The American National State and the Early West

*The American National State and the Early West* challenges the widely held myth that the American national state was weak in the early days of the republic. William H. Bergmann reveals how the federal government used its fiscal and military powers and bureaucratic authority to enhance land acquisitions, promote infrastructure development, and facilitate commerce and communication in the early trans-Appalachian West. Energetic federal state-building efforts prior to 1815 grew from national state security interests as Native Americans and British imperial designs threatened to unravel the republic. Through partnerships with white westerners and western state governments, the federal government encouraged commercial growth and emigration, transforming the borderland into a bordered land. Taking a regional approach, this work synthesizes the literatures of social history, political science, and economic history to provide a new narrative of American expansionism.

William H. Bergmann is an assistant professor in the department of history at Slippery Rock University.
The American National State and the Early West

WILLIAM H. BERGMANN

Slippery Rock University
To my mother, father, and Lara
Contents

List of Maps  page viii
Acknowledgments  ix

Introduction  1
1. Property War  11
2. Martial Economies  53
3. A Bordered Land  94
4. Webs of Commerce  131
5. The National State in Indian Country  172
6. Partnerships  213
   Epilogue  253

Bibliography  259
Index  281
Maps

1. Rivers in the Trans-Appalachian West 20
2. The West in 1795 97
3. The West in 1810 215
Acknowledgments

The process of revising and expanding my dissertation into a monograph could not have come to fruition without the support of many people. Several institutions granted me generous financial support for researching and writing this book. As a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati, I received graduate fellowships from the department of history in support of the dissertation. Northern Michigan University awarded me two faculty research grants, funding much of the research conducted after defending the dissertation. When he served as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Terrence Seethoff enthusiastically approved a semester with a reduced teaching load so I could complete a draft of this manuscript. My former department head, Russell Magnaghi, took an interest in my work, provided me with a steady stream of encouragement, and advocated for resources on my behalf. I likewise am indebted to my former colleagues in the department of history, Chet Defonso, Robbie Goodrich, Keith Kendall, Gabe Logan, Rebecca Mead, and Alan Willis, who cultivated an intellectual environment and approved supplemental department research funds. I especially thank Gabe and Becky, who offered comments on an early chapter draft and are good friends. Members of the campus writing group I belong to likewise deserve recognition for keeping me focused on my goals: Michael Joy, Rebecca Ulland, Maya Sen, Kate Teeter, Derrick Anderson, Mollie Freier, Sara Jane Tompkins, and Rachel Jorgensen. I also would be remiss if I did not recognize the contributions of April Bertucci, Lara Clisch, and the many student workers in the history office who did yeoman’s work helping me with various tasks from photocopying to navigating the university’s reimbursement protocols.

Several archives provided grants so I could visit their repositories both while writing the dissertation and while conducting subsequent research. Over the years, the Filson Historical Society in Louisville granted me two Filson Fellowships, the Kentucky Historical Society offered a general research grant, and the William L. Clements Library awarded me a Jacob M. Price Visiting
Acknowledgments

Research Fellowship. In addition to these institutions, I visited the Cincinnati Historical Society Library, the Indiana Historical Society, the Indiana State Library, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, the Lilly Library, the Library of Congress, the National Archives in Washington, DC, and Library and Archives Canada. The staffs at these archives patiently answered many questions and guided me to many invaluable documents. I also deeply appreciate the efforts of the library staff at the Olson Library at Northern Michigan University for helping me obtain monographs and other resources I desperately needed, especially Michelle Kimball, who did not pressure me to return grossly overdue interlibrary loan materials.

Several people prompted me to rethink significant parts of my argument over the years. At the University of Cincinnati, I was lucky to meet Wayne Durrill, who became my adviser and friend. He has been there whenever I needed him and championed my career in immeasurable ways. I remain intellectually indebted to him. Along with Wayne, I thank Chris Phillips, Geoffrey Plank, and Drew Cayton for serving on my dissertation committee. I wish to thank Wayne, Drew, Joseph P. Ferrie, John Larson, and anonymous readers for comments on earlier versions of chapters and the manuscript.

This project made its way to publication with the help of several people and institutions. Passages in Chapters 1, 2, and 4 previously appeared in two journal articles, “A ‘Commercial View of This Unfortunate War’: Economic Roots of an American National State in the Ohio Valley, 1775–1795,” in Early American Studies (Spring 2008), and “Delivering a Nation through the Mail: The Post Office in the Ohio Valley, 1789–1815” in Ohio Valley History (Fall 2008). I am grateful to the McNeil Center for Early American Studies and the Filson Historical Society and Cincinnati Museum Center for granting permission to use material from my articles. If it were not for Cameron Fuess and Greenstone Mapping, this book would have crude, hand-drawn maps of my own creation rather than professional illustrations. Ultimately I owe much to Eric Crahan, editor at Cambridge University Press, who demonstrated enthusiasm for this project. I am grateful to him and all the others at the Press who shepherded this manuscript through the review and publication process.

Over the years my family has provided me encouragement and emotional support. I have inscribed this book to my parents for all they have given me. At one time or another each member of my family endured – without serious complaint – unprompted, rambling anecdotes about the research and writing process. For that I offer my appreciation. Adam Chill has been a constant friend, though we have lived far apart for many years. Our discussions helped me clarify my thoughts on argumentative elements of this project. More than anyone else, Lara Schaefer, to whom I also dedicate this book, witnessed my struggles bringing this book to print and was a font of support. Perhaps more important, she made numerous sacrifices so I could pursue my interests. I sing her praises on many fronts, but here I thank her for tolerating my incessant preoccupation with this project. I also owe apologies to Ernie, Buster, and Dea for being away from home so often.