. When you went Away you told us that you Expected Colo. [Benjamin] Hawkins from Congress every day; that he was a good man and would do something for us. But we have heard nothing from him yet. We have several Treaties with the Americans, when Bounds was always fixt [sic] and fair promises always made that the white People should not come over. But we always find that after a treaty they settle much faster than before, but when we Treated with Congress [at Hopewell] we made no doubt that we should have Justice. We have been often told by People a great way off that we should set still till all our Lands is Settled; the Americans only meant to deceive us. We now begin to think it is true, tho’ [sic] still hope that Congress will take pity on us and have their people moved off our Lands.³⁶³

Hanging Maw’s argument that treaties escalated white settlement proved to be prophetic. Following the signing of the Treaty of Coyatee, the state of Franklin and her citizens intensified the settlement and sale of territory in the Tennessee Valley. At the September 1787 meeting of the Franklin Legislature held in Greeneville, the Franklinites

³⁶² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 500-501.

³⁶³ Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, Vol. 4, 262.

opened a land office for the purpose of selling the territory claimed from the Overhill Cherokee at Dumplin Creek and Coyatee. The Franklin Legislature provided for land purchases to be transacted using both scarce specie and abundant animal pelts. The land office quickly began to sell land in the Tennessee Valley both within and outside of the two treaty boundaries.³⁶⁴ Joseph Martin described the situation to recently retired North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell:

At my arrival in this place [Chota] I found the Indians in greater confusion [sic] than I had ever seen them before, Owing in part to Colonel John Logan's Expedition against them, Together with daily Incroachments [sic] of the Franklinists on their Lands. They have actually opened a land office for Every Acre of Land that the Legislature of North Carolina Ceded to them North of the Tennessee [River], which includes Several of their [Cherokee] Principal cornfields and part of the beloved Town, Chota and the whole Town of Niol, and Now Settling on the Banks of the River.³⁶⁵

Colonel Evan Shelby, a staunch opponent of the state of Franklin, also relayed the actions of the Franklin government:

They Opened an Office for the Lands from French Broad River to Tinnise [sic] River, being the Lands Reserved to the Indians By the General Assembly of No. Carolina to them and their heirs for Ever. They are Forceably [sic] Takeing possession of the Same, and Setling [sic] in View of their Towns. This Cannot faile [sic] bringing On the Resentment of the Indians, and Involve us in A War with them, which Your Frontiers must share in its dreadful Consequences.³⁶⁶

The state of Franklin's land policies also drew the criticism of one of America's most respected statesmen, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin wrote William Cocke that,

Such encroachments are the more unjustifiable, as these people [Native Americans] usually give very good bargains; and in one year's war with them you may suffer a loss of property and be put to an expense vastly exceeding in value what would have contented them perfectly in fairly buying the lands they can spare. There was one of their people who was going to Congress with a complaint from the chief of the Cherokees that the No. Carolinians on one side, and the people of your State on

³⁶⁴ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 166-167; Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 46-47; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 402-403.

³⁶⁵ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 675-676.

³⁶⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 653-654.

the other, encroach upon them daily. It may be well, however, to acquaint those encroaching that the Congress [of the United State] will not justify them in the breach of a solemn treaty [Hopewell], and that if they bring upon themselves an Indian war they will not be supported by it.³⁶⁷

Even the state of Franklin's political leadership realized the anger created among the Cherokee by the opening of the Franklin land office. Franklin militia Colonel Anthony Bledsoe acknowledged that the "opening [of] a land office from the French Broad to the Tennessee River... gives a general disgust to the Indians, and I judge gives them cause to harass the Cumberland settlements."³⁶⁸ The opening of the Franklin land office and the hostile stance taken towards the Overhill Cherokee by the government and citizens of Franklin all but insured another full-scale Cherokee war. As one concerned Virginia resident stated, "Should these ill advised people [Franklin residents] force them [Indians] into a War, we shall have all the Southern Indians against us."³⁶⁹

Amidst the diplomatic maneuvering with members of Congress and the state governments of Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina, the Cherokee Nation prepared for the impending frontier clash. One historian described the military build-up as "a Cherokee movement that in 1788 was to bring into the field a great conquering Cherokee army organized to sweep every settler from the south of the French Broad."³⁷⁰ In the spring of 1788, the Cherokee commenced hostilities, and began incursions into the Franklin communities. Surry County, North Carolina resident Mark Armstrong wrote to North Carolina Governor Samuel Johnston that the Cherokees "have killed several persons and taken some prisoners. Whilst I staid in Hawkins County [in the state of

³⁶⁷ Jared Sparks, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (Boston: Whitmore, Niles, and Hall, 1856), 260-261, 266-267, 290-291.

³⁶⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 683.

³⁶⁹ Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. IV*, 256-257; Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of James Madison, Volume 10, 27 May 1787-3 March 1788* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 271-272.

³⁷⁰ Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 45.

Franklin], four men were killed & scalped.”³⁷¹ Joseph Martin also grimly apprised Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph of the situation on the Tennessee frontier. Martin wrote:

Enclosing copies of letters showing the alarmed state of the frontiers of Washington, Russel and Hawkins Counties, and indeed throughout the whole Western N. Carolina and what had been known as Franklin, on account of the incursions of the Savages. Along the Holston and Clinch [Rivers], in Powell’s valley, and other places, the inhabitants are ready to leave the country. The letters enclosed are from his friends [Powell] residing on the extreme frontiers. Joseph Hind’s house had been attacked, and his son killed and scalped. On their retreat the Indians had carried off [sic] many horses and had killed the cattle, taking off the meat.³⁷²

The situation in the Tennessee Valley continued to spiral out of control and the struggling Franklin government proved incapable of either offering protection to their citizens or pacifying the marauding Cherokee. The failure of the Franklinites to secure formal recognition from the United States Congress, the loss of national and regional support for the statehood movement, and the state of North Carolina’s strategy of conducting their state’s affairs within Franklin’s ever-expanding borders slowly derailed the state of Franklin. In a letter dated April 12, 1788, North Carolina Governor Johnston warned that “Should the people in that part of the Country wantonly involve themselves in an Indian War without real necessity, but with a view to harass [sic] and drive them from their settlements I cannot promise them any assistance from this side of the Mountain.” By the opening of the 1788 Cherokee hostilities, America’s would-be

³⁷¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 693-694.

³⁷² Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, Vol. IV, 428-429; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 210-213. In a September 19, 1787 talk addressed to the state governments of North Carolina, Cherokee Chief Old Tassel pleaded with the two governments to “take pity on us and not take our ground from us because he is stronger than we (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 779-780).”

fourteenth state stood on the verge of collapse and faced the likelihood of a unilateral Indian engagement.³⁷³

Amidst the mounting turmoil engulfing the state of Franklin, in May of 1788 a Cherokee named Slim Tom murdered eleven members of a Tennessee Valley family residing nine miles from Chota on the Little Tennessee River.³⁷⁴ The Kirk family massacre proved to be the spark that once again triggered open warfare between the Franklinites and the Cherokee. The Kirk family incident and subsequent Franklinite response illustrated the barbarity perpetrated by both sides during the struggle for control of the Tennessee Valley. The sole surviving member of the Kirk family, John Kirk, described the massacre to Cherokee Chief John Watts in a letter dated October 17, 1788. Kirk wrote:

For days and months the Cherokee Indians, big and little, women and children, have been fed and treated kindly by my mother. When all was at peace with the Tennessee towns, Slim Tom with a party of Sattigo [Citico] and other Cherokee Indians, murdered my mother, brothers and sisters in cold blood, when children just before were playful about them as friends, at the instant some of them received the bloody tomahawk they were smiling in their faces. This began the war.

Kirk signed his correspondence “John Kirk, Jun. Captain of the Bloody Rangers.”³⁷⁵ The Franklinites predictably responded to the Kirk murders by sending out the Franklin militia, under the command of John Sevier, to retaliate against the Overhill Cherokee. Sevier, and approximately one hundred and fifty soldiers departed from the appropriately named Hunter’s Station, on a small tributary of the Holston River, on June 1, 1788 with “outrage rankling in their heart.”³⁷⁶ Despite the lack of evidence proving Overhill

³⁷³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 462-464.

³⁷⁴ Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, 117; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 64-65; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 413-415.

³⁷⁵ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 212-214.

³⁷⁶ General Sevier- 1st Campaign of 88, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper’s Notes.

Cherokee involvement in the Kirk family massacre, the Franklin militia force once again targeted the Cherokee's Hiawassee Valley Towns. Sullivan County, North Carolina resident Thomas Hutchings claimed that, "Colonel Sevier, contrary to the Council of Officers in June [2], fell on Kiewkah on Hiawassa, and, is said, killed about 20 Indians."³⁷⁷ Sevier then burned the Cherokee town and marched his forces deeper into the Overhill Cherokee Nation. Sevier's campaign against the Overhill Cherokee led to the destruction of several important Cherokee towns and a tremendous loss of life for the embattled tribe.³⁷⁸

After destroying many of the Cherokee valley settlements, John Sevier turned his attention to the destruction of the largely peaceful Cherokee town of Chilhowe, unfortunately the hometown of Slim Tom. At Chilhowe, Sevier's forces surrounded the Cherokee community and the home of the town's beloved chief Old Abraham. At the time of the occupation, Old Abraham happened to be in council with chief Old Tassel. The two Cherokee chiefs most dedicated to mutual peace received an invitation from the Franklinites to meet them at their encampment across the Little Tennessee River. Under a white flag of truce, Old Abraham and Old Tassel, men described as "remarkable for their good Offices & Fidelity," gathered in Sevier's tent.³⁷⁹ According to Thomas Hutchings, "Abram's [Abraham] son ferried them over [Cherokee party], and swam their horses- this done, they [John Kirk and James Hubbard] fell on the Indians, killed the Tassel, Hanging Man, Old Abram, his son, Tassell's [sic] brother, and Hanging-Man's

³⁷⁷ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 695-696.

³⁷⁸ Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 46-47; Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. IV*, 452. Contemporaries used the name Citico, after Citico Creek (a small tributary of Chickamauga Creek), interchangeably with Chickamauga to describe Dragging Canoe's small breakaway group of Cherokee resistors.

³⁷⁹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 227; Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, 117; Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 47-49; Dykeman, *Tennessee*, 68-69; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 695-696.

brother, and took in Abram's wife and daughter-brought in 14 Scalps- altogether a scene of cruelty."³⁸⁰ According to first-hand accounts of the tragic events of that summer day, John Sevier was "nearly a Quarter of a Mile from the Place" during the "braining" of the unarmed Cherokees, but the militia commander's absence did not shield him from criticism.³⁸¹ The Continental Congress offered several resolutions condemning the act and many of Sevier's contemporaries blamed him for the actions of the troops in his command. According to historian Dave Foster, "the [Kirk] incident devalued Sevier's reputation with President Washington, who wanted to keep peace with the frontier Indians," and "the president called Sevier an Indian murderer."³⁸² Thomas Hutchings warned that Sevier's conduct would "leave an evil tendency, in so much as it may involve us in a war."³⁸³ Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress, suggested to North Carolina Governor Johnston that, "Hostilities alleged to have been committed by John Sevier & others into which you are earnestly requested to cause enquiry to be made & if found true to take measures to have the perpetrators thereof apprehended & punished."³⁸⁴ Governor Johnston responded to the Continental Congress's demand for justice by "issuing a warrant for apprehending them [Sevier and party]."³⁸⁵ The

³⁸⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 695-696.

³⁸¹ In sworn depositions to the North Carolina Assembly, two Sevier loyalists declared Sevier to be innocent of the charges being leveled against him regarding the murder of the two Indian chiefs. According to Hubbard and Evans, the executions "was contrary to John Sevier's Orders and that it was done by a [illegible] John Cirk [Kirk] who had his mother and two brothers and sisters killed a few days before (Nathaniel Evans and James Hubbard (Hubbart), 22 October 1788, Depositions from Greene County in defense of John Sevier, General Assembly Record Group, North Carolina State Archives)."

³⁸² Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 18.

³⁸³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 695-696.

³⁸⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 495-497.

³⁸⁵ In a proclamation issued on July 29, 1788, Governor Johnston characterized the murder of Old Abraham and Old Tassel as being "cruel & unjustifiable." Joseph Martin also accused James Hubbard of the murder of an innocent Cherokee named Butler in the spring of 1785 (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 487-488).

Washington County District Court ultimately found Sevier innocent of the charges brought against him, but the damage to the Overhill Cherokees could not be undone.³⁸⁶

The tragic consequences of the barbarous acts of that June day extended far beyond the cold-blooded execution of two beloved Cherokee chiefs and their families. The reverberations from the death of Old Tassel and Old Abraham sparked a wave of terror and fear that swept across the Cherokee and white communities in the Tennessee Valley. Governor Johnston hoped that the arrest of John Sevier and several Franklin militiamen might “conciliate the Indians & restrain the Whites from Committing Outrages.” In an open letter to the Cherokee Nation, Johnston promised that if “any of them [Franklinites] have injured you without sufficient cause to take them up and send them to us that they may receive Correction & punishment.”³⁸⁷ Colonel George Maxwell of Sullivan County believed that “Sevier’s conduct, so exasperated the Indians that the whole body of them is now at war with us.”³⁸⁸ Hugh Williamson, North Carolina delegate to the Continental Congress, described the far-reaching ramifications of the murders in a September 6, 1788 letter to Governor Johnston:

You know that a Treaty is now pending with the Southern Indians [Creeks] and Georgia which has been long suffering under the knife, begins to hope for a general peace. In such conjunction the conduct of Mr. Sevier was not only fatal to their hopes, but perfectly alarming to the States of South Carolina and Virginia, each of them

³⁸⁶ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 227; Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, 117; Downes, “Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley,” 47-49; Palmer, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, Volume IV, 18-19; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York: The Current Literature Publishing Company, 1905), 216-217; Spoden, *Kingsport Heritage*, 142-143; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 211-213. North Carolina historian John Preston Arthur argues that Sevier, “knew well the fierce bloodlust of his followers, and is criminally negligent to leave to their mercy the friendly Indians who had trusted to his good faith; and moreover, he made no effort to punish the murderer (Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, 117).” Wilma Dykeman states that James Hubbard, “an avid Indian hater,” lured Old Tassel and Old Abraham with “a flag of truce.” Once inside the white encampment, “Hubbard closed the door, posted guards at the windows, handed a tomahawk to John Kirk, Jr., and invited him to take vengeance for his loved ones (Dykeman, *Tennessee*, 68-69).”

³⁸⁷ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 487.

³⁸⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 718.

might suffer by a general Indian War and the delegates from these States earnestly request that preventative measures may be taken.³⁸⁹

Despite the efforts by the Continental Congress and several southern state governments to conciliate the Cherokee Nation, the actions of Sevier and his fellow Franklinites insured the outbreak of another Native American war.

By murdering the two Cherokee chiefs most dedicated to maintaining a harmonious coexistence between the Indian and white valley residents, the Franklinites destroyed any hope for peaceful relations with the Overhill Cherokee, and inadvertently united the Cherokee behind a larger war effort. Richard Winn informed Governor Johnston that “the said Cherokee Chiefs have given Notice, they mean to spill Blood.”³⁹⁰ No longer could the frontier whites rely on the peaceful intervention of Cherokee chiefs like Old Tassel and Old Abraham on their behalf. Now the efforts of Cherokee resistance groups, such as Dragging Canoe’s Chickamauga Cherokee, became the accepted course of action for all Cherokee tribesmen. The state of Franklin leadership’s uncompromising pursuit of land at any and all costs, use of corrupt diplomatic practices, and campaign to undermine the treaty efforts of North Carolina, Virginia, and the United States government caused the bloodiest Indian war ever fought in the Tennessee Valley. John Sevier’s son, James Sevier, described this period as “the hottest Indian war I ever witnessed.”³⁹¹ After the state of Franklin’s demise, North Carolina Governor Johnston inherited the Cherokee war, which he characterized as “horrid Murders & Massacres.”³⁹² This conflict raged for several years until the Overhill Cherokees and their many tribal

³⁸⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 495-498.

³⁹⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 490.

³⁹¹ Major James Sevier to Lyman C. Draper, August 19, 1839, John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

³⁹² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 490, 497-498, 506-507.

allies finally agreed to sign a treaty ending the bitter hostilities. Long after the collapse of Sevier's state of Franklin, on July 2, 1791, the Cherokee signed the Treaty of Holston (in present-day Knoxville) effectively ending the three-year Cherokee war initiated by the Franklinites.³⁹³

³⁹³ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 227-228; Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 88-89; Downes, "Cherokee-American Indian Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley," 48-53; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 68-69. According to John Finger, the continued violence in the Tennessee Valley forced the Overhill Cherokee to abandon several of their valley towns, including Chota, and settle in Georgia. These valley refugees joined with Dragging Canoe's Chickamauga Cherokees to fight against the former Franklinites. North Carolina Congressman Hugh Williamson believed that "the conduct of Mr. Sevier was not only fatal [to treaty negotiations]," but also threatened the southern states with "a general Indian War (Van West, *Tennessee History*, 16-17)."

Chapter Six

“Death in all its Various and frightful shapes”

Over the two centuries of historical examination that followed the collapse of the state of Franklin, many scholars contend that the statehood movement quietly disappeared with little fanfare. A group of Tennessee textbook authors asserted that, “The State of Franklin had gone out with a whimper and not a bang,” and North Carolina historian Captain Samuel A. Ashe concluded that “the last vestige of the State of Franklin was, by conciliation and moderation, buried out of sight.”³⁹⁴ Even noted Cherokee and Tennessee frontier historian John R. Finger described the final breath of Franklin “not [as] a burst of glory,” but as a quiet “whimper.”³⁹⁵ Nothing could be farther from the truth. During the final months of the state of Franklin, the communities of the Tennessee Valley erupted into a violent civil war that left several Tennessee Valley residents dead and the region in complete bedlam.

Inhabitants of the Tennessee Valley struggled to address the burgeoning Cherokee and Creek resistance movements, the disruption to their communities caused by two competing state bureaucracies, and the increasingly treacherous factionalism threatening their homes and families. The state of North Carolina continued its conciliatory strategy aimed at non-violently defeating the Franklin separatist movement by driving a political wedge between the residents of the Great Valley of the Tennessee. Considerable risks accompanied North Carolina’s political maneuverings, and as early as May of 1787, Governor Caswell warned the embittered residents of “the Counties of Sullivan, Greene,

³⁹⁴ Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, *Tennesseans and their History*, 44; Samuel A. Ashe, “The State of Franklin,” *The North Carolina Booklet* 14 (1914): 48-49.

³⁹⁵ Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 122.

Washington, and Hawkins,” that if they failed to “evince the necessity of Mutual Friendship and the Ties of Brotherly love” between themselves that “the Blood of some of your dearest and worthiest Citizens may have been spilt and your Country laid to waste in an unnatural and Cruel Civil War.”³⁹⁶ Caswell’s prophetic admonishment shrouded the Franklin communities in fear like early morning mist hanging over the Allegheny Mountains to their east. The Caswell administration’s growing alarm over the potential outbreak of civil war intensified as a result of the further escalation of partisan political strife within the region. In an effort to avoid an outbreak of frontier violence, the state of North Carolina initiated a series of backcountry negotiations throughout the first half of 1787, between herself and the leadership of Franklin. Initially these high-level meetings offered the possibility of a peaceful compromise, but the eventual failure of the negotiators to secure a substantive and lasting agreement between the two states and their Tennessee Valley proponents resulted in the doomed state’s final bloody days.³⁹⁷

Governor Caswell expanded his effort to bring about a harmonious conclusion to the Franklin separatist movement by dispatching several impassioned correspondences with his son Winston into the Tennessee Valley. In late February of 1787, the first of these letters arrived in the hands of the still recovering Franklin Judge David Campbell. Caswell assured Campbell that Franklin’s independence may eventually be secured “if those can be brought to agree among themselves and make a General application to the Legislature hereafter, returning to the former Government and agreeing to certain

³⁹⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 707-709.

³⁹⁷ In keeping with their divide and conquer strategy, the state of North Carolina erected Hawkins County in 1786 out of the Franklin-created county of Spencer. The North Carolina Assembly named the new western county after Benjamin Hawkins, member of both the North Carolina Assembly and the Continental Congress (Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 215-216).

reasonable stipulations.”³⁹⁸ Winston Caswell also carried a letter from his father to Governor Sevier in which the North Carolina leader recounted his assembly’s fateful decision during the previous November session. Caswell regrettably reported that, “the Assembly, from representation of persons among yourselves [specifically Senator John Tipton], was induced to believe that it proper for the people to return to subjection to the laws and Government of North Carolina.” Caswell clearly understood the perilous situation unfolding on the Tennessee frontier and included a plea for calmer heads to prevail among the region’s partisan leaders. Caswell appealed, “In the mean Time, the most Friendly intercourse between the Citizens on the Eastern & Western Waters is strongly Recommended.” The North Carolina Governor concluded his communiqué with parting words of affection:

I have no doubt but a new Government may be shortly established if the people would unite, submit to the former Government and Petition for Separation, this I think the only Constitutional Mode & I firmly believe if Pursued will be a means of effecting a separation on Friendly Terms which I much wish and I cannot say but I have my own satisfaction in view, as I expect, if Life & Death and strength last to lay my bones on the Western Waters. Twelve Months will bring about a Release to me from public employment [governorship] & it is my intention then to establish it as the place of my residence.³⁹⁹

Caswell’s efforts to waylay the further escalation of violence in the Tennessee Valley undoubtedly served his political and financial agendas, but despite his adjurations, tensions between the Franklinites and Tiptonites continued to mount.

Under increasing pressure from North Carolina to return their political allegiance to their parent state, the Franklinites convened a spring session of the Franklin Assembly. In one of the last meetings of the full deliberative body, representatives assembled in their capital at Greeneville to attempt to govern their state amidst the region’s swirling

³⁹⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 616-619.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

political instability. In addition to opening a land office to settle land warrants for the Muscle Shoals district and expanding the state's rudimentary tax code, the Franklinites utilized the early March session to attempt to reverse the political factionalism generated by North Carolina's divide and conquer tactics.⁴⁰⁰ Tiptonite Thomas Hutchinson described the coercive measures in an April 1, 1787 letter to Governor Caswell:

In order to frighten Others into Compliance with Them [the Franklinites] Have passes an Act to Fine and Imprison Any person Who Shall dare to Act under the Authority of North Carolina for the First Offense five pounds. A Second Offense ten pounds and A Year's imprisonment. The [Franklin] Court at Discretion to Summon a Guard over them, Which Guard are to be paid out of the property of the Offender.⁴⁰¹

Hutchinson also informed Governor Caswell that the Franklinites "have also Impowered [sic] the Governor to Raise the Militia to Oppose the Operation of the Laws of North Carolina Who are Now enlisting, and Giving 400 Acres of Land Bounty. This is under A Color of Guarding the Frontiers." Hutchinson ominously warned. "Should they Offer any Insults To the Civil Authority, I Expect it will be difficult to prevent an Effusion of Blood."⁴⁰² The Franklinites closed the legislative session by hanging John Tipton, whom they considered "the instigator of [their] unhappiness," in effigy. The Franklin supporters placed an "extraordinary will" symbolically inside Tipton's mouth that "bequeathed his ignorance, his perjury, his folly, and his ambition to be divided among his friends, and a wooden sword to the most deserving of them."⁴⁰³

By the start of spring, a number of partisan leaders on both sides of the Franklin issue grew increasingly eager to resolve the statehood affair through diplomacy and to avoid

⁴⁰⁰ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 137.

⁴⁰¹ Hutchinson also pleaded with Governor Caswell to further intervene in the region and argued that "Unless these people are entitled to Exclusive and Separate emoluments from the Rest of the Community, they Ought Certainly to be Quelled." Essentially, Hutchinson's correspondence attempted to induce Caswell to commit the North Carolina militia to war against the Franklinites. This of course never came to fruition (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 678-679).

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 646-647; Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 10.

Hutchinson's predicted "Effusion of Blood."⁴⁰⁴ On March 20th, two delegations led by Franklin Governor John Sevier and his aging friend General Evan Shelby, rendezvoused at the home of Samuel Smith in Sullivan County in a bid to forestall the impending warfare between the region's two opposing factions.⁴⁰⁵ General Shelby described the situation in a report written the day after the meeting to Governor Caswell:

Many people are firmly attached to North Carolina, Others are as Obstinate against it; however, it is to be hoped that time and reflection will restore them friendly to North Carolina. The Animosity arising from difference of opinions in Government among our people here have Run high; to quiet the minds of the People and Preserve the Peace and tranquility till something better could be done, was the reason that induced me to hold a Conference and Conclude on the Articles enclosed.⁴⁰⁶

The conference proved to be one of the few successful examples of diplomacy that, at least briefly, offered the possibility of a peaceful resolution to the Franklin conflict. The two principal articles agreed upon addressed the violence and confusion destroying the region's judicial system and emptying their states' treasuries. In an effort to end the months of courtroom violence, the negotiators agreed to limit the types of cases and decisions adjudicated in the competing "Courts of Justice." Both sides agreed to avoid trying partisans on either side of the conflict for criminal offenses. By limiting the kinds of court cases being seen in the Tennessee Valley to "the trial of Criminals, the proving of Wills, deeds, bills of sales, and such like Conveyances," negotiators hoped to avoid further judicial hostilities. The second article acceded to by the two diplomatic contingents allowed "the Inhabitants residing within the said disputed Territory... to pay

⁴⁰⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 678-679.

⁴⁰⁵ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 216-217; Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 10. Samuel Cole Williams describes Evan Shelby as "a blunt, stern man, sixty-seven years of age, and J.G. M. Ramsey states that Shelby was "high in confidence of his countrymen everywhere, remarkable for his probity, candour [sic], good sense, and patriotism. During his meeting with Sevier, Shelby served as Brigadier-General for North Carolina's Washington District (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 142-143; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 357-358).

⁴⁰⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 646-648; Evan Shelby, Jr. biography of his Evan Shelby, Sr., Shelby Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City.

their Public Taxes to either the State of North Carolina or the State of Franklin.” This unusual decision allowed the competing state bureaucracies to function independently without the fear of having their constituencies’ tax contributions diverted to the opposing government. The agreement concluded with one final concession to the Franklinites, in which the delegations recommended that Franklin’s case for separation be considered for a third time “at the Next Annual Meeting of the [North Carolina] General Assembly.”⁴⁰⁷

The Shelby/Sevier negotiations provided few cogent solutions to ebb the partisan ranker imperiling the Tennessee Valley communities, and the articles agreed upon during the March meeting may have actually exacerbated regional hostilities. According to Franklin historian Samuel Cole Williams, “Tumult reigned, and violence was scarcely held in leash.” Williams also argues that Governor Sevier’s willingness to sign a “truce” with the North Carolina government divided Franklin’s leadership and led to “the decline of the morale of numerous followers.”⁴⁰⁸ Less than two months after signing the truce, General Evan Shelby informed Governor Caswell that, “the People of Franklin have not assented to the agreement which was entered into with their Governor for the preservation of peace and good order in this Country.” The futile effort to bridge partisan sentiments further dissevered the region’s inhabitants and rendered lame the brief accord signed in Sullivan County.⁴⁰⁹

During the months following the conference held between Shelby and Sevier, the Tennessee Valley continued to be savagely torn apart by political infighting. Colonel Anthony Bledsoe described the circumstances to Governor Caswell. “Politics in this part

⁴⁰⁷ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 357-358; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 142-143.

⁴⁰⁸ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 143-144.

⁴⁰⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 690.

of the country run high, you hear in almost every collection of people frequent declarations for North Carolina, and others in the manner for the State of Franklin; I have seen it in much warmth.” In response to Governor Caswell’s request to “know how the Laws and a Return to the Old Government Set on the minds of the people” of the Tennessee Valley, Colonel Thomas Hutchings offered this optimistic analysis, “I find in the County of Green [sic] the People are much Divided, in the other three Counties [Washington, Sullivan, and Hawkins] about two thirds much pleased with the Laws and a Return to the Old Government.”⁴¹⁰ Just a week earlier, Franklin Judge David Campbell recorded this conflicting assessment of the political leanings of his fellow Tennessee Valley residents, “You must not conclude that we are altogether unanimous but I do assure you [Caswell] a very Great Majority, perhaps Nineteen twentieths, seem determined to Preserve [Franklin] at all hazards.” Although impossible to verify, these statements regarding the distribution of political loyalties in the Tennessee Valley accurately reflected the escalating political dissention within the state of Franklin.⁴¹¹

In the face of increasing internal opposition and the damaging impact of North Carolina’s “divide and conquer” political tactics, the Franklinites remained unflinching in their effort to secure their political sovereignty. In a fiery letter addressed to Governor Caswell, David Campbell offered a sharp criticism of the effects of North Carolina’s conciliatory strategy. Judge Campbell stated, “I also blame the Law which passed in your Assembly to enable the People here to hold partial Elections [to the North Carolina Assembly]; if it was intended to divide us and set us to measure one another, it was well

⁴¹⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 654-657.

⁴¹¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 643. The state of North Carolina appointed Thomas Hutchings colonel of the Hawkins County militia in 1787 (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 144).

concerted; but an ill planned Scheme, it intended for the good of all.” The vocal Frank also included his own judgment regarding the treacherous political landscape of the Tennessee Valley, informing the North Carolina Governor that,

The People here, for I have been in Public Assemblies and made it my business to collect their Sentiments, dread the Idea of Reversion. They, say, if No. Carolina is in earnest about granting them a Separation why not permit them to go on as they have begun and not involve them in inextricable difficulties by undoing the work of two or three years Past... Pains was taken to collect the minds of the people Respecting a Reversion, many who were formerly lukewarm are now flaming patriots for Franklin; those who were real Franklinites are now Burning with enthusiastic zeal, they say North Carolina has not treated us like a Parent but a step Dame; She means to sacrifice us to the Indians Savages.⁴¹²

Campbell warned the North Carolina government that, “The Sword of Justice and vengeance will I believe, be shortly drawn against those of this country who attempt to overturn and violate the Laws and Government of Franklin, and God only knows what will be the event.”⁴¹³

In an April 6, 1787 exchange with Governor Caswell, John Sevier also conveyed the Franklinite’s indomitability:

I must own, before their [North Carolina Assembly] Rising I had the fullest hopes & Confidence that body would have either agreed to the separation on Honourable Principles & Stipulations, Otherways Endeavored to have Re-united us upon such terms as might have been lasting & friendly; but I find myself and Country entirely deceived and if your Assembly have thought their Measures would Answer such an End they are Equally Disappointed, but I firmly believe had proper Measures been Adopted a re-union in some measure, perhaps fully, would have taken place. We shall continue to Act as Independent and would rather Suffer death in all its Various and frightful shapes than Conform to any thing that is disgraceful.⁴¹⁴

Caswell’s response to Sevier’s letter reiterated his support for Franklin’s political sovereignty, stating, “You may rely upon it that my sentiments are clearly in favor of a separation.” Caswell’s correspondence warned against “the violences of the passions of

⁴¹² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 641-643.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 679-680.

some men among you,” and repeated his call for “unanimity among the Tennessee Valley residents.” The forewarnings offered to Governor Caswell by two of the most influential Franklinites reflected the heightening animus developing between the Tennessee Valley factions.⁴¹⁵

During the spring of 1787, the leading opponents of the state of Franklin intensified their efforts to topple the Sevier government. On April 27th, General Evan Shelby met with several Anti-Franklin leaders, including Thomas Hutchings, George Maxwell, and John Tipton, at his home in Sullivan County. The Tiptonites convinced General Shelby to make the following appeal to the government of North Carolina:

As the safety and well being of Government are now at Hazard and the Liberties and Properties of the good Citizens thereof wrestled from them by parties, Notwithstanding the lenient and Conciliatory Measures of the [North Carolina] General Assembly...I have therefore thought it expedient to call upon your immediate assistance, having the faith and honor of the Legislature of North Carolina pledged to us, that we shall remain secure in our liberties and Properties, the Matter is truly alarming; and it is beyond a doubt with me that Hostilities will in a short time Commence, and without the interference of Government without delay an effusion of Blood must take place. Therefore I think it highly necessary that one thousand troops at least be sent as that number might have a good effect, for should we have that number under the Sanction of Government, it is no doubt with me they would immediately give Way, and would not appear in so unprovoked an insurrection, on the contrary should a faint and feeble resistance be made the consequences might be very fatal and would tend to devastation, ruin, and distress.⁴¹⁶

In addition to what was ostensibly a plea for military intervention by the North Carolina militia, Evan Shelby included a request for “a quantity of Ammunition” and an alliance with the state of Virginia to crush the Franklin movement. In response to the creation of a Franklinite army to “Oppose the Operation of the Laws of North Carolina” just weeks earlier, the Tiptonites hoped to raise their own militia force to “put an end to the present

⁴¹⁵ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 681-682.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 646-647.

unhappy Disturbance.”⁴¹⁷ Throughout the spring of 1787, the Tennessee Valley communities increasingly resembled armed camps, as both sides prepared for the outbreak of war.⁴¹⁸

In May of 1787, the Franklinites held a constitutional convention in Greeneville to ratify the Franklin Constitution drafted in November of 1785. The delegates voted to accept the Franklin Constitution, and the once controversial document became the frame of government for the embattled state. William Cocke used the constitutional convention as a platform upon which to convince the Franks to organize another round of parallel state elections to the North Carolina Assembly. Governor Caswell and the North Carolina Assembly’s willingness to consider an independent state at a later date convinced Cocke “that some individuals of the said Assembly now warmly express themselves in favor of separation.” Cocke believed that if the Franklinites elected new representatives to the North Carolina Assembly that it “would enable us [Franklinites] to send members to negotiate a separation, and thus we could easily obtain our wish without trouble or hazard.” Even Governor Caswell assumed that the North Carolina Assembly may be willing to concede Franklin’s independence at the November 1787 legislative session.⁴¹⁹

Cocke’s seemingly benign electoral motion set off a furious debate among the Franklin leaders. A vocal group of militant Franklinites, largely drawn from the newly

⁴¹⁷ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 689-691.

⁴¹⁸ In a letter dated May 4, 1787, Anthony Bledsoe informs Governor Caswell that, “I have myself heard the Franklin party wish the period of the commencement of hostilities. To me it is a dread thought. Might I be permitted to request your Excellency’s addressing these people and advising them the necessity and advantage of returning to their duty once more and the danger and evil consequences of their persisting in the attempt of supporting and independence.” There is no evidence that the Franklinites wanted war to break out between themselves and North Carolina, but it is apparent that many opponents of Franklin believed this to be true (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 683-684).

⁴¹⁹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 220-221; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 149-150.

formed southern Franklin counties of Caswell, Sevier, and Blount, openly opposed Cocke's motion to hold North Carolina elections. Opponents of the elections offered varying arguments against Cocke's political assertions. Colonel Samuel Wear (Weir) claimed that the uncertainty of the plan "required the greatest deliberation and more time for consideration," so "he would therefore vote against" opening the polls. Although one of the newest Franklinites, Colonel George Elholm stringently asserted his disdain for the elections. In an eloquent soliloquy, Elholm denounced the proposed elections stating that, "to take seats merely as pretended friends of North Carolina, was inconsistent with the character of a people whose bravery in the field [of battle during the American Revolution] had changed the gloomiest aspects to that of the most pleasing." Elholm implored the delegates to "not sit like old women in council when their rights and privileges were in question." The former Georgian also reminded those supporting the elections that North Carolina refused to recognize the 1786 representatives selected by the Franklinites and that the parent state's assembly might choose to do so once again. General Daniel Kennedy introduced another powerful argument against holding the disputed elections. Kennedy contended that by holding the elections, the Franklinites inadvertently denied the political sovereignty of their own state. George Elholm concurred, stating "if we suffered any of our friends to represent us in the Assembly of North Carolina, by choice of our citizens under any pretence whatever, we had in fact made void the cession act [1784] on our part, and of course reverted insensibly to North Carolina government."⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 220-222; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 149-160. As with the bulk of the state of Franklin's legislative records, copies of the debate over the 1787 elections are missing from the historical record. Samuel Cole Williams and Pat Alderman include accounts gleaned from the *Georgia State Gazette* on July 14th and 28th, 1787.

Although Governor Sevier failed to directly address the issue of holding a new round of elections, he did offer a rare public oratory defending Franklin's independence. Sevier denounced the repeal of the Cession Act of 1784 by North Carolina and declared, "the independency of Franklin" to exist "in full force undeniably." The Franklin governor reminded the delegates of their March passage of a bill directing the Franklin Assembly to "make use of hostility" if necessary to "prevent elections within the limits of the State of Franklin under the authority of North Carolina." Sevier warned that holding the elections "would bring the friends of independency under the rigors of that act." Colonel George Doherty, Major Newell, and Colonel Barton added their voices to the growing chorus of opposition to the Cocke measure. Despite the efforts of Colonel William Cage, Colonel Thomas Amis, and others, General Cocke regretfully withdrew his motion to hold elections to the North Carolina Assembly in the state of Franklin for a second time. In its place, the Franklin delegates agreed to appoint another delegation to attend the upcoming November session of the North Carolina Assembly in order "to negotiate peace with the State of North Carolina consistent with the honor of, and with justice to, those two States as independent of each other." The heated debate surrounding the 1787 elections confirmed the effectiveness of North Carolina's divisive political tactics and the growing rupture continued to widen within the Franklinite ranks.⁴²¹

Shortly after the conclusion of the May constitutional convention, an "open letter" from Governor Caswell circulated through the Franklin communities exhorting the inhabitants to consider "the dreadful consequences which must ensue in case of the shedding of blood among yourselves." Caswell's letter implored the Franklinites to desist

⁴²¹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 220-222; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 149-160.

in opposing “the due operation and execution of laws of the State [of North Carolina], menacing and threatening [North Carolina loyalists]... with violence,” and committing “outrages... on the good citizens of the said counties.” Caswell’s petition “entreat[ed]” the Tennessee Valley to “lay aside your party disputes” because they are a “very great disadvantage to your public as well as private concerns.” Caswell’s plea to end the caustic political factionalism, in order to prevent “private interests from suffering,” appealed directly to the financial motivations of both Tennessee Valley rivals. In Governor Caswell’s last public address as governor, the “friendly and pacific” leader made one final effort to avoid “the dreadful calamities and consequences of civil war.” His efforts again proved fruitless as the two cabals continued to move closer towards war.⁴²²

At the end of June, John Sevier and North Carolina’s political leadership tried for a second time to fashion an accord to deflect the outbreak of civil war in the Tennessee Valley. In a July 6, 1787 letter to General Daniel Kennedy, Sevier recounted his meeting with the North Carolina delegation:

I met the Old State party on the 27th last month; few of our side met, not having noticed. I found them much more compliable than I could have expected, except a few. I have agreed to a second conference, which is to be held at Jonesboro’, the last day of this month. I shall earnestly look for you there, and as many other of our friends as can possibly attend, and I flatter myself something for the good of the public may be effected.⁴²³

Although it is unclear whether the meeting planned for July actually took place, the June conference served as one of the final efforts by the leadership of both states to mold an

⁴²² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 685-686.

⁴²³ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 391. The only extant copy of the Sevier letter to Kennedy is reprinted in J.G.M. Ramsey’s seminal work on Tennessee history, *The Annals of Tennessee*.

agreement. By the end of summer, the opening bands of the forecasted partisan storm swept across the Tennessee Valley communities.⁴²⁴

During the months leading up to the ensanguined fall of the Franklin government, the fragile coalition of Tennessee Valley Franklinites began to slowly disintegrate. Despite the failure to prevent the outbreak of frontier violence, North Carolina's divisive political tactics did manage to fracture the Tennessee separatist movement and to lure key regional figures back into the folds of the North Carolina government. This coercive process dated back to 1786 when former proponents of Franklin, including John Tipton, James Stuart, and Richard White, reversed their political loyalties and emerged as outspoken opponents of the state of Franklin.⁴²⁵

Over the next two years, additional Franklinites shifted their political allegiances to their former state. The commissioning of Franklin loyalists to influential posts within the North Carolina state government proved to be one of the most effective reversionary tactics utilized by the Caswell administration. From the election of senators to the appointment of county sheriffs, prominent Franklinites continued to accept civil, judicial, and military commissions from the North Carolina government. In February of 1787, Governor Caswell offered Franklin's chief judge, David Campbell, an appointment as "Judge of the Washington district."⁴²⁶ The ultimate insult to the Franklin government came in the fall of 1787 when, at the behest of Evan Shelby, North Carolina offered John Sevier a commission as Brigadier-General of the Washington District. The allure of a

⁴²⁴ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 174.

⁴²⁵ Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 187-188; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 339, 401.

⁴²⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 20*, 616-617. David Campbell ultimately accepted the appointment as Superior Court Judge of the Washington District representing North Carolina at the 1787 meeting of the North Carolina Assembly. The decision sparked the ire of the Franklinites, who accused the former Franklin supporter of "the desertion of his friends in very undisguised terms of reprobation (Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 187-188)."

guaranteed state salary and regional prestige undoubtedly influenced some Franklinites decisions, and the continued abandonment of the fated Franklin government aggravated the festering regional hostilities.⁴²⁷

According to Samuel Cole Williams, the “failure of the [June diplomatic] conference” between Sevier and the North Carolina commissioners and the “discord and strife” accompanying the August North Carolina Assembly elections, forced the Franklinites to “hurriedly [fall] back on [William] Cocke’s [election] strategy which had been discussed and discarded in May.”⁴²⁸ For a second time, loyal Franks organized competing polling stations in the Tennessee Valley to elect their own representatives to the North Carolina Assembly. The 1786 legislative balloting occurred in a relatively peaceful and organized manner, but the results of the August 1787 elections nearly incited the valley residents to war. The 1787 polling results and the violence surround the elections illustrated the irreconcilable divisions within the Tennessee Valley. The southern Franklin counties of Blount, Sevier, and Caswell reaffirmed their allegiance to the Franklin government by overwhelmingly electing Franks to represent their interests at the upcoming North Carolina legislative session.⁴²⁹

The elections held in the northern Franklin counties of Washington, Sullivan, Greene, and Hawkins proved far more contentious. Although no hard polling numbers survived, the political factionalism in these hotly contested counties unquestionably led to the election of two sets of representatives. The threat of polling station violence in Hawkins County (called Spencer County by the Franklinites) led North Carolina county sheriff

⁴²⁷ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 339, 401.

⁴²⁸ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 161-164.

⁴²⁹ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 174-175; Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 206-207.

John Hunt to declare that only Tennessee Valley inhabitants making tax contributions to North Carolina could cast their votes.⁴³⁰ This decision drew the ire of William Cocke and a group of Greene County Franklinites. According to the only available account of what transpired that summer day, “when about three votes were taken, Col. [William] Cocke appeared with a number of men, some of whom were from Greene County; that he, the deponent, had undoubted information that these men had come part of the way armed, in consequence of which he [John Hunt] was apprehensive a riot would ensue.”⁴³¹ One determined Hawkins County voter declared “that if the people were all ot [sic] his mind he would have his vote or a blow and he did not care which he gave first.”⁴³² The threat of violence forced Sheriff Hunt to shut down the polling station and a few days later the Franklinites declared their own candidate, Stockley Donelson, the victor.⁴³³ Despite the Franklinite’s triumphant declaration, three Hawkins County “inspectors of the polls” “jointly granted to Mr. [Thomas] Amis [the North Carolina candidate] a Certificate specifying that he was duly elected on said third Friday & Saturday in August.” The confusion surrounding the Hawkins County elections forced the North Carolina Assembly to announce “that neither of the parties is entitled to a seat” at the state legislative session.⁴³⁴ As the North Carolina government contemplated the bewildering

⁴³⁰ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 174-175.

⁴³¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 322-326.

⁴³² Joseph Martin to Richard Caswell, 16 March 1787, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper’s Notes (S).

⁴³³ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 174-175; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 161-164.

⁴³⁴ The North Carolina Assembly initially reused to certify the election of either man, but after careful deliberation, representatives determined “that John Tipton, esq., is duly Elected” and “ought to be permitted to qualify & take his seat accordingly (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 322-326).”

election results, the acrimony surrounding the 1787 legislative elections further pushed the Tennessee Valley towards civil war.⁴³⁵

The 1787 legislative elections proved to be the catalyst igniting the fumes of civil discord. In July of 1787, an altercation between two Washington County sheriffs nearly led to a pitched battle between the Tiptonites and Franklinites. Jonathan Pugh, the North Carolina Sheriff, described the incident in a sworn deposition delivered to James Stuart on September 20, 1787. Pugh recounted that,

on [the] thirty-first day of July last he [Pugh] , the deponent, and one of his deputies, being appointed to warn in the inhabitants of one of the districts of said country, to give in their taxable property, and being informed that a number of inhabitants were at the town of Jonesborough, to which place they proceeded in the execution of their office; and being there some time, a certain James Sevier came up to the deponent and shook hands with the deponent and asked the deponent how he was. Whereupon the deponent arrested the said James Sevier by virtue of the precept upon a bill of indictment against him; upon which the deponent demanded security for his appearance at next court; which he refused to do, and said that he despised the deponent's authority, and that he would not pay obedience to the laws of North Carolina.⁴³⁶

The fracas escalated after Andrew Caldwell, the Franklin Sheriff of Washington County, confronted Pugh and “violently struck and abused the deponent.” Sheriff Caldwell’s

⁴³⁵ Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 206-207; Evan Shelby, Jr. biography of his Evan Shelby, Sr., Shelby Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University. In Washington County, residents elected both John Tipton and Landon Carter for the same North Carolina Senate seat. According to Samuel Cole Williams, both Landon Carter and John Sevier fought to deny Tipton his Senate seat. Both Sevier and Carter blamed Tipton for the 1786 defeat of the Franklin petition for statehood delivered by William Cocke and David Campbell. Williams also states that Greene County residents elected David Campbell to the North Carolina Senate. In a letter recorded by Lyman Draper, Joseph Martin informed Governor Caswell that, “Sullivan and Hawkins County are unanimously in favor of the Old State,” but conceded that “Washington [County is] much divided between Tipton & Sevier.” During the same August legislative session calling for competing elections, the Franklinites also selected a gubernatorial replacement for John Sevier, whose term expired on March 1, 1788. The Franklinites chose Evan Shelby as Sevier’s successor, and Governor Sevier sent the general a letter urging him to accept the position. Shelby ultimately rejected the governorship (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 161-164).

⁴³⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 689-691.

threat to arrest Pugh forced the North Carolina loyalist to flee Jonesborough. Caldwell pursued Pugh and eventually “put him in prison and shut the door.”⁴³⁷

The commotion in Jonesborough quickly drew the attention of Governor Sevier. Sevier confronted Pugh about having the audacity to serve a North Carolina writ in the state of Franklin. Sevier declared that he “paid no obedience to the laws of North Carolina” and that he “despised her authority.” A few weeks later, John Tipton and a group of armed men traveled to Jonesborough to “redress” the “quarrel” between the two Washington County sheriffs.⁴³⁸ The Tiptonites succeeded in confiscating county records from the Jonesborough courthouse, but never found Sheriff Caldwell. The unexpected Tiptonite foray inexplicably “produced a rapid report” among the Franklin supporters “that they had made a prisoner of his Excellency” John Sevier. The faulty report “caused two hundred men to repair immediately to the house of Col. Tipton, before they became sensible of the mistake.”⁴³⁹ Governor Sevier narrowly prevented the Tiptonites from becoming a “sacrifice to [the] Franks,” but the incident further fanned the flames of war.⁴⁴⁰

During the final months of 1787, the Franklin independence movement suffered several devastating blows. Concurrent with the conclusion of the September United States Constitutional Convention, meeting in Philadelphia, the Franklin government

⁴³⁷ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 174-175; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 391-392; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 163-164. Paul M. Fink states that “the North Carolina Grand Jury brought an indictment against Caldwell because he “with force of arms an assault did make on him Jonathan Pugh, Esquire, then & there did Beat, Wound and Evil Intreat [sic] & then & there other enormous things did” to Pugh (Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 208-209).”

⁴³⁸ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 391-392.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 163-164.

⁴⁴⁰ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 174-175; Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 208-209; Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 12-13. In a letter reprinted in the *Columbian Magazine* in November of 1787, William Cocke informed George Elholm that, “a body of about fifteen hundred veterans, embodied to rescue their governor (as they thought) out of the hands of the North Carolinians, and bring him back to the mountains.” There is no record of the North Carolina court’s decision (Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 391-392).

gathered for the last time to discuss the logistics of their military alliance with the state of Georgia against the Upper Creeks and to select another set of diplomats to attend the upcoming session of the North Carolina Assembly. J.G.M. Ramsey described the grim situation confronting the Franklin representatives:

The Council of State had participated in the general disaffection, and some of its members had accepted office under North Carolina, while others had failed to meet their colleagues in the Board, or had formally withdrawn from it. The Legislature of Franklin suffered also from the prevalent disintegration, and manifested a strong tendency to dismemberment.⁴⁴¹

Amidst the political dissension plaguing the meeting, Governor Sevier managed to secure financing for the proposed joint expedition with Georgia. The delegates appointed Landon Carter and David Campbell to serve as commissioners to lobby the November session of the North Carolina Assembly to reconsider Franklin's independence. The remaining Franklinite leadership predictably passed another act to open a land office to issue grants for territory previously secured from the Cherokee by the treaties of Dumplin Creek and Coyatee.⁴⁴²

As the Franklin government continued to crumble, the Franklinites received word that the delegates to the United States Constitutional Convention finally completed their difficult task of crafting a new frame of government for the young American Republic. On Monday September 17th, the President of the Convention, George Washington, transmitted a copy of the newly drafted United States Constitution to all thirteen state governments for "assent and ratification." Washington attached a personal correspondence to the documents, describing the importance of the redrawn frame of government, the inevitability of resistance from some states, and the necessity of at least

⁴⁴¹ Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 401-403.

⁴⁴² Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 187; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 189-193.

nine states quickly ratifying the constitution. Washington closed his letter to the states by assuring America's political leadership that the new constitution will "promote the lasting welfare of that Country so dear to us all, and secure her freedom and happiness."⁴⁴³ As copies of Washington's letter and the new constitution spread among the Tennessee Valley communities, the reeling Franklin supporters anticipated a decision on the admittance of new states into the federal union. In a constitution designed to defend America's sovereignty, Article IV, section 3, destroyed the Franklin independence movement by declaring that,

New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.⁴⁴⁴

As one Tennessee historian stated, "Any hope that had remained for Federal intervention was now gone."⁴⁴⁵ After years of unsuccessfully lobbying the federal government to support their independence movement, the only prospect for the state of Franklin's improbable survival now lay with the North Carolina Assembly.⁴⁴⁶

In November, the North Carolina Assembly convened for their fall session. Rabid Anti-Franklinites overwhelmingly represented the Tennessee Valley inhabitants at the convention; including Robert Allison, George Maxwell, and James Stuart in the House of Commons and John Tipton and Joseph Martin in the Senate. Only David Campbell, whose political loyalty wavered, appeared on the membership rosters for the

⁴⁴³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 775-777.

⁴⁴⁴ The United States House of Representatives, "The United States Constitution," www.house.gov/Constitution/Constitution.html.

⁴⁴⁵ Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 87.

⁴⁴⁶ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 222; Bergeron, Ashe, & Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 44; Fink, "Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin," 206-207; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 189-190.

Franklinites.⁴⁴⁷ During the lengthy sessions, the representatives made several critical decisions regarding the Franklin counties, including passing an act to reconsider the ceding of her “Western lands” to the federal government, commissioning regional military officers, and reexamining a bill “declaring what crimes and practices shall be deemed Treason...for quieting the tumults and disorders in the Western parts of this State.”⁴⁴⁸

Late in the legislative session, the Senate also considered a “Petition of the inhabitants of the Western Country,” circulated by Franklin supporters after the adjournment of the November Franklin Assembly.⁴⁴⁹ In a desperate final plea for North Carolina to “graciously... consent to a Separation,” the commissioners carried with them a petition signed by roughly 450 Tennessee Valley residents. The frontier document reiterated many of the same arguments for separation, including the passage and subsequent controversial repeal of the Cession Act of 1784, the guarantee of statehood contained in the North Carolina Constitution, the geographical “remoteness” of the region from the seat of state government, and the inadequate distribution of funds for the promotion of internal improvements and the defense of their communities against the regional Indian tribes.⁴⁵⁰ The Senate chose not to take any action regarding the petition or any subsequent appeals by the Franklin attendees. As the North Carolina government continued its conciliatory policy towards the Franks by again extended pardons for “the

⁴⁴⁷ Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 187; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 404-405; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 193-197.

⁴⁴⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 119-120; 202, 218, 223, 247-248; 261-262, 270, 273, 276, 284, 293, 300-302, 326. Governor John Sevier also sent Francis A. Ramsey, the father of Tennessee historian J.G.M. Ramsey, to the November session with Landon Carter and David Campbell. The act to cede their western lands to the federal government, originally passed in 1785 and repealed shortly after, failed to pass (Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 404-405).

⁴⁴⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 119-120; 202, 218, 223, 247-248; 261-262, 270, 273, 276, 284, 293, 300-302, 326.

⁴⁵⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 705-714.

offences and misconduct of certain persons in the Counties of Washington, Sullivan, Greene, and Hawkins,” the likelihood of Franklin’s independence evaporated all together.⁴⁵¹

By the end of 1787, the repeated failure of diplomatic appeals to both the federal and North Carolina governments, the fragmentation of Franklin’s political leadership, and the diminishment of regional support toppled the statehood movement, but deep-seeded partisan hatred persisted in the burned out hull of America’s aborted fourteenth state. J.G.M. Ramsey described the scene, “Vestige after vestige of Franklin was obliterated; its judiciary gone; its legislature reduced to a skeleton; its council effete, defunct, powerless; its military disorganized, if not discordant, and its masses confused and distracted, with no concert, and unanimity among themselves.”⁴⁵² In the northern Franklin counties of Hawkins and Sullivan, former Franklinites grudgingly accepted the defeat of the Franklin movement. Surry County resident Mark Armstrong informed newly elected North Carolina Governor Samuel Johnston that, “the unhappy division which has for some time past subsisted between the people of the Old State & New State of Franklin... [seemed] to be done away and [a] reconciliation [had] taken place.”⁴⁵³ In neighboring Washington and Sullivan counties, the resumption of peaceful relations failed to materialize, as partisan tensions continued to flare.⁴⁵⁴ John Sevier never wavered in his belief in the salvation of his government through its doomed alliance with the state of Georgia and

⁴⁵¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 119-120; 202, 218, 223, 247-248; 261-262, 270, 273, 276, 284, 293, 300-302, 326.

⁴⁵² Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 403-405.

⁴⁵³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 693-694.

⁴⁵⁴ Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 87. During the build up to the Battle of Franklin, the enemies of John Sevier reported several incidents of the Franklin governor and groups of armed men threatening Tiptonites. In a letter to Robert Love, John Tipton described such an occurrence, “Sevier and his Gang persist in opposition to the Laws of North Carolina they have been at my house in a hostile Manner (John Tipton to Robert Love, 21 January 1788, Henry Toole Clark Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).”

support from powerful Americans. Governor Sevier optimistically informed General Daniel Kennedy in January of 1788 that, “I find our friends very warm and steady- much more than heretofore.” Over the coming months, partisans in Washington County pushed the Tennessee Valley to the brink of total war.⁴⁵⁵

It came as little surprise that a dispute involving state jurisdiction and private property initiated the outbreak of hostilities between the Tennessee Valley partisans. According to Judge John Haywood, the “*fieri facias*” commenced after Colonel John Tipton, serving as colonel and clerk of court for Washington County, ordered Sheriff Jonathan Pugh to execute a seizure of John Sevier’s property to satisfy unpaid taxes to the state of North Carolina.⁴⁵⁶ Revenge served as Tipton’s true motivation for ordering the raid on the Sevier farm, and the collection of back taxes simply offered him the justification to order the search and seizure.⁴⁵⁷ Sheriff Pugh traveled to the Sevier farm at Mount Pleasant and confiscated several of Sevier’s slaves and livestock as payment for the delinquent tax contributions. In a fateful decision, John Tipton ordered Pugh to deliver Sevier’s property to his home on Sinking Creek “for safe-keeping.”⁴⁵⁸

Governor Sevier received word of the loss of his slaves while preparing the militia forces of the southern Franklin counties, whose rabid support for Franklin persisted, for a spring assault on Dragging Canoe’s Chickamauga Cherokees. Sevier ordered the Franklin

⁴⁵⁵ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 20, 456.

⁴⁵⁶ Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 190-191.

⁴⁵⁷ The author is speculating regarding John Tipton ordering Sheriff Pugh’s collection of back taxes from Governor Sevier, but a Washington County’s Clerk of Court, the execution unquestionably originated from the mind of John Tipton.

⁴⁵⁸ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 223-224; Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 87-88; Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 12-13; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 406-407. Williams and Haywood state that the Franklin troops under Sevier’s command mostly mustered from Greene, Sevier, and Caswell counties in southern Franklin. Inhabitants of these three counties remained the most rapid supporters of Sevier and the state of Franklin (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 198-200; Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 190-191). There remains considerable debate over the details of the so-called Battle of Franklin.

troops to march to Tipton's farm to reclaim their governor's property and defend their state's sovereignty. In a sworn deposition taken August 20, 1788, several Tiptonites recounted the events of that winter morning. "On the 27th of February last John Sevier Marched within sight of the house of the said John Tipton, Esqr. With a party of men to the amount of One Hundred or upwards with a drum beating colours flying In Military Parade and in a Hostile manner."⁴⁵⁹ By the early afternoon of February 27th, Franklin governor John Sevier and a force of roughly 150 Franklin troops surrounded the Tipton home and immediately prepared to arrest John Tipton.⁴⁶⁰

As the Tipton family and approximately forty-five loyalists found themselves surrounded by Franklin troops, the ominous predictions of bloodshed appeared to be at hand. Within hours of the beginning of the siege, John Sevier dispatched Colonel Henry Conway with a flag of truce and a letter demanding immediate capitulation from the Tiptonites.⁴⁶¹ General Sevier's dispatch "requested" that John Tipton "and the party in his house surrender themselves to the discretion of the people of Franklin within thirty minutes from the arrival of the flag of truce."⁴⁶² The Tiptonites stubbornly refused to surrender and Colonel Conway returned to Sevier's military encampment with only a "verbal answer" to Sevier's "daring insult."⁴⁶³ Tipton retorted that "he begged no favours, and if Sevier would surrender himself and leaders, they should have the benefit

⁴⁵⁹ Deposition from John Tipton and others, 20 August 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives.

⁴⁶⁰ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 223-224; Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 87-88; Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S); Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 406-407. Williams states that forty-five men protected John Tipton at the beginning of the siege, but Haywood argues that only fifteen men held up at the Tipton home (other sources put the number of men guarding the Tipton home at seventy-five and seventy) (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 198-200).

⁴⁶¹ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 201.

⁴⁶² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 691-693.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 714.

of North Carolina Laws.” Over the next several hours, Conway tauntingly paraded his detachment of Franklin troops across John Tipton’s fields before taking their positions “near to the [Tipton] spring and still house.”⁴⁶⁴ The Tiptonites managed to get word to their supporters of the ongoing encirclement and a small detachment of Washington County troops, under the command of Captain Peter Parkinson, quickly rushed to the aid of the Tiptonites. As the sun dipped below Sinking Creek canyon, both factions prepared for the ensuing assault.⁴⁶⁵

The hostilities, which historians later dubbed the Battle of Franklin, “commenced” early that evening with “the firing on Captain Parkinson’s company.” As Parkinson’s small detachment of troops approached the Tipton farm, the “Governor’s whole body [of troops] opened fire.”⁴⁶⁶ The Franklinites managed to take five of Captain Parkinson’s troops prisoner, shoot three horses from under their riders, and force the Washington County rescuers to retreat. The exchange of fire caused panic among the Tiptonites, and under cover of darkness, two women fled the Tipton home attempting to escape with

⁴⁶⁴ Deposition from John Tipton and others, 20 August 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives.

⁴⁶⁵ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 223-226; *Winchester Advertiser* “Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin,” March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, Newspaper Extracts (JJ). The facts surrounding the so-called Battle of Franklin are at best cloudy. Many of the details regarding troop totals, the chronology of events, numbers of participants killed or wounded, and even the specific occurrences vary widely depending upon conflicting accounts. The author attempted to draw upon as many of these sources as possible to recreate the events of the Battle of Franklin, but even participants in the conflict did not agree on what actually occurred over those frigid winter days. John Sevier commanded the Franklin troops alongside county militia captains Colonel Charles Robertson, Colonel Henry Conway, and Major-General George Elholm. An account by an unnamed source, reprinted in the *Winchester Advertiser*, stated that Sevier “intended to burn the [Tipton] house,” but there is no corroborative evidence proving this statement (*Winchester Advertiser* “Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin,” March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, Newspaper Extracts (JJ)). There is also confusion over the possible existence of a cannon at the Battle of Franklin. Although there is no reference to a Franklinite cannon in any of the contemporary accounts, J.G.M. Ramey, Samuel Cole Williams, and several others believed in the presence of the military ordinance. In an account, copied in Lyman Draper’s notes, Major James Sevier stated that “there was no cannon there, but [he] designed on getting one from Holston (Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper’s Notes (S)).”

⁴⁶⁶ Deposition from John Tipton and others, 20 August 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives.

their lives. As the two women emerged from the besieged farmhouse, Henry Conway's troops opened fire on the unsuspecting escapees. One of the women, Rachel Devinsly, "received a ball through her shoulder," but apparently lived to recount her tale. Despite withering gunfire from both sides, the first day of the Battle of Franklin ended without a single human fatality.⁴⁶⁷

As the sun rose on the second day of the standoff (28th), two Tiptonites succeeded in eluding Franklinites sentries and securing additional Sullivan County reinforcements for the beleaguered old state loyalists. Governor Sevier anticipated the call for additional troops and attempted to block their passage by guarding every available route to the Tipton farm.⁴⁶⁸ As approximately forty Franklin militiamen, under the command of Captain Joseph Hardin and John Sevier, Jr., "started for the [Dungan's Mill] ford to dispute the passage of the Sullivan men," the Franklinites sent another flag of truce to John Tipton and his supporters.⁴⁶⁹ Although Tipton later described this offer as "more mild in nature," he again refused to surrender and informed the Franklinites that "all I wanted was a submission to the laws of North Carolina, and if they would acquiesce with this proposal I would disband my troops here and countermand the march of the troops from Sullivan..."⁴⁷⁰ The Franklinites rejected Tipton's flag of truce and offer to

⁴⁶⁷ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 691-693; *Winchester Advertiser* "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin," March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, Newspaper Extracts (JJ); Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S). Lyman Draper includes this account of the wounding of Rachel Devinsly in his notes, "Erwing Ellison & [illegible] Houston fired, & shot a woman in the shoulder, she was a young woman of the name Rachel Devinsly [author's best approximation of the nearly illegible surname], who had been sent out thinking they [Franklinites] would not fire at a female, but it was dusk they could not distinguish (Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S))." J.G.M. Ramsey also believed that the shooting of Devinsly "was purely accidental (Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 407-409)."

⁴⁶⁸ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 201.

⁴⁶⁹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 224-225.

⁴⁷⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 691-693; George Maxwell and John Tipton to Arthur Campbell, 12 March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, King's Mountain Papers (DD);

recall the Sullivan County force being raised by George Maxwell and John Pemberton. Governor Sevier's inexplicable absence from the Frank's military command post forced his soldiers to reply without their commander. The Franklin men informed John Tipton that Captain Parkinson's troops "were easy about" defeated, and "as for the troops on their march to join [him], they could countermand their march themselves."⁴⁷¹ As reports of Sullivan County troop movements continued to filter into the Franklinites, both factions drew closer to the precipice of war.⁴⁷²

As a thick blanket of snow fell across the Tennessee Valley, the Sullivan County troops continued "to move undiscovered and unmolested" towards the Tipton farm. "On the morning of the 29th, before daylight, [John Tipton] received information that Colonel Maxwell, with the approximately [180] troops from Sullivan County, and a number from [Washington] county, had collected in a body at Mr. Dungan's, about six miles from" the Tipton homestead.⁴⁷³ From the opposite direction (from the east side of the Tipton house), Governor Sevier's two sons, John and James, led a reconnaissance expedition comprised of thirty men towards Dungan's Mill Ford to intercept the Sullivan County troops. After traveling only three hundred yards, the Franklin men came under fire from

Deposition from John Tipton and others, 20 August 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives.

⁴⁷¹ *Winchester Advertiser* "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin," March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, Newspaper Extracts (JJ). According to Lyman Draper, on the evening of February 28th, William Cox "came in & gave intelligence that the people of Sullivan were embodying to reinforce Tipton & would that night cross the Watauga [River] at Dungan's Mill ford." The Franklinites did not believe Cox, thinking his communication to be a "double pact," and "many gave no heed to the information (Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S))."

⁴⁷² Samuel Cole Williams speculated that the Franklinites believed that "Tipton referred to Parkinson's company which, they knew, had been turned back." The expedition led by John Sevier, Jr. and Joseph Hardin never located the Sullivan County troops and after marching "within half a mile from the ford...wearily, doubtless, and cold, refused to go any further, seeing no signs of meeting a foe & believing that Cox had deceived them- returned to camp that night (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 201)."

⁴⁷³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 691-693; Deposition from John Tipton and others, 20 August 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives.

the Sullivan County militiamen. As mini balls “rattled the fences” surrounding the Tipton farm, the Sevier brothers, “at full gallop,” led their scouting party in a desperate retreat.⁴⁷⁴ As the small unit of Franklin scouts fled blindly through the driving snowstorm, they undoubtedly heard the opening volleys fired by their troops against the Tipton home ring out across the Tennessee Valley. The Battle of Franklin was finally at hand.⁴⁷⁵

The sudden reverberations from the Sullivan County troop’s guns caught the Franklinites by surprise. Despite the continued warnings of advancing Tiptonite troops, “Sevier thought himself very secure, and was very sure he should take Tipton and his men.” Governor Sevier’s overconfidence proved his undoing. A witness to the events of February 29th described what transpired, “a great body of Sullivan men attacked him [Sevier] with heavy firing, and rushed among them, took a number of prisoners, arms, saddles, and dispersed the whole of the Franklinites.” As the Sullivan County forces engaged the Franks, John Tipton and the remainder of the barricaded Tiptonites, “sailed out [of the farmhouse] and drove them [Franklinites] from their ground without much resistance.”⁴⁷⁶ The two-pronged attack overwhelmed the Franklinites, and “forced the Governor to retreat without his boots.”⁴⁷⁷ As the partisans continued to exchange volleys, both sides suffered casualties. Franklinite John Smith sustained a fatal shot to the thigh and Henry Polley and Gasper Fant also received devastating wounds to their leg and arm respectively. As Sevier’s forces hastily retreated from the battlefield, the Franklinite’s delaying fire led to the deaths of Washington County Sheriff Jonathan Pugh and John

⁴⁷⁴ Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper’s Notes (S).

⁴⁷⁵ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 691-693; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 193; Deposition from John Tipton and others, 20 August 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives.

⁴⁷⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 691-693.

⁴⁷⁷ “Intelligence from the State of Franklin” reprinted in *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 8 April 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, Newspaper Extracts (JJ).

Webb of Sullivan County, as well as the wounding of Captain William Delancy and John Allison.⁴⁷⁸ As Sevier's troops suffered "total defeat" at the hands of the old state men, their Governor deserted his troops and absconded himself "15 miles from [Tipton's] home," beaten and "barefooted."⁴⁷⁹

As John Sevier and his Franklinite forces retreated from Sinking Creek, the scouting party led by John and James Sevier finally penetrated the curtain of snow to belatedly enter the fight. In their confusion, the Franklinites apparently fired upon their own troops, but fortunately missed their intended targets. Lyman Draper recorded what occurred next:

riding up to the camp, and Col. Sevier's flag still flying, they [the scouting party] did not suspect the sudden & complete change in affairs that had taken place during their brief absence- A volley of guns arrested them and some few, amazed & wondering were pulled from their horses & called in to surrender, among them, James & John Sevier [Jr.] & their cousin John Sevier.⁴⁸⁰

In a stunning reversal of fortune, the Tiptonites routed the Franks and captured the sons of Franklin Governor John Sevier. As word of the crushing defeat of his forces and the apprehension of his sons reached the Franklin Governor, John Sevier reluctantly sent a verbal communiqué to John Tipton "asking [for] his life [and that] of his parties," and agreeing to "Submit to the Laws of the State" of North Carolina. The Tiptonites accepted the Franklinites' terms of surrender and "Colonel [George] Maxwell sent him [Sevier] a flag giving him and his party to the 11th [of March] to submit to the laws of North

⁴⁷⁸ Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S).

⁴⁷⁹ *Winchester Advertiser* "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin," March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, Newspaper Extracts (JJ); Deposition from John Tipton and others, 20 August 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives. In November of 1788, William Delancy applied to the North Carolina Government for compensation for the wound he sustained "in an action under the command of Colo. Tipton." The state eventually rewarded Delancy the "Sum of Thirty pounds, five Shillings and Six pence" for his injuries (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 21*, 176).

⁴⁸⁰ Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S).

Carolina.”⁴⁸¹ In the mean time, John Tipton “determined to hang both” of Sevier’s sons, but “Apprised of the rash step which he intended to take, the young [Sevier] men sent for Mr. Thomas Love and others of Tipton’s party” to intervene on their behalf. After Love and others “urged their arguments so effectively,” John Tipton agreed to “restore [the Sevier brothers] to their liberty.”⁴⁸² The release of the Sevier brothers and the capitulation of Governor Sevier ended the Battle of Franklin, but the legal and political fallout from the three bloody days of fighting remained.⁴⁸³

The Franklinites’ humiliating defeat on the fields of the Tipton farm destroyed lingering support for their statehood movement in Washington and Sullivan counties, but the southern Franklin counties continued to defend Sevier and the importance of statehood. The diminishing support in the northern Tennessee Valley counties became painfully apparent to the Franklinites during a failed bid to retaliate against John Tipton in early March. Thomas Hutchings described the events in a letter to Brigadier-General Joseph Martin. “Captain [William] Cocke issued his general orders to Thomas Henderson to raise a militia of their party to march against Colonel Tipton. They had so little success that I presume they are much dispirited. Every one of their captains, I believe, refused. They cannot make a party of any consequence.”⁴⁸⁴ On March 1, 1788, John Sevier’s term as governor of the state of Franklin expired, but he continued to attract the loyalty and

⁴⁸¹ George Maxwell and John Tipton to Arthur Campbell, 12 March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, King’s Mountain Papers (DD).

⁴⁸² Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 192-194.

⁴⁸³ Bond of Andrew Hains (Haynes), John Sevier, Jr.; and James Sevier, 1 March 1788, Paul Fink Collection, W.L. Eury Collection, Appalachian State University, Boone; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 691-693. The Sevier brothers previously appealed to Thomas Love for permission “to return to visit John Smith [wounded that day]” at his home, and “returned the next day, after giving their bonds for their appearance at court.” The two brothers never stood trial for the assault on the Sullivan County forces (Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 192-194). Copies of the bonds securing the release of several captured Franklin soldiers are contained in the W. L. Eury Collection at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. The collection, compiled by Franklin historian Paul Fink, also contains a claim by John Sevier, Jr. for a gun taken from him by John Tipton during his arrest.

⁴⁸⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 715-716.

admiration of the majority of the Tennessee Valley's southernmost inhabitants.⁴⁸⁵ In early March, Sevier finally sent his response to John Tipton and George Maxwell's "flag of truce dated 29th February 1788." Sevier maintained that he "did not fully comprehend" the terms of surrender, and assured his opponents that the Franklin "council, equally now as heretofore, to be amendable to the laws of the Union for our conduct." He also expressed his desire that the Tiptonites "will be answerable to the same laws for your proceedings, and actuated by principles of humanity and discretion of the people, and honor of both parties." Sevier's letter surprisingly did not reveal any hint of defeat, and the former Franklin leader even included a defiant request for the "return of property that fell into [Tiptonite] hands."⁴⁸⁶ A day after the March 11th deadline for Sevier and his fellow Franklinites to submit to the laws of North Carolina, John Tipton and George Maxwell informed Arthur Campbell that the Franklinites "never Came in to Comply with the Terms" and "that he [Sevier] is trying to Raise another party." The Tiptonites requested "a few volunteers to quell the Insurrection" and "save [the region] from future bloodshed."⁴⁸⁷ In another exchange with General Martin, Tipton reiterated his concern over the likelihood of future "private injuries if not murders," but also insisted that the "violators of the [North Carolina] law should be brought to justice, especially those who have so flagrantly transgressed."⁴⁸⁸ The political and judicial uncertainties surrounding the Franklinites forced John Sevier to hide among his southern supporters.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 194-195.

⁴⁸⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 693, 715-716.

⁴⁸⁷ George Maxwell and John Tipton to Arthur Campbell, 12 March 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, King's Mountain Papers (DD).

⁴⁸⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 693.

⁴⁸⁹ Cox, *The History of Washington County Tennessee*, 87-89.

Before any of the leaders of the separatist movement could be “brought to justice,” John Sevier fell back upon his highly effective diversionary tactic of launching Indian wars to deflect any civil or criminal retribution and to consolidate his regional support. Joseph Martin clearly understood Sevier’s potent blending of racial identity and patriotism to resuscitate the Franklin movement. In a March 24th exchange with North Carolina Governor Samuel Johnston, Martin warned that,

Sevier had gone towards the French Broad River since the 10th instant; that Colonel Canaday, with several others, had gone the same way to carry on an expedition against the Cherokee Indians, which I am well assured wishes to be at peace, except the Chickamauga party [led by Dragging Canoe], which could easily be drove out of that country, if your excellency should recommend it. I am somewhat doubtful that Sevier and his party are embodying under the color of an Indian expedition to amuse us, and that their object is to make another attack on the citizens of this State.⁴⁹⁰

Governor Johnston also suspected the Franks of “wantonly involving themselves in an Indian War without any real necessity,” and charged Joseph Martin with the daunting task of “cultivating a good understanding with the [Cherokee] Indians & preventing by all means any Hostilities or Insults committed on them by Citizens of this State.”⁴⁹¹ As John Tipton and Samuel Johnston prepared to indict John Sevier for treason, the former Franklin governor launched his spring campaign against the Chickamauga Cherokee.⁴⁹²

The months surrounding his defeat at the Battle of Franklin proved disastrous for Nolachucky Jack. The recent resignation of Franklin sympathizer and Sevier compatriot Richard Caswell from the governorship and his replacement by the unsympathetic Samuel Johnston erased any hope for an amicable reunification of the two states. Despite Sevier’s overtures of peace, Governor Johnston refused to negotiate with the Franklinites

⁴⁹⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 716-717.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 200-202. Details of Sevier’s spring Cherokee campaign are included in chapter four.

and openly called for the prosecution of the state of Franklin's political leaders. In an April exchange with John Gray Blount, governor Johnston described his frustration over what he saw as the continued failure of North Carolina's conciliatory policies towards the Franklinites:

I have lately had an express from Holstein giving an account of some very dangerous Riots in which some blood has been spilt and two men killed by Rioters under the Command of Sevier. I hope the [North Carolina] Assembly at their next meeting [in November] will either use means effectually to enforce the Execution of the laws in the Country or leave them to Govern themselves, to suffer them to continue in the present unsettled State, may in time be attended with very bad influence on the Conduct of the Citizens in other parts of the State.⁴⁹³

Johnston described the Franklinites as "outlaws and vagrants," and promised to "exert the whole power of [the North Carolina] Government to bring to Condign punishment all such [persons] as shall presume to violate the laws and disturb the peace of the State."

John Sevier continued to defend his actions during the Franklin movement, blaming North Carolina for causing "all of these disturbances," and reiterating that he was involuntarily "drafted into the Franklin measures by the people of this country."⁴⁹⁴ In addition to the installation of a dogged Franklin opponent in the North Carolina governor's seat, John Sevier also became embroiled in the controversy surrounding John Kirk's retaliatory execution of the peaceful Cherokee delegation led by Old Abraham and Old Tassel. Governor Johnston and many of North Carolina's political leaders blamed John Sevier for the slaughter of the two peace chiefs and their families by bloodthirsty Franklinite soldiers.⁴⁹⁵ In a July 1788 address to the Cherokee Nation, Johnston expressed regret for the murders and promised the tribe that "if any of them [Franklinites] have injured you without sufficient cause...they may receive Correction & punishment."

⁴⁹³ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 462-463.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 200-201.

The Secretary of the United States Congress, Charles Thompson, expressed Congress's support for punishing the "perpetrators" of the murders. He informed Johnston that if the charges against "John Sevier & others" are "found true," then the state of North Carolina should "take measures to have the perpetrators thereof apprehended & punished."⁴⁹⁶ As the Chickamauga campaign raged in the Tennessee backcountry and southern Franklinites refused to bow to the authority of the North Carolina government, Governor Johnston finally issued his long-awaited warrant for the arrest of John Sevier for treason.⁴⁹⁷

In July of 1788, North Carolina governor Samuel Johnston wrote to former Chief Judge of the state of Franklin, David Campbell, regarding John Sevier's prosecution. Johnston believed that "John Sevier, who styles himself Captain General of the State of Franklin, has been guilty of High Treason in levying troops to oppose the Laws and Government of this State, and has with an armed force put to death several good Citizens." Governor Johnston gave his consent for Judge Campbell to,

issue a warrant to apprehend the said John Sevier, and in case he cannot be sufficiently secured for Tryal [sic] in the District of Washington, order him to be committed to the Public Gaol [sic] for the District of Hillsborough, and I will give orders to the Commanding Officer of Washington District [Joseph Martin] to furnish sufficient Guard to assist the Sheriff in the Execution of his duty. It is necessary that this business be conducted in secrecy and dispatch in order that it may succeed in such manner as to restore peace & tranquility to that part of the State.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 487, 496. Governor Johnston informed Secretary Thompson of the arrest warrant he issued against John Sevier in a letter dated September 29, 1788.

⁴⁹⁷ Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 200-201. In an April 30, 1788 response to Joseph Martin, Sevier informed the Brigadier-General that "I am ready to suspend all kinds of hostilities and prosecutions on our part, and bury in total oblivion all past conduct (John Sevier to Joseph Martin, 27 March 1788 and John Sevier to Joseph Martin, 30 April 1788, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S))."

⁴⁹⁸ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 484-485.

After months of pressure applied by John Tipton and Sevier's determined political enemies, the leader of the state of Franklin finally faced the stark reality of being executed for treason.⁴⁹⁹

Despite Governor Johnston's issuance of an arrest warrant and his guarantee of a militia force sufficient to capture the wildly popular former Franklin governor, Judge Campbell refused to carry out the apprehension of John Sevier. Although Campbell remained silent regarding his reasons for letting Sevier remain free, several Franklin historians assert that Campbell's friendship with the fugitive prevented him from executing the arrest.⁵⁰⁰ Campbell's decision and Sevier's prolonged absence from the region delayed the inevitable legal showdown between John Tipton, Samuel Johnston, and John Sevier. Sevier remained in the Tennessee backcountry throughout much of the spring and summer of 1788, before eventually returning to his home in early October. According to several sources, Sevier "openly" visited public places in Jonesborough, and defiantly continued to conduct business with the region's economic elite. Astoundingly, Sevier, who undoubtedly knew of the warrant for his arrest, initiated clashes with his political and economic opponents.⁵⁰¹ The day before his arrest, the former Franklin governor instigated a shoot-out outside of the store of a Jonesborough merchant.

According to court depositions taken by Justice of the Peace William Cox at the end of

⁴⁹⁹ In a May 8 letter to Dr. James White, Governor Johnston blames John Sevier for the violence occurring in the Tennessee frontier. He argued that Sevier "duped" the supporters of Franklin, and that the former Franklin governor's "folly and presumption has reduced his affairs to so desperate a situation that it is not convenient for him to live under any wholesome and Regulated Government (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 469-470)." On July 29, Governor Johnston ordered General Joseph Martin to organize "a sufficient number of the Militia of the District of Washington to aid and assist the Sheriff of any County in the said District in the Execution of any Warrant or Warrants for the apprehending any person or persons who have been guilty of Treasonable practices against the State and furnish such Sheriff with a sufficient Guard or Escort to enable him to convey such prisoners to the place of their Destination (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 485)."

⁵⁰⁰ Haywood, *Civil and Judicial History of Tennessee*, 200-203; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 231-232.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

October 1788, David Deaderick testified that he and former Washington County Sheriff Andrew Caldwell “were peacefully sitting in his shed adjoining his store house...when [his] boy informed him that [John] Sevier was at his door.” Deaderick described the incredible events that followed:

He, the deponent, happened to be whistling as he opened the door, and was surprised to see a number of men on horseback; he supposes about Ten or Twelve; John Sevier, Senr., at their head, who immediately on the deponent’s opening the door, said we want no whistling, we want Whiskey or Rum. The deponent replied, as to whistling, he hoped he might do as he pleased, but whiskey or Rum he had none. Sevier said he was informed he had & they wanted it & would pay money for it. The deponent answered, he was informed wrong, that he had neither whiskey or rum. Sevier then asked the deponent if [Andrew] Caldwell was with him. He answered he was and called him. Caldwell came to the door & Sevier asked him nearly the same respecting Liquor, who also informed him he had none. After hesitating a very little time he (Sevier) began to abuse this place; then its inhabitants without distinction, until the deponent thought the abuse so pointedly leveled at him, that he asked Sevier if he aimed that discourse or abuse at him. His answer was Yes, at you or anybody else. After exchanging several high words, Sevier called the deponent a son of a Bitch. The deponent replied he was a dead son of a Bitch, and stepped close to Sevier, who immediately drew out his pistol, or pistols.⁵⁰²

As Sevier and Deaderick prepared to square off, Andrew Caldwell stepped between the two men to prevent the escalation of the altercation. Caldwell’s efforts at diplomacy proved futile as Deaderick, armed with his own pistol, charged into the street after Sevier. As the dispute intensified, “Caldwell and Sevier began to quarrel; in the Course of which the former desired Sevier to pay what he owed him. He replied he owed him nothing. Caldwell said he was damned eternal liar. Sevier swore by God he would shoot him & rais’d [sic] his pistol. It went off, and wounded a certain Richard Collier.”⁵⁰³ After accidentally wounding an innocent bystander, John Sevier and his party quickly fled the scene of the crime. Sevier’s betrayal of former Franklin Sheriff Andrew Caldwell and

⁵⁰² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 699-701.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

involvement in the Jonesborough shooting provided his opponents with a fortuitous opportunity to exact their revenge.⁵⁰⁴

After the altercation in Jonesborough, John Sevier attempted to avoid capture by hiding at the home of Jacob Brown's widow. Caldwell immediately informed John Tipton of Sevier's involvement in the shooting. At approximately "2 o'clock, after midnight [October 10th], Colo. Tipton, Adw. Caldwell & several others [eight to ten men] came to the deponents store [Deaderick] when he joined them an persued [sic] Sevier whom they overtook & Apprehended about day light [the] next morning."⁵⁰⁵ After apprehending his hated rival, John Tipton madly waved his pistol in the prisoner's face and threatened to hang him before he could stand trial. The Sevier family's friendship with Colonel Robert Love saved John Sevier from execution, but the former Franklinite's connections to powerful North Carolinians could not prevent his transfer to the Morgantown jail. Despite his appeal to be incarcerated in Jonesborough in order to stay near his family and friends, John Tipton insisted that Sevier be held at the Burke County jail in order to avoid potential rescue attempts by Franklin loyalists. As Sevier began his long march of shame over the southern mountains, John Tipton triumphantly paraded the Franklin leader in shackles in front of the home of the widow of Jonathan Pugh. After several days of difficult winter travel, Sevier's armed escort delivered the former Franklin governor to the Morgantown jail to await trial.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Haywood, *Civil and Judicial History of Tennessee*, 200-203; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 231-232. Although David Campbell refused to carry of the arrest of John Sevier, another North Carolina judge, Samuel Spencer, did agree to issue "the bench warrant" for Sevier apprehension. Thomas Gourley, Washington County Clerk of Court, and Andrew Caldwell, Justice of the Peace for Washington County, concurred with David Deaderick's deposition (Andrew Caldwell Examination, no date given, Paul Fink Collection, W.L. Eury Collection, Appalachian State University).

⁵⁰⁵ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 699-701.

⁵⁰⁶ Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example*, 180-181; Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 90-91; Haywood, *Civil and Judicial History of Tennessee*, 203-205; Ramsey, *The Annals of*

The arrival of one of North Carolina's most celebrated and infamous sons drew the immediate attention of Sevier's Burke County supporters. Fortunately for the Frank, the Sheriff of Burke County served with Sevier at the Battle of King's Mountain and upon his compatriot's arrival at the jail "he knocked the irons from his hands & told him to go where he pleased."⁵⁰⁷ As he awaited arraignment in Morgantown, Charles and Joseph McDowell, two brothers who also fought alongside Sevier during the American Revolution, posted John Sevier's bail.⁵⁰⁸ Shortly after being freed, Sevier rendezvoused with a small group of friends and family who traveled to Burke County to secure his release. The group of rescuers found Sevier in a local tavern enjoying a drink with Major Joseph McDowell. Sevier's would-be liberators "told him frankly [that] they had come for him & he must go."⁵⁰⁹ Sevier confidently remained in Morgantown several more hours before preparing to depart. Contrary to several fanciful accounts describing his gallant escape from the custody of his Morgantown jailers, "Sevier [simply] ordered his horse & [they] all started off [towards Washington County] before noon, in the most public & open manner."⁵¹⁰

Tennessee, 424-425; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 230-233. There are several descriptions of the arrest of John Sevier, but few contemporary accounts exist of what transpired during those October days. The bulk of this account is taken from John Haywood, J.G.M. Ramsey, and Samuel Cole Williams. William Morrison, Sheriff of Burke County, took possession of the prisoner after his arrival in Morgantown.

⁵⁰⁷ Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S).

⁵⁰⁸ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 231-232; Haywood, *Civil and Judicial History of Tennessee*, 203-205; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 232-234; Fink, "Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin," 212-213.

⁵⁰⁹ Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S); "Sevier Taken by Tipton," Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S).

⁵¹⁰ Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper Manuscript Collection, Draper's Notes (S). Burke County Sheriff, William Morrison also served with Sevier at King's Mountain. After posting bail, Morrison simply allowed Sevier to ride out of town. Samuel Cole Williams lists the name of the family members and friend who traveled to Morgantown to secure Sevier's release. These participants included: John Sevier, Jr., Nathaniel Evans, George North, James Cosby, Jesse Green, and William Matlock (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 232-234).

The ease by which John Sevier “escaped” from Burke County demonstrated his steadfast support among the inhabitants of western and central North Carolina, but the former Franklin separatist still faced ferocious opposition within the North Carolina government. A few days after returning to his Tennessee Valley home, Sevier began the daunting process of restoring his political influence within his former government and defending his actions during the Franklin affair. On October 30, 1788, Sevier sent an address to the North Carolina General Assembly describing his reasons for jumping bail in Burke County and more importantly, justifying his decisions as the governor of the state of Franklin. As to his flight from Justice, Sevier explained:

Is it not obvious to you, that the rigid prosecutions now carried on is more to gratify the ambition and malice of an obscure and worthless individual [referring to John Tipton], than to appease the Justice of the State. Is it not Contrary to your Constitution, and all the Laws made in pursuance hereof, to not only deprive a man of His liberty, but treat him with wanton cruelty and savage insults before Trial, or any evidence of the breach of the Laws adduced, borne off, out of District, at a distance from his friends & neighbors who can only be the best Judges of his innocence or Guilt.⁵¹¹

Sevier defended his participation in the Franklin independence movement, and reminded the North Carolina Assembly that he and his fellow Franklinites “were all [recently] employed and deeply engaged” in throwing “off the British yoke of slavery and tyranny... at the expense of their blood and loss of their dearest relations.” Sevier deflected personal responsibility for the chaos and tragedy surrounding the Franklin movement by reiterating his initial reluctance to join the statehood effort, and insisting that “the people [of the Tennessee Valley] wish[ed] for separation.” Despite his recent prosecution by the state of North Carolina and public rebuke by Governor Samuel Johnston, Sevier contended that he always maintained his loyalty to his former

⁵¹¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 697-699.

government and wished only that North Carolina “flourish and become great.” As the North Carolina Assembly opened their November session, John Sevier nervously awaited his legal and political fate.⁵¹²

As the November meeting got under way, delegates again debated pardoning former Franklinites for “the offenses and misconduct” carried out during the separatist movement. As the act of pardon easily passed in the Senate and the House of Commons, a group of John Sevier’s political rivals introduced a “Bill to repeal part” of the act of clemency in order to exclude him from the general pardon. The delegates formed a special committee to consider the proposal, and on November 30th, “on examining sundry papers and hearing oral Testimony,” the committee offered their final decision.⁵¹³ The committee’s chairmen, John Rhea, declared that,

John Sevier, Esquire, together with sundry other persons in the said Counties [of Washington, Sullivan, Greene, and Hawkins], did in the years 1785, 1786 and 1787, in a great measure subvert the peace & good order of Government of the State of North Carolina; that their conduct was in many particulars highly reprehensible... Your Committee therefore conceive, that as the offenses of all the citizens of the said Counties have been pardoned and consigned to oblivion, the said John Sevier, Esquire ought to be placed in the same situation, it appearing to your Committee that he was not as highly reprehensible as many others.⁵¹⁴

Despite the protests of John Tipton and several other opponents, the state of North Carolina pardoned John Sevier.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ “Bill to Repeal Part of Act Once More to Extend Act of Pardon Offenses of Certain Persons, Ect.,” General Assembly Record Group. The Senate voted twenty-four to nineteen not to exclude John Sevier from the act of pardon and the House of Commons voted 52-33 for pardoning all of the former Franklinites. John Sevier and the Franks benefited greatly from the high percentage of former Franklin supporters representing the western counties in the North Carolina Assembly (North Carolina State Archives; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 43, 56, 64, 73, 77, 110, 114, 218, 221, 222, 230, 232, 239, 256, 285-286).

⁵¹⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 728-729.

⁵¹⁵ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 234-235. Several Franklin loyalists, including Thomas Amis, William Cocke, Willie Jones, held seats in the November session (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 245-247). There is some confusion surrounding the year in which North Carolina actually

John Sevier's congressional exoneration ended his legal difficulties, and the vindicated former rebel quickly reestablished his political standing in the Tennessee Valley. After publicly swearing his loyalty to the laws of North Carolina in February of 1789, the residents of Greene County elected John Sevier to the North Carolina Senate. The North Carolina Senate appointed the former rebel leader to the state committee that eventually ratified the United States Constitution, as well as electing Sevier to be the Brigadier-General of the District of Washington.⁵¹⁶ Miraculously, the former governor of the state of Franklin rose from the ashes of his still smoldering state and perched himself high atop North Carolina's political mountaintop. As former Franklinites attempted to forget the final tragic months of the state of Franklin, the sordid details of a trans-Atlantic intrigue remained obscured behind the lingering partisanship and Indian warfare threatening the southern Tennessee Valley communities.⁵¹⁷

pardoned Sevier. It is the author's best estimation that the assembly pardoned all but Sevier in 1788 and eventually agreed to pardon Sevier in 1789.

⁵¹⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 547; Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 729.

⁵¹⁷ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 238.

Chapter Seven

Vassals del Rey de España

During the chaotic months separating John Sevier's defeat at the Battle of Franklin and his arrest for treason, Dr. James White secretly visited the former Franklin governor at his home in the Tennessee Valley. During their clandestine meeting, the North Carolina congressman revealed a "shadowy scheme" that tantalizingly held out the possibilities of resurrecting backcountry separatism and reviving the recently aborted Muscle Shoals land deal.⁵¹⁸ The events that unfolded between July of 1788 and February of 1790 involved the government of Spain, a small group of powerful land speculators, John Sevier, and the communities of "Lesser Franklin."⁵¹⁹ The sordid details of the "Spanish Intrigue" reveal a conspiracy that threatened to fracture the southwestern frontier in order to preserve the shattered remains of frontier separatism and advance the fortunes of a cabal of influential businessmen.⁵²⁰

The Spanish Intrigue dated back to the earliest speculative efforts of William Blount's Muscle Shoals Company and the post-revolutionary alliance forged between the southeastern Indian claimants and Spain. Both the Spanish and the southern aboriginal tribes desperately sought to halt America's westward expansion at the southern

⁵¹⁸ Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 123-124.

⁵¹⁹ Samuel Cole Williams utilized the term "Lesser Franklin" to describe the efforts of the southern counties of the Tennessee Valley to maintain their independence from North Carolina following the collapse of support in the northern counties of Washington and Sullivan. Williams derived the terms from Arthur Campbell's use of the terms "Greater Franklin" to convey his desire to affix his home of Washington County, Virginia to the statehood movement (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 218-220).

⁵²⁰ Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, *History of Tennessee*, 168-169; Russell Dean Parker, "Historical Interpretations of the Spanish Intrigue in Tennessee: A Study," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 58-59 (1986-87): 44; Whitaker, "The Muscle Shoals Speculation," 377; A.P. Whitaker, "Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest: An Episode, 1788-89," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 12 (September 1925): 159.

Appalachian Mountains. Britain's willingness to establish a western boundary, with the Proclamation Line of 1763, separating the Indians and the English colonists, convinced the Cherokee, Creek, and Chickasaw tribes to fight alongside royal troops and colonial loyalists during America's war for independence. As America's frontier communities extended beyond the southern mountains, many of the once divided southeastern tribes united against the white squatters and their state governments. The vast majority of the post-revolutionary Indian wars fought in the Appalachian backcountry resulted from white encroachment on Indian lands.⁵²¹

On the Tennessee frontier, Dragging Canoe's Chickamauga Cherokee and Alexander McGillivray's Upper Creeks engaged in frontier guerilla warfare in a futile effort to end white expansion. Spain hoped to halt America's territorial growth to protect their diminished colonial property in Florida and the Mississippi River Valley. In a strategic plan to preserve their colonial possessions, the Spanish government provided aid to the Chickamauga Cherokee and the Creeks. In 1784, Alexander McGillivray negotiated the Treaty of Pensacola with Spanish emissaries in Florida. Spain agreed to secretly provide weapons and ammunition to the Creeks to finance their continued struggle against white expansion.⁵²² During the state of Franklin's infancy, the growing cost of prolonged Indian warfare, mounting casualties, and Spanish interference prevented the states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Franklin each from laying claim to the Muscle Shoals land. Despite these hurdles, the Tennessee Valley's political and

⁵²¹ Whitaker, "The Muscle Shoals Speculation," 365-376. For details on the Muscle Shoals land scheme, see chapter four of this manuscript.

⁵²² Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 22-26, 28-33; *Cherokee and Creek Indians*, 121-124; Alexander McGillivray to Estevan Miro (governor of New Orleans), 28 March 1784, in D.C. Corbitt and Roberta Corbitt eds., "Papers From the Spanish Archive Relating to Tennessee and the Old Southwest, 1783-1800," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 9 (193?): 117-118. The Corbitt and Corbitt edited "Papers From the Spanish Archive Relating to Tennessee and the Old Southwest, 1783-1800" henceforth will be referred to as "Spanish Papers."

economic leadership refused to surrender their dream of developing the bend of the Tennessee River.⁵²³

In the summer of 1786, James White met privately with Spanish Minister (Charge d’ Affairs) Don Diego de Gardoqui at his home in New York City.⁵²⁴ Dr. White served as a member of the North Carolina Assembly from Davidson County and in the influential post of Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern District. White owned substantial tracts of land in Greene and Davidson counties and maintained close personal and business connections to numerous Franklinites.⁵²⁵ White’s links to the Tennessee Valley’s political and economic leadership and his familiarity with the challenges confronting potential land speculation led him to Gardoqui’s home at the Kennedy House at #1 Broadway. During the August 26th conference, White described the escalating tensions between Spain and the United States over the commercial use of the Mississippi River. White informed Gardoqui that he “realized that you are going to win what the United States never expected to cede to Spain, which is the Navigation of the Mississippi,” and that the “Southern States...will never agree” to the concession. White predicted that “as soon as they [southern political leaders] learn of the Cession, they will consider themselves abandoned by the Confederation and will act independently.” The North Carolinian believed that “This [potential] situation offer[ed] Spain the most favorable opportunity to win them forever.” White asserted that if the Spanish government kept the Mississippi River open to the southern states and eased trade relations that “His Catholic Majesty [Carlos III] will acquire their eternal goodwill and

⁵²³ “Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 400-401.

⁵²⁴ Archibald Henderson, “The Spanish Conspiracy in Tennessee,” *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 3 (December 1917): 229-231.

⁵²⁵ Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records*, 410-411.

they, as an Independent State, will draw closer to His Majesty.” White told Gardoqui that he planned to return to his home along the Cumberland River (Middle Tennessee) to “sound out the minds of [regional] leaders,” and promised to report back by February of the following year. The stunned Gardoqui, “replied with very polite words [but] without committing himself” to such an outlandish scheme.⁵²⁶

White’s eagerness to ink a deal between the political leadership of the southwestern frontier and the Spanish government drove him to expedite his political reconnaissance mission. White returned to Gardoqui’s New York home four months early and related to the Spanish official that, “the fears of the [southern] States had increased greatly” over the Mississippi River deal.⁵²⁷ In reality, White’s characterization of southern sentiment applied primarily to the western frontier communities of Virginia and North Carolina, and he probably exaggerated the scope of his knowledge regarding the regional reaction to the commercial controversy to convince Gardoqui to risk opening backcountry negotiations. During the October 4th meeting, White failed to name any specific frontier communities or willing participants, but he did assure Gardoqui that “the new [western] settlements are much inclined to separate from the United States upon the least apparent pretext and the matter of the surrender of the navigation of the Mississippi was so

⁵²⁶ “Summary of a conversation between James White and Gardoqui, 26 August 1786, “Spanish Papers,” *The East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 9 (1944): 83-84. Gardoqui included a summary of his secret meeting with White in his October 28th communiqué with Floridablanca. In the same letter, Gardoqui commented on the fortuitous change of events effecting the future navigation of the Mississippi River. Gardoqui stated that, “...18 months ago nobody would have dared to propose to [the United States] Congress giving up the Navigation of the Mississippi, nor did I have any hope whatever of achieving, what has been accomplished, but we have had for a while a group able, tractable, and respectable persons from the Northern States, who have been very noble, and to them I have been able to explain the importance and generosity of His Majesty, and it is to them that we are indebted for the working of this miracle.” Gardoqui also comments on his ongoing negotiations over the details and language of the Mississippi River deal with the “intractable” and “insupportable” Secretary of Foreign Affairs, John Jay (Gardoqui to Conde de Floridablanca (Spain’s Secretary of State), 28 October 1786, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 9 (1944): 85-86).

⁵²⁷ Gardoqui to Conde de Floridablanca (Spain’s Secretary of State), 28 October 1786, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 16 (1944): 86-87.

important that it would cause them to give themselves up, or at least ally with the English or the Spaniards.” White warned Gardoqui not to forgo the opportunity to unite the “two Nations,” “because a contrary action would cause the loss of a Bulwark the power and strength of which the world in general has no conception.” White’s arguments proved extremely persuasive, and he offered to visit Spain’s Mississippi plantations following his return trip to his Nashville home. Gardoqui approvingly provided him with four letters requesting that White “be treated as one of my friends, and as a person of honor and esteem, and that he should be granted every assistance” by Spanish officials.⁵²⁸ After three months of lobbying, Dr. James White finally succeeded in securing the Spanish government’s consent to initiate the backcountry coup.⁵²⁹

Amidst heated negotiations between Gardoqui and United States Secretary of State, John Jay, over the future navigation of the Mississippi River and the Franklinites’ struggle to secure independence, the secret channels of communication remained open between Spain and the Tennessee Valley. Over the next eighteen months, correspondence between Spain and the southwestern frontier slowed. Spain’s continued support of the aboriginal resistance movements strained relations with the East Tennessee separatists. Reports from the Tennessee frontier emerged accusing Spain of aiding and abetting the southeastern Indians tribes in their struggles against the white encroachers.⁵³⁰ In January of 1788, James Robertson and Anthony Bledsoe informed North Carolina Governor Samuel Johnston that, “Indians have killed Seven of the Inhabitants [of Davidson and Sumner counties].” The two Cumberland leaders accurately believed the

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Russell Dean Parker, “Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue in Tennessee,” *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 58-59 (1986-87): 43-44; Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation,” 377.

⁵³⁰ Henderson, “The Spanish Conspiracy in Tennessee,” 230-233; Parker, “Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue,” 45.

“Invaders to be the Creek Nation who are at this time Allies to the King of Spain.”

Robertson and Bledsoe pleaded with Governor Johnston to intervene on their behalf in order to “prevent the further effusions of Blood.” The men suggested that Johnston appeal to Gardoqui to prevent “their [Creeks] further Acts of Savage Barbarity,” and if the “Minister of Spain... not think proper so to do,” then James White would “be of Service.”⁵³¹

Governor Johnston quickly responded to Robertson and Bledsoe’s request and agreed to present their concerns “before the Council of State at their first meeting.” Johnston also sent copies of their January 4th letter to the “Delegates in [the United States] Congress to make sure use of them as may be proper.” He assured the two men that, “Congress will no doubt apply to the Resident from the Court of Spain [Gardoqui] for an Explanation of the Conduct of Col. McGilvery [sic].” Apparently, their appeals proved highly persuasive to members of congress, because on April 18th, Gardoqui dispatched a formal denial of involvement in the “Cruelty of the Savages” on the “Frontiers of North Carolina.” The Spanish minister protested, “Your Excellency [King Carlos III] may give full assurances to the contrary that the Spanish Government entertain such sentiments of good will and Amity to the United States, that it would rather sedulously prevent than encourage any outrages upon their Citizens.”⁵³² Shortly after receiving the King of Spain’s denial, Governor Johnston received a letter from Dr. James White reassuring him that the “the Catholic King is relaxing in its policy” towards territorial disputes on the southern frontier. In an amazing effort at deception, North Carolina congressman James White effectively misled his governor regarding Spanish designs on the United States’

⁵³¹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 437-438.

⁵³² Ibid., 464-467.

southeastern frontier. White knew of Spanish support for McGillivray's Creek insurgency and that he himself actively promoted Spain's acquisition of North Carolina's western territory.⁵³³

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, on May 8, 1788 Governor Johnston accepted Gardoqui's protest of innocence. He informed the Spanish minister that he "had confidently entertained that the Citizens of our Western Frontiers were not well informed when they attributed the Cruelties experienced by the savages to the interference or connivance of the subjects of his Catholic Majesty." Amazingly, Johnston agreed "to inform the citizens on the Western Frontiers" of the King of Spain's growing concern over the "abhorrent" attacks by the Spanish aligned Creeks, and to "promote & conciliate sentiments of Good will and amity in the minds of the Citizens...towards their neighbors the Subjects of his Catholic Majesty." Governor Johnston also sent a letter to James White expressing his willingness to publicly accept Spain's denial and assuring him that "it has been my wish to Cede that Country [North Carolina's western frontier] to Congress yet as that measure was afterwards done away I shall do everything in my power to save the Interest of that people." Samuel Johnston's disappointment over the repeal of the 1784 Cession Act foreshadowed his eventual support for a second Cession Act passed by the North Carolina Assembly in 1789. Johnston and the political leadership

⁵³³ In a June 1, 1787 exchange between the governor of New Orleans and the Marquis de Sonora, Governor Miro stated "John [James] White tried to seduce the Indians [Creeks] by proposing to them to make common cause against a Power [The United States] that aimed to subject them (Miro to Sonora, 1 June 1787, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 11 (1939): 78-79)." There is able evidence proving that Spain provided McGillivray's Creeks military aid through out 1784-1789 (McGillivray to Miro, 1 February 1789, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 19 (1947): 82-83).

of North Carolina remained dangerously unaware of the treachery being devised by Dr. James White.⁵³⁴

The first appearance of the state of Franklin in Spanish communications occurred on September 25, 1787 in a confidential communiqué between Miro and Minster of the Indies, Don Antonio Valdes. Miro included a map of the settlements “West of the Appalachian Mountains” with his letter to Valdes. The map’s key listed “a Republic with the Name State of Franklin,” and also included brief accounts of the state’s failed bid for admittance into the union and continuing struggle to “preserve their independence.” Spain’s inclusion of Franklin in their survey demonstrated their growing interest in the embattled state. A few weeks later, Gardoqui described the ongoing “revolt” in “the new County of Franklin” to the Governor of Cuba, Don Josef de Ezpeleta. The Spanish ambassador believed that the Franklinites might be persuaded to join Spain if a commercial route could be established connecting the Tennessee Valley to the Mississippi River. Although optimistic regarding a future alliance between Spain and Franklin, efforts to construct a viable trade route faced considerable geographical challenges from the “rugged mountains” and five hundred miles of “swampy lands” separating Franklin’s farmers from Spain’s Mississippi Valley settlements.⁵³⁵

The first direct communication between Franklin and Spain materialized in the spring of 1788. The Franklinites’ repeated failure to win approval for their independence and waning regional support created the ideal political climate for Spain’s efforts to lure the Tennessee Valley communities into their kingdom. Apprised of John Sevier’s debilitating defeat at the Battle of Franklin, Spain and James White both hoped to capitalize on the

⁵³⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 468-470.

⁵³⁵ Gardoqui to Ezpeleta, 12 November 1787, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 13 (1941): 102-105.

dimming fortunes of the Franks. In April of 1788, White returned to Gardoqui's Manhattan home "encouraged" by recent reports out of Franklin and "enthusiastic" about the future success of their scheme. After toasting to each other's health, White and Gardoqui mapped out the details of a secret compact between Franklin's political leadership and the government of Spain. White offered to "go to the state of Franklin" and attempt to gauge the level of support for a Franklin-Spanish alliance. If the Franks embraced his overtures, White planned to travel from the Tennessee Valley to either Natchez or New Orleans to put the plan into motion. Gardoqui described the plot to Spain's Secretary of State, Conde de Floridablanca:

I have secret reports from some of those settlements [Franklin, Cumberland, and Kentucky] whose principal inhabitants have received favorably the idea (of turning to us). It seems to me that it would be impossible to oblige this people by force, but I believe it would be easy to win them by Tact and generosity, leaving them their customs, religion, and laws, on the supposition that in time they will be imperceptibly drawn to ours. I believe that the matter is ripe for trial because of the general debility of the country and because the District of Frankland lends itself to such a degree, that I am informed that the government has secret information of that disposition. The King [of Spain] claims that territory by the last conquest and I propose to so the rest by sending Don Jaime [James White] there to promote it and to treat with our officer, with which I shall have done all that is possible from here, without devoting too much time to this complicated and dangerous business.⁵³⁶

Gardoqui expressed his concerns over "trusting [his nation's] affairs to foreigners [meaning James White]," and he remained cognizant of the diplomatic "consequences" if the United States discovered Spain's "consideration." Gardoqui included a group of petitions from unnamed Franklinites expressing their support for the Spanish alliance, and the minister proposed rewarding these future allies with "large tracts of land,

⁵³⁶ Gardoqui to Ezpeleta, 18 April 1788, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 17 (1945): 105-11.

powerful interests, and other brilliant advantages.”⁵³⁷ Following their meeting, James White embarked for the crumbling state of Franklin with a Spanish passport and three hundred pesos in hand.⁵³⁸

White arrived in the Tennessee backcountry during the darkest days of the state of Franklin. During White’s brief visit to the Tennessee Valley, Governor Johnson issued an arrest warrant for John Sevier and Franklin’s southern communities confronted the daily horrors of Chickamauga Cherokee and Upper Creek attacks. The state’s economy suffered a terrible blow with the recent abandonment of the Georgia military campaign and the resulting derailment of plans to acquire the Muscle Shoals territory. As historian A.P. Whitaker described, “In these circumstances Sevier proved responsive to White’s overtures.”⁵³⁹ Neither participant recorded what transpired during their summer discussions, but clearly the two frontier leaders recognized a shared agenda. On September 12, 1788, John Sevier drafted two letters to Gardoqui and entrusted their delivery to his son James.⁵⁴⁰ These two correspondences disclosed specific details regarding the Franklin-Spanish alliance. In the first communiqué, Sevier expressed his desire to extend Franklin’s settlements to “the Tenessee [sic] River or near the Mussell [sic] Shoals.” The former Franklin governor “solicited” Gardoqui’s “interposition” with Spain’s Indian allies in order “to keep the peace” during Franklin’s territorial expansion.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Whitaker, “Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest,” 157-158. During the April 18, 1788 meeting between White and Gardoqui, the Spanish Minister sent three letters denying Spain’s involvement in aiding McGillivray’s Upper Creeks in the war against the Tennessee Valley squatters. Gardoqui addressed these letters to Samuel Johnston, John Sevier, and Colonel Elijah Robertson of Cumberland (brother of James Robertson) (Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation,” 377).

⁵³⁹ Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation,” 378-380.

⁵⁴⁰ Whitaker, “Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest,” 160.

After more than four years of failure, Sevier hoped to utilize Spain's influence to finally conclude the Muscle Shoals land deal.⁵⁴¹

In the second of the two correspondences, Sevier reported to Gardoqui that, "the people of this country with respect to the future of an alliance, and commercial connection with you are very sanguine and that we are unanimously determined on the event." The secrecy of the frontier plot makes it impossible to verify the true level of Frankish support for the Spanish alliance, but Sevier does offer the Spanish minister several compelling reasons motivating his fellow Franklinites. Sevier lashed out at the state of North Carolina, decrying, "the embarrassment we labour under in respect to the parent state, who make use of every stratagem, to obstruct the growth, and welfare of this country." Sevier warned Gardoqui that "there will not be a more favorable time than the present to carry in to effect the plan on foot," and implored the Spaniard "to make every speedy and necessary preparation for defense; should any rupture take place." Sevier asked Gardoqui to consider "the advantages" of a Spanish/Franklin "connection," and then made several requests from the Spanish government, including "a few thousand pounds" to alleviate the "great scarcity of specie in this country," "military supplies," and Spanish passports⁵⁴². In exchange for their sworn allegiance to the Spanish king, the

⁵⁴¹ Sevier to Gardoqui, 12 September 1788, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 15 (1943): 103. In his excellent analysis of the historiography of the Spanish Intrigue, Russell Dean Parker offers his analysis of James Gilmore's account of the September 12th meeting between Sevier and White. Purportedly recorded directly from John Sevier by J.G.M. Ramsey, Gilmore asserts, in his flattering biography of Sevier entitled *Advanced Guard of Western Civilization*, that White divulged the details of the Spanish scheme on the Kentucky frontier. According to Gilmore, Sevier sent a letter to Isaac Shelby describing the James Wilkinson led Kentucky intrigue and warning Shelby to prevent the plot from occurring (Parker, "Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue," 45-46).

⁵⁴² Sevier to Gardoqui, 12 September 1788, Letters in Foreign Archives, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

political and economic leadership of Franklin hoped to advance their personal economic fortunes and defend their political autonomy.⁵⁴³

As James Sevier departed the Tennessee Valley to deliver his father's correspondences to Don Diego Gardoqui, Franklin supporters in the southern Tennessee Valley communities struggled to keep alive their hopes for independence. Sevier arrived at Gardoqui's New York residence on the same day John Tipton apprehended his father for high treason.⁵⁴⁴ Unaware of the arrest, James Sevier presented Gardoqui with his father's two letters. Just a week before this meeting, Gardoqui informed Governor Miro of the increased danger surrounding the ongoing Franklin conspiracy and that even James White "no longer consider[ed] it safe nor proper to remain in this country." White's mounting fear that his role in the scheme might be discovered forced him to assume several aliases (Don Jaime and Jacques Dubois), and Gardoqui's concerns over being implicated in the plot led him to distance himself from the conspiracy. Gardoqui instructed James Sevier to travel to New Orleans and contact Miro for future "aid and protection."⁵⁴⁵ Gardoqui also dispatched James White to the Spanish territory to mediate

⁵⁴³ Henderson, "The Spanish Conspiracy in Tennessee," 233-235; Parker, "Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue," 45-47; Whitaker, "The Muscle Shoals Speculation," 379; Whitaker, "Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest," 160-161.

⁵⁴⁴ Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 219-220.

⁵⁴⁵ Gardoqui to Miro, 3 October 1788 and 10 October 1788, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 18 (1946): 132-133. Gardoqui attempted to calm Miro's suspicions of James White by offering a brief background of the American conspirator. Gardoqui informed Miro that, "I have known him as a Member of this Congress from North Carolina for a period of three years, and he was commissioned by it for the settlement of treaties with the Indians; in view of his general knowledge, and especially of the Boundaries, and his understanding of the secret views of this government, nobody can inform you more accurately..." In a "list of passports to New Orleans," Gardoqui included this entry, "October 11, To Mr. John Sevier for himself and several Associates (Gardoqui to Miro, 3 October 1788 and 10 October 1788, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 18 (1946): 132-133)."

the clandestine negotiations. After receiving several Spanish passports and travel money, Sevier left for New Orleans unaware of the ever-increasing importance of his mission.⁵⁴⁶

Over the final two months of 1788, the governments of Georgia, Virginia, and South Carolina renewed efforts to establish peaceful relations with the southeastern tribe. At Governor Johnston's behest, North Carolina joined the other southern states in their ongoing negotiations with the Creeks and Chickamauga Cherokee. Despite publicly criticizing the 1785 Treaty of Hopewell upholding Cherokee land claims, the Johnston administration actively pursued a diplomatic and cost effective solution to the wave of frontier violence. Johnston offered his support for the communities south of the French Broad River and to the Cumberland settlements of Middle Tennessee. Johnston defended his decision to Dr. Hugh Williamson:

The People Inhabiting the Lands on the Fork of French Broad and Holstein Rivers claim under Grants from this State; regularly issued from the Secretary's Office & executed by the Governors, these people are therefore as much under the protection of the State as any other of her Citizens. For this reason as well as some others which I have heard, the Treaty of Hopewell will probably ever be reprobated by every good Citizen of this State.⁵⁴⁷

Both Williamson and Johnston believed that John Sevier's 1788 campaigns against the southeastern tribes presented serious obstacles to concluding a lasting peace with either the Cherokee or Creeks. Dr. Williamson warned Johnston that,

a Treaty is now pending with the Southern Indians and Georgia which has long been suffering under the knife, begins to hope for a general peace. In such a conjunction the conduct of Mr. Sevier was not only fatal to their hopes, but perfectly

⁵⁴⁶ Henderson, "The Spanish Conspiracy in Tennessee," 236-237, 137-139; Parker, "Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue," 49-50; Whitaker, "Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest," 160-161. According to several sources, the General Assembly of Franklin met at an undisclosed location on October 15th, 1788 and addressed the shortage of specie in the region and the growing concern among the political leadership regarding the payment of their salaries. There is considerable debate over the actual occurrence of this legislative session, but there is little doubt that many Tennessee Valley residents retained their support for the dying statehood movement (Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 219-220).

⁵⁴⁷ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 497-498.

alarming to the States of South Carolina and Virginia, each of them might suffer by a general Indian War.⁵⁴⁸

Johnston's opposition to the Treaty of Hopewell and public expression of support for the southern communities eased western hostility towards the state of North Carolina. For the increasingly marginalized southern Franklinites, Johnston's conciliatory policies and the North Carolina Assembly's willingness to pardon former Franks further deflated the southern separatist movement.⁵⁴⁹

By November of 1788, supporters of the "Lesser Franklin" movement in the southeastern Tennessee Valley found themselves reduced to pleading with their parent state for assistance against the growing Indian resistance movement. The Frank's unrelenting campaigns against the Creeks and Cherokees, dwindling munitions, and refusal to abandon their illegal settlements created an alarming situation in the Tennessee backcountry. Unaware of Sevier's ongoing negotiations with the Spanish government and incapable of defending themselves, a group of Greene County residents petitioned the North Carolina General Assembly to aid them in their frontier defense. The petitioners informed the representatives of their dire situation:

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 21*, 497-498, 500-501. In his September 6, 1788 letter to Governor Johnston, Hugh Williamson, delegate to the North Carolina Assembly, informed the North Carolina Governor of the open hostility towards the Treaty of Hopewell. Williamson stated, "The Treaty of Hopewell had given much offense to many good Citizens in our State because it was supposed to have surrendered Lands to the Indians which had formerly sold or exceeded to the State." Williamson goes on to give Johnston the details of a proposed amendment to the Treaty of Hopewell that stated "Whenever the present Settlements shall have acquired sufficient strength and the State shall be desirous to extend her Settlements she has only to buy a farther claim of Soil from the Indians (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 21*, 497-498, 500-501)." Williamson may have been referring to the land sales transacted by John Armstrong in 1783 and 1784 or the territorial cessions secured from the Indian's by Franklin's highly controversial Treaty of Dumplin Creek (see chapter 4). John Sevier and the Dumplin Creel claimants continued to petition the North Carolina Assembly to recognize the Treaty of Dumplin Creek. The inhabitants of the southern Tennessee Valley communities defended their land claims on the basis of the Treaty, that established the state of Franklin's southern and western boundaries at "the dividing ridge between Little [Tennessee] River & the Great Tennessee, and south of the Great Rivers Holston and French Broad (Memorial of John Sevier, 20 November 1789, State Records, North Carolina State Archives)."

We your Petitioners Are now Sufferers by a most Cruel and unjust war with the Cherokee Indians We have been Closely Confined in forts these six months past, and many of our people Barbarously Massacred, our farms not attended our Horses and Cattle drove from our Stations. And often We [are] not Able to do more than defend ourselves from our walls. We have been often without Assistance from the more Secure parts of the District, the Divisions and Controversies Among the people render it often out of the power of the Militia Officers to Assist us.⁵⁵⁰

The petition also conveyed their mounting apprehension over the impact of ongoing diplomatic negotiations with the regional Indian tribes on their homes. In an effort to legitimize their land claims, the Greene County citizens requested that the North Carolina Assembly carve a new county out of the southern communities of Greene County, establish a local courthouse and “Administration of Justice,” and most critically, erect a land office to legally register their land claims. The petition revealed a grudging abandonment of independence by Franklin’s remaining holdouts, and placed even more paramouncy on John Sevier’s negotiations with Spain.⁵⁵¹

Despite the enterprising efforts of James White, Don Diego Gardoqui, and the Sevier family, the Spanish conspiracy began to collapse towards the end of 1788. Rising Spanish suspicions, glaring cultural incongruities, and a rapidly shifting political climate made the relationship between Spain and Franklin untenable. The Spanish Intrigue never progressed far enough for the two parties to work out the complex logistics of a Franco-Spanish alliance, but Spain’s designs for the incorporation of the Kentucky frontier offers a glimpse into the possible inner workings of such a plan. In addition to courting the

⁵⁵⁰ Report on petitions of inhabitants of Greene Co. and south of French Broad River, 20 November 1788, State Records, North Carolina State Archives. The petitioners included proposed boundaries for the new county in their November petition. “Beginning at the main Dividing Ridge or Appalachian Mountains Where the waters of the Little Pigeon and Little [Tennessee] Rivers interlock from there along the divide between the two rivers to the waters of Boyd Creek Thence along the Divide between Boyd Creek and the Little Pigeon to the [illegible] point of a large island in the French Broad Known by the name of Sevier Island Thence a West course to the Hawkins [County] line.” The proposed county encompassed huge tracts of land in Sevier and Caswell counties (neither yet formally recognized by the North Carolina Government).

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

political leadership of Franklin and Cumberland, Spain also conspired with Brigadier-General James Wilkinson to consolidate Virginia's rapidly developing Kentucky settlements into their sphere of influence. The Spanish Intrigue in Kentucky advanced much further than either the Franklin or Cumberland schemes.⁵⁵² In August of 1787, Wilkinson traveled to New Orleans where he presented a memorial to Governor Miro laying out a proposal for the union of the Kentucky communities and Spain. Wilkinson's exasperation over the United States government's inability to acquire navigation rights to the Mississippi River from Spain served as his primary motivation for seeking an alliance. Tobacco developed as the principal cash crop in Kentucky's frontier economy, and the navigation of the Mississippi River offered the most viable commercial route to regional markets. In order to compete with Virginia's powerful eastern planters, Wilkinson needed access to the Mississippi River and to new markets in Spain's Louisiana Territory. Wilkinson offered "two propositions" as to how Spain might acquire the Kentucky Territory. The first involved the King of Spain "receiving the inhabitants of the Kentucky region as subjects" and then "taking them under his protection." Wilkinson's second proposal attempted to draw Kentucky and Spain together culturally through emigration and inter-mixing.⁵⁵³ Spain viewed the Kentucky intrigue as an opportunity to expand their North American land holdings and to further distance themselves from the land hungry American government.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵² William R. Shepherd, "Wilkinson and the Beginnings of the Spanish Conspiracy," *The American Historical Review* 9 (April 1904): 490-493.

⁵⁵³ The Supreme Council of Spain rendered their decision as to which of Wilkinson's propositions to adopt on November 20, 1788. After careful consideration, the Spanish government chose the emigration strategy, "until the Kentuckians attain their independence from the United States ("Papers Bearing on James Wilkinson's Relations with Spain," *The American Historical Review* 9 (July 1904): 748-749)."

⁵⁵⁴ Abernathy, "Journal of the First Kentucky Convention," 67-78; Allison, *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*, 86-89; Henderson, "The Spanish Conspiracy in Tennessee," 235.

Planning for the Spanish conspiracy in Franklin and Kentucky would have been very similar. In a letter dated September 25, 1787, Governor Miro and Martin Navarro described the details of the Kentucky plot to Spanish Minister Don Antonio Valdes. Miro and Navarro's "instructions" on what to do if the Wilkinson's "predictions" came "true" offered an extensive list of legal, political, economic, and cultural directives. They first considered the potential religious conflicts that could emerge when joining Catholic Spain with the overwhelmingly Protestant Kentuckians.⁵⁵⁵ During Gardoqui's initial contact with future Franklin conspirator James White, the Spanish minister reassured Spain's Secretary of State of White's trustworthiness by describing him as "a Catholic" who "has never used [his Catholicism] to serve his ends, nor for anything else."⁵⁵⁶ In their initial negotiations with Wilkinson, Spain insisted that the Kentuckians "permit Churches served by Irish catholic priests, without the exercise of any other Religion being permitted." The Spanish government attached a conversionary mission to what ostensibly stood as a territorial annexation. Spanish officials agreed to allow the Kentuckians to privately "exercise their present religion," but ultimately hoped that the frontier Protestants could be "converted by [the] persuasion and good example" of frontier Catholics. The chance of a mass Catholic conversion of the overwhelmingly Protestant communities scattered across the southeastern frontier seems extremely unlikely.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁵ Miro and Navarro to Valdes, 25 September 1787, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 5 (1940): 102-109.

⁵⁵⁶ Gardoqui to Floridablanca, 28 October 1786, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 16 (1944): 85-90.

⁵⁵⁷ Miro and Navarro to Valdes, 25 September 1787, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 5 (1940): 102-109.

Despite concerns over religious pluralism, the Wilkinson plot remained fundamentally a scheme born out of mutual economic and political necessity. In their consultation with Valdes, Miro and Navarro primarily addressed the fiscal aspects of a Spanish-Kentucky compact. These considerations included: the sale of Kentucky tobacco, trade tariffs and duties, and future trade relations with the United States and Britain. If Kentucky became part of Spain, then the region's commercial farmers faced the prospect of a "six percent" export tax, an "import duty," and a potential trade embargo from the United States and Britain. For Kentucky's commercial tobacco farmers, access to the Mississippi River and Spain's global agricultural markets eclipsed these meager economic concessions. The Spanish weighed the financial rewards of the Kentucky conspiracy against the potential political and military repercussions they faced from the United States. Miro and Navarro determined that,

it would be obligatory and necessary to place detachments [of Spanish troops] at the principal points of these new dominions, who Commandants would be both civil and military commanders, in order to watch out for any attempt the United States might begin, to impede the introduction of commerce, and to settle difference among the inhabitants.⁵⁵⁸

In addition to stationing soldiers in Kentucky's backcountry communities, the Spanish officials concluded that there needed to be "Justices of the Peace" to enforce Spanish law. In essence, Miro and Navarro believed that Spanish Kentucky must be governed by Spanish appointees and defended by Spanish troops.⁵⁵⁹

The circumstances surrounding the proposed Franklin-Spanish alliance differed slightly from Wilkinson's Kentucky scheme, but Spain's diplomatic "blueprint" for governing Franklin presumably would have contained many of the same elements.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

Perhaps the most insightful predication of the Spanish conspiracy in Franklin is contained in an exchange between Joseph de Ezpeleta and Don Antonio Valdes. After meeting with James White in Havana in the winter of 1788, Cuban governor Ezpeleta recounted recent developments on the trans-Appalachian frontier:

On the Western side of the Allegheny Mountains and the Appalachians, extending to almost the Mississippi, there are more than two hundred thousand inhabitants settled in the Territories of Kentucky, Cumberland, and Franklin. Up to now these people have been awaiting whatever fortune they might expect from Congress, but feeling cramped now by this dependency, they have decided to live under a separate Government and to make alliances of another kind.⁵⁶⁰

Ezpeleta then revealed intimate details about the potential Franco-Spanish pact. Briefed by White, Ezpeleta explained the political and economic benefits offered by the backcountry compact for both Franklin and Spain. The Franklinites stood to profit financially from their partnership with the Spanish government. A Franco-Spanish commercial relationship offered the Frank's unfettered access to Spain's ports, markets, shipping, and the Mississippi River. Franklin's land speculators also potentially gained "an increase in their territory" after Spain halted Native American resistance to the expansion of white settlements across the Tennessee backcountry. Spanish interests also potentially benefited from a proposed merger with the Franks. The Tennessee Valley settler's military experience made them ideal Spanish soldiers, and if an agreement could be concluded between their government and Spain, King Carlos III expected the Franklinites "to defend the King's territory against any attack by another Power." Ezpeleta elaborated on the other possible Spanish advantages:

In exchange for his indulgence, His Majesty will have at his disposal a considerable number of people who can be very useful to him. By becoming accustomed to recognize his sovereignty through an oath of fidelity, they will,

⁵⁶⁰ Ezpeleta to Valdes, 29 December 1788, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 18 (1946): 139-143.

without perceiving it, go on to subjecting themselves to other obligations of Vassalage; they will develop a commerce that will greatly increase the Merchant Marine, and consequently there will be men for the Royal Navy. These same men losing with experience the prejudices that our rivals [British and Americans] have instilled into them, will live united with us, and will be employed in the service of the King like real Spaniards, the greatest advantages being their separation from [the United States] Congress, and their uniting for their benefit with us with the same interests as the other Vassals of the King [Cumberland and Kentucky], raising thus a secure barrier against the unjust attempts of the United States, for it is easy to defend the entrance through the almost impassable Mountains which separate them.⁵⁶¹

Ezpeleta reiterated James White's assertion that the Spanish government needed to "promptly" move forward with the necessary arrangements for the secret alliance.⁵⁶²

Even as Ezpeleta, Gardoqui, Sevier, and White encouraged the Spanish government to "place [the Franklinites] under the protection of the King," rumblings of discontent could be heard from both sides.⁵⁶³ In an October 30, 1788 address to North Carolina's General Assembly, John Sevier attempted to curry favor and remove suspicion by warning the representatives of the "formidable and inveterate enemies watching to take advantage of our divisions."⁵⁶⁴ Sevier's reference to foreign threats is remarkable in light of his ongoing negotiations with Spain and probably reflected his growing doubts about the wisdom of a deal with the Spanish king. The increased urgency of James White's appeals to Spanish officials also confirmed the cooling off of support for a Franco-Spanish alliance among the Franks. From the start, Spain's political leadership worried about a possible deal with the Franklinites. As early as September of 1787, Estevan Miro cautioned his government that the Tennessee Valley settlement's expanding population and military power posed a threat to Spain's Louisiana Territory. Miro also warned that

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ White to Ezpeleta, 24 December 1788, "Spanish Papers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 18 (1946): 143-144.

⁵⁶⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 698.

denying these frontiersmen access to the Mississippi River could provoke a war that might ultimately cost Spain all of their North American territories and Mexico. Miro strongly advised allying with the western settlers before they are “driven back into the arms” of the United States government.⁵⁶⁵

By the end of 1788, the growing chorus of suspicious Spanish voices threatened to derail the conspiracy in Franklin. James White attempted to calm the Spanish government’s growing hesitancy over continuing the ongoing Franklin negotiations. On December 24, 1788, White argued that “the policy of the Spanish Government” should be aimed at “attracting” the Franklinites “as friends [rather] than taking precautions against them as enemies.” White promoted the trade benefits of the alliance, as well as the strategic advantages of “using these people as a barrier” against American aggression and territorial encroachment. He also reminded Governor Ezpeleta that Spain’s diplomatic delays allowed the Tennessee Valley settlements to “take on more formidable proportions,” and pose an even greater threat to Spain’s North American colonies. White offered Spain’s political leaders his utopian vision of an alliance with the Franks:

Spain now has in her hands the power to assure herself of this Country [Tennessee Valley] by peaceful and humane methods. Then its inhabitants will be a Source of advantage instead of dangerous and turbulent neighbors. United to the American Republics, they may be especially suspicious. Separated, nature itself will keep them from Mercantile rivalries [with Spain]; the traffic for the exportation of their raw products will stimulate of itself an increase of Sailors for the Royal Navy. Tobacco, Hemp, iron, Food, and other bulky articles will gather in such abundance at the Ports on the Mississippi, with facility for transportation by water, so that many Sailors as are necessary to Arm many Warships will be maintained.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ Miro and Navarro to Valdes, 25 September 1787, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 5 (1940): 102-109.

⁵⁶⁶ White to Ezpeleta, 24 December 1788, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 18 (1946): 143-144.

White concluded his compelling defense of the Franklin plan by recommending that the Spanish government move slowly in their efforts to religiously convert and acculturate the Tennessee Valley residents. White queried, “As to internal policy, Will it not be best to indulge them by granting them the continuance of their manners, Customs, and Prejudices that habit makes the Love?” White understood the disastrous consequences of forcing cultural uniformity on the Franklinites, and he argued that, “With time, if other customs are considered necessary, they can be substituted for these.” White’s attempts to prevent future cultural and religious disharmony revealed one of the fundamental obstacles preventing a Franklin-Spanish union, cultural intolerance.⁵⁶⁷

Back on the Tennessee frontier, the rupture between the remaining southern separatists and the state of North Carolina gradually began to close. Most of Franklin’s former political leaders accepted the inevitability of reunion and returned their political allegiance to North Carolina.⁵⁶⁸ Only in Greene County did significant support for statehood remain. On January 12, 1789, sixteen Greene County residents met at the courthouse to once again address the Indian attacks and ongoing treaty negotiations endangering their settlements. The group never mentioned the state of Franklin nor Spain during the conference, but the attendees overwhelming supported the creation of a new state west of the Appalachian Mountains. The frontier leaders castigated the state of North Carolina for failing to adequately bolster their frontier defenses and appointing the much maligned Joseph Martin as a member of the North Carolina delegation negotiating

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 236-237; Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 223-225.

with the southeastern tribes.⁵⁶⁹ The Greene County men adopted fifteen articles primarily aimed at strengthening their frontier defenses and defending their land claims. The representatives also reaffirmed their allegiance to John Sevier, electing him to “keep the command of the inhabitants on the frontiers,” and conduct all future “talks with the Indians.” The frontier leaders concluded their meeting by calling on Washington and Sullivan counties to join their “Voluntary plan of Safety.”⁵⁷⁰ Clearly John Sevier’s overtures to the Spanish government failed to stop their Indian allies from attacking white settlements south of the French Broad River, and just two days prior to the Greene County conference, Sevier and “the arms of Franklin” confronted a “combined force of Creeks and Cherokees” at Flint Creek. In the shockingly bloody Battle of Flint Creek, the frontier militiamen slaughtered the Native Americans, leaving 145 dead and countless other mortally wounded. In “The Last Battle of Franklin,” Sevier struck a near fatal blow to the Indian resistance movement, and further fanned the flames of frontier violence.⁵⁷¹ The persistence of Cherokee and Creek attacks and a growing awareness of cultural disparities, further diminished the likelihood of a Franklin-Spanish alliance.

In February of 1789, John Sevier became the last in a long line of former Franklin leaders to pledge their fealty to the laws of North Carolina. Despite the rapidly changing political dynamics of the Tennessee Valley and the recent death of Spain’s King Carlos III, James White remained convinced that a Franklin-Spanish compact could still be concluded. During the spring of 1789, White delivered several letters to unnamed

⁵⁶⁹ Patrick Henry called Sevier’s loyalists “Mr. Martins decided foes,” and defended the Indian agent by arguing, “I believe the complaints against Mr. Martin but will come from the new govern’t [sic] party, I mean Franklinites either in No. Carolina or Virg’a [sic] (Patrick Henry to William Grayson, 31 March 1789, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 14 (June 1709): 202-204).”

⁵⁷⁰ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 723-725.

⁵⁷¹ Alderman, *The Overmountain Men*, 236-237.

Tennessee Valley “leading men” stipulating that they must swear an “oath of allegiance to the [new] King...if it was their wish to come under the protection of Spain.” White’s April 18th correspondence to Governor Miro expressed his growing impatience over Spain’s measured approach to frontier negotiations. White again urged Miro to offer the Franklinites “refuge under the King’s protection” before it was too late.⁵⁷² In response to White’s appeals, Miro issued a statement to the Tennessee Valley “Westerners” that expressed Spain’s desire to “favor and protect” them. The April 20th memorandum promoted James Wilkinson’s recently proposed strategy for uniting Kentucky and Spain through emigration and cultural intermixing. Miro extended an invitation to the Tennessee Valley residents to settle in the Louisiana Territory on land granted by the Spanish government. The New Orleans governor also offered to open Spanish markets and trade routes to the would-be emigrants and even wave duties on any property imported or sold in Spanish North America. Following Miro’s address, the Spanish government abruptly abandoned James White’s dangerous scheme for securing a Franco-Spanish alliance for James Wilkinson’s more cautious emigration approach. Miro explained his government’s decision:

Upon the proposal of the afore mentioned Gentleman [White] made me respecting the wishes of those Districts in order to make a connexion [sic] with the Court of Spain, after disavowing [sic] themselves from the United States it is not in my power to stipulate any thing, nor to promote the scheme; because the good understanding subsistent between the most catholic Majesty & the United States prevents it.

Miro’s pronouncements undoubtedly came as a devastating blow to James White’s grandiose vision of a Spanish Tennessee Valley.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² White to Miro, 18 April 1789, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 20 (1948): 103-105.

⁵⁷³ Miro’s Memorandum of Concessions to Westerners, 20 April 1789, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 20 (1948): 103-105. In March of 1789, Dr. Hugh Williamson wrote that

After the Miro memorandum, the Spanish conspiracy in Franklin quickly imploded. On April 30th, 1789, Miro informed Valdez that he considered “it of little use for us [Spain] to intermeddle in” Franklin, and Spain turned their attention to winning support in the newly named Mero District [Cumberland] and Wilkinson’s Kentucky Territory.⁵⁷⁴ James White briefly continued to press for a Cumberland-Spanish alliance, but eventually abandoned all hope of uniting the Tennessee Valley with Spain’s North American territories. After traveling once more to Franklin to deliver Miro’s spring memorandum, White terminated his correspondence with the nation of Spain. Less than three years after conceiving of a Spanish controlled Tennessee Valley, James White’s Franklin-Spanish conspiracy faded into the past.⁵⁷⁵

Historians continue to debate John Sevier and his fellow Franklinite’s complicity and motives during the Spanish Intrigue. The scarcity of information relating to the backcountry episode led early intrigue scholars to either misrepresent the incident or omit the conspiracy all together. The translation and publication of an extensive collection of papers pertaining to Spanish/American frontier relations enhanced historical understanding of what actually occurred on the southwestern frontier. The appearance of the “Spanish Papers” definitively proved Sevier and company’s duplicity in the frontier conspiracy, and the historiography surrounding the enigmatic event blossomed following their revelation. Sevier apologists defended his role in the treasonous scheme by

“There is a Report in Town that the King of Spain is dead. One of his sons and that son’s wife certainly are dead of Small Pox.” Spanish King Carlos III died on December 14th, 1788 (Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 539).

⁵⁷⁴ Miro to Valdez, 30 April 1789, “Spanish Papers,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 20 (1948): 108-110.

⁵⁷⁵ Parker, “Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue,” 49-50; Whitaker, “The Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest,” 162-163; Whitaker, “The Muscle Shoals Speculation,” 382-384. In 1788, the political leadership of Cumberland communities renamed their communities the Mero District (misspelled) to honor Estevan Miro.

attaching venerable ulterior motives to his actions. Russell Parker Dean offers several of these interpretations in his historiographical study of the intrigue. Sevier biographers James R. Gilmore and Francis M. Turner assert that Sevier utilized the threat of an alliance with Spain to either force the United States to take a harder line with the Spanish government over the navigation of the Mississippi River or to pressure North Carolina to cede their western land. To these authors, North Carolina's unwillingness to adequately fund the Tennessee Valley's frontier drove John Sevier to open negotiations with Gardoqui and White. As Sevier defender Thomas E. Mathews pointed out, "North Carolina had never shown any but the slightest interest in the welfare of these western settlers who had crossed the mountains to make homes for themselves in the wilderness." Another group of historians simply contended that the "defiance of North Carolina" served as Sevier's true motivation for opening talks with Spain. Clearly the timing of the Franklinite's involvement in the conspiracy makes this a compelling argument. Whatever excuse is offered for Sevier's willingness to parley with Gardoqui and White, Nolichucky Jack always emerged as a pragmatic leader who retained his loyalty to the American Republic. Franklin historian Noel B. Gerson described the entire affair as "an Elaborate Hoax," and proclaimed that, "at no time, to be sure, were Sevier and his associates actually planning to make an alliance with Spain." Thomas Mathews castigated critics of John Sevier, insisting that, "Such men ought not to be lightly, much less unjustly and wantonly, accused of crimes, for if their reputations may be thus assailed, then no man's reputation is safe."⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁶ Noel B. Gerson, *Franklin: America's Lost State* (New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1968), 136; James R. Gilmore, *John Sevier as a Commonwealth Builder* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1887), 117-118; Thomas E. Mathews, "The Spanish 'Conspiracy' in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 4 (March 1918): 69-72; Parker, "Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue," 39-40, 42-44, 46-48;

There is another group of historians offering a much harsher critique of Sevier and the Tennessee Valley's political leadership. Although still maintaining that the Franklin conspirators never actually planned to swear their allegiance to Spain, these scholars associate financial motives with the Franklinites' actions. Historian Thomas Perkins Abernathy pioneered the "economic interpretation" of the Spanish Intrigue. Abernathy contended that the Spanish conspiracy had little to do with frontier defense or preserving the Franklin statehood movement. Instead, Abernathy argued that support for the scheme stemmed from the insatiable desire to secure control of the Muscle Shoals territory. Abernathy accused influential land speculators, such as William Blount, Richard Caswell, and John Sevier, of secretly promoting the scheme in the Tennessee Valley for personal financial gain. According to Abernathy, the failure of the Muscle Shoals land speculators to secure "the cession of western land to Congress" in 1784 and the United States' inability to secure rights to "the navigation of the Mississippi" convinced Blount and company to turn to Spain. A Spanish alliance offered "the only way in which the [Mississippi] river could be opened to trade," the termination of the Indians' "war against the settlements," and "the hope of enticing new settlers to the West to increase the value of lands."⁵⁷⁷

Whitaker, "Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest," 156-157, Williams, *The History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 235-244. Parker also mentions the following works: Francis Marion Turner, *Life of General John Sevier* (New York: The Neal Publishing Company, 1910), James Phelan, *History of Tennessee: The Making of a State* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, & Company, 1888).

⁵⁷⁷ Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation*, 91-102. Parker describes Abernathy's economic interpretation as "The Muscle Shoals Connection" to the Spanish Intrigue. Details of the connection between William Blount and both the Spanish Intrigue and the post-1784 Muscle Shoals land deal remain obscured (Parker, "Historical Interpretation of the Spanish Intrigue," 56-59). Blount biographer William Masterson points out several links between Blount and the conspiracy. Both William Blount and James White worked in Philadelphia during the earliest phases of the scheme, and Masterson speculated that Blount "probably knew of it." Masterson also associated Blount with the Spanish Intrigue in Cumberland, but ultimately concluded that "he saw earlier than some of his Western associates that, while the intrigue could be well used as a threat to extort a cession from North Carolina, yet the essential incompatibility of the aims of the

It remains unclear as to whether the Spanish conspiracy in the state of Franklin developed out of self preservation, diplomatic necessity, or just unadulterated greed. In all probability, all of these factors combined to initiate the Franks' brief flirtation with Spanish vassalage. The level of support among the residents of the southern Tennessee Valley for the collaboration also remains a historical mystery. What stands as indisputable is that between 1788 and 1789 John Sevier, through the intermediation of Dr. James White, entered into clandestine negotiations with the Spanish government. Regardless of the análisis razonado, the Spanish Intrigue remains the final arresting chapter in the tumultuous history of the state of Franklin.

Westerners and of Spain precluded carrying separatist ideas to any radical conclusion (William H. Masterson, *William Blount* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954), 151).”

Chapter Eight

“Rocked to Death in the Cradle of Secession.” The Antebellum Evolution of Franklin, 1783-1865

In September of 1804, Ingram Weirs sued William Cocke over disputed land grants issued by the Spencer County Court in the defunct state of Franklin. During the course of the proceedings, attorneys for both parties debated the circumstances surrounding the creation and governance of Franklin. The legality of Cocke’s land claims rested on the legitimacy of the state of Franklin and her court system. The case *Weirs v. Cocke* is emblematic of the divergent historical and popular interpretations of the Tennessee Valley separatist movement. Rhea and Williams, lawyers for the plaintiff, argued that,

Surely it will not be contended that the sale by the Sheriff, under the pretended authority of the Franklin Government, can give any legal right to the defendant. It was an insurrection [Whiskey Insurrection], as much so as the opposition to the excise, which took place a few years ago in the back parts of Pennsylvania. None of the acts of such a government can be good, or founded on such principles, as to obtain a moments consideration in a court of competent authority. The proceedings of the [Franklin] court of Spencer [Hawkins County under North Carolina and Tennessee] cannot be records; if they are, a writ of error would lie in this court, but no lawyer entertains an idea of such a thing.⁵⁷⁸

The attorneys for Cocke, G.W. Campbell and Jenkins Whitesides, challenged the plaintiff’s comparison of the Franklin movement to the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion, stating,

The Franklin Government is not to every purpose, to be considered as an usurped one. It is not similar to the insurrection in the western part of Pennsylvania; that was an absolute opposition to a law of the United States essential to its existence; one for raising a revenue.⁵⁷⁹

Campbell and Whitesides then offered their own account of the history of Franklin:

⁵⁷⁸ *Ingram Weirs v. William Cocke*, September 1804, William Alexander Provine Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives; John Overton, *Tennessee Reports, or Cases Ruled and Adjudged in the Superior Courts of Law & Equity, and Federal Courts for the State of Tennessee* (Knoxville: privately printed, 1813).

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The Government of Franklin arose from necessity; from the situation in which the people of North Carolina, west of the Mountains were placed; detached from anterior settlements in the eastern part of the State, exposed to the incursions and merciless barbarities of the neighboring savages, the State of North Carolina could not, or did not, afford the people in this country, that prompt assistance which was indispensable to their happiness, nay almost to their existence. Under these circumstances they formed a government of their own, distinct from that of North Carolina, but they did it in a peaceable manner, it was not attended with violence, civil war, or bloodshed.⁵⁸⁰

Sitting Judge John Overton apparently agreed with the defense's argument that the state of Franklin served as a legitimate "de facto government," and thereby validated Cocke's land claims. The trial transcripts from *Weirs v. Cocke* reveal the dynamic evolution of the meaning and historical legacy of the state of Franklin.⁵⁸¹

From the dawning of the movement to decades after its collapse, Franklinites and their supporters carefully crafted an image for the state of Franklin. Through the blending of patriotic rhetoric, nationalistic language, and revolutionary symbolism, contemporary Franklinites forged a history of their separatist movement that inspired local and regional pride and historical fascination. After the death of the state of Franklin, the descendents of both the Franklinites and Tiptonites redefined the movement in an effort to reshape the past and defend the actions of their kinfolk. During the first half of the nineteenth-century, the continued evolution of the meaning of Franklin allowed several prominent American figures to recast the movement for their own political purposes. By tracing the contemporary invention of Franklin through its political manipulation by abolitionist Ezekiel Birdseye and North Carolina Senator

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

Andrew Johnson during the first half of the nineteenth-century, Franklin's incredible metamorphosis from failed state to "courageous little commonwealth" unfolds.⁵⁸²

From the beginning, Tennessee Valley Franks doggedly promoted the connections between their separatist movement and the American Revolution. By associating Franklin with America's struggle for independence, the Franklinites hoped to win political and public support for statehood. If America's political leaders could be convinced that Franklin's independence flowed from the same patriotic river giving birth to America's separation from Britain, then the state of Franklin's chances of survival dramatically improved. Public support for Franklin, both inside and outside of the Tennessee Valley, depended heavily upon the region's historical ties to the Battle of King's Mountain and the famed sacrifices of the Overmountain Men. Through the efforts of skilled orators and savvy diplomats, the Franklinites cemented the link between Tennessee Valley separatism and America's glorious rebellion.

Colonel Arthur Campbell made the first connections between backcountry separatism and the American Revolution. In the summer of 1785, Campbell defended his earlier efforts to ignite a Washington County, Virginia, independence movement. In a letter to Colonel John Edmiston, Campbell responded to his critics, stating,

It is extremely unfortunate that many well-meaning and valuable men in America, who remained unshaken during the severest trials, at the end of the [Revolutionary] war, lost sight of the object they were contending for, or perhaps they had no object in view at all; and so of course now, for them, all might be lost or run into wild disorder.⁵⁸³

Campbell argued that Americans "were provoked and justly angry with England" for attempting to deny America's "sons, a republican or free government." He then outlined

⁵⁸² Louise Wilson Reynolds, "The Commonwealth of Franklin," *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* 52 (January 1918): 23.

⁵⁸³ Palmer, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. IV*, 100-101.

“three kinds of government,” of which, Campbell held “Democracy or [a] republican government” up as the ideal. Campbell’s analysis supported his Anti-Federalist argument that successful republics only flourished in “small societies or States.”⁵⁸⁴ Campbell’s assertion that backcountry separatism emanated from the same political vein as revolutionary republicanism became one of the earliest arguments for Franklin’s independence. During the convening of the first Franklin Assembly, a member of the convention “arose and made some remarks on the variety of opinions offered, for and against a separation.” Drawing upon the revolutionary precedent established by the Declaration of Independence, the unnamed Frank compared “the reasons which induced their separation from England, on account of their local situation, etc., and attempted to show that a number of the reasons they had for declaring independence, applied to the counties here represented by their deputies.”⁵⁸⁵

The connections between the political and economic leadership of the state of Franklin and the American Revolution are obvious. Soldiers like John Sevier, Landon Carter, and John Tipton led hundreds of Tennessee Valley settlers in bloody backcountry battles against the British and their Indian and southern loyalists. The political leadership of Franklin never allowed either North Carolina or the United States’ government to forget their sacrifice during the Revolutionary War and often drew upon this legacy to defend their independence movement. In one of John Sevier’s few direct addresses to the North Carolina Assembly, he reminded the representatives that,

You are sensible and sufficiently acquainted how recently we were all employed and deeply engaged, to keep off the British yoke of slavery and tyranny, and in the days of your greatest extremity, the people who are now suffering for differing in

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Watauga Association of Genealogists, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 20.

political sentiments, were those who gave you the first relief, at the expense of their blood and the loss of their dearest relations.⁵⁸⁶

Sevier challenged the assembly, asking, “Has North Carolina forgot that for such acts America took up arms against the British nation? Has she also forgot that the man and party that now suffers, was her zealous defenders in the days of her greatest extremity?” In a letter read before the Georgia Assembly, Sevier accused North Carolinians of forgetting that many Franklinites “fought, bled, and toiled” alongside their citizens for “the common cause of American Independence.” To Sevier and his fellow Franks, their devotion to America’s sovereignty justified their effort to establish their own independent state.⁵⁸⁷

Supporters of Franklin pointed out perceived similarities between America’s separatist movement and their own on the Tennessee frontier. Through the use of painstakingly chosen language and symbolism, Franklin became an extension of the revolution and the Franklinites its “rear-guard.”⁵⁸⁸ The blurring of the lines between revolution and separatism became one of the primary strategies used by Franklin’s propagandists to defend their state’s political sovereignty. The most obvious manifestation of this tactic is the naming of their new state after Benjamin Franklin. Originally, the political leadership of the Tennessee Valley intended upon designating their new state Frankland (meaning “Freeland”), but the Franklinites eventually abandoned the esoteric reference to the European Franks who dominated the Province of

⁵⁸⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 697-699.

⁵⁸⁷ John Sevier to Georgia Assembly, 25 June 1787, William Alexander Provine Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

⁵⁸⁸ James R. Gilmore, *The Rearguard of the Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton, 1903).

Gaul after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.⁵⁸⁹ It is unclear as to why they replaced Frankland with Franklin, but amidst the post-revolutionary wave of nationalism celebrating the political, ideological, and military leaders of the American Revolution, the name change served to highlight the region's devotion, loyalty, and necessity to the new republic. The Franklinites undoubtedly saw the political and diplomatic benefits of identifying their state with one of America's most celebrated patriots, and as opposition to their statehood movement mounted, the Franklinites increasingly wrapped themselves in the blanket of American nationalism and the rhetoric of revolution.⁵⁹⁰

The Franklinites persistently evoked the language used by America's revolutionaries in their effort to secure support for their own statehood movement. A letter composed by an anonymous Washington County, Virginia, resident on June 1, 1785 reflected the melding of the rhetoric of America's rebellion with the Franklin separatist movement.

The recent Franklin visitor proclaimed:

The New Society or state called Franklin, has already put off its infant habit, and seems to step forward with a florid, healthy constitution; it wants only the paternal guardianship of Congress for a short period, to entitle it to be admitted with [illegible], as a member of the Federal Government. Here the genuine Republican! Here the real Whig will find a safe asylum, a comfortable retreat among the Modern Franks, the hardy mountain men!⁵⁹¹

The Franklinites interlaced their correspondence and legislation with the powerful prose and mythology of the revolution. Words like republican, liberty, independence, and

⁵⁸⁹ McGill, "Franklin and Frankland: Names and Boundaries," 248-250. The debate surrounding the original name for Franklin continued for years after the collapse of the state. In 1843, frontier historian and archivist Lyman Draper initiated an inquiry into the origin of the name Franklin. General Stephen Cocke, son of Colonel William Cocke, relayed to Draper that "his father had informed him that as friends of the new government aimed to form a sovereign state, free of North Carolina, they hit upon the name 'Frankland' as particularly appropriate- for 'Frankland' is equivalent to 'Freeland'." The name Frankland only appeared on a handful of official documents and within contemporary correspondences (L.C. Draper on the Name of Franklin, William Alexander Provine Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives).

⁵⁹⁰ Dykeman, *Tennessee: A History*, 66.

⁵⁹¹ Unknown author, 1 June 1785, Newspaper Abstracts (JJ), Draper Manuscript Collection.

patriot grounded the principles of Franklin separatism in the ideological foundations of America's independence. The Franklinites argued that their efforts to defend their political "independence" and "pursue their own happiness" developed from the identical reasons, rights, and dreams that fostered the political radicalism of the American Revolution. The Tennessee Franks asserted that their separation from North Carolina occurred only out of necessity and that unreasonable taxes, political neglect, and eastern tyranny forced them into their fateful decision.⁵⁹² To the Franklinites their statehood movement truly stood as Tennessee Senator Andrew Johnson described seventy years later, "The War of Rebellion in Epitome."⁵⁹³

In conjunction with the Franklinite effort to craft a positive image of their state, opponents of Franklin created a vastly different perception of the Tennessee Valley separatist movement. From the first machinations of independence, North Carolina's political leadership conspired to undermine Franklin's sovereignty and dissociate the movement from the sacred revolution. As the Franklinites cast themselves as defenders of the principals of the revolution, North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin openly condemned their "revolt" and decried the economic motivations behind Franklin. Martin understood the potential effectiveness of drawing upon the victory of the Overmountain Men, and he warned the Franks not to "tarnish...the laurels you have so gloriously won at King's Mountain and elsewhere, in supporting the freedom and independence of the United States." To Governor Martin, the "black and traitorous [Franklin] revolt"

⁵⁹² Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 697-699; Dr. Abraham Jobe, "Autobiography, or Memoirs of Doctor A. Jobe," Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City

⁵⁹³ Frank Moore, *Speeches of Andrew Johnson, President of the United States with a Biographical Introduction* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1866), 263-276.

threatened the stability of the new American government, and during the final months of his governorship, he made every effort to destroy the state.⁵⁹⁴

Governor Martin's attack on the Franklinite propaganda effort fueled a growing Anti-Franklin movement within the region. The Tiptonites emerged victorious at the Battle of Franklin, but ultimately lost the long war of popular opinion. The Tiptonites struggled to cast the southern separatist movement in a negative light and to undercut Franklinite efforts to anoint their movement with a sense of honor and patriotism. The Tiptonites attacked the carefully crafted image of the Franklin independence movement. To the opponents of Franklin, the Tennessee Franks did not represent a revolutionary vanguard, but instead were "the off scourings of the Earth," "outlaws and vagrants," and "fugitives from Justice."⁵⁹⁵ Franklin's independence did not emerge out of necessity, nor did it reflect any of the principals of the American Revolution. To the Tennessee Valley Tiptonites, the Franklin movement disrupted their communities, escalated Indian violence, and retarded the growth of their region. These two dramatically divergent contemporary views of the state of Franklin persist to this very day and define the two broadest historiographical schools interpreting the statehood movement.⁵⁹⁶

The propaganda war characterizing the political and public debate over the state of Franklin did not end with the dissolution of the separatist movement. The participants in the Franklin drama and their children continued to redefine the meaning of the frontier state. Through correspondences with early frontier historians like Lyman Draper and Judge John Haywood, Franklinites and Tiptonites reshaped the history of Franklin and championed the actions of themselves and their relatives. Beginning in the early 19th

⁵⁹⁴ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 22, 642-647.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 637.

⁵⁹⁶ Clark, *The State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 21, 462-463, 487, 496.

century, Lyman Draper began collecting materials relating to the state of Franklin and the Tennessee frontier. The loss of most of the official papers relating to the state of Franklin during the last years of its existence made Draper's job exceedingly challenging. In order to enhance his understanding of the complex events surrounding Franklin, Draper contacted several children of leading Franklinites and Tiptonites. Within these exchanges, the sons of separatism reshaped the legacy and laid the foundation for many of the myths relating to the state of Franklin.⁵⁹⁷

On February 9, 1839, Colonel George W. Sevier sent a short letter and brief biographical sketch of his father John Sevier to Lyman Draper. Draper, who originally wrote to George Sevier's "relative" Senator A.H. Sevier, asked about John Sevier and "the thrilling scenes of those [frontier] days." George Sevier used his correspondence with Draper to criticize Judge John Haywood's *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, published in 1823. Although not present for the Franklin debacle, Haywood became one of Tennessee's first Supreme Court Judges and also one of the state's earliest historians. Haywood's history of Tennessee offered a remarkably astute analysis of the Franklin statehood movement and painted a strikingly realistic portrait of the actions of both factions during the affair. Haywood's revealing account of frontier Tennessee and the state of Franklin, and specifically the gubernatorial activities of John Sevier, angered George Sevier. He lashed out at Haywood, stating, "Haywood's history of Tennessee is very imperfect & written altogether from the statements of a few old men some of whom have strong prejudices against my father the late Genl John Sevier." Sevier defended his father, arguing "He was not only a Genl but a Statesman & politician" who fought for

⁵⁹⁷ Ned Irwin, "The Lost Papers of the 'Lost State of Franklin,'" *Journal of East Tennessee History* 69 (1997): 84-96.

“internal improvements” for his constituents. George Sevier’s biography of his father is more remarkable for what is not in the account than what he included. In the entire four-page account of his father’s life, George Sevier never mentioned the state of Franklin, only acknowledging his father’s involvement in the scheme in a short sentence in the accompanying letter to Draper, stating, “My father was the Governor of the [illegible] State of Franklin.” George Sevier’s effort to downplay his father’s role in the Franklin debacle through selective biographical omissions only added to Draper’s curiosity regarding the failed statehood effort.⁵⁹⁸

Over the next fifty years, Lyman Draper continued to delve deeper into the Franklin affair. He questioned Joseph Martin’s son and the grandson of Franklin militia captain Andrew Caruthers, but as participants “of the strong events” surrounding Franklin passed away, the history of Franklin took on a life of its own. In 1851, A.W. Putnam sent Lyman Draper a remarkable “sketch of the life of Gen. John Sevier” recently submitted to the Nashville newspaper, the *True Whig*. Putnam’s thirteen-page biography romanticized the events of Sevier’s exceptional life, and is one of the earliest examples of historical myth making related to the state of Franklin. To Putnam, the “personal, civil, legislative, judicial, executive, and military... contention and strife” accompanying Franklin was “aimed at the very man who had done, was doing, and continued to do more to defend the people and promote their peace and prosperity than any other man in all the country.” Putnam recounted John Sevier’s tormented acquiescence to statehood and his noble rejection of North Carolina’s 1784 commission as Brigadier-General. He then compared Sevier to “Moses” who “chose rather to suffer affliction with his people-than

⁵⁹⁸ George W. Sevier to Lyman C. Draper, 9 February 1839, 17 June 1840, King’s Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection; James Sevier to Lyman C. Draper, 19 August 1839, John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives; Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 5-14.

be flattered with the writing on sheep-skin!” Putnam portrayed Sevier as a man courted by the state of North Carolina, but managed to “keep Old Rip Van Winkle at arms length.” According to Putnam, Sevier held the “coon skin money” of the State of Franklin “in more esteem than the parchment roll with the Great Seal of North Carolina attached.” He became the embodiment of a frontier patriot, fighting his “political opponents” and savage Indians “hip and thigh and from tree to tree.” John Sevier “feared not, faltered not, and failed not!” Regarding the catastrophic Indian wars largely initiated by the Franklinites, Putnam cast the southeastern Indian tribes as the aggressors who “disregarded the treaties” carefully negotiated by Sevier, and forced him to “pursue their marauding parties.” Putnam paternalistically described Nolichucky Jack as the “father, friend, and protector” of the “people living south of [the] Tennessee & Holston River [Sevier, Caswell, and Blount counties],” and does not mention the violence and bloodshed he brought upon these settlements. Regarding the end of Franklin, Putnam argued that the Franklinites abandoned their efforts only after forcing North Carolina to concede to a number of “measures proposed and adopted to satisfy the people of Franklin.” Putnam excluded accounts of the Battle of Franklin, Sevier’s arrest, and the Franklinites’ involvement with the Spanish government. Despite its failure to achieve statehood, Putnam’s biography depicted the movement as John Sevier’s successful campaign to improve the lives of Tennessee Valley families.⁵⁹⁹

Lyman Draper also contacted the descendents of the Tiptonites who offered him a very different version of the history of the state of Franklin. John Tipton, the grandson of

⁵⁹⁹ A.W. Putnam to Lyman C. Draper, 4 September 1851, King’s Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection; William B. Robinson to Lyman C. Draper, 23 September 1880, King’s Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection. “Rip Van Winkle State” was one of the state of North Carolina’s earliest nicknames.

Anti-Franklinite leader Colonel John Tipton, recounted the Franklin affair in a brief biographical sketch of his grandfather sent to Draper on January 22, 1839. Tipton portrayed his grandfather as a frontier warrior “frequently in command and engaged in a number of battles and skirmishes with the Indians.” He described “Col. John’s” rise to political prominence in East Tennessee and his grandfather’s involvement in the violence in Washington County. According to Tipton’s account, his grandfather “opposed” the state of Franklin, and “most of his neighbors [meaning Greene and Sullivan counties] sided with him.” Tipton attempted to downplay his grandfather’s complicity in the backcountry bloodshed, offhandedly commenting, “some men on each side determined to take up arms and in the year [left blank] the fighting men met at the residence of Col. Tipton.” Tipton boasted that, “a skirmish took place in which the Sevier party was routed with the loss of 6 or 7 killed and wounded.” John Tipton’s biography of Colonel Tipton defended his grandfather’s actions during the Franklin movement by obscuring his direct involvement in the most unsavory aspects.⁶⁰⁰

Dr. Abraham Jobe, the maternal great-grandson of Colonel John Tipton offered one of the most interesting accounts of the Battle of Franklin. Dr. Jobe, born in Carter County, Tennessee, on October 9, 1817, briefly chronicled his great grandfather’s participation in the defeat of the Franklin separatist movement. The Jobe-Tipton family preserved the stories of their forbearers through oral traditions, and Jobe “gathered [his account] from old men and women who distinctly remembered all the facts they detailed.” Jobe’s sensationalized account of the Battle of Franklin predictably casts John Sevier as the aggressor in the backcountry skirmish. According to Jobe, his great

⁶⁰⁰ John Tipton to Lyman C. Draper, 22 January 1839, King’s Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection.

grandfather's unwavering loyalty to the state of North Carolina and refusal to submit to the authority of Franklin incited Sevier to raise an army and march "on Tipton to coerce him into obedience." As Sevier's forces surrounded "the brave little band in the [Tipton] house," "the first gun fired was at a woman who had been sent out of the house to the spring after water." In Jobe's version of the battle, the Tiptonites' counterattack came as a response to the Franklinite assault on an innocent woman. Jobe concluded his tale with his great grandfather gallantly leading "his men" in a successful assault on Sevier's forces that left several Franks wounded or dead. Jobe's account of the history of Franklin mirrored the version offered by the Franklinite descendents. To Dr. Jobe, his great grandfather's loyalty to North Carolina and the new American Republic compelled him to defend the Tennessee Valley communities from political and social anarchy.⁶⁰¹

It comes as little surprise that the descendents of the participants in the Franklin affair attempted to protect the historical reputations of their families. Their historical revisionism blurred the reality of the frontier separatist movement and projected the backcountry partisanship of the eighteenth century onto the political canvas of the nineteenth century. The complex and dichotomous legacy of Franklin proved extraordinarily malleable. Historical factualism often gave way to political expediency, as Franklin's legacy became intertwined with the two dominant political issues of the nineteenth century, secession and slavery. As Ezekiel Birdseye and Andrew Johnson resurrected backcountry separatism and Johnson desperately attempted to forestall the

⁶⁰¹ Dr. Abraham Jobe, "Autobiography, or Memoirs of Doctor A. Jobe," Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City. The fact that most of Jobe's "informants" came from the Tipton and Jobe families, including "old Aunt Sally Tipton" and "Uncle Abraham Jobe," explains Dr. Jobe's pro-Tipton bias.

state of Tennessee's secession from the union, the state of Franklin emerged anew in America's consciousness.

Ezekiel Birdseye moved into the Tennessee Valley at the height of the southern mountain abolitionist movement. Decades prior to Birdseye's 1838 arrival, anti-slavery forces thrived in East Tennessee. As early as 1815, Quaker leaders like Elihu Embree and Charles Osborne founded emancipation societies and published anti-slavery newspapers in the Tennessee Valley to "effect the abolition of slavery by political means."⁶⁰² Over the next twenty years, prominent Presbyterian ministers joined with Quakers to establish dozens of manumission societies across the region. According to historian Durwood Dunn, "As late as 1827, East Tennessee alone contained nearly one-fifth of all anti-slavery societies in the United States." In one of the few direct links between the two statehood movements, the Reverend Samuel Doak taught many of the Presbyterian leaders of the early Tennessee abolitionist movement at Washington College. "Doak's Log College" became the training ground for prominent anti-slavery leaders such as John Rankin and David Nelson. By 1841, every county comprising the former political boundary of the state of Franklin contained at least one abolitionist organization.⁶⁰³

The Tennessee Valley manumission societies waged a highly effective anti-slavery campaign on the fringes of pro-slavery Middle Tennessee. Through the use of impassioned political petitions and the publication of anti-slavery newspapers and pamphlets, Tennessee Valley abolitionists pressured local, state, and federal leaders to

⁶⁰² Durwood Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South: Ezekiel Birdseye on Slavery, Capitalism, and Separate Statehood in East Tennessee, 1841-1846* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 4-7, 17.

⁶⁰³ Henry Lee Swint, "Ezekiel Birdseye and the Free State of Frankland," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 3 (March 1944): 226-228.

confront the horrors of slavery. In an amazing testament to their determination, East Tennessee abolitionists convinced the Tennessee government to debate amending the state's 1796 constitution to end slavery. From 1834 to 1835, a special committee, chaired by Hawkins County native John A. McKinney, considered the gradual emancipation of all slaves in East Tennessee and five additional counties in Middle Tennessee. Despite ultimately being defeated by the pro-slavery leadership of Western and Middle Tennessee, East Tennessee abolitionists continued to promote their radical anti-slavery agenda. Members of the Tennessee Valley Manumission Society even backed the African colonization efforts of the 1820s and 1830s, and formed the Tennessee Colonization Society to lend their support to the growing effort to resettle freed slaves in Liberia.⁶⁰⁴

The Tennessee Valley's twenty-five year history of anti-slavery activity drew Ezekiel Birdseye to the former state of Franklin. Birdseye moved from his home near Stratford, Connecticut to Newport, Tennessee (present-day Cocke County) to join in the flourishing Tennessee Valley abolitionist movement. He collaborated with prominent Tennessee abolitionists such as the Reverend H. Lea, Robert Bogle, John Caldwell, Reverend Boswell Rogers, Reverend Spencer Henry, and Maryville College President Dr. Isaac Anderson. As the Tennessee Valley anti-slavery movement strengthened, Ezekiel Birdseye dreamt of establishing an independent "free state" comprised of "the mountain areas of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia."⁶⁰⁵ Between 1839 and 1840, Birdseye and Newport Judge Jacob Peck met to discuss the creation of a state of "Frankland." In a letter to Gerrit Smith, a wealthy abolitionist from Peterboro, New York, Birdseye described his vision:

⁶⁰⁴ Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 4-7, 10-14; Sheeler, "Background Factors of East Tennessee," 167-168.

⁶⁰⁵ Swint, "Ezekiel Birdseye and the Free State of Frankland," 226-229.

You will probably recollect that I suggested the possibility some three years since of that East Tennessee might be detached from other parts of the state and made a separate and free state. I had hopes even then that such might be the results. Afterwards, I was in doubt that I almost despaired to seeing it accomplished soon if ever. From my first arrival in this state I have endeavored to convince those with whom I have been acquainted that such a division would contribute to the well being of East Tennessee.⁶⁰⁶

Birdseye's public advocacy for the creation of an abolitionist state in the heart of the slave south threatened to alienate potential Tennessee Valley slave-holding supporters of East Tennessee statehood. The savvy "Connecticut Yankee" responded by hiding his abolitionist motivations for statehood behind a persuasive argument for East Tennessee's economic independence. Birdseye switched his rhetoric promoting Tennessee Valley separatism from controversial moral arguments against the indignities of the "peculiar institution" to more socially palatable appeals involving internal improvements and regional economic growth. Birdseye joined a swelling chorus of East Tennessee's economic and political leaders demanding that the state government in Nashville promote the development of the region's transportation arteries and growing market economy.⁶⁰⁷

Birdseye described his new political tactics to Gerrit Smith:

the natural resources of the country were its mineral agriculture and manufacturing resources, that with free labor and with well directed industry- a home market for the farmer and such legislation as would encourage improvements in the useful arts and with all protect the virtuous, would insure it wealth and prosperity.⁶⁰⁸

Birdseye justified his decision to submerge the abolitionist roots of his support for statehood, stating,

Those who hope by this means [create a new state] to exterminate slavery in East Tennessee think it will be prudent to say little on that subject or publicly [sic] on it until the act of separation is determined then to make an effort to carry that measure. I should suppose there could be no doubt but a very large majority of our people

⁶⁰⁶ Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 25, 197-198.

⁶⁰⁷ Swint, "Ezekiel Birdseye and the Free State of Frankland," 226-227, 230-233.

⁶⁰⁸ Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 197-198.

would vote for the termination of slavery without delay. The surrounding slave states would take the alarm and no doubt make strenuous efforts to counteract a policy which they deem destructive to their interests.⁶⁰⁹

After the creation of a new state of Frankland, Birdseye believed that, “The friends of the slave would have an open field and opportunity to meet the advocates of slavery in debate.”⁶¹⁰

Birdseye’s new fiscal appeals for Tennessee Valley independence drew the northern abolitionist into an unlikely alliance with one of the south’s leading political figures, Andrew Johnson. Johnson served as the Tennessee state senator for Greene and Hawkins counties and tenaciously promoted the economic development of East Tennessee. Since 1836, the Tennessee legislature passed two separate pieces of legislation to develop the region’s transportation system. Both efforts proved to be ineffectual, resulting in only “one turnpike and false starts on two railroads.”⁶¹¹ To an ambitious politician and businessman like Andrew Johnson, the development of the Tennessee Valley’s economy became a salient political issue. In the winter of 1841, representatives from across the Tennessee Valley convened in Knoxville to promote the construction of a trans-montane railroad, turnpikes, and the “improvement of navigation of the Tennessee River.” Both Andrew Johnson and Ezekiel Birdseye attended the “internal improvement conventions.” Birdseye, representing Cocke County, described the meetings to Gerrit Smith, “On Monday and Tuesday of this week [November 22-23] I attended the internal improvement convention of East Tennessee at Knoxville.” Over the span of two separate

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Eric Russell Lacy, “The Persistent State of Franklin,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 23 (December 1964): 322-323.

⁶¹¹ The state of Tennessee poured a tremendous amount of money into defunct Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad. The economic depression of the 1830s derailed the East Tennessee portion of the railroad, and regional politicians pressured the state to mark the \$650,000 dollars that remained for the project for the much-needed Tennessee Valley internal improvements (Swint, “Ezekiel Birdseye and the Free State of Frankland,” 226-227, 230-233).

conventions, the East Tennesseans drafted a memorial to the Tennessee Legislature requesting that they release approximately \$650,000 dollars to complete the Hiawassee Railroad, to construct a turnpike from Abingdon, Virginia to Knoxville, and to improve navigation on the Tennessee River. Amidst the debate over how to improve the region's economy, the delegates considered plans for forming an independent state out of the counties of East Tennessee. According to Birdseye, "This was discussed in the convention on both days" and "Not a single opponent appeared."⁶¹² Both Johnson and Birdseye left the internal improvement conventions optimistic about the economic and moral future of their Tennessee Valley communities.⁶¹³

At the next legislative session, representatives from Middle and West Tennessee de facto rejected the Tennessee Valley memorial by agreeing to sue the Louisiana, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad Company, owners of the Hiawassee Railroad, for breach of contract. The lawsuit insured the failure of the trans-Appalachian rail line through the Tennessee Valley and outraged regional politicians. In response to the defeat of the internal improvement memorial, Andrew Johnson introduced a resolution in the Tennessee senate to organize an independent state of Frankland out of East Tennessee and the mountainous portions of Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia. Johnson's resolution called for the creation of:

a joint select committee appointed to, consist of two members on the part of the Senate, and three on the part of the House of Representatives to be chosen from the eastern portion of the State, whose duty it shall be to take into consideration the expediency and constitutionality of ceding one of the grad divisions of the state (commonly called East Tennessee) to the General Government, for the purposes of

⁶¹² Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 18-19, 197-198.

⁶¹³ According to Eric Russell Lacy, representative Joseph L. Williams (a Knoxville Whig) first proposed statehood fro East Tennessee during the November internal improvement convention (Lacy, "The Persistent State of Franklin," 322-324).

being formed into a sovereign and independent state to be called “the State of Frankland.”

Throughout 1841 and 1842, the East Tennessee press enthusiastically promoted Birdseye and Johnson’s statehood idea. In the *Jonesborough Whig*, newspaper editor William G. “Parson” Brownlow applauded the resolution and harshly criticized the political leadership of Middle Tennessee for politically and economically neglecting the eastern part their state.⁶¹⁴ Ezekiel Birdseye informed Judge Peck that, “There are three political newspapers in Knoxville all of which now advocate the policy of separating East from West Tennessee. The other papers in East Tennessee will so far as I am informed give their support of the measure.”⁶¹⁵ An anonymous congressman and contributor to the *Knoxville Argus* defended the separatist resolution, stating his East Tennessee constituents did “not [have] a single interest in common with the people west of the mountains.” E.G. Eastman, editor of the *Argus*, described his utopian version of an independent Frankland:

As soon as the chains which render East Tennessee subservient to the more powerful division of the State shall be severed, she will, like a bird thrown free from its cage, rise with buoyant and vigorous wing, and soar high above the clouds of adversity which now hang heavy upon her.⁶¹⁶

In January of 1842, the Tennessee senate finally voted on Andrew Johnson’s resolution. Led by the determined senators from East Tennessee, the statehood proposal passed by a vote of seventeen to six. The Senate appointed Johnson and John R. Nelson, the representative from Knox and Roane counties, to the Frankland statehood committee and passed the resolution on to the state’s House of Representatives for their

⁶¹⁴ Swint, “Ezekiel Birdseye and the Free State of Frankland,” 233-235; Lacy, “The Persistent State of Franklin,” 324-325.

⁶¹⁵ Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 18-19, 197.

⁶¹⁶ Swint, “Ezekiel Birdseye and the Free State of Frankland,” 233-235.

consideration. Samuel Milligan, the representative from Greene and Washington counties, led the effort in the House to secure passage of the Frankland resolution. The contentious debate surrounding the statehood proposal revealed the bitter factionalism that continued to define East Tennessee politics. The members of the House of Representatives rejected the separatist resolution 29 to 41, with the East Tennessee representatives splitting their votes.⁶¹⁷ The defeat of the “Johnson-Milligan resolution” derailed the plan to create an independent state of Frankland.⁶¹⁸ Despite continued support from within the communities of East Tennessee, the second Frankland statehood movement succumbed to entrenched internal divisions and vicious partisan attacks from the political leadership west of the Tennessee Valley.⁶¹⁹

The similarities between Arthur Campbell and John Sevier’s state of Franklin and Ezekiel Birdseye and Andrew Johnson’s state of Frankland are striking. Both movements generated support within East Tennessee by capitalizing on the perception of political and economic marginalization by the distant centers of state government and the struggle for regional internal improvements. In the first manifestation of Franklin, Indian defense and the development of the Tennessee Valley’s frontier economy factored as two of the primary motivations for independence. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the expansion of the region’s trade and transportation infrastructure inspired the rebirth of East Tennessee separatism. The moral and religious leadership of the Tennessee Valley played a critical role in both states of Franklin, and the efforts to inject the radical principles of republicanism and abolitionism met with identical rebuke. Andrew Johnson and Ezekiel Birdseye never directly acknowledged that their movement

⁶¹⁷ Lacy, “The Persistent State of Franklin,” 325-327.

⁶¹⁸ Swint, “Ezekiel Birdseye and the Free State of Frankland,” 235-236.

⁶¹⁹ Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 18-19.

built upon the legacy of the first state of Franklin, but by the middle of the nineteenth century, the memory of Franklin and the heroic defenders of frontier independence increasingly defined the identity of East Tennesseans.

From 1840 until 1860, support for East Tennessee's independence lay dormant, but the antebellum secession debates in the United States Congress and the Tennessee legislature rekindled the flames of separatism. In the decades leading to the Civil War, the Tennessee Valley economy experienced "its own small-scale industrial revolution." The completion of rail lines across the region and the potential financial windfalls offered by the region's coal and iron deposits threatened to transform the communities of East Tennessee. Industrial progress and its reliance upon free labor seemed incompatible with the Tennessee Valley's entrenched slave labor-based agrarian economy. Across the United States, industrial promoters and entrepreneurs attacked the institution of slavery as archaic and detrimental to the growth of America's modern industrial economy. Despite their reputation as rabid southern abolitionists, East Tennesseans owned substantial numbers of slaves and overwhelmingly supported slavery. The development of early mineral extraction industries, the entrenchment of slave labor, and the growth of abolitionism created a potentially explosive situation in the Tennessee Valley.⁶²⁰

In February of 1860, Greeneville, Tennessee resident Andrew Johnson stood before a bitterly divided United States Senate and harshly denounced recent threats made by South Carolina to secede from the union. Over a two day period, Johnson castigated "run-mad Abolitionists" and "red-hot [southern] disunionists" for being "engaged in [the] unholy and nefarious work of breaking up the Union." During his fiery speech, Johnson laid the

⁶²⁰ According to Lacy, antebellum East Tennessee "had acquired half of the state's chartered railroads and three-fourths of its mileage." Out of all the former Franklin counties, Hawkins County maintained the highest percentage of slaveholders (Lacy, "The Persistent State of Franklin," 325-327, 330).

blame for the mounting sectional disharmony at the feet of both southerners and northerners. The Tennessean accused “the Abolitionists proper of the North” of “shaking the right hand of fellowship with the disunionists of the South in this work of breaking up the Union...” Johnson responded to personal attacks launched by pro-secessionist southern politicians branding him a “Black Republican” and an “ally” of abolitionism. Mississippi Senator Jefferson Davis labeled Johnson a hypocrite for opposing secession, stating that “Tennessee was born of secession” and “rocked in the cradle of revolution.” In a clear reference to the first Franklin statehood movement, Davis revealed to the senators:

I was reading, a short time ago, an extract which referenced to the time when ‘we’ - I suppose it means Tennessee- would take the position which it was said to be an absurdity for South Carolina to hold; and Tennessee still was put, in the same speech, in the attitude of a great objector against the exercise of the right of secession. Is there anything in her history which thus places her? Tennessee, born of secession, rocked in the cradle of revolution, taking her position before she was matured, and claimed to be a State because she had violently severed her connection with North Carolina, and through an act of secession and revolution claimed then to be a State.⁶²¹

Jefferson Davis transformed the Franklin separatist movement into a patriotic precursor to southern secession, and in the process struck an effective blow against one of the few southern politicians openly opposing the dissolution of the union.

Andrew Johnson countered Senator Davis’s misrepresentation of early Tennessee history by using the confusion and violence surrounding Franklin to warn of the dangers posed by secession. Johnson challenged Davis’s implication that his state owed its existence to secession, and offered his own set of political lessons to be drawn from the Franklin fiasco. Quoting from John Wheeler Moore’s *History of North Carolina: From the Earliest Discoveries to the Present Time*, he recounted the rise and fall of the state of

⁶²¹ Moore, *Speeches of Andrew Johnson*, 263-266.

Franklin and its “brave and patriotic” leader John Sevier. Johnson believed that Sevier “had fallen into this error of secession or separation from the State of North Carolina,” and the “doctrine of secession could not even be sustained by him, with his great popularity and with the attachment the people had for him.” According to Johnson, “Instead of Tennessee having her origin or birth in secession, the precise reverse [was] true.” “The State of Franklin had its birth in an attempt at disunion and was rocked to death in the cradle of secession,” leaving its “great defender and founder [John Sevier] lodged in irons.” The senator from Tennessee argued that the Franklin separatist movement demonstrated the “nefarious” consequences of the “blighting,” and the “withering doctrine of secession.” Even the “great” John Sevier, who “even now [is] venerated” in Tennessee,” could not escape the “infamous,” “diabolical,” “hell-born and hell-bound doctrine of secession.” Johnson assured the senators that Tennessee “has many fond recollections of the Revolution, but with all her revolutionary character, her people have never attempted secession.” In a remarkable effort at historical revisionism, Andrew Johnson recast the Franklinites as helpless pawns controlled by the irresistible and maddening disease of secession.⁶²²

Andrew Johnson’s effort in the United States Congress to stall the dissolution of the union eventually spread to the Tennessee Valley. After the secession of seven southern states, Tennesseans confronted the difficult decision of joining South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas in abandoning the Union. In a February 1861 referendum, Tennesseans voted “four to one” against secession. After the April 1861 assault on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, residents of Tennessee

⁶²² Ibid., 265-275; John Wheeler Moore, *History of North Carolina: From the Earliest Discoveries to the Present Time* (Raleigh: Alfred Williams & Company, 1880).

considered a second secession referendum. The swirling uncertainties of civil war, the political confusion caused by the dissolution of the Union, and President Abraham Lincoln's call to arms convinced the Tennesseans to reverse their state's political course. On June 8, 1861, Tennesseans voted overwhelmingly to "leave the Union," and on June 24th, Tennessee Governor Isham G. Harris pronounced, "all connection by the state of Tennessee with the Federal Union [is] dissolved..." Of the 47,238 votes cast against secession, nearly 18,000 came from East Tennessee.⁶²³ The failure of Andrew Johnson and his fellow East Tennesseans to stop their state from abandoning the Union ushered in one of the most violent periods in the region's hundred-year history.⁶²⁴

The secession of their state from the Union sparked a fiery backlash among many East Tennesseans. Over the course of the Civil War, East Tennesseans experienced vicious partisan violence within their region and a destructive "bushwhackers war" that terrorized their communities. East Tennessee became a political stronghold for southern unionism and a direct threat to the Confederate cause. For much of the conflict, either Union or Confederate troops occupied the former communities of the state of Franklin. Amidst the anarchy and violence gripping East Tennessee, several of the region's leading political figures reintroduced Tennessee Valley separatism.⁶²⁵ On June 17th, 1861, East Tennesseans met in Greeneville to consider their next course of action. Over the four-day session, the delegates passed "resolutions expressing their desire not to be involved

⁶²³ Lacy, "The Persistent State of Franklin," 330.

⁶²⁴ Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 21. East Tennessee was also politically divided over secession. The counties of upper East Tennessee "were about two to one against secession," and all of the "middle" East Tennessee counties voted against "separation." Only in the "lower" East Tennessee counties did residents cast their votes for secession (John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 159).

⁶²⁵ Williams, *Appalachia: A History*, 164-167. For a detailed account of partisan violence in East Tennessee during the Civil War, consult Noel C. Fisher's *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869*.

in civil war,” and rejecting the “ordinance of separation.”⁶²⁶ The attendees also appointed a committee to draft legislation to be presented to the Tennessee Legislature “seeking consent” to form an independent state out of East Tennessee. On June 29, 1861, the Tennessee Legislature rejected the “State of Frankland” petition, defeating Tennessee Valley separatism for a third time in seventy-seven years.⁶²⁷

From its earliest depiction as the offspring of the American Revolution to its stunning evolution into a pro-Union, anti-slavery utopia, the state of Franklin proved to be a powerful political symbol in East Tennessee. Franklin’s historical, political, and cultural transformation did not end with the Civil War. Over the next one hundred and fifty years, East Tennessee historians, business leaders, and politicians continued to reshape Franklin’s historical legacy and redefine the movement’s significance to America’s history.

⁶²⁶ Lacy, “The Persistent State of Franklin,” 331-332.

⁶²⁷ Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 21.

Chapter 9

“Footstool of Liberty’s Throne.” Hero-making versus Historiography, 1865-2005

Yes, give me the land that hath legends and lays
 That tell of the memories of long-vanished days.
 Yes, give me the land that hath story and song
 To tell of the strife of the right with the wrong;
 Yes, give me the land with a grave in each spot
 And names in the graves that shall not be forgot.
 Yes, give me the land of the wreck and the tomb;
 There's grandeur in graves --There's glory in gloom.
 For out of the gloom Future brightness is born;
 As, after the night looms the sunrise of morn.
 And the graves of the dead, with the grass overgrown,
 May yet form the footstool Of Liberty's throne;
 And each simple wreck in the way-path of might
 Shall yet be a rock in the temple of Right.
 - Father Abram J. Ryan⁶²⁸

In a speech delivered to the Historical Society of Washington County in the early 1940s, the Honorable E. Munsey Slack described the state of Franklin as a “vision that was magnificent, a dream that illuminates history, a hope that stirs ambition and thrills men to this day!” Slack’s laudation reflected one hundred and sixty years of misunderstanding, mythologizing, and distorting America’s first post-revolutionary statehood effort in the Trans-Allegheny frontier. Slack’s depiction of the Franklin separatist movement built upon the efforts of the Franklinites to construct an image of Franklin that simultaneously connected their state to the glory of the American Revolution and distanced it from the economic motivations and internal factionalism tainting their independence movement. Following the Civil War, the historiography and popular perception of the state of Franklin diverged. Historical scrutiny of the separatist

⁶²⁸ Susie Gentry, “The Volunteer State (Tennessee) as a Seceder,” *The North Carolina Booklet* 3 (July 1903): 5; Michael Hart, “Project Gutenberg,” June 1997, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext97/fryan10.txt>, (7 July 2005); Abram J. Ryan, *Poems: Patriotic, Religious, Miscellaneous* (New York, P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1880).

movement intensified and the simplistic and romanticized orthodox interpretations of Franklin yielded to probing revisionism. As scholars deconstructed the events and meaning of Franklin, East Tennesseans reinvented the legacy of their “lost” state and its fallen heroes. On occasion the lines of historical scholarship and popular memory intersected, but more often, the two interpretive paths careened hopelessly in opposite directions.⁶²⁹

In 1823, Tennessee judge John Haywood compiled the first historical account of the state of Franklin. Haywood served as Attorney General for the state of North Carolina following the collapse of Franklin, and undoubtedly became intimately acquainted with the participants in the statehood affair during his short term. Haywood eventually moved to Tennessee and served as a member of the state Supreme Court from 1812 to 1826. During his appointment in Tennessee, Haywood began to “collect the facts” for his history from the “remarkable men” who carved out East Tennessee. Haywood’s book, *The Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee*, is one of the earliest and most important works on frontier Tennessee history and laid the historical groundwork for every student of Franklin. Haywood’s book drew extensively from the oral histories maintained by East Tennesseans, and these accounts often contained historical biases, factual errors, or fanciful exaggerations. Haywood’s description of the Franklin statehood movement suffered from these scholarly obstacles, but he managed to offer a remarkably objective narrative of the state’s tumultuous existence. Haywood neither

⁶²⁹ Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia, *Washington County Historical Society of Abingdon, Virginia: Addresses Delivered Before the Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia* (Abingdon, VA: Publications of the Washington County Historical Society, 1945), 54-57.

criticized nor celebrated the exploits of the Franklinites, and his historical approach influenced many of the earliest studies of the state of Franklin.⁶³⁰

Historians Dr. J.G.M. Ramsey and Colonel John H. Wheeler relied heavily on the pioneering work of John Haywood in their histories of the Franklin movement. Ramsey's 1853 *The Annals of Tennessee* remains the definitive work on the early history of the state. Dr. Ramsey's father, Francis A. Ramsey, moved to Washington County in 1783 and worked as a land surveyor until the start of the Franklin movement. F.A. Ramsey emerged as a leading Franklinite and served as Washington County court clerk, secretary to the Franklin constitutional convention, and a Franklin commissioner to the 1787 North Carolina Assembly.⁶³¹ F.A. Ramsey's participation in the Franklin government occasionally led his son to dramatize the state's past. J.G.M. Ramsey's *Annals of Tennessee* followed Haywood's narrative historical format for recounting the statehood effort, but the Franklin descendent concluded his account with a forlorn "Vindication of Franklin." He assured his readers that, "...the action of the parties [participating in the Franklin affair] need not be ascribed to fickleness of purpose or bad faith, much less to disloyalty to their proper rules, or insubordination to regular government and law." Ramsey argued that the Franklinites seceded from North Carolina to "preserve quiet and order," and "their course was pacific and conservative...nothing destructive or revolutionary, much less belligerent, was intended or contemplated." Dr. Ramsey believed that,

⁶³⁰ Perhaps the best example of Haywood's historical inaccuracy is his description of John Sevier's sensational escape from his captures in Morganton. Haywood recounts an escape that never happened, and this account is eventually taken as historical fact until some time later (Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 6-9, 146-212).

⁶³¹ David Lawson Eubanks, "Dr. J.G.M. Ramsey of East Tennessee: A Career of Public Service" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1865).

Every review of the conduct of both parties in the disaffected [Franklin] counties, from 1784 to 1788, reflects honour upon their patriotism, their moderation, their love of order, and their virtue. No other instance is recollected, in which two antagonistic governments existed so long over the same people, with so little anarchy, so little misrule, so little violence. And amidst all the rivalry, and faction, and malcontent, and conflict, personal and official, which must have arisen from this unexampled condition of things, the annalist has to record but two deaths, almost no bloodshed, and little violation of the right of property.⁶³²

He asked his readers, “Was the revolt of 1784 justifiable- was it wise-was it patriotic- did it prevent greater evils- would a different policy have secured greater good, or produced better results?” Ramsey argued that “the verdict of the contemporaries of the revolters” “vindicated” the Franklinites’ “patriotism” and “asserted the integrity of their motives.” The same familial and personal connections that led to his “vindication” of the Franks also allowed him to uncover and publish dozens of undiscovered correspondences relating to the backcountry affair.⁶³³ Colonel John H. Wheeler also drew upon Haywood for his chapter entitled “State of Frankland, its rise, progress, and fall” in his distinguished work on antebellum North Carolina, entitled *Historical Sketches of North Carolina: From 1584 to 1851*. Wheeler’s analysis of Franklin, published in 1851, mimicked Ramsey’s narrative style, and served as one of the earliest attempts to integrate the story of the Franklin movement into North Carolina’s state history.⁶³⁴

Haywood, Ramsey, and Wheeler’s descriptions of the state of Franklin all demonstrated similar historiographical characteristics. All three accounts relied upon suspect oral traditions that negatively impacted historical accuracy. These three early

⁶³² Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, preface, 282- 444.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Walter Faw Cannon argued that the work of John Wheeler reflected the ideas of the “Ingrate” historical interpretation. Cannon believed that Wheeler’s *Historical Sketches of North Carolina* denounced the Franklin movement as “lawless thirst for power... against the patriotic and self-sacrificing state of North Carolina (Cannon, “Four Interpretations of the History of the State of Franklin,” 8-9; John. H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina: From 1584 to 1851* (New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, 1851), 90-99; Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 311-313).” An examination of Wheeler’s chapter on Franklin does not support Cannon’s interpretation.

histories also followed a similar narrative style and offered little in the way of historical interpretation. Finally, all three works failed to mention the significance of land speculation, the brutality of white on red violence, and the Spanish government's relationship with the state of Franklin. Despite the factual shortcomings of the accounts offered by Haywood, Ramsey, and Wheeler, their scholarship inspired historical fascination into the obscure backcountry statehood movement and revived regional interest in the state of Franklin.

During the decades surrounding the Civil War, the state of Franklin faded into historical obscurity as American historians struggled to come to grips with the tragedy of war and the turmoil of southern reconstruction. In East Tennessee, survivors of the Civil War and localized "bushwhacker's wars" confronted the horrors of postbellum life in their war ravaged communities. The region's identification with radical abolitionism, vocal opposition to Tennessee's secession, and wartime unionism muddled the Tennessee Valley's Civil War legacy. East Tennessee's historical reputation emerged tarnished from the carnage of the Civil War and Reconstruction. East Tennesseans found it difficult to draw upon the South's "Lost Cause" mythology to ease the pain of military defeat and the wrenching socio-economic transformation of Reconstruction. They instead turned to two of the Tennessee Valley's defining moments, the Battle of King's Mountain and the legacy of mountain separatism, to repair their region's historical image. The state of Franklin emerged from the Civil War and Reconstruction transformed.⁶³⁵

More than any other individual, John Sevier became the embodiment of the burgeoning mythology surrounding the state of Franklin. On January 7, 1873, William A.

⁶³⁵ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 1-5; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1-8.

Henderson delivered a speech before the Board of Trade of the City of Knoxville. The lecture, entitled “Nolachucky Jack,” offered attendees an aggrandized account of Sevier’s life. From his “distinguished services at King’s Mountain” to his governorship of Tennessee, Henderson lavished praise upon Sevier. He referred to the Franklin movement as a “little revolution,” and argued that the “rebellion of Franklin” owed its very survival to the courage of John Sevier. Henderson’s carefully crafted image portrayed Sevier as a friend to the Indian, quoting one Cherokee treaty negotiator as saying, “Send us Nolachucky Jack; he is a good and great man, and will do us right.” Henderson recounted another incident in which a young child and his father waited along a dusty roadside for “Nolachucky Jack” to pass. Apparently, Sevier’s “legend” overshadowed his actual physical appearance, leaving the child disappointed that he “was only a man.” According to Henderson’s lecture, Sevier’s heroic stature caused the death of the North Carolina judge “responsible for issuing the warrant for the arrest of” Sevier after the Battle of Franklin. After signing the warrant for Sevier’s arrest:

The Judge [Spencer] returned to his home in North Carolina, and was prostrated on a bed of sickness. Feeling somewhat better one afternoon, he arose from his bed and seated himself under an oak in his yard, when his antagonist suddenly without warning, fiercely attacked him. Cries of help were heard, his family rushed to his assistance, but all too late the furious combat was over, and the Judge had been killed by a turkey gobbler. The cause of the singular tragedy was referred by some to the red flannel worn at the time by the unfortunate victim, but many of the common people always stoutly maintained that it was because he had had John Sevier arrested!

Henderson also included the fantasized tale of Sevier’s stealthy “escape” from the Morganton jail:

While the trial [of Sevier] was progressing, amid great excitement, one of them [Sevier’s friends] lead the favorite horse of the Governor to the court-house door, entered the house and strode up in front of the Judge, and asked in a loud voice: “Mr. Judge, are you done with that man?” When asked the cause of his conduct and question, surrounded by the greatest confusion, he replied: “Because the man is

needed at home.” In the meantime, the Governor had mounted his horse and, followed by cheer after cheer from delighted multitude, was on his unchecked way to his mountain home.

William Henderson’s exaggerated account of John Sevier’s life represented a new phase in the burgeoning legend of John Sevier and the state of Franklin.⁶³⁶

In 1887, author James Roberts Gilmore published the second volume of his biography of John Sevier, entitled *John Sevier as a Commonwealth-Builder*. Gilmore, best known for his Civil War stories and poems, advanced the “romantic” historical interpretation of the state of Franklin.⁶³⁷ He glowingly depicted Sevier as “the rear-guard of the Revolution and the guardian and defender of the newly planted civilization beyond the Alleghenies.” Sevier valiantly “built up a great commonwealth in the very heart of the Western wilderness.” John Tipton and Joseph Martin are portrayed as Sevier’s ruthless “enemies” who stopped at nothing to destroy Franklin and its noble leader. Gilmore harshly criticized Indian agent and land speculator, Joseph Martin, labeling him “a treacherous friend” and “self-seeking demagogue.” His descriptions of John Tipton are even more venomous, with Gilmore comparing Tipton to the biblical Prince of Darkness and Anti-Christ, “Belial.” Gilmore thundered:

This man [Tipton] was one of those restless spirits who seem never entirely happy unless they are in the midst of strife and discord. Profane, foul-mouthed, turbulent, and an irascible, domineering temper, he lacked every quality of a gentleman except personal courage, and that nameless something which comes down in a man’s veins from an honorable ancestry. He had ambition but not the ability to lead, and he could not understand why he should give to Sevier such unquestioning allegiance. He was greedy for office, and a born demagogue, and he was jealous of Sevier that men of low and yet ambitious minds feel for their moral and intellectual superiors.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ William A. Henderson, “Nolachucky Jack (Gov. John Sevier),” 7 January 1873, King’s Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection.

⁶³⁷ Cannon, “Four Interpretations of the History of the State of Franklin,” 8-9; Stan Klos, “Famous Americans,” 2001, <http://www.famousamericans.net/jamesrobertsgilmore/> (10 July 2005).

⁶³⁸ Gilmore, *John Sevier as a Commonwealth-Builder*, viii-ix, 10-11, 18, 29-30, 72.

Gilmore's book revived the antebellum historical feud between the Franklinites and Tiptonites and created what one historian forgivingly labeled as the "Democratic" interpretation of the state of Franklin.⁶³⁹ In Gilmore's hyperbolized version of Franklin, North Carolina's "indifference" and "parsimonious refusal of all appropriations" for the Tennessee Valley communities forced Sevier and the Franklinites to declare their independence. According to Gilmore, "North Carolina bade her over-mountain citizens look for security and protection, at the very time when they were in daily danger from the savage enemy..." He mused, "With their parent state's refusal to protect their families, Can it be wondered at that, when tidings crossed the Alleghenies, it aroused a universal feeling of indignant consternation?" Gilmore caustically described the Overhill Cherokee as "savages" who refused to abide by lawfully concluded land treaties, and applauded the peace-seeking Franklinites who conducted assaults against the Native American communities only to protect their own families. He denounced the remarkable Houston-Graham Constitution, defeated by Sevier and his fellow Franklinites, as a frame of government drafted by religious "zealots" and supported by an "intolerant minority." Sevier defeated the "evangelical constitution" because "he questioned the expediency of bringing religious tenets into a civil constitution." Gilmore argued that, "The union of church and state existed in some of the older countries, but it was clearly contrary to the teachings of the Bible and the example of Christ..." Gilmore does not mention the extraordinary expansion of yeoman political power or the democratic principles tantalizingly offered by the Houston-Graham Constitution. Gilmore also avoided acknowledging Sevier's role in the Spanish Intrigue and accused John Tipton of "recklessly" instigating the Battle of Franklin. In Gilmore's Shakespearean history of

⁶³⁹ Cannon, "Four Interpretations of the History of the State of Franklin," 8-9.

Franklin, Sevier gallantly led his fellow Tennessee Valley residents into a period of “unbroken prosperity,” in which “Education had been fostered, law had been duly administered, and crime had been a thing almost unknown.” Sevier defended the state of Franklin from “a swarm of warlike enemies,” but alas,

The reign of peace and law and fraternal feeling was for a time to be interrupted by the machinations of a few reckless and ambitious men, who, with no power or influence of their own, were rendered potent for evil by the “mother-State,” which had never expended a dollar nor provided a soldier for the aid or protection of its western citizens.

James Roberts Gilmore created East Tennessee’s own version of the “Lost Cause,” and John Sevier’s failed statehood movement became the “Lost State of Franklin.”⁶⁴⁰

At the turn of the twentieth century, the first gaps emerged between the historical studies and the public’s perception of the state of Franklin. In 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt published his four-volume history of the American frontier, entitled *Winning of the West*. His chapter on the state of Franklin offered one of the earliest unvarnished studies of the movement and its supporters. Roosevelt described the Franklin movement as a “separatist” movement and downplayed its connection to the principles of the revolution. Roosevelt acknowledged the “blunt truthfulness” and “real attitude of the Franklin people...towards the Indians,” stating that the Franklinites “never swerved from their intention of seizing Indian lands...by force.” He labeled the Franklinites “freebooter[s],” and “pirates” who “lusted for the possessions of the Indian.” Despite Roosevelt’s racism, he understood the tragedy that befell the southeastern Indian tribes when they found themselves “face to face” with a “masterful [race] of people, still in their barbarian prime.” He believed that, “the conquest and settlement by the whites of the Indian lands was necessary to the greatness of the race and to the well-being of

⁶⁴⁰ Gilmore, *John Sevier as a Commonwealth-Builder*, 18-24, 46-47, 65-71, 74-76, 117-129.

civilized mankind. It was as ultimately beneficial as it was inevitable.” “As to the morality or immorality” of these events, Roosevelt argued that, “a conquest may be fraught with evil or with good for mankind.” He acknowledged that, “Every such submersion or displacement of an inferior race, every such armed settlement or conquest by a superior race, means the infliction and suffering of hideous woe and misery.” As to history’s judgment of the Franklinites, Roosevelt stated, “All that can be asked is that they shall be judged as other wilderness conquerors, as other slayers and quellers of savage peoples are judged.” Roosevelt’s *Winning of the West* represented a dramatic shift in the historiographical development of the state of Franklin.⁶⁴¹

As historians like Theodore Roosevelt and George Henry Alden reinterpreted the backcountry separatist movement, the mythology surrounding John Sevier and the “lost” state of Franklin continued to seep into the public’s consciousness.⁶⁴² On March 11, 1910, Dr. William Edward Fitch delivered a speech to the New York Society of the Order of the Founders and Patriots of America at the Hotel Manhattan. The talk, entitled “The Origin, Rise, and Downfall of the State of Franklin, Under Her First and Only Governor, John Sevier,” exemplified the popular perception of Franklin. Dr. Fitch described the Franklinites as “the fearless pioneers of the west, who had gone into the wilderness, had suffered incredible hardships, many of whom had been murdered by the savages, some had their wives and children massacred, and all had suffered in privation and property.” John Sevier “stood guard over and protected the women and children of the State of Franklin,” and “their absolute devotion to him...enabled him to conquer his greatly superior savage enemies.” Fitch believed that Sevier “preferred peace to war” with the

⁶⁴¹ Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 176-178, 190, 199-202.

⁶⁴² George Henry Alden, “The State of Franklin,” *The American Historical Review* 8 (January 1903): 271-289.

Indians, and he made every effort to see that “the two races...live[d] together in perpetual amity.” As to the Tiptonites, Fitch recounted the “luckless hour” when:

there arose certain conservative and unimaginative characters in the Mountain principality of the State of Franklin, who for unknown reasons turned their allegiance to the state of their nativity, forsaking their grand and noble leader, Col. John Sevier.⁶⁴³

Biblical imagery and language permeated Fitch’s lecture. He described the Franklinites’ unwavering devotion to independence and Sevier, predicting “Had the destroying angel passed through the land, and destroyed the first born in every section, the feelings of the hardy frontiersmen would not have been more highly incensed...” His account of the public outcry following John Sevier’s arrest, of which there is no historical evidence, described “thousands of infuriated men...pouring into the capital of Franklin [Greeneville]” and “shouting threats and imprecations on [John] Tipton and North Carolina.” Fitch also included the fictitious account of Sevier’s “triumphant” escape from the Morganton jail. He closed his lengthy address with a rousing summary of the state of Franklin:

Thus we see that the State of Franklin was the immediate offspring of the Revolution of the Regulators, culminating in the Battle of Alamance in 1771. Their independence was a reality before it was dreamed of elsewhere. In the little commonwealth of the State of Franklin, the British flag was never unfurled, and no British officer ever trod the soil. They paid tribute to no government on earth except their own. Here an outraged people, outlawed, and oppressed by British tyranny set to the people of the new world the dangerous example of erecting themselves into a state, separate and distinct from, and independent of, the authority of the English Crown, where they enjoyed Freedom, that twin sister of virtue, the brightest of all the spirits that descended from the train of religion from the throne of God, leading man higher to the early glories of His being.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴³ William Edward Fitch, “The Origin, Rise and Downfall of the State of Franklin, Under Her First and Only Governor John Sevier,” 11 March 1910, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, TN.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

The mythologizing and memorializing of the state of Franklin extended well beyond exalted speeches and lectures. On August 22, 1903, the Historical Society of Washington County held a public ceremony in Jonesboro “to celebrate the founding, or organization, of the State of Franklin.”⁶⁴⁵ Fifteen years later, the Samuel Doak Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution unveiled a memorial to Franklin in the courthouse square of the former capital of Greeneville. The marker memorialized “the courageous little commonwealth that repudiated the sovereignty of North Carolina, and for five years exercised statehood in defiance of North Carolina and the Continental Congress.” The Dorian marble monument stood 6 ½ feet in height and 14 ½ feet in width, and included a bronzed “tablet inscribed” with the following:

1785-1788
To Commemorate the Capitol
of the
State of Franklin
and
To Honor
Governor John Sevier
and the Patriotic Pioneers
Who Followed Him in the
War of the Revolution
and Assisted in Establishing
in the Wilderness the
Foundation of
Law and Liberty.
Erected 1918
Through the Efforts of the
Samuel Doak Chapter
of the
Daughters of the American
Revolution
Morristown, Tennessee

⁶⁴⁵ S.J. Kirkpatrick to O.P. Temple, 7 August 1903, O.P. Temple Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University of Tennessee.

Daughters of the American Revolution member Louise Wilson Reynolds penned a companion history of Franklin for the *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine*. Reynolds recounted the “story of the brave little Franklin,” whose history burned with “all the fire and romance which is usually attributed to fiction.” She described John Sevier as “handsome, magnetic, and graceful in manner and form,” one who dashingly “made his appearance on the page of frontier romance as a gallant admired by the belles in linsey.”⁶⁴⁶

Much of Reynolds’s account of the Franklin movement focused on the early Watauga settlements and the Battle of King’s Mountain, and what she did tell her readers about Franklin is largely inaccurate and highly sensationalized. For example, she stated that,

Under the constitution of the Franklin Commonwealth no one could hold office unless he was a Christian, believing in the Bible, Heaven, Hell, and the Trinity. Immoral men and Sabbath-breakers were debarred from holding office, together with lawyers and ministers of the Gospel.

The Franklinites actually rejected this frame of government for the much more conservative North Carolina Constitution. Reynolds also shielded Sevier from culpability in the Spanish conspiracy, arguing:

In view of an otherwise unblemished career, and lack of direct evidence, it is fair to believe that the crucial hour would have found Sevier too big for the temptation; too devoted to the men whose homes his strong arm had helped defend to ever entangle them in a distasteful and treacherous alliance with a foreign power.

⁶⁴⁶ Reynolds, “The Commonwealth of Franklin,” 23-28. According to Reynolds’s account of the Franklin ceremony, “A great cheer arose from the audience as little Miss Hoss drew aside the flags draping the monument (Louise Wilson Reynolds, “Memorial to State of Franklin Dedicated,” *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* 52 (September 1918): 518-519).”

Reynolds believed that the Franklin Monument stood as a “deserving and too long neglected tribute to the fearless, liberty-loving patriots, the rugged pioneers of Tennessee.”⁶⁴⁷

Amidst the speeches, lectures, celebrations, and memorials, Tennessee historian and former Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court Samuel Cole Williams published the first book-length treatment of the state of Franklin. Williams’s *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, published in 1924, is a sweeping study of the Franklin separatist movement. Williams relied heavily on the previous Franklin scholarship, but also utilized published records of the states of North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia and private manuscript collections to reconstruct a detailed account of Franklin. Williams’ history of Franklin quickly emerged as the definitive work on the subject. As one book reviewer stated, “It will have a place in Tennessee with the classics of our historical literature.”⁶⁴⁸

Williams’s book does not fit neatly into either the orthodox or revisionist schools of Franklin’s historiography. Williams understood the historical inaccuracies and ongoing public confusion regarding Franklin, and he hoped his history would “extend the research, correct errors, and supplement the work of the earlier [Franklin] writers, and to amplify even to the point of risking the lodgment of valid criticism of over-elaboration.” Williams also sought to demonstrate the national importance of the Franklin movement, which he called the “most profound and significant manifestation of the spirit of separation,” by connecting the backcountry rebellion to “the movement for separation that was at that time rife on all frontiers, eastern as well as western.” Despite the effort of Judge Williams to correct the rampant fallacious mythology and historical inaccuracies

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁸ John H. DeWitt, “History of the Lost State of Franklin,” *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 9 (April 1924): 167-170.

surrounding the state of Franklin, the historical realities of the separatist movement remained obscured behind the blinding rays of patriotism and the deafening roar of local adulation.⁶⁴⁹

In 1932, University of Virginia history professor Thomas Perkins Abernathy published a controversial economic interpretation of the development of the Tennessee frontier, entitled *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*. Abernathy emphasized the central role land speculators played in the organization of Tennessee, and harshly condemned the consequences of the monopolization of land and corruption of politics on the yeoman farmers of the Tennessee Valley. In his chapter on the state of Franklin, Abernathy argued that two powerful cabals of land speculators instigated the separatist movement in order to capture the lucrative Muscle Shoals land deal. As to the revolutionary spirit of the Franklinites, he stated, “There was nothing revolutionary in the minds of the men who had started out to establish this State of Franklin. They were sincere in their belief that they had been left without a government and felt themselves authorized to create one.” Abernathy castigated previous historians who “have heretofore treated the Franklin movement as a serious rebellion- the cry of the West for freedom.” He depicted the statehood movement as “a game played between two rival groups of land speculators,” and he proclaimed that the “whole history of the State of Franklin grew out of the miscarriage of the plans of land dealers.”⁶⁵⁰

Abernathy also described the defeat of the Houston-Graham Constitution as “Democracy...defeated in the wilderness.” He challenged critics who condemned the frame of government as “the fanatical proposition of a few clergymen,” and pointed out

⁶⁴⁹ Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, vii-viii.

⁶⁵⁰ Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, 56-58, 64-90.

that the “North Carolina Constitution [accepted by the Franklinites] required the same religious qualifications” as the Houston-Graham Constitution. Abernathy argued that the rejected document “was the first original constitution drawn up west of the mountains, and without being fanatical, it was in many respects one of the most democratic ever produced in the United States.” He accused John Sevier of defeating the Houston-Graham Constitution in order to “prevent” his political “influence” from being “overthrown,” and to frustrate the efforts of his political and economic opponents to “acquire property in the new country.” Abernathy concluded that the ratification of the constitution of North Carolina “did not... provide the fountainhead and bulwark of a beneficent new democracy,” and that “Greed, working through the land speculators, defeated the hopes of the people.”⁶⁵¹ Despite drawing fire from defenders of the legacy of Franklin, Abernathy’s economic interpretation of backcountry separatism radically challenged historians’ views of the statehood movement.⁶⁵²

As historians rewrote the history of the state of Franklin, Tennesseans and their political leadership continued to commemorate John Sevier and his role in the development of their state. During Tennessee’s 1923 “Citizens’ Week,” the Tennessee Daughters of the American Revolution recognized Sevier and Andrew Jackson in a short book entitled *Two Famous Tennesseans*. The author of the book chose to include only a brief sketch of Sevier’s role in the Franklin affair, and devoted the bulk of the account to Sevier’s rivalry with Tipton and the Battle of Franklin. The bloodshed at Tipton’s farm is described as a “sham battle” in which both sides intentionally “shot into the air” to avoid killing anyone. The author asserted that Sevier “did not go there to shed blood,” and “the

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 77-80.

⁶⁵² Cannon, “Four Interpretations of the History of the State of Franklin,” 9, 11-16.

casualties were probably the result of accident.” We are reminded of Sevier’s gallantry as a revolutionary soldier, and “his success in Indian fighting.” “Sevier was in thirty-battles as commander, yet he was never wounded and was always the victor.” A soldier like Nolachucky Jack “could have easily taken Tipton on the day that he arrived...” As to why he didn’t simply crush the Tiptonites, the author speculated that Sevier “had sat the previous night [before the battle] in grim silence at his campfire. He had often drawn his sword for his country and triumphed over his enemy, but to draw his sword against his fellow-citizens was more that he had the heart to do.”⁶⁵³

On April 19, 1931, sculptors Belle Kinney and Leopold F. Scholz unveiled their eight-foot tall bronze statue of John Sevier at the Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. The monument, donated by the state of Tennessee, depicted Sevier standing heroically with his arms crossed and a sword draped on his side. The short biographical sketch of Sevier included with the unveiling’s “program of exercises” only mentioned the state of Franklin in passing:

When because of inability of North Carolina to afford governmental protection to the “over-mountain” people, the independent State of Franklin was established, Sevier became its first and only governor. When the government fell he was arrested for treason, but was never tried, and his disabilities were removed.⁶⁵⁴

Less than ten years later, the Tennessee state legislature passed an act to preserve the Knox County home of John Sevier. The 1941 bill provided \$4,500 dollars in state funds to purchase Sevier’s home and forty adjoining acres of farmland, and allocated \$3,500 dollars to restore the property “to as near its original condition as possible.” The legislature also set aside \$600 dollars annually to maintain what eventually became the

⁶⁵³ Tennessee Daughters of the American Revolution, *Two Famous Tennesseans: John Sevier and Andrew Jackson* (Nashville: privately printed, 1923), 26-30. Tennessee Citizen’s Week lasted from December 2 to 7, 1923.

⁶⁵⁴ John H. Dewitt, “Biographical Sketch,” John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Marble Springs Historic Site. John Sevier's prestige as a "commonwealth builder and Revolutionary hero" continued to ascend to new heights.⁶⁵⁵

Through out the 1940s and 1950s, the state of Franklin remained a source of regional pride for East Tennesseans. On June 1, 1946, the Library of Congress included "a display on the state of Franklin" in their "sesquicentennial" celebration of the founding of the state of Tennessee. The Jefferson and Sevier County chapters of the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities even "commemorated the signing of the Treaty of Dumplin Creek." In an "impressive ceremony" held on June 10, 1954, attendees were treated to a lecture by Dr. Robert H. White on the "historical consequences of the signing of the treaty," and "a pageant...which reenacted the negotiations which took place between the Commissioners of the State of Franklin and representatives of the Cherokee Indian nation on June 10, 1785." The chairman of the Dumplin Creek Historical Commission, Dr. Dan M. Robison, dedicated a plaque "commemorating the signing of the treaty." The plaque read:

The only treaty made by the State of Franklin was signed here after some negotiation. Commissioners were John Sevier, Joseph Outlaw, and Daniel Kennedy. Signatory Cherokee chiefs were the King of the Cherokee Ancoo of Chota, Abraham of Chilhowee, The Sturgeon of Tallassee, The Bard of the Valley Towns, and some thirty others.

The celebration is remarkable in light of the Dumplin Creek Treaty's controversial backcountry negotiations and disastrous repercussions for the Overhill Cherokee.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁵ John Sevier Memorial Association, "The Marble Hill Historic Site," 2003, <http://www.kornet.org/jsma/index.html> (14 July 2005); Public Act of Tennessee 1941, 10 February 1941, John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

⁶⁵⁶ "The Lost State of Franklin," B. Carroll Reece Museum Records, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City. The Treaty of Dumplin Creek plaque stands in Kodak in Sevier County, Tennessee.

During the middle of the twentieth century, the state of Franklin became the subject of two historical romance novels. The novelists cast the Franklin turmoil as the literary backdrop and many Franklin participants as characters in their love stories. Helen Topping Miller set her 1947 novel, *The Sound of Chariots*, in the early months of the state of Franklin, but only vaguely followed the actual historical events of the statehood movement. The novel traced the exploits of Giles Hanna, an impoverished soldier and Sevier loyalist, and Raleigh Bevan, a villainous foul-mouthed land speculator. Most of Miller's story unfolded before the birth of Franklin, but she did include a brief allusion to the future of the doomed state. Miller described Franklin as:

this new little state that had been born in the fierce morning of independence, in the minds of the proudly independent men who had fathered it... A valiant little state! It was to live in a tumult of argument and dissension. It was to fight valorously for its life for four brief years. And then it was no more, and the people who trod its hills and valleys a century after might not know even that it had lived.⁶⁵⁷

In 1952, Chicago-native Noel B. Gerson published *The Cumberland Rifles*, which he described as a "Novel about the Lost State of Franklin and Spain's abortive attempt to conquer young America." Gerson's story included numerous "historical figures," such as John Sevier, George Elholm, John Tipton, Don Diego Gardoqui, and Don Esteban Miro, as well as several characters that were "the products of [Gerson's] imagination." The novel revolved around the efforts of Boston schoolteacher Rosalind Walker to open a girl's seminary in the state of Franklin and a plot carried out by Spanish undercover agents Janus Elholm and Harold Jordan "to overthrow the stripling government of Franklin." Despite being a work of historical fiction, Gerson capitalized on the immense popularity of John Sevier by making him one of the heroes of his story. In the novel's climactic ending, Sevier and James Robertson led the "army of Franklin" in a glorious

⁶⁵⁷ Helen Topping Miller, *The Sound of Chariots* (Chicago: The People's Book Club, 1957), 283-288.

defeat of the treacherous “Castilians.” Sales of both novels undoubtedly benefited from the burgeoning Franklin mythology and the romanticization of the backcountry separatists.⁶⁵⁸

One of the most publicized expressions of the romanticization of John Sevier and the state of Franklin occurred with the 1956 and 1958 productions of Kermit Hunter’s outdoor drama, *Chucky Jack: The Story of Tennessee*. Hunter, best known for his plays *Unto These Hills* and *Horn in the West*, crafted a moving account of the post-revolutionary life of John Sevier and the founding of the state of Tennessee. With the backing of the Great Smoky Mountains Historical Association, *Chucky Jack* played to large audiences at the 2,501-seat Hunter Hills Theatre. A 1956 ticket order form described the drama:

Hero of King’s Mountain- one of the first settlers to push down the green valleys to the west- member of the Continental Congress- founder of the Lost State of Franklin- first governor of Tennessee- one of the truly great American patriots... JOHN SEVIER!... called by the Indians CHUCKY JACK from pioneer home on the Nolichucky River. Now this giant figure comes to life in a vivid and stirring outdoor drama, set in the breathtaking Hunter Hills Theatre at Gatlinburg in the cool shadows of the Great Smokies. Sixteen memorable scenes trace the career of this eminent statesman whose character and leadership at a crucial moment molded the very foundations of American democracy. Authentic Colonial costumes, exciting incidents, colorful dances, a magnificent musical score composed by Jack Frederick Kilpatrick...CHUCKY JACK is an experience you will always remember.

For the cost of the \$1.50 ticket, one could ride the trackless sightseeing train the “Chucky Jack Special” up to the outdoor amphitheatre and witness the story of “a man who braved the wilderness of long ago to establish a new social order, to give opportunity and scope to the people around him, to produce in the western wilderness a better way of life.”

⁶⁵⁸ Noel B. Gerson, *The Cumberland Rifles* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1952), 37-39, 92-95, 298-314.

Chucky Jack stood as the theatrical embodiment of the mythology of John Sevier and the state of Franklin.⁶⁵⁹

After the 1932 publication of Thomas Perkins Abernathy's scathing revisionist history of Franklin, historians continued to reinterpret the state's past. In 1960, Tennessee historians Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell issued their seminal four-volume *History of Tennessee*. The three Tennessee history professors' treatment of the state of Franklin promoted Abernathy's economic critique of Tennessee statehood. The authors pointed out the link between land speculation and the Franklin separatist movement, arguing, "Sevier assumed leadership of it [Franklin], apparently in the hope that in some way the existence of the new state might be used as a means of reviving and advancing the Muscle Shoals project." Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell also agreed with Abernathy's assertion that the rejection of the Houston-Graham Constitution "was an example of the defeat of democracy." They stated that, "the democratic features of the Houston instrument were even more remarkable for that day and time," and that "it is quite probable that these democratic features contributed to the constitution's defeat."⁶⁶⁰

Fifteen years after the publication of Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell's book, the prolific Tennessee scholar, Wilma Dykeman, completed her bicentennial history of Tennessee. Dykeman's book, simply titled *Tennessee*, offered a discerning interpretation of the Franklin movement. Dykeman criticized the "romanticization [of Franklin] by local writers," and asserted that the state stood as "an example of common public needs

⁶⁵⁹ Brochures, programs and playbills for productions of *Chucky Jack* in the Hunter Hills Theatre, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, 1956 and 1958, Wilber White Stout Papers, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg.

⁶⁶⁰ Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, *History of Tennessee*, Vol. I, 154-160.

and desires shaped and used by powerful private interests allied with international ambitions.” She believed that “money was a deep though often obscure motive behind the movement for the new state” and the “bloody skirmishes between Cherokees and Franklinites.” Dykeman denounced the “land-hungry settlers” for initiating the Indian Wars, and branded John Kirk’s execution of Old Tassel and Abram as the “low point of Southern frontier history.” As historians like Folmsbee, Corlew, Mitchell, and Dykeman identified the economic motivations and grievous consequences of Tennessee Valley separatism, the myths and melodrama of earlier historical efforts largely disappeared.⁶⁶¹

Despite the biting historical revisionism of Franklin scholars throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the romantic historical interpretation of Franklin persisted. The pertinacious defense of Franklin’s historical legacy by regional historical societies, local writers, the descendents of the Franklinites, and East Tennessee’s political and economic leaders kept the mythology of Franklin alive.⁶⁶² Writers like Noel B. Gerson and Paul M. Fink continued to applaud Franklin “as a self-made state carved out of the wilderness almost overnight by ambitious, energetic frontiersmen who refused to be halted or even slowed by obstacles that would have forced the more cautious to wait, weigh risks and proceed slowly.” Paul M. Fink, the most important twentieth-century collector of documents and artifacts relating to Franklin, wrote in a 1957 essay that, “Such was the independence and individualism that characterized the founders of the State of Franklin, and sustained them in their valiant but temporarily fruitless efforts to enjoy self government- as a new state or as a separate nation.”⁶⁶³ In his 1968 history

⁶⁶¹ Dykeman, *Tennessee: A Bicentennial History*, 65-76.

⁶⁶² Bergeron, Ash, and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 39-45; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 112-123; Foster, *Franklin: The Stillborn State*, 1-22.

⁶⁶³ Fink, “Some Phases of the History of the State of Franklin,” 213.

entitled *Franklin: America's Lost State*, Gerson proudly proclaimed that the Franklinites' "relentless drive...set in motion the forces that transformed an impenetrable wilderness into one of the most advanced and cultivated regions in the entire United States."⁶⁶⁴

As the state of Franklin entered its third century of historical interpretation and public celebration, its mythology and history continued to clash. Historians left little doubt that the Tennessee Valley separatist movement stood in sharp contrast to the distorted images being offered by Franklin's defenders. The widening divide between historians and Franklin supporters continued to eerily resemble the political partisanship that destroyed the state. Revisionist historians stepped into the role of the Tiptonites and modern Franklin loyalists filled the shoes of Sevier, Cocke, and the rebellious Franks.

In 1965, the staff of East Tennessee State University's B. Carroll Reece Memorial Museum began preparations for a Lost State of Franklin exhibition. The 1965-1966 exhibition sought to highlight Franklin's role in the development of East Tennessee. As Reece Museum curator Robert S. Moore and his staff began to collect documents, paintings, and memorabilia relating to the statehood movement, they unintentionally endorsed the romanticized version of Franklin's history. The organizers of the exhibit failed to include any meaningful reference to Franklin's turbulent relations with the southeastern Indians or connections to the Spanish government in their display. Despite the perpetual Indian violence and territorial disputes plaguing the state, the Franklin exhibitors chose only to display a copy of a 1772 "Watauga Treaty with the Indians" and a child's toy "replica of an Indian bark canoe." There is not a single allusion to the Spanish Intrigue or the clandestine relationship between Franklin governor John Sevier and James White in the exhibition catalogue. By excluding these two fundamental

⁶⁶⁴ Noel B. Gerson, *Franklin: America's Lost State* (New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1968), 159-160.

elements, the staff of the B. Carroll Reece Memorial Museum purged the most bothersome aspects of the statehood movement from their exhibition and distorted Franklin's riotous history.⁶⁶⁵

Buried deep within the voluminous papers of Tennessee Congressman James H. Quillen, preserved in the East Tennessee State University archives, are several copies of a very unusual legislative act. Quillen's "Franklin Bill" aimed "to establish and create the territory of Franklin, and to authorize said territory to petition for admittance as the 51st sovereign State of the United States." The largely symbolic act stated:

Whereas; the great traditions and the peerless heritage of the former State of Franklin have been obscured and lost for future generations, and it is deemed beneficial and desirable to the future welfare of our Country that the former State of Franklin be re-created, and that section of our present sovereign State of Tennessee lying to the East of the Cumberland Mountains and comprising the Eastern Grand Division of the State of Tennessee is composed of the descendents of those great men who originally carved out of a wilderness the State of Franklin, and which said section of the State is indigenous to the stalwart characteristics and qualities of leadership which contributed so greatly to the establishment and preservation of our nation.⁶⁶⁶

Amazingly, Quillen penned his State of Franklin Bill in the spring of 1961, and it served as a political gimmick to increase support for his Republican Party in East Tennessee. A few days after reading his Franklin Bill before the Tennessee House of Representatives, Congressman Quillen received a Western Union Telegram from Kentucky Senator H. Nick Johnson expressing his desire for "the State of Franklin to include Southeastern Kentucky." The Republican Congressmen informed Senator Johnson that, "I have been having a 'good time' on my bill to recreate the Grand Old State of Franklin." He joked to

⁶⁶⁵ John J. Baratte, *Lost State of Franklin, 1965-1966*, B. Carroll Reece Museum Records, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City. John J. Baratte served as the B. Carroll Reece Museum's director at the time of the *Lost State of Franklin* exhibition.

⁶⁶⁶ 1961 State of Franklin Bill, 7 March 1961, James H. Quillen Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City.

Johnson, “I really appreciate your joining with me on this to include Southeastern Kentucky. Perhaps we can make Republicans out of them.”⁶⁶⁷ Of course, the State of Franklin Bill failed to pass in the Tennessee Legislature, but James H. Quillen’s personal crusade to “publicize” the “colorful history” of the State of Franklin continued for thirty more years.⁶⁶⁸

In 1962, Tennesseans elected James H. Quillen to the United States House of Representatives from the First Congressional District. Over the Sullivan County native’s thirty-four year stay in Congress, he worked steadfastly to procure federal funds to improve East Tennessee’s economy and transportation system. In 1982, Quillen used his considerable political influence to convince Tennessee’s political leaders to build the James H. Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University. In December of that same year, Quillen joined with other Congressional Republicans to pass the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982. The bill, eventually signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, provided federal funds to complete two important highways in East Tennessee, “Johnson City’s State of Franklin Road and the Great Smoky Mountains’ Foothills Parkway.”⁶⁶⁹ The City of Johnson City and Washington County started construction of the State of Franklin Road at the end of the 1970s, but budget shortfalls and logistical problems led to delays in completing the first two sections of the thoroughfare. By 1982, only a small critical stretch of the road remained unfinished, and Congressman Quillen’s unwavering support for the “priority” project insured its

⁶⁶⁷ Hendrick L. Smith to James H. Quillen, 25 March 1961; H. Nick Johnson to James H. Quillen, 10 March 1961; James H. Quillen to H. Nick Johnson, 16 March 1961, James H. Quillen Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹ Charles B. Tyson to James Quillen, 20 September 1982; News from Congressman James H. Quillen, 5 January 1983; *Kingsport Times* (Kingsport, Tennessee), 8 September 1982, James H. Quillen Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

completion. Johnson City residents finally witnessed the completion of the State of Franklin Road in 1995, and the roadway remains one of the central arteries in Washington County. By naming one of East Tennessee's most traveled roadways after the state of Franklin, James Quillen and the political leadership of East Tennessee cemented the state's legacy in the minds of the thousands of drivers daily navigating the Johnson City street.⁶⁷⁰

In 1968, East Tennessee banker W.E. Newell delivered a remarkable address to the business leaders of East Tennessee, entitled "The Tri-City Area and the State of Franklin." Newell's speech connected the state of Franklin to the "industrial development" and economic "growth" of the Tri-City Area (encompassing Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia, Kingsport, and Johnson City). He argued that, "In order to understand the present economic and industrial situation here in Bristol and the Tri-city area, we must first look at the... "Lost State of Franklin."'" In what assuredly must have seemed like a strange topic for a lecture on fiscal promotion, Newell launched into a brief description of the history of Franklin. His familiar romanticized version of Franklin masked the true purpose of his lecture. Newell pointed out that "throughout the entire history of the United States, there has been little in common between the North Carolina country this side of the mountains and the state capital in Raleigh." Similarly, he believed that, "There has been little in common between the Tennessee section east of the Cumberlands and the state capital, Nashville." Newell stated that,

It is probably truthful to say that economically, agriculturally, politically, and socially, the areas comprising the "Lost State of Franklin" are [still] more closely bound to each other than they are to the Bluegrass sections of Nashville and

⁶⁷⁰ Ron McCarley and Alan Bridwell, "Historical Timeline for Key Events for Johnson City, Tennessee Area Transportation and Economic Development," n.d., <http://www.jcedb.org/history/time/time2.htm> (16 July 2005).

Frankfort, the aristocratic Tidewater section of Virginia, or the wealthy Piedmont section of North Carolina. In other words, we in this Tri-City area have a common heritage going back to Pre-Revolutionary War Days.⁶⁷¹

Newell drew upon the “common bond,” cemented during the trying days of Franklin, to implore East Tennessee’s economic leaders to “seek new industry” and “keep atuned [sic] to the needs of the industry that we already have.” He encouraged attendees to “work together toward keeping the milk stool balanced and the legs growing stronger through a cooperative effort for our mutual benefit.” In light of the significant role economic development played in the founding of Franklin, Quillen and Newell’s use of the statehood movement for the promotion of regional economic development seems exceedingly appropriate. Newell concluded his speech with these final rousing words, “Yes, beginning with the Lost State of Franklin in the 1700s and running to this day of the so-called Great Society in the 20th Century, we in this area are bound together by strong social, political, geographical, and industrial ties. We are on the march industrially.”⁶⁷²

The economic boosterism of James H. Quillen and W.E. Newell represented only a small part of the role the state of Franklin played in the fiscal development of East Tennessee during the second half of the twentieth century. A brief scan of the Tri-City Area yellow pages reveals numerous businesses that incorporate the state of Franklin into their corporate names. In February of 1996, the first office of the recently chartered State of Franklin Savings Bank opened their doors for business on West Walnut Street in Johnson City. Over the next five years, the bank grew to include four additional locations and became one of the most successful businesses in the region. In addition to

⁶⁷¹ W.E. Newell, *The Tri-City Area and the State of Franklin* (Bristol, TN: privately published, 1968), 1-5.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

local banking, East Tennessee entrepreneurs also incorporated Franklin's name into several other businesses, including: State of Franklin Real Estate Company, State of Franklin Chiropractic, State of Franklin Healthcare, and the State of Franklin Insurance Company. These business owners hope to profit from the region's pride in the statehood movement that occurred in their communities over two hundred years earlier.⁶⁷³

The history and memory of the state of Franklin continues to evolve, as critics and supporters of the Franklinites defend their positions in the pages of history books, in the words of patriotic oratories, and on the bronzed plaques of marbled monuments. As historian Michael Toomey points out, "it is perhaps fitting that the historical interpretation of the State of Franklin should be as complex as the circumstances under which the government functioned." From the carefully crafted popular images of Franklin contemporaries to the historiographical wars waged in print, Franklin has never been and will never be a "lost" state.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷³ "State of Franklin Savings Bank," 2003, <http://www.stateoffranklin.com/> (16 July 2005).

⁶⁷⁴ Cox, ed., *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 91-93. Dr. Michael Toomey, Staff Historian for the East Tennessee Historical Society, published an excellent concise account of the history of Franklin, entitled "'Our Present Confused Situation:' The State of Franklin, 1784-1789," in Joyce and Eugene Cox's *History of Washington County Tennessee*.

Epilogue

“While no man has the right to object to or to protest the facts of history, neither has any man the right to pervert those facts, nor unjustly to characterize them according to his own whim or fancy, and thereby detract from the good name and fame of men, who in their day and generation served the State and its people faithfully and well, with singular disinterestedness, sacrifice, and devotion.”⁶⁷⁵

“The facts of history” are rarely unambiguous, and more often than not, are highly subjective and open to an infinite number of interpretations. The events of and the participants in the Franklin separatist movement present a striking reminder of this historical truism. The state of Franklin stood briefly as America’s unrecognized fourteenth state, and the defenders of statehood naturally tried to cast their movement in the most favorable political and historical light possible. What is truly remarkable about the movement is the persistence of the Franklinites’ eighteenth-century public relations campaign. Franklin remains a powerful symbol for many East Tennesseans, and its historical legacy is carefully preserved in the highway markers, business names, and various monuments dotting the rolling hills of the Tennessee Valley. To East Tennesseans, Franklin and its charismatic governor, John Sevier, have come to represent rugged individualism, regional exceptionalism, and civic dignity. The purpose of this study is not to take this away from them, but to reevaluate the extraordinary history of their “lost” state of Franklin.

The Franklin movement grew out of the socio-economic conditions of the Tennessee Valley frontier. The specie poor, land dependent regional economy hungrily craved new territory, and the southeastern Indian tribes stood as the primary barrier to socio-economic success. The savvy political leaders of the Tennessee Valley understood the

⁶⁷⁵ Mathews, “The Spanish ‘Conspiracy’ in Tennessee,” 69.

interconnectedness of their land-based economy and the brutality of Indian warfare, but chose to accept the inherent dangers in exchange for opening new lands to white settlement. This tumultuous dynamic occurred across the rapidly expanding western frontier, and the state of Franklin simply represented another strain of Anglo-American expansion and Native American resistance. Franklin is not exceptional in this respect, but the ferocity and duration of the Indian wars in the Tennessee Valley represented one of the bloodiest periods in antebellum America. The Franklin independence movement also fits historically into a period of frontier radicalism that transformed America's political landscape. From the Vermont statehood movement to Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion, frontiersmen agitated for political influence, economic improvement, and protection from the Indians.

However one chooses to interpret the statehood movement, Franklin remains a complex and fascinating historical event. From their reckless assertion of independence to their undaunted diplomatic campaign to garner political and popular support for their movement, the Franklinites' attempt to establish a new state in the Tennessee Valley stands as a testament to their boundless economic and political ambition. As one Franklin historian argued, "Perhaps the most prominent characteristic of the Franklinites was their relentless drive."⁶⁷⁶ The state of Franklin's history paralleled the young American republic's post-revolutionary struggle to survive amidst political turmoil, economic collapse, and the looming threat of foreign enemies. The state of Franklin's ruinous failure reminds us of the extraordinary and fragile nature of America's independence.

⁶⁷⁶ Gerson, *Franklin: America's Lost State*, 159.

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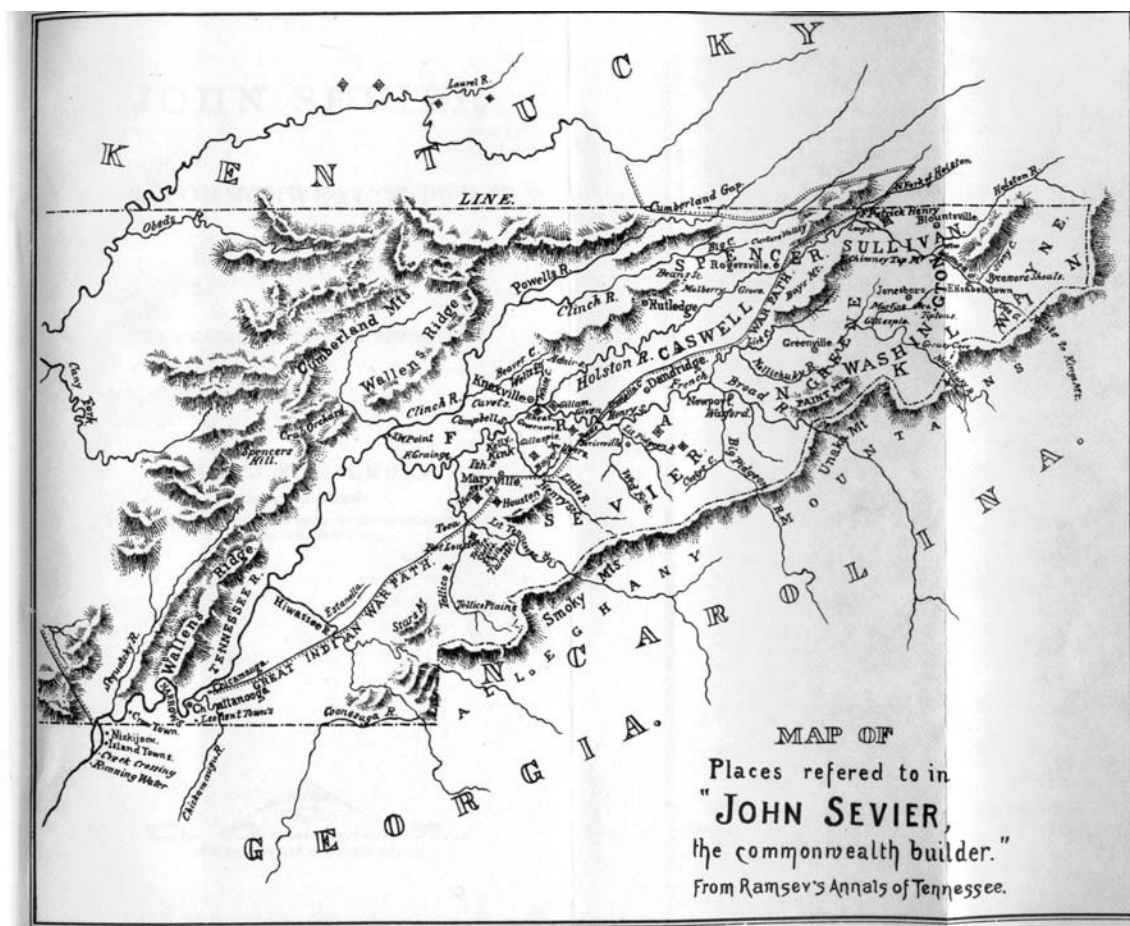
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Appendix 1



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